

# THE ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY IN THE PRACTICE OF ADULT EDUCATION LEADERS

by

JEANETTE JUSTICE FLEMING

(Under the Direction of Bradley C. Courtenay)

## ABSTRACT

In recent years some business and leadership scholars have recommended a spiritually influenced practice of leadership. These recommendations are based on personal testimony and anecdote with very few empirical studies conducted to substantiate claims. There have been no empirical studies of leadership and spirituality within the field of adult education. The purpose of this study was to examine the role of spirituality in the practice of adult education leaders. It was designed as a phenomenological inquiry focused on how leaders defined spirituality, how spirituality influenced their practice, and if they employed a common style of leadership.

The participants in this study found it impossible to separate their spirituality from their daily practice of leadership for it was integral to personal identity. These leaders perceived spirituality as a deeply personal search for meaning grounded in a web of connection with a Higher Being, with other people, and with all of creation. They did not believe that spiritually influenced leadership conflicted with the separation of church and state because they perceived spirituality as a distinct concept, differing from, but related to religion. Although religious beliefs varied in the sample, the basic spiritual understandings regarding leadership were similar. They spoke of working for the greater good and supporting the personal growth and development of

coworkers. They were adamant in their commitment to social justice and stressed the importance of honesty, fairness, and compassion in the workplace.

In the practice of leadership, spirituality provided a calling or sense of vocation, instilled an ethical framework, and served as a resource in times of challenge. Spirituality shaped their perception of power, influenced their decision making, and impacted communication with coworkers.

Styles of leadership reported by the study participants varied. Servant leadership was described by some participants, but there were also team, transactional, transformational, and situational leaders. The style of leadership practiced by participants seemed directly related to their perception of spirituality.

INDEX WORDS: Spirituality, Leadership, Adult Education

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JEANETTE JUSTICE FLEMING

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M.Ed., The University of Georgia, 1981

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JEANETTE JUSTICE FLEMING

Major Professor: Bradley C. Courtenay

Committee: Talmadge Guy  
Sharan Merriam  
Richard Rohs

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
December 2005

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those who accept the sacred responsibility of leadership.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This degree has taken five years of study and a lifetime of experience to complete. It began as a way to increase my educator's salary but soon became a journey into self discovery. I arrived in the department confident in my chosen field of expertise and in my ability to find answers. I leave acknowledging the depth of my ignorance, but excited about the questions I've discovered to inform my future work. This metamorphosis can be attributed to the wisdom and hospitality offered me by a host of very special people.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Importance of Leadership in Adult Education

It has been well documented that effective leadership is essential to the development and optimal functioning of human organizations (Knox, 1993; Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin, & Kakabadse, 2002; Kowalski, 1988; Weiner & Mahoney, 1981; Yukl, 1998). Being able to identify leaders, prepare them for a specific task, and strategically place them within an organization is a goal of Human Resources departments everywhere. Organizations created for the purpose of educating adults are presently in a time of particular challenge for they face an ever increasing need for effective leaders. Experts across the profession foresee the explosive growth of adult education opportunities. Fay, McCune, and Begin (1987) stated that “societal dynamics...and world events already in motion” (p. 15) will alter and strengthen the critical position of adult education in the next century.

In a review of adult education trends, Mott and Rampp (1995) found that the factors influencing this increasing importance of adult education to be “demographic changes, particularly, but not exclusively in the labor force, an increasingly global, unstable, and shifting economy, sociopolitical trends, technological advances, and the changing nature of learning itself” (p. 246). These authors told of a report compiled by J. B. Appleberry for the Harvard Institute for the Management of Lifelong Education which explained the scope of the educational challenge ahead. In that report it was predicted that “by the year 2020, information available to mankind [sic] will double every 73 days” (Mott & Rampp, 1995, p. 246). While predictions like

this one may evoke a sense of relief in adult educators concerned with future job security, it also points out an immediate need for qualified individuals willing to serve in leadership positions to provide guidance and support for all those involved in the task of meeting this daunting challenge. How will the field of adult education approach the task of identifying and preparing leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

The identification and training of potential leaders will be crucial to future success. Yet, within the field of adult education discussions on the topic of leadership seem to result in ambiguity. Perhaps this can be explained because many of the scholars involved in establishing adult education as a legitimate profession were deeply involved in social justice issues. They seemed wary of those in positions of leadership who could exert power over others. Mary Follett Parker (1920) promoted the idea that one should have “power-over” only him or herself but saw “power-with” as an appropriate model of leadership to be used in politics or industry. Lindeman (1926) agreed with Parker and added, “Directive energy is not to be condemned but we need to ask pertinent questions regarding the matter of its use. Power-over, even when exercised by the most benevolent of despots, invariably debases both those who command and those who obey” (p. 48). Decades later, adult educator and social justice activist Myles Horton also expressed his reservations concerning misuse of leadership. In a conversation with Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, Horton stated, “I’ve always been ambivalent about charismatic leaders. . . . I know there’s a real role for this type of leadership, but I have a problem with it” (Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1991, p. 111).

In contrast to those in the fields of business or management who over the last fifty years have attempted to simplify leadership into models of traits, behaviors, and situations, leadership for educators seems to be more personal and value laden. Ehrle and Bennett (1988) believe that

“academic leadership involves promulgating the values and visions that give the overall effort its meaning and direction....and requires insight, integrity, optimism, persistence, flexibility, excellent interpersonal and communication skills, and appropriately involves one’s personal belief system and values” (p. 189). No matter how adult education scholars have defined, mistrusted, limited or expanded their concept of leadership, the importance of leadership to the field cannot be overstated. Knox (1991) made this clear when he wrote:

Leadership has long been crucial for initiating and sustaining adult education programs in the field. The field has relied on the personal vision and dedication of its leaders in part because of the lack of routine institutional procedures in agencies that provide adult education.....In adult education, the predominant reliance on part-time and short-term staff members and volunteers... makes educational leadership by full-time administrators essential for the success of an agency. (p. 223)

While leadership may be essential to agency success, adult education research and literature has not reflected this. In an analysis of the literature done by Courtenay (1990), it was discovered that prior to 1989 only two books and five articles included a comprehensive discussion of leadership within the administrative role. Knox’s (1991) chapter on educational leadership and program administration followed soon after Courtenay’s article, and also made note that adult education handbooks prior to 1980 not only overlooked the concept of leadership, but had no chapters dealing with the administrative aspect of adult education at all.

The decade of the 80s saw a small increase of publications related to management issues, but Knox (1991) reported that these added works dealt with administering adult education programs in a particular segment of the field such as continuing higher education (Freedman, 1987) or training and development for employees in private enterprise (MacLagan, 1989). The

1989 adult education handbook provided three chapters devoted to administrative issues (program planning, management, and evaluation), but, again, no mention of leadership. The trend of producing texts dealing with issues related to the day to day administration of sub-fields of adult education continued into the nineties with Mott and Rampp's (1995) text for continuing education. It, too, covered a variety of managerial topics, but never focused solely on the concept of leadership development or theory.

Galbraith, Sisco, and Guglielmino (1997) wrote for a broader audience in their *Administering Successful Programs for Adults*. This text gave an overview of "approaches to administration" (p. 25) with a short summary of management theory, but leadership was identified only as "an important function for adult, community, and continuing education administrators" (p. 8), and discussed in three paragraphs. It is apparent that today's adult educators could still echo Knox (1991) when he reported that practitioners repeatedly complained of graduate study and scholarly writing giving inadequate attention to leadership within adult education. Knox even stated that due to the lack of leadership theory and literature originating in the profession, he found it necessary to base his leadership chapter on "related fields of study such as administration, program development, strategic planning, organizational dynamics, and leadership" (p. 220).

While there has been a dearth of literature focused on the role of leadership within adult education, and the majority of those few pieces have been based on managerial models, there have been a few visionary authors willing to tackle the topic of the changing leadership needs of adult education. Edelson (1992) challenged adult educators to review old leadership models and rethink leadership in relation to the uncertainty, ambiguity, and chaos that existed in adult education organizations. Others responded to this challenge by acknowledging the controversy



and shifting views related to the leadership role. Apps (1994) recognized that it was a time “when old rules for leading do not work well, if at all, but the new rules are not yet written” (p. 5). He made note that “too often in the past, adult educators talked about management functions such as budgeting, program planning, and evaluation as if they were leadership functions. They are not” (p. 7). Apps decided that the field of adult education needed a whole person approach to leadership which combined “thinking and feeling, matters of the head and matters of the heart” (p. 4).

Marsick and Watkins (1999) presented another view of leadership for the twenty first century educator. Instead of the traditional leader in the role as the authoritative boss or manager, they saw benefit in the leader serving as a facilitator of the learning organization. Donaldson (2000) provided an interesting chapter in the most recent adult education handbook addressing all the emerging concepts and trends to explain how leadership within the field was being impacted by the societal shift from functionalism to postmodernism.

While Edelson (1992), Apps (1994), Marsick and Watkins (1999), and Donaldson (2000) all presented ideas about leadership new to the field of adult education, they, like Knox (1991) might also acknowledge that their ideas had been based on leadership theories originating from other authors and disciplines. For that reason, it is important to review leadership theory, not just as it relates to adult education, but from a broader, societal perspective.

### The Evolution of Leadership Theory

The systematic study of leadership began in the early 1900s. The first scholars did not focus on the process of leading, but tried to identify the physical traits, social background, or personalities of successful leaders that distinguished them from non-leaders. The very earliest studies, referred to as ‘the great man’ theories, assumed that leaders were born, not trained. From

this original assumption the trait theorists' understanding of leadership was more an exploration of how the leader impressed his will upon those he led, especially in regard to how he gained obedience, respect, and loyalty. This research approach fell out of favor in the 1950s due to studies done by Stogdill (1948) showing how contradictory these listing of traits could be. This shift in research philosophy led leadership scholars away from investigating internal traits of successful leaders and into the very observable and easily documented behavioral studies (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Graen, 1976; McGregor, 1960; Stogdill, 1974). This second generation of leadership scholars researched first the behaviors of successful leaders, and then the behaviors of followers, in hopes of identifying a set of explicit behaviors which, if duplicated, would result in successful leadership relationships.

Soon those involved in the scientific search to identify and predict leadership realized that behaviors were only one of many variables in the complex leadership equation. They began to consider other factors, first adding in the situation or context (Hersey & Blanchard, 1974), and then the task structure, personal relationships with followers, and the leader's personal power base (Fiedler, 1967). House (1976) investigated matching different leadership styles to suit different follower needs, with Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) continuing this line of research by giving consideration to how the leader/ follower relationship worked within a group. Vroom and Yetton (1973) had also examined leadership within a group setting and proposed allowing appropriate degrees of group member participation in decision making. Other studies (Manz & Sims, 1987) carried this idea further to promote the concept of self-managed teams.

Though these models were packed with valid findings, no one study could claim to provide a leadership model applicable to a wide variety of leadership situations. There was something missing, and the challenge was there to discover that elusive "something." Like art

and beauty, effective leadership is easily recognized when seen or experienced, but deconstructing the phenomenon, labeling its parts, and reproducing it was proving quite complicated for researchers. It was time to rethink the process and consider new ideas.

A very different theory of leadership was offered in 1978. It did not come as a result of observation and experimentation, but evolved from a hermeneutic study of great leaders conducted by presidential biographer and political theorist, James MacGregor Burns. In a book he entitled simply, *Leadership*, Burns offered a revolutionary concept. He identified a way to delineate between what he called transformational leaders and transactional leaders.

Transformational leadership, as proposed by Burns (1978), is the type of leadership that not only creates change and achieves goals within the environment, but also changes the people involved in the process for the better. He considered this a type of “moral leadership” which “occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leader and follower raise one another to high levels of motivation and morality” (p. 20).

Burns’ book instigated further study by other scholars interested in investigating these controversial ideas. The scholar most dedicated to the research of Burns’ original theory of transformational leadership was Bass. He, along with his associates (Bass & Avolio, 1990), reached the conclusion that there were four essential components of transformational leadership: charisma, inspiration, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation. While all four were important, Bass (1985) did not think that transformational leadership could be accomplished without charisma. Since Bass considered charisma the most important of the four characteristics of transformational leadership, other researchers set about the mission of deconstructing charisma within leadership.

Conger and Kanungo (1988) provided the field with a comprehensive review of charismatic leadership studies. Gibbons (1987) investigated the antecedents to charismatic/transformational leadership, searching to find what previous life experiences may have produced such leadership abilities. Kuhnert and Lewis (1987), Benay (1997), and Steeves (1997) used Kegan's (1982) constructive- developmental model to examine the relationship of levels of adult development to charisma and transformational leadership.

It is interesting to note that by the decade of the nineties several of the researchers investigating transformational leadership, especially those tracking down the illusive charisma factor, began to view the role of spirituality in leadership as a legitimate consideration for study (Bolman & Deal, 1995; Conger, 1994; Richardson & Thayer, 1993). Although the behaviors exhibited by transformational leaders in previous studies had been described in terminology similar to that used to define spirituality, earlier scholars had made no direct reference to these similarities in secular leadership literature. Conger (1994) provided a probable explanation for this avoidance in research when he admitted that spirituality and leadership were very vague concepts and difficult to define. He believed that scholars seeking credibility among colleagues trained in the predominantly scientific, quantitative methods of research of earlier decades had naturally avoided involvement with a topic so ephemeral or illusive.

#### Considering the Spirituality of Leadership

By the late 1980s, however, discussion on a wide range of leadership issues was becoming more open and less bound by scientific/rational mind sets. Vaill (1989), a business management scholar, considered leading more of an art than a science, and urged that it was important for the leader to pay attention "to one's own spiritual qualities, feelings, insights, and yearnings....to attune oneself to those truths one considers timeless and unassailable, the deepest

principles one knows” (p. 31). Fairholm (1991, 1994, 1997, 1998), a professor of public administration, was one of the first scholars to offer an in-depth exploration of the importance of spirituality in leadership, beginning with *Values Leadership* (1991). He continued with a gradual fleshing out of his theory with each new book. He first addressed values, next the development of a culture of trust, then he proceeded to explore how leaders can encourage spirituality and community within the workplace. In his most recent book, *Perspectives on Leadership: From the Science of Management to its Spiritual Heart* (1998), Fairholm pulls together many of his previous ideas to propose that leadership is a relationship, not a skill or a personal attribute, and should be used to help all concerned achieve spiritual as well as economic fulfillment. In *Spirit at Work*, Conger (1994) edited essays written by a variety of noted leadership scholars (Palmer, 1994; Scott, 1994) who addressed the need for spiritual consideration at work. In the opening chapter Conger proposed that traditional sources of support and connection (such as community, extended family, and church participation) have eroded leaving the workplace as the central source of connectedness for many people. He and his co-authors offered advice on what leaders could do to include spirituality in the workplace, such as the development of hospitable spaces and providing opportunities for the personal development of workers.

What caused this shift in opinions regarding the role of spirituality in leadership? It was instigated not by academic inquiry only, but by a phenomenal groundswell of interest from the general public. Books addressing philosophical and spiritual concerns in daily life (Gaarder, 1997; Hilman, 1996; Moore, 1994; Norris, 1996; Peck, 1978; Redfield, 1993) began to hit the best seller lists. Leadership and business scholars, such as Klenke (2003), took note and commented on the burgeoning interest. “Until recently, it commonly was believed that there is

no place for spirituality within science, politics, business, or academia. However....when God makes the front page of *Fortune Magazine*... the business community takes notice” (p. 56).

God had made that front page because savvy business and organizational development leaders, ever attuned to popular trends and changing opinions, had already spotted the growing interest in the phenomenon of spirituality. This societal trend had been highlighted by Naisbitt and Aburdene (1990) when they predicted one of their top ten new megatrends to be a spiritual revival for the new millennium. Naisbitt also had discussed this prediction with an audience of business executives saying that “The big story...will not be high-tech, but a renaissance in the arts, in literature, and in spirituality” (Adkins, 1989, p. 16). This famous trend predictor saw the accelerating speed and complexity of modern life forcing individuals to reexamine their lives in order to regain a sense of meaning. Bolman and Deal (1995) agreed to this shift in meaning-making and proposed that we not only realize the importance of spirituality in public discourse, but noted that we “all need a language of moral discourse that permits discussions of ethical and spiritual issues, connecting them to images of leadership” (p. 2). Their book also provided this excerpt from a research paper (Porter, 1989) presented at a leadership conference at Harvard University which further explains why addressing spirituality in leadership is important:

In a seminar with 17 executives from 9 corporations, we learned how privatization of moral discourse in our society had created a deep sense of moral loneliness and moral illiteracy; how the absence of a common language prevents people from talking about and reading the moral issues they face. We learned how the isolation of individuals – the taboo against talking about spiritual matters in the public sphere – robs people of courage, of the strength of heart to do what deep down they believe to be right. They think they are alone in facing these issues. (p. 2)

Porter's (1989) concern was soon being echoed by others who saw a growing need for an open discussion of spirituality in the field of leadership and management. A variety of leadership practitioners and scholars (Block, 1993; Conlin, 1999; Covey, 1991; Hawley, 1993) also got involved in the promotion of a spiritually inclusive leadership. By the end of the 90s this growing trend concerned some researchers (Mitroff & Denton, 1999a) who noted that the literature promoting spiritually influenced leadership seemed largely based on anecdote and personal observation with little empirical study to substantiate the claims being made. Mitroff, a professor of business policy, and Denton, an organizational consultant, launched a study to examine how leaders in corporate America were dealing with the issue of spirituality. They expressed the concern that:

In spite of or perhaps because of this literature [promoting spirituality in the workplace], there have been, until now, no serious empirical studies of what managers and executives believe and feel about spirituality or assessments of its purported benefits. (Mitroff & Denton, 1999b, p. 83)

They found that corporations “seek to manage the cares and concerns of the soul by separating it from other realms, by walling it off as strictly as they can” (Mitroff & Denton, 1999a, p. 5).

While they explored a number of concerns relating to the topic, the authors expressed the belief that the field of organizational studies still suffers from what Jung (1938) once called spiritual emptiness. However, other research conducted by Hicks (2002) and Moberg (2002) took a critical stance, questioning whose interest did this new spirituality- at- work trend serve? Hicks' (2002) article, *Spiritual and Religious Diversity in the Workplace*, offered a review and critical analysis of present scholarship addressing spirituality and leadership. He argued that the concept of spirituality is more disparate and contested than the current leadership literature

acknowledges, and suggested that the task of effective organizational leadership is to create a culture in which leaders and followers can respectfully negotiate religious and spiritual diversity.

Moberg's (2002) study was particularly concerned about the way spirituality was being evaluated within research settings. He believed that scales meant to measure spirituality universally "override distinctive norms of minority groups and contribute to their mistreatment and victimization" (p. 47). He acknowledged human spirituality as an ontologically existent or "real" phenomenon, but was concerned that the variety of "implicit and explicit definitions of spirituality applied in research are diverse and confusing" (p. 48).

