

ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY IN PERSONS CHOOSING A CAREER IN EDUCATION:
CALLING AS A MOTIVATING FACTOR

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ABSTRACT

Jared T. Bigham. ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY IN PERSONS CHOOSING A CAREER IN EDUCATION: CALLING AS A MOTIVATING FACTOR. (Under the direction of Dr. Samuel J. Smith) School of Education, March, 2008.

The job of a teacher undergoes more scrutiny and accountability with each passing year. The esteem for the profession and extrinsic rewards do not increase commensurately to the ever growing challenges that teachers encounter. It therefore raises the question what motivates a teacher to enter such a profession? Many teachers in the profession say they answered a calling to teach. This phenomenological study examined the role that spirituality plays in persons choosing a career in education. Participants were chosen from college students who were in their methods semester of training. The participants were interviewed, and the dialogue was analyzed for themes that could be uncovered from their experiences. The themes that were revealed in this study correlate to spirituality playing a vital part in the participants' process toward becoming a teacher in the following aspects: the calling experience as a process, the esteem for the teaching profession as a calling, and the use of spirituality for affirmation.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my family, whose support and understanding of my time has been my foundation. To my wife, Albie, who has kept our house going in my many absences. To my grandpa, who instilled in me an uncompromising work ethic. To my great-aunt, Deanie, who has been a constant encourager. And to my parents, who have always helped nurture my calling from God to be an educator.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The field of primary and secondary education is demanding at best and often tumultuous in public perception. The rationale for choosing a career in this field can no longer rely on the old adage “Those who can’t, teach,” for the challenges inherent to the profession beg more substantial motives. A decaying public perception of teachers, low pay versus years of education, and increasing pressure to meet performance standards have cast a negative light on the profession (Moore-Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). “Why would anyone want to be a teacher?” is a question that is becoming more common. However, there is a small, but burgeoning, body of literature that examines the spiritual motives for career choice. Research by Colozzi and Colozzi (2000) relates that careers that are not pursued for financial reasons are viewed as a “calling.” Many educators profess that their job is a “calling,” which points to the thinking that there is something spiritual about their decision to enter the field. This view has been expressed by reformers such as Dewey (1959) who said, “Every teacher should realize the dignity of his calling; that he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social growth” (p. x). Dewey, who was a member of the Congregational Church at the time, went one step further in saying that the teacher was “the prophet of the true God” (p. 32).

Though calling is a term often used by Christians in reference to jobs or tasks they take on in service to God (Elias, 2003), it is not just a term used by Christians or others who practice organized religion. It is often referenced by those who submit to an intrinsic notion of service to others or to the greater good. Though they themselves may

not classify it as the will of God motivating them, they do admit they are acknowledging a pull from an external source that ignites an internal motivation and gives meaning to a career (Duffy, 2006).

The conceptual framework from which this study will be pursued is based on the constructivist philosophy of Lev Vygotsky (1926/1997). The calling experience is one of meaning making, so constructivism will be the foundation from which the research methodology will build.

Statement of the Problem

With so many negative connotations being attributed to the field of education, there must be motivating factors that lie beyond normal criteria for choosing a career. This study purposes to pursue the question: What role does spirituality play in choosing a career in education, with a focus on calling as a motivating factor? This is not a focus on a specific religion's influencing factors or people who consider themselves a part of an organized religion. This research leaves the question open-ended to include any motivating force that compels a person to do something contrary to mainstream decision-making constructs and extrinsic rewards. The extrinsic reward factors are the ones that so many people seem to have a problem looking past when deciding on teaching as a career. It has even been stated by Sparks (1988) that people who value extrinsic rewards as motivating factors make poor teachers. Therefore, the intrinsic and altruistic motivation must be explored to understand better what draws teachers into the field.

Importance of the Study

This research can be used in better understanding the disposition of teachers in order to bolster public perception, invigorate teacher recruitment, and better equip teacher

training programs. Though universality cannot be applied to the definition of a teacher, understanding the motivating factors in becoming a teacher can help in the perception of the profession. With the negative hit the education profession takes in today's media and political rhetoric (Farkas, Johnson, & Foleno, 2000; Moore-Johnson & Birkeland, 2003), it is essential that the altruistic aspects of the job are taken into account. If a calling does exist for some teachers and this calling leads to altruistic professionalism, then the profession itself can only be elevated by the service oriented and selfless actions of the "called." These aspects of the profession become vitally important in combating the degradation of public opinion.

Teacher recruitment is a hot topic as predictions of mass teacher shortages across the globe are pronounced, so understanding what makes a teacher want to be a teacher has never been more important (Watt & Richardson, 2007). Recruitment is a term that is often used in career fields. Businesses, agencies, and professional entities such as law firms recruit perspective workers on many different levels as an individual's talent and skills demand, but education is a field that is often viewed as one of selflessness. If this is the case, should people who do not feel a calling be pushed or directed into this field? The answer may be "no," if the evidence of calling could be applied universally. This research does not intend to substantiate the necessity of calling, but the results of the research could be applied to helping understand a disposition that is better suited for a career in education.

There is a great deal of anecdotal thinking that perceives the job of a teacher as undemanding. Summers off and extended holiday breaks are examples people commonly speak of when asked about their perception of teachers. Most people in the education

field would agree that this perception is greatly skewed. As early as the 1960s, teaching has been labeled as a “semiprofession” (Lortie, 1969) when compared to other professions such as medicine or law. This perception has changed little. In fact, a good depicter of the waning influence and esteem that teachers hold since Lortie’s research can be seen in the diminishing control they have over aspects of their professional lives, especially with the advent of No Child Left Behind (2001). Understanding why some teachers enter a field that has declined in regard and control is puzzling to many. This research may lead to understanding the factors that sway a person into such a career field and if there is applicability in the recruiting of teachers.

Further applications of this study could be used in teacher training programs as the disposition of teachers is becoming more important in teacher training. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has recently made one of its new objectives “codifying the internal existence of those who desire to become teachers” (McKnight, 2004, p. 212). This is a far cry from previous expectations of checking off mastered skills and competencies. By NCATE standards, teacher training programs will now be expected to understand the virtues of potential teachers and evaluate these virtues. It seems that if some teachers do experience a calling, it would fall under this “virtue ethic” (p. 212). Based on the results of this research, the door to the mentality and motivation of a teacher could be opened slightly more, whether or not a connection to spirituality is apparent. A connection or lack of a connection offers insight into approaches and methodology in training teachers.

Operational Definitions

Calling

In this study, the term “calling” is one of the key ideals. This term is used loosely in the area of career and occupation, but for the purposes of this research, it will be narrowly defined beyond flippant usage. According to Colozzi and Colozzi (2000), a career that is not motivated by monetary gain or is for the betterment of society or the good work of a higher power is considered a calling. In essence, it is an occupation that requires some type of sacrifice on the part of the individual.

Vocation

Vocation is a term that is used both in secular and religious arenas. Often, it is used as an interchangeable term with “job” as a secular term, but in its strictest sense, vocation comes from the Latin word *vocare*, which means “to call.” This usually applies to a career of service (Elias, 2003, para. 3). In this research, vocation will apply to a career that is pursued as a result of a calling as previously defined (Drier, 1977; Gangel, 1979; Jackson, 1965; Jaques, 1965; McDaniels, 1965).

Spirituality

Spirituality can be broadly defined in and out of a religious context. From an organized religious perspective, spirituality often refers to one’s relationship with God. Outside of organized religions, spirituality usually refers to a perception of a power or persona that oversees for the good of the universe (Hill & Pargament, 2003; Miller & Thoresen, 2003). Spirituality in this study will combine these contexts to include a Christian view of spirituality as a relationship with God as a guiding force and also non-Christians who may not believe in God but have a belief system that incorporates the idea

of an energy or force that works for a common good (Duffy, 2006, p. 52). The relationship of these two perspectives will be discussed further in chapter two.

Religion

In this research, religion will refer to an organized set of beliefs and practices held by a community of people in faith to a divine power.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As the need for teachers continues to grow around the world, there have been numerous studies conducted in many countries to explore the motivation of people who enter the field of education (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). Where the ranks of teachers were once readily filled, there is now a recruitment effort underway in many areas around the United States and in other countries. Most research literature has been quantitative in nature, adhering to mass surveys and questionnaires. Little of the literature is focused on “calling” specifically but focuses more on humanistic rationales rather than spiritual. This is understandable because it is difficult to assess something that is an internal experience or to make determinations if one “cannot see the disposition in question” (Helm, 2006, p. 238). Exploring spiritual aspects of decision-making is undertaken with some trepidation because it is not something that is easily observable, and the classification can become diverse depending on defined meaning of the vocabulary alone.

Science and religion agree that certain things exist in the universe that we simply cannot see: religion declares that there is a higher power or intelligent creator who can be seen only with the eyes of faith, and science says that we cannot see everything that exists, like microorganisms, magnetic pulls, and gravity. (Helm, 2006, p. 238)

If one agrees with this premise, then one can agree on a starting point for researching the spiritual aspects of career choice. Much of the literature that does deal with calling or spirituality in decision-making, apart from humanistic motivations, takes this view, and these types of studies undertake to define a dynamic that is at work. In

relation to this, a brief comparison will be made between the spiritual calling of an educator and that of a person in professional ministry to shed more light on this spiritual dynamic.

Conceptual Framework

The calling experience is one of meaning making; therefore, the constructivist philosophy of Lev Vygotsky will be the basis from which this research is grounded. Vygotsky (1926/1997) repeatedly stressed the importance of past experiences and prior knowledge in making sense of new situations or present experiences. The concept of calling in this research is based on a background of personal spiritual concepts and application of these concepts. From a metaphysical perspective, Vygotsky believed people viewed the world through a lens of organized experiences; therefore, the calling experience is a framework from which a career is pursued. In an epistemological sense, people who are called construct their own knowledge symbolically by personal representations that could possibly be referenced to the calling experience. The axiology found in this philosophy allows for the learner to build his or her own value system, so the calling experience could be the root from which the values are defined (Vygotsky, 1926/1997).

Why Teach: The Negative Perception of Teaching

Before one can begin to understand the motivation a person has to teach, it must be established why this profession is seen as a calling by many people in and out of the field. There is a well publicized teacher shortage looming in the future due not only to negative media attention (Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003) but other factors such as increased immigration, changes in class size policies, the anticipated retirement of half

the teaching force, and the low retention rate of new teachers (Henke, Chen, & Geis, 2000; Moore-Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). The problem is intensified by the movement of teachers from school to school and district to district in search of a better working environment (Ingersoll, 2001). The shortage has alarmed policymakers and school systems to the point of revising certification requirements, offering mortgage subsidies, creating on-line job applications, and developing mentoring programs (Moore-Johnson & Birkeland).

The professional standing of teaching has long been volatile. Sykes (1983) stated that although teaching “has enjoyed a measure of public esteem and gratitude through the years, . . . there is a long-standing taint associated with teaching” as a profession (p. 98). According to Hoffman (1981), part of this idea is due to the perception that teaching is equivalent to child care. In decades (and centuries) past, teachers were held in high esteem as gateways to knowledge. However, the social standing teachers enjoy today carries “little prestige” (Farkas et al., 2000). “People applaud the profession from afar...but few would be happy to see their own children join its ranks, much less themselves” (p. 14).

The standards movement of recent years has added a great deal of pressure on teachers to produce results via their students’ performance (Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2002). No Child Left Behind (2001) has brought a factor of accountability that is unprecedented. Where a teacher’s classroom was once an island unto itself, state-wide curriculums are being required and standardized test scores are published in newspapers. Many teachers believe they are being punished for the political jargon and lip-service policy that has swept the nation since Goals 2000.

In a report published by Public Agenda (Farkas et al., 2000), an interesting aspect of career choice was researched. Most studies focus on motivating factors that encourage people to become teachers; however, the Farkas et al. study also included 802 college graduates under the age of thirty who had jobs other than teaching. This focus was an effort to determine what factors might turn one off to the profession. Table 1 shows the perception of these participants. Their overwhelming view is one of negative connotations that accompany the job on many levels.

Table 1

Drawbacks of Teaching (Farkas, Johnson, & Foleno, 2000, p. 14)

Teachers often have to worry about personal safety	89%
Teachers are seriously underpaid	78%
Teachers today are often made the scapegoats the problems facing education	76%
Teachers do not have good opportunities for advancement	69%
Teachers do not get the sense they are respected and appreciated	66%

The perceptions listed in Table 1 paint a clear picture as to why these graduates did not choose teaching as a career. If this sampling is indicative of the general opinion of the job of teachers, it is easy to see why this is a career that people might believe they must be “called” to do. When people look at other service oriented jobs such as missionary work, the military, or healthcare, they see that a sacrifice is necessary on the part of the individual. If the statistics of Table 1 were true only in perception, little incentive can be found in a career where people are underpaid, feel unsafe, cannot advance their career, are a scapegoat for problems, and are not appreciated or respected.

There are also few financial incentives to go into the teaching field. Teaching salaries have improved little in the last 30 years when compared to other professions (Moore-Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). When teachers' salaries were adjusted for inflation in 2000, the average salary was only \$46 above what it was in 1993 (American Federation of Teachers, 2000). Many teachers find they must take second jobs or summer jobs to enable them financially to teach (Johnson, 1990). This is a dismal prospect when the salary is measured against the earned degree, for many teachers have graduate degrees in their respective subject areas or in curriculum or administration areas.

