MID-LEVEL STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS’ PERCEPTIONS OF SPIRITUALITY:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2005

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ABSTRACT

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This study was predicated on several ideas with the main one being that spirituality should be an intentional component of student affairs work. However, little is known about student affairs professionals’ perceptions about this topic. The purpose of this study was to engage mid-level student affairs professionals in dialogue to explore the nature of spirituality (one's sacred and personal journey or quest to find meaning and purpose in life) as a component of professional responsibility in student affairs work. The study examined: (a) professionals’ personal constructions of spirituality, (b) the role of spirituality in the philosophy and practice of student affairs professionals, and (c) how student affairs professionals communicated their personal and professional constructions of spirituality to students.

Given the nature of spirituality and student affairs professionals, a phenomenological approach was chosen. The researcher discerned the essences of spirituality for these participants by interviewing five mid-level student affairs professionals, reflecting on their individual ideas pertaining to the events or occurrences they described, and developing a composite view that best reflected the shared meanings of the participants. Profiles of the five participants and the institutions at which they work are provided.

The researcher presents: (a) three themes that influenced the professionals regarding their spiritual definitions and beliefs: spiritual upbringing, spiritual guides, and spiritual journeys, (b) common perceptions that appeared among the participant’s thoughts and experiences, (c) three themes derived from the actions, experiences, and observations of the participants regarding their ability to influence students’ spirituality: role modeling, spiritual interventions, and serving as spiritual guides, and (d) how the campus context influenced these participants’ thoughts and actions regarding spirituality. The sum of all the themes and commonalities are important to mid-
level student affairs professionals’ perceptions of spirituality. As such, a model is presented to explain how the respondents integrated their understanding of spirituality into a complex perspective on their role as professionals.
This manuscript is dedicated to my best friend –
the woman I live with, laugh with, dream with, and love.

If not for my wife Lori, this dissertation
may never have been started, much less finished.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although I have dedicated this to my wife Lori, she also deserves acknowledgement for assisting with the manuscript – she has proofread and made suggestions, she has helped to keep me focused and made sure I kept balance in my life, and most of all she served as a sounding board throughout the entire process. I also have been blessed to have the most supportive parents a man could ask for – Robert and Illa Mae Hansen. My children, Eric and Katy, are two great kids who barely remember when Dad was not working on his doctorate or writing his dissertation – and remained loving and supportive throughout those times. Despite the miles between us, my sisters, my in-laws, and much of my extended family have been involved and/or supportive of my work.

This project would never have been completed without the patient and careful guidance of my Advisor. Mike Coomes seemed to inherently know when to push, and when to leave me alone, when to encourage, and just how to constructively criticize. Thank you for all you have given me throughout this project. I hope others may someday learn as much from me as I have learned from you. I also thank my committee members, Patricia, Rachel, and Ellen, who were so supportive and encouraging of my work, while challenging me to constantly improve it.

The Higher Education program at Bowling Green State University proved to be an amazing community of scholars that helped shape my education and writing, and helped me to refine my educational philosophies. The combination of an extremely supportive cohort of doctoral students and an extremely talented faculty was tremendous. Cohort members Rena Murphy and Bill Arnold were integrally involved in this dissertation as peer debriefers and occasional proofreaders. They along with Tommy Stephenson, Laura Gonzales and George Timmons will always remain good friends as well as colleagues. I was blessed to have the
opportunity to work with several faculty members who are pillars in the profession – Patricia King, Carney Strange, Don Gehring, Carolyn Palmer – and other exceptional faculty members including Fiona MacKinnon, Mike Dannells, Bob DeBard, and Leigh Chiarlotte among the many. There are also three members of the Miami University faculty – Marcia Baxter Magolda, Judy Rogers and Peter Magolda – who have continued to inspire me through their writing, their professionalism and their friendship since I entered the student affairs profession.

There are many Bowling Green doctoral students from other cohorts who have been supportive and helpful along the way: John Lowery, Janice Gerda, Carolyn Brightharp, Lynn Holland, Barb Henry, and Lisa Gueldenzoph to name a few. There are other students and staff members, too many to mention by name, who have influenced me in so many different ways. Kathy Bechstein, administrative assistant in Higher Education and College Student Personnel, is the glue that quietly holds things together – I am proud to call her friend and to have had the opportunity to work in the office with her during three years of assistantship experiences.

The unique and positive support of the University of Saint Mary faculty and staff has been outstanding these past three years. My current Office Manager, Carolyn Fox, previous Office Manager, Priscilla McLean, my entire Student Life staff, the Administrative Council and numerous others have pushed and assisted, prayed for and believed in me in ways that are unexplainable. Last, and most importantly, it is essential to acknowledge: But for the grace of God go I.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The profound questions in life intrigue human beings no matter the labels of difference—religious denomination, racial and ethnic heritage, socio-economic status, and so forth—that have been created to separate people. Despite labels, every person seeks the answers to spiritual questions: Why am I here? What is the purpose of my life? What do I love? Is there a being or power that transcends humanity? What should be my relationship with others in this world? These spiritual questions evolve from a universal instinct that connects one with others and allows one to discover his or her place in the web of life (Palmer, 1998).

In the past two decades there has been a rise in interest in religion and spirituality in society, reflected in the increasing number of books and articles in the popular press dealing with these topics. Best-seller lists provide evidence of the current fascination with spirit, soul, and spiritual intelligence (Downey, 1997; Jablonski, 2001). Additionally, hundreds of books in the past decade focusing on the meaning of life, vocation, community, career, leadership, and relationships, were written from a spiritual perspective (Jablonski, 2001).

Spirituality in the United States

One explanation for the rise of interest in spirituality in the United States can be found in the concept of the historical sequences of spiritual awakenings. Awakenings are transforming periods in history when individual values and private behaviors change at the societal level. Awakenings occur when a generation of “idealist” individuals focuses on spirituality in their lives (Strauss & Howe, 1991). During each awakening era, the United States has witnessed “mounting frustration with public institutions, fragmenting families and communities, rising alcohol and drug abuse, and a growing tendency to take risks in most spheres of life” (Strauss & Howe, p. 96). Strauss and Howe’s theory of generations indicated that the “Boomer” generation,
those born between 1943 and approximately 1960, is a generation of idealists that came of age during a spiritual awakening (approximately 1967-1980). That spiritual awakening (the Boom Awakening), better known as the “Consciousness Revolution,” peaked around 1970 and then spread as the human potential movement transformed values, lifestyles, manners and families throughout the 1970s (Strauss & Howe).

As many Boomers began accepting adult roles (around 1980), they were not in positions of political and community leadership. Instead, they “steer[ed] the national mood toward pessimistic and portentous spiritualism” (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 96). Being cynical of social institutions and systems, they turned inward and focused on individual needs. By the mid-1980s the nation was overrun with self-help groups. “From TV talk shows to dependency groups to church basements, the search for personal meaning started with the direct experience of the individual” (Strauss & Howe, 1997). Spiritual development through searching for personal meaning was one attribute in the idealists’ generational cycle.

During past spiritual awakenings, idealists exhibited patterns of personal behavior that used their inner convictions to project and enforce their principles on the world around them. This was certainly true of the idealist Boomers. In 1989, the next decade was touted to be one of a changed and inspired corporate America, where people would lead healthier and more decent lives. As many Boomers began accepting community and political leadership roles throughout the 1990s, America witnessed a huge rise in spiritual movements as the Boomer leaders attempted to transform the nation (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Many Boomers view the generation immediately following them as another ‘lost generation,’ and Boomer evangelists condemn their lack of spirituality. To prevent “losing” another generation, Boomers have focused on raising and nurturing a new generation within the
sheltered influence of an idealist spiritual movement. Boomer parents are trying to raise children focused on the values of selflessness and civic virtue in the hope that they can build a better world, one of which their parents can only dream (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Parents have realized the trouble of transmitting their own sense of moral integrity and virtues to their children in the absence of a community. They also had difficulty maintaining their own integrity when their only support was from transient associations with like-minded others (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). Spirituality again came to the forefront as parents realized that individualism and community are not opposites, but that they are intricately connected. Spiritual and religious models are now being used to reconcile the seeming paradox of individualism and community.

Americans, given our history of westward expansion, are prone to isolationism created by individualism, but they are also influenced by counter tendencies that pull persons back from isolationism into social communion (Bellah, et al., 1985). Democracy has survived in America because citizens periodically turn away from their private interests and look at something other than themselves. Even Alexis de Tocqueville, as early as the 1830s, noted that the practices and habits of spirituality, religion, and democratic participation educate citizens to a larger view than their private worlds (de Tocqueville, 1835-1840/1969). Fukuyama (1999) expressed that America’s cultural roots reinforced both individualism and the tendency for society to self-organize into voluntary associations and communities.

The 1980s in America were a time of personal ascendance and individualism. The tension between private interest and public good was beginning to deteriorate. While the focus on economics held the American people together in community, social mores were disintegrating (Bellah, et al., 1985). Additionally, the disruption of social norms caused by technological
advances, the economy, and increasing individualism caused people to seek out new forms of moral codes and social order (Fukuyama, 1999). Over the past decade more people have re-examined models for public virtue and common good, and many have turned to spiritual and religious models to find or develop communities.

Spirituality in Higher Education

As people examined models to develop public virtue and a common good in society, interest in spirituality grew and spread to college campuses. Although one’s spiritual quest is pursued for a lifetime, “it emerges full bloom during the transition from youth to adulthood” (Dalton, 2001, p. 17). Many people spend this time between youth and adulthood on a college campus. Spiritual questions are thrust into the forefront of college students’ lives by national and world events, for example the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001. When events such as these occur, campuses see a heightened interest in discussion of religious and spiritual values.

The inclusion of religious and spiritual discussion on campus has existed since the founding of higher education in the United States. Religious denominations and churches founded almost all of the colonial colleges (Rudolph, 1962). Marsden (1994) noted that higher education in the United States was built upon the foundation of Protestant colleges, and that most major universities emerged from this background. During the nineteenth century, religion continued to be a dominant force in American society, and thus also in higher education (Lowery, 2000).

Religion and spirituality in higher education began eroding in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Science, technology, vocationalism, pragmatism, modernization, and higher education’s shift in focus toward pure research all impacted the secularization of the academy
(Lowery, 2000; Marsden, 1994). Despite religion’s shift from its place at the center to the periphery during the twentieth century (Marsden, 1992), religion and spirituality continued to hold a position in higher education, although sometimes a controversial one.

Today, the place of spirituality and religion in the university continues to be a controversial topic. The need for religion as part of the curriculum in all of higher education, the historical roots of religion in both the nation and higher education in the United States, and religion as a form of diversity neglected in colleges and universities have all been topics of articles in the professional journals of higher education (Green, 1996; Hoekema, 1996; Mitchell, 1996). Academicians such as Fowler (1991), Gill (1997), Nash (1999, 2001, 2002), Nord (1995), Palmer (1983, 1998) and Parks (1986, 2000) have published a variety of books and articles supporting the importance of spirituality and religion in college and university settings to further students’ development. Gill (1997) commented that “God-talk” should occupy an important place in higher education because religious thoughts and experiences are crucial dimensions of life and learning. Palmer (1983, 1998) suggested that spirituality impacts one’s ability to teach and connect with students in the academy. In this rapidly changing society, our future as a culture may depend on our capacity to guide and mentor young adults in spiritually meaningful ways (Parks, 2000). After all, higher education is still “the institution of preference for the formation of young adults in our culture” (Parks, 1986, p. 132).

Spirituality in Student Affairs

Within higher education, holistic student development has been a basic tenet of the student affairs profession since the writing of the Student Personnel Point of View (SPPV) in 1937 (Love & Talbot, 1999; Rentz, 1996, Temkin & Evans, 1998). The rewriting of the SPPV in 1949 reiterated the importance of the student affairs profession’s holistic approach to education,
and specifically addressed spirituality. The profession’s holistic student development approach calls for student affairs professionals to intentionally promote increasingly more complex levels of functioning. This is done by assisting students with integrating different influences and experiences with respect to all aspects of their human abilities and potential (Miller & Winston, 1991; Mish, 2001; Sanford, 1967).

Don Ardell (1977, 1982) coined the term “wellness” in the early 1970s to represent a “whole person” philosophy of maximizing human potential. Wellness, as depicted by Ardell, exemplified the holistic educational concept of the student affairs profession. By the 1980s, the term had become popular on college campuses. Wellness centers, predominantly under the purview of student affairs offices, were developed to assist students with integrating “the multiple dimensions of the human experience into a balanced lifestyle” (Fedorovich, Boyle, & Hare, 1994).

In 1989, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) published Points of View, which re-emphasized and affirmed holistic student development as the philosophy of the profession: “Although students are in college to acquire knowledge through the use of their intellect . . . While students are maturing intellectually they are also developing physically, psychologically, socially, aesthetically, ethically, sexually, and spiritually” (p. 13, emphasis added). The Student Learning Imperative: Implications for Student Affairs, produced by the American College Personnel Association (ACPA, 1996), rededicated the profession to holistic practice: “Student affairs professionals[’] . . . efforts are guided by a holistic philosophy of learning . . .” (p. 119). In 1997, assumptions about holistic development supported the Principles of Good Practice developed by a joint committee of NASPA and ACPA. Additionally, Powerful Partnerships, a report issued by representatives from the American
Association of Higher Education (AAHE), ACPA, and NASPA, presented learning principles that underscored the importance of holistic development (Evans & Reason, 2001; Joint Task Force on Student Learning, 1998). Overall, holistic development is the most prevalent and foundational concept found in the statements of the student affairs profession (Evans & Reason).

Despite its explicit use in the profession’s seminal documents, “spirituality and spiritual development have been conspicuously absent from student development theories and ignored by many student affairs professionals” (Love & Talbot, 1999, p. 361). This may be a result of student affairs professionals’ lack of training and the absence of information considering how to work effectively with students on issues of spirituality (Collins, Hurst, & Jacobsen, 1987; Love & Talbot, 1999). Only one short essay about spirituality appeared in any of the major student affairs journals (i.e., *Journal of College Student Development, The NASPA Journal, College Student Affairs Journal, and College Student Journal*) in the fifteen-year period from 1983-1998 (Love & Talbot).

Although a few more articles have appeared in the major student affairs publications in the past few years (Love and Talbot, 1999; Moran, 2001; Moran & Curtis, 2004; Rogers & Dantley, 2001; Temkin & Evans, 1998), none of them investigated spirituality empirically, and only one was written utilizing the perspective of student affairs professionals. Only recently was a short book published addressing spirituality’s implications for student affairs practice (Jablonski, 2001). However, like many of its predecessors, this book addressed topics such as student development theory, career development, and staff development from theoretical or pragmatic viewpoints. As such, the need to examine spirituality from an empirical point of view still exists.
Student affairs professionals are in positions to advise, supervise, mentor, and assist students on a daily basis and are alert to many developmental issues of students, but are often uneasy about students’ spiritual issues. When events, such as the September 11, 2001 tragedy, elicit a dramatic response from students, student affairs professionals, in their roles as social architects and meaning makers in the college environment, must rally their resources to support students (Allen & Kellom, 2001). This requires exploration of student affairs professionals’ values through reflection on their core principles, including the nature of spirituality within their roles and responsibilities.

When exploring student affairs professionals’ philosophies, values, and core principles, one encounters an inherent problem -- defining the members of this group. Many laypersons are still being hired into all levels in the field to perform various tasks. These laypersons have commonly been referred to as practitioners, rather than professionals. Carpenter (1991) characterized professionals as having the essential ingredients of both preparation and practice in the field of student affairs. A student affairs professional can be further defined as one who is appropriately educated and trained to work with students in developmental ways, even when performing the same functional tasks as a practitioner (Fenske, 1989b; Miller & Winston, 1991). Practitioners, while vital to the success of many higher education institutions, have not had the exposure to the documents, guidelines and educational underpinnings of the profession. Appropriately educated and trained student affairs professionals, on the other hand, can deliberately design or reshape higher education environments to offer learning opportunities across the whole spectrum of human development. This important distinction affects many aspects of work with students, including that of holistic development.
Within the large cadre of student affairs professionals, mid-level professionals are advanced in expertise and skills in their areas of responsibility and in the profession (Hughes, 1999). These professionals keep their colleges functioning while influencing their institution’s style and tone (Ellis & Moon, 1991; Scott, 1978). Mid-level professionals have generally invested time in their institutions allowing for a complex view of the enterprise. They are valuable assets who are capable of assisting their university in the daily aspects of accomplishing institutional mission (Belch, 1991). Most mid-level student affairs managers view themselves as educators, student development specialists, and public servants who are committed to upholding the philosophy and values espoused in higher education and student affairs (Belch; Penn, 1990). As such, mid-level student affairs professionals have much to offer to the discussion of spirituality.

Purpose of the Study

Spirituality should be an intentional component of student affairs work, but little is known about student affairs professionals’ perceptions about the topic. This study was predicated on several ideas. Student affairs professionals need to explore their own spirituality in order to guide students in their spiritual exploration (Allen & Kellom, 2001; Love & Talbot, 1999). Student affairs professionals should utilize discussion and reflection about spirituality in professional and personal development in order to prepare to engage in intentional and meaningful discussions about spirituality with students (Moran, 2001). Initial discussions should focus on student affairs professionals clarifying their perceptions about spirituality and its role in the profession.

The purpose of this study was to engage student affairs professionals in dialogue to explore the nature of spirituality (one's sacred and personal journey or quest to find meaning and
purpose in life) as a component of professional responsibility in student affairs work. The study examined: (a) professionals’ personal constructions of spirituality, (b) the role of spirituality in the philosophy and practice of student affairs professionals, and (c) how student affairs professionals translated their personal and professional constructions of spirituality to students. In order to clarify professionals’ conceptualizations of spirituality and its role in the profession, these questions were raised:

1. How do student affairs professionals define spirituality and spiritual development?

2. Do student affairs professionals believe the spiritual development of students is consistent with the values of the profession?

3. Do student affairs professionals think there is a place for spirituality in their work with students?

4. What role should the student affairs professional play in assisting students with spirituality and spiritual development?

5. How have student affairs professionals assisted students with spirituality?

6. What do student affairs professionals' think is their future role in helping students with spiritual questions?

If the field of student affairs continues to express a holistic philosophy of student development, then students’ spiritual development should be an essential component of student affairs work. Increased focus on spirituality may add a dimension to the development of students’ identity during the college years. If student affairs professionals remain disengaged from students regarding the spiritual dimension, then learners are deprived of an opportunity to grow and learn in this important aspect of their lives. However, student affairs professionals may have difficulty assisting students with spiritual development if the professionals are not attuned
to the problem. This study contributes to the higher education community’s understanding of student affairs professionals’ perceptions of spirituality in student affairs work.

The Significance of the Study

The rise of societal interest in spirituality is a reality. Although several reasons have been forwarded regarding the public’s demand for accountability in higher education, Allen & Kellom (2001) expressed that students’ holistic development was one of those reasons. Holistic development is commonly denoted as the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical, social, and occupational dimensions in student affairs wellness models (Beeler, 1988). According to Hoekema (1996), spirituality as a holistic component is an essential part of a person’s education and involves “thoughtful reflection on the relationship between faith, learning, and the conduct of individual and communal life” (p. 36). More recently Love (2001) plainly stated, “Spiritual development is important for college students” (p. 15). Providing students with the opportunity to explore this dimension of their lives allows students an opportunity to approach life’s complexities with a depth of perspective.

The concepts of learning, personal development, and student development are so intertwined, and essential to student affairs work, that they are used interchangeably throughout The Student Learning Imperative: Implications for Student Affairs (ACPA, 1996). In essence, the concepts of student learning and personal development involve: (a) “creating the conditions under which students are likely to expend time and energy in educationally-purposeful activities,” and (b) raising “students’ aspirations and contrib[ing] to the development of skills and competencies that enable them to live productive, satisfying lives after college” (ACPA, p. 2). Over the past ten years, there has been a renewed emphasis on creating purposeful models in student affairs programs to address holistic perspectives of student growth and development
(Jablonski, 2001). By definition this should also include spiritual development, but empirical studies of spirituality and spiritual development are lacking.

Spiritual development aids a student’s search for identity. As a result of an emerging sense of identity, students begin to develop a meaningful understanding of the world, build a personally meaningful value system, and take responsibility for present and future actions and commitments to others and society (Shelton, 1983). As the process of spiritual growth and development unfolds, a college student

  notices a growing need for intimacy in personal relationships, a clearer understanding of “who I am” based on these deepening personal relationships, a clearer outlook and worldview based on his or her undergraduate education, and, finally, a clearer notion of “what my place in the world might be.” (Shelton, p. 87)

Spirituality affects students’ growth and development from multiple perspectives. Developmental theory commonly used by student affairs professionals, which incorporates the findings of Jean Piaget (1964), Lawrence Kohlberg (1981), Carol Gilligan (1982), William Perry (1970), and Donald Super (1957) among others, and relates to areas such as cognitive development, moral development, psychosocial development, and gender identity development, is integrative in nature (Shelton, 1983). Spirituality is a common theme that allows integration of all aspects of growth in the young adult years. This theme includes assisting students to (a) give meaning to one’s life experiences, (b) incorporate the Transcendent in one’s life (a sense of God, universe, a higher power, mystery, or awe), and (c) to incorporate the emotional and intellectual changes that filter encounters with one’s existence (Shelton).

Assisting students with spiritual development has implications for the way in which they experience higher education. Spiritual development may affect the manner in which students
learn and the competencies they gain throughout their college experience. According to Evans, Forney and Guido-DiBrito (1998), “Struggles that individual students experience with psychosocial development come to bear on their learning processes” (p. 290). As such, spirituality should be integrated into programming that focuses on students’ developmental needs to maximize their potential to benefit from an academic experience (Kiracofe, et al., 1994).

Spiritual development is also an important dimension for students to consider in choosing future lifestyles. Students, while in college, make lifestyle choices about issues such as careers and relationships, and develop patterns of living that remain with them for a lifetime (Fedorovich & Boyle, 1992). Spiritual values aid students in clarifying major decisions that influence them throughout their adult lives. Because spirituality is an important and integral aspect of students’ development, ignoring spirituality may actually be detrimental to students (Collins, et al., 1987; Hoekema, 1996; Love & Talbot, 1999; Temkin & Evans, 1998).

Student affairs professionals, particularly mid-level managers, are uniquely positioned in the academy to guide the holistic development of students; consequently they have a responsibility to facilitate the learning process and development of students. Student affairs professionals structure students’ college experiences through the programs, activities, and environments they create, guide, and offer on their campuses (Allen & Kellom, 2001). The values and beliefs of student affairs professionals have implications beyond the profession because the execution of their duties affects students, the institution, and higher education as a whole.

The rise of societal interest in spirituality, the influence of spirituality on students’ development, the impact spirituality may have on student learning, and the demand for more accountability in higher education are significant reasons for the study of spirituality. Student
affairs professionals’ philosophies, competencies, and positions in the academy allow them to positively affect students regarding their spiritual development. These factors make it important to explore spirituality as a component of professional responsibility in student affairs work.

Overview of the Methodology

Spirituality is a complex concept that is not easily studied utilizing a positivist scientific framework. Qualitative approaches are accepted as legitimate forms of research for topics such as this (Love & Talbot, 1999). Many potential qualitative research designs exist that could be utilized to shed light on questions about spirituality in the student affairs profession. Given the nature of spirituality and student affairs professionals, a phenomenological approach to discern the essence of the participants’ responses was chosen.

Phenomenological research methods focus on discovering the universal, shared meanings of persons who experience a particular occurrence or event. In this study, the shared experience is student affairs professionals’ use of spirituality in their work with students. In order to ascertain this, one must have determined the student affairs professionals’ views of spirituality in general. The researcher accomplished this through interviewing a number of student affairs professionals, reflecting on their individual ideas pertaining to the events or occurrences they described, and developing a composite view that best reflected the shared meanings of the participants (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). The investigation utilized a two-interview format that employed an informal, interactive process and open-ended questions to gather data.

Purposive sampling, in which participants were selected based on their ability to address the phenomenon and its surrounding issues, was a necessary component of this methodology (Patton, 1990). Because the potential group of participants was extremely large, a specific set of student affairs professionals was defined for this analysis and narrowed to one group with
reasonably similar characteristics conducive to analysis of this phenomenon (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Participants were recruited from small private colleges in northwest Ohio, southeast Michigan, and broader areas of the lower Great Lakes region. The study examined a small group of participants in a particular setting and time frame. From this intensive study, readers might glean some insight and understanding that they can relate to their lives or circumstances. The rest of the methodology and the framework for this study is explained in detail in Chapter III including: (a) a description and rationale of the proposed qualitative methodology, (b) an explanation of the methods and design for the study including the assurance of the efficacy and rigor of the study, and (c) the researcher’s theoretical framework and background that was utilized to address the research questions.

Definitions of Terms

The complexity of the concepts and multiple meanings of several of the terms necessitate the inclusion of a glossary. This section will aid the reader by delineating how the terms related to spirituality and religion, student affairs and student development, and the terms associated with the methodology of this study are used in this manuscript. After two general terms, separate headings demarcate the different sets of definitions.

American/United States – as per common usage, American is used interchangeably with United States throughout the document in reference to historical events, higher education, or colleges and universities in the United States of America.

Colleges/Universities – college and university are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to traditional four-year institutions of higher education.
**Student Affairs and Student Development Terms**

Holistic – having to do with all aspects of a person, his or her entire being; the view that an integrated person has a reality independent of and greater than the sum of his or her parts (Mish, 2001).

Mid-level student affairs professional – a student affairs professional (see definition below) who has advanced expertise and administrative skills in specific program areas (Hughes, 1999).

Psychosocial development – the developmental tasks or stages that occupy adults at different times or phases in the life span (Rodgers, 1989).

Student affairs practitioner (also historically recognized as a *student personnel worker*) – an individual whose primary work is in a non-curricular and non-business area of an institution of higher education (Fenske, 1989b).

Student affairs profession – all activities undertaken or sponsored by an educational institution, aside from curricular instruction (e.g. – career services, counseling, residence life, student activities), in which the student’s personal development is the primary consideration (Cowley, 1936/1986).

Student affairs professional – one who preferably has a master’s degree in student personnel, higher education administration, or counseling; holds membership in and ascribes to the ethical and technical standards of a professional association for student affairs; and has responsibility for co-curricular educational activities of students in higher education institutions (Miller & Winston, 1991; Mish, 2001); i.e., an appropriately educated and trained student affairs practitioner.
Student development – increasingly more complex levels of functioning regarding one’s ability to act on and integrate different influences and experiences as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education (Rodgers, 1990; Sanford, 1967).

**Spiritual and Religious Terms**

Faith – a personal quality, not a quality of a religious system; “an orientation of the personality, to one’s self, one’s neighbor, to the universe; a total response; to see, to feel, to act in terms of, a transcendent dimension” (Smith, 1979, p. 12). Also, “to set one’s heart upon” (Fowler, 1981; Parks, 1986).

Religion – “a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life” (Yinger, 1967, p. 18).

Religiousness – the extent or degree a person adheres to the practices, knowledge, and beliefs of a particular religion (Burkhardt, 1989).

Spiritual development – increasingly more complex levels of functioning regarding one’s ability to act on and integrate different influences and experiences of spirituality.

Spirituality – a universal human quality and process; one's sacred and personal journey or quest to find meaning and purpose in life; one’s essence or vitality or life principle; a quality that relates a person to the world, gives one meaning to exist, and allows for personal transcendence beyond the present context of reality; and, finally, a relationship or sense of connection with mystery, awe, a High Power, God, or Universe (Burkhardt, 1989; Sinetar, 1992).

Transcendent – mystery, awe, a high power, God, or universe (Sinetar, 1992).

**Methodology Terms**

Audit trail – documents, transcripts, journals, and other materials that pertain to a study that are kept to enhance the dependability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Credibility – the extent to which the findings and interpretations of a qualitative study are found plausible (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Lowery, 2000).

Criterion-based selection – method employed to choose participants according to a particular list of attributes essential to a study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Merriam, 1998).

Dependability – the degree to which the researcher’s decisions about the process of the study and interpretations of data can be tracked and verified through appropriate documentation (Erlandson, et al., 1993; Gillilan, 1995).

Epoche – the process a “researcher engages in to remove, or at least become aware of prejudices, viewpoints, or assumptions regarding [a] phenomenon under investigation” (Katz as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 158).

Essence(s) – the core meanings of a phenomenon mutually understood through common experience (Moustakas, 1994); the universal, shared meanings of persons who experience a particular occurrence or event.

Imaginative variation – the process of seeking possible meanings of a phenomenon through the utilization of imagination (Moustakas, 1994).

Intentionality – the internal experience of being conscious of something; awareness of the purposeful relationship between the act of consciousness and the object of consciousness (Moustakas, 1994).

Intuition – immediate cognition, knowing something without having to rationalize it (Descartes, 1977).

Member checks – involving the participants in approving the findings of a study to strengthen the credibility of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Peer debriefing – a process of exploring aspects of inquiry with a disinterested peer(s) in an analytical manner (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Phenomenon – any occurrence that is perceptible, or appears to be real (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology – the study of a phenomenon; a way to understand shared experiences. As a research methodology, it emphasizes experience and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Holstein & Gubrium, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990).

Purposeful sampling – participants are selected who generate data that shed light on the phenomenon and issues central to the purpose of the research (Patton, 1990).

Reduction – the process of reflecting on and describing the meaningful and essential component parts of an experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Synthesis of meanings and essences – a unified statement or description of the common or universal conditions and qualities of an experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Textural descriptions – a written summary of clustered themes and meanings derived from an individual participant's experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Organization of the Document

In the next chapter the author examines in greater detail the literature base concerning religion and spirituality in higher education and the student affairs profession. First, terms and concepts associated with spirituality and religion are explicated. Then, the historical significance of religion and spirituality in higher education, including the secularization of higher education, is discussed. In the following sections, the researcher examines the student affairs profession and its philosophy, student affairs professionals and their role in higher education, and the call for
student affairs professionals to explore spirituality in their lives. In the last section, the author discusses student development and the role of student development in student affairs work.

Chapter III begins with discussion of the researcher’s professional, spiritual, and research background and his perspective on the nature of inquiry. The researcher then describes the assumptions and methods of phenomenology. Next, he details specific methods utilized for this study including participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. Prior to summarization, the author notes the measures of quality used for the study.

After a general introduction in Chapter IV, the author introduces the participants and describes the contexts in which they work. He then focuses on three sets of themes that emerged during the interviews with the five participants. The author concludes with a discussion about how the campus setting, or context, influenced these participants in regards to this study.

In Chapter V the essences of spirituality for student affairs professionals, as derived from the five participants in this study, are presented. Next, a model is introduced and explained that speaks to the experiences of the participants as it might relate to other student affairs professionals regarding spirituality in their work. The author then discusses the participants’ perceptions in relation to the research questions. Finally, the limitations of this research, implications for student affairs professionals, and recommendations for future study are offered.
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature relevant to spirituality, the context of spirituality in higher education, and spirituality in the student affairs profession. Although a great deal of literature exists about spirituality, much of it is superfluous to the study of spirituality in student affairs. Discussion of several key religious and spiritual terms and concepts begin the review. Here the focus includes differentiating spirituality from religiousness and faith. In order to narrow the scope of the spirituality literature, focus is placed on spirituality in relation to holistic development in the student affairs profession throughout the remainder of the review.