This review of leadership literature (Bass, 1985; Blake & Mouton, 1964; Burns, 1978; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Graen, 1976; McGregor, 1960; Stogdill, 1974) helps us understand that the evolution of leadership theory has not been linear, but is similar to a deep and swiftly moving river of ideas replete with small and interesting tributaries. While this latest swirling eddy of interest, spirituality, has produced scholarly speculation, interpretation, and texts, there are few rigorous studies providing validity for the claims being made. Researchers are correct in calling for more empirical study on spirituality and leadership, and there is no better secular context in which to study this phenomenon than the field of adult education. While adult educators may have borrowed leadership theory from a variety of disciplines in the past, this particular leadership trend is one with obvious historical precedence in the field of adult education.

### Addressing Spirituality in Adult Education

The study of spiritually influenced leadership is uniquely suited to the field of adult education for the acknowledgement of spiritual influence upon leadership is not new to adult education. Adult education has deep and abiding theological roots. Yeaxlee (1925), Knowles



(1962), Kelly (1970), and Elias (1986), in their texts tracing the evolution of adult education, all record movements inspired by religious ideals and led by deeply spiritual individuals. Elias (1986) tells us that “in the sixteenth century there emerged a familiar theme in the early adult education movement, the connection of adult education with religiously inspired nonconformist movements” (p. 130). The lives of adult education leaders who worked for social justice provide a deeper understanding of the historical role of spirituality in adult education.

English, Fenwick, and Parsons (2003) remind us that Moses Coady, founder of the Antigonish movement in Nova Scotia, and Myles Horton, civil rights activist and founder of the Highlander Folk School, both had theological training. Eduard Lindeman, author of *The Meaning of Adult Education* (1926), was greatly influenced by the social gospel movement, and produced other books written specifically for Christian audiences. Basil Yeaxlee (1925), Horton (Horton, Kohl, & Horton, 1998) and Malcolm Knowles (1962) all worked as adult educators employed by the YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association) at one time or other. Jane Addams (1912) and Mary Follett Parker (1920), pioneers in settlement houses that provided adult education opportunities to immigrants, became involved in these educational endeavors as a result of their upbringing in the Society of Friends (Quaker faith). The profession of adult education is indeed rich in examples of leaders who were spiritually inspired.

Perhaps this past history has encouraged the more recent scholars to be open to the idea of spirituality within our practice. As previously noted, Apps (1994) was an early proponent, joining leadership scholars from other disciplines to call for a more spiritually inclusive leadership. Zinn’s (1997) article broached the topic, not from a leadership perspective, but in an effort to explain the spirituality debate to others in the field, and to “establish some common language so that we can communicate more effectively about spirituality in adult education”

(p. 8). Dirkx (1997) sought to reassure adult educators who were considering the spirituality phenomenon that one was not expected to openly discuss spirituality in the classroom, but give thought to ways one could nurture the soul; “to recognize what is already inherent within our relationships and experiences, to acknowledge its presence in the teaching and learning environment” (p. 83). Lauzon (1998, 2001) tried to help adult educators understand why this burgeoning interest and acceptance of spirituality was occurring. He attributed the increased interest in spirituality to what he saw as a worldwide shift in meaning-making, suggesting that we are no longer being served by the rational-logic means utilized for the past 70 years. Lauzon believed that the rational-logic way of meaning making was being replaced by a vision-logic associated with a deepening spirituality. English, Fenwick, and Parsons (2003) suggested “the attention that spirituality receives in the public press may be indicative of a universal need to name and embrace spiritual concepts and issues” (p. 3). Tisdell and Tolliver (2001) wrote to support their belief that there is a cultural dimension to spirituality and a spiritual dimension to culture which, if investigated could aid teachers in designing more culturally relevant and transformative learning experiences.

In the examination of spirituality, other adult education scholars have been more critical. Two of the first educators to question the wisdom of spiritual practices in the workplace were Fenwick and Lange (1998). These authors provided a critical view of actual conditions, reporting a fundamentalist aspect evident in present workplace spirituality which leaves little room for diversity. Fenwick’s (2002) skepticism was again evident when she asked HROD professionals, “Are educators participating in a commodification of the spiritual for their own interests?”

(p. 10). She was concerned that using spirituality as an added component to a human resource development project “appears to regard workers’ spirits as an untapped resource with remarkable potential for increasing human capital and improving productivity” (p. 10).

The empirical studies conducted to examine spirituality within adult education settings have been few with none discovered by the researcher that focus on spirituality and leadership. Tisdell (2000) conducted a study examining the role spirituality played in the lives of sixteen female adult educators who taught for social justice. Groen (2001) focused on the experiences and practices of five adult educators as they addressed the spiritual dimensions of their workplaces. These two studies, one from adult higher education and one from HROD, demonstrate the emerging interest in examining the role of spirituality in a variety of adult education settings. Their findings have provided insight into the phenomenon, and have illuminated both positive and negative impacts of spirituality. It is clear that more study of spirituality is needed, especially in regard to how it may impact the leadership role in adult education settings.

In summary, leadership is important to the functioning of organizations. It has been studied intensely for over a century in an attempt to identify effective leader/follower relationships with the expectation of being able to develop or train individuals for leadership roles within organizations. Recent research indicates that the influence of spirituality upon the leader may be a factor in the practice of effective leadership within organizations. Therefore, further empirical research is needed to fully explore this possible connection.

#### Problem Statement

Past leadership research has demonstrated the complexity of leader/follower dynamics within organizations. These studies have evolved through the years from the earliest ones that

emphasized innate characteristics, moving through behavioral, situational, and contingency models, into the study of transactional and transformational leaders, then to a close examination of the transformational leaders' charisma.

Empirical studies of charisma and transformational leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Hartsfield, 2003) have led some scholars and researchers from business, management, and leadership fields to consider spirituality as a possible factor in the practice of effective leadership. Recently, this spirituality within leadership has been promoted in management and business literature, but very little empirical research (Mitroff & Denton, 1999a) has been conducted, and findings are not conclusive.

Extensive searches of adult education literature revealed no reports of empirical studies conducted to examine this phenomenon. What we do know about the role of spirituality in leadership is based upon speculation and personal testimony, yet scholars and practitioners continue to attest to the importance of spirituality in the leadership relationship. What we need are empirical studies documenting this leadership phenomenon. Klenke (2003), a leadership education scholar, recently made this challenge to researchers, "If spiritual constructs add value to the study of leadership, scholars, practitioners, and educators need to begin to document the added conceptual, empirical, practical, and educational values that these constructs provide" (p. 59). This study was designed to fill that gap in our understanding of the role of spirituality in the practice of adult education leaders in order to provide some of this much-needed documentation.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of spirituality in the practice of adult education leaders. The research questions which guided this study were:

1. How do adult education leaders perceive and describe spirituality?
2. How do adult education leaders perceive and describe experiences of spiritually influenced leadership?
3. How do adult education leaders describe their style of leadership?

### Significance of the Study

Historically, leadership scholars have identified leaders by observable behaviors (Stogdill, 1948), situations (Hersey & Blanchard, 1974), contexts (Fiedler, 1967), and studied how these impacted the organization. Other scholars have studied a characteristic identified in the transformational leadership theory called charisma (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). These studies, along with recent societal trends, have led some to suggest a connection between spirituality and leadership (Fairholm, 1997; Vaill, 1989). While a variety of leadership and management authors have produced works promoting spirituality within leadership, there have been few empirical studies conducted to explore this relationship. This is easily understood since there is so little consensus on exactly what it is we are attempting to study.

Spirituality, like leadership, is a difficult construct to define. Many spiritual definitions include terms like transcendence, inner-connectedness, self-awareness, soul, search for meaning, religion, or hospitality (Elkins et al., 1988; Klenke, 2003; Palmer, 1983, 1998, 1999; Zinn, 1997). The pertinent question to our field is how do adult education leaders describe or define this concept. This study included a component to gather perceptions and descriptions of spirituality from leaders working in a variety of adult education settings in order to discover commonalities of definition among adult educators.

Another contribution of this study to theory was an investigation into the possibility that a particular style of leadership may be more conducive to the inclusion of spirituality than others. Previous leadership research has provided a plethora of leadership models. Study participants were asked to describe their leadership style in an attempt to discover if there was a commonality of leadership style exhibited by leaders who are spiritually influenced.

Adult educators in the United States are always conscious of the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom and wary of overstepping boundaries. This unease has led to the avoidance of spiritual issues in the settings of public or academic administration. If inclusion of spirituality in the leadership style of adult educators is to be considered as a recommendation across the field, this study can offer insight into how this inclusion has already been successfully achieved. Practically, this study provides a clearer understanding of how these spiritually influenced individuals performed the leadership role within their organization, and suggests how one might navigate the controversy that sometimes swirls around the issue of addressing spiritual issues within the public educational arena in a highly diverse society. Qualitative research provided opportunities for gathering great detail and experiential nuance from spiritually influenced adult education leaders.

This phenomenological study which examined how adult education leaders perceived and described spiritually influenced leadership contributed significantly to leadership theory by providing deeper understanding of the internal forces which inform leadership behavior.

## CHAPTER 2

### A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of spirituality in the practice of adult education leaders. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do adult education leaders perceive and describe spirituality?
2. How do adult education leaders perceive and describe their experiences of spiritually-influenced leadership?
3. How do adult education leaders describe their style of leadership?

To prepare for this study, I reviewed existing literature related to the topic. I discovered a plethora of material related to the concepts of leadership and spirituality in a variety of disciplines, but focused my study on four areas: (a) leadership in adult education, (b) the evolution of leadership theory; (b) the concept of spirituality, and (c) the intersection of spirituality and leadership.

Searches to find sources for these areas of literature were conducted in the following databases: UGA Galileo catalogue, Library of Congress, PSYCINFO, ABINFORM, Professional Development Collection, Academic Search Premier, Educational Abstracts Full Text, ERIC, The Philosopher's Index, ERIC (education), Wilson Web, Dissertation Abstracts, and electronic journals and texts.

## Leadership in Adult Education

Adult education is rich with examples of outstanding leaders such as Eduard Lindeman, Mary Parker Follett, Miles Horton, Malcolm Knowles, and Paulo Freire. Along with the more famous, there are legions of adult educators who practice effective leadership daily. Knox (1991) made the case that leadership is especially crucial for sustaining adult education programs because of the “lack of routine institutional procedures in agencies that provide adult education” (p. 223). In a field that has historically relied upon volunteers and part-time staff members to achieve educational goals, leadership skills for the professional have not been optional, but required. Perhaps it has been this tacit acceptance of required leadership that has made the topic of identifying and developing leadership almost invisible in adult education.

Adult education handbooks that supplied information to professionals on a variety of other important topics through the years had no chapters dealing with administration or leadership at all before 1980. Even the revered “black book,” *Adult Education: Outlines for an Emerging Field of Study*, edited by Jenson, Liveright, and Hallenbeck (1964) included only one chapter (Essert, 1964) which provided a cursory explanation of the management philosophy in vogue at the time, the administration or management of systems. The only mention of the role of a leader in this administrative systems model was to state that “any adult education program can be improved substantially if competent professional leaders can select, train, and assist volunteer leaders to undertake clearly defined specialized tasks” (Essert, 1964, p. 195). There was no elaboration as to what constituted a competent leader or how to recognize or train one. Adult education’s reliance on business management for administrative models continued through the years. Between 1980 and 2004, the handbooks have provided three chapters related to



managerial issues, but only one (Donaldson, 2000) which solely addressed the topic of leadership.

There have been authors who have provided practical advice on dealing with day to day issues of administration, such as program planning and evaluation (Freedman, 1987; Galbraith, Sisco, & Guglielmino, 1997; MacLagan, 1989; Mott & Rampp, 1995), but, as made evident by Courtenay's (1990) review of the literature and Knox's (1991) chapter on leadership, there has been a marked lack of adult education literature examining the complex construct of leadership. Courtenay (1990), Knox (1991), Edelson (1992), Apps (1994), and Donaldson (2000) have provided insight on leadership issues and encouraged the field to give adequate attention to this concept so critical to the success of adult education. It is interesting to note, however, that while Knox (1991) bemoaned the lack of leadership literature, and provided leadership theory review borrowed from other disciplines in the aforementioned chapter, in his next book, *Strengthening Adult and Continuing Education: A Global Perspective on Synergistic Leadership* (1993), he did not expound upon theory, but returned to a practical, case-study approach giving advice on how to adapt strategic plans, identify objectives, and improve communication. Therefore, for greater understanding of leadership theory, one still cannot rely on adult education literature, but must go outside the field.

### The Evolution of Leadership Theory

Defining the concept of leadership has been difficult for each successive generation of leadership scholars. Bennis and Nanus (1985) explained the problem in this way:

Decades of academic analysis have given us more than 350 definitions of leadership.

Literally thousands of empirical investigations of leaders have been conducted in the last seventy-five years alone, but no clear understanding exists as to what distinguishes

leaders from non-leaders... Never have so many labored so long to say so little. Multiple interpretations of leadership exist, each providing a sliver of insight but each remaining an incomplete and wholly inadequate explanation. (p. 4)

While recognizing that no theory provides an adequate interpretation of the concept of leadership, reviewing how leadership study evolved through the twentieth century provided this study grounding in how each researcher provided that “sliver of insight.”

### *Trait Theory*

The earliest leadership theorists did not focus on the process of leading, but tried to identify the physical traits, social background, or personalities of successful leaders that distinguished them from followers. These studies from the early 1900's, referred to as “the great man” theories, considered leadership a genetic trait. Certain individuals were born with abilities or traits which enabled them to become outstanding leaders. From this original assumption, the trait theorists' studies of leadership were more an exploration of how past leaders had garnered followers' obedience, respect, and loyalty. They also sought to identify the genetically gifted individuals who would prove to be the effective leaders of the future.

About 1910 academic study of leadership and management of organizations began to shift emphasis. Scientific management became the reigning organizational concern, and was fully described by Taylor's (1911) *The Principles of Scientific Management*. Taylor's theory of management was based on a mechanistic model designed to make organizations run like “well-oiled machines” (Galbraith, Sisco, & Guglielmino, 1997, p. 24). Lillian and Frank Gilbreth (1948) provided further research into Taylor's theory with the use of motion pictures to determine how everyday tasks could be performed more efficiently. This was certainly not a time when the inner traits of leaders were considered worthy of study. If a phenomenon could not be

experienced with the five senses or proven to have statistical significance, it did not fit comfortably into academic study. The findings of earlier trait studies began to be closely scrutinized for validity. Stogdill (1948) soon declared that the lists of traits were inconclusive and could not adequately predict leadership performance. Though a large number of traits were identified, there seemed not to be “a single small set of traits that consistently predicted leadership success” (Gatewood, Taylor, & Ferrell, 1995, p. 497). Robbins (1998) added other reasons for the failure of this theory, saying it “overlooks the needs of the followers,...and fails to clarify the relative importance of various traits” (p. 349). Thus, the scholars of the scientific management era shifted to a more tangible study of leadership, the isolation and observation of behavioral characteristics exhibited by leaders.

### *Behavioral Theories*

What do effective leaders actually do? How do they perform the role? Behavioral studies assumed that if leadership behaviors could be observed and recorded, they could be used to train others how to lead more effectively. Douglas McGregor’s (1960) Theory X and Theory Y fell into this category. He identified those in leadership roles who believed people are motivated by money, are lazy, and have poor work habits unless told exactly what to do as using an authoritarian, Theory X style. In contrast, Theory Y leaders believed that people work hard, cooperate, and have positive attitudes if you allow them to be part of the decision-making process.

Researchers at Ohio State University tried another approach to studying leadership behaviors. They identified over a thousand independent dimensions of leadership which they narrowed down into two categories. The first category of behaviors was called initiating structure, and referred to those that leaders used to attempt to organize work, work relationships,

and goals. The second category, consideration described behaviors where leaders exhibited trust, respect for subordinates' ideas, and regard for their feelings. After extensive research, these studies suggested that if leaders ranked high in both categories they usually had positive outcomes, but "enough exceptions were found to indicate that situational factors needed to be integrated into the theory" (Robbins, 1989, p. 350).

Researchers at the University of Michigan were working on similar studies identifying leadership behaviors. They used the classification of production-centered for leaders who set standards, organized and monitored employees closely, and stressed results. An employee-centered leadership style encouraged participatory decision making and employee satisfaction. These studies found that employee-centered managers were more likely to produce higher group productivity and higher job satisfaction than those who were production-centered.

The next study of behaviors by Blake and Mouton (1964) identified five leadership styles that combine differing proportions of concern for production and concern for people. These styles were plotted on a grid to produce a nine by nine grid outlining 81 possible leadership combinations. The authors suggested that the best leader was the individual who scored highest (9) on both the concern for people and the concern for results. Robbins (1998) saw this theory as a good framework for conceptualizing leadership style, but though it provided "little substantive evidence to support the conclusion that a 9.9 style [indicative of the highest score possible] is most effective in all situations" (p. 351). The 1990's version of these studies is the empowerment model which encourages the leader's sharing of influence and control with followers. This empowerment helps satisfy the basic human needs for achievement, a sense of belonging, and self-esteem. Followers reported feeling more empowered when "leaders were clear about their expectations, when their leaders gave them plenty of information about what was happening in

the organization, and when they involved the followers in making important decisions” (Hellriegel, Jackson, & Slocum, 1999, p. 508).

Graen (1976) added another dimension to behavioral models when he theorized that leaders use different styles with different followers. This was first called the vertical-dyad linkage model, but is now referred to as the leader-member exchange model. Important findings from this study showed that leaders and followers who have similar personalities develop higher quality relationships than those who have strikingly different personalities.

### *Contingency Theories*

While behavioral models added to the knowledge base, it became clear to those working in the field that predicting leadership success could not be attributed to specific lists of individual leader or follower behaviors. There was another dimension to the leadership relationship and the next wave of leadership study identified it as recognizing varying situations and contexts. These models are categorized as contingency or situational, and all agree that the situation determines the best style of leadership to use, and focus more on the follower than did past studies. The four best known are Hersey and Blanchard’s (1974) situational model, Fiedler’s (1967) contingency model, House’s (1976) path-goal model, and the leader-participation model.

Hersey and Blanchard’s (1974) situational model suggests that a leader’s style is flexible and should be adapted to changing situations based on the readiness level of followers. They define readiness as the ability and willingness to accomplish a specific task. Their model explains directive leadership behavior as a one-way communication which provides clear instructions and specific directions. They see this as appropriate behavior for leaders to exhibit toward newcomers in the group. The next adaptation should be a move toward a coaching style which is a two-way communication involving listening, encouraging, and building confidence.

Along this continuum the leader moves into a supportive style which includes the follower in the decision making process. Finally, the leader should assume a delegating style when the follower is ready to assume full responsibility for a particular task. The limitations of this model relate to whether or not a leader is allowed to choose a leadership style in a new situation, or the fact that there may be different levels of readiness in the same group of followers. Robbins (1989) sees a high similarity between these four levels of response to readiness to the four extreme corners of the Managerial Grid previously reviewed.