All of these factors weigh heavily against a person choosing education as a career, but the negative views of the profession make a great case for seeing the job as a calling. If a person accepted all the pessimistic portrayals of the profession, it would almost seem like martyrdom to pursue a job as a teacher. The negative analysis of the career sets the stage for understanding what would motivate a person into this job.

Spirituality's Influence

According to recent statistics gathered across the United States (Harris Poll Online, 2006), 91% of Americans professed to hold to some type of spiritual belief system, with 73% of Americans professing a specific belief in God. These numbers indicate that most people acknowledge a higher power, and the statistics concerning college students are also revealing. According to a study done by Bonderud and Fleischer (2003), spirituality plays a prominent role in students' lives.

Of 3,680 college students from 46 colleges and universities surveyed: 78% discuss religion/spirituality with friends, 77% report that they pray, 71% find religion to

be personally helpful, and 73% said their religious/spiritual beliefs helped develop their identity.

These statistics underline the role of spirituality in some instances as an influence and a guiding force, and at this point it is important to delineate the differences between spirituality and the practice of organized religion as it is found in this review of literature. A person can pursue spirituality without participating in the commitments of organized religion (Mayes, 2001), and this is the view most literature takes when studying spirituality and its influence on college students. Therefore, spirituality is commonly researched in its broadest sense, as it is defined earlier in chapter one. This may seem too loose a parameter for a person interpreting research from a formal religious perspective such as Christianity, for one might ask, “How can spirituality in an informal sense influence a person?” The question is answered with another question: “Does God’s will and influence extend only to the believer?” Depending on people’s answer to this question determines the validity found in research with a broad definition of spirituality. Wuthnow (1994) wrote that “Our individual experiences of the sacred . . . provide us with reference points, both emotionally and intellectually, telling us that our lives have meaning and purpose” (p. 3). Whether a person acknowledges God in a formal sense or acknowledges a guiding force in the world in a much more informal sense, there is no doubt that the above statistics reflect a student body across America that is influenced to some degree by its spiritual dispositions. However, there is little literature that investigates the link spirituality might have with the teaching profession.

Spirituality is inescapable as an entity in our culture (Tillich, 1956, 1983), and thus it could be factored as a possible influence on decision-making and career choice. If

personal axiological philosophies influence and shape individuals, it is probable to expect the same type of influence to effect one's decision to become a teacher (Serow, Eaker, & Ciechalski, 1992). Mayes (2001) argues that a "moral violence" is committed against students if they are required to compartmentalize their spirituality apart from their career (p. 3). This would be an unfortunate stance if there is a correlation between spirituality and career choice in education (Mayes; Nord, 1995).

Calling and Vocation

Service to Humanity and the Common Good

When people speak of a calling, there is often a sacrificial nature to the concept. The term is not often used in the context of affluent career choice such as a person being "called" to be a multi-millionaire Wall Street trader or "called" to be the owner of a hotel chain. The term is more readily associated with persons who work in a field that seems to take more than it gives back, such as missionaries, social workers, or hospice workers.

The significance of calling lies in its ability to take what is outwardly labeled a job and transform it into a vocation that is pursued for reasons other than extrinsic ones. This extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation is a dividing line for many students, especially teachers. In Marshall's 1986 study, he states that "There seems to be some agreement in the research to date those intrinsic factors, those related to love of children etc., are more important than extrinsic factors, those related to pay, holidays, and so forth" (p. 77). This intrinsic motivation is derived from a sense of purpose. According to Bonderud and Fleisher (2003), 76% of college students surveyed in their research are searching for purpose and meaning in their lives. This affirmation of purpose is often found in a calling to a career. This career of service is not limited to persons who use the term

calling in a religious context, as is often the case. In their research, Bonderud and Fleisher found that 88% of college students surveyed felt that non-religious people can live morally upright lives. In this context, service to humanity and the greater good is viewed along the same lines as service to God and doing the will of God.

Vocation can be characterized as secular or religious, as long as there is a passionate commitment and element of sacrificial service (Elias, 2003). Joseph and Green (1986) conducted a study that included the responses of 234 students concerning the reasons they were entering the teaching field. Their findings revealed that 90% of the students wanted to be of service. The service feature of calling is apparent in much of the research literature that deals with motivations for teaching (Book & Freeman, 1986; Goodlad, 1984; Richardson, 1988). Max Weber, the prominent German sociologist, wrote at the turn of the 20th century that a true sense of vocation existed only when a strong sense of commitment and passion is felt for work (Weber, 2004). Collins (1991) expands on this by stating that: "Vocation refers to a calling and entails firm commitment to performance of worthwhile activities that are not merely calculated to advance personal career aspirations or fulfill minimum job expectations" (p. 42).

People who have the academic credentials to gain acceptance into a college of education for teacher training also have the ability to enter career fields with higher pay and status, a fully resourced working environment, constant training, and opportunities for more expedient career advancement (Moore-Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). With these benefits also attracting college students, there is a great deal of competition for competent individuals to enter the field of education. Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant's (2003) research asserted that the intrinsic features of teaching combat the extrinsic ones by

offering both a “moral career in addition to feeling that they belonged to a community” (p. 101). A high percentage of teachers who are in training or new to the field also say they want a job where they can make a difference (Farkas et al., 2000).

In Farkas et al. (2000), most young teachers who were surveyed said they had responded to a calling. They went on to say that 86% of respondents felt that teaching is a profession that requires a “sense of mission,” and only those “with a true sense of calling should pursue the work” (p. 10). Many of the responses in the Farkas et al. study reflected this statement that was recorded: “I just had this feeling [about teaching], you know what I mean?” (p. 10). This description and those like it are not common to most career fields where there might be a vested interest in the job but most of the motivation to pursue a particular career is found in extrinsic factors outside of altruistic or internal reasons.

As mentioned earlier, one of the unique aspects of the 2000 Farkas et al. study was the 802 nonteacher, college graduates under 30 who were surveyed concerning their perceptions of the teaching field. The perceived drawbacks to the field were assessed but the positives were assessed as well. An overwhelming 97% of respondents said that teachers “contribute to society and help others,” and 82% said that it is a profession that “requires a true sense of calling” (p. 14). These are telling statistics from a group on the outside looking in. One respondent remarked that “Everything teachers do is angled toward other people, not towards themselves; I’m sure they get fulfilled by what they do” (p. 15). The key phrase in this statement and correlating with this research data is “get fulfilled by what they do.” The money is not mentioned, nor is prestige mentioned. It is the service within the job that is perceived as the reward. The final salvo to the Farkas et

al. research was the statement that teachers seemed to be “energized by a sense of purpose” (p. 36). This cannot be said of all careers or even many careers, and if this is true, then it leads one to the conclusion that there is something inherently different about the motivations for choosing the education field.

Service to God or a Higher Power

Calling is often used in a religious context, and it is a key event in Christian scripture (Elias, 2003). All four Gospels record the call by Jesus to serve the Kingdom of Heaven (Mathew. 4; Mark 1; Luke 5; John 1). The call frequently “entailed significant sacrifice and commitment,” and in Hebrew scripture as well, the call was a summons to undertake a religious task (p. 297). VanOosting (2002) writes about four characteristics to the idea of vocation in relation to calling:

A person is called for a specific purpose to which he or she must make a commitment; the called person has a special gift for accomplishing this purpose; a vocation presumes a person who calls, Yahweh, God, Jesus; and finally, to accept a vocation means to live a life of sacrifice, to live with faith in darkness. (p. 11)

The idea of calling and vocation carries the connotation of service and almost a sense of career martyrdom because a call precipitates some sort of sacrifice on the part of the called. For the teacher, it could be monetary sacrifice weighed against years of education, lack of prestige, inadequate resources, or any of the other negative aspects that have been previously listed. From a religious perspective, answering the call is serving God, whether it does or does not align with personal aspirations. To this end any career, “even one that is disliked, can be a vocation, since one may have a duty to do what one finds difficult” (Rahner & Vorgrimler, 1965, pp. 483-484).

According to Elias (2003), the “theology of vocation” is based on the understanding and belief that God can guide or command a person to follow a call. Even if people may not choose a certain job, they pursue it out of a sense of duty. This is one of the aspects of calling that makes it unique in that a person makes a life-altering choice based on altruistic motivations from a humanistic point of view or based on obligation from a religious point of view. Martin Luther and John Calvin expanded this ideal of vocation beyond strictly religious callings of ministry, such as monastic living, to include all aspects of life, including “work and occupations in society” (p. 298). This concept of work as worship and service to God was one of the key ideas that came from the Protestant Reformation (Whitlock, 1961). The original, and allegedly heretical, doctrine of Luther and Calvin was that all occupations were equal in God’s eyes, whether or not they were religious (Fox, 2003; Kucharsky, 1971; Whitlock, 1961).

This career aspect of calling became a prominent part of Puritan ideology and community. A person became a member of the covenant community in a two-fold process. First, a person had to have an internal conversion experience. Second, a person had to make a public commitment to a calling, or vocation, which contributed to the community in some way in the form of productive labor (Elias, 2003). This form of calling differs from monastic callings where monks and nuns removed themselves from the world. This new idea of calling was to a job that placed the called person in society as a contributing member. The religious commonwealth was formed through shared reliance on people community fulfilling a calling.

A sense of community belonging is still a common theme today in education. Research was conducted by Brown (1992) concerning the reasons teachers in the

Caribbean chose to become educators in their communities. She found that some of the participants felt “imbued with a sense of mission: ‘I think that this is God’s will for my life.’ ‘Teaching was my destiny’” (pp. 185-186). Wanting to contribute to society ranked second among all participants as one of the aspects that drew them into teaching. Filling a role that enables a person to feel a sense of belonging to the community is a common theme that is found throughout the literature concerning motivations in teaching. In research conducted among 298 undergraduates’ views of teaching, Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) found that 94% felt that teaching was a job where they could contribute to their community (p. 124). This sense of belonging is manifested and affirmed in the sharing of values, which is often cultivated in the community school (Kohl, 1984). This phenomenon has evolved from its religious roots to a more secularized version of serving a community, rather than the idea of serving a community of God’s people.

Paul Mattingly’s book *The Classless Profession* (1975) studied American teachers of the 19th century and their motivations for teaching. His research supported the idea that teachers of this time period felt a sense of calling that was of a spiritual nature. This calling was not only from a desire to serve God but also to impart morality and a sense of virtue. The 19th century saw the first-generation of the formal schoolman, and interestingly a great many of these teachers were ministers who seemed “more attracted to schooling than other professionals,” and the teachers of this era as a whole had a professional style that was ministerial (p. xv). Many prominent educators of this period such as Mary Seton and Catherine Beecher felt that teaching was chiefly a religious vocation (Sklar, 1973). Tyack (1989) went on to say that many teachers of the 19th century “felt a powerful Protestant-republican ideology of service” that gave meaning to

their work (p. 417). Society also saw these teachers as a type of ministerial guides. This ideal was exemplified in the evangelical missionary type efforts in which teaching was used in the 19th century. These efforts ranged from educating newly arrived immigrants to educating liberated slaves of the postbellum South (Cremin, 1988; Jones, 1980; Mayes, 2001). This idea of axiological and ontological commitments influencing the development of career path in the 19th century can still be seen in today's teachers, but the training process is much more formal and regulated than it was in the beginnings of the American education system (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Mayes). To become a teacher today requires much more training and endears less prestige than 150 years ago, and the level of personal sacrifice has risen disproportionately to the extrinsic rewards and perception of the career.

The image of today's teacher is multifaceted, but most views are connected to a life-changing persona. Joseph and Burnaford (1994/2000) found that people who view teachers in a positive light see them as ministers, counselors, guides, Zen masters, liberators, saints, saviors, and visionaries. Mayes (2001) believes these perceptions reflect the spiritual commitments of teachers. This would appear to be an accurate assessment since the role of teachers situates them in the development of a child's life. Teachers often have as much or more impact on children as parents do when it comes to life decisions such as career choice. This not only commands a certain amount of respect from children who are positively influenced, but it also romanticizes the idea of a teacher as a life-changer. People who are afforded this type of admiration are often viewed with a spiritual connotation on some level, whether it is "minister" or "Zen master." This idea is also supported by the research of Pajak and Blase (1989). In their study of 200

teachers, they found that most of the teachers acknowledged their own spiritual beliefs as having a positive effect on their professional lives. These teachers “spoke generally of religious values or a belief in God without naming any religion in particular” (p. 299), but the influence of spirituality was apparent.