The second section of the chapter reviews the history of religion and spirituality in higher education. In order to understand the concern about the place of spirituality in student affairs, one should be aware of the history of spirituality and religion in American higher education. Although American higher education was closely connected to religion early in its history, the secularization of higher education in the United States moved religion to the periphery of the academy. However, theology and religious education departments, campus ministry programs, and student affairs professionals have maintained the importance of spirituality and religion within higher education.

To appreciate the legacy of spirituality in student affairs work, it is important to know about the student affairs profession and the student affairs professional. The profession's philosophical roots regarding holistic development are of primary importance to understanding why spirituality belongs in student affairs work. Expectations of student affairs professionals including the role of the mid-level student affairs professional, their role as educators and guides, and the importance of exploring spirituality with student affairs professionals are addressed. The
The Language of Spirituality

The complexities of common language usage complicate the discussion of spirituality. Terminology pertaining to faith, spirituality, and issues of human transcendence can never be exact. As such, these ideas and conceptualizations tend to be human and personal as well as limited and inadequate (Fowler, 1981; Smith, 1979). The meanings of concepts, or terms, such as spirituality, religiousness, faith and belief have changed over time so that present-day use is very different from historical use (Fowler, 1981; Smith, 1979). One example is the synonymous use of “spirituality” and “religiousness” (Burkhardt, 1989; Zinnbauer, et al., 1997). Another example is the transformation in use of “belief” and “believe” in relation to “faith” (Fowler; Smith). To clarify concepts and terms it is important to trace the socially acceptable meanings and the historical changes in meanings of the terms belief, faith, religion and spirituality.

Belief

The history of the concept of “belief” is important to understanding and defining “faith” and “spirituality.” Some religious writers and speakers use “believe” in religious contexts and in ways that are often misunderstood, contributing to present-day confusion (Smith, 1979). To clarify this confusion, the work of Wilfred Cantwell Smith is significant. Smith, a comparative religionist, “has the linguistic competence to study most of the major religious traditions in the languages of their primary sources” (Fowler, 1981, p. 9) and has utilized this background to write extensively on belief.

Smith (1979) described three predominant trends in the use of the verb “believe” from the twelfth century to the present. First, the object of belief was a person (God and Christ in the
Christian case); now the object of believing is an idea, a theory, or a proposition. Second, the act of believing was a decision, “the taking of a step of cosmic self-commitment; the state [sic] of believing has come to be a descriptive, if not a passive condition” (p. 120). Third, the mood of belief was to “involve one’s relations to absolutes, to realities of surpassing grandeur and surety” (p. 120); the mood of believing now “involves one’s relation to uncertainties, to matters of explicitly questionable validity” (p. 120). As one studies or discusses “beliefs” or what one “believes in,” it is important to remember that one approaches any given quotation or passage in which these terms occur, “by bringing to it the connotations and clusters of meanings from our own century, our minds influenced by all the intervening evolution from the Enlightenment, the nineteenth century, and the modern world” (p. 107).

The major shift in the meaning of the English word “believe” has proven to be of significant consequence (Smith, 1979). By the early modern period (16th century on) secular use of the words “belief” and “believe” began changing. Religious and ecclesiastical changes in use followed about a century later (Fowler, 1981). During this transition, “faith” was used for what was translated as “belief.” However, there was no verb for “faith,” so the term “believe” continued being used in religious and theological translations. Until the transition was completed, “believe” carried much the same meaning as faith—“to set one’s heart upon” (Fowler). Remnants of these translations continue to add to present-day confusion in language usage (Smith).

**Faith**

Despite writing extensively on faith, Smith (1979) managed to resist actually defining it. He wrote about how others define faith and various aspects, qualities, and understandings of
faith, but he wanted readers to ponder “how crucial a matter the shape and direction of faith is in our lives’ (Fowler, 1981, p. 10). Instead, Smith described faith as follows:

Faith is a quality of human living. At its best it has taken the form of serenity and courage and loyalty and service: a quiet confidence and joy which enable one to feel at home in the universe, and to find meaning in the world and in one’s own life, a meaning that is profound and ultimate, and is stable no matter what may happen to oneself at the level of immediate event. (p. 12)

Smith also noted that faith is a personal quality, not a quality of a religious system, and that faith is “an orientation of the personality, to one’s self, one’s neighbor, to the universe; a total response; to see, to feel, to act in terms of, a transcendent dimension” (p. 12).

Others have utilized Smith’s (1979) discussion to define faith as “to set one’s heart on” (Fowler, 1981; Parks, 1986). This meaning of faith involves a commitment of loyalty and trust, an alignment of one’s heart or will, a commitment of oneself to someone or something that is known or acknowledged (Fowler). More recently, however, faith was described as “the activity of seeking and discovering meaning in the most comprehensive dimensions of our experience” (Parks, 2000, p. 7, italics in original). This description also noted faith as a “broad, generic human phenomenon” in relation to how one makes sense out of things (Parks, 2000).

Faith is often associated with religious belief (Parks, 2000). One reason for this association is that religious doctrine is often seen as central to an expression of faith (Smith, 1979). Another reason is that faith, within Western religious tradition, has had a specific and venerable Christian connotation. This association between faith and religion has resulted in a negative connotation of faith in Western society (Parks; Smith). In other words, the negative connotation of religion in Western society has also resulted in a negative connotation of faith.
Faith has also had a connotation in Western secular society that “faith in whatever form is peripheral . . . [and] that society can be organized on the assumption that faith does not really matter” (Smith, 1979, p. 139). So pervasive is the impact of secularization, persons have come to view faith as belief, or a belief system, that maintains a dogmatic attitude of all “systems of belief” (Fowler, 1981). Faith, when it is reduced to belief in doctrinal and creedal statements, becomes associated with organized religion so that even responsible and sensitive persons may think they must live without faith (Fowler).

“Thus, the word faith has become problematic in a religiously plural world. This is particularly true within any setting—governmental, educational, or commercial—where the multiple perspectives characteristic of our new global commons are especially evident” (Parks, 2000, p. 15). The result is that faith has become a charged, negative word to be avoided, or has simply become a matter treated with indifference (Parks; Smith, 1979).

Readers may interpret these descriptions of belief and faith differently. However, the descriptions do have consistency when one reads the cited authors’ discussions regarding how the descriptions were developed. The descriptions all hold in common the characteristic that faith is a universal quality that is expressed in both religious and secular terms. Many people still link faith to belief and religious belief systems in their common usage of these terms.

Religion

Religion is tied to a social institution in which a group of people participate and/or the practices of the group or individual, as opposed to an individual’s search for meaning. “Religion refers to a belief system -- a product of the rational mind. Religion has to do with the conceptualization of spiritual experience in that it takes the collective spiritual experiences of people and forms them into a system” (Burkhardt, 1989, p. 71).
Religion is “that doctrine, or often fixed system of beliefs, through which we channel our finest spiritual energies. Religion lets us celebrate our spiritual life; through liturgy, hymns, and sacred prayers we are empowered and renewed” (Sinetar, 1992, p. 4). Religion has also been defined as “a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life” (Yinger, 1967, p. 18). Religiousness refers to the extent or degree a person adheres to the practices, knowledge, and beliefs of a particular religion (Burkhardt, 1989).

Some people continue to refer to religiousness and spirituality synonymously even though these concepts were found to have many different meanings and to be significantly different in content. Various authors use terms such as religiousness and spirituality synonymously even though their definitions are diverse, including the ways the terms are defined by the American public (Zinnbauer, 1998; Zinnbauer, et al., 1997). They diverge such that religiousness focuses on organizational or institutional beliefs and practices, whereas spirituality focuses on personal qualities of connectedness or relation with a higher power. Delineation between these two concepts is important.

*Spirituality*

In the past 25 years, interest in spirituality has greatly increased (Roof, 1993). Since many people tend to identify with spirituality, and because public confidence in religion and religious leadership has dropped over recent years, some authors have begun to differentiate spirituality from the other terms (Burkhardt, 1989; Parks, 2000; Roof, 1993; Zinnbauer, et al., 1997). The term spirituality is most frequently used, but spiritual dimension, spiritual well-being, and spiritual needs are also utilized to address the same concept (Burkhardt, 1989). If one reads literature from multiple disciplines, a tremendous amount of writing exists about spirituality and
religion. The main difficulty in the effort to define spirituality is that there are as many views of spirituality as there are authors (Prozesky, 1984).

Spirituality has been described as an obscure construct in need of empirical grounding and operationalization (Zinnbauer, et al., 1997). Sociologist J. Milton Yinger (1967) wrote, “It is a truism to say that any definition of religion is likely to be satisfactory only to its author —and often not to him [or her]” (p. 18). This seems to hold true for a definition of spirituality as well, especially if the definition is to cover the range of diverse participants in higher educational settings.

The following definition provides some guidelines to assist in understanding spirituality. Spirituality is a universal human quality and process; a sacred and personal journey or quest to find meaning and purpose in life; one’s essence or vitality or life principle; a quality that relates a person to the world, gives one meaning to exist, and allows for personal transcendence beyond the present context of reality; and, finally, a relationship or sense of connection with mystery, awe, a higher power, God, or universe (Burkhardt, 1989; Sinetar, 1992). This definition of spirituality incorporates most of the facets described by authors who have attempted to define this concept. Any definition of spirituality should be concrete, yet flexible enough to allow people to make meaning of their spirituality without being constricted by the definition. The definition above allows for an appropriate amount of flexibility, but like most definitions of spirituality it struggles to be concrete.

The definitions provided allow people to differentiate between spirituality and religion. Spirituality is very much an individual expression of one’s essence or one’s nature. Religion is related to a social institution and involves particular practices. These definitions note that religion can be an expression of spirituality. However, a sense of spirituality can be present in
one’s life “whether or not it is expressed through religious beliefs or practices” (Burkhardt, 1989, p. 71).

Spirituality is also sometimes defined similarly to faith. Some theologians have said that faith is “a direct encounter with God” (Smith, 1979, p. 11). Participants in a recent study most often described spirituality as belief in or relationship with God or a higher power (Zinnbauer, et al., 1997). However, spirituality is also more often identified with concepts such as personal transcendence and meaningfulness. Through its association with personal experiences of the transcendent, spirituality has acquired a positive connotation (Zinnbauer, et al., 1997). Spirituality’s positive connotation has resulted in a growing comfort within some areas of education to speak of spirit, spirituality, and soul (Parks, 2000).

The task of intellectuals, Smith (1979) suggested, is to recognize matters of faith and spirituality and communicate these philosophical understandings to others. These understandings assist people in developing culture and, as such, must be formulated “in expressions of our time and place and group—knowing that as the centuries proceed these too will become out-of-date” (Smith, p. 148-149). Although a reconsideration of the word faith may help reclaim a sense of meaning and purpose, the contemporary resistance to things religious is assuaged when faith is associated with spirituality (Fowler, 1981; Parks, 2000; Smith). Thus, by creating a dialogue about spirituality, one can then move on to discuss faith and other related concepts. With a focus on spirituality, rather than faith or religion, professionals can begin to create a common language through which matters of spirituality may be placed in holistic student development.

The preceding section describes the historical and present use of the language of belief, faith, religion, and spirituality. It is also important to understand the history of spirituality and
religion in American higher education in order to understand the concern about the place of spirituality in student affairs. The next section delineates this history.

Religion and Spirituality in Higher Education in the United States

The role of religion in higher education has been affected by different historical events throughout various eras. Beginning with the founding of Harvard in 1636 (Bredeson & Willower, 1991; Cohen, 1998; Hofstadter & Hardy, 1952; Nord, 1995), higher education in America, prior to the formation of the United States, began with schools to train young men for the ministry and civil leadership. By the time of the American Revolution nine colleges existed in America, eight of which had denominational origins. Only the College of Philadelphia (later named the University of Pennsylvania) was not of church origin. “At the time of the founding of the colonial colleges, the pattern of curriculum and faculty-student relations stemming from church-related institutions was most prominent” (Cohen, p. 15).

The colonists desired a strong religious orientation in the communities and the society that they wished to build. “There was a link between the established churches and the teaching of morality or the good life, and as new churches were formed, colleges came along with them so that the young could be instructed in proper conduct” (Cohen, 1998, p. 17). Thus, the early colleges centered on the dissemination of knowledge through teaching, rather than on the advancement of knowledge through research such as modern universities stress. The teaching of moral philosophy was generally the responsibility of the college president (Nord, 1995).

Many presidents of both state and private colleges openly placed Christianity at the center of their institutions in the mid-1800s. Proselytizing by established Eastern colleges sent alumni and evangelists westward to found or preside over colleges and spread the faith (Cohen, 1998). Faculty positions required religious qualifications in both private and public colleges.
(Nord, 1995; Veysey, 1965). “In 1860, 262 of 288 college presidents were members of the clergy and more than a third of the faculty were ministers” (Nord, p. 84). The curriculum included courses entitled Moral Philosophy, Evidences of Christianity, Greek, and Latin. These and other courses reflected a normal curriculum associated with a traditional liberal arts Christian college of the time (Rudolph, 1960; Veysey).

By the mid-1800s, however, higher education in the United States was being influenced by science and research from the German universities. A philosophical point of view based on scientific method and sustained through experimentation in the laboratory began to appear in American universities (Veysey, 1965). Daniel Coit Gilman founded the first research institution in America, Johns Hopkins University, in 1876 with the explanation that science was simply a handmaiden to religion (Hart, 1992; Marsden, 1992). In many universities faculty and administrators expressed the handmaiden sentiment. Into the 1890s, many state universities were still conducting chapel services, frequently with required attendance. At the time, even state universities appeared to be simply nonsectarian Protestant institutions (Marsden; Nord, 1995).

Theology started disappearing from the curriculum and ministerial training was moving to separate “doctrinally safe” divinity schools by the end of the nineteenth century. The classical curriculum in colleges was being dethroned by science, pure research, pragmatism, specialization, and an elective system as well as vocationalism and utility (Nord, 1995). Veysey (1965) wrote of this period, “Another field of endeavor had been urbanized and secularized; only churches themselves remained to be affected, more or less, by the same process” (p. 56).

Religion and theology went through more change in American education in the early 1900s. In 1906 the Carnegie Pension Fund, with an underlying belief that college education should be freed from clerical control, established generous pensions for teachers and scholars at
independent universities and colleges. “Many private religious colleges and universities severed their denominational ties as a result” (Nord, 1995, p. 85). Although departments of theology or religion remained at some larger universities in the 1920s, most colleges and universities had assigned religion and theology to the School of Arts and Sciences with philosophy and the social sciences. Additionally, voluntary chapel became the norm for many colleges by the 1920s (Rudolph, 1962).

By the 1920s and 1930s theology programs were being separated from colleges and were assigned to seminaries and divinity schools. At the time, theology programs were considered graduate programs in many colleges. Newly developed accreditation association standards required universities with graduate programs to have larger endowments, more library holdings, and more professors holding terminal degrees (North Central Association, 1926). The theology programs were removed so that accreditation would not affect the college’s financial status.

Since the mid-1900s, critical historical events have continued to influence religion in United States higher education. World War II, the Cold War, and the Russian satellite Sputnik brought added emphasis on science and technology in American higher education in the 1940s and 1950s. The result was increased government funding in various forms. Along with the funds came increasing regulation in order to secure and continue receiving funds. For example, even church-related colleges were sometimes eligible for certain forms of federal aid as long as the college did not require courses in religion or theology that might proselytize or indoctrinate (Trotter, 1978).

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed the expansion of access to higher education to all citizens. However, throughout the last few decades of the 20th century, the creation of greater accessibility to higher education for social justice has become more equated with economic
opportunity for members of the American underclass (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The overriding values of economics, vocationalism, science and technology, and American citizenship have resulted in little concern in contemporary higher education for incorporating religion. These values, along with historical factors, indicate a secularization of higher education in the United States (Nord, 1995).

*The Secularization of Higher Education in the United States*

The secularization of higher education in the United States was influenced by several historical factors. Perhaps the most recognizable factor was the influence of modernization. Human capital, industrialization, development of science and technology, and economic development were factors that influenced modernization and growth in higher education (Hofstadter & Hardy, 1952; Marsden, 1992; National Institute for Educational Research, 1980; Rudolph, 1962; Veysey, 1965).

Since the mid-19th century, science and technology have been the hallmarks of higher education in the United States (Hofstadter & Hardy, 1952). Although faculty and administrators in the United States framed science as a handmaiden to religion, they did not necessarily recognize its secularizing effect (Marsden, 1994). But science in American universities shaped the evolution versus creationism debate as well as the view that religious values should be a separate cognitive content area (Brickman, 1973).

Accreditation resulted in further secularization of higher education. Those embracing the accreditation movement claimed that higher education could only be served by a research orientation that kept the bias of religion out of the research process. After all, they postulated, pure research can only discover truth through unbiased means (Marsden, 1992, Rudolph, 1962, Veysey, 1965).
The societal focus on the education of citizens for a democratic government also influenced the secularization of higher education in the United States. This was professed early in American higher education when Thomas Jefferson stated that an educated citizenry was imperative to support a democratic form of government (Gehring, personal communication, class notes, Fall 2000). Higher education in the United States has been increasingly framed by the goal of educating citizens for a democratic society (Palmer, 1998). In turn, democratic values and principles (e.g., respect for all citizens) have necessitated secularized education for a secularized government (Marsden, 1994). That is, the focus on democratic values such as respect for all citizens has resulted in avoiding religion and religious language. Rather than learning to accept others’ religious and spiritual traditions as a form of respect, people have responded to this issue by trying to remove religion and spirituality from a position of potential influence.

Secularization, along with capitalism as the fundamental reality of economic life, resulted in the materialistic culture that developed in the United States, in part from educating citizens for upward social and economic mobility. Until the 20th century, higher education in the United States was open only to the aristocratic, the wealthy who could afford higher education. The factors that allowed greater accessibility to higher education resulted in increased college enrollments by citizens simply seeking upward mobility (Merriam & Cafarella, 1999). Although ease of access to higher education has become an important commitment to all segments of the population in the United States, the result has been changes in educational purposes, organizational structures, and desired outcomes amid a great deal of debate and public opinion (Bredeson & Willower, 1991).

One of the concomitant changes, created from debate and public opinion, was a wall of separation between secular and religious values being taught in public institutions. Advocates of
secularism and separationism in church-state-school matters feared a loss of religious freedom, a principle on which this country was founded (Brickman, 1973). This political position was upheld despite public concerns about the loss of moral values that could be influenced by religious values. The result has been the removal of religious influence from public higher education (Marsden, 1994).

The Protestant ethic in the American way of life can be seen as an influential factor in the secularization of American higher education. A recent treatise pointed to the inevitability of secularization because of the very belief structure of the Protestant tradition (Marsden, 1992). The equality and dignity of all individuals, found in both Protestant doctrine and American citizenship, incorporated the need for everyone to accept all points of view. The true Christian had to accept and respect the rights of others. This central principle of democracy could not help but have led to the secularization of the academy (Marsden).

The United States legal system is sometimes considered a factor in the secularization of American higher education as well. American legal precedent supported by the Supreme Court is blamed by some for prohibiting religion in public education by separating the practice of religion from public schools beginning in the 1940s. The courts simply added to the secularization process in American higher education, since much of the religious purpose and content had already disappeared from the universities (Nord, 1995). The lower courts perhaps played a role in the secularization process by enforcement of “anti-Catholic legislation” that prohibited public support for sectarian schools (Nord). Secular and separationist advocates continually opposed any relaxation in the interpretation of the separation clause in the First Amendment. They feared that it would create a serious danger to religious freedom (Brickman, 1973). Because of the
confusion and misinformation surrounding the legal issues about religion and spirituality in higher education, it is appropriate to look at this more in depth.

*Legal Issues Related to Spirituality and Religion*

Higher education professionals should be cognizant of the legal issues they may face when they assist students with spiritual development. Campus faculty and administrators, parents, or even students themselves may argue against religion and spirituality on the campus as a legal matter. Strict separationists view the separation of church and state as absolute—no public property, institution, or personnel should be involved in religious or spiritual matters (Nord, 1995).

It is helpful to be knowledgeable of the legal realities of the separation of church and state. The United States Constitution protects American society from religious power and the First Amendment forbids the use of power to force religion on a person in any setting. However, religious and spiritual discourse does not constitute forcing religion on a person anymore than discourse on sexuality, pluralism, or political beliefs forces sex, acceptance, or political party on someone. Rather, religious and spiritual discussion actually serves the purposes of the free expression clause (Green, 1996; Hoekema, 1996; Nord, 1995). Hoekema stated that to banish religious discourse from the classroom deprives students “of an essential part of their education, that which involves thoughtful reflection on the relationship between faith, learning, and the conduct of individual and communal life” (p. 36).

The United States courts have asserted that public colleges and universities must legally maintain religious neutrality. Neutrality includes not favoring one religion over another and not favoring religion over non-religion. Private colleges have no obligation of neutrality regarding
religion or spirituality. The establishment and free exercise clauses protect private institutions from government interference in this area (Kaplin & Lee, 1997).

Perhaps the most important legal decision regarding religion and spirituality on campus was *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (403 U.S. 602, 1971). This case clearly delineated a public institution’s responsibility of separation with a three-pronged test that included the following: (a) the act or policy must have a secular legislative purpose, (b) no act or policy may explicitly promote nor prohibit religion, and (c) there can be no excessive entanglement between the government and religion (or the church) as a result of the act or policy (Kaplin & Lee, 1997; Nolte, 1979; Nord, 1995). *Tilton v. Richardson* (403 U. S. 672, 1971) further influenced the church-state issue on campus. In this case, the court noted that there are significant differences in higher education compared to elementary and secondary schools, and more specifically, that college students are not as impressionable or susceptible to religious indoctrination (Bilger, 1979). Students of college age are able to discern doctrinaire information. They are also capable of choosing to participate or not participate in religious or spiritual programs offered by an institution.

Although many institutions steered clear of the separation issue for many years to avoid potential legal quandaries, some public institutions are recognizing the appropriateness of offering spiritual development programs for their students as part of their whole-person educational philosophy. Southeast Missouri State University utilizes its campus ministry program in close conjunction with the student affairs department to intentionally offer spiritual programming opportunities for its students (St. John, Myers, Friedel, & Settle, 2001). Most campuses support some type of campus ministry office or program. Campus ministry and religious education on campus have traditionally been held as the permissible venues to discuss religion and spirituality on campus.
Religion and theology departments have long existed on many campuses. These departments continue to be recognized as areas permitted to address religion and spirituality on campus. Public colleges and universities remain neutral for legal purposes by offering the study of religion as a scientific and scholarly activity that does not indoctrinate students. Students can engage in the comparative study of religions, study the social impacts of religion on society, and study the various historical influences of religion, to name but a few examples.

Private institutions can generally offer more specific courses on religion and may even utilize a denominational context. However, a church-related college may be eligible for federal aid only under the condition that the college does not require courses in religion or theology that tend to proselytize or indoctrinate. Another condition is that the college does not require attendance at religious services (Trotter, 1978). Many small, private, church-related colleges have been willing to abide by these conditions in order to receive federal aid, especially during difficult financial times.

The other venue identified as permissible for offering spiritual or religious development programs at colleges is campus ministry. The primary role of campus ministry has been the faith-based religious education of students. Campus ministry on public campuses is often an outreach from local churches, temples, and synagogues. Campus ministry programs on church-related campuses are often provided in conjunction with the affiliated church (Johnson, 1978).

Campus ministry has developed over the years from an enduring, denominational orientation to a more interfaith, ecumenical orientation (Westerhoff, 1978). This trend has primarily followed the secularization of American colleges as described previously. Despite efforts at ecumenical cooperation, particularly among Christian denominations (Johnson, 1978),
students often perceive campus ministry program offerings as religiously (and doctrinally) oriented. Some spiritually oriented students have an adverse response to religious labels. They are sometimes uneasy about participating in programs sponsored by a denominational campus minister or a campus group that carries a denominational label (e.g., Baptist Student Union).

Campus ministry appears in many different forms on campuses. Some campus ministers, offices, or programs actually report to the dean of students or other student affairs professional. Some public universities, as Southeast Missouri State University has exemplified, offer intentional spiritual programming utilizing student affairs professionals (St. John, et al., 2001). But why should student affairs be involved? Why not just leave spiritual programming to religious education departments and campus ministry? Looking at the history of the student affairs profession can help answer these questions.

The Student Affairs Profession

The German influence took root in American higher education in the late 1800s and early 1900s. About the same time, undergraduate enrollment increased tremendously in higher education in the United States (Brubacher & Rudy, 1958; Klein, 2000). Having embraced the German model of higher education, with its main focus on academic freedom to engage in research and inquiry (lehrfreheit), faculty became increasingly engaged in research leaving the non-intellectual development of students to non-faculty specialists (Fenske, 1989a; Rentz, 1996). This created a need for professionals who would work with students’ personal development outside of the curricular arena (Fenske, 1989a).

With a growing concern “about their ability to administer their institution[s] while assuming responsibility for student life issues,” college presidents saw a need for persons to specifically advise students concerning their curricular and extracurricular issues (Rentz, 1996, p.
The positions of Dean of Men and Dean of Women were created in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Many people, some from the academic ranks, were quickly being hired to advise students regarding college issues (Carpenter, 1991; Cowley, 1936/1986). This newly created body of practitioners formed associations to discuss common issues and problems and “inevitably the conversation included attempts to define it [the profession], establish criteria for its practice, and clarify its role on campuses” (Rentz, p. 41).

Many definitions and terms were being applied interchangeably to the new profession, so it was determined that an authoritative statement was needed to define the profession’s principles and practices (Cowley, 1936/1986). The result was the *Student Personnel Point of View* (SPPV), a report written by an executive committee convened by the American Council on Education (ACE) in April 1937 (Rentz, 1996). The SPPV pointed out that the goals of the faculty had shifted from the development of the student as an individual to an emphasis on scientific research and the creation of new knowledge (ACE, 1937/1986).

The historical development of student affairs has resulted in a profession that is “a large, highly diversified field of student-related activities that suffers from continual identity crises” (Fenske, 1989b, p. 35). The responsibilities of the new profession grew rapidly to include such educational duties as educational and vocational counseling, social programs, graduate placement, the administration of loans and scholarships, and others (ACE, 1937). “The development of student affairs as a highly organized unit in American higher education did not emerge until the postwar period of the late 1940s brought large numbers of diverse and first-generation college students to a rapidly expanding number of college campuses” (Ambler, 1993, p. 108). The large growth in numbers and increasing size of public universities after 1950 created an expansion of curricular and social services, and forced fundamental changes in how student
affairs professionals performed their work (Ambler, 1993; Fenske, 1989a; Hughes, 1999). Finally, the social and political movements of the 1960s precipitated another expansion of student affairs services to meet the needs of the increasing diversity of students (Ambler; Ellis & Moon, 1991).

The Student Affairs Philosophy of Holistic Development

A profession needs an underlying philosophy or ethic. The student affairs profession has advanced a holistic philosophy of undergraduate education since the profession’s beginning (Fenske, 1989b; Rentz, 1996). The pioneers of the student affairs profession, the first Deans of Men and Women, valued the individuality of each student, were committed to the holistic development of students, and held an unshakeable belief in each student’s unique potential for growth and learning. These values and beliefs would become the cornerstones of future statements of the field’s mission and goals (Rentz, p. 39-40).

The committee members who drafted the Student Personnel Point of View (SPPV), “affirmed the concept of holism as a basic assumption that should guide practice” in this profession (Rentz, 1996, p. 43). Specifically, the committee noted that colleges and universities had an obligation to consider the student as a whole —his intellectual capacity and achievement, his emotional make-up, his physical condition, his social relationships, his vocational aptitudes and skills, his moral and religious values, his economic resources, his aesthetic appreciations . . . rather than upon his intellectual training alone (ACE, 1937/1986, p. 76).

The “whole student” philosophy has been subscribed to by various leaders of the profession ever since (Fenske, 1989b). The philosophy was again summarized in the 1949 SPPV, released by the American Council on Education. “The concept of education is broadened to
include attention to the student’s well-rounded development—physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually—as well as intellectually” (NASPA, 1989, p. 22). Trueblood’s (1964/1986) treatise on equal educational opportunity pointed out to student affairs practitioners and faculty that there should be no conflict between an interest in the student-scholar and the “whole” student. Miller and Prince (1976) noted, “The mission of the college is to educate the whole student and not only his or her intellect” (p. 169). Holistic student development and other philosophies of the student affairs profession were again re-emphasized in the NASPA publication *Points of View* in 1989.

The broad philosophy of these roots was argued for more recently in the ACPA’s *Student Learning Imperative* (1996). “Student affairs professionals take seriously their responsibilities for fostering learning and personal development. Their efforts are guided by a holistic philosophy of learning . . .” utilized to assist the development of each student (p. 2). The hallmarks presented in the *Student Learning Imperative* were re-organized into several outcomes “for the purposes of developing our own definition of student learning” (Whitt & Associates, 1996, p. 6). “Student learning encompasses all the aspects of students with which student affairs has traditionally concerned themselves—their well-being, their well-rounded development—as well as some with which we traditionally have not” (p. 6). This tradition of student affairs continues in order to “help the academy recognize the value of the whole person concept” (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p. 14).

*The Student Affairs Professional*

The inception and development of a profession brings with it the need to define what it means to be a professional in that field. A good starting place is advocating that “as individuals and as groups, we believe ourselves to be ‘professionals,’ and we believe our calling and
colleagues with whom we have established formal organizations to be professional” (Stamatokos, 1981, p. 105). Despite laypersons still being hired into all levels in the field to perform various tasks, professionals must agree with the idea that “professionalism is an essential ingredient of both preparation and practice in the field of student affairs” (Carpenter, 1991, p. 259). How can one distinguish a practitioner from a professional? Fenske (1989b) defined a practitioner as an individual whose primary work is in a non-curricular and non-business area of an institution of higher education. A professional is one who is appropriately educated and trained to work with students in developmental ways, even when performing the same functional tasks as a practitioner (Miller & Winston, 1991).

The type of sophisticated knowledge required of a professional is derived from graduate program preparation for the field, professional development activities, or both. The student affairs professional must possess a foundation a “sophisticated grasp of an interdisciplinary knowledge base, drawing on strands from psychology, sociology, education, and organizational development among others” (Moore, 1991, p. 768). Student affairs professionals also need a more specific knowledge base that includes the following: (a) an understanding of how human development occurs (the psychological and social processes), (b) an ability to analyze significant environmental influences on human development, (c) a perspective on who the college student is developmentally, and (d) clear ideas of the ends toward which human development should be directed during one’s college years (Knefelkamp, Widick, & Parker, 1978).

Knowledge of and ability to appropriately assess and improve one’s efforts and students’ development is another competency that distinguishes a professional from a practitioner. Not only should professionals intentionally design developmental or learning environments, “they need to promote goal-directed student involvement, and help students understand their own
learning and development in the process” (Moore, 1991, p. 770). These efforts also require the measurement of programs and processes, and of students’ achievements. This creates the need for student affairs professionals to utilize, and possibly design, tools for assessing the outcomes associated with the developmental process (Astin, 1993).

The growing demand for qualified practitioners in the 1970s brought an influx of graduate programs designed to educate and train student affairs professionals. Documents for guiding the academic preparation of student affairs practitioners were first drafted in 1964 by the Council of Student Personnel Associations in Higher Education (COSPA). By 1986, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) had developed guidelines for both professional preparation and professional practice (Carpenter, 1991). Carpenter noted, “efforts related to the CAS Standards and other credentialing and accreditation processes are gaining strength” (p. 273). He continued, “the literature and professional associations of student affairs are more and more dominated by respected, capable, and aware professionals” (Carpenter, p. 273). Equipped with appropriate knowledge and training, student affairs professionals deliberately design or reshape the higher education environment to offer learning opportunities across the whole spectrum of human development.