Fiedler's contingency theory (1967) proposed that effective groups have a proper match between a leader's style of interacting with subordinates and the degree to which the situation gives control and influence to the leader. He believed that an individual's leadership style is innate (either task-oriented or relationship-oriented), cannot be changed, and can be identified by a questionnaire. After assessing leadership style, Fiedler thought it was then necessary to match the leader with the ideal situation. To accomplish this, three key situational factors must be identified: leader-member relations, task structure, and leader position power. There are two major criticisms of this model. Situation variables are difficult to assess, and the model doesn't really address the characteristics of the subordinates.

House's path-goal model (1996) established the leader's job as that of assisting followers to reach their goals by providing the necessary direction or support which will also ensure that these goals are compatible with the overall objectives of the group. He sees a leader's behavior as motivational to the degree that it "(1) makes subordinate need satisfaction contingent on effective performance and (2) provides the coaching, guidance, support, and rewards that are necessary for effective performance" (Robbins, 1989, p. 361). Leader behavior should be determined by two variables: employee characteristics and task characteristics.

The leader-participation model was first proposed by Vroom and Yetton (1973), and later revised by Jago (1982). This model sets forth a set of rules which can be used to determine how much and what kind of participative decision making is appropriate in a variety of leadership situations. The researchers think that a decision can be evaluated by its quality and its acceptance. Using their model, leaders must analyze the situation, then choose one of the five decision making styles guided by the eight contingency questions which are to be answered in the order provided.

All four of these contingency models are based on the flexibility of the leader and the importance of recognizing situational factors and identifying follower characteristics. While these studies further delineated the process of leadership within organizations, they, too, fell short of the goal of providing a clear definition of leader. Their findings did not hold the attention of the organizational world for long because the situations and contexts within research sites were undergoing major change. The positivist, scientific-rational view of the world was coming under attack. Postmodern thought regarding pluralism and multiple truths was gaining strength in the academic world. Again questions arose about definition. What kind of organizational relationship were these theories describing? Was it leadership or management? Were the two terms synonymous or distinctly different? Burns (1978) suggested clearly that they were different.

### *Transformational Leadership*

Burns (1978) did not believe that leadership could be properly defined as a leader convincing a follower to perform a task, nor that the leader could induce the follower to do what that person would not otherwise do. He saw leadership as a partnership where the leader encourages the follower “to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations –

the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations – of both leaders and followers” (Burns, 1978, p. 19). He further explained his concept by proposing that there were two basic types of leadership, the transactional and the transforming. He differentiated between the two by providing the following description:

The relations of most leaders and followers are transactional – leaders approach followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another.... Transforming leadership, while more complex, is more potent. The transforming leader...looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents. (p. 4)

Burns followed up on this idea with his explanation of what he considered “moral leadership.” He promoted the idea that leadership not only instigates change and achieves goals, but can transform the people involved for the better. For Burns, “the leader’s fundamental activity is to induce people to be aware or conscious of what they feel – to feel their true needs so strongly, to define their values so meaningfully, that they can be moved to purposeful action” (p. 44). These transformational leaders motivate followers to do more than they thought they could by helping them to understand the importance of each follower’s contribution to the common goal.

Burns placed transactional leadership and transformational leadership on opposite ends of a continuum, realizing that the majority of leader/follower behavior falls under the category of transactional leadership. He said these most common of leader/follower relationships were based on values related to means, such as exchanging an honest wage for a day’s work or giving a promotion to reward an excellent job performance. The values that governed these types of



relationships were honesty, responsibility, and fairness. At the opposite end of this continuum, Burns saw the transformational leader as one who is more interested in helping followers pursue the more lofty values of liberty, justice and equality (Burns, 1978).

Burns' transformational leader would encourage followers to move up to higher levels of existence, similar to the concept of self-actualization explained in the works of Maslow (1954, 1962, 1964). Maslow saw humans as having a hierarchy of needs, each of which must be met before moving upward to seek higher goals. The first level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs was physiological (food and shelter), then safety, next love, from there to esteem, and finally to self-actualization (Maslow, 1954). Maslow (1964) promoted the idea of the self-actualizing person as the end toward which all human activity should aim, and saw this as the common purpose of education, psychotherapy, government, and religion. You might say that Burns made self-actualization of both leaders and followers the purpose of leadership practice as well.

Bass (1985) took the idea of transformational leadership to the level of transformational theory by conducting empirical research to test Burns' (1978) ideas. Bass makes a clear distinction between a transactional leader who motivates followers using an exchange relationship involving services performed in return for rewards, and a transformational leader who can communicate a vision and inspire followers. He defines transformational leadership as engaging the full person of the follower, and occurs when "leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group" (1990, p. 21).

Bass' findings reported in *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations* (1985) promoted transformational leadership and further defined the concept, but disagreed with Burns

on two important points. Bass did not see transactional and transformational leadership on either end of a continuum, but as two independent dimensions of leadership. He felt that one could be both a transactional and a transformational leader with transformational leadership augmenting transactional. His second point of difference with Burns' theory was that Bass believed transformational leadership to be amoral. It could be used for either good or evil purposes, while Burns defined it as being used only for the greatest good. After further study, however, Bass (1990) retracted this particular point of dissension saying,

I have come to agree with Burns. Personalized transformational leaders are *pseudotransformational*. They may exhibit many transforming displays but cater, in the long run, to their own self-interests....This is in contrast to the truly transformational leaders who transcend their own self-interests. (p. 15)

Extensive research conducted by Bass (1985; 1990; 1995; Bass & Avolio, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1993) which investigated transformational leadership in business, military, educational and religious institutions led him to believe that most of the leadership studies in the past had been investigating transactional leadership. From the descriptions of transformational leadership gathered in previous studies, he formulated a questionnaire of 73 behavioral items called the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). He tested this instrument in a variety of settings and discovered five factors relating to exemplary leadership. Two of these, "contingent reward" and "management by exception" (Bass, 1985, p. 33) were considered indicative of typical transactional leadership. The three factors remaining were deemed transformational. These three, upon further study (Bass & Avolio, 1990) were broken into four distinct factors which became known as the four I's. These factors, critical to transformational leadership, were: idealized influence (charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized

consideration. Of these four, charisma, or idealized influence, was recognized as the first and most important component of transformational leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1987).

### *Charismatic Leadership*

The word “charisma” which researchers used to describe this attribute of leaders comes from the Greek language, originally meaning gift. It was adapted into Western culture by early Christians to describe what they considered gifts of God. This gift of charisma enabled the Christian believer to perform extraordinary feats like miraculous healing or prophecy. This concept was first used to describe a type of leadership by German sociologist Max Weber (1947). Weber saw charisma as a special personality trait, of divine origin, exhibited only by a very few individuals which resulted in the person having exceptional power to lead.

While charisma is closely associated with Burns’ (1978) theory as one of the four critical characteristics of a transformational leader, another theory, called charismatic leadership, was first published by House (1976) as a chapter in a leadership text. House saw a charismatic leader as one who demonstrated the following personal characteristics: a strong desire to influence others, dominance, self-confidence, and strong moral values. Leadership author Northouse (1997) suggested a reason for House going largely unrecognized for his contribution. While “charismatic leadership has received a great deal of attention by researchers....it is often described in ways that make it similar to, if not synonymous with, transformational leadership” (p. 132).

While Bass and his associates were diligently working to examine the transformational leadership phenomenon, other researchers (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987) were also studying the complex relationship between charismatic leaders and their followers.

In Conger & Kanungo's (1988) review of charismatic leadership studies they concluded there seemed to be general agreement among researchers that charismatic leaders had: vision, emotional expressiveness, articulation skills, high activity level, and exemplary behavior. The researchers also agreed upon these distinguishing characteristics of the followers of charismatic leaders: high attachment to and trust in the leader, willing obedience to the leader, heightened performance and motivation, greater group cohesion in terms of shared beliefs and low intragroup conflict, and a sense of empowerment.

While some examined distinguishing characteristics of the transformational leadership relationship, Gibbons (1987) investigated the developmental factors in the life of an individual that appeared to result in a charismatic transformational leader. He discovered high parental expectation and early responsibility in the family. Though childhood may have been difficult for these future leaders, sufficient resources were available to avoid being overwhelmed. The individuals learned early to deal with conflict and disappointment. All had many previous leadership opportunities in various settings. They saw personal development as a primary work goal as well as life goal, viewed all experiences as learning experiences, and tended to be self-reflective.

Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) approached the study of charismatic/transformational leaders from a different perspective. They sought to explore the internal processes which resulted in an individual becoming a transformational leader. Kuhnert and Lewis proposed that an understanding of the inner processes would result in not only being able to identify transformational leadership in hindsight, but one might also determine how it can be developed in people who lead. They stated that "transactional and transformational leaders are qualitatively different kinds of individuals who construct reality in markedly different ways, thereby viewing

themselves and the people they lead in contrasting ways” (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987, p. 649). The theoretical framework of the Kuhnert and Lewis’ (1987) study was Kegan’s (1982) constructive/developmental model of how people make meaning or view their world (with emphasis on the stages of development applicable to adults). They proposed that only stage 4 (institutional stage) individuals were capable of becoming transformational leaders. Only at this stage of development were individuals “able to take an objective view of their goals and commitments; they can operate from a personal value system that transcends their agendas and loyalties. In other words, they can operate as transformational leaders” (Kuhnert & Lewis, p. 653).

Other studies (Benay, 1997; Steeves, 1997) agree with Kuhnert and Lewis’ theory that transformational leaders demonstrate higher levels of adult development than transactional leaders. These studies are important because they suggest that developing charismatic or transformational leaders will not be accomplished by short term training designed to teach a particular set of leadership skills. More discussion and research is needed to determine how one would design a long term developmental program to aid individuals in achieving a higher level of adult development in a quest for transformational leadership.

### *Beyond Charisma*

Transformational and charismatic studies have continued to be popular among researchers over the past twenty years as evidenced in the work of Avolio and Bass (1987), Bass (1985), Benay (1997), Bennis and Nanus (1985), Conger and Kanungo (1988), Field (2003), Hartsfield (2003), Kuhnert and Lewis (1987), and Strangway (1999). While these researchers specifically examined transformational leadership development, there were others involved in exploring leadership patterns they saw emerging in the workplace.

One theory promoted in the 1990's was called team leadership (Parker, 1990; Wellins, Byham, & Wilson, 1991). This idea of team or shared leadership began to appear due to organizational restructuring in the American workplace. Downsizing, corporate takeovers, and bankruptcies “shifted the decision-making powers of the organization downward from the traditional hierarchy to more self-managed teams” (Hill, 1997, p. 160). These teams were described as “organizational groups composed of members who are interdependent, who share common goals, and who must coordinate their activities to accomplish these goals” (p. 159). Hill's (1997) review of team theory stated that although team leadership had become one of the most popular areas of leadership theory and research, “most models...do not clearly show the complex relationship between team leadership and team effectiveness” (p. 160).

The decade of the nineties was filled with scholarly research designed to develop workable models of leadership suited to the existing organizational chaos. Bowman (1997) points out that those writing for academia were not the only ones tackling the problem of leadership at this time. In her review of what she calls popular approaches to leadership (Block, 1993; Covey, 1989, 1991; De Pree, 1987; Greenleaf, 1977; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Senge, 1990), she states that the differences between these and true academic studies were that popular approaches were “primarily for a general or leadership-practitioner audience, ....more user-friendly” (Bowman, 1997, p. 240).

Bowman (1997) believes that these pragmatic or popular approaches to leadership have several recurring themes in common. The first being that many of the authors promote the idea of the leader as a servant (an idea first presented by Greenleaf in 1977) where the leader shifts focus from their own needs to the needs and interests of the followers. The second commonality of popular approaches is the promotion of empowerment of the follower. Another common

characteristic is that “most of the popular leadership authors write from a spiritual perspective, rather than solely from a business or managerial one” (p. 241). She states that those leadership theorists who write from a spiritual perspective pay less attention to profit issues, and more attention to character issues like trust and honesty. She cites Covey’s (1991) book in which he describes the principles on which he feels leadership should be based. Those principles included trustworthiness, character, competence, maturity, self-discipline, and integrity. Of course, while these authors do not emphasize profit margins of the organization being led, the authors’ assumption is that following spiritually inspired principles lead to a more content and productive work force, and therefore, to a more effective and profitable organization.

Although Bowman (1997) categorizes these as popular approaches to leadership written for non-academic audiences, there were other authors, Fairholm (1997) and Conger (1994), very much a part of academia, who also described and promoted spiritually influenced leadership. Fairholm (1991, 1994, 1997, 1998), a professor of public administration and organizational behavior, was one of the first leadership scholars to suggest a connection between leadership and spirituality. He cited the work of Senge (1990) as helping him to understand the role the leader must play in enabling followers to grow and lead productive lives. Although Senge’s (1990) book focused on how to create a learning organization, Senge saw the need for leaders within a learning organization to reconsider their role. He thought leaders should redefine their job.

They must give up the old dogma of planning, organizing, and controlling and realize the almost sacredness of their responsibility for the lives of so many people. The leader’s fundamental task then is to provide the enabling conditions for people to lead the most enriching lives they can. (p. 140)

Fairholm's (1991) first book made the connection of leadership to values. He made the point that everyone had values, and that values trigger behavior. Therefore, he proposed a philosophical conception of leadership, one based on the American constitutional values of respect for life, freedom, happiness, justice, and unity. In his second book (Fairholm, 1994), he examined the importance of trust in the leadership relationship, and in 1997 he made the bold leap into *Capturing the Heart of Leadership*. This book offers a full coverage of the complex construct of spiritually influenced leadership. Fairholm (1991) reminds us that the presently revered tenets of management and administration are recent creations of modern man. The leaders in the ancient world did not manage, they led. They used charisma and personal magnetism to convince people to become followers. Large organizations of the modern age, however, needed to be able to control individual and group behavior to assure measurability, continuity and achieve desired goals. "Leaders leading from the heart don't always provide this stability. Leaders are forever innovating, moving outside the constraints of structure. While this may be exciting, it is also...hard to predict and control" (p. 16). Therefore, Fairholm theorized:

Management arose as an alternative to this kind of charismatic prophetic leadership. It [management]... relies on internal logical consistency, repeatability, and subordination of the many to the few. In all of our social institutions – the military, industry, government, and the church – the movement has been away from the inconstant individual (prophetic) leader, to the stable, predictable, logically focused manager. (p. 17)

Fairholm asserts that while past leadership theories and models have remained silent on the topic of spiritually influenced leadership, "these philosophical values are present in the practice of leadership today" (p. 21). In his surveys of midlevel managers, Fairholm found that 84% of the



managers confirmed a link between a leader's ability to have a transformational effect on an organization and his or her disposition toward spirituality.

Fairholm's (1997, 1998) books and Conger's (1994) *Spirit at Work* all make the argument that traditional sources of support and connection for Americans, community, extended family, and participation in organized religion, have changed so drastically in the last decades that the workplace has become the central source of connectedness for many people. This makes a focus on spirituality influenced leadership a response to the needs of individuals within organizations.

In Bowman's (1997) evaluation of what she called popular approaches to leadership, she cited several strengths of these styles of leadership. She identified them as being humanistic and positive in their orientation. She said they were easy to understand, made intuitive sense, and were consistent with accepted managerial principles. She also stated that they "provide a spiritual perspective missing from most of the leadership literature... [because] many people are interested in discussing values...and looking for deeper meanings in their daily lives than can be found in simple materialism or consumerism" (pp. 244-245). However, Bowman criticized these approaches, saying that while examples are given of how they have been used in organizational settings, the majority of these examples are anecdotal and have not been tested by well-designed empirical research.

Whether spiritually influenced leadership evolved out of charismatic studies or was the result of leadership practitioners grasping for meaning in a world of administrative chaos, the first problem of investigation to be addressed by any researcher interested in empirical examination of this leadership phenomenon must be one of definition. Just what are we talking about when we say spirituality?

## The Concept of Spirituality

Spirituality is an evolving concept, and difficult to define with any consensus of opinion. As one searches for an acceptable definition, it becomes apparent that this is not a new quest, but one that is as old as human history. In Armstrong's *A History of God* (1993) we find that:

[H]uman beings are spiritual animals. Indeed there is a case for arguing that *Homo sapiens* is also *Homo religiosus*. Men and women started to worship gods as soon as they became recognizably human....Throughout history, men and women have experienced a dimension of the spirit that seems to transcend the mundane world...However we choose to interpret it, this human experience of transcendence has been a fact of life. (pp. xx-xxi)

While this "human experience of transcendence" may be a permanent feature of human existence, the meaning of the term *spirituality* has evolved and changed through the centuries. The word *spirituality* comes from the Latin root *spiritus* which means the animating breath of life. Elkins (1999) sees this as the same idea expressed in the Bible. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). The word *spirituality* further developed from a merging of the Latin *spiritus* with the Greek idea of *enthousiasmos*, which means *the god within*. Elkins (1999) reminded us that in ancient times the understanding of spirituality was based on the belief in two dimensions of reality, the material and the nonmaterial. Material reality referred to that which could be experienced through the five senses, while spirituality was not tangible. It was "the world that artists, mystics, poets, prophets, shamans, and philosophers have described for thousands of years....vitally important to human life....[where] we anchor our lives and find our deepest values and meanings. Spirituality lives in the nonmaterial world" (p. 25).

For hundreds of years to be involved in the study of *spirituality* meant being involved in *religious* investigation. Spirituality and religion were considered synonymous (English, Fenwick, & Parsons, 2003), and both words were used interchangeably by a variety of scholars up until the late twentieth century. For example, definitions of religion offered by noted philosopher William James (1961) and psychoanalyst Carl Jung (1938) presented ideas that definitely did not restrict religion to only the institutional practice of rituals, but encompassed a broader perspective. James (1961) defined religion as “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude” (p. 32). Jung (1938) made a definitional difference between creed and religion when he offered this understanding:

I want to make clear that by the term “religion” I do not mean a creed. Creeds are codified and dogmatized forms of original religious experience. Religion appears to me to be a peculiar attitude of the human mind... a careful consideration and observation of certain dynamic factors, understood to be powers, spirits, demons, gods, laws, ideas, ideals, or whatever name man has given to such factors. (p. 587)

Both of these definitions make it clear that for these scholars, the word religion was not restricted to rituals, practices, or codified belief systems promoted institutionally, but included a very personal component. In the postmodern world of today, however, the word religion seems to have undergone a shift in definition replete with new boundaries and limitations. Research conducted by religious scholar Pargament (1999) tells us that:

More and more...we are finding spirituality defined in contrast to religion.... First, religion is being defined as the organizational, the ritual, and the ideological....This newly defined construct is contrasted with the spiritual, which refers to the personal, the affective, the experiential, and the thoughtful. The reminder that an individual can be

spiritual without being religious or religious without being spiritual has become a standard part of many papers on spirituality. (p. 6)

Emmons and Paloutzian (2003) in the *Annual Review of Psychology* also report this shift in definition saying, “agreement on the meaning of spirituality and religion is in short supply.... it has become fashionable, both culturally and in the scientific literature, to differentiate between the spiritual and the religious” (p. 381).