Meaning-making in one’s life is also an important aspect of career decision, and spirituality, calling, and vocation are all important aspects when it comes to finding purpose in life. Bonderud and Fleischer’s (2003) research revealed that 76% of the college students they surveyed are “searching for meaning and purpose in life” (para. 3). Literature that deals with work as a calling often looks at the impact calling has on self-realization (Krau, 1997; Savickas, 1993). Battlista and Almond (1973) suggest that people find their lives are meaningful if they are in the process of fulfilling purposes, and the notion of purpose is often the product of calling, which is the “job” God has intended. In a spiritual sense people feel called for a purpose, and this purpose lends significance to the concept of their role in life. Some people have a desire to lead a life of personal significance, and most college students feel a need to validate their lives (Evans, Forney, & Guiclo-DiBrito, 1998). Significance to a community and a sense of belonging has been discussed previously, but personal significance or individuals’ view of their impact is somewhat different. This significance and sense of purpose can be manifested in many ways, but spirituality is connected to most of them. Doing a job that one feels called to do and appears sacrificial is one of the most concrete ways of finding meaning. Coles (1990) says that spirituality in a generic sense helps facilitate students’ attempts to apply meaning to their lives (Coles). Adams and Csiernik (2002) expand on this ideal of personal fulfillment. Their research looks at spirituality as a factor in career success:

Workplace spirituality involves positively sharing, valuing, caring, respecting, acknowledging, and connecting the talents and energies of people in meaningful goal-directed behavior that enables them to belong, be creative, be personally fulfilled, and take ownership in their combined destiny. (p. 43)

These ideas of destiny and personal fulfillment appear as similar terminology to calling and vocation, for what are calling and vocation if they are not the destiny/plan God has for a person. This is not an argument for predestination, but it can be argued that calling can align personal dispositions and talents with a career that is of service. This alignment based on spiritual beliefs can increase job satisfaction (Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Millman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003). In a qualitative study done by Robert, Young, and Kelly (2006), it was observed that those workers who had greater levels of spiritual focus found greater job satisfaction in their careers. Job satisfaction and personal fulfillment are also found in peoples' perception of their ability to cope with the rigors and demands of a certain job. It is difficult to imagine people being satisfied with a job or having a sense of contribution to a community if they believe they do not have the skills or temperament necessary to do the job well. Spirituality can act as an important positive filter through which career decision self-efficacy is analyzed (Duffy & Blustein, 2005; Howard & Howard, 1997). Career choice and job satisfaction have an underlying connection when a calling is involved and there is a spiritual element that acts as a catalyst, and it is evident in the literature that those individuals who view their career as a calling experience much more job satisfaction (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwanz, 1997).

Career Choice Counseling

College students often struggle with the questions of life as they are on the cusp of choosing a career. Who am I? What matters to me? What are my skills? These are questions that students must face as they make career decisions (Parks, 2000). Career counselors and student affairs personnel are in place to guide students and aid them in their decision-making process, and this includes incorporating the spiritual aspect of career counseling (Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006; Rogers & Love, 2007). In order to institute a holistic approach to counseling, the spiritual construct of the student must be taken into account. Mayes (2001) writes that “It is unwise to marginalize a student’s spirituality” (p. 249). Instead a student’s spirituality should be a crucial part of any discourse in major decisions while in college.

Bloch (2004, 2005) argues that each facet of a person’s life is affected directly or indirectly by each component in his or her life. Therefore spirituality touches the area of decision-making concerning career choice in ways such as perceiving a job as a calling, believing in the altruistic aspect of work, aligning values with job traits, or experiencing a sense of community at work. Bloch’s (2004) research helps define aspects of career counseling that should account for the spiritual connection. Bloch also encourages counselors to address the motivations for being drawn to a particular career, and then see if these motivations align with a true calling rather than a decision based on monetary or convenient opportunities. The process is not as simple as filling in the blank based on extrinsic factors. A counselor should be helping a student navigate career decisions without negating spiritual variables (Duffy, 2006), and this is complex in that intrinsic motivation must be part of the equation.

In the past 2 decades, the Christian Church has been looking more closely once again at the significance of spirituality in work and career (Conger, 1994; Orsborn, 2000; Palmer, 2000), and there has been “renewed focus” in literature concerning spirituality in career guidance and development (Fox, 2003, p. 167). Career and spirituality are two of the foremost aspects of peoples’ lives, so it only stands to reason that any connectivity must be explored to better understand the construct from which decisions are made.

Mayes (2001) makes the following observation:

Spiritual commitments matter. They infuse much of our social and political life. They help shape the conceptual and emotional landscapes of our cultures. For many of us, they are the rock upon which our very lives rest. (p. 12)

In order to understand career development in the United States, Hansen (1993) suggested that more credence should be given to the spiritual dimension of career choice and spirituality in the work place. This seems like a common sense approach, for it is difficult to accept the premise that people who are spiritual will be able to confine beliefs and practices to aspects of life other than a career that takes up a good portion of time each week.

The process of self-actualization and self-efficacy that were mentioned earlier are intertwined with value orientation. People often choose careers where the value content in a job aligns with their personal value construct (Judge & Bretz, 1992). The importance of individual values and their arrangement in a person’s character hierarchy also influences career choice (Cochran, 1986). This application of values could be applied to calling and vocation concerning education. As presented earlier, the literature suggests that education is a career field of service, and the predominant, organized religions such

as Christianity espouse service. The Bible lists many examples of the importance of serving:

Matt. 20:28-- ...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.

Luke 22:26-27-- But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

Rom. 15:17-- Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.

1 Cor. 12:5-- There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

1 Tim. 1:12-- I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.

If one adheres to Christian values or other religions that avow service, it is easy to make a connection to education as a career choice. Value orientations should be at the forefront of counseling considerations, for it defines the area in which a person will most likely experience job satisfaction and career success (Brown, 1996; Sharf, 1992).

Sink (2004) found that “spirituality is an effective ‘tool’ for constructing a sense of purpose in life and for working through personal challenges” (p. 310). If this is accurate, counselors and student affairs personnel can utilize spirituality as part of the decision-making process in career guidance, but this would have to be integrated into the matrix of development rather than a separate factor.

Spiritual Disposition of Teachers and Teacher Training

The disposition of a high-quality teacher is difficult to define because it concerns the mind, heart, and psyche of a person: areas that are internal. However, it is important

to explore this area to understand particular traits that exist in good, committed teachers in order to recruit and train prospective educators. The spiritual relationship to disposition could possibly be linked by “calling” as an aspect of a person who is entering the field for altruistic reasons.

Aristotle defined the term disposition as the nature of a virtue or vice in relation to the agent and the possession of a particular frame of mind in any given ethical or moral situation. It can be argued that the “moral situation” of teaching is contained in the decision to give oneself over to a career that takes more than it gives in terms of extrinsic rewards, and those who feel they have experienced a calling are fulfilling a moral obligation that is part of their spiritual views. Identifying this piece of one’s disposition could be considered a crucial part in exposing those who are truly suited to be teachers.

This idea of disposition has now gained more professional prominence since NCATE has moved to make it a part of teacher training programs. NCATE is not merely an agency that accredits colleges and universities, “it is a force for the reform of teacher preparation” (McKnight, 2004, p. 212). The NCATE definition is lengthier than Aristotle’s, but it gives a better idea of how complex it is to try and define something internal like dispositions.

Dispositions: The values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator’s own professional growth. Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice. For example, they might include a belief that all students can learn, a vision of high

and challenging standards, or a commitment to a safe and supportive learning environment. (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2001)

Though this definition does not explicitly mention spirituality, factors such as *motivation*, *caring*, *responsibility*, and *social justice* are a part of the dynamic of spirituality.

Helm (2006) says that features such as the ones previously mentioned are dispositions that can be identified in literature as dispositions of good teachers, but can these dispositions be assessed? Swick (2001) says that these dispositions can not only be assessed, but they should also be transferred to their students. It is difficult to assess something that is internal, or to determine if something exists if it is not a tangible occurrence. Like dispositions, spirituality is also something that is internal, but Helm (2006) brings the concepts of dispositions together with spirituality:

Science and religion agree that certain things exist in the universe that we simply cannot see: religion declares that there is a higher power or intelligent creator who can be seen only with the eyes of faith, and science says that we cannot see everything that exists. (p. 238)

There are commercial assessments that try to analyze dispositions one at a time. The California Critical Thinking Teacher Disposition Inventory created by Peter and Noreen Facione (1992) attempts to do this in an inventory style assessment, and many college and university teacher training programs are using scoring rubrics to assess dispositions found in portfolios and in practicum. Another assessment that is gaining prominence was developed jointly by the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University in Minnesota. This format includes "intrinsic motivation and a passion for youth; commitment to social justice; engagement in and promotion of positive social interaction;

and self-improvement” (Helm, 2006, p. 239). The questions in this assessment are designed to determine if these traits can be found in the candidate. Once again, these dispositions are underlying parts of spirituality.

Giovannelli (2003) contends that these dispositions can be used for more than determining a person’s suitability for teaching. She argues that if dispositions can be identified early in teacher training programs, they can be emphasized for better classroom practice. This idea aligns with Aristotle’s belief that the internal must be aligned with the external actions of the person. However, if people do not contain the disposition or spiritual context as a career is being pursued, can the desired traits be reinforced and magnified? The next question would be whether it would then become necessary to look for or require these dispositions, which have spiritual undertones, in potential candidates. McKnight (2004) argues that people cannot simply create these dispositions or adjust dispositions within teacher training programs. He asserts that time is too limited, and he goes on to say that the complexity of the internal nature of people makes it impossible to expect an assessment rubric to bring about significant internal change. The basic argument for those whose beliefs align with McKnight’s is that people either have *it* or they do not.

Mayes (2001) contends that the area of spiritual commitment among students in teacher training programs is inadequately explored. Mayes’ research along with Serow, Eaker, and Ciechalski (1992) revealed that many teacher education students are motivated by spiritual reasons to become teachers, and these students carry a disposition that is reinforced by a calling. According to Mayes research, “Teachers generally portrayed their relationship with students as caring, understanding, accepting, patient, and

trusting and said that this was the result of their spiritual commitments” (p. 7). This argument takes McKnight’s (2001) ideas one step farther and vastly diverges from those that argue for disposition assessment and instilment. Mayes’ view is that many students in teacher training programs are already there for spiritual reasons, so their dispositions must be “cultivated” (p. 5). Mayes goes on to say that “spiritual reflectivity” should be one of the components in teacher training programs, so that students might better understand their motivations for entering the field and assess the core skills they possess that align with teaching.

Whether or not one believes that dispositions can be assessed, should be used as recruiting criteria, or should be exploited to make better teachers, most are in agreement that there are certain internal characteristics that are reflected by good teachers. This belief supports the idea that teaching is not just a job based on normal career constructs. There are intangible variables that make it part of the unique service profession. In the Farkas et al. (2001) study, 90% of respondents surveyed said that teaching is a profession in which one needs to be truly motivated to survive (p. 10). In relation to dispositions, 91% said their skills and interests “fit well with the demands of the profession” (p. 11). These statistics align with much of the other research that has been mentioned previously, and the notion is reoccurring that teaching is a field that requires a certain disposition that is catalyzed and cultivated by spirituality. If this is accurate, it is a career that is rarely one of convenience or extrinsic reward. The Farkas et al. study supports this with a revealing statistic. Four in 10 (40%) young adults say they fell into their current career by chance, whereas just 12 % of teachers say they ended up in education by chance (p. 16).

There are two quotes from the Farkas et al. (2001) study that effectively sum up much of the statistical data concerning motivation for entering the profession. A teacher from California asked this question: “Maybe they’re right. Maybe more money will bring more people in. But if they’re coming because of money, what are you getting?” (p. 19). A teacher from New Jersey echoed this question by saying, “I don’t think you necessarily get a higher-quality teacher just because you pay more. Teachers go into the profession because it’s something they want to do” (p. 19). This type of thinking encapsulates the idea of unique dispositions belonging to the teaching field, for how many other professions deal more in internal dynamics of job satisfaction and intrinsic reward versus the extrinsic and economic factors that often carry more weight? And how many people with jobs can say they are doing something they are passionate about doing? With increased scrutiny being given to the internal dispositions of teachers, the technical approach to teacher training seems anti-thesis to the dynamics that brace-up the profession (Valli, 1993).

Spirituality is no less hard to define than the dispositions that are proposed in quality teachers. In fact, that is part of the reason it could be argued that spirituality has a strong connection to certain dispositions, if not a basis for dispositions. Gloria Watkins, a prominent literary academic who uses the pen name bell hooks writes of her vocation: “The learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred” (Hooks, 1994, p. 13).

People Who Change Careers to Become Teachers

Well, it sounds really corny now, but I worked in the City, and I was getting quite good money, and I was fed up with stepping over homeless people, and the

commercial world. I just felt I had outlived my use for it. And so I wanted to retrain to do something that I thought was really serving the community of the country. (Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003, p. 101)

This quote is reflective of the thinking of many people who leave their current profession to become teachers, and one of the biggest rays of hope for the profession is the fact that people choose to leave their current jobs to enter education. Like the person who was quoted in the Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant's (2003) study, many people want to find meaning and purpose in their lives, as well as living within the constructs of their belief system (Neck & Millman, 1994). Their current careers may not offer this fulfillment, so it becomes necessary to factor in intrinsic aspects of careers that may have been previously overlooked when they were first making career decisions. There have been several studies done on the importance of one's personal belief system being exhibited in the job one occupies (Pauchant, 1995; Sievers, 1993; Willmott, 1993), and if a person is not finding "meaning as well as money" (Willmott), personal fulfillment may not be met.

Making a career change is not an impulsive decision (Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003), and it takes a great deal of motivation to cause this type of life-altering transition, especially when a person leaves a lucrative career. To many who enter teaching as a second career, it is a family-friendly job that reflects a shift in ideals and expectations. There are also those who have been successful in professional, high-status careers such as law, engineering, science, and computer science that find a desire to give back to society in the form of passing on their experience to a younger generation. This idea of transmitting experience is tied to the sense of community and service that some

career changers are looking for in teaching. Many respondents in studies that have been conducted concerning career change say they were isolated in their work (Hammond, 2002), and they sought to be part of a group where their knowledge and experience could benefit others within the community. As one person put it in the Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant study,

In an office it is about you, you, you. But in teaching...it's not so selfish. I want a job where I can have an effect. The idea that they are actively looking for teachers made a difference to me. I thought they really want me, it is a chalk-face job, making a difference. Whereas research never had that. I felt as a teacher you have a real impact, and being part of the community. (p. 102)

Spiritual dispositions can also push or pull a person from one career to another. Research shows that often times the people who adhere to spiritual beliefs believe that God opens or closes doors in their professional lives that guide them from one job to another more fulfilling job (Lips-Wiersma, 2002). This is readily apparent in a person who leaves a job that is seen as extrinsically rewarding for a job that is based more on intrinsic rewards. Teaching is often seen as the answer to a career built on egocentrism as opposed to a life of service. The influence of spirituality on career change may be the result of delayed spiritual commitment on the part of the believer. Once people make a commitment to a spiritual construct, then he or she might find the current occupation does not align with the new dedication to a belief system.