**Mid-level Student Affairs Professionals**

Within student affairs there is a large cadre of professionals considered to be mid-level managers. Particularly since the 1960s, middle management positions in student affairs have increased through the creation of new administrative positions (Ellis & Moon, 1991). Paralleling the growth of middle management in the corporate sector, student affairs professionals need advanced expertise and administrative skills in specific program areas (Hughes, 1999).
The range of mid-level student affairs professionals’ role expectations differs according to specialization (Penn, 1990). However, three primary roles—student development educator, administrator, and counselor—do exist (Delworth, Hanson & Associates, 1989). Mid-level professionals’ functions vary according to institutional size and complexity. One of the primary functions of mid-level professionals is to orient students to the curricular and co-curricular college requirements, standards, opportunities, and activities (Penn, 1990; Scott, 1978). Primarily enacting policies set by senior administrators and trustees, mid-level student affairs professionals are also expected to be servants to the students and faculty and to find the appropriate balance of these roles (Ellis & Moon, 1991; Hughes, 1999; Scott).

Drucker (1973) contended that middle manager’s decisions and actions are meant to have a direct and prominent impact on the organization. Mid-level student affairs administrators have been described as anonymous leaders and unheralded heroes who keep institutions functioning while influencing their institution’s style and tone (Ellis & Moon, 1991; Scott, 1978). Level of experience and responsibility shape the mid-level student affairs professionals’ leadership role on campus (Belch, 1991). Mid-level student affairs professionals further determine their status through the level of autonomy in determining and achieving goals. Increased freedom to act without approval or direction from above, including the freedom to implement creative problem solving strategies, indicates such autonomy (Hughes, 1999).

It is imperative to better understand the experience, meaning, and importance individuals attribute to the mid-level management position in student affairs (Belch, 1991). Mid-level professionals have a complex view of their institutions because of the time and effort they invest in the enterprise. These professionals are a valuable asset for the insights they hold and, as a
result of their technical expertise in a given area, they are capable of driving the institution in the
day-to-day accomplishment of its mission (Belch, 1991).

Mid-level student affairs managers often view themselves as educators, student
development specialists, and public servants whose goal is to effectively assist students in the
educational setting outside the classroom (Penn, 1990). They also are committed to upholding
the philosophy and values espoused in higher education and student affairs (Belch, 1991). It
appears that mid-level student affairs professionals have much to offer to the discussion of
spirituality on campus, within the profession, and toward the development of students.

The Student Affairs Professional as Educator and Guide

Student affairs professionals serve in many roles including leader, manager, coach,
collaborator, and advisor among others. Throughout its history, the profession of student affairs
has existed to help students (Jacoby, 1993). Moore (1991) commented that one of the roles
student affairs professionals have played is that of encouraging students in their developmental
journeys. But the field has moved from simply providing students with support services to a
more substantial role of enhancing and intentionally facilitating holistic development as an
integral part of students’ total education (Bryan & Mullendore, 1993; Miller & Winston, 1991).
As such, one of the important roles of the student affairs professional is as an educator who
facilitates, guides, and assists students to make meaning of their experiences through out-of-class
education and developmental experiences (Creamer, Winston, & Miller, 2001; Miller &

As educators, student affairs professionals offer learning opportunities across the whole
spectrum of personal development. This role includes clarifying learning opportunities with
students to enhance their personal or talent development (Moore, 1991). It is important to note
that student affairs professionals should implement and execute programs with students rather than for students. This allows professionals to help students understand their own learning and development (Jacoby, 1993; Moore, 1991).

Moore (1991) commented that fostering personal involvement in learning is crucial to the success of students in higher education. Baxter-Magolda (2001) explained that student experience is the foundation for learning. She noted the need for student affairs professionals to create collaborative partnerships with students for learning and meaning making to occur. Student affairs professionals must continue to recognize that the major responsibility for personal and social development while in college rests with the student (Miller & Prince, 1976). But in the role of educator, student affairs professionals have a responsibility to guide students in their making of meaning (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

*Student Affairs Professionals and Spiritual Exploration*

It is important for student affairs professionals to explore their own spirituality as a model to guide students in their exploration of spirituality (Allen & Kellom, 2001; Love & Talbot, 1999). Higher education professionals have begun to recognize the significance of spiritual development for students, but they have been hesitant to address spiritual development in their own work lives as student affairs professionals (Rogers & Dantley, 2001). “Just as we in student affairs emphasize educating the whole student, we need to attend to our whole person in the way we structure student affairs organizations, collaborate with our colleagues, and educate students” (Rogers & Dantley, p. 595).

Student affairs professionals should incorporate discussion and reflection about spirituality in their training sessions, on-going development seminars, workshops, and other events (Moran, 2001). Additionally, student affairs professionals should practice the art of active
listening, reflecting, and asking meaningful questions in order to prepare to engage in intentional and meaningful discussions about spirituality (Moran). Creating dialogue for the purpose of “expanding peoples’ awareness [and] enriching it to develop more complex meaning” (Rogers & Dantley, 2001, p. 599), is an important process for helping professionals and students face spiritual concerns. Dialogue is not about reaching consensus, but about respecting others’ points of view, learning from differences, and seeing truth “through the eyes of those whose worldview is in contrast to one’s own” (Rogers & Dantley, p. 599).

Dialogue should become an often-used means to engage all members of campus communities in spiritual discussion. Student affairs professionals must be vigilant in making sure all constituents are invited to engage in this dialogue and demonstrate “that they consider all institution members as colleagues with important insights to contribute” (Rogers & Dantley, 2001, p. 600). As such, student affairs divisions need professionals at all levels to help create conditions and climates that encourage spiritual exploration, spiritual dialogue, and spiritual development for all members of the campus community (Rogers & Dantley).

To date, several authors have focused the discussion of spirituality and spiritual development on faculty and students (Astin & Astin, 1999; Moran, 2001; Nash, 1996; Palmer, 1998). Strange (2001) noted the need for addressing spirituality in college student personnel graduate preparation programs. Parks (1986, 2000) addressed spiritual development for young adults, which includes students and young student affairs professionals. However, the importance of spiritual development for student affairs professionals is just beginning to be mentioned in the literature (Allen & Kellom, 2001; Love & Talbot, 1999). Those articles noting the need to consider the spiritual development of student affairs professionals are theoretical and pragmatic. They are not, nor are they based on, empirical research.
Within the holistic philosophy of the profession, researchers have developed a wide array of principles and theories that guide the work of student affairs professionals. Concern for whole person development has resulted in numerous theories of student development (Rodgers, 1990). Rodgers defined student development as “the ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her developmental capabilities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education” (p. 27). As a philosophy, student development “. . . has guided student affairs practice and served as a rationale for specific programs and services since the profession’s inception” (Evans, et al., 1998, p. 4).

As a guiding philosophy, student development evolved from the scientific study of human development and the disciplines of psychology and sociology (Evans, et al., 1998). After an initial focus on vocational guidance early in the twentieth century, the SPPV was formulated and the new profession asserted that educator’s must guide students’ whole development. The report asserted that this would allow students to reach their full potential and contribute to the development of society (ACE, 1937/1986). In 1949, the SPPV was revised to focus on the psychology of individual differences as well as to affect the development of students (Evans, et al.; NASPA, 1989). In the 1960’s, social scientists focused their studies and theories on how students change and grow during their college years. The advent of these studies led to student development becoming used as a term to denote the research and theories concerning late-adolescent development (Evans, et al.; Rodgers, 1990).

The body of literature associated with student development includes cognitive, psychosocial, typology, maturity, and person-environment categories (Knefelkamp, Widick, & Parker, 1978). “Knowledge of student development theory allows student affairs professionals to
proactively identify and address student needs, design programs, develop policies, and create healthy college environments that encourage positive growth in students” (Evans, et al., 1998, p. 5). Student development theories attend to behavioral and affective changes as well as intellectual development during the college years. In addition, these theories encourage professionals to collaborate with faculty to enhance learning and developmental outcomes for students (Evans, et al.).

Recently, Wilson and Wolf-Wendel (2005) recognized the importance of holistic and spiritual development in the literature of the profession. In the *ASHE Reader on College Student Development Theory*, their unit on holistic versions of student development included a section on spiritual and faith development. Stewart (2002), whose article was included in the reader, noted that students were excited about the opportunity to discuss spirituality. The students had indicated that they had not considered issues of spirituality previously because they had never been asked.

For the purposes of this study, the following paragraphs will address cognitive and psychosocial theories and typology models. Examples of two particular theories: (a) Fowler’s theory of Faith Development, and its basis in cognitive and psychosocial theories, and (b) Nash’s typology model of religious narratives, are also provided.

*Psychosocial and Cognitive Theories*

Psychosocial and cognitive theories provide us “with ways to describe where [a] student is developmentally, and how developmental changes occur” (Knefelkamp, et al., 1978, p. xi). These are complementary ways of describing student development: “One describes what students will be concerned about and what decisions will be primary; the other suggests how students will think about those issues and what shifts in reasoning will occur” (Knefelkamp, et
Although psychosocial models focus on the process of self-definition, many of these “identity models” are also cognitive in that “. . . individuals move through stages of increasing cognitive complexity with regard to their self-identification” (Evans, et al., 1998, p. 11).

Influenced by the research of Erik Erikson (1950, 1968), psychosocial development theories describe a sequence of tasks or stages that define an individual’s cycle of growth. An individual grows, or develops, when one’s biology and psychology come together and change the way she or he thinks, behaves, feels, values, and relates to others and to oneself. In psychosocial theory, the sequence in which developmental tasks are addressed is influenced by gender, culture, and the society in which one lives (Evans, et al., 1998; Knefelkamp, et al., 1978).

Based on Jean Piaget’s (1964) theories in psychology, cognitive theories reveal the ways people develop intellectually; they enlighten changes in the manners or methods of how people think (Evans, et al., 1998). The process of cognitive development is seen as interactive: “Individuals encounter problems, dilemmas, or ideas which cause cognitive conflict that demands that they accommodate or change their way of thinking to a more adequate form” (Knefelkamp, et al., 1978, p. xii). In cognitive development theory, universal patterns of stages that individuals experience in a sequential order are identified, although gender differences have been noted (Evans, et al.; Knefelkamp, et al.).

Currently, the only psychosocial-cognitive theory related to spirituality is Fowler’s (1981, 1991) theory of faith development. Fowler based his theory in the tradition of constructive developmental genetic epistemology as articulated by J. Mark Baldwin, John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Lawrence Kohlberg. It was additionally influenced by Erik Erikson’s revisionist psychoanalytic ego psychology, and the theological and comparative religion philosophies of
Paul Tillich, H. Richard Niebuhr, and Wilfred Cantwell Smith (Fowler, 1991). This theory was developed to describe the “dynamic process of finding and making meaning in our lives” (Fowler, 1991, p. 27). Fowler’s original theory described six stages of faith consciousness with the first two occurring during childhood. Primarily emerging during adolescence, Stage 3—Synthetic-Conventional Faith challenges a person to begin to form a set of beliefs, values, and commitments for one’s life. Stage 4—Individuative-Reflective Faith is reached when one questions, examines, and reconstitutes the values and beliefs formed to that point, and when one is able to take responsibility for one’s own life. According to Fowler, most traditional age college students and young adults are found in these two stages. Usually developing at mid-life and beyond, Stage 5—Conjunctive Faith, occurs when one is able to embrace the opposites or polarities in one’s life. Finally, Stage 6—Universalizing Faith is a very rare occurrence denoted by a special grace that is hard to explain.

Typology Theories

Typology theories, another category of student development theory, suggest that persistent individual differences exist in how people look at and relate to the world. Typology models emphasize factors—psychological (e.g., temperament differences) or sociological (e.g., socio-economic status)—that are consistent among a group of individuals in how they cope with change or collegiate demands. These factors, that stress different patterns of socialization, along with the core assumption that “. . . each individual, representing any type, brings unique, positive contributions to each situation” (Evans, et al., 1998, p. 11), turn us from the universal to the particular and influence development in other arenas (Evans, et al.; Knefelkamp, et al, 1978). Major typology theories have emphasized learning styles, vocational interests, and personality types.
The typology theory most interesting to this study of spirituality is Robert Nash’s (1999, 2001, & 2002) work on religious narratives. Nash believed in the importance of students’ spirituality. In an attempt to learn more about this, he dialogued with students about spirituality and religious expression. His first book, *Faith, Hype and Clarity: Teaching about Religion in American Schools and Colleges* (1999), described four types of religious narratives that Nash used to categorize his participants: (a) fundamentalist (b) prophetic, (c) alternative (neo-gnostic), and (d) post-theistic. In *Religious Pluralism in the Academy* (2001), Nash described six narratives: a) orthodoxy, b) wounded belief, c) mainline belief, d) activism, e) the exploration, and f) secular humanism. His latest work, *Spirituality, Ethics, Religion, and Teaching: A Professor’s Journey* (2002), briefly described eight narratives that included four previous narratives: orthodox believers, wounded believers, mainline believers, and (social justice) activists, but also described mystics, existential humanists, postmodern skeptics, and scientific empiricists. The latter four narratives included elements of the explorer and secular humanist narratives, but were distinctly different in many ways.

Nash (1999) used the labels of religious belief and non-belief because they represented types of spirituality most frequently expressed by his students. He argued that “each of the narratives presents a more or less coherent response” to what a particular narrative’s adherents believe are a deficiency in American society. In 2001, he described six mainstream and alternative stories represented among college students. Nash also discussed the role of religion for fostering values and how moral conversations might take place in the classroom. Although he expanded the number of narratives in 2002, that book focused on his teaching and experiences with students while touching upon the narratives simply as an element within his chapter on *The Spirituality of Teaching*. 
Like most typology theories, an attempt to emphasize types of spiritualities fails to acknowledge that each individual develops a personal spirituality (Ingersoll, 1994). Nash (2002) noted that his eight narratives are the dominant ones among many, and that he created his narratives to avoid the religious and spiritual stereotyping that other authors created. He recognized that it is virtually impossible for any analyst to adequately describe the nuances and complexities of religio-spiritual narratives in an easy or catchall way.

Perhaps more important than a student’s religious narrative is that the student recognizes himself or herself as a spiritual being and seeks to develop that aspect of his or her life. Knowledge of the type of religious narrative a student embraces may be helpful, but spiritual guides should help a student to enhance his or her spirituality as an aspect of the student’s whole development. Guiding students in this manner can occur regardless of a student’s type.

Summary

The author began this chapter by explaining and differentiating the potentially confusing terminology regarding spirituality, religion, and faith. He then summarized the literature relevant to spirituality within the context of American higher education and the student affairs profession. He noted how American higher education was closely connected to religion early in its history, and how the secularization of higher education in the United States has caused the diminution of religion and spirituality and moved it to the periphery of the academy. Despite this, theology and religious education departments, campus ministry programs, and student affairs professionals have maintained the importance of spirituality and religion within American higher education.

The author also reviewed the literature pertaining to the student affairs profession and its emergence as an entity whose members attended to students, their concerns, and their needs. The student affairs profession has retained the importance of spirituality through its philosophy of
holistic education. Some may contend that retaining the philosophy of holistic development has pushed the profession further from the core of a scientific rationale of higher education. However, the philosophical roots are of primary importance to understanding why spirituality belongs in student affairs work within higher education.

The student affairs professional, particularly the mid-level professional, is in a unique position in the academy to attend to students. The professionals’ role as educator and guide was explained, including the importance of guiding student learning and meaning-making. The author also addressed why student affairs professionals should explore spirituality.

Finally, the review addressed the theories that guide student affairs professionals concerning student development. The review concluded with discussion of Fowler’s (1981, 1992) theory of faith development, and the religious narratives Nash (1999, 2001, 2002) derived from his dialogues with college students.

As a whole, the review suggests that the student affairs profession believes in the philosophy of holistic development. This philosophy prompts student affairs professionals to assist students with positive affective and behavioral development, rather than just intellectual growth. The profession’s philosophy is based on the assumption that holistic development allows students to reach their full potential and contribute to society’s betterment. To embrace the holistic philosophy fully, it is important for student affairs professionals to better understand the role spirituality may play in holistic development.

A review of the literature discloses that little research has been done on mid-level student affairs professionals. This study invited mid-level student affairs professionals to join the dialogue about spirituality. The goal was to broaden the dialogue about spirituality and reiterate that all student affairs professionals have important insights to contribute. Specifically, the
discussion will focus on clarifying student affairs professionals’ constructs of spirituality and the role of spirituality in the student affairs profession. The next chapter details the methodology for conducting and reporting a research study of this nature.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Spirituality does not lend itself easily to scientific study, but requires different methods of investigation (Collins et al., 1987). Qualitative approaches are both warranted and accepted as legitimate forms of research for topics such as this (Love & Talbot, 1999). Qualitative methodologies and methods are as numerous as the researchers who choose to engage in qualitative studies. Each researcher brings a theoretical framework to a study, designs a study based on that framework in conjunction with the research question, and constructs a study based on the aforementioned considerations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990; Silverman, 2000). There are many potential qualitative research designs that could be utilized in attempting to shed light on the questions about spirituality in the student affairs profession. The following pages address: (a) the theoretical framework and background utilized to address the research question(s), (b) the description of and rationale for a specific qualitative methodology, and (c) the explanation of the design and methods for the study including the assurance of the efficacy and rigor of the study. Since no prior study had focused on the spirituality of mid-level student affairs professionals, a phenomenological approach was utilized to discern the essence of the participants’ responses.

The general direction of this research and the research questions reveal some of the theoretical framework. The research questions posed were constructed from knowledge of student affairs and higher education, and from interest in a wide range of literature about spirituality and religion. In particular, wellness and student development are central to student affairs work in the context of colleges and universities. In both the wellness and student development literatures spirituality is mentioned as a central component, but little has been written attempting to define spirituality or suggesting how it might be utilized in student
development. This gap in the literature is a serious deficit for professionals who adhere to a wellness approach to student affairs.

According to Patton (1990), the quality and integrity of a qualitative study is best served when a researcher is forthright with his or her thoughts about how the study was designed and how the data were analyzed. As such, the researcher’s background and conceptualization of the study, is essential to the design, development and analysis of data in any qualitative research study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990; Silverman, 2000). The following autobiographical sketch highlights this researcher’s professional and educational background as well as thoughts related to this research study. In keeping with appropriate phenomenological research technique, the researcher’s story will be written as a first person narrative.

The Researcher’s Story

At the time of this writing, I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Administration program at Bowling Green State University; pursuit of the doctoral degree began in 1998. My student affairs career spans over twenty years at six different institutions of higher education, a career that began by obtaining a master’s degree in College Student Personnel at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Due to the influence of the master’s program and a commitment to student affairs, I have deemed it important to stay abreast of the professional literature throughout my career.

One of the main reasons I found the student affairs profession attractive to study is because of its commitment to the holistic development of students. My philosophy of professional practice is grounded in a focus on wellness, a movement within the profession and in society that recognizes the holistic development of persons. Although each of the colleges where I have worked has been unique, I have remained actively involved in wellness programs
and initiatives throughout my career. Despite the specific mention of spirituality and/or spiritual development in the student development literature, and the commitment of colleges to holism, little attention seems to have been given to spirituality and the spiritual development of students on the part of colleges and universities. Accordingly, I believe the spiritual dimensions of students’ lives have not been adequately addressed or supported by the student affairs profession.

My specific interest in spirituality and spiritual development began in high school. Dissatisfied with the religion of my parents, I attended churches of different religious denominations and different non-denominational Bible study groups with friends. In college, I explored religion and spirituality through coursework that included (a) a comparative world religions class, and (b) a study abroad class that traveled throughout Western Europe for a month focusing on the reformation and ecumenical movements of Christianity. During and after college, I attended a variety of churches to aid my understanding about different religions, faiths, and church doctrines.

Throughout and following my master’s program, I practiced Christianity while reading and learning about alternative spiritual experiences such as channeling, reincarnation, new age spirituality, supernatural encounters, and earth worship. For the past several years I have been a member of the United Methodist Church, have focused on spirituality and faith within that context, and have developed a personal relationship with God. Reading the entire Bible, which I continue to study, has allowed me to explore a faith tradition in greater depth. I have intentionally read works that have assisted me in developing an understanding of a variety of world religions and faiths including Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Taoism. I have also purposefully exposed myself to many religious and spiritual works ranging from The Tao Tê Ching (Lao-tzu, 1955), The Prophet (Gibran, 1966), and Jesus Christ Superstar (Rice & Webber,
1970), to *Gandhi* (Ashe, 1968), *Godspell* (Schwartz, 1972) and *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (Pirsig, 1975). This has allowed me to better understand a broad range of spiritual traditions and faiths. This broad background helps me in my work with a variety of students and their spiritual traditions.

Throughout the course of my doctoral program, I produced papers on the following topics: spiritual dimensions of college students, adult student development and spirituality, the secularization of Findlay College, and the secularization of higher education in Thailand and the United States--a comparative perspective. The focus throughout these works was on spirituality in higher education within and beyond the bounds of Christian influence. These and other studies enabled me to develop the defining themes of spirituality noted in Chapter I. Given my personal exploration of the topic, my interest in spirituality created a desire to know how other student affairs practitioners defined spirituality and spiritual development.

Prior to beginning this study, I had limited experience in conducting qualitative research. A doctoral course on qualitative research, in which I participated, involved a case study exploring one participant’s expression of how graduate school affected his spiritual development. Additionally, I have participated in classes and training sessions that promoted skills for developing trust and rapport with others. These skills were utilized and further developed working with employees and students over several years. Conducting numerous interviews of potential employees on many levels has sharpened my training in interviewing skills. I have further honed skills through recruitment of volunteers for many committees and tasks. Finally, I have developed appropriate observation skills and have confidence in my abilities to analyze various forms of data.
My perspective, or beliefs, about how people make meaning and what constitutes knowledge, directly influenced the design of this research study. I believe that each person makes meaning of life, circumstances, events, and occurrences for oneself. No two persons are exactly alike; no two persons have exactly the same experiences. Therefore, no two persons see, perceive, think, imagine, or judge their experiences in the same way. However, different people are capable of describing experiences in ways that show they have commonalities with others’ experiences. This is particularly true of people from similar socially constructed backgrounds such as race, gender, economic class, or ethnicity.

Because of my educational and professional experiences, particularly as a student affairs practitioner, I believe that the words, meanings, and ideas set forth by colleagues and students are extremely important. Data generated through interviews and observations are considered appropriate for studies that involve developing meaning surrounding a phenomenon (defined as any occurrence that is perceptible, or appears to be real). This approach lends itself to the study of events and occurrences, and allows me to discern a phenomenon’s basic meanings and constructs. In the role of an inquirer, I can search for participants’ shared meanings of a phenomenon and then create the descriptions of the experience(s).

Through reading about qualitative research methodologies and methods, I have discovered that phenomenology is a way to understand shared experiences. Merriam (1998) commented, “Qualitative research draws from a philosophy of phenomenology in its emphasis on experience and interpretation, but a researcher could also do a phenomenological study using the particular ‘tools’ of phenomenology” (p. 15). This study emphasized the use of those particular tools.
Due to the nature of studying spirituality, and the lack of studies regarding the spirituality of mid-level student affairs practitioners, I chose a phenomenological approach to study questions about the spirituality of these practitioners. The actual methods, or tools, utilized to explore mid-level student affairs professionals' beliefs about spirituality and spiritual development, as explained by Moustakas (1994) and others, follow.

Methodology and Methods

This study was developed and the data were analyzed using a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology, as a research methodology, emphasizes experience and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln; 1998; Holstein & Gubrium, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990). Patton described phenomenological studies as guided by

the assumption that there is an essence or essences to shared experience. These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced . . . The assumption of essence, . . . becomes the defining characteristic of a purely phenomenological study. (p. 70)

Thus, a purely phenomenological study seeks to determine the universal, shared meanings of persons who experience a particular occurrence or event. The essence(s) is the very nature of the phenomenon, or what makes something what it is (Van Manen, 1990). An example of this approach was a study of women healers in Maine by Markides (1996). Markides employed a phenomenological methodology and thematic analysis to illustrate the essences of complementary energetic practices of women healers.

The phenomenological methodology coincides with the belief that one needs to ascertain the essence of a phenomenon through the shared meanings with others, the research participants. Researchers have used the phenomenological approach to examine such experiences as
homelessness, being anxious, being criminally victimized, insomnia, and anger (Moustakas, 1994). The proposed study primarily utilized the phenomenological research methods explicated by Moustakas. These research methods focused on discovering meaning through reflection on events or occurrences as described by the participants.

Assumptions of Phenomenology

The most basic philosophical assumption of phenomenology is that one can only know something to be true by consciously or intentionally thinking about the perceptions and meanings that make one aware of the event or occurrence being studied (Patton, 1990). Moustakas (1994) described the challenge for a researcher as follows:

To describe things in themselves, to permit what is before one to enter consciousness and be understood in its meanings and essences in light of intuition and self-reflection. The process involves a blending of what is really present with what is imagined as present from the vantage point of possible meanings; thus a unity of the real and the ideal. (p. 27)

The main assumptions of phenomenology can be best understood by defining the concepts of essence, intentionality, and intuition.

The essence(s), or shared meaning(s), of a phenomenon are depicted after reflective analysis and interpretation of the research participants’ narratives. The researcher reflects on what was experienced and makes meaning of it. In this way, the researcher is able to perceive the experience(s) as real. As such, what the researcher thinks, and feels, and perceives is the source of certainty (Moustakas, 1994).

Another assumption of phenomenology is intentionality. “Intentionality refers to consciousness, to the internal experience of being conscious of something; thus the act of consciousness and the object of consciousness are intentionally related” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 28,
emphasis in original). By being conscious of, or present and focused on, other experiences in the world, the broader world and the self are inseparable in terms of making meaning. The meaning of the phenomena is uncovered through intentional reflection because experience precedes reflection. As an example, the analysis of sorrow cannot exist concurrently with the experience of sorrow, or the sorrow will soon dissipate. In order to grasp the meaning of an experience, intentional reflection must occur after, and only after, the experience itself (Moustakas; Van Manen, 1990).

Intuition is the third key assumption of phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Based on the writings of Edmund Husserl and Rene Descartes, Moustakas described intuition as “the beginning place in deriving knowledge of human experience, free of everyday sense impressions and the natural attitude” (p. 32). The natural attitude is “the everyday knowing of things,” or the primacy of everyday experiences (Moustakas). Intuition is immediate cognition, knowing something without having to rationalize it, without having to rely on everyday experiences to rationalize and determine its existence. For instance, one exists because one knows she exists. Every time she thinks or perceives that she exists it is true, and no one can tell her she is nothing (Descartes, 1977). Basic truths, objects of perception, and ethical principles, regarded as valid and universal, are known to be true through intuition rather than reason.

Combining intuition with the intentional reflective process allows experiences to become clear and evident. This process permits the description of experiences and the recognition of the essence(s) of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological approach allows the researcher to look at the experience, think about it intuitively, intentionally and reflectively, and describe its essence.
Methods of Phenomenology

Phenomenological research facilitates the derivation of knowledge through Epoche, Reduction, and Imaginative Variation (Moustakas, 1994). Epoche is the process a “researcher engages in to remove, or at least become aware of prejudices, viewpoints, or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation” (Katz as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 158). Reduction permits the researcher to consider experience in its singular state. Imaginative Variation, which must follow Reduction, allows the researcher to grasp and describe the pure possibilities of the meanings and essences of the experience. Finally, a Synthesis of Meanings and Essences concludes the phenomenological research process.

Epoche

Epoche is the “process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, and predispositions, and allowing [experiences] to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). The suspension of judgment was critical in the phenomenological investigation for the researcher to see the experience for itself (Merriam, 1998). The researcher “brackets the phenomenon” so that it can be looked at freshly, or in a completely open manner (Moustakas). Epoche is a difficult task that requires the researcher to “allow a phenomenon or experience to be just what it is and to come to know it as it presents itself . . . From the Epoche, we are challenged to create new ideas, new feelings, new awarenesses, and understandings” (Moustakas, p. 86). This posture allows the researcher to claim an individual reality and achieve a personal sense and validity.

Reduction

Reduction begins with closely examining the phenomenon; all other distractions, preconceptions, and the like are set aside so “the entire research process is rooted solely on the
topic and question” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). The researcher's task is to look at and describe just what is seen. The researcher looks several times, treats every statement as having equal value initially, and describes the different textural qualities--distinctive or identifying characteristics--of the experiences. Each angle of perception adds more to the knowledge of the phenomenon and allows the researcher to reduce the experience to what is thematic (Moustakas).

The analysis process enables the researcher to remove repetitive, overlapping, and irrelevant statements and leaves only the textural meanings and unchanging parts of the whole phenomenon. The themes are then clustered into a coherent textural description. Reduction enables the researcher to concentrate on explicating the essential nature of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

In order to better understand the Reduction process, Moustakas’ (1994) description is helpful:

The experiencing person turns inward in reflection . . . Whatever shines forth in consciousness as I perceive it, reflect on it, imagine it, concentrate on it, is what I attend to--that is what stands out as meaningful for me. Each looking opens new awarenesses that connect with one another, new perspectives that relate to each other, new folds of the manifold features that exist in every phenomena and that we explicate as we look again, and again, and again--keeping our eyes turned to the center of the experience and studying just what is before us, exactly as it appears. (p. 92)

Reflecting on what was experienced, the researcher recognizes and describes the experiences with greater clarity. Each reflection on the experience provides a more complete grasp of the meaning. Clear and competent reflection provides reduction toward the meaningful and essential component parts of the experience (Moustakas).
Reducing the experiences to themes, or what Moustakas (1994) labeled horizontalizing, permits clusters of themes to fall into categories. The final task of Reduction is to construct a complete and coherent description of the phenomenon.

*Imaginative Variation*

Through the use of Imaginative Variation, the researcher seeks “possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97-98). Through Imaginative Variation, anything can become possible as potentialities emerge and move toward meanings and essences. The researcher then describes the essential structures of a phenomenon by noting examples of unchanging structural themes (Moustakas).

Of central concern to the researcher is the concept of the unchanging structural theme. For example, consider the red color of individual objects. A generic redness is determined because all the different shades of the color red we perceive have a quality of redness running through them. This intuition is arrived at through imagining and integrating what is common in all the different shades of red (Moustakas, 1994). The key concept of this example is that all phenomena have a similar essence that a person can derive and describe through the processes of phenomenology.

*Synthesis of Meanings and Essences*

“The intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” is the final process in phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). In other words, the researcher must describe the common or universal conditions and qualities of the phenomenon. In reality
“the essences of any experience are never totally exhausted” (Moustakas, p. 100). The synthesis describes the essences at a particular place and time following the researcher’s reflective and imaginative study of the phenomenon. The researcher could experience the phenomena at a later time or from a different perspective resulting in further reflection, imagination, clarity, and additional essences.

To understand synthesis, consider when the researcher owned a Ford Mustang automobile. As the primary driver, the researcher saw the Mustang mainly from the perspective of the driver’s seat. He also looked at the automobile from many different angles outside the car. The owner had a good perspective of the Mustang and could describe it to others. But he might have gained a new perspective of that car by riding in the back seat when someone else was driving. This perspective would not have changed the essence of the Mustang, but it would have provided a different perspective for reflecting on, imagining, clarifying and describing the essences of that Mustang.

The phenomenological methodology for investigating human experience allows knowledge and understanding to be derived from a state of pure consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). Simply stated, the phenomenological study is “one that focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how they experience it” (Patton, 1990, p. 71). These processes provided the framework and methods utilized in this study.