This definitional shift has been problematic for those teaching in the field of religion and philosophy for terms once understood to have universally accepted meanings must now be re-examined and redefined. Van Ness (1999) reported a need for a commonly agreed upon definition for spirituality in his task of editing a text to be published for students of the Union Theological Seminary. He provided the following definition of spirituality as one agreed upon by noted scholars and theologians contributing to the text series:

[Spirituality is] that inner dimension of the person called by certain traditions “the spirit.”

This spiritual core is the deepest center of the person. It is here that the person is open to the transcendent dimension; it is here that the person experiences ultimate reality... It deals with prayer, spiritual direction, the various maps of spiritual journey, and the methods of advancement in the spiritual ascent. (p. xii)

To that definition Van Ness (1999) added one terminological distinction crucial for the understanding of the text *Spirituality and the Secular Quest* (1996). He made clear “being religious is not a necessary condition for being spiritual” (p. 2).

If this shift in definition is truly becoming widely accepted, how is this trend manifesting in the broader society? If it is commonly understood that one can be spiritual without being religious, how is this understanding affecting traditional religious institutions? In a study of

statistics related to participation in traditional religion, Shorto (1997) found that membership in traditional churches had dropped since the late 1940's with denominations such as Episcopal and Methodist losing 38% of their membership. Sociologist Roof (1993), in his study of the "baby boomer" generation's spiritual journeys, found during the same time period traditional religious institutions declined, there was a rise in references to alternative forms of spirituality such as Eastern (especially transcendental meditation and yoga), Native American, twelve-step, feminist, Goddess, and earth-based. It seems that interest in spirituality had not decreased during this turbulent time period, it simply shifted in focus. This assumption regarding an ongoing interest in spirituality is supported by Shorto (1997) where he found that 96% of Americans report that they believe in God, 90% pray, 90% believe in heaven, and 93% of homes in America contain a Bible. These findings were similar to those reported by Adler (2005) from a survey of 1,004 Americans conducted by Beliefnet and *Newsweek* magazine. In this article, 79% described themselves as spiritual, yet only 45% reported attending weekly worship services, and 24% said they were spiritual, but not religious. Religious psychologists Zinnbauer, Pargament, and Scott (1999) draw the conclusion that "the present-day American religious and spiritual landscape reflects a decline in many traditional religious institutions, an increase in personalized and individualized forms of expression, and a culture of religious pluralism" (p. 8).

A study by religion professors, Marler and Hadaway (2002) compares the findings from their national survey of American Protestants with several national polls and previous studies done by Roof (1993, 2000) and Zinnbaur et al. (1997). They looked "at the role survey methodology plays in this zero-sum approach to the relationship between being religious and being spiritual" (p. 290). They concluded that "the most significant finding about the relationship between 'being religious' and 'being spiritual' is that most Americans see themselves as both"

(p. 297). Of course, the weakness of the Marler and Hadaway (2002) study is that it did not represent the opinions of any Americans who were not Protestant. According to the statistics provided by the Adler (2005) article, this would have left out 42% of the population.

Moving the debate outside of the realm of traditional religious trappings, Forman (2004) conducted a five year study for the Fetzer Institute. He was charged with the task “to research and describe the range and extent of the broad Grassroots Spirituality Movement – Buddhists, Neo-advaitan meditators, Esoteric Christians, Renewal Jews, Taoists, spiritual healers, the spirituality in business consultants, and so on” (p. 17). The study wanted to discover if this “loose gaggle of seekers could communicate or develop into something like a community across the great religious divides” (p. 18). Forman (2004) found what he called several patterns in the ways people used the term spirituality. The first set was what he called inner overtones relating to the inner being or body of the person. The second set of common terms emerging were related to wholeness or seeing things holistically. The third set of common terms referred to connectedness and being in relationship, and the final set found that people “used the term in conjunction with a sense of being guided in some not-strictly-rational way” (p. 47). Forman concluded from these commonalities that “spirituality seems to point to the intuitive, non-rational meditative side of ourselves, the side that strives for inner and outer connection and sense of wholeness” (p. 48).

While the previous studies reported findings related to the shift in group spiritual expression across the nation, other scholars have examined spirituality from an individual perspective. Psychologists Wink and Dillon (2000) conducted a study to examine spiritual development in adulthood using data collected over 40 years in an intergenerational study conducted at the University of California, Berkeley. The authors reviewed data from 130

individuals (written surveys) as well as listened to four taped interviews from each of the participants in the study to research the influence of age, cohort, and gender on the development of spirituality over a lifetime. Their findings included: spiritual development tends to occur in the second half of life, and that it is enhanced by being a “psychologically minded and unconventional individual who has also experienced discontinuity and adversity” (p. 92). They also discovered that early religious involvement tends to predispose individuals to further spiritual development. According to their data, women turned to spirituality earlier and proceeded at a faster rate than men. Differences in religious affiliations evidently had no affect on spiritual changes over a lifetime. The authors also found overall low levels of reported spirituality among study participants.

It was the last finding, low levels of reported spirituality overall, which seemed an apparent contradiction of the majority of the research literature. How could their cohort group report low levels of spirituality when Shorto (1997) reported 96% of Americans believe in God? Upon further examination it was a result of the researchers’ definition of what they considered spirituality. The authors used a more “discipline-oriented definition of spirituality that clarifies the content and boundaries of the construct” (Wink & Dillon, 2002, p. 80). They further explained that they favored a practice-oriented spirituality, one based on performance of intentional activities aimed at relating to the sacred, demanding a commitment, depth, and focus. As a definition for their study they reported:

In this framing, spiritual development demands not only an increase in the depth of a person’s awareness of, and search for, spiritual meaning over time, but it also requires an expanded and deeper commitment to engagement in actual spiritual practices. (p. 80)

An earlier, more famous psychologist, Abraham Maslow, presented another definition of spirituality in his *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences* (1964). In this work he wanted to demonstrate that spiritual values have naturalistic meaning, that they are not the exclusive possession of organized churches, that they do not need supernatural concepts to validate them, that they are well within the jurisdiction of a suitably enlarged science, and that, therefore they are the general responsibility of all mankind [sic]. (p. 33)

As evidenced in this passage, Maslow definitely did not seem to qualify who could be called spiritual. In fact, in an earlier work (1962), he states a belief in the universal need for spirituality when he stated, “the human being needs a framework of values, a philosophy of life, a religion or surrogate-religion to live by and understand by, in about the same sense he [sic] needs sunlight, calcium, or love” (p. 206).

Writing from a non-academic perspective, Rabbi Lerner (2000) offered this explanation of things spiritual. He understood spirit to be “the ultimate freedom of the universe, that which constantly allows us to transcend all that is and move toward that which can and should be” (p. 7). He did not think that a true explanation of spirit could be expressed in normal language, but the closest we could get would be through poetry or song.

Elkins et al. (1998), in an attempt to define and describe spirituality, reviewed the work of many who had written on the topic (Buber, 1970; Dewey, 1934; Frankl, 1963; James, 1961; Jung, 1938; Maslow, 1964, 1970) and reported that “none of the writers had provided a clear, comprehensive definition of spirituality” (p. 9). In further investigation Elkins et al. narrowed and refined the search for definition to nine major components of spirituality: transcendent dimension, meaning and purpose in life, mission in life, sacredness of life, material values, altruism, idealism, awareness of the tragic, and fruits of spirituality. Elkins then proceeded to use



these components in an attempt to design an instrument for measuring spirituality from a humanistic perspective.

Adult educators Fenwick, English, & Parsons (2001) entered the discussion of spiritual definition in an attempt to establish a clearer understanding of the concept of spirituality in order to “rein in the rather wild eclecticism currently prevailing” (p. 1) in literature. Their purpose was to develop a theoretical framework for comparing and analyzing the explosion of spiritually related literature available. Upon review and discussion they arrived at what they considered the eight dimensions of spirituality: life and death, soul and self, cosmology, knowledge or the nature of truth, the way or spiritual journey, the focus or purpose of spiritual seeking, the practices of spirituality, and the responses to spiritual pursuits. In an attempt to clarify the definition of spirituality existing within the field of adult education, a study was recently conducted by Courtenay and Milton (2004) which identified three common understandings: a sense of connectedness, a search for meaning, and an awareness of a transcendent force.

Upon the comparison of all these previous attempts to define the concept of spirituality, there seem to be only two points of agreement. Spirituality is an inner dimension of the human being and involves the belief in transcendence or greater power. These two concepts have been intensely studied by religious scholars through the centuries. The inner dimension of the human being has also been explored by philosophers and psychologists.

That inner being can be viewed as self or identity, and has been a topic of interest since the beginning of time. The question, “Who am I?” rings through the ages with philosophers from every civilization offering ideas. In 70 B.C. Aristotle began his inquiry into what he called the science of being, and set in progress an ongoing debate concerning the different ways of being. Descartes (1596-1650), a French philosopher, proposed a cognitive understanding of being,

commonly stated as “I think therefore I am.” About a hundred years later, British empiricist, David Hume (1711-1776) proposed the bundle theory which said that individuals are just a bundle of experiences and because we cannot discover by introspection the supposed unity that ties these bundles of experiences together, the “I” or identity does not exist. German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) presented the idea there were two “worlds” operating simultaneously; the world of appearances and properties that we perceive (the world of phenomenon), and the world of things as they are in themselves, as their essences (the world of noumenon) that we cannot perceive. Kant argued that there would be both a phenomenal self that we could perceive as well as a noumenal self that would remain unknown to us.

Erik Erikson (1902-1994), an American psychologist, gave us the theory of psychosocial development in which he said that humans experience eight distinct stages of development whereby the personality or identity is formed by the impact of society, history, and culture upon the individual. He tells us that:

[I]dentity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, ....at its best it is a process of increasing differentiation, and it becomes ever more inclusive as the individual grows aware of a widening circle of others significant to him, from the maternal person to “mankind.” (Erikson, 1968, p. 19)

Ogilvy (1981), former philosophy professor, now social researcher and corporate consultant, presents the mental image of identity or the formation of self as moving out in concentric circles. It begins with inward exploration, moving out into concentric spheres of family, society, state, world, and beyond. “Each of the self’s identifications further defines its way of being in the world. And each of the self’s identifications with parts of its world make it

vulnerable to redefinition as parts of its world undergo change” (p. 499). To stabilize this constant redefinition of self, spirituality seems to be the outer ring of the developmental circles.

In Ogilvy’s examination of this last ring of identity, which he called religion or the quest for eternal truths, he made the observation that record numbers of Americans were turning toward a “more direct experience of the sacred” which he called “the new mysticism” (p. 499). He saw this as moving from an epistemology of belief mediated by institutions toward an epistemology of experience. He considered this to be an historic shift which was changing the shape of relations to the divine, and he warned that this time of transition might breed fanaticism which could result in “new crusades, inquisitions, and religious wars” (p. 499). This 1981 prediction, sadly, seems to be right on target as daily newscasts remind us of present conflicts around the globe which seemed to be fueled by religious extremists. However, Ogilvy (1981) offered this note of optimistic challenge for those involved in this chaotic time of transition:

[P]art of the phenomenon may cause alarm but part reflects an important coming to terms with the spiritual dimensions of human existence. To ignore that dimension is to be less than fully human; to inflate the spiritual dimension into fanaticism is to pervert the religious impulse. We cannot use a blanket criticism of the new mysticism to hide us from the difficult task of steering an even course between the two extremities of ignoring and perverting our spiritual life. (p. 499)

It does appear from this quick review of how some scholars through the ages have interpreted the concept of self or identity that this inner dimension of humans examined by philosophers and psychologists is integrally related to the discussion of how we now define spirituality as it applies to organizational leadership.

While debate regarding the definition of spirituality seems to be endless, it is evident that both scholars and popular authors have moved beyond tracking down a perfect definition into either a promotion or criticism of the inclusion of spirituality in the practice of secular leadership. Emmons and Paloutzian (2003) in their chapter in the *Annual Review of Psychology* make the point that while “achieving some degree of definitional clarity [regarding spirituality and religion] is desirable, [it is] not necessarily essential for scientific progress and the establishment of a cumulative knowledge base” (p. 382). Since this study is proposed as a way to add to that knowledge base, it is therefore, important to move on in our search. If authors have already begun to promote or criticize a spiritually influenced leadership, on what knowledge are they basing their recommendations? It is time to discover what empirical research has been done to establish the reliability of the claims being made.

#### The Intersection of Leadership and Spirituality in Research

One of the first empirical studies to examine any aspect of leadership and spirituality was from the field of business management and conducted by Mitroff and Denton (1999b). The authors initiated the study because they were concerned that while leadership literature was promoting spirituality in the workplace, there were no actual empirical studies which substantiated the claims being made. Therefore, their study was designed to examine how leaders in corporate America were actually dealing with the issue of spirituality. Mitroff and Denton interviewed 32 senior executives and received survey feedback from 113 other senior human resource executives. They found that executives and managers differentiated between religion and spirituality. The study participants defined spirituality as “the basic feeling of being connected with one’s complete self, others, and the entire universe” (Mitroff & Denton, 1999b, p. 83), and saw possibilities for it being incorporated into the workplace without offending or

causing acrimony. More traditional aspects of religion, however, were considered a highly inappropriate form of expression and topic in the workplace. The authors found that presently corporations “seek to manage the cares and concerns of the soul by separating it from other realms, by walling it off as strictly as they can” (Mitroff & Denton, 1999a, p. 5). The authors concluded from the data collected in interviews with high level managers that:

[Organizations which] identify more strongly with spirituality... have employees who (1) are less fearful of their organizations, (2) are far less likely to compromise their beliefs and values in the workplace, (3) perceive their organizations as significantly more profitable, and (4) report that they can bring significantly more of their complete selves to work, specifically their creativity and intelligence. (p. iv)

Mitroff and Denton (1999b) reviewed five distinct models for fostering spirituality in the workplace for those leaders who were interested in implementing spiritually inclusive practices. Their goal was to discover those models which would not offend or seek to proselytize the workforce. The authors concluded that all five of the models reviewed rated only in the elementary stage of development, and “would need major overhauls” before any could be recommended.

Another dimension of leadership and spirituality was explored in a study conducted by management researcher Delbecq (1999). He asked Silicon Valley executives about the sources of their inner strength and wisdom which informed their leadership. He found that those who viewed their leadership role as a spiritual vocation or calling found a sense of vitality and purpose in their leadership journey. These individuals also spoke of an integration or wholeness where the private life of spirit did not have to be segregated from the public life of work. The executives explained that their spiritual beliefs gave them the courage to survive with dignity the

special challenges of executive leadership. They also saw spirituality as the integrative force which helped them to perform the role of business executive as a form of service to others.

In a recent doctoral study in leadership education, Hartsfield (2003) examined the underlying internal forces at work in the transformational leader. Hartsfield stated that “while the impact of transformational leadership on individuals and organizations is clearly supported by research, the internal dynamics that cause a leader to act in a transformational manner are not as well understood” (p. 13). Hartsfield made the case that spirituality, emotional intelligence, and self efficacy can be conceptually related to the behaviors indicative of the four I’s (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) provided by transformational leaders. Therefore, he considered these three internal dynamics as possible predictor variables in identifying transformational leaders. His research was designed to study the interrelations among the three predictor variables, spirituality, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy. Analysis of his data indicated emotional intelligence to be the strongest predictor variable, followed by self-efficacy, and then spirituality.

Another study on transformational leadership and spirituality was conducted by Jacobsen (1994). In a Delphi study 22 transformational leaders reported that spirituality played a critical role in their leadership. Jacobsen found that: “This group of transformational leaders, which was very diverse in terms of organizational setting, geography, background and gender, shared a common belief that spirituality lies at the heart of their activity” (p. 93). He concluded that transformational leadership is directly linked to the leader’s spirituality.

When examining research literature in the field of adult education, my results were the same as Tisdell’s (2000) who reported that “spirituality has been given little attention in mainstream academic adult education” (p. 308). Fenwick and Lange (1998) did a review of

literature in Human Resources Development (HRD) literature reporting that existing works had an emphasis on individual needs and organizational development but cited no empirical work in the field of adult education related to spirituality and leadership. Tisdell's (2000) study was designed not as an examination of leadership, but to explore how spirituality influenced the motivations or practices of sixteen female adult educators who worked in the area of emancipatory education. She discovered five themes of spiritual experience common among the educators: a re-membling of past spiritual understandings, an understanding of spirituality as interconnectedness, an understanding that a higher power facilitates healing, and a belief that spirituality as a way of life requires inner reflection and outward social action.

Groen (2001) studied five adult educators to discover what they considered were spiritual dimensions of the workplace. She found that one of the key components of a spiritually-infused workplace was that people had a sense of vocation about their work. This finding echoes one of the responses made by executives in Delbecq's (1999) research. The executives interviewed in that study felt their leadership role was a vocation or calling which gave them purpose in their practice of leadership. Groen (2001) also noted that the workplace culture in these organizations encouraged creativity, risk taking, and fair wages.

These two studies provided interesting insight into the phenomenon of spirituality as it has been addressed within adult education, with both investigators very representative of their particular subfield of adult education. Groen (2001) teaches in the field of HROD which gave her ample opportunity to hear early discussion and theory about spiritually influenced leadership as it swirled in related fields such as business and management. Tisdell (2000), with her educational background in theology as well as her passion for emancipatory education, represents another area within the field. She could be more closely identified with spiritually influenced leaders so

important to the founding of our profession. Yeaxlee (1925), Knowles (1962), Kelly (1970), and Elias (1986) all traced the development of adult education and reported on individual educators who were inspired by religious ideals. In fact, Yeaxlee (1925), in his book *Spiritual Values in Adult Education*, stated that he believed education to be a spiritual activity. English, Fenwick, and Parsons (2003) also acknowledged that “Spirituality has long been part of, and the motivation for, adult education and training practice. Some of the most significant social movements in adult education began with a spiritual impulse” (p. 11). Tisdell’s (2000) study reaffirmed that for those working in the field of emancipatory adult education, spirituality is still very much a motivating influence in their professional life.

### Summary

The literature reviewed on leadership, spirituality, and the intersection of these two concepts in and outside the field of adult education shows that there has been as yet no conclusive or substantiated theory of spiritually influenced leadership. There has been some progress made, however, in identifying many of the factors which influence the practice of leadership in general. The earliest studies examined who a leader was (traits), what a leader did (behaviors), and where leadership took place (contexts). When researchers began to delineate between transactional and transformational leadership, the possibility of a moral component of leadership was introduced. From these studies of transformational and charismatic leaders there developed an interest in examining the role spirituality might play in the complex leadership relationship. While some leadership and management scholars (Bolman & Deal, 2001; Conger, 1994) have theorized and offered ideas about the importance of spiritual leadership in management, there have been very few empirical studies, and the studies that do exist provide few findings that allow us to make substantive conclusions about the role of spirituality in



leadership. This is even more noticeable in the field of adult education. While adult education scholars acknowledge the importance of leadership to the field, and the obvious connection of leadership and religion in the motivation of some of our most noteworthy leaders of the past, there has been no study as yet discovered examining the role of spirituality in the practice of leadership within the chaotic educational environments of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This study was conducted as a way to provide detailed and well documented empirical research into the phenomenon of spirituality in leadership as it presently exists in a variety of adult education professions. From the accumulative wisdom and rich descriptions of daily leadership experiences provided by the peer nominated, highly regarded leaders who participated in this study, I have been able to add to the base of leadership knowledge by discovering commonalities of definition, understanding, and practice from a diverse sample of individuals. These commonalities provide a view of the phenomenological essence of spiritually influenced leadership, and based on this I offer recommendations for practice and further research. I feel this study can serve as one of the seminal pieces in the emerging research area whose aim is to more fully understand of how one's spirituality can and does play a role in the practice of adult education leadership.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of spirituality in the practice of adult education leaders. The research questions which guided this study were:

1. How do adult education leaders perceive and describe their experiences of spirituality?
2. How do adult education leaders perceive and describe their experiences of a spiritually influenced practice of leadership?
3. How do adult education leaders describe their style of leadership?