Changing careers to teaching is much more an internally motivated act than the result of external factors. There are spiritual undertones to many of the reasons that a person undertakes this transition, and the implicit belief that God-directed acts have

guided a person to this divergence cannot be discounted among the people who change jobs. The fact that teaching itself is such a unique and sacrificial type of career makes a move to this field remarkable, and it makes the spiritual dimension of motivation an intriguing point of study.

Reasons People Teach Apart From a Calling

Though intrinsic reasons permeate much of the literature as motivation for choosing teaching as a career, there are factors that lie outside altruism and spirituality that affect motivations for entering the field. These factors must not be discounted but rather held in comparison to other internal factors in order to gain a clearer understanding of motivations. It is important to quantify phenomena such as calling in contrast to other motivating reasons to emphasize differing aspects more accurately.

One of the most prominent reasons to enter teaching specifically related to extrinsic motivation is job security (Brown, 1992; Watt & Richardson, 2007). With the high attrition rate of teachers, the Baby Boomer generation retiring, and a lack of interest in the field, pursuing a job in education is an almost guaranteed meal ticket. There are systems that offer financial incentives and other perks to attract not just quality teachers but any teachers at all. This also makes teaching an attractive job during times of economic downturn (Jantzen, 1981), for if all else fails, our schools will always be open during times of inflation, high unemployment, and bear markets on Wall Street. It is a seller's market in the education profession, so a teaching job becomes appealing to those who are seeking career stability, and this is represented in much of the research literature that deals with extrinsic factors influencing career choice and teaching.

Another less noble, yet practical reason for entering the field is the vacation schedule from which most teachers benefit. These regular holidays and extended summer breaks allow for traveling and time spent with family, which is a appealing aspect for some teachers (Watt & Richardson, 2007; Yong, 1995). This also carries over to some parents who wish to have a career that aligns with their children's holidays and breaks. These breaks also give teachers the opportunity to pursue continuing education classes on the graduate level. This continuing education is also supported by research that says some teachers also enter the profession due to the intellectually demanding and cognitively stimulating aspects of the career (Richardson & Watt, 2006).

One of the most predominant motivations for entering the teaching profession crosses over into the intrinsic side, but it lacks qualities of true altruism, spiritualism, or calling. Research has shown that many teachers choose their careers simply because they enjoy working with children on a daily basis (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Watt & Richardson, 2007; Yong, 1995). This sounds noble on the surface, but it is not completely altruistic because the person gets personal satisfaction and enjoyment from working with and being around kids. This is definitely not a negative perception of career motivation, for the disposition of a teacher relies greatly on the ability to build relationships with children.

There has been research done in the past that has classified education as a "fallback" career for many teachers (Haubrich, 1960; Robertson, Keith, & Page, 1983). However, this aspect of career choice seems to be dwindling rapidly. Recent research shows that the ever increasing rigors of the profession have limited the number of teachers who enter the field as a fallback career (Watt & Richardson, 2007). One of the

few instances this appears to be a noticeable factor is when people are unable to find a job in a respective university subject and take a job teaching in their subject area under alternative certification (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). This is not necessarily a bad thing, for an increased level of expertise is brought to the course, as well as the possibility of people finding a “calling” after experiencing teaching.

The Calling Aspect in Formal Religion

The calling experience is most often equated with professions within formal religion, especially relating to missionaries and religious leaders such as ministers and priests. The call is often cited by those who work in a vocational sense within or for an organized religion, and the literature points to many differences in the calling of these people. Because of the unique aspects of a religious vocation, it is insightful to discuss the qualities of the ministerial call in an attempt to better understand the call of educators.

Calling in a broader sense within Protestant and Catholic religions is usually not confined to religious leaders or workers (Bennett, 1973). As discussed earlier in this chapter, there is a line of thinking, with much credit given to Calvin and Luther, that everyone has a calling to a particular job in service to the community and in essence the Kingdom of God. However, there are service oriented jobs such as teaching and the ministry that are unique, if not also appearing nobler, in the calling framework. According to Christopherson (1994), there are particular traits to the calling experience within the religious vocation that set it apart from other professions and careers.

The distinctive characteristics of the call play a major role in establishing the identity and personal worth for modern clergy. There are several factors that come into play to support the distinction and importance of this call. Edwards (1988) said that the

religious career call “is not something theoretical; it is rather an experience. It results in an inner moving,” (p. 61). Christopherson (1994) takes this one step further when he says that “Clergy are the designated guardians of the sacred ideal of the call, and their careers are expected to be the real life embodiment of those ideals. Their lives and work make the call visible and real” (p. 221).

Calling is treated as a variable that makes a person willing to do a job in ministry even when the extrinsic rewards are few. It is also the support in which the clergy or missionary can rely on to make sense of their role. This framework allows for the conceptualization of meaning-making and direction. It also assists in one of the key characteristics of the religious call: the “absence of vanity” (Christopherson, 1994). The call does not focus on the person, but rather on the work in selfless and spiritual terms. This idea of altruistic motivation is exceptional when compared to most other careers in that the person seeks to serve the needs of others rather than professional advancement, accumulation of power, or monetary gain. There are many service oriented fields, but most focus on the wants of people rather than the needs of people. The professions that do focus on the needs of people rarely give more than they take emotionally or monetarily. Clergy tend to resist careerism as it applies to other professions, and they seek to transcend the normative rewards found in other jobs. Christopherson (1994) describes the career of the clergy in professional terms,

Ministers generally do want a good job; they want success in a career, specialized skills, and measure of personal power and status. But in the midst of discussion about professional goals, clergy talk about an inner voice that calls them to do

what is right. They blend the language of accomplishment with the language of ascription, obligation, and service. (p. 233)

The word *experience* appears many times in literature dealing with the issue of calling, and as mentioned earlier, the experience consists of somewhat unique qualities to the ministry field. According to Bennett (1973), there is an inner prompting of the heart,

Christian ministry, vocationally interpreted, is a free choice wherein the person responds willingly to a role he believes God wants him to fulfill. He has identified with this role because of a combination of motivations which are peculiar to him and related to his personal experience and environment...and, in the final analysis, being “called” means being a person who can be used for transcendent purposes. (p. 7).

This may be accompanied by special gifts and interests, and Steckel (1981) argues that this calling experience continues and is self-supporting through study, prayer, and responses to people in need. Steckel also asserts that calling in ministry is foundational to every professional act. This indicates that the call not only instigates but also sustains, guides, and inspires the religious worker.

The call is a symbol of divine direction, and it is this symbolism that often sets clergy apart from the community professionally, but it ties them to the community spiritually. Steckel (1981) asserts that clergy have a higher expectation of ethical integrity within the community, beyond obeying the law or adhering to the standards of conduct found within the community. People within a community often act differently around clergy in actions, speech, and jocularity. This is due in no small part to the foundation of the job, which lies in a divine appointment. Clergy are seen as a

representative of God, therefore it is as if the eyes of God are upon them in a more substantive way than the abstractness of Godly omniscience.

The idea of calling of clergy in Catholicism is even more distinctive than Protestant views. Both religions hold that all persons within the congregation of the church are called to be ministers to the world, but the call of the clergy in the Catholic faith is distinguished by the vows of the priesthood. This is a defining element that sets the clergy and their work apart from the laity. Fidelis (2001) asserts that even though all people of a religious community can serve in a parish, hospital, social service organization, or as missionary to a Third World country, it is the lifetime call of the clergy to do these things that helps to set their role apart from others who offer part-time service.

The uniqueness of not just taking the vows of religious life but also living the vows are discernable characteristics that visibly set priests apart from their congregation. Fidelis (2001) gives a brief highlight of the unique qualities of the call of a priest,

1. If you feel a hunger to love and be loved in a way that seems to surpass the human capacity, you may be experiencing a call to religious life.
2. The person called to religious life feels a desire to live simply. If you feel a desire to be detached from things, to find your treasure in God, you may be experiencing a call to religious life. The vow of poverty is chosen to express dependence on and trust in God's care for us.
3. Religious commit themselves to listen to God speaking through the constitutions and decisions of the community and through those members who are appointed as leaders of the community. God's call is also recognized as

coming through the Church and sacred Scripture, the needs of the world and the mission of the community.

4. Obedience is assumed to help the religious be honest in his or her search for God's will. If you feel a desire to base your important life decisions more and more completely in a context of God's call, you may be experiencing a call to religious life.
5. Community itself is one of the greatest witnesses that religious life has to offer in a culture where self-interest and individualism can lead to isolationism and even violence.
6. At the heart of the call to religious life is a desire to give oneself in love to God in a way so total that the pursuit of union with God makes it impossible for anything or anyone to be more central. One becomes unavailable for marriage.

These traits taken singularly may apply to many people within a religious community, but the commitment to all of these traits constitutes a defining and unique work. This call goes beyond working for the needs and salvation of the lost world as is required of the laity. This person serves as a leader and moral, ethical, and doctrinal center for the religious community.

Missionaries are another group of people in which the call is often a significant element. According to Stamoolis (2002), the importance of the call is vital in the role of a missionary,

The primacy of the missionary call is the one common factor in missionary service. When we look at what is the missionary call, we see that it is action initiated by God even when the agents of the actions are humans. (p. 5)

The adversity that a missionary of any religion faces in service makes the job an emotionally and physically demanding proposition. The committed and long-term missionary must have grounded motivation and ready support system. The call is this factor that seems to sustain many missionaries, for there are few visible extrinsic rewards. It is difficult for most people, even within a religious community, to understand how missionaries carry out their work or why they would want to in light of the poor circumstances in which many are forced to live. Often missionaries are in hostile environments where they may not be welcomed. They often live in Third World countries in less than desirable living conditions, and many times they must learn a new language to communicate with the locals they are serving. As one person put it, “The only person qualified to assume the post is someone that does not want it,” (Stamoolis, 2002, p. 8). In other words, a person must be called to undertake such a career that seems apart from the normal monetary or power seeking rationales in other careers.

As mentioned earlier, any career could be from a sense of calling, but the altruistic characteristics and lack of extrinsic reward of a religious career set it apart from others. Stamoolis also argues that a lack of a calling is responsible for much of the attrition in the missionary field. He states that longevity in a cross-cultural mission is greatly reduced when the missionary has not experienced a spiritual call. The “quiet confidence that one has followed God’s leading” is the sustaining factor for many missionaries (Stamoolis, 2002, p. 11). Therefore, it is suggested that it is not the circumstances that create successful missionaries or promote longevity. It is the experience of a call.

With the call to religious service, there also comes a sense of authority. This is one of the enabling characteristics for clergy, missionaries, and other religious workers. Wardlaw (2003) asserts that workers within religious vocations feel empowered by the divine calling. This empowerment comes from the mentality that their orders come from God; therefore, there is divine purpose and meaning to the decisions and acts of the religious worker as it relates to their role of service. There is also the idea that God does not call someone who does not possess the skills and aptitude for a religious vocation, or ability to gain the skills (Bennett, 1973). The authority is reflected in the presumed confidence of God in the person to carry out his or her service. Christopherson (1994) suggests the call itself is the most apparent basis for clergy claiming authority within the community and exercising it as religious leaders. Many clergy feel this bestowment of authority from God is what makes their calling different from the calling all Christians have to serve, for they have the ultimate responsibility for religious leading and teaching and the pastoral care of their community. The sense that a higher power is working through them to minister to their community enables clergy to find a more meaningful place in their work.

The calling to the ministry is reflective of a calling to education. Both are usually seen through a filter of altruism due to the emotional strain sometimes realized in the work and due to the lack of extrinsic rewards. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there are several negative perceptions that pertain to teaching as a career that promote this idea of altruism. Concerning the vocation of the missionary Stamoolis (2002) says,

Ours is hardly a lucrative profession that individuals enter to make their fortune.

Many give up far more comfortable surroundings to struggle with inadequate

resources. It is notoriously difficult to understand motives for a person's decision to become a missionary. (p. 4)

These words could have easily been about the job of a teacher. During these difficult times, Stamoolis also asserts that the call for the clergy or missionary is a sustaining presence; likewise, teachers also can rely on their call to bolster them in the face of adversity.

Working through difficult times is also offset by the knowledge that a calling denotes a spiritual sender. Clergy and missionaries work in straining situations because ultimately they believe God has sent them to perform a task or service (Stamoolis, 2002). Educators who feel a spiritual call could also accept their situation because they feel it is where they are supposed to be or where they have been placed.

As Christopherson (1994) was cited earlier, many clergy who undergo professional stress and hardship find their sense of self-worth, identity, and legitimacy for their work in the call. This is easily applied to educators who often battle negative public opinion, the demands of parents, and the ever changing standards and regulations of the field. Like clergy, in the midst of negative times, the call for teachers becomes increasingly important in determining their own sense of worth.