**Participant Selection**

The essential criteria for selecting participants for this phenomenological research study included the following: (a) the participant must have experienced the phenomenon, (b) the participant had to be willing to participate in the interview process, (c) the participant was required to grant the investigator the right to tape-record the interviews, (d) the participant
needed to allow the data to be published, and (e) the participant needed to be interested in understanding the nature and meaning of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Additional considerations for participant selection included age, gender, race, and context/religious affiliation of the institution at which the participant worked.

For this study, purposeful sampling was used in conjunction with the essential criteria for selecting participants. These participants were not chosen to generate data generalizable to a greater population; rather, individuals were selected who would generate data that shed light on the phenomenon and issues central to the purpose of the research (Patton, 1990). Furthermore, a criterion-based selection method was employed: participants were chosen according to a particular list of attributes essential to the study (Erlandson, et al., 1993; Merriam, 1998).

The nature of qualitative research precluded the researcher from knowing all of the important selection criteria at the beginning of the study. The selection strategy needed to evolve as the researcher collected data. Based on the research questions and the phenomenon being studied, the selection process had to be simplified and the focus narrowed to one reasonably similar group of participants that was conducive to analysis of this phenomenon (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The important issue for this study was to discover the essence(s) shared by the selected participants. Because the potential group of participants was so large, a specific set of professionals was defined for an in-depth analysis of spirituality and spiritual development.

Intuition, discussion with colleagues experienced in research, and student affairs professional literature guided the criteria for choosing participants for this study. As noted in Chapter I and expounded upon in the literature review, the professional literature regarding professionals as delineated from practitioners, and the literature concerning mid-level professionals and their potential for contribution to this area of study, established important
selection criterion to limit and shape the group of participants. Status as a mid-level professional was utilized as one of the main criterion for purposeful selection. The following were the criteria utilized for purposeful selection of participants:

1. Professionals in mid-level positions (e.g.—Director of Residence Life/Housing, Director of Student Activities) employed at small (under 3,000 students) private liberal arts colleges/universities.

2. Professionals with three or more years of experience in student affairs who had opportunities to help students address issues of spiritual development.

3. Professionals generally knowledgeable about campus policies and expectations of faculty, students, and administrators regarding spiritual development.

4. Professionals aware of the professional literature that explores professional philosophies.

5. Professionals who were potentially influential on their campuses and thus could have been involved in developing spiritual development policies on campus.

6. Professionals who have had ample contact with students beyond just student staff.

The researcher contacted student affairs professionals who had attended, or presented, spirituality programs or workshops at professional meetings or conferences. The researcher asked those contacted for the names of professionals who fit the criteria and who would be interested in participating in this study. The researcher also contacted student affairs professionals at several small private colleges in the Great Lakes area, and sought the names of colleagues at their institutions who fit the criteria and might be interested in participating in this study. In order to execute a manageable study, maximum variation of participants was sought utilizing a group of at least four, and no larger than eight, mid-level professionals.
The researcher contacted several mid-level student affairs professionals with five or more years of student affairs experience to ensure broad understanding of the developmental issues of college students. The participants were recruited from small private colleges in areas of the lower Great Lakes region to allow for manageable engagement. E-mail (see Appendix A) was utilized to contact professionals who met the specified criteria. Additional e-mail messages established the legitimacy of the study and determined the participant’s interest in and availability for the study. Follow-up contact by telephone established personal relationships between the researcher and the participants.

The first four participants selected for this study had a viable interest in the topic. Specifically, each expressed an involvement in the spiritual and/or religious development of students on his or her campus, and expressed an interest in learning more about spirituality and the spiritual development of students. Additionally, they fit the above criteria and were willing to participate. They were also selected because they varied in types of institutions represented, each participant’s institution was established by a different religious denomination, which had become secularized to varying degrees, and one college was independent of any religious affiliation. Each also held a different position and set of responsibilities in student affairs. The participants spanned 28–49 years of age, and spanned 6-27 years of experience in the profession. Each had spent four or more years at their current institution, assuring some stability and stature at their institution, and, it was hoped, would provide a variety of perspectives on the issues of spirituality and spiritual development. Additionally, two were female and two were male.

The researcher also attempted to utilize the “snowball” method of sampling to increase the group. At the initial interviews, he asked the four chosen participants for additional names of possible participants. A fifth participant was contacted, screened and added to the group because
he fit the criteria. He fell within the age spans of the other participants, and he had a different title and different professional responsibilities than the others. After learning more about the other potential participants’ backgrounds, it was discovered that they did not fit the criteria for a variety of reasons.

Upon meeting all the participants, it was discovered that none of them represented a visible racial minority. This is not totally surprising given the researcher’s experience at meetings of student affairs professionals in the Great Lakes and Midwest regions. The apparent racial composition of student affairs professionals in these areas tends to be primarily White. Additionally, most student compositions at small, private liberal arts colleges are predominantly White, and their student affairs professional staffs tend to be overwhelmingly White. A chart of the selected participants’ attributes appears in Table 1.

Table 1.

Participants and their attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YSA</th>
<th>YCI</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Functional Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Housing/ Residence Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Leadership &amp; Student Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Career Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Associate Dean of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Assistant V.P. for Student Dev.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. YSA = Years in Student Affairs; YCU = Years at Current Institution

The researcher followed ethical principles established by the Human Subjects Research Board at Bowling Green State University. Clear agreements were established with the participants including confidentiality, informed consent, and full disclosure of the nature,
purpose and requirements of the research study (see Appendix B). Information that could be considered private or potentially damaging was removed or disguised to protect the identities of the participants. Minimal risk was involved to the health or well being of the participants and referral for therapeutic support was discussed with each participant, although the need did not arise. Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time, however they all remained engaged throughout the study. Designs and processes of data collection were open for discussion with all participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; C. Mertler, personal communication, class notes, Fall 1998; C. Strange, personal communication, class notes, Fall 1999).

Data Collection

The researcher traveled to each campus location to meet and interview each participant face-to-face. A long-interview format utilizing informal, interactive engagement and open-ended questions and comments was the primary method for data collection. The researcher created, to the greatest extent possible, “a climate in which [each] research participant [felt] comfortable and [responded] honestly and comprehensively” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). Each participant was also granted time to focus on the phenomenon prior to starting each discussion.

Each participant was interviewed on two separate occasions and notified that a third interview or follow-up questions via telephone or e-mail might be necessary for confirmation or elaboration on items derived from the interviews. The first interview focused on the individual participant’s definitions and values regarding spirituality and their professional values. The second interview focused on each participant’s use of spirituality in his or her professional life and its value for the profession. Second interviews were also used to check information obtained in the first interviews.
Prior to the interviews, a short, open-ended survey (see Appendix C) was distributed to allow participants to focus on the research topic (R. Vannatta, personal communication, August 9, 2000). The questionnaire served as a type of meditative activity for the participants prior to the interviews. The intent was to evoke a more comprehensive account of the participants' experiences. The answers provided by particular participants in their first interviews were used to prompt further elaboration from participants in subsequent interviews.

Interviews began with social conversation and information sharing to build rapport. The questionnaire served as a starting point to focus the discussion. The questions developed for the interviews (see Appendix D) were varied and altered occasionally during the actual discussion of the participant’s experience of the phenomenon (Erlandson, et al., 1993; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990).

All interviews were tape recorded to capture crucial data and were transcribed verbatim. Handwritten notes were taken to compensate for possible technology problems. Although the lengthy interview format allowed for elaboration and clarification by the interviewer and participants during the interviews, the transcripts of the first interviews pointed out areas for clarification and suggested additional questions for the second series of interviews. The transcripts served as the primary source of data for analysis.

Participant observation was utilized to describe participants, the settings in which they worked, and any other activities that were relevant to the topic (Patton, 1990). Since contact with each participant was limited to two occasions, a field log (discussed below in the Measures of Quality section) included descriptive data of the direct observations.
Procedures and Data Analysis

Organization and analysis of the data began with the researcher studying the transcribed interviews utilizing the methods and procedures of phenomenal analysis, primarily Moustakas’ (1994) phenomenological methodology. The essences, or shared meanings, of the phenomenon of spirituality were depicted after reflective analysis and interpretation of the research participants’ narratives. The researcher reflected on what the participants described and made meaning of it. In this way, the researcher was able to perceive the experiences as real. What the researcher thought and perceived became the source of certainty (Moustakas). The meaning of the phenomena was uncovered through intentional reflection on the experiences of the participants. Intentional reflection occurred based on the experiences described by the participants (Moustakas; Van Manen, 1990). The researcher combined intuition with the intentional reflective process to allow the researcher to recognize the essences (Moustakas). The phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to look at the experience, think about it intuitively, intentionally, and reflectively, and describe its essences.

Prior knowledge of the profession, professional literature, and spiritual literature influenced the design of the study and the research questions. This knowledge was self-questioned and challenged when collecting and interpreting data to follow the technique of phenomenological study known as Epoche (Merriam, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). This approach to understanding was central to the researcher’s perspective that individuals construct reality as they make meaning of their situations and their lives. Consequently, the researcher inductively developed interpretive or analytical constructs that described the shared experiences as explained by the participants.
Reduction began with reflection on the phenomenon. The researcher attempted to set aside all other distractions, preconceptions, and the like to focus solely on the topic and questions (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher analyzed and described what he heard and saw in the interviews and transcripts. Looking at the data several times over the course of almost three years, the researcher initially treated every statement as having equal value. While reading and reflecting on the data, the researcher listed the meaning units. These units were then clustered into common categories or themes, and overlapping or repetitive statements were removed.

The researcher then described the different textural qualities—distinctive or identifying characteristics—of the experiences. Each time the researcher listened to the interview tapes, read the transcripts, and reflected on the material, another angle of perception added more to the knowledge of the phenomenon. This allowed the researcher to reduce the experience to the unchanging parts of the phenomenon that were thematic (Moustakas, 1994).

The textural descriptions of the experience were derived from the clustered themes and meanings. These themes were clustered into categories and textural descriptions, enabling the researcher to explicate the essential nature of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). This allowed the researcher to construct a complete and coherent description of the meanings and essences of the phenomenon written as Chapter IV.

The researcher then described the essences of the phenomenon and utilized imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). Utilizing intuition, the researcher focused on the unchanging structural themes and on what was common to the participants (Moustakas). He synthesized and described the common conditions and qualities of the phenomenon. For the researcher, his meaning was created when his concept of the experiences was combined with the participants’ experiences. This is produced as the model and description at the beginning of Chapter V.
Measures of Quality

A quality phenomenological study requires attentive adherence to its particular methodology (Moustakas, 1994). Some of the finer points of the phenomenological methodology are comparable to quality measures found in other qualitative methodologies (Gillilan, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas; Patton, 1990). Procedures and processes from other qualitative methodologies, particularly naturalistic inquiry, strengthened the phenomenological study while remaining true to the specific phenomenological methods.

Credibility criteria enhanced the plausibility of the study. Member checks and peer debriefing were utilized to enhance the credibility of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Member checks involved the participants approving the findings as the primary criterion used to strengthen the credibility of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moustakas (1994) referred to this as the validation of data. During each interview, the researcher verbally checked for clarity and meaning of what was being described. Each participant was sent a copy of his or her transcripts and asked to verify, correct, and comment on the accuracy of the transcripts. Each was also asked to identify any quotes she or he deemed important to this phenomenon. Each participant was permitted to strike or negotiate quotations or descriptions attributed to him or her. Participants were asked to carefully examine the description for potential corrections, clarifications, or additions. The same process was then utilized with each participant’s textual description denoted as the participant profiles in Chapter IV.

Another credibility criteria utilized was peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is a process of exploring aspects of inquiry with a disinterested peer(s) in an analytical type manner (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As explained by Gillilan, “Peer debriefing serves as a means of questioning and
clarifying the researcher’s intellectual posture . . . before and during the research process” (1995, p. 31-32). Colleagues and faculty members were utilized as peer debriefers for this study.

Early in the study, the researcher discussed the phenomenological methodology with committee faculty and several colleagues. Later, three colleagues were each asked to review the participant descriptions and themes derived in the study. The peer debriefers assisted the researcher in keeping an open mind and attitude regarding the phenomenological process of data analysis. The debriefers accomplished this by serving as sounding boards to the researcher's phenomenological process. Additionally, the researcher’s faculty adviser was particularly instrumental in reading and discussing themes, synthesis, and textural descriptions throughout the study.

The quality of this study was ensured through the development of an audit trail (Erlandson, et al., 1993; Merriam, 1998; Silverman, 2000). The audit trail of documents and other materials that pertained to this study enhanced the dependability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability is the degree to which the researcher’s decisions about the process of the study and interpretations of data can be tracked and verified through appropriate documentation (Erlandson, et al.; Gillilan, 1995). Detailed notes and all copies of rewritten materials were kept to chronicle the process. Notes of peer debriefing sessions, drafts of textural descriptions and unified descriptions were kept to ensure the study’s quality. The audit trail included the interview tapes, transcripts, and observation notes including impressions about the participants and the interviews.

**Summary**

The purpose of this study was to contribute an understanding of how mid-level student affairs professionals conceptualize their beliefs about spirituality in the college context, and what
they believe should be the place of spirituality in the student affairs profession. In order to clarify student affairs professionals’ conceptualizations of spirituality and its place in the profession, the following questions were raised:

1. How do student affairs professionals define spirituality and spiritual development?

2. Do student affairs professionals believe the spiritual development of students is consistent with the values of the profession?

3. Do student affairs professionals think there is a place for spirituality in their work with students?

4. What role should the student affairs professional play in assisting students with spirituality and spiritual development?

5. How have student affairs professionals assisted students with spirituality?

6. What do student affairs professionals' think is their future role in helping students with spiritual questions?

In an effort to explore the essence of these and other questions most appropriately, a phenomenological methodology was selected. Participants were chosen for the study using a purposeful, criterion-based method of selection. Data were collected primarily through an interview format. Additional data were derived from notes and observations. Standards of credibility were served through member checks and peer debriefing, and standards of dependability were enhanced through an audit trail.

To clarify professionals’ conceptualizations of spirituality and its place in the profession, the phenomenological methodology was utilized to elicit the universally shared meanings of spirituality in the professional lives of the participants. The essence(s) of the experiences of spirituality in the lives of student affairs professionals were uncovered through the themes
elicited from the data. The methodology allowed the researcher to construct meaning by utilizing imaginative variation and synthesizing the textural and thematic descriptions.
CHAPTER IV. TEXTURAL DESCRIPTIONS AND THEMES

Student affairs professionals generally see themselves as part of a helping profession, assisting students to develop and grow into more mature and whole human beings. One of this study’s participants, Ruth, commented that it was important to her to “help students get on a spiritual journey and help them navigate that journey to greater spiritual development” (Ruth 2, 160-163). She thought student affairs professionals should assist students in figuring out who they are, give them the knowledge base, the tools, and skills necessary to go out and do great things when they leave college (Ruth 2, 237-238). Within that framework, Ruth further described the importance of spirituality; “I think spirituality is a good resource for that. It’s part of who they [students] are, but also it’s something that will hopefully give them support when they encounter different challenges and struggles that they will encounter in life” (Ruth 2, 235-243). This was the overall tone of the study. The essences presented by the participants included themes that described who the participants were as spiritual beings, their thoughts and beliefs about spirituality within the profession, and the ways the participants acted to influence the spirituality of the students with whom they worked.

In this chapter each participant will be introduced by way of a textural description. The textural description, written as a biographical profile, highlights the institution at which each worked at the time of the interviews and describes each participant’s background and experiences. The researcher has attempted, whenever possible, to present the essence of the participant’s thoughts and experiences utilizing their own voices. The goal of the researcher was to create an informal interview environment in which the exchange occurred as a casual dialogue rather than a rigidly structured exchange. Occasionally the researcher and the participants engaged in conversations that included the use of less formal language than would be expected in
a more structured setting. In order to maintain the integrity of the exchanges, the researcher did little grammatical editing of the quotes that appear. The participants’ names and institutions are referred to using pseudonyms in order to protect the participants’ identities. Citations provided for paraphrases and direct quotes from participants are presented using the participant’s pseudonym followed by the corresponding interview number and the specific lines of text from the interview transcript. After presentation of the profiles, the researcher briefly summarizes the participants’ textural descriptions.

The chapter then utilizes textural description to focus on the themes that emerged during the interviews with the five participants regarding their experiences and observations of spirituality as student affairs mid-level professionals. The first three themes were those that influenced or described the participants’ personal spirituality, their spiritual definitions, and their spiritual beliefs. This is followed by themes that denote several common perceptions the participants’ described regarding their thoughts and experiences about spirituality and its place in the student affairs profession. The final set of themes is related to the actions, experiences, and observations of the professionals regarding their ability to influence students regarding spirituality. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the campus setting, or context, influenced these participants’ thoughts and actions regarding students’ spiritual development.

Participants’ Textural Descriptions

This portion of the study begins by introducing the five participants and their institutions. What follows is a brief profile of each participant and the college or university at which each worked. Each textural description also contains information about the participant’s spiritual or religious upbringing as well as factors that influenced the participant’s views about spirituality
and religion. The participants are introduced by the number of years, from least to greatest, of student affairs experience.

*Ruth and Chapel College*

Exiting an interstate highway at the Chapeltown exit, 50 miles from the closest large city, one had to then travel a few miles into and through a small but thriving village community to reach Chapel College. Traveling through the town one had a sense of being in a time warp; the buildings although well kept, were from a bygone era. The campus of the small liberal arts college was tucked away in the southwest corner of town; the road that ran past the main college entrance quickly became a rural highway.

Many dated buildings of various color brick comprised the campus, but internal renovations made them comfortable places in which to work and study. The residence halls had also been renovated and housed the majority of students who lived on the predominantly residential campus. The centerpiece of campus was a red brick building with a cafeteria, snack bar, mailroom and student organization offices that overlooked the baseball field.

Chapel College was founded by a distinct religious denomination around the turn of the 20th century and was strongly affiliated with that denomination. At the time of the visit, Chapel was a member of the Association of Christian Colleges and Universities and had an enrollment of around 1,050 students. Although the college had added two graduate degree programs designed for working professionals, the primary focus was on traditional age undergraduate students.

Chapel College is proud of its faith-based educational program and is dedicated to academic excellence and educating young people of all backgrounds in the traditions of service and peacemaking. Chapel was committed to the ideals of diversity and tolerance and has been
open to all students irrespective of nationality, color, sex, or church affiliation since its inception. Its mission statement incorporated preparing students for responsible citizenship, vocation, service to all peoples, and for the purposes of God’s universal kingdom.

After entering one of the many renovated buildings that contained the admissions, student life, and the Peace Arts Center offices, the researcher located Ruth, the Director of Residence Life at Chapel College. Ruth was a pleasant and outgoing young woman with an air of intelligence and local propriety. To avoid anyone interrupting our conversation, we moved to Ruth’s on-campus apartment, located in one of the residence halls. The living space was neatly appointed, but very comfortable and decorated with several pictures and artifacts of Ruth’s family, friends, and life at Chapel. Nothing in particular stood out to reflect Ruth’s religious or spiritual background or ideology.

It was easy to converse with Ruth. She was very open about her thoughts and ideas. At 28 years of age, Ruth had served Chapel for six years. This represented the entirety of her professional career since completing a master’s degree in College Student Personnel. She had just begun taking classes toward a doctorate degree in higher education administration.

Ruth was raised in the Lutheran faith and still identified with that denomination. She remarked:

You know, I’m not sure. It’s partly the way I was raised. I think I’ve always grown up in, I wouldn’t say my parents were super religious, but yet I knew church was important. I maybe didn’t go all the times as I should have, or didn’t like to go, but it was important. I think in times of transition for me personally, when I came here and now as I am leaving, I find that my spirituality is, my faith have become more important. I mean, by working here, my faith has increased. I’m a lot more comfortable dealing with religion
and spirituality in regards to other people, but also just with myself, and that’s why I think it’s important. (Ruth 2, 252-261)

Reading professional literature regarding moral development, value development, and civic involvement had also affected Ruth’s thoughts on spirituality. She expressed that spirituality was something important that one has to cultivate. She found the influence of religion and spirituality on others to be fascinating.

The Chapel College community had influenced her significantly, as indicated by her comment, “By working here, just by the nature of this institution, I think my relationship with the church and what I mean when I say church, I mean the church in general, my relationship with the church and my religion is blended together” (Ruth 2, 36-38). She noted how this environment affected her thoughts, “To me, here they are one in the same, just the way this environment is structured, the way the people operate within this environment” (Ruth 1, 108-109).

In describing how she was brought up in a churched family, Ruth did not indicate that religion had been forced upon her. She believed in God and read the Bible, but took these things more seriously after she began working at Chapel College. Life within the Chapel community was appealing because she encountered many instances that required her to think differently. Although Chapel is a church-related rather than biblical college, Ruth recognized early on that religion had a strong presence on the campus. Faculty and staff meetings always opened with a word of prayer and religion was thoroughly integrated into the curriculum.

According to Ruth, Chapel College had a strong religious life program. She supported this opinion by providing the following examples: “Chapel service for example. [Attendance at church] service is not mandatory but we have anywhere from 250-300 people show up every
week” (Ruth 2, 214-215). She also talked about a group called BASIC, which was an acronym for Brothers and Sisters in Christ, one of the co-curricular organizations at Chapel College. In recent years they have had approximately 350 students express an interest in the group. According to Ruth, the average Chapel student was involved in about four to five different organizations within the spiritual life co-curricular program.

Summing up the influence of the college’s religious affiliation upon her work Ruth commented,

Chapel College is a church related college and the church really does play a role here. So, in any kind of policy that I make regarding students, or in a decision that I may make about a judicial matter, I have to think about, how does the church feel about this topic? Or what would the church have to say about this? You know, the church has certain tenets and principles and beliefs, and because I’m working at a [“Peace College”] college, whether I believe in those beliefs or tenets or not I have to support them, because I’m at a church related college and there are strong church ties. So it influences policies and regulations and my response to students. (Ruth 2, 272-278)

Brandon and Independent University

Independent University was founded in the small town of Independence in the 1880s. Independence was primarily a blue-collar and farming town, well off the beaten path. The small town of 18,000 was located in the midst of farmland, about 20 minutes from a town of 40,000 and almost an hour from a major city. Surprisingly, the small town supported two institutions of higher education, Independent University and a small liberal arts college.

Listed as one of the least expensive private colleges in its state, Independent attracted many first-generation college students. At the time of the interview, it served a mix of traditional
aged students from around the state, some international students, and a representative group of adults from Independence and surrounding communities. The university took pride in its diversity, as well as its ability to constantly change and transform itself. Within the past two decades, Independent’s culture of purposeful change and adaptation has resulted in it becoming one of the fastest growing independent universities in the nation with an enrollment that had more than doubled. The enrollment at the time of the study had grown to over 1,600 students.

Independent University had been progressive in building and upgrading facilities on its small campus. Modern architecture of matching brick facades comprised several recent additions that housed a variety of classrooms and offices. The campus seemed almost out-of-place in the older neighborhood of houses, apartments, and a few small businesses. When touring the campus by foot, one discovered that several of the houses were actually part of the campus, used as either offices or student housing.

Brandon, age 32, had spent just over five of his nine year career in student affairs at Independent University. Having completed a master’s degree in College Student Personnel, and having served as a hall director at a small private liberal arts college in Michigan, Brandon served Independent University as an Assistant Dean of Students. He was responsible for several areas of student involvement including leadership development and student organizations.

Brandon’s office appeared professional yet comfortable. Several pictures on the walls helped give the space a relaxed feeling, although none of the visuals presented an idea of Brandon’s religious or spiritual ideology. On the other hand, the bookshelves were relatively full and consisted of titles on meditation, eastern religions, and various forms of spirituality. Brandon later mentioned how he utilized many of these books with students based on his discussions with
them. Occasionally he would “gift” a book to a student when he thought a particular book might be helpful to that student.

Brandon mentioned that he attended a United Methodist church as a child, but was not involved much in church life during his later years at home. He noted that, “I got up to school [college] and I just realized that there was something missing and I started jumping around . . . I went to a lot of different churches” (Brandon 1, 147-148). Brandon also mentioned how his experiences with different churches and students of various faiths influenced his ideas and definitions of religion and spirituality over the years: “That contributed, I think, towards the development of just a spiritual side that wasn’t so much based on religion . . . I started realizing that there’s more than a set doctrine or religion to my spiritual side” (Brandon 2, 16-19).

Over the years, several people had influenced Brandon’s ideas and definitions of religion and spirituality. He learned from many people and experiences at a variety of different churches, particularly when he was seeking a faith community throughout college and again in graduate school. He also noted the influence of international students, past supervisors, and counselors at the various colleges where he had worked (Brandon 1, 164-176). Brandon summed up his experiences and relationships with people who

opened different doors and helped me, and showed me different ways of looking at things and uh, just expanded the horizons and gave me new options. It’s uh, like I know that doesn’t work for me, or that does, and that is something that I hadn’t thought about before. (Brandon 1, 180-182)

Brandon pointed out that Independent had recently started a Chaplain’s Office. The mission statement for that office noted a commitment to serving the spiritual needs of the campus, students, faculty, and staff regardless of their faith traditions. The statement also noted
the Chaplain’s Office provided a safe space for the ever-changing process of the spiritual journey that affected the many aspects of peoples lives, and encouraged individuals to serve others.

Brandon commented:

> It’s not very clear on our mission statement, but our president has chosen to build a chapel and hire a campus minister, and that’s interesting, . . . he says that it is important to students and we are going to provide them with that space, to do whatever kind of prayer, or reflection, or meditation they choose. (Brandon, 1, 86-94)

Despite the recent addition of the Chaplain’s Office and campus minister, Brandon did not have a sense that Independent’s mission supported, or that the campus community believed in, developing the spiritual component of students. Nor did he think this community was supportive of the holistic mind, body, and spirit type of philosophy. Independent University was originally founded as a business school, but was adapting its curriculum and attempting to position itself as an independent liberal arts college. With many first generation college students attending Independent, Brandon believed the focus of the students coming to Independent University was primarily to get an education, to get a job, and hopefully to have a better life than what their parents or current family situation would dictate (Brandon 1, 211-215).

The researcher mentioned to Brandon that on the university’s web site one could not find a specific mission statement for the university or for student services. The closest statement to one of mission noted that Independent provided access and opportunity to each student to achieve a college education. Brandon’s general feeling about the institution was “. . . it’s very compartmentalized, and you are responsible for this and you do that and you don’t worry about this, don’t worry about that, don’t worry about anything but your responsibility” (Brandon 2, 71-73).
Overall, Brandon was particularly in tune with the idea that a student affairs professional’s actions and behaviors are dictated, or should be dictated, by the mission and goals of the university for which that person worked. Having attended and worked at a few other institutions in his short career, Brandon realized that different institutions do have different missions. He noted that working with students regarding spirituality was unique at each of those institutions. He also seemed to be coming to grips with the idea of being true to himself and to developing consistency between his behavior and his beliefs about spirituality. Although the culture and philosophy of his department was that student affairs professionals should only deal with their particular areas of responsibility, Brandon realized that in order to be true to himself he needed to extend himself beyond those boundaries. To be able to help students effectively, Brandon needed to be able to respond to students in a variety of venues and ways outside of just his compartmentalized area of responsibilities.

Anthony and City Christian University

City Christian University began as a liberal arts institution in the 1830s, and in the mid-1800s relocated to a major urban area. Situated in an old residential area of the city, the university appeared more suburban rather than urban. However, the quickest route to the school was by exiting the expressway on the fringe of the city’s business district and driving a few miles through different city zones. Arriving at the residential area, City Christian stood majestically amid well-kept historic homes, small restaurants, quaint shops, and an historic movie theatre.

The main classroom and office buildings were laid out on a quadrangle. The large buildings were of a nearly matching ruddy brown brick, although each building has a façade and style of its own. Another quadrangle-like area was home to several newer buildings including the student center and some 1960s style reddish brick residence halls. Until 1959, a Lutheran
Seminary was actually part of City Christian and was located nearby. It still shared instruction, programming, and services with the university. A statue of Saint Anthony, sculpted by one of the faculty, and other symbols on campus hint at the campus’ openness to faith, spirituality, and its former religious affiliation.

The Religious Life Center was located in the middle of the original campus quadrangle. A large cross, higher than the building, stood out front of the main entrance. The architecture made it appear as if it was built specifically as a Church, although it was originally a library. Religion classrooms and faculty offices were located in this building. Worship services were held every Sunday morning and chapel services every Wednesday morning. Although all services were non-denominational, City Christian was a Lutheran institution that readily used the Lutheran Green Book in its services. Students were not required to attend religious services; they had become optional. The University noted that on-campus services offered a college community atmosphere because students and faculty both attended.

City Christian recognized itself as a diverse academic community. City Christian’s mission statement affirmed the concept of holistic education as well as service to neighbors and the world. Religion and spirituality were encouraged through specially funded campus activities.

Like many small, urban liberal arts colleges, City Christian added graduate degree programs as early as the 1960s. The enrollment at the time of the interview with Anthony was almost 4,000 students and about half of those were traditional aged undergraduate students. Graduate students and adult degree program students comprised the other half of the enrollment.

In the lower level of the large modern-style Student Center, one finds the Career Services Office where Anthony’s office was located. At 40 years of age, Anthony had been in student affairs for 14 years and had served his current institution for 11 years. His office exhibited a very
professional look, tidy and organized, yet various personal artifacts and pictures gave it a comfortable, almost home-like feel. No obvious religious or spiritual artifacts adorned his office, but several books on vocation and calling were located among the repertoire of career resource books on his bookcase. Anthony was well spoken, yet very down-to-earth. One sensed that he was very approachable and comfortable in a counselor or mentor role, willing to discuss anything with anybody.

Serving as the Career Services Director, Anthony actively engaged students in spiritual retreats that focused on vocation and calling. He was contemplative and reflective in his discussion of spiritual issues. Anthony was raised in the Lutheran Church and identified most with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. He commented, “That’s the group that makes the most sense, although I don’t agree with everything they say” (Anthony 2, 67-68). However, he and his family attended a Presbyterian Church because they were comfortable with the congregation and practices at that church.

Several things influenced Anthony’s ideas about spirituality and religion, particularly his childhood upbringing in the Lutheran Church, his personal experiences and struggles with spiritual ideas, and readings about a wide variety of spiritual topics including meditation and Buddhism (Anthony 1, 60-67). More specifically, regarding his church upbringing, his religious background was open to discussion that included other faiths and beliefs. His association with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America was one in which members specifically sought to learn through others and through different beliefs. The members actively engaged in questioning and inquiry with each other, and with people outside their church, about what their spiritual experiences were like. This encouraged Anthony to listen and be open to a variety of faith traditions (Anthony 1, 153-162).
Anthony described his personal experiences and struggles in detail, particularly noting efforts to address his doubts and to make meaning regarding spirituality and religion. His undergraduate degree and original practice in chemistry instilled in him a natural tendency to doubt and question (Anthony 1, 74-78). Anthony noted that when he first started to doubt and question things, he was able to ask his mother about certain religious beliefs of which he was unsure; his mother responded by saying that doubting was a good and healthy thing and that through your doubt you can really decide what you believe (Anthony 1, 171-176). Anthony predisposed himself doubting, searching, analyzing, and determining to discover what made sense for him spiritually, and for making meaning of his life and his vocation.

As Anthony explored his spirituality, he sought out people whom he respected, and although he did not always agree with what they said, he listened to them and that in turn shaped his thinking. A number of those whom he encountered influenced his thoughts on spirituality significantly, and perhaps gave him a foundation and comfort for discussing spiritual issues. Most prominent among these individuals were his parents, his pastor when he was in high school, and friends he has made through City Christian who attended the seminary associated with the university (Anthony 1, 168-184).