As discovered in the review of literature, leadership and spirituality are ambiguous and evolving concepts. Previous emphasis on scientific, positivist worldviews provided little support for research to investigate so ephemeral a topic as spirituality. Very little empirical research exists regarding the role spirituality plays in the practice of leadership. Therefore, employing the exploratory inductive strategies of qualitative research seemed to be the best way of uncovering meanings of previously unexamined experiences in leadership practice. This methodology led to a more holistic understanding of spiritually influenced leadership from the personal, contextual perspective of those adult education leaders who experience it.

This chapter will describe the methodology used. It is organized in the following sections: Design of the Study, Sample Selection, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Validity and Reliability, Researcher Assumptions and Biases, and Summary.

### Design of the Study

Gathering information concerning the understanding a leader has of his/her spirituality requires a research design with great flexibility and maximum researcher-participant interaction. Seeking participants' descriptions of exactly how spirituality impacts the role of a leader within an organization also mandates in depth communication. According to Merriam and Simpson (2000), "if you want to understand a phenomenon, uncover the meaning a situation has for those involved, or delineate process...then a qualitative design would be most appropriate" (p. 99).

Qualitative research is not concerned with prediction, distribution, or variance as is quantitative research. It focuses on the essence and interpretation of processes. Qualitative research attempts to find out how people make meaning or interpret a phenomenon with the key philosophical assumption being that reality is constructed by individuals in interaction with their social worlds. The practice of leadership within an organization is very much a social process, but Conger (1994) warned that engaging in this research on spirituality within organizations would be difficult. He wrote, "Spirituality, like leadership, is a very hard concept to pin down. These are probably two of the vaguest words you can find in our language, and when you put them together you get something even vaguer" (p. 27). Attempting to ferret out new understanding related to the intersection of these two extremely vague concepts demanded a research method that recognized the limitations of language. In Merriam and Simpson's (2000) description of inquiry methods, phenomenology is described as one that acknowledges language as "an insufficient basis for studying phenomena: too many dimensions of life and experience cannot be captured by language" (p. 90).

But how does the use of phenomenological methods escape the confines of language? Researchers who use this method say that it deepens the level of consciousness of both the

researcher and participant “showing how complex meanings are built out of simple units of direct experience” (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 90). “Phenomenology asks for the very nature of a phenomenon, for that which makes a some-‘thing’ what it is – and without which it could not be what it is” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 10). A further explanation of this qualitative method is offered by Crotty (1998) who says:

Phenomenology suggests that, if we lay aside, as best we can, the prevailing understandings of those phenomena and revisit our immediate experience of them, possibilities for new meaning emerge for us or we witness at least an authentication and enhancement of former meaning. (p. 78)

All qualitative research is grounded in phenomenology, a philosophical movement based on the work of Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl, a 19<sup>th</sup> century German philosopher and mathematician. Disagreeing with the mind/body duality proposed earlier by Descartes (1596-1650) which separated the act and the object of thinking, Husserl argued that the two must be considered together (Husserl, 1931). His philosophy explored experience. He called all the things of which one is aware, *phenomena*. His phenomena included not only natural objects, but also values, moods, desires, and feelings. Therefore, phenomenology “became a program for a systematic investigation of the content of consciousness” (Stewart & Mickunas, 1974, p. 23).

While there are many views on exactly what constitutes a phenomenological study (Creswell, 1998; Husserl, 1967; Lincoln, 1990; Moustakas, 1994), Patton (2002) sees all of these perspectives as having a common focus

on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning. This requires methodologically, carefully, and thoroughly capturing and describing how people experience some

phenomenon – how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it to others. (p. 104)

To begin a qualitative inquiry influenced by phenomenological methods one collects data. Phenomenological data is the conscious experience of phenomena which includes:

both the acts – such as thinking, believing, perceiving – and the things to which these acts are related – such as ideas or material objects. Experience is thus “intentional,” that is, directed upon some object.... The basic method for this type of research is “seeing” or “intuiting” or “reflecting” upon one’s experiences. (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 91)

Husserl’s development of phenomenology as a method of philosophical inquiry stressed the importance of the examination and suspension of all assumptions about the nature of any reality. He gave us three terms to describe this process: epoche, reduction, and bracketing.

Moustakas (1994) provides a good explanation of epoche:

Epoche is a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things.... the phenomena are revisited, visually, naively, in a wide-open sense, from the vantage point of pure or transcendental ego. (p. 33)

Epoche demands a change in the researcher’s attitude. It asks one to become aware of personal worldview, assumptions, and prejudices regarding the phenomena under investigation, and demands that the researcher, to the best of his/her ability set these assumptions aside during the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

After epoche, the second part of the Husserl’s process is phenomenological reduction. This involves what Husserl (1931) called “bracketing.” In bracketing, the researcher scrutinizes the phenomena outside the setting in which it occurred. It is taken apart, defined, and analyzed.

According to Moustakas (1994) and Patton (2002) this analysis process can be broken down even further. The researcher is encouraged to horizontalize data by spreading all data out for a close examination, considering each element as equally important. The researcher then begins to reduce the existing data. Anything that seems irrelevant, redundant, or overlapping is deleted. What remains can be identified as invariant themes and these can be minutely examined using techniques such as imaginative variation which asks the researcher to see the object from differing views, and by breaking themes into textural and structural elements.

In summary, a phenomenological qualitative inquiry begins with a paradigm shift which focuses the researcher's attention upon personal assumptions and biases regarding the phenomena under investigation. With acknowledged biases set aside, the researcher collects data involving lived experiences of the specific phenomena. The data should include rich description of thoughts, feelings, and sensory detail. The researcher reduces the data by seeking commonalities or invariant themes which can be synthesized into a recreation of the essence of the phenomena being studied.

### Sample Selection

Because the goal of this phenomenological research was to examine the role of spirituality in the practice of leadership, a purposeful sample was chosen which provided the depth of description and information needed to provide enough data for a thorough exploration of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002, Van Manen, 1990). There are several different strategies for selecting a purposeful sample. The two most appropriate for this study were criterion and maximum variation sampling. Criterion sampling allowed me to choose participants who met "some predetermined criterion of importance" (Patton, p. 238). Of course, Moustakas

(1994) reminds the phenomenological researcher of the most basic criteria for participant selection:

the research participant has experienced the phenomenon, is intensely interested in understanding its nature and meanings, is willing to participate in a lengthy interview and (perhaps a follow-up interview), grants the investigator the right to tape-record,...and publish the data in a dissertation. (p. 107)

To apply these guidelines to my study I had to locate a set of possible participants who were identified by peers and coworkers as reputational leaders within an adult education setting, who acknowledged their practice of leadership was influenced by spirituality, who were interested in understanding more about the relationship of spirituality and leadership, and who were willing to participate in the study. To provide the richest description of spiritually influenced leadership practice, I added another criterion for participant selection. Previous spirituality studies (Fowler, 1981; Wink & Dillon, 2002) indicated that spiritual understanding is accumulated over a lifetime, and is more readily reported by individuals in the second half of adult life. Therefore, the probability of collecting a more descriptive and complete data set will be higher if participants are at least 35 years of age. Therefore, the purposeful sample was selected based on the following criteria:

1. Participants were identified as reputational leaders within an adult education setting.
2. Participants acknowledged that spirituality played a role in their practice of leadership.
3. Participants were 35 years of age or older.

Because the field of adult education spans a broad spectrum of careers, it was also important to incorporate a maximum variation in the purposeful sampling. Maximum variation sampling increases the heterogeneity in small, non-random samples. For this reason I wanted to

interview two or more participants from each major subfield of adult education, Adult Literacy, Cooperative Extension, Higher Education/ Degree Programs, Human Resources and Organizational Development, and University Continuing Education. This strategy helped me discover the central ideas or themes that existed even with a great variation among participants. This was done to avoid “one-sidedness of representation of the topic” (Patton, 2002, p. 109).

For this study I began the sample selection process with a list of recommended possible participants which had been suggested to me by classmates and professors in adult education graduate courses as well as by practicing adult educators. I had asked them to identify individuals within their particular subfield whom they considered outstanding leaders whose spirituality might play a role in the way they practiced leadership. I clarified that being a “leader” was not synonymous with being an administrator. While some of the participants might be administrators, they could just as easily be individuals who were readily acknowledged by coworkers as leaders within their area of expertise. I also asked that the participants recommended be at least 35 years of age. After collecting recommendations, I categorized possible participants by adult education subfields, by gender, by ethnicity, and by religious affiliation in order to collate the richest possible data set with the widest margin of diversity.

In the pilot stage of the study, I decided to work with only four participants. I contacted one educator from four of the career categories. After meeting with each of the four and explaining the purpose and parameters of the study, they all agreed to participate. From that point, I not only used the previous list of possible participants, but also employed a snowballing or chain sampling approach (Patton, 2002) by asking those I interviewed to make recommendations of other possible participants from their subfield.



After the pilot study I contacted sixteen more potential participants by email with an informational letter which outlined the purpose of the study, criteria for selection, as well as explained all the interview procedures and expectations. I wanted self selection to be the key criterion, for in a phenomenological study it is vital to have only those individuals who are deeply interested in the phenomenon under investigation. From the sixteen individuals contacted, eleven more participants over the age of 35 who were recognized as leaders within their chosen adult education profession and who willingly acknowledged their spirituality as playing a role in their practice of leadership became a part of the study. After conducting Berry's interview, however, I discovered that she was 32, not 35 years of age, but the description she provided was so rich and full of insight, I decided to keep her within the study. Therefore, the number of participants interviewed before arriving at a point of saturation was 15.

#### Data Collection

According to Wolcott (2001) there are three major research activities involved in data collection. He calls these activities experiencing, enquiring, and examining. Patton (2002) labeled these three as participant observation, interviewing, and archival research. When planning the data collection stage of this qualitative study, I included a form of all three of these methods in order to produce a more reliable and trustworthy study. According to Creswell and Miller (2000), this combination of information from a variety of sources "provides corroborating evidence, (p. 127)" and makes the narrative account more valid because the researcher does not rely on just a single incident or source of data.

#### *Participant Observation*

While lengthy worksite participant observation can prove helpful in many qualitative studies, the possibility of observing overt, easily documented, spiritually-influenced leadership

behavior in any specified time of visitation seemed unlikely. Therefore, participant observation involving participants in a leader/follower interaction was limited to field notes recording interactions if coworkers happened to appear in and around the time of the interview. This opportunity for observation only occurred with four of the participants. I did, however, closely observe each participant during the interview to record demeanor, expression, and emotion displayed during the interview, especially in relation to their understanding of spirituality.

### *Interviewing*

The most used data collection technique by researchers in adult education is the interview (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Merriam (1998) tells us that “interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them. It is also necessary to interview when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate” (p. 72). Patton also stresses the value of the interview in qualitative research:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe... [such as] feelings, thoughts, and intentions.... We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (1990, p. 278)

Further instruction from these research scholars states that this entrance into another's perspective is best achieved through the use of informal, conversational interviews rather than from interviews conducted in a regimented fashion (Merriam, 1991; Patton, 2002). Therefore, I conducted semi-structured interviews of 1 to 3 hours in length with 15 adult education leaders to gather insights related to the role of spirituality in their practice of leadership. I used an interview guide (see Appendix A) simply as a reminder of topics I needed to introduce, but it did not

mandate the order or progression of interviews. Flexibility and openness to the insights provided by participants was vital for establishing the rapport needed in this study. I did, however, use the interview guide for another purpose.

Weibust and Thomas (1994) observed that some people find it difficult to put spiritual beliefs into words. They explained this problem as “where one attempts to use the mind and verbal expression to discuss the data of transcendelia” (p. 9). In recognition of this possible problem of articulation, prior to the interview each participant was allowed to review the interview guide. I asked each participant to reflect upon these questions until they felt comfortable with the topics and ready to discuss them.

To prepare for my arrival, I asked each participant to select an interview site conducive to audio recording where they would be uninterrupted and feel comfortable to talk freely. In the spirit of a focused phenomenological interview, upon arriving at the interview site (and after set-up of equipment), I briefly explained the interview process. I included a quiet time before the interview to be used by both the participant and myself for blocking out extraneous thoughts, and for focusing upon the phenomenon of spiritual leadership. Because so many of the interviews (12 of the 15) were conducted at their worksites, I felt this was an important step in the bracketing process because it encouraged the participants to consciously remove themselves from the office turmoil and fully concentrate on the coming interview. I then guided the participants into a comfortable, relaxed conversation with the goal of collecting rich description of their perceptions and experiences. I asked that they might (if they felt comfortable in doing so) avoid eye contact with me so as to encourage inward reflection. I wanted their responses to be almost a personal musing without any thought to what my reaction might be. This procedure proved to be quite effective for some, but others needed eye contact in order to relax and converse freely. I adapted

my interview style before or even during the interview in order to encourage a more open discussion. Thirty hours of interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

### *Archival Research or Documentation*

To strengthen the study and provide data triangulation, I looked for physical documentation of the participants' spirituality. This might include books, articles, videos, speeches the participants had written or read, music or lyrics composed or enjoyed, poetry, or art work important to them. Documents such as these can be a useful source of information because, unlike human participants, there is not a possibility that this information will change in reaction to the researcher (Whitt, 1991). The most common physical documents observed were books of a spiritual nature with six participants having these. There was also a poem, a film, sculpture, artwork, and music. Since twelve of the fifteen interviews were conducted in the offices of participants, I also made a point of closely observing personal space within that setting for any items possibly connected to spirituality. This proved to be a rich source of physical documentation. There was a poster size photograph of Gandhi, framed spiritual writings, books on spiritual topics, artwork, angel collections, sculpture, spiritually inspired codes of conduct posted on walls, a prayer rug, and ceramics depicting spiritual characters. Only three offices contained no physical evidence of spiritual influence and the occupants of two of those had just moved into a new office.

Another form of physical documentation was my own research journal in which I recorded thoughts, speculations, interpretation of events surrounding interviews, and any other pertinent data which could prove helpful. This journal was part audio, part paper. I audio-taped my personal epoche and pertinent information related to interviews just conducted, and wrote reflective pieces on various stages of the data collection and analysis process. This served two

purposes. First, listening to tapes or rereading the journal helped me to examine my assumptions and presuppositions regarding the topic of spiritually influenced leadership. Second, the research journal served as a timeline of data collection and a reminder of exactly how, when, and why key decisions were made.

### Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis takes massive amounts of raw data and transforms this into reliable, usable, and valid findings. This is accomplished by analyzing data inductively. “Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis” (Patton, 1990, p. 390). Patton (2002) states that while there is no exact recipe for conducting data analysis it involves “reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivia from significance, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal” (p. 432).

In qualitative research the process of analyzing data begins simultaneously with the collection process because the researcher is the primary instrument for accomplishing both processes. This complete involvement of the researcher offers the flexibility of making adjustments or refocusing the data collection procedures to include emerging concepts. This flexibility and adaptability comes with the added responsibility of consciously observing and reporting exactly what those analytical procedures entailed and how they impacted the data collection process.

The data for this study was analyzed using procedures suggested for the analysis of phenomenological research. These procedures include epoche, phenomenological reduction

(achieved through bracketing and horizontalization), applying imaginative variation, and finally synthesis.

The first stage of applying a phenomenological perspective is called epoche. Moustakas (1994) says epoche is a “clearing of the mind, space, and time...entering a pure internal place (p. 86). As Moustakas (1994) pointed out, this required sustained attention and concentration upon the data collected. To arrive at this desired state of epoche, I stored and analyzed data only in my office at our mountain home. This was a place of quiet retreat with only me, the computer, my charts, the poster boards, and later, my wall of invariant themes. To become more fully immersed in the data, I personally transcribed all but one of the interviews. This allowed me to juxtapose field notes and personal observations regarding ideas mentioned into the text of the transcripts.

The next step of analysis was phenomenological reduction. Patton (2002) states that this involves the process where the “the researcher ‘brackets out’ the world, and presuppositions to identify the data in pure form, uncontaminated by extraneous intrusions” (p. 485). This “bracketing” is accomplished by dissecting the transcribed interviews into key phrases and statements that directly relate to the phenomenon in question. This takes away the surrounding conversation found within the interview, and allows the researcher to interpret the meanings of these phrases as if reading a text. My way of achieving this step involved charting the interviews with full text on one side of the page, and meaningful phrases copied to the other side. The phrases could then be broken down further by highlighting key words or concepts (See Appendix B). The reduction process can also include a follow-up interview with a participant if necessary for clarification or deeper understanding of a particular phrase or idea presented originally. I made five phone calls and sent two emails during this process to clarify sections of the

interviews I did not fully understand. In each case, participants responded immediately with added information. This reduction phase also made me aware that the first three interviews conducted did not contain enough information about a question which emerged as an important concept to explore in later interviews. Since this became an important part of the study, I rescheduled and conducted three follow up interviews with these leaders to ensure equal representation of all participants' perceptions.

After the data was charted, it was time for horizontalizing. This simply means to spread the data out for examination with all perspectives having equal weight (Patton, 2002). This made it possible for me to organize data into clusters or groupings of similar meanings searching for commonalities. I was fortunate to have help in this stage of the process from qualitative research classmates who joined me in coding, clustering, and comparing notes on about half of the transcripts. It was truly beneficial to have others trained in the process to aid in reducing the mass of data at this stage, and to locate valuable insights I might have overlooked had I worked alone. They also served as a sounding board as I began to collapse clusters of data into themes.

Taking the commonalities or invariant themes discovered, I tackled a process Moustakas (1994) calls imaginative variation. He sees this as seeking "possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals" (p. 98). This is a process similar to walking around a large object or building to get a view of all the differing angles in order to get an expanded or enhanced picture of the phenomenon. Moving away from my charts and horizontalized boards of data, I reread all the transcripts, then read each one reversing the order, from the end of the interview to the beginning. From this I found connections I had overlooked. For example, I noticed toward the end of the interview that Caesar described his own style of leadership as "leading from the back of the room." This was the exact

phrase he had used in the beginning of the interview to describe how Myles Horton led in workshops he had attended. From this, I realized that while he had been trained by many wonderful leaders, Horton seemed to be the one whose style he attempted to pattern.