Christopherson also emphasizes that the call for clergy is accepted rather than chosen like other career decisions. When selecting a career path, most people analyze their skill set, the monetary gain, and environments that appeal to them. This is not to say people considering a religious vocation or a career in education do not do these things as well; however, the call overbalances the decision-making construct against negative aspects that would usually hold more sway in other career paths. In Hall's (1968)

sociological study, he suggests that when a person experiences a call to a field they would probably want to do the work even if fewer extrinsic rewards were available.

It was mentioned earlier from Christopherson's (1994) work that a primary characteristic of the clergy was an absence of vanity. This would appear to be a characteristic of teachers in that there is little praise given in our society to the profession, rather there is a great deal of finger pointing at teachers and a negative outlook on education as a whole. Teachers play one of the most vital roles in our society, yet rarely do they use their position in a self-serving way. One seminary student put the humbleness of the job in this way, "To get up on Sunday mornings in front of people who have been entrusted to me is special and a bit scary," (Christopherson 1994, p. 227). This quote is applicable to the teaching profession as well.

Bennett (1973) stresses that each member of the clergy should be convinced of his purpose, and this purpose is what makes the calling so important. There should be no reasonable doubt that God wants him or her in the ministry, nor "should he or she be serving against his or her own will but as one who has the attitude of the volunteer," (p. 12). This is an apt description of a teacher who is in the job for more than usual professional reasons. Wardlaw (2003) takes this line of thinking up a notch when he says,

Callings, after all, are often disruptive and invasive and destabilizing, requiring one, if one heeds them, to take the world that is so delightful and settled and filled with its own kind of satisfaction and promise and to just shake it like a blanket. Why would any sane person willingly invite that kind of chaos into their life, unless they had discerned that Calling Voice? (p. 48)

This is an applicable statement for a career in religious service or education.

One of the most glaring similarities between the two professions is a sense of what they *could* do or *could* become. Religious leaders and educators alike are usually skilled, creative, and intelligent people who could probably establish a career that would offer many more extrinsic rewards and professional recognition. Therefore, the calling is defined in opposition to what could be professionally.

Knowing what the calling is not serves as a hedge against the secular preoccupation with technique, rational solutions to specific instrumental problems, and empirical assessments of success or failure. Faithfulness in a vocation means resisting selfishness and careerism, holding onto the ideals of transcendent purpose in one's life and work. Growth and positive change become the measurement of success. (Christopherson, 1994, p. 231)

Through the difficulties, clergy, missionaries, and educators hope to find a meaningful place in the larger community, and if they are faithful to the call, then they have a sense that a higher power will work through them to reach people and perform their work of service.

Summary

The influence of spirituality and calling in peoples' decisions to enter education is substantiated in overt and in less obvious ways in literature. The roots of American education were founded on spiritual presuppositions that carried through to the early 20th century. As teaching has evolved into a much more trying and demanding profession in the past seventy years, it has been ever more apparent that a career in education requires a certain disposition that is often accompanied by a motivating internal experience.

Quantifying this experience and establishing considerations in career guidance, teacher recruitment, and teacher training has become an important idea. Spirituality cannot be relegated to formal religion and apart from a career in which so much evidence points to a calling as the motivation for entering the field. The literature has shown that teaching is a job that is predominately catalyzed by internal impetus, the source of which is a topic of great interest and cause for expanded study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to research the role spirituality plays in persons choosing a career in education. An event of this type is not easily observed or easily described with typical quantitative survey methods. The experience is internal and subjective to the life situation of the person making the decision. Because it is an internal phenomenon, hermeneutic phenomenology will be used as the mode of research. This qualitative approach seeks to interpret the complex dynamic of spiritual motivation and the uniqueness of the phenomenon inherent to each person's experience.

Quantitative methods of research have been applied to the motivations of persons entering the education field, and these methods have helped categorize many internal and external factors, as well as building thematic descriptors of teachers. Hermeneutic phenomenology, however, focuses more on the experience of the individual on an emotional and psychological level that is revealed through rich, in-depth narrative writing. It offers the opportunity for persons to describe the experience of making the decision to teach in conjunction with the motivation to teach. Hermeneutic phenomenology is based on "lived experience" and helps in meaning-making from research, so the application of this research methodology is appropriate for the purpose of the study.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology Defined

As a research approach hermeneutic phenomenology is a method of inquiry that provides the ability to systematically study phenomena that are normally difficult to observe or measure (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). Hermeneutics "is the theory and

practice of interpretation” (van Manen, 1990, p. 179). Phenomenology “is the science of phenomena” (van Manen, p. 183). Hermeneutic phenomenology combines these terms with the idea of interpreting a description of an experience. It seeks to understand and describe someone else’s experience and capture the essence of that experience. A researcher who uses hermeneutic phenomenological methods enters an area of interest with a sense of “wonder” that is “Being-in-the-world, as concern is fascinated by the world” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 88).

Research Design of Hermeneutic Phenomenology

There is no scripted, technical format to follow when conducting hermeneutic phenomenological research. Each research project is unique, and the data collection and analysis is an emergent process. There is a methodical structure, but “in a serious sense there is not really a ‘method’ understood as a set of investigative procedures” (van Manen, 1990, p. 29). It is discovery oriented, and the researcher begins with reasonable presuppositions. However, in order to lend credibility to the research, there must be conditions established within which the researcher agrees to work. This also gives the reader a sense that complete ambiguity was not practiced during the study.

This study was based on conditions established by van Manen (1990) and Heidegger (1962). The following conditions defined by Heidegger that was adhered to in the study were as follows:

1. The researcher brings a certain amount of subjectivity and pre-understandings to the study that cannot be completely removed.
2. The researcher should be passive toward the phenomenon being studied and allow it to reveal itself by creating a “clearing space.”

3. The researcher should look critically at the ordinary aspects of the phenomenon in order to relate it to the Being of the person involved.

The last condition is an integral part of researching the abstract concept of spirituality, for connecting the Heideggerian concept of Being to spirituality forms a relationship of purposefulness to a person's actions.

The conditions van Manen (1990) sets forth are based on his Methodical Structure of Human Science Research:

1. turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
6. balancing the research context by considering parts and whole (p. 31-32).

These six conditions as well as the three conditions taken from Heidegger were used throughout the study, while the intricacies of the research design itself emerged during the research process.

Participants

The participants who were interviewed in this research were chosen purposefully for the study. According to Patton (1990), "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling" (p. 169). In order to access

persons who might have had a spiritual motivation in choosing a career, the participants were students at a private Christian university which has a reputation of having a successful teacher education program. The participants were chosen based on their responses to the following short survey that was administered to students who were in secondary and elementary methods courses. The survey is not a quantitative or qualitative part of the research. It was simply a means of finding participants who indicated a spiritual motivation for career choice.

Survey of Students in Their Methods Semester of Training

1. Have any of your immediate family members ever been or are currently teachers? If so, please list their relationship to you:
2. Did you personally want to go into education when you first started making career decisions, or are you entering the field primarily because of external factors that moved you toward it? List any factors that might apply:
3. Are you leaving a current career to return to school to become a teacher? If “Yes” what career:
4. What extrinsic factors motivated you to go into teaching? (Ex. Holidays, benefits, etc.)
5. Do you feel you were *called* by a spiritual force to teach? If “Yes,” please explain:
6. Circle any internal aspects that motivated you to become a teacher. Please circle all that apply:
 - Felt a desire to serve others.
 - Enjoy working with children.

- Felt a spiritual calling in a religious context.
 - Felt a spiritual calling in a context of serving the greater good.
 - Felt a desire to give something back to society.
 - Felt a desire to help mold the lives of young people.
7. Please write a few lines describing what motivated you most to enter teaching?

☐ Please check the box if you would be willing to do a follow-up interview. If you are willing to be interviewed, please provide contact information (phone and email address) below on how the researcher might reach you.

The participant consent form that will be signed by those participants who are willing to do a follow-up interview is found in the Appendix.

Interviewing Participants

The interview procedures that were followed were based on van Manen's (1990) definition of the function of interviewing within hermeneutic phenomenological research:

1. It may be used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon;
2. The interview may be used as a vehicle to develop a conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) about the meaning of an experience. (p. 66)

Questions were asked of the participants to begin a dialogue, with the participants being given rein to answer questions and describe their decisions in terms that were relativistic to their own experience. The following is an interview guide that was used to direct the interview. Follow-up questions or aside questions were asked at the discretion

of the interviewer to further explore areas of interest relating to the study. Nine participants were interviewed for the research.

Interview Guide

1. Tell me about yourself.
 - a. Family
 - b. Age
 - c. Religious affiliation
2. What is your definition of spirituality?
 - a. Prompts might be:
 - i. Formal religion
 - ii. Personal belief system
 - iii. Guiding force
3. Are you familiar with the term calling? If so, what is your definition? If not, the definition by Colozzi and Colozzi (2000), is a career that is not motivated by monetary gain or is for the betterment of society or the good work of a higher power is considered a calling. In essence, it is an occupation that requires some type of sacrifice on the part of the individual.
4. Do you think teaching is a calling? For everyone?
5. Were you called to teach? Can you identify a specific moment?
6. Would teaching be an attractive career if you were not called or there were no spiritual dimension to your decision to teach?
7. Did you always want to be a teacher?
8. Describe your experience when you decided to become a teacher.

- a. What were the intrinsic factors that influenced you, such as spirituality?
 - b. What were the extrinsic factors that motivated you, such as the schedule of a teacher?
 - c. Which of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors do you think were linked to spirituality?
9. Why do you think some people view teaching as a calling?
 10. Would you feel compelled to teach even if you wanted to do something else? Why?
 11. Do you think you have always had the disposition and basic skill set to be a teacher?
 12. Are others in your family teachers? Did they influence you? Was there any spiritual link there?
 13. What are the drawbacks you see to entering the teaching profession?
 14. Do you think teaching will be a life-long career for you?
 15. Is there anything that I have missed that you would like to add or clarify?

The proceeding interview guide will be submitted along with the consent form to the Institutional Review Board for approval.

Recording the Interview

The interviews were audio recorded and later professionally transcribed. In this way, the interview was repeatedly reflected on and analyzed. The audio recordings will be destroyed no later than June 30 of 2008. Handwritten notes were taken during the interview, but they were not copious or comprehensive in order to keep the flow of the interviewing progressing uninterrupted. These handwritten notes were used to help clarify responses and to direct the questioning.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the collected data within this hermeneutic phenomenological study was based on the approach outlined by Cohen, Kahn, and Steeves (2000, pp. 76-77, 81.) This approach is based on five steps concerning the readings of the data and the writing of the narrative.

1. Analysis actually begins while the interviews are being conducted. The interviewer is actively listening and thinking about the responses and descriptions of the participant. Possible themes are being constructed at this time as well.
2. Careful analysis is made of the data as the researcher reads and rereads the data. This phase is called “immersing oneself in the data.” The objective is to develop initial interpretations of the data that will eventually develop themes later in the analysis process. The researcher identifies the prominent characteristics in each interview to this end.
3. This phase includes data reduction. At this point, the researcher decides what is relevant and what is not. The researcher takes the transcripts and organizes within each interview like topics that were discussed by the participant. Digressions or off topic comments can be removed at this time as well as verbal ticks such as “you know.” This allows the text to move in a focused flow without changing the essence of it.
4. Thematic analysis will begin once the researcher has an overall understanding of the text. The researcher will write tentative themes beside phrases or

sections of text. These labeled pieces of data from each interview are then grouped together.

5. The final step draws from van Manen's (1990) concept of writing and rewriting as a critical element of interpretive phenomenology. At this point, the researcher takes the themes as parts and brings them together as a coherent impression of the whole. This is a reflective process.

At the heart of the data analysis process, the Heideggerian (1962) philosophy of "passivity" was followed. This means the researcher was not too aggressive in *finding* phenomena. The researcher created a "clearing space" in which the phenomenon could render itself known. By Heidegger's precepts, the phenomenon was already there and had been hidden. It was the job of the researcher to allow it to be revealed. This entailed multiple listenings of the tapes and multiple readings of the text.

Bias Reduction

First person pronouns will be used in this section to aid in clarifying bias reduction (The American Psychological Association, 2001, pp. 37-39, 41). This is due to the personal nature of hermeneutic phenomenological research methodology. Bias reduction in this study refers "collectively to validity and reliability" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 95). In order to promote bias reduction, the rigor of this research was based on two precepts.

First, the reader will know exactly what was done by the researcher in gathering data (Cohen et al., 2000). To that end, I clarify the amount of data gathered and the setting in which each unique piece of data was gathered. This includes the duration of interviews, interview sites, and clarifying correspondents with participants.

Second, I explain why I took the steps I took in the research process (Cohen et al., 2000). This does not mean that the entire data gathering process with each participant was completely restricted or that analysis was linear. It means that the data was carefully studied in a self-revealing method and that each step was fully explained.

Member checking was conducted in two separate ways. First, my running notes during the interviews were used to affirm and clarify participant responses at the end of the interviews. Second, emails were sent to the participants to affirm and clarify the major points of the interview after the transcripts had been read.