According to Anthony, City Christian University was “a very safe environment for talking about spirituality and religion” (Anthony 2, 38-39). City Christian University was probably more supportive of staff members talking about spirituality with students than other campuses. Anthony attributed part of that to City Christian’s mission regarding training students to go into the world and serve others (Anthony 1, 289-291). “In fact, there’s an endowment that is owned by the university that funds part of the vocational retreats,” Anthony explained (Anthony 1, 299-300). As such, Anthony felt encouraged and noted, “I feel very okay about
talking with students about spiritual issues, because I know that’s an area of support that the
institution provides” (Anthony 1, 303-305).

Thomas and Universal College

Universal College was a little off the beaten path, but with fairly easy access to a large metropolitan city. As one entered the town of Universal from the south or west, rural farmland stretched on for many miles. However, as one traveled from Universal to the north or east the traveler quickly hit freeways and suburbs, the telltale signs of a nearby city.

The town of Universal looked like “small-town Americana” with its tree-lined streets and quaint downtown storefronts. The campus was situated near the center of town with small stores and shops facing the campus from two of the main streets. Other businesses, residential areas, churches, and schools were within blocks of the campus whose majestic old buildings, along with modern newer ones, rose above many of the city’s buildings. Universal was the type of college and town where one could sequester oneself if one chose. However, one could also easily access the distractions of modern life in the nearby city and its suburbs. It was obvious why students might be attracted to this locale.

Universal College was founded in the early 1830s by two missionaries whose goal was to train teachers and Christian leaders for the West. Inspired by a prominent pastor noted for his Christian universalist views, the missionaries also gained support from one of the great revivalists of the era. Universal’s Graduate School of Theology, organized early in its history, merged with a prominent divinity school in the 1960s. In recent years the college has reflected this heritage through its reputation for teaching and through encouraging students’ social and moral commitments.
Universal claimed a heritage of respect for individuals and concern for society. According to its mission, the college actively recruited a student body that was economically, racially, culturally, and geographically diverse in order to foster tolerance of divergent views and an awareness of diversity that informed one’s participation in society. Universal College sought to equip its students with critical analysis, creative thought, appreciation of creative and original work, and a capacity for moral judgment. The university also sought to facilitate emotional, social, physical, and mental well-being along with intellectual growth. As a highly selective liberal arts university with a solid reputation and heritage, Universal attracted liberal minded students who were academically capable and interested in a good liberal arts education. The Universal College enrollment around the time of the interviews was about 2,850 students.

The modern looking Student Life and Services Office at Universal was located in one of the older, regal limestone and brick buildings on campus. The building contained a snack bar and mini-convenience store, a dance club, a sit-down restaurant, the mailroom, and many offices for student organizations. Student Life and Services noted goals for students’ development that included encouragement of a balanced and whole approach to life. In addition, the Office of Chaplains was an ecumenical interfaith resource center for support of the spiritual life of students, faculty, and staff. The types of programs offered through this office included: study, meditation, prayer, retreats, and liturgical services.

Thomas, the Associate Dean of Students, was a soft-spoken and unassuming individual with an obvious air of intelligence. His office was laid out in a practical and organized manner reflecting someone with years of experience. Soft background music played from a small portable stereo in the office. His shelves were lined with a myriad of books including many on
various aspects of spirituality, sociology and philosophy. The office seemed as much like that of a faculty member as that of a college administrator.

Thomas maintained faculty status and provided sponsored private readings (i.e., independent studies) to students. He taught yoga and various other topics, but the majority of the private readings had been in areas of spirituality. Sometimes the readings were taught in small groups where discussion was integral for student learning. Other times a single student may have worked with Thomas in more of a mentoring type of relationship.

At 46 years of age, Thomas had built a 19-year career in student affairs and had served Universal College for the past six years. Thomas held a doctoral degree in higher education from a prominent eastern university. In addition to fulfilling the responsibilities of the Associate Dean of Students, Thomas served as Director of the Student Union and had oversight of the Office of Chaplains, which included a rabbi, a priest, and a Protestant minister. He was responsible for all non-academic programs at Universal and for providing a balanced variety of programs appropriate to the rich diversity of the cultures within the Universal College community. Those programs were intended to enhance students’ overall experience through cultural, intellectual, social, and recreational programs.

Thomas was raised in a family where religion was not necessarily important, but where Christian values were present. He commented about how he learned values such as how to treat others, and how to live a Christian life (Thomas 2, 20-22). Thomas also noted that a relationship with God, or spirit, was not present in his youth. His parents really did not help him to understand religion and spirituality in that manner; he thought he was grasping for that understanding later in his life (Thomas 2, 22–25). Thomas went to a university in Kentucky as an undergraduate and became active in the Catholic Church. He converted to Catholicism because
he was seeking a relationship with God, greater religious or spiritual understanding, and some type of spiritual framework he felt was missing from his life.

More recently the churches that Thomas chose to attend were Unitarian or Quaker Churches, or those that gravitated toward a similar discipline. He also was very interested in eastern religions and their practices. His father was involved in the Unitarian church; Thomas found it interesting that he was drawn toward similar religious traditions as his father (Thomas 2, 25-32). Although he gravitated toward Christian religions and values, he had explored spirituality through readings and practices that included philosophy, yoga, shamanism, and meditation.

Marie and Collegetown University

Collegetown University, in a very suburban-like city of over 40,000 people, was located just a mile through town from an interstate highway. The campus was located on the main street of a small city which also included residences and a middle school to the north of the campus, and a historic downtown several blocks away to the south. Several small businesses, restaurants, gas stations, an elementary school and fast food restaurants dotted the city street between the campus and the city’s center.

Approaching the campus from the main street, one was taken aback by the beauty of the more prominent buildings. The large, majestic Old Main Hall was flanked on either side by the modern library and a sizeable church. The campus buildings represented an array of architectural styles indicative of the years they were built. Several adjacent houses had been converted to administrative and faculty offices, reflecting the growth of the campus over the years.

The church at the front of the campus contained a campus ministry office, a small chapel, and a large sanctuary; it served both the students and a large congregation from the town.
Founded in the late 1800s, Collegetown University was one of many colleges of its era to be established by clergy. Strong church ties and financial support from the members of its evangelical Protestant denomination gave it a solid foundation. Its location was selected because of the strong community support and its centrality to the denomination’s growing congregational base.

Collegetown had always offered both traditional liberal arts courses and programs more specific to employment opportunities. The University was considered a leader in creating innovative programs to meet the needs of both the local and national workforce. Its mission, simply stated, was about equipping students for meaningful lives and productive careers. With an enrollment of over 4,000 students, Collegetown University accommodated people of all ages through a wide variety of undergraduate and graduate programs.

The university was affiliated with an evangelical Protestant religious denomination, and it acknowledged, preserved, and honored its Judeo-Christian heritage. At one time the university supported a theological graduate school. The graduate school later became a separate theological seminary based upon the recommendation of the University’s accreditation association. At the time of this study, the University was exploring its relationship with the seminary and how the two might share resources. The University’s evangelical heritage continued to influence the campus with a strong campus ministry program designed to assist students with their spiritual needs and holistic development, which included a developing service learning program.

Marie, the Assistant Vice President of Student Development, could be found in an office in one of the converted houses. While waiting to interview Marie, one of the Student Services Office staff noted that the university experience is a vital developmental and learning process for each student at Collegetown. The staff members, and later Marie, commented that Collegetown
staff members seek to foster opportunities for students that will promote intellectual, ethical, moral, spiritual, cultural, physical, and social growth. Other mission objectives of the staff included challenging students to explore identity, participate in global and local communities, and persist in academic programs.

A bubbly and vivacious woman, Marie had been at Collegetown University 17 of her 27 years in student affairs. She completed a master’s degree in counseling early in her career, and along the way earned a doctorate in higher education administration and supervision. At 49 years of age, she was the oldest participant in this project.

Marie was raised in a Church of the Brethren congregation, and was thankful that “I had parents who, even though I might not have believed it or appreciated it then, come hell or high water, took us to church every Sunday . . .” (Marie 2, 91-93). She commented that although she was raised in a fundamentalist Christian church, her views of spirituality changed due to her own development at college. She particularly noted a world religions class and a very contemporary and open-minded professor. She also learned to accept other ways of worshipping or being connected spiritually. Therefore, she was extremely respectful and open-minded to however people chose to foster the spiritual part of their lives (Marie 1, 116-121).

Marie differentiated between religion and spirituality, particularly by defining religion as standards and rituals. She described two of the rituals of the Church of the Brethren—women in the church wearing prayer covering, and church members washing each other’s feet. She noted the latter ritual was one of servant leadership and taking care of each other (Marie 2, 31-38). Rituals also helped in terms of developing one’s spiritual life. Marie gave a recent example of a ritual she developed, that of lighting a fire in the fireplace every morning in the winter. She
described it as “a neat way to, enhance your day,” to get up early to make a fire two hours before going to work (Marie 1, 474-477).

A passage from an Erma Bombeck book was one of Marie’s favorites. It was about God blessing individuals and having them ask the question “What am I doing each day to promote myself mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually?” According to Marie, Bombeck noted that life was too short to let it pass you by, and that you only have one shot at this life and then it is gone. As such, Marie believed it was important to enhance one’s life on a daily basis and to enhance oneself spiritually through ritual (Marie 1, 477-481).

Marie’s definitions and ideas about spirituality and religion were obviously grounded in her home environment. She gave several examples of how her family ‘walked the talk’ of being religious by caring for and nurturing others:

I guess I saw a lot of the practicing of what you were suppose to be doing, in terms of what we learned at Sunday school and church. And I know a lot of things that were modeled, taking a meal to the family where maybe there was a sickness, sending a card, doing this and this, I’m still doing those things. (Marie 1, 136-147)

Marie equated Collegetown University’s mission of equipping students for productive lives with one’s life being productive by being spiritually, mentally, physically, and emotionally healthy (Marie 2, 219-221). Although Marie viewed the university’s objectives as including the spiritual aspect, she thought this was falling mostly under the campus minister’s purview as far as offering or creating interventions for student spiritual development. She believed, however, that there were other things happening on campus that were also providing for student spiritual development. She also thought that those in student affairs had the opportunity to conduct their
lives as role models and spiritual guides to students, allowing them to discern the importance of spirituality in their lives (Marie 2, 223-226).

*Summary of Textural Descriptions*

The intent of this study was to ascertain from mid-level student affairs professionals the relationship of their experiences with and understanding of spirituality to their roles as mid-level student affairs professionals. The recruitment of participants yielded a mix of ages, positions, and representatives of both sexes. As indicated in the textural descriptions, each had his or her unique spiritual or religious upbringing, and each worked at a uniquely different institution. However, while being unique, there were also many similarities about the participants’ experiences.

The themes common to the participants are described next. The primary themes include: (a) influences that shaped the participants’ spirituality and views of students’ spiritual development; (b) the participants’ integrated professional perspective (i.e., ideas, thoughts, experiences) about spirituality, the student affairs profession, and working with college students; and (c) descriptions of actions and influences the participants wielded in their student affairs positions. Several sub-themes were also extrapolated from the participants and will be noted along the way.

*Influences that Shaped the Participants’ Spirituality*

Three influences shaped the participants’ thoughts and actions regarding spirituality in their professional lives. Although the participants were asked what influenced their thoughts and actions regarding spirituality, the researcher had no preconceptions of what themes would result from this question. As noted in the textural descriptions, religious or spiritual upbringing was one influence. A second influence was the variety of spiritual guides that affected the participants as they continued along their own spiritual development paths. The participants’ on-going and
intentional spiritual journeys appeared as a third influence that shaped participants’ thoughts and actions regarding students’ spirituality.

**Religious/Spiritual Upbringing**

All of the participants discussed the influence parents and church/congregation members had on shaping their spiritual values. The impact may have been from a very structured church experience, or from an unstructured experience, that led them to question or seek spirituality or religion for themselves later in life.

The degree to which each participant spoke about his or her religious or spiritual upbringing varied. A few of the participants thought his or her religious or spiritual upbringing greatly influenced how each approached this topic today. The other participants discussed this influence, but did not emphasize how much influence religious upbringing may have had on present day spiritual development.

By looking at spiritual or religious upbringing on a continuum, one can better recognize this influence on the participants. At the far left end of the continuum would be the participant who would note being the most influenced by his or her early religious or spiritual upbringing. The far right end would be the participant who did not think early religious/spiritual upbringing significantly influenced his or her current spiritual condition.

Marie would fall at the far left end of the continuum. She explicitly noted the home environment and her church upbringing:

Um . . . I always looked out for the underdogs, and someone who maybe might be an outcast for whatever reason. I can remember there were absolutely no Black students in the elementary school I went to and there was a Black person who came by the farm where we grew up and didn’t have a place to stay. And I remember my brother said we
took him in for the night and then, in that time and era and place, that’s something people didn’t do . . . beyond that, I knew there was a blind man that would come to the house for Sunday dinner . . . okay, I guess I saw a lot of the practicing of what you were suppose to be doing in terms of what we learned at Sunday school and church. And I know a lot of the things that were modeled, taking a meal to the family that maybe there was a sickness, sending a card, doing this and this, I’m still doing those things. (Marie 1, 136-147)

Of the five participants, Brandon would be at the far right end of the continuum. He briefly mentioned his church upbringing in his earlier years:

> When I was growing up I went to the United Methodist Church, but I think that I went just because I thought that was what you were supposed to do on Sunday and I thought everybody did, didn’t know it was an option. Um, just went, didn’t really get it I think, not at all, not through, not even through high school. (Brandon 1, 133-135)

Brandon went on to share a personal story about how his father, and eventually the family, stopped going to church. Brandon related:

> I think through high school, yes, my father had a break from the church before high school and he stopped going . . . I was told by my mom, because Dad just didn’t go to church since I was little. That is what she told me. He never went back . . . I think there might have been more to it, but we didn’t go much my later years at home. (Brandon 1, 133-147)

Brandon went on to discuss how when he went away to college he felt there was something missing in his life as a result of the lack of religion or spirituality during his adolescence.
The other three participants noted experiences of religious upbringing that fit in between these two on the continuum. Closest to Marie would be Anthony. He described the importance of his upbringing in the Lutheran Church. Although the church was open to the discussion of doubt and differences of religions, Anthony’s experience was one of church attendance and parental tutelage (Anthony 1, 59-64; 149-158; 173-179).

Ruth would appear somewhere fairly close to the right of Anthony on the continuum. She noted that her family environment had religious underpinnings and that she had to go through confirmation classes, but she did not feel that religion was “forced down her throat” (Ruth 1, 110-113). From Ruth’s profile we learned that she didn’t go to church all the time but she knew church was important (Ruth 2, 247-250).

Finally, Thomas would appear somewhat to the right of Ruth and possibly closer to Brandon. Thomas was raised in a family where Christian values were present, but where religion was not necessarily important. He was raised with values about how people treat others, and how people should live their lives (Thomas 2, 20-22). Thomas also noted that his parents did not really help him to understand religion or God or spirituality (Thomas 2, 22–25).

**Spiritual or Religious Guides**

Another influence the participants discussed was people who helped them to grow religiously or spiritually. These included specific people with whom a participant studied spirituality or religion, people with whom he or she worshipped, or people who just had a general guiding influence on a participant’s spiritual development. When describing their spiritual and religious upbringings, some of the participants mentioned specific religious or spiritual mentors from their childhoods, such as Sunday school teachers. However, most of the respondents met their mentors and guides after they had left home.
Thomas spoke a great deal about the various spiritual guides in his life and was very cognizant of their influences. He spoke a little about the influence of his parents and church upbringing, but spoke more specifically about others. One spiritual guide was a friend named Shirley, with whom Thomas started on a spiritual path through the sharing of books and ideas.

Another person was a friend of Thomas’ named David, who was probably one of his most significant mentors. Thomas noted,

I think that he helped take me to the next level of my spiritual development, probably the most profound and deep level of my spiritual development, and provided me with lenses and a vocabulary and a way of thinking that has been very lasting and will, I think, be permanent . . . David is somebody who I still look to for support. (Thomas 2, 32-47)

A third guide that Thomas discussed was his friend Harry. He and Harry have facilitated spirituality discussion groups for five years, they facilitate a men’s group, are in the same New Warrior men’s group called the Mankind Project, and do yoga twice a week together. Thomas discussed how the work they’ve done together is all very spiritually based and that they sometimes laugh about not only being on the same spiritual path, but often at the same place on that path. According to Thomas, it seems they are experiencing what they would refer to as a parallel spiritual journey (Thomas 2, 50-57).

Although most of the participants did not see their Deans or Vice Presidents as spiritual guides or mentors, Ruth spoke very highly of her Dean of Students in this regard. The Dean at Chapel College has influenced Ruth’s thoughts about spirituality and has had a significant impact on her personal and professional life. He has not really sat down with her to specifically talk about religion, religious beliefs, or spirituality, but rather, his behavior models his beliefs. She says he “walks the talk” and that by being the Dean of Students at a small private church-
related college, there are things about religion and spirituality that he does take into consideration. He tries to teach his subordinates about how religion shapes the atmosphere of the campus, how important religion is at the school, and the role the church and religion play in the life of the institution.

As a role model, Ruth explained:

He is a Sunday school teacher, he attends church regularly, he is a committed Christian, but yet he is not evangelical in any way like some people are on this campus. He’s not out there with the Christian Peace-Maker teams but yet I know that he is rock solid and he can deal with all kinds of students, the super evangelical ones, the ones who don’t give a flying flip about God, religion, or why they are here, but I think he is a significant person in that aspect. (Ruth 2, 47-52)

Ruth has had very frank conversations with the dean about different types of issues, and those conversations have helped her to realize how he comprehends religion, how he has cultivated his own faith, and how he utilizes religion and spirituality in his work with students. He gives Ruth something to strive for because she wants to be able to relate to students the way he does (Ruth 2, 66-68).

The participant who initially thought he was least affected by mentors or spiritual guides was Brandon. He commented:

I don’t think that for an extended period of time I’ve felt connected to anyone that I really learned from and I think that that might just have grown out of the relationships that I’ve had . . . Um, so, I’ve never developed that, a mentor relationship in any area, and I think that the spiritual being so personal, yet intangible, I don’t think that has happened.

(Brandon 2, 42-47)
But he also commented that he had not really thought about or considered how or what type of spiritual influence others have had on him until he was asked about it in this interview (Brandon 1, 181-182).

Despite his verbal explanation to the contrary, Brandon spoke about how his supervisors, the counselor, and even the international students at Independent influenced his thoughts on spirituality. He noted how they “just opened different doors and helped me, and showed me different ways of looking at things and ah, just expanded the horizons and just gave me new options” (Brandon 1, 180-181).

Brandon also spoke about a guiding type relationship he had recently experienced with the pastors of the church he was attending. A married couple that served as joint pastors of his church agreed to have a ceremony for Brandon and his partner. The pastors required sessions that all couples must attend before the union ceremony. According to Brandon, “Several of the topics were focused on spirituality and religion and that was probably one of the first times that I had a straight forward discussion about it for myself, not me discussing it intangibly or tangentially with students” (Brandon 2, 54-56). Brandon also said that was the first time he and his significant other talked openly together about what spirituality and religion meant to them; they also had the guidance of these two other people which was very interesting to him. Still, Brandon noted, “I’m more personal in life and like to just keep things to myself” (Brandon 2, 58-60).

Continued and Intentional Spiritual Journeys

The third primary influence the researcher noticed was each participant’s choice to continue his or her personal spiritual development. Some of the participants described their spiritual development as being on a personal spiritual journey. This journey was supported by
continued readings, studies, and involvement in intentional spiritual or religious experiences or communities.

Anthony spoke specifically of the idea of a personal spiritual journey. A few years ago he went to a monastery in Kentucky and spent a week in silence and reflection rather than attend a career development or student affairs conference. He thought it helped him a lot more than attending conference sessions (Anthony 2, 101-103). He related:

I definitely feel I’ve been on a personal spiritual journey and continue to be on a personal spiritual journey, yeah, but I don’t know if that was within a specific faith tradition or not, . . . and exploring my relationship with “All That Is,” or “The One Who Is,” or “The Great I Am,” or whatever, you know, those um, that’s, that’s my spiritual journey; and through a variety of things like centering prayer and many nights of meditation and journaling and listening and I’m continuously on that journey. (Anthony 2, 170-177)

Anthony elaborated on several experiences that shaped his thoughts about spirituality. He commented on reading about other religions such as Buddhism as well as practicing meditation. He also discussed struggling with spiritual questions, but thought he had enough personal spiritual experience that allowed him to comment “there is reason to believe in something in spite of doubting” (Anthony 1, 61-64). Other things that have shaped Anthony’s beliefs were a deeper exploration into writings on consciousness and reality over the past five or seven years. Anthony noted that those have had an effect on his understanding of spirituality (Anthony 1, 68-71).

Ruth also thought it was important for student affairs professionals to cultivate their own faith or spirituality. Ruth thought her faith had increased due to her experiences at Chapel and, as a result, she was more comfortable dealing with religion and spirituality in regards to other
people (Ruth 2, 250-256). By continuing to develop her own spirituality and religiousness, Ruth thought she developed a whole realm of other options she could review with students regarding their faith or spirituality (Ruth 2, 308-315).

For Marie it was important to continue to develop in the areas she defined as the four key components of holistic development (mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual). Marie recalled a world religions class that helped her to see a bigger picture of spirituality and realize there were other ways of worshipping and developing spiritually (Marie 1, 114-117). Through her own whole-personal development, including the spiritual component, she thought she could better serve others, and better lead students and staff regarding their spiritual development (Marie 1, 170-171).

Regarding spiritual journeys Brandon commented, “I think it’s also about being the individual professional exploring these issues for themselves and coming to a place where you have a philosophy on it” (Brandon 2, 186-188). He believed being on a spiritual journey was important for him and that he was continuously getting better at it; that is, better at his own spiritual development (Brandon 2, 334-336). Brandon thought that as one develops spiritually, he or she then shares that spirituality with others through one’s work (Brandon 2, 428-430).

Thomas described his spiritual journey as the engine that drives his growth, development, maturity, and sense of self. He believes this is the same for many other people (Thomas 2, 254-257). He noted, “What happens in my work is all very much related to my spirituality and my spiritual practice” (Thomas 1, 171-172). Thomas said there was no disconnection between his work and his spiritual life, and that he grows spiritually through his work, students, and colleagues. He saw himself as bringing his spirituality to his workplace everyday (Thomas 1, 172-178). As such, Thomas saw his entire life as a spiritual journey.
Summary of Influences

It was striking how these three themes readily emerged from the discussions with participants regarding what influenced their thoughts, ideas, and practices regarding spirituality. All of the participants had some type of religious upbringing early in their lives. For some it lasted until they left home for college, while for others it ended prior to high school. Even though none of the participants talked in great detail about his or her religious upbringing, for all it seemed to pique an interest or feeling that spirituality was important to their life.

Even though Brandon had not thought much about the influence of those who guided him spiritually, all the participants described a variety of spiritual or religious guides in their lives -- those who helped to shape their spiritual beliefs. Even though every participant thought spirituality was an individual path or journey, the majority noted the importance of the guides who helped them along the way. The two older participants were more reflective about their past experiences and were better able to define both who their guides were, and the influences those guides had on their lives.

Finally, participants’ personal spiritual journeys influenced their spirituality. All discussed their continued and intentional spiritual development, although each approached this differently. Some sought out specific readings, some utilized more formal channels of religious or organized spiritual groups, others focused more on meditation and self-reflection. It appeared to the researcher that it was important to all participants to be involved in continuing their own spiritual journey, both for their own personal development or growth and in order to be more adept at working with their students or others. These intentional and continuous spiritual journeys continued to influence the participants’ thoughts and actions about the importance of students’ spiritual development as well.
Several common perceptions about the student affairs profession and spirituality appeared among the participant’s thoughts and experiences. These perceptions were directly related to the interview questions asked by the researcher (see Appendix D). The first one involved the participants’ views on holistic development. Another perception was how the participants defined spirituality and religion. The importance these professionals placed on spirituality in student affairs was also consistent. Finally, the participants shared common observations of student involvement in spirituality on their campuses.

Holistic Development

As was previously indicated in Chapter II, the holistic development of students is an important tenet of student affairs in particular and higher education in general. It is important to note the participants’ understanding of this concept. The participants defined the concept and role that they thought holistic development should play in student affairs.

Although the participants had differing ways of explaining holistic development, their understanding of holistic development and its importance for their students focused simply on the development of the whole person. The common references used by all five participants to describe holistic development denoted physical, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. For instance, Brandon commented, “I think holistic development is just the basic three components that everybody talks about, Mind, Body, and Spirit” (Brandon 1, 7-8). And Marie commented:

I think we all have four components that we need to make sure that we give attention to in order to be a well-rounded person, the mental and physical and the emotional and the spiritual. And if those four parts are enhanced and a part of
who we are, we’re a much more totally complete individual then having a heavily weighted one component or only some components. (Marie 1, 5-9)

In addition, some of the participants also mentioned common models of wellness and additional dimensions of holistic development. Anthony explained, “When you say holistic it makes me think of wellness, the whole person, all the dimensions of the person: physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social, and occupational (Anthony 1, 6-7). Ruth and Marie also noted the idea of a person being balanced or well rounded.

The participants also agreed on the role holistic development should play in student affairs. Anthony viewed holistic development as a goal of student affairs work and stated, I guess I’ve been taught, and always thought in my own personal experience, that work with students is not just about my area, career development, and it’s not just about their social side, not just about their academic side, but all those things that form each other, so I think that it’s critical. (Anthony 1, 22-25)

Several of the participants commented on how it is important for student affairs professionals to address holistic development beyond what occurs in the classroom and academic curriculum. They thought this should be addressed by intentionally implementing spiritual programming for students. Marie summarized her opinion:

If we want our students to have outcomes, our students to be citizens of tomorrow, to be globally aware, to be diverse, to be critical thinkers; all those outcomes in higher education that we hope we are able to do interventions for while they are here as students, then we need to do some intentional interventions beyond just letting it happen as it will. And we can do that through intentionally intervening in their environment to provide
opportunities to provide that growth to happen in the multitudes of dimensions. (Marie 1, 33-38)

Brandon concurred that holistic development is essential to the student affairs profession and programming should be intentional. He thought spirituality was a value of the student affairs profession, and that one could not talk about the whole person without including the spiritual component. He noted, “That would just be an oxymoron, holistic development minus the spiritual part of the life of the person” (Brandon 1, 259-265). However, he thinks there is an inconsistency between what student affairs professionals profess and what they put into practice regarding the intentional programming of spirituality. In Brandon’s opinion, student affairs professionals talk about holistic development and the spiritual dimension, but he does not think most professionals intentionally program regarding spirituality.

Thomas agreed with both Marie and Brandon. He believed that holistic programming for students, including spiritual programming, should be intentional, but that student affairs professionals do not always practice what they say in this regard. He commented:

I think it’s [spirituality] something I hear discussed often among colleagues and at professional development activities. I read about it, but I feel that it is something that we don’t put into practice. I feel that even when I read mission statements I see the whole person in there, but it feels like we have either a lack of understanding, or an unwillingness, or just an uneasiness on the spiritual side of our students. That perhaps we don’t know how to do it or how doing it fits in with the mission of that particular institution. (Thomas 1, 18-23)

The agreement on holistic development is likely due to these professionals’ education and training in student affairs. Their agreement that the spiritual component is a part of holistic
development is probably also reflective of their education and training. With all their combined education, training and years of experience, they agree that developing the spiritual component in students’ lives is most often overlooked by those practicing in their profession.

Spirituality and Religion

Not only did all the participants agree on the basic components of holistic development, each also named spirit or being spiritual as one of the critical aspects of this development. The participants defined spirituality similarly, but not uniformly. They also noted that spirituality was a somewhat personal matter, personal being used in the sense of belonging to the individual. Because of this, the terms used to define spirituality are individual and subject to interpretation. This makes it more difficult to recognize a common perception and to develop a uniform definition. The participants did maintain fairly uniform definitions of religion. Religion was primarily discussed as doctrine, belief systems, and ritual.

Thomas thought that his current definition of spirituality was probably much broader now than ever before in his life. He defined spirituality as “one’s relationship to oneself and the rest of the world” (Thomas 1, 42-43). He has determined that many things can be viewed as spiritual, and also noted that something could be spiritual but not necessarily religious. Thomas elaborated that there can be something very spiritual for a person because of one’s interpretation or the meaning that one brings to an item or activity (Thomas 1, 43-48). He described this sense of interpretation or meaning:

Whether it’s yoga, which for me is a very spiritual practice, but I don’t see that as being religious, or my sitting meditation, or maybe some shamanism or journaling that I do. To me that is all spiritual, I am connecting with a higher part of myself, and I see that all as very spiritual, but yet not necessarily grounded in an organized religion, but yet it can be
somewhat of a religious practice for me. But I label it because, I guess, because of our society’s lack of clarity on all this. (Thomas 1, 75-80)

Regarding religion, Thomas defined it as being based on any kind of foundation, organized doctrine, or set of principles.

Anthony related spirituality to the immeasurable things that are divine, mystical experiences, and direct experiences of the spirit within people:

Spirituality for me first of all is not the same as religion. Spirituality is the sometimes un-definable, un-measurable, knowable, but not in a measurable way, essence, experience, sometimes of the divine, but not always of the divine. In terms of spirit, there is a spirit that people have. When I think of spiritual development it is typically the un-measurable that is the divine. (Anthony 1, 36-40)

Similar to Thomas’ explanation of religion, Anthony commented, “In religion you have rules, core beliefs, doctrine that people believe” (Anthony 1, 50-51).

In his struggle to define spirituality Brandon offered, “Maybe that is the answer with spirituality, because it’s a lot of things that you cannot define or measure and I think it does vary” (Brandon 1, 91-93). Brandon related spirituality to the term energy. He talked about people’s energy and people lifting each other up. He also mentioned the transfer of energy and how lack of energy is emotionally draining. Energy is more spiritual than anything else for Brandon because it is intangible, but energy, like spirituality, has a connectedness to it (Brandon 1, 95-101). Other ideas regarding spirituality that Brandon talked about were reflection, asking oneself what life is about, what one has done with one’s life, and where one is going in life (Brandon 1, 111-113). Brandon defined religion simply as doctrinal.
Spirituality for Marie was a “connectedness feeling to something larger than yourself” (Marie 1, 367-368). Marie described how spirituality is the bigger picture. Sometimes people want to hold fast to what they were raised with, but sometimes that gets in the way, or makes it a little bit difficult to expand to a broader picture, more of a spiritual rather than a religious picture (Marie 1, 324-330). Marie spoke of religion as standards and rituals (Marie 2, 31-38).

The participants elaborated on the idea that religion can aid in one’s spiritual development. Anthony thought that although religion is not the same as the experience of the spiritual, religion encourages the experience of the spiritual (Anthony 1, 47-56). Thomas commented that there could be something very spiritual for a person because of one’s interpretation, or meaning, or the understanding that they bring to a religious item, or an activity such as church-going (Thomas 1, 42-48). And Marie thought that rituals, which are often religious but sometimes are not, also helped in terms of developing one’s spiritual life (Marie 1, 474-477). In Brandon’s opinion, “if you are truly religious it is very spiritual and it’s very much a part of who you are . . .” (Brandon 1, 115-118).