For the four participants whose first language was not English, I again listened to the audio tapes searching for interesting or unusual ways they worded key concepts. It was from this examination I realized how important it was to more fully explain Brahma's perception of religion. My Western view regarding this word had forced him to adapt, to some extent, his answer to the way I posed the question. In another section of the interview, he had quietly provided his perception of Hinduism as not a form of religion as Westerners understand the concept, but as "a philosophy of being." Imaginative variation forced me to look beyond the surface interpretation based on my Western assumptions to uncover important nuance and differing cultural philosophies.

The next step of analysis was to use clustered themes and meanings to develop textural descriptions of the experience of spirituality and spiritually influenced leadership. This is a description of the experience that doesn't contain the experience itself, just the abstraction of the experience. It has content and illustration, but not the essence. To do this part of the analysis I took the charted interviews and read each to discover commonalities in descriptions or emerging themes. For example, in the participants' descriptions of a deeply spiritual event I immediately saw repeated references to birth experiences. Therefore, I went through each interview and pulled out all phrases related to birth. I charted these first for the individual and then across data sets of three (See Appendix C). I added to the charts each time a new participant related a birth experience. At the end of data collection I placed the four descriptions of birth events on one poster board for easy comparison. I then pulled every related phrase into one outline of textural



description of the experience, also including any field notes which described participant behavior as they spoke of these experiences (See Appendix D). Being a visual learner, this was especially helpful to me for I had everything in one location without having to page back and forth between printed charts. I could see a descriptive collage and understand the texture or get the “feel” of how participants perceived this phenomenon.

After examining the textural description, you go back once again to the structural description, the bare bones of the experience, where the “phenomenologist looks beneath the affect inherent in the experience to deeper meanings for the individuals who, together, make up the group” (Patton, 2002, p. 486). For me, this stage of examining structural description (See Appendix D) made me realize that the four birth of children experiences could be grouped with the two Christian “rebirth” experiences and the “rebirth” of an extended family through reunion for the structural bones of the experiences were essentially the same

The final step, synthesis (See Appendix D), involved putting textural and structural components back together to arrive at a more complete explanation of the essence of the experience. It was in this stage of examining textural and structural description where I felt to some degree that I got “beyond the words” on some segments of data. Again to use the birth experiences as an example, as I began to reassemble the textural and structural descriptions I began to see an interesting connection between spirituality and deep emotional response. As I tracked commonalities across the data sets I realized that there was a strong thread of commonality in my field notes describing the bodily reactions of these individuals as they spoke of their deeply spiritual moment (See Appendix D). Almost all participants had gotten tears in their eyes, choked up, cleared their throat, or found it difficult to speak at some point during this section of the interview. The phenomenological synthesis of this one theme would have to be

that a deeply spiritual event was an emotionally overwhelming moment of perceived connection between themselves, another person, and a transcendent being or entity which in some way illuminated an event of life and death importance which would affect their “way of being” in the world from that moment on. Since my research was focused not so much on the extreme experiences of spirituality, but with the “daily-ness” of the phenomenon as it relates to professional leadership, I did not pursue this particular avenue of inquiry beyond this point, but it would make for truly interesting research for another time.

Of course, this process was not complete until my interpretation of the synthesis of the entire study was presented to the participants for their review and input. I emailed (See Appendix E) each participant a first draft copy of chapter four, and received a response from 13 of the 15 participants. Their comments, interpretations, and constructive criticisms were right on target, very much appreciated, and contributed greatly to this study.

For example, Caesar’s response made me realize I needed to reread my biases and assumptions section. He candidly called me to task about over representing the ideas of some participants, while possibly neglecting others. After a brief moment of denial and defensiveness I faced the uncomfortable realization that he was right. While I had made every attempt to include the ideas of each participant, there were a few voices dominating the discussion. Even with my detailed epoche and attempt to produce an ideal phenomenological interview environment, my biases and assumptions had still slipped up to bite me in the analysis stage of the process. The words I understood best, the thoughts of those whose ideas were similar to mine were more represented than those provided by participants very different from myself. That forced me to pull away from the coded charts to once again reread the transcripts seeking thoughts and ideas I

had missed in my earlier analysis. I recognized the problem some participants had with putting their thoughts of spirituality into words, especially those whose first language was not English.

This re-listening also made me more fully understand why DV's interview was shorter than most. There were some concepts which he simply did not feel comfortable discussing. When probed to provide phrases describing his ideas about God he told me, "I don't have a physical description...we don't have that in Islam. Nobody will even try to discuss that because that's a scary place to go to....very, very forbidden in our religion for we are in no position to do that." This re-examination also allowed me to discover a richness in DV's descriptions of feeling connected to the universe which encouraged me to investigate that theme more thoroughly throughout the data. Therefore, a direct result of Caesar's participant response to the member check was my becoming intensely aware of equal representation of voices, and a review of data which resulted in a more nuanced, hopefully less biased analysis.

In the member check letter I had also asked the participants to form conclusions from the findings and make recommendations for future research. The responses confirmed many of my ideas, offered new perspectives on others, and definitely provided me with many years of research proposals. I was especially intrigued with Brahma's thoughts regarding the investigation of the importance of early religious training in the future development of spiritually influenced leaders.

### Validity and Reliability

It is important for researchers to design a study whose findings are believable and can be trusted. Establishing internal validity is accomplished when the researcher's findings accurately and comprehensively capture the phenomenon under investigation, but this validity "must be assessed in terms of interpreting the investigator's experience, rather than in terms of reality

itself (which can never be grasped)” (Merriam, 1991, p. 167). Creswell and Miller (2000) say that this validation of qualitative research is routinely accomplished by procedures such as “member checking, triangulation, thick description, peer reviews, and external audits” (p. 124), and suggest that researchers employ one or more of these.

As mentioned earlier, one way internal validity was addressed in this study was by including a series of member checks. This allowed me to view the data collected not only with a researcher’s eye, but through the lens of participants (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I contacted five participants immediately after transcribing interviews to clarify phrases or sections I did not fully understand. I also conducted a second interview with three participants to gather essential data I had missed in the first interview. In the synthesis stage of the analytical process I emailed tentative findings to all participants to allow them to react and provide comments on whether I had accurately represented and interpreted their experiences. This was done to guard against what Fine (1998) calls “othering” participants by inadvertently projecting the researcher’s personal beliefs and experiences onto those of the participants thereby totally missing their unique perspectives. While I initially did this simply because it was part of recommended practices, I learned quickly that member checks are vital to a quality research project, providing fresh insight to data that may have become too familiar to the researcher. Member checks also proved to me that my participants were true “co-researchers” willing to take time from their busy schedules not just for a one time interview, but to read, reflect, and respond to questions of analysis and interpretation of findings.

External validity refers mainly to the issue of generalizability of research findings. To what extent can the study’s findings be generalized or transferred? Qualitative researchers find this concept of generalizability problematic, of limited use, and perhaps inappropriate (Merriam,

1991; Patton, 1990). Spirituality-influenced leadership is a complex and personally interpreted construct of human consciousness which will make generalization to another setting very difficult. However, the detailed descriptions of experiences captured in the interviews and reported in chapter 4 should enable the reader or user of the research to determine the extent to which the findings can be applied to their settings.

Triangulation of data sources also supports the validity of this study for I collected data not only by interview, but through limited participant observation, as well as through the physical documentation of spirituality represented by objects within in the private office space of the participants.

The use of an audit trail provided by this chapter also serves as a way of providing reliability. Merriam tells us that we should include “how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (1998, p. 207). By keeping a research journal throughout the study and including a summary of my findings in this document, I have provided the reader with a way to examine researcher findings in order to make an informed evaluation about the credibility of the findings.

#### Researcher’s Assumptions and Bias

With the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis it is imperative for those who choose a qualitative method to identify personal assumptions and bias that could possibly have an impact upon the analysis and findings of the study. I embarked upon the study of the role of spirituality in the practice of leadership after 30 years of working in various positions of leadership within the field of adult education. Based upon personal experience, one of the primary assumptions made by this study is that leadership ability is learned and developed over a lifetime, and that leadership is not a genetic trait with which one is

born. While the nature/nurture debate continues to rage, the leadership literature reviewed in chapters one and two provides evidence that my assumption is credible and has been made by countless other leadership researchers. This assumption does not preclude a belief that some personality traits of an individual can play a significant role in the development of leadership skills.

As Tisdell and Tolliver (2001) recognize, there is a cultural dimension to spirituality and a spiritual dimension to culture. They see spirituality as a way we make meaning. If spirituality is truly a framework for meaning-making in our lives, it could serve as a very potent source of bias and assumption. Viewing the world through the lens of a white, middle-class female, born in the southern United States and raised in the Christian faith has provided me with a particular worldview and understanding of the phenomenon under study. In congruence with Tisdell's (2000) study on the spirituality of 16 female adult educators who taught for social change I, too, have moved beyond original religious training to explore a variety of spiritual traditions, and in turn have "re-membered" (Tisdell, 2000, p. 308) past and present spiritual teachings to arrive at a belief system more suited to my present condition and stage of life. This individual exploration has encouraged the acceptance of the diversity and wisdom of other religious traditions. Throughout the data collection and analysis process I tried to remain ever vigilant, attempting to never allow personal fascination with the topic to bias interviews or lead to an inappropriate interpretation of participant beliefs.

Another personal bias I had to bracket was one drilled into me from 30 years of teaching in the public education system of the United States. This was a wariness of overstepping the boundaries set by the First Amendment guarantee of religious freedom. Issues related to the separation of church and state are never far from the mind of any American educator who has

taught in systems where there are diverse religious beliefs. I had to overcome past training to become comfortable about questioning others in the workplace concerning spiritual beliefs.

### Summary

This chapter explained the methodological approach and specific details of an inquiry into the nature and scope of the role of spirituality in the practice of leadership within an adult education setting. Fifteen participants were purposefully selected from adult education leaders who practice in a variety of settings. Data was collected and simultaneously analyzed using phenomenological procedures with an emphasis on epoche, reduction and horizontalization, imaginative variation and synthesis. Throughout the process my purpose was to uncover thematic categories of spiritually influenced leadership experience which contributes to the building of leadership theory for the widely diverse discipline of adult education.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of spirituality in the practice of adult education leaders. The research questions guiding the study were:

1. How do adult education leaders perceive and describe their experience of spirituality?
2. How do adult education leaders perceive and describe their experiences of a spiritually-influenced practice of leadership?
3. How do adult education leaders describe their style of leadership?

This study employed a qualitative research design guided by phenomenological principles. I interviewed, observed, and documented physical evidence from the office space of fifteen adult education leaders who acknowledged that spirituality influenced their leadership. I then analyzed the data seeking commonalities of experience.

This chapter begins with a brief profile of each of the fifteen participants. These profiles are categorized alphabetically by pseudonym within the field of adult education they represent. Each participant chose his/her own pseudonym for use in the dissertation. The second part of the chapter reports the research findings, explained by supporting data from the interviews.

#### Participants

Fifteen spiritually influenced adult education leaders were interviewed for this study. In order to identify possible participants, recommendations were sought from adult education



professors and doctoral students at the University of Georgia, and from practicing educators working in a variety of adult education careers. In the study's pilot phase, a snowballing technique was also employed whereby participants were asked to make recommendations of other adult education leaders who could possibly add rich data to the set. I asked them to help me identify individuals who fit the following criteria:

1. Participants are identified as leaders working within an adult education setting.
2. Participants would acknowledge that spirituality plays a role in their practice of leadership.
3. Participants ideally would be 35 years of age or older (several previous studies on spiritual development suggest a deepening of spiritual understanding with aging).

From the list of individuals recommended, possible participants were categorized by career and contacted in a specific order to prevent over-representation in any one subfield of adult education as well as to give voice to the understandings of those diverse in race, gender, ethnicity, and spiritual traditions. As seen in Table 1, the participants ranged in age from 32 to 66 years of age. (I decided to include information provided by Berry although she turned out to be 3 years younger than previously reported and below the stated age parameter. Her data was rich, varied, and possibly indicated that the age range might not be so important as individual experience and maturity). The fifteen participants worked in 5 subfields within adult education: Adult Literacy, Cooperative Extension, Higher Education/Degree Programs, Human Resource and Organizational Development (HROD), and University Continuing Education (including Public Outreach and Community Engagement). There were 8 females and 7 males. Eight participants were Caucasian, 3 African American, 1 Hispanic, 1 Asian, 1 Arabic, and 1 Jewish. There was a variety of religious affiliations with 7 Protestants (2 Presbyterians, 2 Baptists, 1

Methodist, 1 Episcopal, 1 African Methodist Episcopal), 3 Catholics, 1 Jew, 1 Muslim, 1 Hindu/Buddhist, and 2 presently unaffiliated with any organized religion.

Table 1

*Participant Biographical Information*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Field of Adult Ed</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Religious Affiliation</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>
Dorothy	Adult Literacy	Female	40	Baptist	African American
Fico	Adult Literacy	Female	56	Catholic	Hispanic
Robin	Adult Literacy	Female	50	African Meth Episcopal	African American
Bill	Cooperative Extension	Male	42	Catholic	Caucasian
Bowman	Cooperative Extension	Male	48	Catholic	Caucasian
Frank	Cooperative Extension	Male	53	Presbyterian	Caucasian
Henrietta	Cooperative Extension	Female	46	Presbyterian	Caucasian
Brahma	Higher Ed. Degree Prog	Male	66	Hindu/Buddhist	Asian Indian
DV	Higher Ed. Degree Prog.	Male	41	Muslim	Arab Palestinian
Shequethia	Higher Ed. Degree Prog.	Female	45	Baptist	African American
Berry	HROD	Female	32	Episcopal	Caucasian
Vanessa	HROD	Female	56	No Affiliation	Caucasian
Caesar	University Continuing Ed.	Male	57	No Affiliation	Caucasian
Ellen	University Continuing Ed.	Female	51	Jewish	Jewish
Mike	University Continuing Ed.	Male	56	Methodist	Caucasian

*Dorothy*

The subfield of Adult Literacy is well represented by Dorothy who is a state administrator in the GED department of an Adult and Technical Education program in the southeastern United States. Providing leadership in a setting presently rife with staffing controversies and limited budget, Dorothy credits spirituality as being her anchor in troubled times. She has a framed version of the Serenity Prayer on her desk as a reminder of what is important when she has to make difficult leadership decisions.

Along with her job responsibilities and leadership in professional organizations, Dorothy is actively involved in her church community as well as enrolled in an Adult Education doctoral program. Dorothy is African American, 40 years of age, and single. She revealed during the interview that she grew up as the daughter of a Baptist minister fully immersed in the day to day life of a church. Although her family was Protestant Baptist, Dorothy told of growing up in a home which was open and accepting of all people regardless of religious affiliations. As an adult, she moved away from home, explored a variety of religions, but chose to remain involved in the Baptist denomination at a large church near her new home.

*Fico*

Fico is another leader in the field of Adult Literacy. She is an ebullient emissary for education in a low income section of a large metropolitan city in the southeastern United States. She provides classes in health education and cultural literacy for Hispanic immigrants. Fico's outstanding leadership ability is acknowledged by other educators in her field for she is repeatedly asked to travel statewide for conference presentations and for new employee trainings. She welcomes opportunities to share her expertise in designing and providing programming for this underserved population.

Fico is Hispanic, 56 years old, married, and the mother of two sons. She grew up in Puerto Rico where she was greatly influenced by her devout Catholic parents and the Catholic schools she attended. This religious upbringing was evident in her office setting for there was a small statue of the Holy Family tucked into a bookcase behind her desk. Although she is firmly rooted in the Catholic traditions “branded inside her brain,” Fico welcomes and cherishes friends from all faiths. In her words, “Hey, God is God! Religions are made by men.”

### *Robin*

Like Fico, Robin teaches in classrooms where many educators fear to tread. While some of her classes are presented at the local technical college for the Connection to Work program, Robin carries her health education message door to door in low income housing projects where she enrolls young mothers in workshops designed to teach them how to be responsible and informed parents. Robin is a respected leader among those who work in this program. In conference gatherings for her professional organization and for new employee trainings across the state, she is often called upon by her peers to share her philosophy and programming expertise through formal presentations and informal discussions.

Robin is African American, 50 years old, married, mother and proud grandmother. She was raised in the Baptist church but is presently an active member of the African Methodist Episcopal church she joined in order to be a part of the same church her husband attended. Robin’s office provided plenty of physical documentation of her spirituality. In her bookcase there was a King James Bible, a book of daily devotions, a teacher’s guide for Sunday school lessons, and a book explaining a healthy diet as described in biblical teachings. Robin’s faith is a very personal relationship with God. He is her protector in this job that she feels “is a ministry to

people.” She is very comfortable with simply demanding, “Alright Lord, just come in here and help me get this situation straight.”

### *Bill*

Bill is an adult educator working for a land grant university with major teaching and research responsibilities within the Cooperative Extension Service. He is recognized as a leader in his field of study across the Southeastern Region of the United States and he coordinates several interstate research projects. Bill’s leadership ability was also evinced by his selection as part of an international team of agricultural specialists offering educational assistance to a developing nation in Africa.

He is Caucasian, 42 years of age, married, and has 3 sons. Bill was raised in the Midwestern United States by devout Catholic parents, attended a Catholic elementary school, and remains actively involved in the Catholic Church. In his office surroundings, Bill feels that the African artifacts which he collected during his time of teaching in Zaire as well as the exhibited artwork of his children are reflections of the spiritual connections in his life.

### *Bowman*

Bowman has worked in the Cooperative Extension Service of a large university for over 25 years, working his way up through the ranks from an agricultural County Extension Agent, to District Agent, to State Specialist, to his present position as a statewide Program Leader. He also presently serves as national president of a professional organization and chairs several national educational committees as a result of this affiliation.

He is Caucasian, 48 years of age, married, and has one son. Bowman grew up in the southern United States, the son of a Baptist minister, who “just literally lived at church” throughout his childhood. In his mid-twenties, however, he re-evaluated his spiritual beliefs and

converted to the Catholic faith in which he is now actively involved. Bowman firmly stated that “I think there are things that spiritually can happen to you... there are experiences and people and religions... that... influence you to a great degree...and impact how you make decisions in a leadership role.” He also told me of using the framed, spiritually inspired code of behavior posted to the left of his desk as a daily reminder of how he should conduct himself in his role as an educational leader.

### *Frank*

Frank has worked for the Cooperative Extension Service of a large university for over twenty years and presently serves as an academic department head. He has held a variety of leadership positions from city councilman in his small town to his present role of president for a large national professional organization.

Frank is Caucasian, 53 years old, married, and the father of two daughters. He was raised in a small Midwestern town where he was actively involved in the Methodist church. He has lived in the southeastern United States for most of his career and presently chooses to be involved as an elder and youth leader in the small Presbyterian Church near his home. Frank told me that “in order to be a leader of some depth, of some long standing value, you’ve got to have a spiritual basis to do that leadership, not a religious basis necessarily, but a spiritual basis.”

### *Henrietta*

Henrietta is a doctoral student in Adult Education who works for the Cooperative Extension Service of a large university. While she has academic responsibility in Family and Consumer Science, she also leads a County Extension programming unit, and coordinates a large staff of professionals for a four county federal nutrition grant. Henrietta is actively involved in several professional organizations, having served as state president in one as well as a national

officer in another. A further testament to the leadership role she plays in the organization was her selection as part of a task force charged with redesigning Extension program delivery in her state.