Much of the bias reduction in the study will hinge upon the belief that participants have shared a genuine spiritual experience or spiritual motivation. There was no “right” or “wrong” objective measure to judge this but simply “plausible insights” (van Manen, 1990). The interpretation rests with me as the researcher. I entered the research as an educator who believes he is working under the pretext of a calling. I believe that gave me a certain amount of insight and a certain amount of subjectivity in interviewing participants. Every effort has been made to fairly report my interpretation of the data. However, I claim no detachment or objectivity, as it is impossible to completely transcend the experiences and influences in which I entered the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

According to Cohen et al. (2000) the challenge in hermeneutic phenomenological research is to produce a text that accurately reflects dialogue that took place between the researcher and the participant, and bias reduction must always be on the mind of the researcher (p. 86). I have striven for this outcome through the interview process and data analysis.

All the interviews took place on the campus of a private Christian university in the southeastern United States. The participants were selected from a survey that was given to all senior students who were in the elementary or secondary methods classes before student teaching. The participants were chosen based on specific responses they gave on a survey that indicated that they had a spiritual experience or spiritual guidance when making the decision to become a teacher, as well as their willingness to do a follow-up interview to the survey.

The interviews were audio recorded and lasted approximately one hour to one and one-half hours. All participants were asked the same guiding questions in the same order, but they were encouraged to elaborate on a personal, experiential level as much as possible. After all the interviews were completed and they were transcribed, what Cohen et al. (2000) calls “data transformation” took place. Data transformation is the process of reducing the material down to relevant information that applies to the research. I did a great deal of editing of the transcripts to remove the digressions of the participants and simplify the language by removing some of the phrases like “you know,” so that the data

being analyzed would be focused on the topic of spirituality. The final product was approximately 190 double spaced pages of data.

Participant Analysis

This section covers the overall impression of the participants: Roxanne, Dorothy, Heidi, Elizabeth, Merinda, Jenny, Holly, Amber, and Dale (pseudonyms). The impression and representation of the group and the individual analysis that follows is based on my conversations and interactions with them; therefore, the interpretation is filtered through my lens of experience. It is not a dissemination of self-actualization done by the participants but rather my understanding of their experiences.

Group Analysis

The participants were purposefully selected for this study based on specific responses on a survey, but many commonalities are found in the group that was not part of the criteria for selection. For instance, all the participants were reared in Protestant Christian homes. Eight of the nine participants were female, and only three of nine had immediate family members that are or had been teachers.

All the participants felt that spirituality played a role in some way in their choosing to become teachers. Some came to the decision to teach based on actively seeking spiritual guidance, while others viewed it more as a process of doors being opened and closed that put them in position where teaching seemed like the logical and ordained thing for them to do. Calling was also a term and belief concept with which all of the participants were familiar. One participant, Holly, actually worked for the Calling and Career Center on campus.

Individual Analysis

Heidi grew up in a small town and attended the same high school her parents did. She attended a traditional Methodist church growing up, and she has a definite dividing line between religion and spirituality. Heidi felt religion was more structured and based on belief aspects of a church, whereas

Spirituality, I feel, it means focusing on your relationship with Jesus and just your walk with God, and it's more of a personal journey. I guess I see it as more of an inward thing than an outward thing. I feel like religion is kind of outward and your spirituality is inward.

When asked if spirituality could be a guiding force, Heidi responded emphatically that it could. "Definitely. Personally, I've felt like there are many times I feel like God's spoken to me and revealed things to me. And I feel like God calls people to jobs as well." Heidi was confident not only in her decision to become a teacher but also in the belief that her spirituality was a big part of the process, especially when she viewed it from hindsight.

Roxanne will be the first person in her immediate family to graduate with a college degree. She is 23 years-old, and she attended college off and on at first and dabbled in different careers until settling on education. Roxanne's definition of spirituality was "taking your faith wherever you go...it's your lifestyle and how you live your life." When she was asked if spirituality could be a guiding force and if it shaped her decision making, she said, "Yes. And that goes into me praying about decisions before I make them." She went on to say that she felt more comfortable making decisions when she sought spiritual guidance beforehand.

Roxanne also said that her outlook on spirituality was relatively new, and that her previous beliefs had revolved more around church. She felt God had been a guiding force in her career, even without her actively seeking God's will initially about teaching. However, she felt confident that God had put her in her current position.

Holly grew up in a nondenominational church in what she considered a "pretty normal, average family." Her definition of spirituality is that

God is in every aspect of my life. I try not to define it too much just for not really wanting to put limitation on what God can do. I think he's not separate from any aspect of my life.

When asked if spirituality could be a guiding force in a person's life, she replied: "I definitely do; if they'll let it." When asked to clarify what she meant by "if they'll let it," she said:

I just think that if people aren't open to that, maybe they're not aware of what's going on. I still think God is working in everybody's life. But as far as acknowledging it goes, I think that it could get you to a whole other level of guiding in your life.

The more I talked with Holly, the more it became apparent that she felt God was working in everyone's life, but those who tried to seek spiritual guidance from Him were more fulfilled and more capable of understanding their place in the world.

Amber is a single mom with two kids who moved cross country to finish her junior and senior year at her current university. She considers herself Pentecostal but nondenominational. Amber's concept of spirituality "would probably be closely tied to a personal intimate relationship with the Lord." When asked to consider whether

spirituality could be a guiding force in peoples' lives, she said: "Some people; if they consider themselves spiritual." When asked to elaborate and think in a broader sense of spirituality beyond herself, she went on to say that

Spirituality can steer a person one way or another. Just wanting to help others or doing good for others can be spiritual for a lot of people. For me, personally, spirituality in my relationship with the Lord has led me to teaching.

For Amber, the spiritual guidance in her life was not so much active as it was passive in a sense that everything about teaching "clicked" with her.

Dorothy has grown up in the same town in which she attends college. She does not like the labels of denominations and prefers the label of Christian. When asked to give a definition of spirituality, she answered,

I guess spirituality is just knowing God's love, and that's from a Christian perspective. You look at God's love and service and commitment and compassion and all the inner aspects of Christ.

When I asked Dorothy whether spirituality could be a guiding force, she replied, I would definitely say that it is. I think it could be viewed in all aspects of life whether it's how you treat your body or what you decide to do with your life or in the decisions that you make and know that there's a consequence that follows those actions.

Dorothy was reared in a Christian home with a strong sense of spirituality. She said she was always encouraged by her parents to do what she wanted to do-what she felt led to do-with her life.

Elizabeth identifies herself as a Baptist. She graduated from another university with a degree in business and began working in a bank. She made the decision to become a teacher less than a year after being out of school. Elizabeth's definition of spirituality is "Your relationship with God; how close you are to him. It's not really about religion or what you define yourself as Baptist or Church of God; I think it's your relationship with Him." When asked if she saw spirituality playing a role in guiding peoples' lives and decision making, she said "Well, for most Christians I think it is; it should be. And it definitely is in my life. I won't do anything unless I pray to God, and I know that it's something God wants." Elizabeth has a sister who is a teacher. I asked her if her sister influenced her in any way to become a teacher, and she said only in a negative way. Her sister actually tried to discourage her from entering the profession.

Jenny is in her late fifties and a mother of four. She grew up Quaker and married a Catholic. She said that she and her husband just reply that they are Christians when anyone asks the denomination. When asked what came to mind when she heard the term spirituality she said: "Through my faith, it's always through the spirit; we were brought up to believe it guides you."

Jenny's grandmother was a one room school house teacher, and several of her cousins were teachers. Jenny's husband just finished his degree after retiring from the military and is currently a teacher as well. Her upbringing strongly influenced her spiritual beliefs and concepts, and it is an integral part of her identity, history, and sense of self.

Dale was the only male participant. He was reserved and a little closed during our discussion. His parents were missionary teachers overseas until he was seven years old.

Dale most closely affiliated himself with the Baptist denomination. When asked what his definition spirituality would be, he gave a more dogmatic response than the other participants: “It is synonymous with religion; someone’s spiritual if they have a religion they follow. There are different levels of it. Those who are strict follow the religion.” However, Dale did acknowledge that a person could be spiritual on a personal level even if they are not a practicing Christian. He also felt that spirituality could be a guiding force in peoples’ lives: “It’s hard to say, for me. I’d like to say yes, but a lot of times I do what I want more so than seeking after God’s will and following that.” Dale does go on to say later in our discussion that one of the reasons he does not constantly seek God’s will is because of his belief that God has given him skills and a certain disposition that makes him suitable for the choices he makes in his life.

Merinda considers herself a Baptist, and she still lives in the town in which she grew up not far from the university she is attending. She wishes to live in her hometown and teach once she graduates. Merinda considers spirituality to be a guiding force in a person’s life, and for her personally, she says spirituality plays a definite role in her decision-making process “as far as knowing what God wants [her] to do.”

Merinda has an older brother who is also a teacher. She said he was a positive influence and encourager when she first decided she wanted to become an educator. However, when asked whether she thought her brother’s influence was part of the spiritual construct in her decision to teach, she said that she did not think it was.

Categorical Analysis of Guiding Questions

The Concept of Calling

The concept of calling was known to all the participants as far as relating to a job or career that has some spiritual motivation behind it. I asked the participants for their definition of calling and then presented them with the definition used in my research for a comparison in the Operational Definitions section of chapter one. All the participants related calling in their lives to God in some sense.

The differences in perceptions were found in how the participants believed a calling actually takes place for people or took place for them. For some it was very simple:

1. "Calling would be what God desires you to do."
2. "Calling would be the drive of motivation that you have for the career to do what [God] has enabled you to do."
3. "You following God's will for your life. I mean, God putting something on your heart and following it would be a calling."
4. "God has placed upon my heart desires of what to do with the rest of my life."

For others like Jenny it was more complex:

Calling is where you feel you're being told to go, led to go. You can have a number of different callings in your lifetime, and, generally, toward the end of where you're supposed to be reaching and normally all focusing toward one simple thing.

All of the participants felt calling most closely related to job and career with the exception of Dale. He believed that he is called to be a Christian first, and he made the statement that,

[God] doesn't care about what specific career you have, although, he has given you certain gifts and those gifts work better at some careers than others. So your first calling is to be a Christian; after that, to [the job].

When I questioned Dale further concerning how calling could be used in relation more specifically to a career, he replied:

God gives us certain gifts, and I believe He has used those in our calling, so He's not going to call you to go do something that's way out of line with your personality most likely; which would require a lot of sacrifice. God gave us our gifts for a reason; not to throw away and do something that they won't really do well.

Even though Dale believes he was called to teach, his idea of calling is based on the skill set or disposition a person is born with and develops. He does not believe in an "Ah-ha" experience where a person feels called in a specific moment, for his idea is that a person is born to a calling and should use the skills they have toward that end rather than a time when a person is spiritually moved to take a career. This moment of realization is discussed further in following sections.

Holly had a blending of Dale's view of calling as it applies more to life and the other participants who viewed it as relating to career:

I think it means that there's something, some aspect of our lives, that we are forced to [see] what our strength's tend to lend, and God's calling on our life

would be just a path you take; not necessarily the same thing as a career or vocation, although, those two are often intertwined. I just think that your calling is your life's journey that God has for each person, and you choose or choose not to follow it.

Holly works in the Center of Calling in Career. I asked Holly to compare her view to my definition, and she felt that the view of calling should be broader than most people apply it.

Students come in a lot and the term calling is closely connected with either being a pastor or being a mission major, and it's hard for them to think outside of that. But I think that being a business major could be just as much a calling because as a Christian, somebody needs to be there to minister to the people in the business world—to be there to minister to people in the communication's world—and so I just think that calling is just part of every person's life.

I questioned the participants on whether they agreed with the sacrificial nature of calling that I used in my definition. All said they would agree that there is a sacrificial aspect to calling as it relates to teaching. Elizabeth had this to say:

I think it requires a lot of sacrifice because sometimes you're putting in a lot of hours than just a school day, so it's a lot of time. And then it's the money part, I think that's a sacrifice itself. And then other people look down at the education profession as well; some may let that bother them.

The theme of low pay in comparison with years of education was an aspect of sacrifice that was brought up specifically by four of the participants with comments such

as: “I know I won’t make as much money...” and “I know I could go and do something else and make a lot more money.”

Although money was mentioned as a sacrifice by these participants, they did not believe it was a personal sacrifice for themselves as much as a perceived sacrifice by those who viewed teaching from outside. Dale for instance said, “Sure it would be nice to make more money, but if you love teaching, that’s why you want to do it; it’s not like a sacrifice.” Holly echoed this as well: “As far as [money] goes, that would be a sacrifice in a way. But I don’t feel like I’m sacrificing anything to be a teacher.”

Though all participants said a calling by definition entailed some type of sacrifice, it was interesting that only three of the participants gave the impression that they would directly undergo sacrifices and not just perceived sacrifices of others when they became teachers. Amber encapsulated the physical, mental, financial, and emotional strains of teaching that the public and many teachers feel, as mentioned in chapter two.

[It will take] a lot of time, and a lot of planning, if you really care about it. If it’s really your calling, then you’re going to devote yourself to it, and it’s going to take a lot of effort, time, and planning. You’re not just an eight-to-five teacher or an eight-to-three teacher. You’re a teacher always; your heart is there always. You don’t stop thinking about your kids, you don’t stop thinking about your lessons; what you want to do with your class, how you want to reach your kids, what is most important to teach them, how to do that in the best way. Yeah, you definitely sacrifice a whole lot; in monetary terms too. Going to school four years, and then you get out, and you’re not paid the greatest.

From her Christian perspective, Holly's view of sacrifice was more universal to believers and not just educators: "If we are serving Christ, then that is an element of sacrifice. And so that can be obtained in any profession."