Ruth, however, approached the definitions a bit differently than the other participants. She did not think spirituality and religion could be separated. She did not create a clear distinction between religion and spirituality as she struggled to define the terms. At first spirituality was noted as “a safe way to approach religion…a safer way for people to talk about something similar to religion” (Ruth 1, 40-45). She thought spirituality and faith were closely connected (Ruth 1, 47-49), and later commented, “When I think of spirituality, and religion always automatically comes into mind for me, I don’t know, I’m probably not far along on some developmental scale, but to me they just go hand in hand” (Ruth 1, 126-128).
Throughout the discussion about spirituality, Ruth remained consistent but added more depth to her definitions:

With spirituality I think you have this belief or sense that there is a higher power or something out there. And religion, some people might say is spirituality with a discipline. It’s something you believe in more because it is tied to a specific faith or denomination or what not. So again, I think spirituality is kind of a generic term, a general term, a very safe term, a very broad term; where religion, on the other end, is spirituality but with more meaning, with more thought, more discipline (Ruth 2, 17-24). I think spirituality is safe, but to me spirituality is more than just believing in a higher power. I think there is a definite religion. Whether it’s a Christian religion or a different religion, but there is something more there (Ruth 2, 86-89). I think that spirituality is one’s sense of connectedness to, well I’ll say God, though others might say higher being, I’ll say it’s God. (Ruth 2, 164-165)

Ruth added “I kind of see spirituality as general, where faith and religion is more specific” (Ruth 1, 71-75).

As mentioned in Chapter II, a variety of definitions of spirituality abound. Although the five participants’ definitions did not clarify a common definition to any great extent, they did agree that the spiritual is something larger than oneself and is related to a larger being or world. They also noted that spirituality was an individual and somewhat personal matter that was intangible or immeasurable. The participants also elaborated on the idea that religion can aid in one’s spiritual development, but thought that religion was more about discipline or doctrine and not the same as the experience of the spiritual.
Although the participants did not have a consensus in how they defined spirituality, they all thought that spirituality was important for students and belonged within the purview of the student affairs profession. They acknowledged however, that they thought their views of spirituality and its importance for students were not common views in the profession. Within this discussion they also compared the similarities of how professionals address spirituality and diversity issues, the comfort levels of student affairs professionals regarding spirituality, and the concerns some professionals have regarding the separation of church and state when addressing spirituality.

The participants discussed several ideas about why student affairs professionals might avoid dealing with spirituality as part of student development. Brandon noted two reasons why professionals might be afraid to, or might misunderstand how to, present spiritual development to students. One is that spirituality is an area that is somewhat intangible and difficult to measure or assess. And if today’s student affairs professional cannot assess it, “they don’t want to touch it” (Brandon 1, 290-292). The other is that professionals may be concerned that there would have to be a different program for each person because spirituality is such a personal thing. Brandon explained,

When you start talking about spiritual development, when you can’t create a program that’s going to cover everyone because you’d have to do a different program for every single student and it’s not feasible. Um, and if you only do a spiritual program that has a Christian focus, or a Christian emphasis or influence, Atheists, Agnostics, Buddhists, non-Christians, everyone else will either feel neglected, or left out, or pressured.

(Brandon 1, 295-300)
Thomas thought there were many student affairs professionals who probably think it is not their responsibility as student affairs professionals to develop this aspect in students (Thomas 1, 120-124). His conclusion was based mostly on some of his discussions and interactions with others. He related, “They don’t see it as necessary or important, or they may be indifferent and thinking that it’s not our responsibility, and that people can get the support from outside of the institution” (Thomas 1, 132-134).

Thomas also commented that people have powerful perceptions of good and bad regarding some of the terms or ideas surrounding spirituality and religion. They are clearer about their understanding of religion, or what they bring to religion, as compared to spirituality, which is much harder to define or grasp (Thomas 2, 65-68). As such, Thomas thought that many student affairs professionals grapple with negative terms or perceptions about both spirituality and religion and, therefore, do not want to involve themselves with students’ spiritual development.

Marie thought some professionals might think it is a taboo topic, similar to politics or sexuality. They “don’t want to even open that can of worms, and/or [provide] the time to do it” (Marie 1, 375-377). Another reason Marie believed that spirituality was not being discussed in the profession was that no one asks student affairs professionals about spirituality. She commented, “You’re the first person that’s ever asked me” (Marie 1, 335).

Another issue mentioned was the scope and ambiguity of terms. According to Ruth, it is a “hard topic to discuss because it is ambiguous, it’s big, and I think that there are many right answers and right definitions. So it’s hard to be objective because it is such a subjective topic” (Ruth 2, 116-123).
Marie and Ruth were both explicit about how spirituality may be following the same path that the topic of diversity followed in its entrée into higher education. When people knew issues of diversity were important to address with students, but were not quite sure how to address them, they shied away from addressing diversity issues. Marie likened the handling of spirituality to how student affairs professionals sometimes handle issues of diversity. “You know, a potential hot button, like do I say people of color, or do you kind of dance around it because you don’t want to say something offensive” (Marie 2, 127-129). She thinks the result is professionals sometimes just leave spirituality out, like the way they fail to address diversity.

Ruth discussed how spirituality is often mentioned on paper, but depending on the institution, the professionals involved, and their responsibility for overseeing student development, it may not be handled very well. She also explicitly compared it to learning about diversity issues, “My impression is that for a long time [diversity] was mentioned but nothing was ever done with it. You know, it’s kind of given face value, and it was talked about, but nothing was really implemented” (Ruth 1, 267-269).

According to Ruth, programs on spirituality, like diversity, get talked about, and occasionally implemented, but there is not a lot of attention paid to the spiritual development of students. She thought student affairs professionals need to say that they address spirituality in some way, shape, or form, but there often is not a commitment to it (Ruth 2, 144-147). Ruth described this using a concept she called virtual implementation. Virtual implementation is the kind of practice or enactment of a policy where “we talk about doing something, or our written policies indicate that we should do something, but it’s never really done” (Ruth 2, 155-157).
Beyond the Comfort Zone

One common reason participants thought other professionals would not agree with their emphasis on student spiritual development was the lack of comfort with spirituality that many student affairs professionals possess. Thomas attributed a lack of knowledge, a lack of personal exploration, a lack of understanding, and fear or discomfort as reasons more student affairs professionals did not embrace spiritual development in their work. He noted that labels like new age, or a Pagan Awareness Conference, and other non-traditional types of spirituality alternatives are somewhat scary to people (Thomas 1, 120-124).

Ruth spoke specifically about how her fellow doctoral students tended to react when she referenced God when discussing her work at Chapel College. She shared, “There is kind of a hush in the room or people look down. I think they get uncomfortable with that” (Ruth 1, 250). Ruth did not think student affairs professionals liked to talk about spirituality unless the professional was comfortable with his or her own faith, or if he or she was at an institution where spirituality was an important part of the mission (Ruth 2, 86-91).

One reason she felt professionals were uncomfortable or reluctant was because of their own background or faith. Ruth thought that since spirituality is a personal issue for many, it may be uncomfortable for them to discuss with others. She also thought it depended on the faith in which one was brought up or how secure one felt about his or her own religion or spirituality. She commented, “I mean sometimes, at least for me, I’m struggling enough with my own spirituality. How can I possibly help other people or teach a program about this?” (Ruth 2, 102-108).

Marie thought maybe some professionals think they will get in trouble if they address spirituality on campus. She further commented, “I think it’s the piece that people are kind of
afraid they’re going to be stepping on toes if they address it too directly, just because they’re uncomfortable, or they don’t want to hit any hot buttons for someone” (Marie 2, 124-127). Marie also thought some student affairs professionals’ had limited knowledge about spirituality. She noted that student affairs professionals don’t really sit down to have this type of conversation. She was not sure spirituality was even on their agenda and could not recall ever having a discussion centered upon spirituality at any professional conference (Marie 1, 262-271).

Finally, Ruth noted how religion is a very political term. There are so many personal beliefs and tenets attached to religion and spirituality that it is a topic many may be afraid to discuss. Ruth referred to an old adage that states when you go to a party you shouldn’t talk about sex, politics, or religion. According to Ruth, many people still do not feel comfortable discussing these things publicly, so they do not (Ruth 2, 134-138).

**Concerns of Church and State**

The participants expressed that there were a number of professionals who would agree with them about the importance of spiritual development. But they also thought many student affairs professionals would likely say that spirituality is too much like religion and should not, or could not, be discussed in the academy. They particularly thought professionals at public universities would think this because of the separation of church and state. Most of the participants mentioned that the separation of church and state was a significant reason student affairs professionals avoid dealing with the spiritual development of students. Thomas thought there was a fear about the separation of state and church among student affairs professionals, especially at public institutions. Thomas wondered if fear has deterred some from even getting into spiritual development (Thomas 1, 106-114). Thomas elaborated,
I think that the separation of church and state has in some way provided a roadblock, you know, and people are just putting on their brakes from having discussions. You just don’t bring religion into this place, so therefore you don’t discuss it, you don’t express it, explore, experiment, so I don’t think the discussions even exist on many levels. (Thomas 2, 83-86)

**Spirituality and Students**

In general, the participants thought students were becoming more interested and involved in issues of spirituality on their campuses than in the past. Some of the participants saw the growth in student religious organizations and events on campus as a clear indication of this interest. Over the last few years, the participants noted that student involvement in organizations like Campus Crusade for Christ, various campus ministry events, and specific events or organizations such as Habitat for Humanity had increased. Additionally, the participants noticed more students were seeking individual pathways to spirituality such as yoga, meditation, and independent readings.

Marie said the increased interest by students in religious and spiritual matters was the impetus for the formation of the Religious Diversity Committee at Collegetown University. This committee was concerned with both individual and communal religious and spiritual practices of Collegetown students. The committee conducted a survey and asked students about certain rituals that students might perform in their religion(s). This prompted the committee to provide space on campus for students to practice their religious or spiritual rituals. For example, if a group of students thought it was important to burn incense on Thursday nights, the committee would help students figure out a time, place, and manner for these students to practice this ritual.
The committee also asked what else the University could do to help students with spiritual or religious development on campus (Marie 2, 347-366).

Anthony mentioned that students were bringing more spirituality and religion to campus and that student affairs’ professionals were reacting to that. Anthony commented that students’ spirituality was taking on two forms in their lives. One was community spirituality, or the social aspect of spirituality in students’ lives. The second involved an individual aspect of spirituality. Community spirituality generally included church experiences, participation in student religious or spiritual organizations, or both. Anthony thought most students connected spirituality to religion and social aspects. For a minority of students however, spirituality also included an important individual relationship involving their conversation with the Divine (Anthony 2, 252-258). Our participants described several different ways that students addressed spirituality through both community and individual expression.

*Student Spirituality: Community Expression*

Anthony suggested that spiritual growth was fostered and community was further developed when groups of people who have similar beliefs come together for worship (Anthony 2, 145-152). Anthony spoke about Thursday night candlelight service at City Christian as starting out with 4-5 students and growing, over the last four years, to include more than 100 students (Anthony 2, 276-282).

Some of Ruth’s observations at Chapel College served as examples regarding the community element of spirituality and religion to students there. She commented, “Chapel service for example. [Attendance at church] service is not mandatory but we have anywhere from 250-300 people show up every week” (Ruth 2, 209-210). She also talked about a group called BASIC, which is an acronym for Brothers and Sisters in Christ, one of the co-curricular
organizations at Chapel College. Every year they have 350 students express an interest in the group. According to Ruth, Chapel College has a very strong religious life program. Many students are involved in four to five different organizations within the spiritual life co-curricular program (Ruth 2, 210-213). Even though they had a lot of other things going on, the students still became involved in the bible study groups as well as the BASIC groups and other volunteer or service groups (Ruth 2, 220-222).

Brandon shared that a student organization at Independent University had written and performed a play for the campus. Overall, the play and performances turned out to be a community spiritual event. The story was about a young black woman who went away to college, faced many problems and challenges, and at the end went to church and it solved all her problems. Brandon thought it was very simplistic, go back to church and all your problems will be solved, but that was the message the group wanted to send to the audience. There was a church scene in the play also, so the organization invited gospel choirs to perform as part of the play; they also had the gospel choirs perform between acts (Brandon 2, 287-297).

*Student Spirituality: Individual Expression*

Brandon saw spirituality as a very personal and individual issue on his campus. He had seen individuals come in and borrow books, or just say “can we talk” and close the door. Brandon thought he had referred more students to the campus chaplain this year, but otherwise he noted no increase in interest and involvement in spirituality at Independent (Brandon 2, 285-287; 298-300).

According to Thomas, students’ spirituality was multi-faceted. Some were questioning and exploring meaning in their lives, some were reading books, some were taking classes in philosophy and religion, and some were taking courses on spirituality. Others were expressing
themselves through yoga or tai chi; utilizing these practices for a spiritual element and benefit rather than just for toning or building their bodies. Students pursuing meditation, discussions, and spiritual readings were also an indication of greater student interest in spirituality or spiritual development (Thomas 2, 185-195). Ruth noted that many students at Chapel put aside time for bible study (Ruth 2, 220-221).

An Integrated Professional Perspective: A Summary

For these five participants, an overarching philosophical approach to student affairs work was the holistic development of students; this included a spiritual component as a main tenant to this philosophy. Holistic was mentioned as being synonymous with balanced or well-rounded students. The idea that this philosophy was essential or critical to student affairs work was a common perception. Participants also mentioned that despite the student affairs professional association’s statements about the importance of holistic development, student affairs professionals were not practicing this philosophy. They believed this because professionals often do not address the spiritual component, which is an integral part of the philosophy.

Although the participants had unique definitions for spirituality, they had a consistent perspective that spirituality was beyond oneself and related to a larger being or world. The term religion, on the other hand, was agreed upon as the doctrine or principles or set of beliefs common to a group of people. For most, spirituality and religion were not synonymous terms. Ruth, however, could not think about spirituality without thinking about religion.

Because the participants thought spirituality was important to student development and was a main component to an overarching philosophy of the profession, the participants generally perceived that student affairs professionals should promote the spiritual development of students. Most of the participants thought their views of spirituality and its importance for students was
not the common view in the profession. They thought that many professionals would likely disagree with them, particularly those at public universities who might confuse spirituality with religion.

Brandon thought the lack of spiritual development research and discussions in the profession may be because spirituality is somewhat intangible and difficult to measure or assess. Also, Brandon thought professionals might be pensive because spirituality is a very personal thing (Brandon 1, 293-295). Ruth discussed the concept of virtual implementation. She thought that many student affairs professionals think they should address spirituality, but because they are not sure how to address it, they simply do not. Student affairs professionals might avoid dealing with spirituality as part of student development because discussions of spirituality are often beyond the comfort zone of “expertise” of many student affairs professionals. Another suggestion was that student affairs professionals, especially those at public institutions, might be afraid to discuss the topic because many people equate being spiritual with being religious. As such, they want to be careful about separation of church and state issues.

Another common perception was that students, at least on these campuses, have been more interested in spirituality and religion recently. These opinions were based, in part, on witnessing increased student participation in spiritual and religious activities on their campuses. Spirituality in students’ lives seemed to take two forms: community spirituality, the social aspect of spirituality in students’ lives; and individual spirituality, an individual relationship with a higher power or exploring meaning in their lives. The culture of each campus may have a great impact on these observations and will be explored more thoroughly later in this chapter.
“Talking the Heart Talk”: The Student Affairs Professionals’ Actions/Influences

This section explores the way these participants enacted their integrated professional perspective in their work with students. The participants agreed that student affairs professionals should engage students in spiritual development. The participants’ actions to influence students’ spirituality were similar to the ways in which the participants themselves developed spiritually. Their opinions varied on the extent and the ways in which spirituality or spiritual development should be promoted to students. Although the participants were asked how they utilized spirituality in their professional lives, the researcher had no preconceptions of how the participants might respond to this question. The following paragraphs discuss the three themes that were presented regarding how the participants’ utilized their positions to assist students with spiritual development.

The primary action these professionals intentionally utilized to influence students’ spirituality was role modeling spiritual development behavior. Most of the participants referred to this as “walking-the-talk,” and all the participants agreed that this was the tacit expression of their spirituality—their actions that students could observe. The second theme involved interventions to assist students with spiritual development, providing educational and experiential opportunities to aid students on their spiritual journeys. The participants noted programs, workshops, and other interventions were important opportunities for students’ spiritual development. Serving as spiritual guides for students, by developing personal relationships and utilizing individual discussions to aid a student in personal spiritual or religious development, is presented as the third theme. This was the spoken expression of individually telling students the importance of spirituality.
Role Modeling: “Walking the Talk”

For the participants, one’s actions need to be congruent with one’s expression of the importance of spirituality. If one was not actively engaged in some type of individual spiritual or religious exploration or development, one was not believable when telling students the importance of spiritual growth. Each participant exhibited an individual style and expression, but recognized that students were observing their actions and were responding according to the professional’s behavior.

When discussing the importance of being a role model to students, the participants often used the phrase “walking the talk.” Marie expressed this most succinctly, “To me okay, you have to walk the talk. So if your values or core spiritual values are exhibited in your behaviors, that’s going to be a much more powerful message than anything else you can do (Marie 1, 80-82). Marie further reflected on her ideas of role modeling religion and spirituality,

I think too many people can talk the book talk but can’t talk the heart talk. And they could quote chapter and verse of developmental theorists, etcetera, etcetera, but to get the essence of what that means, I think the key you have to do is take that abstractness and put it into your life and heart and practice it and do it. (Marie 1, 212-216)

If student affairs professionals define spirituality, then go on to discuss it, and then do not show it with their behaviors, Marie does not want to listen to them. It is so crucial for Marie to ‘walk the talk’ (Marie 1, 250-255).

Brandon made an interesting comment when he said we should,

Not be afraid to be a good role model, or not be afraid to be a role model. . . . We are role models, regardless, and if we do nothing and we create a vacuum, then we’re still role
modeling that behavior in saying this [spirituality] is a part of my life that I can’t share with anyone (Brandon 2, 180-183).

Ruth gave examples of much more concrete role modeling of spiritual or religious behaviors for students. She believed these were important for student spiritual or religious development. She related,

By attending chapel, I think it is really important. I try to attend chapel as often as my schedule allows me to, which isn’t every week, but I try to be there at least 2 or 3 times a month if I can. I think it’s important for me to be in tune to what the spiritual life, to the spiritual life of the students and what the Spiritual Life Department is doing. By department, I don’t mean the Religion Department, but just, um, what the campus pastor and his related organizations are doing, because they are an important group of students. (Ruth 2, 350-355)

Anthony discussed “walking the talk” in terms of vocational discernment:

Do I do the things that we suggest that students do, with regard to vocational discernment? Like, do I keep a journal, with those related thoughts? Do I seek out an environment that is conducive to listening to God? Do I do those kinds of exploratory things myself? And the answer is, yes, I do those things, but that’s part of me, I think that’s part of my calling, I feel like that’s something I think about all the time, I think about it more than the students do. I write about it more than the students would ever dream of writing about it because that is something that I am just constantly mulling over in my mind, and those sorts of things occur to me. So it’s easy for me to walk the talk, at least my talk. I think it’s easy for me to walk my talk. (Anthony 1, 343-351)
Brandon noted that if one leads a strong spiritual life, then one does have that influence on students. Role modeling a strong spiritual life can influence students, and sometimes those students will have a desire to share that with you (Brandon 1, 70-72).

Although most of the participants mentioned why “walking the talk” was important, Anthony summarized it best. He explained,

If I tell students that all this is important and I don’t do it, I mean, that just seems ridiculous, ‘cause if I were a student I wouldn’t pay any attention at all. Just like if I were teaching somebody about good eating habits and they saw me eating junk all the time, or if somebody told me about this way that I should do things and I saw they didn’t, I wouldn’t trust them at all, so yeah, it’s a credibility issue. (Anthony 1, 362-367)

**Spiritual Interventions with Students**

These participants all thought that the role of student affairs professionals should include the promotion of spiritual development of students. They discussed their thoughts about this role. The degree to which each thought spirituality should be promoted varied by participant. Despite the different degrees and ideas about promotion of spiritual development, the participants thought it important to develop, support, or direct others to develop ways to specifically address student spiritual development on one’s campus. The two primary means utilized to intervene with students were through supervising students and offering programmatic interventions. A myriad of other types of interventions were also utilized. The participants openly shared how they, and others on their campuses, implemented interventions for spiritual development.

According to Marie, student affairs professionals should play an active role in student spiritual development. They need to listen unconditionally and dialogue with students to help
them come up with their own answers. This would also give students a chance to verify their
own internal values (Marie 2, 475-480).

Marie compared working with students’ spiritual development to what is done with
students at orientation. She explained that sometimes students do not know what they need, but
student affairs professionals do know because of their work with students, their experience, and
their knowledge of the environment and society. At new student orientation every year student
affairs professionals utilize their backgrounds and knowledge to teach students certain things
(Marie 2, 394-398). Marie expounded:

For instance, they might not know they need to know about the date rape drug, but we
think they do need to know about it, so it’s going to be part of the orientation. They may
think they don’t need to know about alcohol poisoning, but we’ve seen enough cases
where we need to get that word out. So it’s that fine line between them knowing what
they need and what would help them get to that next level, and what we know is
important for them to know. (Marie 2, 398-402)

Marie thought student affairs professionals should be versed in spiritual development and should
provide programs to students because they know it is important to student development.

Thomas wanted to see the spiritual behaviors and interests of students supported as much
as possible. Although he thought some students may not be ready for it, and might reject it, there
should be many spiritual opportunities on campus for students to explore (Thomas 2, 208-210).

He elaborated:

Their [students’] understanding of spirituality, their definition, their relationship with
God, their understanding of religion, I think that is so important. And I think that,
personally, that is the institution’s responsibility to help spiritual development and
therefore, within student affairs and academic units, to provide opportunities. (Thomas 2, 210-214)

Thomas commented that spiritual development is very intertwined with personal development, particularly the managing of emotions and understanding of one’s self. He thought it was the responsibility of student affairs professionals to help support the development of one’s self, including one’s spiritual development (Thomas 2, 218-221).

According to Brandon, a part of the student affairs professionals’ role was to provide opportunities and choices for students to introduce them to other ways of looking at the world (Brandon 1, 80-81). For Brandon, the spiritual side of providing opportunity included helping students to identify for themselves what part spirituality has in life and what that means. This meant asking challenging questions that are important for guiding students in this area (Brandon 2, 225-226): student affairs professionals should “serve a role in pointing out that [students] are going in a [spiritual] direction, and that they have choices and options to explore” (Brandon 2, 480-481).

Ruth discussed how student affairs professionals should play a supporting role rather than a leading role in working with students regarding spiritual development. As such, student affairs professionals should help to develop and cultivate student spirituality by pushing them in the right direction, getting them involved in campus religious activities, or just suggesting the possibilities for students to start working on spiritual or religious development (Ruth 2, 408-416). Ruth thought that perhaps religion departments, campus ministries, or other groups should take the lead in fostering spiritual opportunities for students. She noted that it was important for student affairs professionals to be supportive of the spiritual component because it is part of holistic development (Ruth 2, 416-419). Ruth commented, “Some attention has to be paid to it,
and you might not be entirely comfortable with it, but I think it needs to be addressed, and hire someone good to lead that part, but it’s an important part” (Ruth 2, 420-424).

Supervision of Students

One of the primary means of intervention for the participants was through the supervision of students. This was generally done either through the supervision of students in leadership groups, or through the supervision of student staff members. Thomas talked about spirituality in his leadership groups, specifically focusing on servant leadership and how it is very spiritually based. The students at Universal did not buy into the conventional, hierarchical models of leadership, but Thomas said servant leadership models really resonated with the students (Thomas 2, 286-291). Brandon worked with a leadership group at Independent University on an annual basis. He discussed how he implemented spirituality with the leadership group with which he worked by discussing spirituality as part of a values clarification exercise (Brandon 2, 390-412).

An example that came to mind for Ruth was the wellness program model used with resident assistants (RAs) at Chapel College. She mentioned that most wellness models have spirituality as one of the components. At Chapel College, they believe that students will be well rounded as a result of the RAs implementing spiritual programming for the residents (Ruth 2, 80-86). Ruth also gave special recognition to student staff members who initiated wellness programs that promoted spiritual development. Finally, she encouraged the residence hall staff to work with their hall chaplains to address spirituality with students (Ruth 2, 342-346).

Another specific way that Ruth used spirituality in her work was with her RAs. Ruth had a list of 24 expectations for RAs that was part of a Chapel College RA creed or code of conduct incorporated into her training manual. The last expectation, rule #24 on the list, was *Use Jesus*
As Your Model. Ruth did not create the code of conduct, but rather inherited it from the dean who had been there for 30 years. Not all of Ruth’s RAs were very religious, but it still was an expectation. Ruth commented how the whole, “What Would Jesus Do?” phenomena had become very popular among teenagers over the past ten years, so Ruth utilized it as a model for her students. It was also used as a model for many other student leaders on the Chapel College campus (Ruth 2, 275-283).

Programmatic Interventions

Another key way the participants intervened in student spiritual development was by creating particular programs or retreats for students. Brandon created a program called Ultimate Fitness: Mind, Body, Spirit, Developing the Whole You. Every month students attended different educational programs, one about the mind, one about the body, and one about the spirit. Within each program area students developed a contest to encourage others to develop in the specific area. For spirituality students wrote an essay describing how he or she developed spiritually that semester. Brandon commented that he read quite a few drafts of essays that students wrote (Brandon 2, 438-450).

The religious diversity committee at Collegetown offered a series of lectures on “What Matters to Me and Why.” They asked a variety of people on campus to present how their personal, professional, and spiritual lives were merged. Marie thought that each speaker had a very different spiritual approach when sharing their ideas with the campus community (Marie 1, 347-352).

Probably the most notable opportunity that Anthony provided for students regarding spiritual development was through the retreats he offered to students in conjunction with one of the campus ministers. Although the retreat was founded in a predominantly Christian viewpoint,
it was also from a non-denominational viewpoint, thus making it accessible to the vast majority of students who attend City Christian University. The retreat focused on four areas: (a) the students’ general spiritual calling, (b) the students’ spiritual foundation regarding their history, family, and religious upbringing, (c) whether or not a student felt she or he had any type of personal mission, and (d) nurturing, specifically nurturing the communication and the relationship one has with God.

Sometimes the retreat participants held a Bible study during the retreat, but usually they completed exercises related to spirituality and career development that were related to vocational development. Typically participants wrote some type of journal. Sometimes they created art or other different types of pieces to help explore and pursue questions that related to vocation, calling, and spiritual development. Time was also provided for individuals to encounter nature and then come back to their group for discussion. Components of various retreats have included centering prayer, icons for reflection, times of contemplation, and other exercises related to the theme of the retreat. The retreat leaders always made time to process the experiences throughout the retreat. Generally, the retreats were capped off with Sunday morning worship and a communal meal (Anthony 2, 395-423).

Anthony thought that it was important to create opportunities to expose or open students to these types of experiences. Students grow or develop more in their lives if they are exposed to a variety of opportunities and experiences. He thought that sometimes it was just a matter of ‘planting seeds’ for students, introducing them to the concept of the spiritual dimension in their lives. From there they might go on to develop a deeper spiritual dimension in their lives (Anthony 2, 422-434).
Thomas incorporated spirituality or spiritual development into his work with students in many ways. He interacted with students, especially during difficult times in their lives, to guide them spiritually (Thomas 2, 291-292). Although he had not been asked to do some of this work, he created ways to do it. Thomas offered spirituality discussion groups because he thought that it was necessary, “There’s a need for it, there are students asking for it, they’re thirsty for it, hungry for it, and I would argue it is consistent with what we say we are here to do” (Thomas 2, 266-268). The men’s group Thomas was involved with was also very spiritually based. A drumming circle was brought to campus one Friday and, although the word spiritual was not used, it was a spiritual activity for the campus. Thomas advertised it as a celebration of community and a healing experience for the body, soul, heart, and earth. Thomas also brought David White, a poet and speaker, to campus on more than one occasion. White talked about finding your soul and spirit in the workplace, focusing particularly on how one could be very spiritual within one’s work (Thomas 2, 268-275).

Other Spiritual Interventions

The participants also used a variety of other types of interventions to promote student spiritual development. At Chapel College, the Dean or Ruth would work closely with the campus pastor when they were made aware that a student was having problems. This would allow for the pastor to provide spiritual counseling when possible, or to provide suggestions of how others might help a student work through a problem from a spiritual perspective (Ruth 2, 346-350). Ruth also incorporated prayer into her work with students. Depending upon the type of students or group she was working with, she may have ended a meeting or training session with prayer (Ruth 2, 336-339).
Prayer was also used at Collegetown University. Marie noted that at many campus functions, such as the annual opening breakfast, the campus rituals included prayer. She commented, “We always have prayer, probably any campus function where we have one or more offices sponsoring a luncheon for employers that have had students in internships, etcetera, we build that piece into our campus luncheon” (Marie 2, 178-181).

Anthony provided several opportunities for students to get in touch with their spiritual side and perhaps their vocational calling. One such opportunity was a booklet he had written on choosing a major and a career. In that booklet there was a small section on spiritual career development and vocation, and interspersed throughout the booklet were side panels and quotes that related to various spiritual points of view.

Similarly, Anthony taught a course on choosing a major. In the course he discussed spiritual and vocational calling as a part of career development. Both within the course he taught, and in personal counseling with students regarding career decision making, Anthony listened for students to talk about their beliefs, or about God, or about other spiritual aspects that he could then explore with them (Anthony 2, 367-379).

Like Anthony, Thomas was also able to incorporate spirituality into the classroom setting. Faculty members at Universal College allowed students to do private readings with a faculty member to explore a subject or area of interest more deeply. Within the Department of Sociology, Thomas offered many different private readings, including a number focusing on issues of spirituality (Thomas 2, 278-291).

Thomas also challenged and pushed faculty, staff, and students at Universal to think about the many ways they could provide spiritual development outlets for students (Thomas 2, 264-277). About four years previously, Thomas and some colleagues created a meditation room
in the student center at Universal College for the use of spiritually-related student groups. It was a response to their beliefs about the need for student spiritual development on the campus. The room was a place where someone could go for individual spiritual practice such as meditation, yoga, or spiritual reading. Thomas believed the creation of the space was an important way the college supported spirituality on campus (Thomas 1, 152-157).

Marie discussed her membership on a campus religious diversity committee. The committee’s goal was to provide a forum where students from all religious backgrounds felt welcome to develop their own spirituality, whatever that would be (Marie 1, 337-340). She commented that much of the reason behind the formation of the committee was to evaluate what students needed and wanted for practicing spiritual and religious rituals on campus. The committee sought answers to questions like “Is there a certain ritual you perform in your religion that you would like us to provide space for on campus?” For example, if a group wanted to burn incense on Thursday nights, the committee helped them figure out a way to do that (Marie 2, 355-362).

*Serving as a Spiritual Guide*

Another role the participants performed was that of serving as a spiritual guide for students. Primarily, this meant utilizing individual discussions and developing personal relationships to aid students in their spiritual development. Some of the participants acknowledged the need to challenge and support students within the spiritual guide role. They thought they could help an individual student to greater spiritual and/or personal development through appropriate challenge and support.

Marie spent a great deal of time in personal discussions with students. Although she believed there were many non-intrusive things that happen to students in their spiritual journeys,
Marie believed one thing student affairs professionals could do was to expose students to spiritual development ideas and experiences on a consistent basis. Marie just hoped that she or other guides would be available to help the students process those experiences. She thought that a spiritual guide could help students gain new insight, and hopefully take him or her to the next spiritual level (Marie 2, 298-309). To accomplish these goals, Marie suggested that professionals listen unconditionally and dialogue with students to help them come up with their own answers. These dialogues would give students a chance to verify their own internal values (Marie 2, 475-480). Marie noted that traditional aged college students become a captive audience on campus, and that they experience a lot in four years. She thought this traditional time on campus presented a tremendous opportunity for student affairs professionals to guide students. She also thought professionals could potentially make a huge impact on a student’s life during this time (Marie 2, 486-491).