Henrietta is Caucasian, 45 years of age, married, and has two sons. She was raised in a small Baptist Church, but after moving away to college she explored a variety of religious traditions, choosing eventually to become a member of the Presbyterian Church where she now actively serves as an elder. Henrietta also feels a spiritual tie to nature which was evidenced by the artwork displayed in her office. She identified these paintings, along with photos of her family and the collection of angels in her bookcase, as items which reminded her of her spirituality.

### *Brahma*

Representing adult educators in Higher Education/Degree Programs, Brahma is presently coordinator of research and professor at a large university. Throughout his long and distinguished career he has served in a variety of educational leadership roles such as head of an academic department and founder of an academic society.

Brahma is Asian Indian, 66 years of age, married, with children and grandchildren. While he has lived in the United States for most of his adult life, Brahma was born and raised in India by devout Hindu parents. He told of many wonderful opportunities for spiritual growth throughout his life including having heard Gandhi speak at a gathering as well as having met the Dalai Lama. Brahma says his present spiritual understanding is influenced by Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen, and Gandhian philosophy. (He has a large framed poster of Gandhi on his office wall.) Brahma told me that he has long aspired to be a servant leader to those in his department,

agreeing with a wise saying which he had posted on his office bulletin board, “A true leader has a servant’s heart.”

### *DV*

Another professional in the Higher Education/Degree Programs category was DV, an assistant professor at a midsize state university. He had previously worked in the Instructional Technology field as a trainer and instructional designer. His expertise and leadership in the corporate arena paved the way for his being hired to teach within a university setting. He is happy to be in America, a nation he calls “a country of second chances.” He enthusiastically embraces leadership opportunities in his new academic career by serving as a member of the University Senate, the Teaching Faculty Council, and other university committees. He is presently pursuing a doctoral degree to prepare him for further advancement in this profession.

DV is of Palestinian Arab origin, 41 years of age, married, and the father of two children. He was raised in a devout Muslim family and Islam remains the major spiritual influence in his life. This influence was manifested in his office setting by a beautiful wall hanging which, upon inspection, was actually an Islamic prayer rug. DV told me, “I see spirituality in two different venues. One venue is the worshipping part which is the relationship between you and God The other venue is...the philanthropist part where I want to be a good human being.”

### *Shequethia*

Also representing Higher Education/Degree Programs is Shequethia. Although she is now a student, earlier in her career she held positions of leadership in HROD and Religious Education. Her first position after college graduation was in a corporate setting. She left that work to attend seminary and eventually taught in an interdenominational Protestant seminary. Shequethia has also taught at a community college and served in an administrative position in a



very large Baptist church. She is presently a graduate assistant at a large university where she is completing her doctoral degree in Adult Education.

Shequethia is African American, 46 years of age, and single. She was raised in the Baptist faith, but during college and in her first years as a rising executive in a large corporation Shequethia explored other religions and spiritual philosophies. It was a traumatic spiritual encounter in a New York City park that gave Shequethia the “sweet peace” for which she’d searched, and called her into a profession of teaching and service.

### *Berry*

With a Master’s degree in Adult Education, Berry presently works within the Human Resources and Organizational Development (HROD) segment of the field. She is employed as a national training coordinator for new franchise owners in a large fast food corporation. She enjoys her position in an organization which is openly supportive of spirituality in the workplace and feels that God led her into this career path. Berry “wanted to be involved in leadership development, but I also wanted to work for a company whose values and ideals matched mine.”

Berry is Caucasian, 32 years of age, and single. She was raised by parents of different Protestant denominations (Episcopal and Baptist), and attended the churches of both. While she identifies strongly with the Episcopal Church, she is presently attending Bible studies in three churches of different Protestant denominations. For her, spirituality is “more of the fruits of the spirit...hope, joy, peace, and love.” She says spirituality is “more about the personal relationship between you and God.”

In her office setting, Berry’s abiding spiritual beliefs were evident in a framed wisdom plaque which said, “When God closes a door, He opens a window.” She also pointed out a statue

which depicted Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. This represented for her the ultimate idea of a servant leader.

### *Vanessa*

Vanessa is also an HROD educator who travels nationwide providing training and updates for franchise owners, working for a national funeral services company. She moved easily from a career in education into this profession because her father was a mortician, and she was raised in the day to day operation of the family business. She has served in a variety of state and national leadership roles in related professional organizations. The recognition of her expertise and national leadership role in the industry was apparent as she revealed during her interview that she had been called in to provide counseling for the families of the victims of 9/11 and to provide needed training for those in the funeral industry working on the demort (body recovery) team.

Vanessa is Caucasian, 57 years of age and divorced. Vanessa grew up in the Baptist church, but as an adult has facilitated funeral services in a wide variety of faith traditions. She credits this exposure with helping her develop a more inclusive perspective toward all religious seeking. While she is presently unaffiliated with any one religion, there were framed wisdom sayings from a variety of spiritual traditions on the walls and in bookcases around her home office. Vanessa also said she gained spiritual comfort from the large bank of windows providing her a wonderful view of the beautifully landscaped gardens beyond.

### *Caesar*

Caesar teaches in University Continuing Education. Although new to his present position, he has over 30 years of experience as an adult educator. He has held leadership positions in community settings with both program and management leadership. Committed to

social responsibility and service from an early age, Caesar augmented his postgraduate education by attending trainings and workshops taught by social justice icons Myles Horton, Paulo Freire, and Caesar Chavez. His accounts of these experiences added fascinating insight regarding the leadership styles of these historic social activists.

Caesar is a 57 year old Caucasian male who is married and the father of a son. Influenced by the Quaker, Catholic, and Protestant roots of his parents, Caesar also traveled extensively as a member of a military family which enabled him to study religions worldwide. He related an incident when an Episcopal priest once told him, “You know, it appears as if you’re comfortable with and enjoy almost any religion.” To which he replied, “Well, I do, because if you love religion, it’s like great art. Wouldn’t you want to collect all you could”?

#### *Ellen*

Ellen taught adults in a University Continuing Education setting by providing leadership education to community organizations. She had also served as director of a community leadership development program, president of an Arts Foundation, chairperson for a beautification organization, and an elected official for a large city.

Ellen is a 51 year old Jewish female. She was raised in the Jewish faith and remains actively involved in her synagogue while she is happily married to a man of the Baptist faith. Being raised in a minority faith in the largely Protestant southern United States, Ellen is very conscious of how important it is for leaders to be inclusive of all beliefs. She told me, “When you’re in a community setting, and you’ve got people who come from all different walks of life....to inject one religion over another says, ‘You don’t matter, you’re different, and it doesn’t matter what you think.’ I think you become invisible... and I have felt that...and I would never want anybody to feel invisible.”

The authors of the books in Ellen's professional library provided physical evidence of her support of a spiritually influenced practice. Ellen said her understanding of leadership had been greatly influenced by books written by Parker Palmer, Bill Grace, Posner and Kouzes, as well as Max DePree. She told me of loaning her personal collection of these books to coworkers who asked for leadership information or guidance.

### *Mike*

Mike also works with University Continuing Education in a Public Service/ Community Engagement position. He is the director of a prestigious leadership education institute where he coordinates the work of the faculty and provides leadership to programming design and implementation. He has held previous leadership roles in the military, the Cooperative Extension Service, and in private business.

Mike is Caucasian, 56 years old, and married with children. While he was influenced by the Presbyterian Church in his youth, Mike is now an active member of the United Methodist Church. He was an adult when he felt led to join this Protestant denomination, yet his dedication was such that he reported, "There was a time early in my spiritual life when I felt called to the ministry." He also said, "I can't really separate my secular experience from my spiritual experience because I am a spiritual being, and I try to lead from the heart. I have no hesitation in saying I am a born again, evangelical Christian and I believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. He is the center of my life."

Mike's interest in spiritually influenced leadership was very much in evidence in his office setting. His bookcase was filled with works by authors who openly acknowledge spirituality in their leadership practice, such as Henry Blackaby, Bolman and Deal, MacGregor Burns, Steven Covey, Robert Greenleaf, Kouzes and Posner, and John Maxwell.

### Overview of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of spirituality in the practice of adult education leaders. As can be seen in Table 2 on page 91, findings from this study are presented in three segments as they relate to the core research questions which guided the study.

The first set of findings helps us to understand how adult educators perceive and describe the term spirituality. As the meaning of words and concepts change through time and across cultures, it is important for us to establish what this term, spirituality, presently means to professionals in adult education. As Emmons and Paloutzian (2003) remind us, it is difficult to scientifically research a theory or trend unless there is at least “a minimum of consensus concerning the meaning of core constructs” (p. 381).

The second set of findings gives us an idea of how adult educators perceive and describe their experiences of a spiritually influenced leadership. These findings address the question of what is involved in this phenomenon, and how are the participants’ practices of leadership influenced by their spirituality?

The third set of findings indicates how the participants describe their particular style of leadership. This part of the study sought to discover if any styles of leadership (previously reviewed in Chapter 2) were reported as used by participants, and if so, were there particular styles common among spiritually influenced leaders?

Reviewing the data and findings from all three questions will provide further understanding regarding the role one’s spirituality plays in the practice of educational leadership. It can provide a window through which we can view how leaders within a variety of adult education subfields presently navigate the complex issues inherent in spiritually influenced practice.

Table 2

*Spirituality in the Practice of Adult Education Leaders*

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- I. Perceptions of Spirituality
    - A. The importance of definition
      - 1. Differing from, but related to religion
      - 2. Justification for workplace inclusion
    - B. Reflects individual identity
      - 1. Defines the self
      - 2. Provides an ethical framework
      - 3. Influenced by time and life events
      - 4. Involves a conscious choice
      - 5. Provides sense of calling to vocation and leadership
    - C. Sense of connectedness
      - 1. Connection with a Higher Power
      - 2. Connection with others
      - 3. Connection with nature
  - II. Role of Spirituality in the Practice of Leadership
    - A. Serves as resource in times of challenge
    - B. Shapes perception of power
    - C. Influences decision making
    - D. Impacts communication
  - III. Styles of Leadership
    - A. A diversity of leadership styles
    - B. Perception of spirituality influences leadership style

### Perceptions of Spirituality

The findings of the study which relate to the perception or definition of spirituality can be collapsed into three main sets of data. The first set relates to the understanding that the words “spirituality” and “religion” differ in meaning. The second set of findings show that participants perceive spirituality as the core of their personal identity. The third set of findings addresses the participants’ perception of spirituality as connectedness.

#### *The Importance of Definition*

How we define and perceive a concept determines how we understand and use it in everyday life. When there is a tacit or acknowledged agreement upon the exact meaning of commonly used terminology, members of a group are better able to communicate, and subsequently, can more efficiently achieve the goals of the organization. Since American English is such a fluid and ever changing language, misunderstandings can arise because of definitional differences. When adult educators discuss the issue of bringing one’s spirituality into the workplace, exactly what is being debated?

#### *Differing From, but Related to Religion*

Are the words “spirituality” and “religion” synonymous? For participants in this study, the answer was a qualified “no.” Although three of my participants did not differentiate in the definition of the two words, 12 of the 15 adult educators defined spirituality and religion as two distinct, yet interrelated concepts. When I asked participants to share with me what they thought when they heard the words “spirituality” and “religion,” the common understanding was that spirituality was better described as a deeply personal concept involving a search for identity and meaning while religion was more of a social construction, an institutional set of rules and regulations to govern behavior.

For example, Frank said, “Spirituality, to me, is a much more personal concept....[which helps] someone to understand their role in the greater scheme of things. Religion becomes an organizational or denominational kind of expression of spirituality.” Ellen presented these thoughts regarding religion and spirituality:

The two [spirituality and religion] are not one and the same. In Judaism, there’s so much ritual involved in the religion, but spirituality is something that transcends just the strict interpretation of religious literature or ritual. There’s more grace involved... there’s empathy for other people, there’s a feeling of nurturance, a commitment to service, those kinds of things that relate more to what my daily practices are in relationship to other people, to my community, and to my environment. That, to me, is more spiritual.

Bill said that religion can be “rote and dogmatic, but spirituality is deeper than that...it’s who you are and why you are here...and your relationship to God.” Brahma also provided a very illuminating description of the terms. For him spirituality is “more of a philosophical understanding of being,” while religion is “very ordered, confining, prescriptive, and is sometimes [used as] a method to instill fear.” Brahma further explains that religion “is a Western thought...not an Eastern thought....I don’t think there is anything like Hindu as a religion, but to convey Hindu thought it is cast in religion because that’s the order we understand.” Brahma reflected upon his early Hindu upbringing and confirms that religious training “is a good initial tool to get to the spirituality because in the first stages of life one is not that well informed or reflective. It is a tool to bring about that evening prayer or to practice that reflection even as brief as it might be in a ritualistic way.”

I repeatedly heard participants say that one did not have to be religious to be spiritual, or spiritual to be religious, similar to the comment made by Ellen who stated: “I think there are a lot



of people who are very spiritual that don't adhere to a particular religion," or as DV told me, "I think they [spirituality and religion] are totally separate. They have nothing to do with each other. You could have a spiritual person who has never been in a church or a mosque or a synagogue, and you could have a religious person who has no spirituality whatsoever."

Although 12 of the 15 deliberately made this distinction between the spiritual (personal) and the religious (organizational), other statements they made belied the total separation of the concepts. After rereading the transcripts it appears that participants perceived the concepts as differing, yet very much related. Bowman told me "our spirituality is quite often tied to our religion, probably integrally tied to it." For Ellen spirituality was "rooted in religion." DV believed, "There are some people who combine the two [spirituality and religion], and I think those are the best people out there." Henrietta believed that "Religion is the implementation of my spirituality." Fico stated, "Spirituality for me can happen without religion, but religion will help you nourish the spirituality within you." Brahma summarized his understanding of the interrelatedness of the two concepts when he said, "Both of these [spirituality and religion] have common aspirations to understand self, origin of self, and purpose of self."

The three participants who understood the terms religion and spirituality as interchangeable were members of more fundamentalist Protestant denominations. Mike was very adamant that for him "my spirituality and my religion are the same...that's my way of life." For Shequethia and Robin, the two concepts were also very much the same.

The common understandings from the majority of the participants, however, do show us that perceptions have changed in recent years. While once considered to be interchangeable, the word spirituality has become a concept, separate and distinct from perceptions of religion. However, the two words are still very much related for each participant used both terms to make

comparisons or contrasts to the other. Spirituality was either explained by its relationship to religion, such as Henrietta's seeing religion as the implementation of her personal spirituality, or Fico's understanding religion as a way to nourish her spirituality, or as part of a dichotomy, such as Caesar's understanding of spirituality as asking questions while religion provided only answers, or Frank's view that spirituality was a personal concept while religion was an organizational one.

### *Justification for Spirituality in the Workplace*

One of the first concerns of leadership scholars who investigate the phenomenon of spirituality in the workplace is how a leader's spirituality will affect relations within the organization. Respect for diverse cultural and religious views mandates that organizations remain sensitive to possible misuse of the spiritually influenced leadership behavior. Researchers must examine whether spiritually influenced leaders feel compelled to proselytize coworkers to their particular faith tradition or to exclude those coworkers who do not believe as they do. From reviewing participants' interviews in this study, it seems that making a definitional differentiation between the words spirituality and religion allows for the practice of bringing one's spirituality to work while saving specific religious rituals for one's private life.

Twelve of these participants, acknowledged by their peers as spiritually influenced leaders, were adamant in their support of the first amendment, saying that it was never appropriate for an educational leader to proselytize in the workplace for a particular religion. They were very conscious of being either a part of a public institution or working for diverse organizations. As Ellen stated, "I think to bring a particular religion into the workplace or a place like a school fails to recognize and honor that there are other individuals in the community who

practice something different than the predominant belief.” DV felt very strongly about this and told me:

We live in bad times where religion gives people an excuse to be narrow minded. If we let religion rule we will never get along because the hardest thing to give up, especially if you are a fundamentalist...the hardest thing to give up is your belief. But if we run our lives with spirituality where we have to be good to each other regardless of religion, then I think we are better off.

Vanessa shared this view, “We’re all individuals, we’re different...you just can’t dictate to people the way they should feel or believe.” Brahma told me, “Separation of church and state is an absolute prerequisite to a peaceful society because all that says is that people can have diverse points of view...but we govern ourselves based on our commonalities.”

Shequethia reported that a spiritually influenced leader need “not necessarily embrace the values of others, but have a greater respect for the values and beliefs that other people have.” Bowman put it this way, “I’m always quick to say that I think it is imperative that people of faith stay in leadership roles, but I also believe it is important that you never ever try to impose your own particular brand of religious faith on those that you lead.” Ellen, a practicing Jew in the largely Protestant South, said her past experiences made her try harder “not to ever marginalize anybody.” Henrietta stated, “I don’t think we have a God who would discriminate against anybody, therefore, I don’t want to discriminate against anybody. I think everybody has characteristics that are positive and worth sharing with their coworkers, their community, and their world.”

Three of the participants felt a sense of ambiguity on the issue of separation of church and state. They felt that organizations could only benefit from leaders practicing from a morally

grounded, religious perspective. Of course, Bowman may have summed up the true issue involved when he made this observation:

In our part of the world, where it is a predominantly still a Christian society, we say we need a lot more church in state, but we want *our* church in state.... if we really got what we wanted, there would be a lot of different churches and we would not feel the same about that!

He went on to say he supported bringing one's spirituality into the workplace, but not particular religious practices. He told me, "What we should do is make sure that we never as leaders express ourselves in a way that is threatening to some, while welcoming to anyone else... or make it seem that our own personal views are that of the larger organization that we serve

#### *Reflects Individual Identity*

Thirteen of the fifteen study participants offered perceptions of spirituality involving personal identity. They saw spirituality as integral to self identification and to their formation of an ethical framework. They also believed that this spiritually influenced identity evolved over time, involved a conscious choice of spiritual beliefs, and provided a sense of calling or vocation to their life's work.

#### *Defines the Self*

Repeatedly participants made mention of spirituality being "who I am." As Henrietta explained, "Spirituality is like the inner being who makes you who you are." Shequethia told me that spirituality is all "those things crucial to who I am." Vanessa echoed that sentiment by stating, "I believe my spirituality is who I am." Bill told me that spirituality "was who you are." Fico described a time of deep reflection on spirituality. She told me of her struggle to understand life and her place in the greater scheme of things. Her end result was arriving at a deeper

understanding of her personal identity. She told me, “I found myself, just me.” For Frank, too, spirituality represented a search for identity and meaning in his life. It was “why I am here, my reason for being.”

Brahma offered a visual explanation of his search for identity and meaning as he pointed to a dry erase bulletin board he keeps on the wall of his office. On this board he has written wisdom sayings over a period of several years that have meaning for him, inspire him, and reflect his world view. He pointed toward these as he shared his views about spirituality and said, “It may not be who I am, but who I am aspiring to be.”

Berry’s definition included the idea of spirituality being her individual identity and went on to credit the Higher Power for having created that identity. She firmly declared “I am what God says I am.” Mike seemed to also understand his identity in this way and summarized it by saying “I am a Christian. I am first and foremost a Christian.”