Teaching as a Calling

One of the aspects of this study is the calling connection to teaching. When asked if they felt teaching was a calling, all the participants felt that calling is or should be tied to teaching. When asked why they felt this way, their perspectives shared similarities. For example, Holly voiced the opinion of many participants when she said,

I just think you can tell when somebody is called to be a teacher. I know it's not going to be an easy job, and it's not always going to be visibly rewarding, and it's not a nine-to-five, forty hour a week tailored job. And I'm okay with that. And I think that you can tell when people are okay with that and when they can see the bigger picture and know that's what they're supposed to be doing. For a lot of people I know who are trying to be teachers or who are teachers, the good teachers say that's really the only thing they can see themselves doing.

Many of the participants responded with a perspective that teaching was not just a job, that the calling aspect of teaching and the responsibilities that come with it make teaching more a way of life. As Jenny put it, "Your lifestyle changes...really your whole life."

Since all of the participants felt teaching should be a profession of called individuals and they themselves felt called to teach, I tried to expand on their concept of the teacher as a called professional. I asked pointedly why should teachers have a calling, and this produced some of the most adamant and emotional responses. For

example, Heidi responded, “I feel like people who aren’t called to teach shouldn’t teach.” Much of her opinion was based on personal experiences with teachers she had been taught by during her years as a student. She went on to say,

Whether that person’s a Christian, I feel like any teacher should have some sort of qualifications and personality traits. I don’t feel like someone who isn’t a people person, who doesn’t care about kids, why would they be a teacher? So, definitely, I feel like people are called to teach.

Roxanne was just as adamant as Heidi: “I believe it has to be [a calling]. With the burnout rate plus the pay; why would you want to be a teacher unless those were the desires that God put upon your heart?”

Many of the participants took a hard line on the view that not all teachers were called but that they should be called. Jenny echoed many of the participants’ views:

You’re putting yourself in the position where you’re teaching the future. If you don’t know what you’re doing, if you don’t feel led to be there, you can be miserable. The kids can be miserable. You can completely put people off from ever wanting to learn anything.

The responses were steeped with a sense of purpose and meaning to the job of a teacher. The profession held real esteem and significance to participants, and the spiritual aspect of the calling seemed to fuel this. Some of the participants, like Holly, made it a point to say that any and all profession could be a calling, but teaching still held a higher level of esteem because of its sacrificial nature and influential role in shaping children’s lives.

Two of the participants made remarks concerning whether a person would have to be a Christian to feel called to be a teacher. Holly said, “I don’t think they would have to be a Christian to feel compassion or nurturing.” Elizabeth commented to this as well, and she felt that intrinsic qualities such as caring and a willingness to help other people was essential on a personal, spiritual level in some sense if they were operating outside of a calling from God. I did not explore this idea of a spiritual calling apart from God with the participants because all of them did believe theirs was a calling from God, and I felt that it would digress toward discussing opinions on spiritual quantification rather than their personal experiences.

The Calling Experience of the Participants

It has already been established that the participants all felt they were called in some way to be a teacher. Trying to define this experience was one of the more difficult aspects of my research. I really wanted to capture the essence of the moment they felt compelled to be a teacher. There were many similarities and commonalities in each participant’s individual calling experience, but there were variations in perception of external forces and timelines of acceptance that lend an underlying uniqueness to each individual. The most vivid similarity within each calling experience was the lack of an “Ah-ha” moment in which the participant could pinpoint an exact time in which they felt they were called to teach. This was frustrating for me at first because part of the bias I carried into the research was expecting these participants who had professed a calling to look back to a single instant, and I should have been more open to this possibility. As Heidi put it:

I feel like doors have opened and things have happened so that I'm doing the right thing and that I've been in prayer about it...I know that God has helped and closed doors showing me this is where He wants me to be...I [didn't] go to this church service where the pastor pointed me out after the service, and he told me that I should do this. That's never happened to me. I believe it can be an "Ah-ha" moment, but for me I don't believe that's actually happened.

Almost all of the other participants had similar responses:

1. "I don't think it was exactly a moment in time."
2. "I don't know that there's one specific moment."
3. "Several things since have just kind of led up to that, and I said, 'Wow, this is where you really need to be.'"
4. "I don't know if it was really a moment, but just everything working out and my passion getting stronger and stronger basically."
5. "Mine was more of a process."
6. "I think it was more of a progression. I can't pinpoint a moment."
7. "Not a specific day or time..."

The calling experience of the participants seemed to be more of a progression than a memorable event. Dorothy made this distinction clear:

I don't really know when [my] calling met up with my intuition or ability or my desire to be a teacher, but I think just throughout the years it's just kind of laid itself out before me more and more.

The concept of figurative doors opening and closing to guide a person into a particular role in life played out in many of the conversations I had. All but one of the participants

said this specifically or alluded to it. Roxanne's response was echoed by many, "My confirmation would be God opening up the doors for me to be here."

As much as I pried into the issue, none of the participants could isolate a moment of calling. The conversation always came back to a series of missteps or opportunities that directed them toward teaching. However, all participants felt a great deal of confidence and assurance once the progression of events culminated in their choice of teaching as a career. Their mindset carried connotations of purpose and spiritual idealism that they were fulfilling God's will. As Holly said, "I definitely felt that peace about it." Elizabeth, who as mentioned before graduated with a business degree before going into teaching, said that she did not feel content at the bank where she worked. It was not until she felt that she was being called to teach that the restlessness went away:

I just have peace, and everything was working out; like the doors were opening and pointing me exactly where God wanted me. I just had peace about it. And I know some people don't really understand that part maybe. When you're doing something you're not supposed to do, you don't have peace about it. And then when you do the right thing---it's kind of indescribable I guess.

This type of self-assurance exuded from all the participants during our conversations. This was the support on which many of them leaned during difficult times in their coursework or the typical difficulties encountered in college.

Dale's experience was a little more unique in contrast to the other participants. He did not believe that calling is an "Ah-ha" moment or a process but something that is instilled in a person by God in the form of interests, desires, and talents. Dale believed his calling to teach was affirmed by his proficiency in his subject area and his innate

affection for teaching. When I asked him if he had ever sought any spiritual guidance concerning what career he should undertake, he replied: “No. Not on being a teacher; a little bit on where to teach...God leads us through what we want to do because God’s not going to call us to do something where we’ll be miserable our whole lives.” Dale remained adamant in this regard to his calling experience throughout our conversation.

Removing the Spiritual Aspect of Teaching as a Career

To try and better understand the fullness or importance of the spiritual aspect of their decision making process, I asked the participants if the job would still be as attractive if the spiritual aspect were removed. This posed somewhat of a quandary for many of them, and I often had to repeat the question more than once while they contemplated this thought. For instance, Dorothy said: “I don’t really know how to answer that simply because being raised in church, spirituality has always been a big thing.” It was difficult for them to divest themselves from their spirituality and to think outside of it. One participant, Amber, said: “...that’s kind of a hard question because I don’t know. I can’t really speak on that.” Roxanne also had difficulty even conceiving her motives outside of spirituality: “The only attractive part of it would be the summers off, and I could still be with my kids. I just don’t know how to answer that question.”

Three of the participants clearly said that they would not be interested in teaching without the spiritual dimension.

1. Jenny: “I don’t think so, simply because there is not fruition.”
2. Elizabeth: “Well, [teaching] would be fun, but I don’t think that’s enough to be around kids. I don’t think just liking math would be enough to be around all

these kids because sometimes they snap back at you or you really have a lot of attitudes sometimes.”

3. Roxanne: “It takes a special person, or you have to be so patient. Well, it’s not my patience. I know God gives me the strength and patience to deal with the situation.” And later in the conversation: “I just go back to my desires that I believe he’s given me. I don’t think just loving 26 kids and wanting to be around them for however long every week is something on my own. But it goes into the fulfillment thing. I could choose another career and do that. But at the end of the day, would I be fulfilled; I don’t believe so.”

For some of the participants, the job lost some of the altruistic motivation and outcomes when spirituality was removed. Extrinsic factors became the motivation for the job if spirituality was removed. “[Spirituality] is definitely part of the attraction...Other motivators would come in as far as vacation, summer time, and eventually wanting a family,” responded Holly when I asked her to take out spirituality as a variable. Heidi responded likewise, “If I still wanted to teach while having a family, it’s a really good career for a woman to do that and to be able to have a family.”

Not all participants felt this way. Amber fell back on the service aspect of teaching and the opportunity to help others the job entailed. However, she could not completely remove the undertones of spirituality in their responses, especially when the service aspect of Christianity is in the back of one’s mind. For example, Amber responded: “[I] probably would just because I like to help others.”

The Measure That Spirituality Influenced the Decision Process

During my conversations with the participants, a question of interest arose for me concerning whether the participants could measure the amount spirituality played in the decision-making process. I wanted to see if the participants could put a percentage value on the amount spirituality guided or influenced them in their progression. This was not done in an attempt to gather quantitative data but in an informal sense to get a better feel for their perception of spirituality's role.

1. Heidi: 100% "God doesn't always give me an answer right on the spot, but He leads me in the right directions, implanting desires in my heart and opening doors for me. So when I made the decision that teaching high school English would be my major, I feel that I was completely influenced spiritually. The whole reason I want to teach is not just so I can 'teach.' I want to show Christ's love to teens. That age is so difficult—there are so many emotions floating around, so much new responsibility a teen must face."
2. Jenny: 70% "I would have to say that my heritage being one of faith and spirituality actually would be represented by saying at least 70%, with other influences being friends, family, and college professors who have all told me that I would make an excellent teacher. As a child, I never considered teaching but was attracted by law and politics. Looking back today, I can see things from a different viewpoint and am happy that God had other plans."
3. Elizabeth: 100% "Well, if it wasn't for [spirituality], if that wasn't there, I wouldn't have gotten into [teaching]...I wouldn't have done it if I didn't feel God called me; I would have just kept doing banking."

4. Roxanne: 95% She said that if I had asked her this question when she first started making career decisions, that she probably would have said only 50%.
“Now I see it more a larger percentage, though. [Now] I would say 95%. And that’s the whole learning me making decisions by myself does not work.”
5. Dorothy: 50% “I’m not really sure how to answer this question. I guess it was about 50-50. I feel as though my spirituality influenced my decision, but there were so many factors other than spirituality that proved to me that teaching is what I am meant to do. For example, working well with children and enjoying helping children learn.”
6. Dale: 100%? Once again in Dale’s case, his personal concept of spiritual calling is founded on the belief that God created him with the disposition and skills for teaching, so it was not necessary to seek spiritual guidance.
Spirituality’s role in his mind had put him in the position to be a teacher. Therefore, he did not actively rely on spirituality in a questioning sense to make the decision. He felt the decision was basically made for him on a spiritual level.
7. Amber: 50% “I believe God has influenced/shaped my life to want to help others. I guess my spirituality had about half to do with my decision to go into teaching.”
8. Merinda: 90% “My love for kids is from God; part of the personality that he gave me.”
9. Holly: 50% “I would say about 50% of my decision was influenced by spirituality. The other 50% would be made up of the way I see my talents, my

preferences, and practical reasons—vacations, good career for having a family, and so forth.”

These numbers might be surprisingly high if viewed on their own, but they are not surprising at all when they are included with the conversations of the participants. One of the most interesting aspects of these percentages is that it is not the amount the participants felt they specifically asked for guidance, although that was factored in, but the amount they felt spiritually was at work in the process of making the decision to teach. These percentages reflect the belief that even beyond asking for guidance spirituality played a role in controlling circumstances surrounding the participants.

Disposition and Skill Set

To understand the calling aspect and spiritual reinforcement in the process of becoming a teacher better, I asked the participants if they felt they were born with the disposition and skills to be a teacher or if they had been developed due to spiritual intervention. I felt this was an important part of not only identifying spirituality’s influence on the decision to become a teacher but also to uncover how actively involved the participants felt spirituality shaped the dynamics of their ability to do the job.

Heidi, for example, felt God had given her a skill set that predisposed her to be a teacher and that she was born to do the job: “I would say that God has definitely given me the qualities.” Like Heidi, Dale felt that he was born with a talent for teaching and that talent was put there by God and refined through his education. This was a repeated theme with several of the participants.

Elizabeth, on the other hand, felt that spirituality worked beyond what she felt she could accomplish on her own:

I think [God] has helped me develop skills because one thing is I really hate to get in front of people...Like when I did think about teaching a long time ago, freshman year--before going into banking--the one thing I was like 'I could never show people how to do stuff.'

Merinda also felt the active role of spirituality in preparing her to be a teacher: "I think the feelings for children I've always had. But the ability to teach, I think [God] has helped me develop through classes and being around children."

Though they came at it from different perspectives, all participants felt that spirituality was a key factor in their ability to teach. Most felt they were born with the abilities and temperament for the job, being purposefully put there by God, while others felt without spirituality working in their lives they would not be able to do the job.

Relying on Spirituality During Difficult Times

Since spirituality was the catalyst or motivation in many ways for the participants choosing a career in education, it was worth exploring if and how spirituality was a support system in the training process of becoming a teacher. Some of the participants felt that they were predisposed to handle the rigors or difficulties of the training process, while many of the participants felt their spirituality sustained them through difficult times. When Elizabeth was asked what kept her focused and helped her in difficult times during her training, she replied,

Knowing that God is going to get you there...I think it's just knowing that I'm supposed to be there, and it's going to be hard. I think God is the one that's gotten me through everything so far, so I don't doubt being a teacher.