Since Brandon viewed spirituality as highly personal, his approach with students was also personal. He noted that because there is no particular book or test for spiritual development, he thinks it is important to guide students on an individual basis (Brandon 2, 500-502). Brandon believed that student affairs professionals are able to guide students spiritually without guiding them in any particular spiritual direction. A guide does not have to have a preconceived notion of a spiritual development result. Brandon explained that as a guide he could question a student about where he or she might be headed spiritually. If the student were not sure, Brandon would explain that a person is always headed in some direction and should be aware of that. Then Brandon might help the student understand the spiritual direction she or he might be heading. If the student determines that this spiritual direction is not appropriate, then Brandon can help the student to redirect toward where the student would like to be going (Brandon 2, 471-476).
For Ruth, the spiritual development of students was also about guiding students. Ruth helped students start or continue on a journey, and helped them to navigate that journey to greater spiritual development. Ruth described the process by using a metaphor of clothes in the closet:

You come here with clothes your parents bought you, and your faith is kind of that way, especially for students who come here because it is a church related college. You come here with maybe very naïve beliefs about your religion and your faith and through discussions with students, with faculty especially, and with religious life activities on campus you question parts of your faith and you have to decide “Okay, is this truly what I believe in?” And some clothes are thrown out of the closet, and some clothes you keep on, and finally you buy some new things too. I think you finally begin to see the beginning of students’ taking on a religion for themselves. You know my priest or my pastor taught me this growing up, but now I need to figure out what I believe, and I think that’s one part of spiritual development of students. (Ruth 2, 165-178)

According to Ruth, spiritual identity is an important part of students’ overall identity development at Chapel College. There are many faculty members on her campus who are willing to help students by being religious or spiritual guides for them. The faculty members realize that Chapel is a Christian college and that one’s faith is very individual. Ruth noted that one should think about what it means and what kind of commitment it takes for one to be a mentor or guide to students regarding spirituality (Ruth 2, 191-204).

Ruth also described how she guided students by encouraging them to be involved in spiritual life or service learning activities such as “Shining Through”, a campus singing-ministry, or Habitat for Humanity. She noted that she did not necessarily advocate certain kinds of
religious programs, but just encouraged people to plug into the spiritual opportunities that were available at Chapel (Ruth 2, 355-361).

Being able to respond to students according to what she knew about their individual faiths or religious practices was also important to Ruth. She could explore the spiritual component of a student’s development by being able to ask questions like “have you prayed about it” or “what would your pastor or priest say about this?” This influenced how she worked with students, and gave her another way to assist students with their development (Ruth 2, 308-315). As such, Ruth had another realm of options for student development; she could review faith or spiritual questions and ideas in their lives.

As a career development specialist, Anthony thought he was in a natural position to be a spiritual guide for students. He primarily tied spiritual development to career development to help students discern vocation and calling. He believed he served as a spiritual guide by “being there for students, and meeting them where they are, and helping them understand, if they’re interested, helping them understand another deeper [spiritual] question, or understand more fully where they are, helping them to move to another [spiritual] level” (Anthony 2, 322-324).

For Thomas, spiritual development and spiritual healing starts within, so guiding students was based on helping the student to understand self and feelings. He thought it was important to guide persons to accept their feelings, to allow them to exist, and not run away from their feelings (Thomas 2, 103-115). Thomas explained,

Sometimes it’s about going in and literally doing healing, you know, accepting the feelings during that process, although it’s very painful and it’s very hurtful, but it’s a very wonderful time to reconnect with something that was broken within one’s self, and to heal and repair and to grow spiritually . . . I think some of us are on a different path and
certainly welcome these opportunities, and are here to maybe do that kind of work.

(Thomas 2, 125-133)

This was a natural way for Thomas to engage students. This was part of the spiritual approach and framework he brought to his work. He commented,

I do it all the time, and I do it without thinking, and so when a student is upset about something that has happened, I might help them to do those things that I just described. It may be validating their experience and being there for them, and being very understanding and loving, but to get them to really be with their feelings. (Thomas 2, 114-119)

Brandon thought that part of our role as student affairs professionals was to provide opportunities and choices for students and help them to understand that there are other ways of looking at the world (Brandon 1, 80-81). Brandon guided students by providing opportunities for a student to identify for herself what spirituality meant in her life. He would also ask students challenging questions about what was important to them (Brandon 2, 225-226). Brandon noted that one cannot just challenge students, there has to be appropriate support also. That support may come from family, friends, or from other avenues within the college, but it sometimes had to come from him. Brandon suggested one may need to be in a supportive role for a student’s spiritual development, at least until the student can manage his own spiritual development (Brandon 2, 264-274).

In his professional role, Brandon has provided challenge and support to students’ spiritual development through both guiding and interventions. He guided students most frequently by serving as a resource person and confidant. Brandon explained,
If I care about somebody and I see that maybe they’re not realizing that they’re letting
time go by or they’re letting their life go by, or they’re letting their spiritual journey go
nowhere or go directionless, wander aimlessly, I could point that out and say, ‘what do
you think about this?’ ‘Why don’t you read this book and let’s talk about it; let’s just
have a conversation.’ (Brandon 2, 495-499)

For Anthony, guiding students involved meeting them where they were in their spiritual
development, or trying to assess where he thought they were, in order to provide appropriate
challenge and support. By doing so he hoped students would gain a deeper understanding of the
spiritual side of their vocation or calling (Anthony 2, 197-222). He also strived to support them
by helping them understand that a career could include more than just a set of skills or an area of
interest, that there was a spiritual component that could lead to a vocational calling. Anthony’s
goal was to challenge and support students to make meaning, and to listen to their vocational call
effectively (Anthony 2, 194-254).

Summary of the Student Affairs Professionals’ Actions/Influences

The primary actions the participants utilized to influence students’ spirituality were role
modeling, interventions, and serving as spiritual guides. For the participants, role modeling their
own spiritual development was referred to as “walking-the-talk.” They noted that one’s actions
needed to be congruent with one’s expression regarding the importance of spirituality. They also
thought that an educator should be actively engaged in some type of individual spiritual or
religious exploration or development if he or she was to be believable when telling students the
importance of spiritual growth.

Marie was consistent in tying various spiritual thoughts and ideas back to role modeling
or walking the talk. She commented that if one is walking the talk and students are observing
these consistent messages, then one is credible and students will want to model their behavior and follow him or her. They will recognize character, integrity, trust, and unconditional support from the guide and follow that example (Marie 2, 421-425).

The participants also assisted students with their spiritual journeys and spiritual development by providing interventions for students. Although they had various ideas about the role of the student affairs professional and the degree to which spiritual development should be promoted, the participants and their campus colleagues provided programs, retreats, and various other interventions for students’ spiritual development. They also intervened with students through the manner in which they supervised them, and in some cases through activities in the classes they taught.

The third way participants influenced students regarding spirituality was through serving as spiritual guides. The participants utilized personal relationships and individual discussions to foster student spiritual development. Challenging and supporting students appropriately when in the spiritual guide role was acknowledged as important.

The Campus Context

The discussion of campus context was brought up by three participants in response to several different questions posed by the researcher. Campus context was eventually posed as a question to all participants after the original three participants had mentioned campus context as having influenced spirituality in their lives or the spiritual life on campus. Although a theme did not develop regarding a spiritual environment on the campuses of these participants, they observed how their particular campus context affected spirituality. The campus context, or the aggregate of social and cultural conditions that influence the life of the students and the campus community, influenced what the participants thought about spirituality both on their campuses
and in the student affairs profession. It influenced how the participants guided students regarding spiritual development, perhaps more than they realized or stated. A few of the participants also discussed how the Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO) on their campus influenced the spiritual environment of the campus.

Ruth captured Chapel’s context as she described several factors of influence. Working at a church related college, and doing research on church related colleges, Ruth noted “we’re really unique here at Chapel in the fact that we have strong ties to the church, but yet we’re also really strong student affairs professionals who have a really strong background in student development theory” (Ruth 2, 541-543). Ruth thought that Chapel’s approach to student development and spirituality was different than other “Peace Church” colleges. She commented:

I think that we are very in tune to student development, but yet we’re also very sensitive to the needs and the issues of the church. And we walk a fine line because we balance the spirituality and the religion into student development; we mix it all together. (Ruth 2, 546-549)

According to Ruth, another influence at Chapel included faculty members, presidents, board of trustee members, and other staff members having been overseas missionaries or involved in volunteer service. The faculty and staff also talked about religion, social justice issues, and nonviolent approaches to world issues. They championed different causes and volunteered for different peace clubs and peacemaker groups, finding non-violent ways to protest, and raising student awareness about issues. Ruth acknowledged, “[Spirituality] really is important, and the people in this community try to incorporate that into their life. So to me there is something there” (Ruth 2, 234-235).
The Chapel College context greatly affected how Ruth viewed and incorporated spirituality in her work. She said, “To me, here they are one in the same, just the way this environment is structured, the way the people operate within this environment” (Ruth 1, 108-109). The way things were done at Chapel felt good to Ruth because it made her think spirituality was very much integrated into the curriculum, into faculty-staff meetings, we open faculty-staff meetings with a word of prayer. At the opening dinner for the faculty and staff that kicks off each year, you know, ah they sing the common doxology in four part harmony because that is what they do, and I thought, “Wow, you know religion has very much a sense of presence, a very strong presence on this campus.” (Ruth 1, 120-125)

Ruth noted, “The church here has a significant role and significant voice as to what happens at the college” (Ruth 1, 180-181). That influence impacted the Chapel context. It affected different activities, such as sexual responsibility programs, that the college often implemented for students. At Chapel, church politics influenced the policies, rules, and expectations to the point where programs had to be implemented in a way that was consistent with the teachings, belief and doctrine of the “Peace Church.” Ruth described how this actually played out when working with a student at Chapel College,

I feel that because I’m here at a church-related college, I should be comfortable enough to approach that topic any time, because I feel like they signed on to go here, they know our expectations, if I bring religion into this, it’s fair game, because, you know, they chose to come here, they could have gone somewhere else, so that’s number one in the back of my mind. Number two, I think, in your course of discussions with students, if they mention religion or God or spirituality in a conversation with me, then to me that’s an automatic
green light, it’s okay to talk about this. If they don’t; you can kind of bring it in gradually and see how they respond to religious questions. (Ruth 2, 321-329)

The Collegetown University environment, according to Marie, also had a large number of faculty and staff members whose daily behaviors would exemplify positive character, ethics, and morality. Marie thought this helped students to see positive role models from a variety of corners of the campus, and created a campus context that would bring out students’ spirituality and connectedness to humanity. She remarked that these spiritual models and guides were “continuing to expose students to the culture so that they [students] can daily observe those pieces that have them rise to the next level, the same as you ask of any mentor” (Marie 2, 237-244).

Marie also believed the religious diversity of the Collegetown University campus provided a context that influenced students. There were students from 32 different countries and several different religious traditions enrolled at Collegetown. She pointed out the complexity of interactions of students who are Catholic, come from various Protestant denominations, and come from other religious backgrounds. The complexity resulted in the formation of the Religious Diversity Committee on campus. This committee was designed to help students with spiritual development within the framework of each student’s religion. The presence of religious complexity, as well as the committee formed to address it, demonstrated an openness and inclusive environment for its emphasis on student spiritual and religious development (Marie 2, 352-366).

Anthony thought the City Christian University context was more supportive of staff members talking about spirituality with students than at most other campuses. He had commented about City Christian being “a very safe environment for talking about spirituality
Anthony attributed that support to City Christian’s mission of service to others (Anthony 1, 289-291). Anthony felt encouraged to guide students about spiritual issues as a result of the institutional support provided (Anthony, 1, 303-305).

Although Independent is also a private university, Brandon viewed his campus as very compartmentalized and the context as not very conducive to spiritual development. He noted that anything remotely spiritual was supposed to be referred to the campus chaplain (Brandon 2, 72-74). Brandon also noted that very few faculty or staff members appeared to be engaged in helping students’ spiritual development, and there were almost no student organizations on campus dealing with spirituality or religion. Overall, the campus context at Independent seemed to be one that lacked adequate support for student spiritual development.

However, Brandon noted that several staff and a few faculty members were personally involved in encouraging student spiritual development. Brandon also noted that spirituality was just beginning to be viewed as important. Because the president felt spirituality was important, he was providing the campus with space to pray, reflect, or meditate. This was likely to have a positive impact on the spiritual development of future students at Independent (Brandon 1, 73-81).

Four of the participants specifically noted how they thought the SSAO influenced the campus context regarding spirituality. Thomas commented on his Dean of Student’s impact on the climate for spirituality. He noted that the Dean at least allowed spiritual programs, even though Thomas did not think the Dean saw the need or importance for spiritual development. Although Thomas thought the Dean could make a greater impact on the campus context, he at least felt supported by his Dean who provided funds for yoga teacher training and other spiritual development efforts (Thomas 2, 340-351).
Anthony noted that his SSAO had an open faith life, served as a role model for a faith or religious life, and was supportive of spirituality in other ways as well. His Vice President supported Anthony in his own vocation and spirituality. He had also given Anthony the necessary time that to prepare spiritual programs and retreats for students (Anthony 1, 313-318).

Marie briefly mentioned the ability of the SSAO as one who can set the spiritual tone or climate for a campus. In her discussions with her Vice President shortly before he retired, Marie learned how to catch a glimpse of where a person was coming from in his or her total humanity, rather than just in one’s job role. Through those discussions, Marie believed she could see another’s goodness and feel a connection. Marie thought the Vice President helped her to discover how to make spiritual connections with others (Marie 2, 206-209).

Finally, Ruth talked at length about how her SSAO was a spiritual role model for her. The Dean at Chapel College influenced Ruth’s thoughts about spirituality and had a significant impact on both her personal and professional life. She said he “walked the talk,” and tried to teach his subordinates about how religion shaped the atmosphere of the campus, how important religion was at the college, and the role the church and religion played in the life of the institution. Ruth came to appreciate the Dean’s understanding of religion, how he cultivated his own faith, and how he utilized religion and spirituality in his work with students (Ruth 2, 66-68). He obviously influenced the context of the campus through both his words and his actions.

Although Ruth gave the most detailed responses about the effect the Chapel College context had on the spiritual development of its students, all the participants noted the impact of the campus context in this regard. Some participants noted how the campus context influenced their thoughts on spirituality, and on how they interacted with students because of this context. Four of the participants specifically noted how the Senior Student Affairs Officer influenced, or
could better influence the spiritual environment of their particular campus. Finally, Brandon noted how a retiring President was influencing the spiritual environment at Independent University through a commitment to a new campus chapel and by hiring a campus minister.

Chapter Summary

Several themes emerged during the interviews with the five participants regarding their experiences and observations of spirituality as student affairs mid-level professionals. The initial three themes were those that influenced the professionals regarding their spiritual definitions and beliefs: spiritual upbringing, spiritual guides, and spiritual journeys. The next section described how the respondents integrated their understanding of the spirituality into a complex perspective on their role as professionals. Common perceptions appeared among the participant’s thoughts and experiences. These common perceptions about holistic development, the definitions of spirituality and religion, the role of spirituality in student affairs, and students’ current interest in spirituality accentuated the need for the student affairs profession to pay attention to this topic and how to address it. The researcher then delineated the themes derived from the actions, experiences, and observations of the participants regarding their ability to influence students’ spirituality. These included role modeling, spiritual interventions, and serving as spiritual guides. Finally, the researcher described how the campus context influenced these participants’ thoughts and actions regarding spirituality.

The sum of all the themes and commonalities are important to the essences of the phenomenon of mid-level student affairs professionals’ perceptions of spirituality. The participants’ thoughts and experiences give us the opportunity to explore a meaning that exists when the experience being studied is combined with imaginative variation—the researcher’s concept of the experience. The ensuing description is the synthesis of essences and meanings
(Moustakas, 1994). In Chapter V, the researcher suggests and discusses a model to explain the meaning he created through imaginative variation. The researcher also explores this further through discussion of the participants’ responses to the research questions.
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Student affairs professionals sometimes learn how well they guided students at the end of four or five years. Or sometimes they find out sooner, toward the end of an academic year, when they get a thank you note or letter. Brandon spoke of a note he received from a student a week prior to his last interview for this study. The student mentioned things in the letter that Brandon didn’t think were about spirituality at the time, but later, as he reflected upon them, he came to see their spiritual connection. The student wrote about how Brandon challenged the way the student thought and the way he did things. He shared how Brandon helped him make different decisions in the past year and how he was always going to remember that. Finally, he thanked Brandon for making him look at things in a different way, making him take time for himself, and for helping him to identify what was really important (Brandon 2, 207-219).

This study invited mid-level student affairs professionals to join the dialogue concerning spirituality in the student affairs profession. Specifically, the study focused on clarifying the participants’ thoughts about spirituality as both a component of professional responsibility, and within the college context. Following Moustakas’ (1994) methods of phenomenology, the synthesis of meanings and essences becomes a unified statement of the common or universal conditions and qualities of an experience. This chapter discusses the essences of spirituality for student affairs professionals as derived from the five participants in this study.

The researcher developed the following model to represent the experiences of the participants. Hopefully the model will resonate with other student affairs professionals regarding their backgrounds and abilities for incorporating spirituality in their work. The researcher discusses the model in relation to the findings of this study. The author then provides analysis of the participants’ perceptions in relation to the research questions. Next, the limitations of this
research and lessons the researcher learned from this project are discussed. The implications for
student affairs practice are presented to allow the reader to consider how spirituality might be
addressed in higher education. Subsequently, the author notes recommendations for future study
prior to the conclusion.

A Spiritual Development Model for Student Affairs Professionals

Since this study of spirituality in higher education presents new information, a model has
been developed to help the reader understand how the various themes are related. This model
serves a few basic purposes. The first is to depict the themes of the participants. It shows the
influences that affected the participants’ spirituality and who they became as student affairs
professionals as a result of personal spiritual development. It also shows their views regarding
the actions they take to assist students to develop spiritually. In addition, this model gives
student affairs professionals several common themes or ideas to think about regarding their
spirituality and how they can influence the spiritual development of students. Finally, it depicts
the perceptions, ideas, and thoughts of the participants as related to the research questions. These
are introduced as additional themes in the next section.

The essence of spirituality for these participants was broken down into both themes and
sub-themes. The themes included: (a) influences on the participants’ spiritual development, (b)
an integrated professional perspective, (c) the actions student affairs professionals undertake to
foster spiritual development in students and (d) the perceptions, ideas, and thoughts on
spirituality in the student affairs profession. The potential affects of the campus context are also
noted. The synthesis of meanings and essences resulted in the researcher’s development of a
representative model, depicted in Figure 1.
Figure 1. Student affairs professional spiritual development model
The head in the model represents the student affairs professional, inclusive of the components that influence his or her spirituality and perspective. These components appear inside the head because they are a part of the person. Although many influences shape a person, three components were important sub-themes and represent essences in the study derived from the discussions with the participants. These were: (a) ongoing personal spiritual journeys, (b) spiritual or religious upbringing, and (c) spiritual or religious guides. These influences affected the participants’ views on what spirituality meant to them personally, what spirituality meant to the participants within the holistic philosophy of the profession, their thoughts on the spirituality of college students, and thus, their integrated professional perspective.

The primary component is the personal spiritual journey, which impacts the growth and development of the student affairs professional. All the participants continuously participated in religious or spiritual experiences, including reading, personal study, and participation in spiritual or religious groups. The participants viewed continuance of holistic personal development as essential for student affairs professionals.

Religious and spiritual upbringing includes church, parents, and significant others who influenced the participants early in life and helped to provide them with a foundation of spirituality or religiousness. Also notable for the participants were the guides who influenced their spirituality. As in most endeavors, one grows or develops as a result of guides or mentors who help one along the way. The older participants had a much easier time identifying their spiritual guides and the influence those guides had on their lives. Perhaps recognition of guides and their influence occurs after a person has had ample time for reflection on their past.

The student affairs professionals’ integrated perspective on spirituality, the profession, and students led them to take a variety of actions to utilize spirituality in their work with
students. The ovals in the model represent those actions as played out in the campus context. The size of the ovals indicates the relative importance accorded to it by the participants.

Although the various campus contexts in which our participants worked influenced the types of actions taken by these professionals, there were three notable actions performed to varying degrees by each of our participants. The actions these participants exhibited were essences constructed from the discussions and included: (a) role-modeling; (b) programs and other interventions; and (c) serving as a spiritual guide. The most important role was role modeling (the largest oval), or what our professionals discussed as “walking the talk.” As role models, the participants felt it was important to be involved in spiritual or religious practices as an example to their students. This included attending church services and spiritual or religious activities on their campus, as well as reading about various types of spirituality. For the participants, role modeling was a tacit mode of expressing the importance of spirituality to students and others.

This emphasis on role modeling ties back to the professional’s ongoing spiritual journey. The role model oval slightly overlaps the head of the student affairs professional because it is part of the nature of the person. Being true to oneself and embracing one’s spirit allows one to be authentic in one’s life (Astin & Astin, 1999; Love & Talbot, 1999). Exploring one’s spirituality as a model for students is also important for student affairs professionals (Allen & Kellom, 2001; Love & Talbot, 1999).

The second action the participants engaged in was serving as spiritual guides through discussions and through the development of personal relationships with students to assist them with their spiritual development. Unlike tacit role modeling, this is an intentional mode of expressing the importance of spirituality to students and others. The participants thought this was
an important action in helping students to grow and develop spiritually, but that not all student affairs professionals would necessarily be comfortable acting in this manner. Each professional needs to determine to what degree he or she is comfortable and capable to serve as a spiritual guide for students.

The third action is implementing programs and other interventions that foster the development of spirituality in students. The participants discussed a wide array of programs, retreats, and campus practices that all served as intentional ways to help students to develop spiritually. Originally the author thought creating programs or interventions that helped to foster spiritual dialogues would have been stressed more. The participants noting that being role models and spiritual guides were as important as programs and other interventions surprised the author. Student affairs professionals will need to determine what works most effectively to promote spiritual development to students on their campuses.

The campus context, depicted by the large rectangle, shaped the participants’ views regarding how they could support and challenge students’ spiritual belief systems. College is a place where students can easily work on spirituality both through individual reading and reflection, as well as in community with others. The collegiate environment is an opportune place for students to dialogue about spirituality, comparing and contrasting their beliefs with a multitude of others to gain a greater depth of understanding for this part of their lives. It is also the place where the professional does his or her work, and the place that shapes him or her as a person and professional.

Each campus provides a context in which one is able to act on and influence students’ spiritual development. The campus context may enhance or detract from one’s ability to create an acceptable environment for students, faculty, and staff to discuss and explore spirituality.
Chapel College is an example of a campus that enhances the development of spirituality on campus through spiritual and religious dialog, prayer at meetings and events, and participation in religious and spiritual endeavors by its faculty and staff members. Brandon described Independent University as a place where spirituality is not discussed and is rarely exhibited or supported by its faculty or staff members. For the participants in this study, it both influenced what they thought about spirituality in the student affairs profession, and served as a vehicle for the participants to help students regarding spiritual development.

The thought bubble in the model represents the student affairs professional’s integrated perspective. This includes the professional’s perceptions, ideas, and thoughts on spirituality, on the purpose of the student affairs profession, and on college students. These were the themes that were directly related to the interview questions and began as one of the main focuses for the study. The next section will utilize the research questions as a framework to discuss the synthesis of essences and meanings of spirituality revealed by the participants.

Discussion of Participants’ Perceptions

The research questions remained relatively consistent throughout the study with one exception. As discussions took place with participants and peer reviewers, it was determined that spiritual values and the values of the student affairs profession was much too broad and ambiguous to address in this study. What was actually being discussed was the participants’ thoughts addressing the consistency, or lack thereof, between spirituality and the holistic philosophy of the profession. The participants spoke comfortably about the philosophy of holistic development of students and the place, or importance, of student spiritual development within that framework. This section will start with discussion on the research questions related to the aforementioned items. The author will then discuss the findings related to: (a) how the
participants defined spirituality; (b) the role participants’ thought student affairs professionals should play in assisting students with spiritual development; (c) how the participants incorporated spirituality into their work with students; and (d) the participants’ thoughts about the future role student affairs professionals’ should play in assisting students with spiritual questions.

**Spirituality and Holistic Development**

Mid-level student affairs professionals are distinguished by their commitment to upholding the holistic philosophy of the profession and by their desire to aid students (Belch, 1991). As highly educated and trained professionals, the discussions with the participants led the researcher to realize that the participants were serious about their responsibilities for developing students. For example, the participants spoke with relative ease when discussing the holistic philosophy of the profession. They were also quite comfortable discussing various student development theories and practices and how to best utilize them. Additionally, they spoke about the importance of their own professional development as a way to better enhance their work with students.

A commonly held view of the participants was that student affairs professionals believe in holistic education, and that spirituality is an important aspect of holistic development. Burkhardt (1989) discussed how spirituality is a component, if not the central core, of student affairs wellness models. To support this conclusion, Ruth discussed the use of a wellness model she uses with her Resident Assistants to guide their student programming. She noted the “spiritual piece of the pie” as one of the primary components of that model. Anthony also specifically discussed the wellness model and the importance of the spiritual component.
Thomas and Marie also discussed aspects of holistic development, specifically stressing the spiritual component, and its importance to students. Brandon challenged student affairs professionals to either embrace and implement holistic development, including spirituality, or stop saying that it is important to the profession. He commented, “We keep saying we’re here to develop the whole student. I think we need to recognize that this [spirituality] is a part of it and to take responsibility for that” (Brandon 2, 507-508). He went on to discuss the importance of “figuring out” what it is we are trying to do with spiritual development and the need for student affairs professionals to come to some kind of consensus on what direction we should take and what practices we should engage in regarding spirituality and students (Brandon 2, 508-512). Basically, Brandon is searching for consistency between what is professed as important and what he sees actually being done about it. The researcher imagines that many young professionals may struggle with the ambiguity of this situation.

*Spiritual Language and Definitions*

Terminology pertaining to spirituality can never be exact, and the ideas and conceptualizations tend to be personal and inadequate (Fowler, 1981; Smith, 1979). Like most people, the participants’ definitions of spirituality and religion varied. Similar to Zinnbauer’s (1998) study, the participants confirmed that spirituality relates to personal qualities and connection to a higher power, whereas religion relates to organizational beliefs and or practices. The author was somewhat surprised that the participants rarely used the term “faith” in their discussions of spirituality and religion, especially considering Fowler’s (1981) study of faith development. However, in light of Parks’ (2000) suggestion that the word faith has become problematic in a religiously pluralistic world, perhaps this should not be so surprising.
Thomas discussed the importance of having some type of vocabulary and framework to support one’s spiritual development and identity. However, he also discussed the problems with terminology regarding spirituality and religion. He thought that because of the confusion over terminology and the negative connotation of the word “faith,” it was better to reference many of his practices as spiritual rather than religious. He noted, “The word religion brings a whole set of baggage to it because of how people might view organized religion or their experience in a church” (Thomas 1, 87-89).

Anthony’s sense was that student affairs professionals are becoming better able to subtly distinguish between religion and spirituality. He thought professionals have become more accepting of, and have realized that they can, talk about spirituality. Although Anthony often talked about religion when he discussed spirituality, he was not as comfortable using the term religion. He felt that too many inaccurate assumptions were made when religion was discussed. Anthony thought discussants could define their individual ideas and parameters better when they talked about spirituality (Anthony 2, 110-117).

If student affairs professionals wish to pursue spiritual development with students, it becomes important to come to some agreement on terminology and its use. Overall, the participants’ common perceptions of spirituality were reminiscent of the definition developed in Chapter II: a sacred and personal journey to find meaning and purpose in life; one’s essence or vitality or life principle; a quality that relates a person to the world, gives one meaning to exist, and allows for personal transcendence beyond the present context of reality; and, a relationship or sense of connection with mystery, awe, a higher power, God, or universe (Burkhardt, 1989; Sinetar, 1992). The participants confirmed this definition. They also supported the positive connotation of the term spirituality for use in higher education as suggested by Parks (2000).
Given this definition and support, the term spirituality is concrete enough to allow student affairs professionals to develop interventions, yet flexible enough to allow students and others to derive personal meaning. Utilizing this terminology and this broad definition, professionals can become comfortable creating a dialogue about spirituality, and should be able to place it in the context of holistic student development.

*The Role and Work of Assisting Students with Spirituality*

The participants’ were asked separate questions about their role in assisting students with spiritual development, and how they incorporated spirituality in their work with students. Because of the way the participants responded, it is helpful to discuss this as one topic.

To the participants, the most important aspect in assisting students was to serve as role models of spiritual development. They achieved this primarily through participating in spiritual or religious practices; in other words, by continuing their own personal and intentional spiritual journey as an example to their students.

The participants’ understanding served as confirmation of the notion that it is important for student affairs professionals to explore their own spirituality as a model to guide students (Allen & Kellom, 2001; Love & Talbot, 1999). Ruth thought her faith had increased due to her experiences at Chapel and, as a result, she was more comfortable in addressing issues of religion and spirituality with other people (Ruth 2, 250-256). She also thought a person’s faith or sense of religion, and where a person was in his or her own faith journey, affected that person’s identity in the workplace (Ruth 2, 540-554). Through her own development, including her spiritual development, Marie thought she could better serve others, and better lead students and staff regarding their spiritual journey (Marie 1, 170-171). Brandon thought that as one develops
spiritually, he or she then shares that spirituality with others through one’s work (Brandon 2, 428-430).

Anthony and Thomas further developed the idea that one’s personal spiritual journey is of great importance for self and is a necessary condition in serving as a role model. They noted how spirituality cuts through all aspects of life. Anthony explained how he has developed personally and how his life was “so much richer” because he pays attention to his spiritual life (Anthony 2, 347-352). Thomas talked about the need for congruence between trying to become more whole himself and trying to help students become more whole. He commented, “I guess for me, I just see it as so integrated with one’s sense of self and one’s sense of purpose of why we’re here in this world” (Thomas 1, 134-135). Thomas and Anthony derived a sense of authenticity in their lives from their spiritual journeys, and realized a need to help students and others to become authentic also (Astin & Astin, 1999; Love & Talbot, 1999).

As a result of their own personal spiritual journeys, the participants had developed a deeper understanding of spirituality. They recognized the importance of their personal spiritual journeys as a lifelong endeavor. They also recognized that their ongoing spiritual journeys would help them to be both good role models through the process, and effective spiritual guides for students through their educational and experiential development.

The primary factor that differentiated the participants was their personal spiritual journeys and how they utilized various aspects of their journeys, abilities, backgrounds, and training to guide students’ spiritual development. Ruth utilized a creed, or code of conduct, as a guideline for supervising her resident assistants. She also utilized the campus context and structure at Chapel to encourage students to explore their spirituality. Brandon created a series of holistic development programs for students, and utilized personal relationships with students as a
way to guide their spiritual development. As the youngest members of the participant group, Ruth and Brandon sought more conventional ways and means of assisting students. As their journeys continue, the author suspects they will find increased confidence in their abilities to guide students in a variety of other manners.