Amber had a similar line of thinking:

I guess it's just God gives me the strength. I just believe that I've always been a pretty strong person, and I just feel like that's a God-given ability, of course, so it definitely wouldn't be on my own strength.

Dale, who believes he was basically born into the profession via God's will, speaks of his reliance on spirituality much the way he did his calling. When I asked him if knowing he was called to teach helped him in any way when his training became difficult, this was his response: "I know God wants me to be a teacher, so I figure He's gifted me in that area. And I have confidence in the gifts that He's gifted me with that I can do the task before me." Roxanne felt a similar confidence as Dale, but hers was placed more on the respect she felt a calling during her life rather than being born to the job: "It just goes back to spirituality for me just knowing that this is what I'm supposed to do."

Holly expanded on her reliance on her spirituality to include what she would do during difficult times that arose when she became a teacher.

I think that it will be comforting and affirming, something that I can go back to whenever I feel like I can't do it anymore or something's really struggling with a child. To have that prior knowledge and prior feeling that 'This is what I'm supposed to do' will always be there to fall back on.

From the responses of the participants, it is apparent that spirituality was not only at the core of the decision-making structure but also deeply imbedded in their psychological coping mechanisms. The divinity of the spiritual calling was a rallying point for times of struggle.

Thematic Analysis

There are four themes that radiate throughout the responses of the participants: the calling experience as a process, esteem for the teaching profession as a calling, the use of spirituality for affirmation, and the direct impact of spirituality on career choice. These themes do not stand alone, but are bound together throughout the dialogue.

The Calling Experience as a Process

The experience of calling in relation to teaching was more a process of tangible and intangible phenomena than a single event. Each felt called, but they—with the exception of Dale—experienced a series of events over a period of months and even years that they felt directed them to teaching. Dale, on the other hand, held more to a born-to-the-calling philosophy. This process was different than most other careers motivated by salary, family occupations, technical ability, or working conditions.

Esteem for the Teaching Profession as a Calling

The idea that teachers are a special breed of professionals was evidenced by the continued references to service, job stressors, responsibility, sacrifices, and an emotionally demanding environment. Because of this, the participants felt the teaching field requires more of a spiritual foundation than most jobs and this idea also led to the belief by all the participants that a person should be called to teach. However, the negative factors were just a part of the concept that made teaching estimable to the participants. The fact that the participants all had experienced the spiritual process of a calling made the career seem more distinguished and to an extent more righteous than other careers. In their minds, what could be more virtuous than a God ordained career?

The Use of Spirituality for Affirmation

Once the calling was accepted by the participants, the spiritual basis for their decision became the foundation on which the participants readied themselves for their career. Confidence was gained from the feeling that their chosen career was not their choice alone but that they were chosen. In times of struggle this became the crutch on which the participants leaned. In times of doubt this became the compass by which they navigated through their reservations. This spiritual dynamic in the decision process was not only a catalyst but a sustaining element after the decision was made. Many of the participants also cited that their spirituality would sustain them when they began teaching and ran into difficulties.

The Direct Impact of Spirituality on Career Choice

Within the interlacing network of the dialogue, spirituality was the common thread that connected everything and is at the core of the participants' experiences. At the least, three of the participants felt spirituality was responsible for half of their rationale for choosing teaching as a career. The other six participants gave much more credit, if not all the credit, to spirituality's role. This was not limited to decision-making alone. It also included the belief that there was a spiritual aspect to the imbuelement or acquiring of skills and dispositions that were to be used as a teacher. Therefore, spirituality played a direct role in influencing the participants into the teaching profession, preparing them for the profession, and sustaining them once they began their jobs.

Conclusion

Overwhelmingly the participants felt that spirituality was the main reason they are becoming teachers, and without it, it is unlikely that they would have chosen that career.

There would be a huge void in the decision-making construct of the participants and in the foundation of emotional support if spirituality were removed from the equation. It was difficult for most, and impossible for some, to separate any of the aspects of their career from spirituality. For some of the participants it appears even more apparent to them now as they near the end of their training.

The uniqueness of each of the participants and the varied experience that they each brought to the table helped to validate the themes that have been uncovered. This is due in large part to the similar responses that were given to many of the questions.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study began as an attempt to research the role of spirituality in persons choosing a career in education. Part of the focus was the moment a person is called to teach in an attempt to try and uncover something about that experience and its influence. In that effort a process rather than a moment was uncovered. This came through dialogue with prospective educators who felt they were adhering to a spiritual calling. A mixture of experiences was recorded, but the commonality of the influence of spirituality was prevalent in all the discussions.

Summary

That spirituality played a role in the participants' decision to become a teacher was a given since the participants were purposefully selected. However, it was unforeseen how significant and embedded that role could be and to what extent spirituality was relied upon as a source of confidence in their process to becoming a teacher. The themes that were uncovered are reflected within the dialogue when a cross participant analysis is conducted. The best summary of the research findings would be a recap of the themes that were revealed.

The idea that the "call" to teach was a moment in which a person felt a spiritual pull to teach was quickly replaced with a process after the interviews were completed. None of the participants experienced literally or figuratively a spiritual voice telling them to become teachers. This process took years for some and less time for others; however, it was never doubted by any of the participants that spirituality was a catalyst and motivator in their decisions to become teachers through the whole progression. This

process was seen as avenues of opportunity opening that led to teaching, while avenues in other directions were closed. In the minds of the participants, this process of things working out in favor of teaching as a career was all part of the calling process that legitimized their decision. Factors such as salary, family occupations, technical ability, or working conditions are usually given a great deal of weight in the process of choosing a career. Decisions based on factors such as these are often decided with a sense of pros versus cons. The spiritual aspect of the calling process negates the cons. The process is the focus. The idea is that figurative doors open and close guiding a person onto a career path that is not just a choice but an acceptance. Acceptance is not about personal decision constructs. It is about making a conscious choice to embrace events and influences that the person feels are ushering or have ushered them to a career.

Esteem for the teaching profession was another evident theme. The participants saw themselves as part of an honorable and self-sacrificing career that embodies a sense of mission. From the view of the participants, it would be almost impossible to enter the education profession without a spiritual aspect at work because of the dynamics that encompass the job. If persons truly commit themselves to the job of teaching, then it becomes enigmatic to understand how the extrinsic benefits are enough without an underlying spiritual context. This is where teaching is seen as a vocation, or a job, that is the result of a calling. In this respect, teaching becomes more estimable than many other careers because of the necessity of the spiritual aspect.

Spirituality also became a source of support and validation during difficult times in the process to becoming a teacher. The idea that their career was infused with spiritual supervision gave the participants the confidence to overcome difficulties, for they were

operating from a sense that they did not make the decision alone to become teachers but that they were each chosen. This strengthened the resiliency of the participants and helped them focus on the ultimate goal of becoming a teacher. Participants acknowledged that teaching would be a difficult and demanding career in many ways, but they also felt that the spiritual support system would be there, as had been to get them through the training aspects of the job.

The most vivid theme that arose from the dialogue was how greatly intertwined spirituality is in the process toward becoming a teacher, and its role cannot be dissolved without losing the sense of purpose and meaning the job holds for the participants. Spirituality gave the participants cause to enter the field, gave them confidence during training, and will give them context in which to operate when they begin the job. Without the spiritual dynamic, it is unlikely that many of the participants would have chosen the career or would have been able to cope with the rigors that accompany the training for it as well or at all.

Discussion

The spiritual dynamic seems to add a greater sense of commitment to the teaching career. Without a spiritual catalyst or calling, would a person really be right for teaching in today's world of education that is ever increasing in its demands? As discussed in chapter three, it becomes increasingly difficult to understand why persons would enter the teaching profession without some kind of intrinsic force pushing and sustaining them. This is assuming that the persons undertake the job with a sense of commitment and apply themselves to doing their best. Educators become enveloped by the job when they

are truly committed to it. It becomes a righteous and virtuous vocation because the extrinsic rewards rarely balance out the amount of self that is given over to the job.

With teacher accountability at an all time high and respect from the public and politicians at an all time low, it makes one question why anyone would want to enter such a tumultuous and challenging field. It also raises the question whether or not people can enter the profession and succeed if they do not have some type of spiritual milieu from which they are operating. Would a teacher be a good hire if they were in the profession because of the schedule, because of the benefits, because of the ease of finding a job, because of time off with kids, or because of they want to coach a sport? I would say no to all of these reasons. The job is too demanding emotionally and physically to validate any of these rationales and expect the person to make a difference in the lives of his or her students.

Though the participants in this study were Christians, the spiritual dynamic would not have to be limited to a Christian calling. Acknowledging a calling to the greater good or service to one's community does not forfeit the virtue of the job, even if it more loosely defines the parameters of the calling experience and support center. It also does not diminish the sacrificial aspects of the job that are required no matter what point of origin the person enters the profession. It is apparent from this research that it helps a person to have at least an informal but acknowledged spiritual sense of purpose to the greater good on some level in order to become a truly committed educator.

Recommendations

It seems ironic that there has been a decade's long push to remove spirituality of any kind from the classroom when it seems that the job of a teacher necessitates a

spiritual person. It is recommended that teacher training institutions examine the spiritual aspect of those who choose teaching as a career, at least in a general sense as relating to calling and vocation. There is no end in sight to the increases in teacher accountability and the high demands of many of the impoverished schools across our nation. Therefore, teaching must be set aside and distinguished as a career of principle and commitment. This cannot be accomplished with increases in salary, benefits, or loan forgiveness programs. It must be accomplished in the essence of the job and what constitutes a devoted teacher.

It has been evidenced through the years that increased oversight, greater spending, and more accountability have had little or no impact on improving student achievement. The single most influential means of affecting change is the teacher, so it is more important than ever to understand the context from which perspective teachers are entering training. Spirituality must be factored in as a part of the sustainability of the new teacher, even if it is acknowledged informally and apart from organized religion.

Limitations of the Study

This study interprets the calling experience of nine prospective teachers and relates themes that were uncovered from the interview material. All the participants claim a calling from a Christian perspective; therefore, these findings should not be generalized to other current or prospective teachers.

Further Research

This study set out to examine the role of spirituality in persons choosing a career in education, with a focus on calling as a motivating factor, but one of the first unexpected finds was that none of the participants had a lightening strike moment so to

speak when they were called. It would be an interesting and applicable study into whether or not a chain of events that led to a calling could instill more confidence than a single moment of inspiration.

Five of the participants who elaborated on the sacrificial part of teaching mentioned sacrifices they felt that others perceived concerning teaching, but they did not believe they were personally sacrificing themselves. Even though they acknowledged that a calling required some type of sacrifice, they would come back to the stance that their calling did not feel like a sacrifice. For example, Holly's statement: "But I don't feel like I'm sacrificing anything to be a teacher." This phenomenon of the outside world perceiving teaching as sacrificial in nature but teachers or prospective teachers not seeing this also warrants further study as to the unique mindset of those wanting to teach.

From a school administrative aspect, it would be intriguing to study if there were differences in performance of those teachers who felt a calling to teach compared to teachers who entered the field for salary, benefits, scheduling, coaching, or other extrinsic factors. This could shed light not only on the motivational aspects of spirituality but the performance aspects as well.

It would also be interesting to replicate the study within a secular university. The participant group could be composed of diverse, non-Christian students who felt a type of spiritual calling that did not specifically acknowledge God.

Maybe one of the most important topics for further research is whether or not the spiritual aspect as it relates to calling should be a factor in training or recruitment of teachers. It is undeniable in this research that spirituality influenced the participants in their decision to become teachers and bolstered them in their training as well. It is worth

examining the positive ways this could be capitalized on in training or used as a recruiting tool. In relation to this, a longitudinal study of these participants could be conducted five to ten years from now to see if they are still teaching and how spirituality has factored into their professional lives.

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APPENDIX

Participant Consent Form

The Role of Spirituality in Persons Choosing a Career in Education: Calling as a

Motivating Factor

Principal Investigator: Jared T. Bigham

Liberty University

Education Department

Doctoral Dissertation Research

You are invited to be in a research study of the role that spirituality plays in persons choosing a career in education. You were selected as a possible participant because you indicated in a paper/pencil survey of education methods students that spirituality was a motivating factor in your choosing to be a teacher. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. This study is being conducted by Jared T. Bigham, School of Education, Liberty University.

Background Information

The purpose of this study is to research the motivating impact spirituality has with teacher education majors in a Christian university choosing teaching as a career. There are many publicized negatives in the education field such as low pay, safety issues, increased accountability, and declining respect for the profession. With these well known negative aspects, it begs the question why people choose this career.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Participate in a face-to-face audio recorded interview approximately one hour in length. (A transcriptionist will be hired to transcribe the tapes.)
- Be available for follow-up questions by phone or email.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

The study has minimal risks: The risks are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

The benefits to participation are as follows:

- Increased understanding of teachers' motivation for choosing their career.
- Gives insight for teacher recruitment.
- Gives insight for career counseling.
- Gives insight for teacher training.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report that might be published, no information will be included that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records and recordings will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. All audio recordings will be destroyed by June 2008.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the university you currently attend. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting these relationships.

Contacts and Questions

The researcher conducting this study is Jared T. Bigham. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him anytime at xxx-xxx-xxxx or email to xxxxx@aol.com. You may also contact the researcher's advisor, Dr. Samuel J. Smith, at xxx-xxx-xxxx or email to xxxxxxxx@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Human Subject Office, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 2400, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

The proceeding participant consent form was submitted to the Institutional Review Board for approval. The approval number issued by Liberty University's Institutional Review Board is 550.