Compared to Ruth and Brandon, Anthony was a little older and more experienced in both the profession and in his spiritual journey. He not only offered spiritual guidance through the career materials he wrote for students, but also utilized what he learned on his spiritual journey to help create vocational exploration retreats for students. These incorporated a variety of ideas and exercises to guide students in a number of ways. As noted in Chapter IV, these included book and bible studies, journaling, creative art projects, reflection and contemplation exercises, and even nature hikes.

Although a few years senior to Thomas, Marie’s personal spiritual journey did not appear to be as broad as Thomas’. She was very involved in the Spiritual Diversity Committee at Collegetown, and her understanding helped her to work with students to explore different venues and ideas for their individual spiritual exploration. She also helped create spiritual dialogue through the “What Matters to Me” lecture series. Marie appeared adept at utilizing her position to marshal people and resources to develop the campus context as well as interventions for students’ spiritual growth. Her background and experience also allowed her to be comfortable in personally engaging students regarding spiritual and religious matters.

Thomas’ journey seemed to be intentionally very deep as well as broad as he spent more time in a variety of spiritual explorations and endeavors than did the other research participants. His very active involvement in his personal journey gives him tremendous credibility with students when he encourages them to explore spirituality. His many years of experience in the
profession also added to his ability to create a variety of spiritual groups, programs, and venues for students to become involved in spiritual exploration. Thomas was also quite comfortable addressing spiritual issues through students’ independent studies, as well as through personal relationships he developed with various students.

In different ways and forms, our participants seemed to embrace Richards and Bergin’s (1997) idea that a better understanding of different spiritual backgrounds and concerns would allow them to better assist students’ spiritual development. Perhaps Nash’s (1999, 2001, & 2002) narratives could be utilized for professionals to better understand the religious backgrounds of students and how to better guide them spiritually. However, because spirituality is a uniquely individual experience, student affairs professionals may be more successful assisting students with spiritual growth or development by creating an atmosphere for exploration (Curtis & Davis, 1999; Mack, 1994). This can be done by creating environments and opportunities for reflection on spirituality and the development of personal meaning. This will be further addressed in the implications section.

**Student Affairs Professionals’ Future Role in Spiritual Development**

The participants were specifically asked to comment on what the future role of the student affairs professional and the profession should be in working with students regarding spiritual development. All noted the hope that professionals would become more comfortable in addressing spirituality with students. Most believed it was appropriate for professionals to listen carefully to students and help guide them to realize they have spiritual options and choices that need to be explored.

Anthony discussed this in terms of the wellness perspective. He noted that we tend to students’ needs in the other areas of wellness, so we should be attending to students’ spiritual
needs as well. He felt the future role of student affairs professionals should be to listen to students regarding their spiritual needs, and respond to those needs throughout all areas of student services.

Marie and Brandon both noted that spirituality is an area that is difficult to measure and assess. In today’s climate in higher education, student affairs professionals will need to be able to assess spiritual outcomes in some way. Marie specified the need to survey students now to determine how to engage them in spiritual journeys. This could serve as a base to assess their spiritual development in the future (Brandon 1, 286-291; Marie 2, 577-589; 475-480).

Marie also thought the future role should include providing forums for students to engage in dialogue about spirituality. She thought student affairs professionals should not only engage students in dialogue among themselves, but they should help students to observe and interact with faculty and other staff members as well. Rogers and Dantley (2001) supported this idea when they discussed dialogue as an infrastructure to create deeper conversation and as a significant tool in building community. This idea will also be discussed further in the section on implications for practice.

Thomas commented about the future role for student affairs professional associations as well as for the professional. He noted the need for the professional associations to push professionals to think about the importance of, and understand the place for, spirituality. He thought it was important to help professionals find ways to contribute to and validate the existence of spiritual development, especially for those in the profession who don’t understand it or don’t feel that there is a need for it. He also thought the associations needed to challenge senior-level university administrators to think about spirituality and the ways they can challenge their institutions to assist students with spiritual development. He believed that before any
change can happen at the divisional level, the top administrators would have to show a commitment to spirituality and have an understanding of students’ need for it. These and other implications for student affairs practice will be discussed following the next section.

Limitations and Lessons Learned

This study focused on mid-level student affairs professionals who could speak to spirituality as it pertained to their lives and professional endeavors. Recognize that conclusions established from the participants’ experiences should not be generalized to other mid-level student affairs professionals at small private institutions or beyond. Equally important is to understand that the participants’ views might offer some transferable insights for others working in student affairs.

Upon completing the data collection and analysis portion of the study and reflecting on the overall study, several aspects prove to be sources of subjectivity in the design of this study. As noted in the methodology, the researcher began data collection with a specific background and predispositions that he tried to set aside. Although the researcher tried to take as neutral a stand as possible, the researcher’s Christian background may have influenced this study. Additionally, his work at small institutions and large public universities, where the ideas about spirituality and assisting students with spiritual development are often very different, may have influenced his definitions of spirituality and religion. Further studies of this type may need to account for these predispositions. Although the researcher utilized the member check process in an attempt to mitigate the effects of these types of activities, one must still acknowledge that this type of influence certainly affected the interpretation of the data.

Another limitation of this particular study was the depth of the researcher’s literature review prior to the interviews. Because an extensive literature review was completed prior to the
participant interviews, additional sources of subjectivity may have affected the researcher’s interpretations. After further reading on qualitative methodology, the researcher learned it would be more appropriate to design future studies where the majority of the literature review is conducted after the interviews. This would allow the researcher to more easily engage in Epoche, the setting aside of predilections and predispositions (Moustakas, 1994). Instead, the literature review created additional predilections for the researcher. If conducted after the researcher’s initial interpretations of the interviews, the literature review would simply have assisted the researcher with the synthesis of essences and meanings.

In this study, the researcher did his best to know and utilize the methodology explained by Moustakas (1994) regarding the types of awareness and open mindedness a researcher needs for a phenomenological study. However, Moustakas wrote his methodology prior to other researchers’ development of more in-depth and rigorous guidelines concerning qualitative research. To compensate, the researcher incorporated some of the quality indices of naturalistic inquiry while remaining true to the phenomenological approach and methods. However, the researcher may have been able to execute a more rigorous study through the use of more quality indices from other qualitative methodologies. One example would be additional member checks of the themes and the model developed by the researcher.

Many qualitative studies focus on an analysis of the participants. Often these studies are designed to analyze the participants according to a previously described set of assumptions or another researcher’s model. At one point the researcher considered analyzing the participants according to Fowler’s (1991) stages of faith development, or comparing them to Nash’s (2002) religious narratives. After beginning this type of analysis, the researcher questioned how much one should analyze another’s development without adequate expertise, or without at least using
an assessment instrument. The researcher eventually recognized that this type of analysis was beyond both the design and the scope of the study. As such, the researcher’s analysis focused on the intent of the study—to analyze the essences presented by the participants rather than on the participants themselves. The biographical sketches in Chapter IV, and the additional commentary throughout the discussion, provided ample information for understanding the participants’ backgrounds and predispositions. Thus, the descriptions in this study were based on the researcher’s use of the phenomenology tools described by Moustakas (1994) and others.

The researcher acknowledges that the participants involved in this study all had similar spiritual or religious upbringing. Although it was not possible to know this prior to the study, it must be acknowledged that none of the participants came to spirituality or religion after having been “un-churched” during youth. One should consider whether the participants believe that spirituality is important for others because of their backgrounds and ongoing spiritual journeys. As such, the voices of atheists or agnostics, who may see spirituality quite differently, should be represented.

In reflecting upon the interview process, the researcher was very pleased with the rapport developed with the participants. The conversations were quite comfortable and the dialogue with all the participants seemed open and meaningful. If a participant left anything unsaid, it may have resulted from the researcher’s failure to ask a question or to phrase a question appropriately to elicit a response.

Approximately three years elapsed from the time the interviews were conducted to the completion of the writing process. Certainly some details that were not thoroughly noted at the time of engagement may have faded from memory. However, the verbatim transcripts and interview tapes, as well as the notes taken, allowed the researcher to re-experience the interview
process despite the lapse of time. This time lapse may have been a positive because it provided multiple opportunities for reflection on the material. This aided shaping the meaning of the material as it was considered many times over from various differing viewpoints.

The most difficult part of the process for the researcher was developing the themes for Chapter IV. This was mostly due to the start and stop process and interruptions that occurred over the three years. However, there was also some consternation regarding whether these themes were really presenting themselves through the transcripts, or whether the researcher was simply seeing what he wanted to see. Discussing the themes and findings with colleagues helped the researcher develop confidence in the sincerity of the final product.

The researcher pondered what he would have done differently if he could start over on this project. Utilizing personal philosophies and assumptions of research, a phenomenological investigation still would have been conducted. However, the researcher would have studied more about phenomenological research and sought out more mentors who were familiar with phenomenology. This would have aided the design during the proposal stage of the investigation and would have better prepared the researcher for conducting the study.

Having learned more about phenomenology and its tools throughout the study, the researcher would have focused more on what spirituality meant to the participants and not tried to cover as many research questions. In this manner, the researcher could have better discerned the essence(s) of what spirituality meant to mid-level student affairs professionals and their view of spirituality in the profession. Interviewing a larger group of participants and attempting to cover a greater range of participant attributes would also have been desirable. Overall, these considerations would have helped the researcher conduct a better and more thorough phenomenological investigation.
Implications for Practice

The implications presented here are intended to pique the interest of the reader to search for insights that assist student affairs professionals in creating dialogues and college environments that are inclusive of the spiritual development of students. The ideas are being presented in a top-down fashion; that is, in an order the author believes the implications may need to happen in order for spirituality to permeate the profession.

Perhaps the most important implication is whether or not the profession should be engaged in the spiritual development of students. As pointed out earlier, the student affairs profession embraces the holistic development of students. Spiritual development as a key component of holistic development strengthens the argument that the profession should be engaged in students’ spiritual development. Since it is doubtful that the student affairs profession wishes to divorce itself from the philosophy and ideals of the holistic development of students, it is important that the profession attends to include the spiritual development of students.

If the profession chooses to stay true to its philosophy, and to better incorporate spiritual development as a component of holistic development, then perhaps senior-level administrators should support this agenda so that student affairs practitioners can learn about the importance of spirituality. If student affairs and higher education leaders are tuned into spirituality on their campuses, they will lead their staffs in being prepared to strengthen student spiritual development on their campuses. During his interview, Thomas discussed the possibility of everything within the student affairs division being supportive of spiritual development. He believed there should be staff development within the division to create some kind of common understanding about what spirituality means and how the division defines it. From there, the
student affairs professionals could determine how it is being addressed, how they may address it better or differently, and where the division wants to be in the next five years in creating and implementing spiritual development opportunities (Thomas 2, 319-331).

Thomas touched on two important implications regarding this agenda. One is the importance of spirituality in leadership. Rogers and Dantley (2001) discussed in some depth how student affairs leadership could be informed by spiritual intelligence to create campus environments that enhance holistic development. The other consideration is developing a common language about spirituality. Much like the evolution of the words “belief” and “faith” discussed in Chapter II, the profession needs to continue to develop the common language of spirituality. Staff development through dialogues can aid common language development at the campus level. Continued dialogues at professional conferences can aid common language development at the regional and national levels.

Although there seems to be an upward trend in the number of professional development opportunities focusing on issues of spirituality (particularly an increase in spiritual programs at professional conferences), the profession should create more dialogue among student affairs professionals concerning spirituality. An increase in research in this area does not necessarily result in an increase in the readership by practitioners, nor does it ensure that professionals attempt to understand or practice spirituality and its place in student development. As reported in Chapter II, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and the American College Personnel Association have advanced the concept of holistic development throughout their histories, therefore deeming spiritual development as important to the profession. As such, it would seem appropriate that these associations would act more intentionally at forwarding this agenda.
Mid-level student affairs professionals need to actively pursue dialogue and discussion about spirituality. Professional development means keeping abreast of current trends in theory and practice to be effective in one’s work. To serve one’s personal/professional development and to serve as a role model to students regarding spiritual development and lifelong learning, mid-level professionals should: a) seek out spirituality presentations and discussions at professional conferences, b) attend campus programs, workshops, and educational offerings on spirituality, and c) read literature about spirituality that is personal as well as professional.

The professional associations must also recognize that there are still many practitioners in student affairs positions who have not received adequate education and training in the profession. The associations can support student affairs professionals to reach out to practitioner colleagues to provide educational and development opportunities. These colleagues need to be professionally trained in many areas, including spiritual development. Especially in difficult economic times, the resources for training and development sometimes become scarce. Thus, training and development is contingent upon professionals seeking out appropriate information and opportunities to aid their campus colleagues. This can be accomplished through departmental in-services on campuses. The spiritual development component of this training needs invite all types of student affairs personnel to dialogue about understandings of spirituality and how to incorporate these understandings in their work with students.

Researchers in higher education have called for the spiritual agenda to be forwarded through graduate preparation programs (Love & Rogers, 2004; Strange, 2001). Over 120 masters level graduate preparation programs exist in the United States. Love and Rogers (2004) found that only four of these programs have a class specifically on spirituality. Currently those offerings appear to be electives within those respective curricula. Perhaps other masters
programs are covering spirituality and spiritual development through some other means, such as within their courses on student development theory. However, the inclusion of spirituality in graduate program curricula is a discussion warranted by the ACPA Commission on Professional Preparation.

A concern that some preparation program faculty may encounter is the lack of spiritual development theories or models to teach in a graduate preparation course. Fowler’s (1981) work on faith development, Nash’s (1999, 2001, 2002) religious narratives, and Parks’ (1986, 2000) works could all be used in graduate preparation programs, at least as components in courses on student development theory. However, practitioners should be aware of some concerns when attempting to utilize spiritual theories with students.

In order to promote student development, student affairs professionals apply student development theory to individual development. Student development stage theory posits that professionals should promote reasoning above the thinking exhibited by the individual (Sanford, 1967). The professional does this by determining an individual student’s maturity, knowledge, and personal development, and then challenging that student with slightly more complex ideas and ways of being in an effort to help that student learn and grow (Evans, et al., 1998).

The process of designing interventions to promote development is complex. First, student affairs professionals must be able to recognize the developmental level of the students involved. This requires considerable knowledge of developmental theories, their stages, and their basic propositions. It also requires expertise and insight to determine the level at which a student may be functioning without subjecting every student to a myriad of developmental tests or instruments. The probability of learning, understanding and being able to apply the many student affairs theories to guide educational practice is low (Evans, et al., 1998).
Second, professionals must possess epistemological understanding beyond the developmental level of the student in order to challenge and support the individual appropriately. If the professional cannot recognize the operational stages of a student, the professional is not in a position to assist that student’s growth and development. With the growing number of adult learners participating in higher education, young student affairs professionals are increasingly challenged to assist students with personal development.

Within the realm of spiritual development, creating higher levels of spiritual understanding for students becomes a difficult endeavor. First, the only stage theory in this area is Fowler’s (1981) theory of faith development. Fowler’s definition of faith is very similar to our definition of spirituality. The essential problem for student affairs professionals is that complex thinking about matters of faith or spirituality occurs later in life. The telltale descriptions that make this theory difficult for student affairs professionals to use are the following:

1. Stage 3—Synthetic-Conventional Faith—“typically has its rise and ascendancy in adolescence, but for many adults it becomes a permanent place of equilibrium. . . At Stage 3 a person has an ‘ideology,’ a more or less consistent clustering of values and beliefs, but he or she has not objectified it for examination and in a sense is unaware of having it” (Fowler, 1982, p. 187).

2. Stage 4—Individuative-Reflective Faith—“most appropriately takes place in young adulthood (but let us remember that many adults do not construct it and that for a significant group it emerges only in the mid-thirties or forties)” (Fowler, 1982, p. 189).

Fowler also commented that Stage 5—Conjunctive Faith—was unusual before mid-life. As such, one can see the dilemma. Since most adults, including adult student affairs professionals, do not construct Stage 4 until their thirties and forties, most entry-level (and many
mid-level) student affairs professionals are unable to recognize and assist faith development through presenting higher levels of understanding.

As demonstrated utilizing the use of Fowler’s theory as an example, there are some problems inherent for student affairs professionals to try to utilize this stage theory with students. As described by Fowler (1982), higher-level reasoning related to faith development and spirituality by traditional age college students is improbable. Another concern is that the theory is too general. Because it covers such a wide range of ages, many professionals are likely to be at the same level as the student. For professionals working with adult students, the professional may not be as developed as the student. In both cases, it makes it difficult for the professional to promote student thinking above the current level. A final concern is that practitioners often are not exposed to the theory or do not know it well enough for it to be useful.

The narratives developed by Nash (2001) may be useful for professionals to consider when working with students regarding spiritual issues. The narratives may give one a base of knowledge about the general religious or spiritual type of student with which one may be working. However two concerns should also be noted. One concern is that Nash has reworked the narratives at least three times in four years. This creates confusion regarding the basis of his work. Although a few of his narratives have remained fairly solid and consistent, others evolve or take positions of dominance with he continues his experiences with students and others. While Nash (2002) wanted these narratives to be fluid and capacious, the average reader may find them too fluid to be useful. The other concern is practitioners’ general lack of awareness and familiarity with the narratives, which stymies the usefulness of the work.

Spirituality is a uniquely individual experience. As such, student affairs professionals can respond to student spiritual growth and development better through exploration rather than
explanation (Mack, 1994). The key is to create an atmosphere that supports exploration (Curtis &
Davis, 1999). This would be an atmosphere that allows for reflection on, and development of,
personal meaning. A better method for teaching spirituality to graduate students may possibly be
following Moran and Curtis’s (2004) suggestion of creating safe environments for dialogues
about spirituality. This would allow graduate students to discuss and explore spirituality, and
serve as a model for them to create similar campus environments for students when they enter
the workplace.

Marie offered an idea for garnering spiritual ideas from students. She suggested we ask
seniors about their development, including spiritual development, when exit interviews are
conducted (at least at those institutions that conduct senior exit interviews). She suggested
student affairs professionals should ask seniors questions such as: “What spiritual interventions
have been done for you that have made a difference? Who had the most impact while you were a
student here and why? What are areas that need to be improved for students?” These and other
questions could help us ascertain whether or not student development has occurred in the holistic
components or dimensions an institution utilizes (Marie 2, 623-630). These questions may allow
the institution to develop more, different, or better opportunities for future students. The
questions may also serve as an opportunity for reflection by students for deeper learning, and the
answers may serve as an anecdotal assessment of student learning.

Probably the most important thing all student affairs professionals can do is to encourage
dialogue about spirituality. Spiritual dialogue is about expanding peoples’ awareness and
enriching it so they can develop a more complex understanding of spirituality (Rogers &
Dantley, 2001). The participants noted how the discussions and reflections on spirituality during
the interview process were educative for them. These same, or similar questions can provide an
opportunity for everyone in higher education to dialogue, discuss, and reflect on spirituality. Creating safe environments for these dialogues crosses all boundaries of race, religion, ethnicity and spiritual upbringing.

Recommendations for Future Research

In addition to the practical implications regarding spirituality in the student affairs profession, there is continued need for further study in this area. The original intent of the researcher was to investigate the experience of a wide array of student affairs professionals. The scope of the study had to be greatly limited for a number of reasons, particularly time and resources.

Although the group of participants for this study was an adequate cross section of mid-level student affairs professionals from a variety of institutional backgrounds, two particular groups were not involved in this mix of participants. One shortcoming was that only Protestant and independent institutions were represented in this study. This study would have been enhanced if mid-level student affairs professionals working at other types (Catholic, Jewish) of small liberal arts institutions had been included. Also, none of the participants were from an identifiable racial or ethnic minority group. Further studies should purposively include men and women of various racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Additionally, an attribute discovered during the course of the study was the religious or spiritual upbringing of the participants; including this in the selection criteria would be appropriate.

Extending this study to public institutions, particularly utilizing participants who can speak to spiritual development while working at a public institution, may prove fruitful. Many student affairs professionals understand the legal and practical implications of the separation of church and state, and realize the importance of spiritual development for students as well.
Professionals at public institutions who have developed ways to guide student spiritual development, while avoiding the issues of religion and religious indoctrination, could add substantially to the profession’s knowledge and understanding.

Studying the experiences of upper-level student affairs administrators, particularly Senior Student Affairs Officers, could also be beneficial. This group of practitioners has the potential to greatly influence the spirituality of a campus culture through their personal views and leadership. As some of our participants noted in this study, the vice presidents and deans can influence those who work for them regarding spirituality and student spiritual development.

Another potential area for future study would be to utilize the themes that evolved from this study to examine the views of a wider range or cross section of student affairs practitioners and professionals. Recall that this study distinguished between practitioners and professionals. Utilizing the model and themes presented to ask practitioners about their experiences regarding spirituality in higher education may be helpful. One might want to compare the views of participants from public universities, or large private universities, with those of the participants examined in this study. Studies such as these might expose differences between student affairs professionals’ experiences at different types of institutions. The study of participants from public universities might also help delineate concerns about separation of church and state regarding spirituality.

The author also encourages research focused on the student affairs professionals who have been exposed to spiritual development theories within graduate preparation programs. Of interest would be whether or not those professionals utilize the spiritual development theories they learned. If they utilize the theories, one could explore how those professionals use that knowledge to support the spiritual development of college students.
Although some studies have been done considering students and their spiritual
development, it might also be interesting to see if students relate to the themes which emerged
from the interviews with the professionals in this study. For example, do students recognize that
student affairs professionals who are role-modeling, guiding, and designing intentional
interventions for them are influencing their spiritual development? Additionally, are these
students primarily influenced by previous spiritual guides, interventions, and spiritual/religious
upbringing? Or perhaps they think their spiritual development has been more influenced at the
college level?

Finally, one should note that different methodologies can and should be utilized for the
study of spirituality. Each researcher needs to base his or her research design on personal
assumptions about research, as well as on the questions he or she is posing. For example, a
practitioner willing to discuss spirituality with colleagues might find a more heuristic approach
beneficial to his or her examination of this topic.

Conclusion

Many private liberal arts colleges and universities in the United States still have relatively
strong historical foundations and ties to spiritual and religious development. Many of those
colleges and universities continue to state that a purpose of higher education is the holistic
development of students. These institutions also help us to understand the need for personal
spiritual growth. However, the spirituality dialogue should be broadened throughout higher
education and the multitudes of students in attendance.

As Belch (1991) and Penn (1990) have suggested, mid-level professionals contribute
valuable insights to this topic. Based on the experiences conveyed by the participants in this
study, it is exciting to know that at least some student affairs professionals are able to embrace
their spiritual lives and guide students’ spiritual development. The specific strategies presented to forward the spiritual agenda in the student affairs profession seem to be a fraction of those conceivable. The ideas, events, and possibilities for surveying and creating dialogue with students appear endless.

That leaders in the profession are beginning to address spirituality in more profound ways is significant. The growing importance of spirituality in higher education is evidenced by: a) the number of conferences that address spirituality in higher education, b) an increase in the number of publications focusing on issues related to spirituality, and c) the development of the Institute on College Student Values at Florida State University that includes a focus on spirituality. However, the support also needs to come from the Senior Student Affairs Officers on campuses, giving credence to the importance of spirituality and leading others in the profession to address spirituality with students.

Through dialogue with colleagues, as well as students, student affairs professionals can help create campus environments that are open to and accepting of personal spiritual development. In this way college campuses can be informed by multiple world-views and become environments that welcome all to pursue their personal spiritual journeys. Student affairs and other higher education professionals should encourage all to learn more about their own beliefs and to develop acceptance of others’ beliefs. By embracing this aspect of holistic development, higher education institutions can also further the objective of becoming learning organizations.
References


*Tilton v. Richardson* (403 U.S. 672 [1971]).


Dear Participant:

My name is Keith Hansen and I am a doctoral student in Higher Education Administration at Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio. I am currently entering the research phase of my dissertation, the subject of which is student affairs professionals’ perceptions of spirituality, particularly in their work lives. I am currently looking for individuals who would be interested in participating in my study.

As a former Associate Dean of Students at a small private college and student affairs practitioner for 15 years, I have been interested in the spiritual development of college students throughout my career. Having worked at colleges and universities of various sizes, both public and private, I witnessed different challenges arise in working with students regarding spiritual development. Recently, I have become interested in learning about student affairs professionals' perceptions and ideas about the role of spirituality in our profession. More specifically, I am interested in focusing on the perceptions of mid-level student affairs professionals at small private colleges.

I am attempting to identify a group of professionals who have been at their current institution for at least two years, have been in the profession a minimum of four years, and who have an interest in this topic. I am interested in learning about the themes that arise when discussing this topic with professionals of this nature. The study would be qualitative in nature
and consist of each professional participating in two separate interviews (one to one and one-half hour per interview). A description of each participant's perceptions of the topic will be written, followed by a synthesis of the participants’ experiences and shared meanings.

Participants need to agree to the interview being tape-recorded to assist with gathering complete and accurate data. Participants will be guaranteed anonymity through the use of pseudonyms and coding procedures. Upon completion of the interviews, each participant will receive his or her individual transcript for review. Participants will be asked to clarify, delete or add any information they deem appropriate to portray their perceptions accurately.

If you are interested or think you might be interested in participating in this study, I ask that you contact me via e-mail at hansenk@bgnet.bgsu.edu or by telephone at 419-420-3090. I will be happy to answer any questions and discuss this project further with you. If you agree to participate in the study, you will have the right to withdraw at anytime.

Why Participate? Student affairs professionals are uniquely positioned in the academy and share a responsibility to facilitate the learning process and development of students. The values and beliefs of student affairs professionals have implications beyond the profession, because they affect students, the institution, and higher education as a whole. Spirituality should be an intentional component of student affairs work, but little is known about student affairs professionals’ perceptions about the topic. This study will contribute to the higher education community’s understanding of student affairs professionals’ perceptions of spirituality in student affairs work.

Participants may benefit by examining their personal thoughts about spirituality and how they use this in their professional lives. Through the interview and discussion process, participants will reflect on if, or how, they utilize spirituality for intentional student development.
These reflections will allow consideration of what it means to be a student affairs professional in regard to holistic student development.

I appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

This study has received approval by the Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board, reference # _______________________. If you have questions regarding the conduct of this study, please contact Keith Hansen or Dr. Coomes through the telephone numbers or e-mail addresses below. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University's Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 (hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu).

Sincerely,

Keith R. Hansen               Michael Coomes
Doctoral Candidate            Faculty Advisor
(419-420-3090)                Higher Education Administration
e-mail: hansenk@bgnet.bgsu.edu (419-372-7157)
e-mail: mcoomes@bgnet.bgsu.edu
APPENDIX B. PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Investigator: Keith R. Hansen
612 Rector Avenue
Findlay, OH  45840
Home: 419-420-3090
Office: 419-372-9392
E-mail: hansenk@bgnet.bgsu.edu

I, ___________________________, consent to participate in Keith R. Hansen’s Dissertation research entitled “Student Affairs Professionals’ Perceptions of Spirituality: A Phenomenological Study.” I have been informed that my anticipated time commitment as a participant is two interviews (one to one and one-half hours each) and review of the detailed transcript. Furthermore, I have been informed that:

(a) interviews engaged in will be audio taped, transcribed, and analyzed for this study;
(b) information about me will be collected via audiotape and the researcher’s notes; upon completion and approval of the dissertation, audiotapes will be destroyed.
(c) all information and analysis will be kept at the researcher’s home or office;
(d) pseudonyms will be substituted for me and my institution in all phases of the study, records of data collection, and in the preliminary and final drafts of the dissertation. Only the investigator will have access to the list matching pseudonyms to participants;
(e) I will have the opportunity to review transcripts of my interviews and the overall findings before the final draft in order to confirm or deny the investigator’s descriptions and use of direct quoted or summarized statements. Should it become necessary, I may negotiate alterations of the above with the investigator;
1. The information obtained during this study will be used in a dissertation which will be read by the four members of the dissertation committee, and that will be available to the public in its final form at Bowling Green State University and through Data Abstracts International. Additionally, the transcriptions and final draft, in whole or in parts, may be utilized in other publications or in public presentations if warranted.

2. My participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw from participation at any time.

This study has received approval by the Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board, reference # _______________________. If you have questions regarding the conduct of this study, please contact Keith Hansen (419-420-3090; hansenk@bgnet.bgsu.edu) or Dr. Coomes (419-372-7157; mcoomes@bgnet.bgsu.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University's Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 (hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu).

I agree to participate in this study having read, understood and agreed to the above terms:

________________________________________________
(Participants Signature & Date)
APPENDIX C. BRIEF SURVEY

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my dissertation study. This will provide you with an opportunity to focus on the research topic to evoke a more comprehensive account of your experience.

1. How do you define spirituality and spiritual development?

2. As a student affairs professional, do you believe the spiritual development of students is consistent with the values of the profession?

3. Do you think there is a place for spirituality in your work with students?

4. What role should the student affairs professional play in assisting students with spirituality and spiritual development?

5. How do you incorporate spirituality into your work with students? If you do not, how do you think you might do so?

6. What do you think is the future role for student affairs professionals in assisting students with spiritual questions?
APPENDIX D. INTERVIEW GUIDE

I. Greeting

A. Thank you for agreeing to participate.

B. Purpose: As you know, I am interested in your perceptions and experiences regarding spirituality and spiritual development in your life as a student affairs professional. How you define spirituality, what spirituality and spiritual development of students mean to you, what influences you, and how you act on this, and what you believe the place of spirituality is and should be in the student affairs profession.

C. Procedures: I'll be asking you a number of open-ended questions, some related to the survey answers you provided to me. As we discussed previously, I need to tape-record this interview to make sure I can accurately recreate your views. I will also take notes throughout the interview to record some impressions and in case there are any technical malfunctions. All of the tapes, transcriptions, and notes that pertain to your participation will be coded and altered to remove any personal or institutional identification. All documents will be secured for my access only.

D. Do you have any questions before we begin?

E. Review and sign two consent forms; give one to the participant.

F. Make sure tape recorder is loaded, functioning and turned on!

G. Create relaxed atmosphere and focus with general information sharing including demographic data needed to “create voice” (position, years in profession, type of campus, etcetera) and then begin discussion of spirituality. Move into more focused questions as appropriate.
II. First Interview Questions

A. What does holistic development mean to you? How do you define this?
   Probe: 1. What role does holistic development have in student affairs work?

B. How do you define spirituality?
   Probe: 1. How is this the same and/or different from religion?
         2. What has this influenced your definitions?
         3. Do you think your definition is consistent with how other student affairs professionals' define spirituality? What makes you think so/not?

C. As a student affairs professional, do you believe the spiritual development of students is consistent with the values of the profession? Why or why not?

III. Second Interview Questions

D. What does spirituality and spiritual development of students mean to you?
   Probe: 1. What has influenced this perception?

E. What place do you think spirituality plays in the lives of students? Can you describe evidence or experience of this?
   Probe: 1. What place do you think spirituality should play in the lives of students? Why?

F. What role should the student affairs professional play in assisting students with spirituality and spiritual development? Why?
   Probe: 1. What has influenced this perception?

G. How do you incorporate spirituality and/or spiritual development into your work with students?
   Probe: 1. Can you describe some experiences of this?
2. If not incorporated: How do you think you could incorporate spirituality and/or spiritual development into your work with students?

3. Why is this important?

H. What role should the student affairs professional play in working with students' spirituality and spiritual development? Why? What causes you to believe this?

III. Summary Questions

A. What have I not asked you that I should have?

B. Whom do you know in this region (lower Great Lakes) that I should talk to about this topic? What is it about them that brought them to mind?

IV. Closing

Thank you for your time and for sharing your views of spirituality and spiritual development with me. Upon completion of the interviews, I will be writing summaries of each and will be sending you a cumulative summary of this interview as soon as possible.