#### *Provides an Ethical Framework*

All the study participants felt that their identity as spiritually influenced leaders involved their having an ethical framework provided by their spiritual beliefs. These values or morals instilled by individual study or religious instruction guided their practice of leadership. Mike makes this clear when he points out, “My ethical framework is based on things that are spiritually discerned, and things that come out of my spiritual life.” Bowman stated emphatically, “I think for leaders it is imperative that they have a set of guiding principles based on their spirituality...that they are not value neutral.” He believed his spirit provided “those values we hold deep inside” which guide and direct our practice of leadership. He gave me an example of why this was so important in the day to day operation of his office when he shared a challenging

incident in which an irate constituent harassed him for months attempting to convince him to overturn a disciplinary decision made by a member of his staff. Bowman said,

I had no doubt that being confident in some fundamental things of the heart, knowing what is right and fair and good made me never quit looking for the good in that person...and I'm convinced that that's part of my spirituality...that I'll always look for the good in other people even when they are mistreating me. I never ever lost my temper with her... and I think that's part of my spirituality too. Kindness is not only effective, it's just the right thing to do.

Bill also believed his leadership was guided by a spiritually influenced set of ethics and he told me, "I can't separate spirituality from my ethics and morals and character." Berry went even further to say that "true leadership requires spirituality...for no one can be a leader without a set of values and beliefs, without hope or vision." Frank said that ethical leadership was important to him and that he tried "to understand the depth of spirituality that causes me to think through things from various points of view and consider the impact it's going to have on lots of other people instead of just a self centered impact."

#### *Influenced by Time and Life Events*

Another strong commonality that emerged concerning perceptions of spirituality related to the participants' sense of spiritual identity as something that develops or evolves over time. Each believed that their present understanding had come as a result of spiritual exploration and deliberate reflection in adulthood. All fifteen participants stated unequivocally that their spiritual identity had changed and matured from the time they had been 25 years of age until the present day. Many seemed rueful; others chuckled over how disinterested they had been in matters related to spirituality around the age of 25. Fico told me "When you are 25 you think you can

conquer the world! Spiritually...well, sometimes you don't believe too much." Bill echoed Fico's sentiment when he said, "To be honest with you I don't think I thought about spirituality at 25...I was getting my Master's and worried about having fun." Ellen stated "You know, I don't know that I was actually sitting there thinking about spirituality at 25."

DV did not think he was very spiritual at age 25 because he "was young and had a lot of planning ahead." At this age he felt he was more dependent, less responsible for the well being of others, and did not "run his own life." Shequethia told of a time immediately after college when spirituality was the last thing on her mind. She told of being in a fast track executive career, traveling around the United States, earning promotions and "doing quite well financially." She said "I was thinking that money and status and titles would somehow define me and give me that peace and joy I was searching for." Dorothy had a similar experience, and told me that at age 25:

My focus wasn't on spirituality. I was more focused on employment issues and relationship issues. Even if someone had tried to talk to me about it I probably would have heard it, but not listened. At that time I don't think I was ready to grow. At what point did these leaders, who are now recognized as spiritually influenced, begin to consider spirituality and make it such a part of their identity? Vanessa stated "I believe your life experiences impact your spirituality."

Dorothy gave further explanation when she said,

As life happens....and believe me, it does...there are certain situations where I found myself... regardless of my intellectual acumen...I couldn't fix it. It was bigger than me. I can remember saying one time, "Whew, I guess now I'm gonna pray."

For six of the participants the death of a loved one triggered a time a spiritual awareness. For Bowman, the death of his father brought a time of deep introspection. He told me, “I think my heart and my spirituality really changed a lot beginning about that time.” For Vanessa a deeply spiritual moment of awareness came at the death of a friend, for Caesar it was the death of his father, for Robin it was the death of her mother, for Berry it was her own near death experience, and for Dorothy it was the death of slave ancestors. Dorothy made an interesting comment as she reflected on her visit to the slave castles on the Western coast of Africa. She told of her unusual and extremely graphic flashback to the deaths of thousands of slaves. “I was with a tour group, but it was like I got stuck. I couldn’t move. I remember thinking ‘Gosh...this is me...but it wasn’t me.’”

For four of the participants their presence at the birth of their children and the consequent reflection upon the new responsibilities of parenthood was described as a deeply spiritual experience. DV said, “When I saw my son come out....I remember for a few seconds I just was out in space...I always believed there was God, but this was just a big proof. It was just amazing!” That same sentiment was echoed by Frank who said:

I was present for both of those [births], and you understand in those situations that there is a whole lot more going on here than I can understand. After the excitement and the awe, we talked about our responsibility to the girls...what this was going to mean long term.

Henrietta told me “It [childbirth] really kind of makes you grow up inside and decide who you are going to be as a person...and who you want your children to be. I think this makes you deeply reflect on what life is all about.” Therefore, for 10 of the fifteen participants, birth and death experiences were triggers for deepening spiritual identity.



Another four participants described events which could be considered rebirth experiences and served as moments that strengthened their spiritual identity. For Brahma it was a family reunion he planned to help his far flung family recognize kinship and rediscover a family identity. He wanted to reinstate “that deep sense of belonging to each other.” Brahma said “It took a lot of awakening of the individuals in the family to get down to those experiences....get down to recognizing who they were.”

In Shequethia’s words her “defining moment” of deepening spirituality came in her late twenties. She was on emergency leave due to a health crisis brought on by the stress and the pressures of her executive position. During this time she came to the realization that

The money wasn’t satisfying me. The status wasn’t satisfying me. I had been searching for meaning in my life and I was at a crisis of belief....I was seeking value. I was searching for my own identity.

It was at that moment that she fell to her knees and told God, “Whatever you want, I will do it!” She then reported that “suddenly this sweet peace just totally came over my life,” and she felt led to leave her executive position. Shequethia “ended up in seminary...not for a career in ministry, but to know more about God and His purpose and plan for my life.”

#### *Involves a Conscious Choice*

But was it just the experiencing of traumatic life events that set in motion the creation of a spiritually influenced leader? That did not seem to be the case. All people survive times of difficulty and stress, yet not all become spiritually influenced by those experiences. On rereading the interviews, three common behaviors began to emerge as a pattern. These were: times of deep reflection regarding either stressful life events or the role of spirituality in their lives or both, an examination of their spiritual beliefs as compared to those of others; and, consequently, a

conscious choice being made in regard to what spiritual beliefs would guide both their personal and professional lives.

When speaking of her spirituality, Dorothy said “I’ve kind of evolved. I didn’t realize what was happening at the time...until I began reflecting back.” Bowman also told me of just that kind of reflection occurring in his life.

My Dad’s death made me really back up, and maybe strengthened my faith. Because I guess from being so close to it, I had never had a lot of opportunities to back up and look at it. There never was a decision to make about whether or not we were going to church, or whether or not we were going to be active, it was just a given...and so my Dad’s death made me kind of back up.

Caesar told of his father’s death as well and spoke of his reflection afterwards on “who I am and what he had to do with who I am, what our relationship was.” He went on to say that “a strong spiritual moment is one in which you are grappling with a confluence of nature, the physical world and what happens there, and then this third thing which is about ‘Is there a higher purpose, or more than these two dimensions’...and I believe there is.”

Fico’s report of a deeply spiritual time of examination added another insight related to reflection – having sufficient time to ponder. She told of an accident which forced her to become bedridden for three months. She said “I had always been so energetic, always doing something, but now I could do nothing...It makes you think about your life.” During that time she found:

You stop even reading. You don’t watch TV. You are with yourself. And in here [pointing to her heart], I found myself. It was just me... and me...and nobody else. You see things so differently. That was the deepest time. I touched my spirituality, my soul at that time.

Frank was another participant who spoke about the importance of making time for spiritual examination and much needed reflection. He made a comment that was similar in thought to the one Fico made. He made the observation,

I think people are so stretched and stressed with just making do... that there is not as much time as there used to be just to reflect on things such as, “Is this all there is...why am I here...what is my reason for being...or what can I do to make the world a better place”?

These spiritual examinations and times of deep reflection brought about deliberate choices concerning spiritual identity in the lives of 13 of the 15 participants. Shequethia described the process leading up to a time of decision very well when she told me:

I had been raised in a Christian home, but when I left home I started looking at other religions. I was involved in New Age, Buddhism, the Nation of Islam...you name it. I was seeking value, seeking truth, searching for my own identity - not what my parents had said, or what others had told me.

Berry echoed this questioning regarding her choice of spiritual identity when she told of asking herself, “What is it I believe? Why am I going to this church...and do I believe what they believe?” For eight participants this exploration of spiritual belief brought them to a decision to become active in a faith tradition other than the one in which they were raised. For example, Bowman changed from Baptist to Catholic, Henrietta from Baptist to Presbyterian, Robin from Baptist to American Methodist Episcopal, Frank from Methodist to Presbyterian, and Mike from Presbyterian to Methodist. Brahma added Buddhist spiritual understanding to his Hindu philosophy of being. Berry felt comfortable adding the spiritual teachings of other Protestant denominations to her Episcopal allegiance, and Caesar “collected” wisdom from a broad

spectrum of religions from Christianity to Buddhism. While Fico, Shequethia, Dorothy, and Ellen examined the beliefs of others, they chose to remain active in the religions of their youth, or as Fico said, the one that was “branded in her brain.” Bill, a Catholic, and DV, a Muslim, made no mention of ever having considered a switch to another faith.

This spiritual examination seemed to bring about a greater understanding and acceptance of persons of other religions. Bowman said “because of that change in religions I have no doubt my spirituality became more global...in my acceptance of difference... than I had been up to that time.” Fico said “I accept all religions as long as they teach everyone to be good to one another.” For Frank, his exploration and consequent change of religious affiliation led him to teach a Sunday School class for teenagers in an effort to “convey to those young people not only what our denomination feels is important, but just a general process of helping them to discover the world of religion or spirituality in their lives.”

For thirteen of the participants their identity as a leader who is spiritually influenced was not something that “just happened” or was developed out of habit, or due to the expectations of those around them. Challenging life events caused them to question their identity, their world view. This, in turn triggered an interest in spiritual matters, and required times of reflection. From this, they each made a personal choice regarding a spiritual identity or framework of belief.

*Provides Sense of Calling to Vocation and Leadership*

Educational leadership for these participants was not just a job, but a vocation. Ten of these leaders mentioned this role seemed to come as a result of a “calling” emanating from a Higher Power. They spoke of their work in religious terms referring to it as “a calling,” or “a mission,” sometimes as “a ministry.” Spirituality seemed to inspire them to perform this role. As Vanessa succinctly states:

I felt I was called to do something else, something bigger, to lead in my profession. I could have stayed at my family's business and would have been a great funeral director, served a lot of families, but I felt like I had another mission...on a national stage... where I could impact professionals who could then impact a lot more families.

Shequethia remembered a time of reflection when she was "thinking about God and how He had led me to where I was at that particular point in my professional life [when she had accepted a leadership role]." Robin also described a dedication to her role as an educational leader in a disadvantaged community and stated, "I feel my job is a ministry to these people." Henrietta believed "my mission has to do with the people I work with." Berry felt that it was not just lucky happenstance she had been selected for a national leadership position in her company but that "God had literally picked me up and put me here in this job." I also found it interesting that along with the common thread of somehow feeling called to educational leadership, two of the participants, Mike and Caesar, had originally felt called into religious ministry, but felt they had ended up better suited to their present vocation as adult education leaders.

### *Sense of Connectedness*

Spirituality was also explained or described in terms of connection. All participants understood spirituality as a relationship with a Higher Power and a sense of connection to other people. Some also mentioned feeling connected to nature or to the world around us.

### *Connection with a Higher Power*

Having a relationship with a Higher Power was definitely the foremost connection mentioned by the study participants. There were references to this relationship in each of the transcripts. As DV told me, "Spirituality is the relationship between you and God." A variety of names were given to this Higher Being: God, Allah, Supreme Being, Lord, Almighty, Jesus

Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, a Presence, an Unction, but most seemed to agree with Fico who said, “There is only one God whether He is called Allah, Papa Deo, God...it’s the same.” Another way to view this was as Dorothy believed, “I think God is just so diverse. He can be all things to everybody...or She can.”

By analyzing field notes which described participant behaviors during interviews, I realized this connection to a Higher Being described so vividly by participants could be emotionally overwhelming. Almost without exception, during the portion of the interview in which they were asked to describe a deeply spiritual event, the participants lost emotional control during the telling of the story. Whether it was a narration of death, birth, or spiritual rebirth, eyes welled with tears, throats had to be cleared, and some participants coughed. Complexions blotched, bodies shifted away from me, and heads were dropped. Several simply stopped talking long enough to regain control, while a few wept unashamedly. The emotional behavior did not seem to be gender related for there were as many men who cried as there were women. Berry even asked, “Does everybody cry when they talk about this, or is it just me?” This connection in the deepest moments of described spirituality did not seem to be a cognitive quest for connection as much as an intuitive, somatic, serendipitous experience.

While some perceive spirituality in terms of their relationship to a distant all powerful God, eleven of these participants felt the presence of a God who resided within them. Shequethia called it “that inner voice that is within us.” Berry believed it was “your inner spirit,” and Henrietta referred to as “that inner being...the spirit that is in you.” Mike spoke of having “an awareness of a spiritual force within me” and also talking of having the “infilling of the Holy Spirit.” For Frank it was “an abiding Presence” influencing his thoughts and actions, while DV reported it as “the stuff inside of you...the philanthropist part which makes you want to be a

good human being.” Fico also spoke of spirituality as “something inside of you” that makes you “feel something special for people.” Bowman believed his spirit provided “those values we hold deep inside” which guide and direct our practice of leadership. Vanessa spoke of this inner action as “the inner strength within an individual.... the inner Spirit that keeps them going.”

### *Connection with Others*

All fifteen participants stated that their perception of spirituality included a connection to other people. Mike saw all others as “sacred persons and worthy of my respect.” Henrietta said “my mission on this earth has to do with the people that I interact with all throughout my life, and the spiritual nature of that is in....how do *I* live *my* life so I can make *their* life better.” For Shequethia a part of spirituality was “how I engage in relations to others.” For Dorothy this followed closely her connection to God. She told me, “Spirituality is how you relate to the Higher Being and His creation...nurturing that relationship with other members within that creation.” Ellen also stated that spirituality is having “empathy for other people...there’s a feeling of nurturance, there’s a commitment to service.” Berry said, “We are called to be in fellowship with one another. I don’t think you can be isolated and have spiritual growth.” For Robin spirituality was being “open to other people’s needs,” and for Bowman that spiritual connection meant “being kind to one another and having love.” Vanessa made the point that, for her, spirituality meant “how we take on the responsibility of educating and developing other people.” DV explained his spiritual connection to others in this way:

I hope everybody understands that being a good human is more important than being a good religious person because we don’t live alone. It’s important to be good.....It is important to be good...and by being spiritual you have things in life leading you to say “I gotta be good in this situation....I cannot harm anyone.

### *Connection with Nature*

For seven participants this connection also extended to all living things. Brahma tells of a deeply spiritual experience which takes place in a beautiful retreat and said, “The environment is very much a part of it.” Ellen believed she has “a relationship with my natural environment because of its relationship to us as human beings and how we relate to the natural world.”

DV stated that the beauty of the natural world helps him to enjoy his life, and that he’s “glad to be a part of this whole universe. I think of all this as spiritual experiences.” He gave the most lyrical description of his connection to nature when he said,

I tell you one thing that to me is really amazing... a clear night when I can see the stars. That is just the most amazing thing....all these thousands and thousands of stars and planets and everything out there. I just stand there saying, “God, this is just amazing, as big as our world is, and it is still a very tiny piece of dust compared to everything we have out there.”

Vanessa related to nature in a similar way. She pointed to the flowing creek outside her home, to the trees, and spoke of gazing at the night sky. She told me, “that’s what spirituality is too....how you relate to your surroundings.” Bowman spoke of an environmental education program important in his department and stated, “I think you can be very spiritual about the earth.” Henrietta found that seeking communion with God is especially easy for her when she is outdoors, closer to the beauty of nature. She said “I think you can be spiritual in the woods, by a stream, or out riding horses...whatever way you have to kind of reflect upon how you feel about yourself and your world, and how you get in sync with God.” For Caesar the word “connection” described everything spiritual. He believed “spirituality is the absolute denial of self and the ultimate connection to all other things.”



### Role of Spirituality in the Practice of Leadership

When participants responded to the questions concerning how spirituality influenced their practice of leadership four themes emerged. One theme related to spirituality as a resource for the leader in times of challenge. The second theme concerned how spirituality shaped the way they viewed power in the leader/follower relationship. Another theme described how spirituality influenced decision making, and the final theme involved the impact of spirituality on the leaders' communication.

#### *Serves as a Resource in Times of Leadership Challenge*

Leadership can be a lonely and humbling experience leaving one feeling vulnerable and inadequate to meet the demands of the role. Where does one turn to find aid in times of trial? All fifteen study participants viewed their spirituality as a resource. They felt their connection to a Higher Power prepared and sustained them as they faced the difficulties of the leadership role. In fact, Vanessa did not believe it possible to practice leadership effectively without a spiritual foundation. She said, "How can you be a great leader in your profession unless you have spirituality, that inner strength that keeps you going"? This concept of a leader's ability to persevere coming as a result of spiritual influence was echoed by nine of the participants. Henrietta said, "Spirituality can help you get through the hard times," as she proceeded to tell me of how her spirituality had helped her navigate a long term work assignment where there was a difficult situation involving a jealous coworker who constantly tried to sabotage her programming because she had gotten a raise and he had not. Rather than retaliate and act in a hurtful manner toward him, she "prayed about it," forgave him, and worked to mend their work relationship.

Robin also told me of designing a challenging new educational program for Hispanic mothers. Her coworkers said it would never work because she [Robin] could not speak Spanish. Robin worked doggedly to find innovative teaching techniques and recruit volunteer translators in order to carry her educational message where it was so badly needed. While her class was slow to catch on, it finally became a model effort. She smiled as she told me, “You need spirituality to be able to help the ones you’re working with. If you don’t have it, you’ll stop reaching out after a few rejections. Spirituality makes you keep trying.”

Dorothy also spoke of a leadership situation demanding perseverance in which she had to work with a dishonest and dictatorial supervisor. She told of constantly having to circumvent unfair decisions and mandates she was expected to enforce on the teachers within her department. “I know I survived only through my spirituality. Otherwise, I would have totally thrown in the towel.” Berry was another who told of the importance of perseverance inspired by spirituality. She said, “The people who are spiritual leaders, the ones that I admire, are the ones who endure the challenges and the criticism in order to bring change....and to have change you have to have leaders....and that definitely requires endurance.”

Along with encouraging perseverance, spirituality provided other benefits to the leader. Henrietta stated that her spirituality prevented her professional life from being “a wild roller coaster ride” because she had “that spiritual part to cling to” which made her more “calm” and “well grounded.” Bowman believed that spirituality provided stability and anchored the leader in times of crisis. He continued his explanation by saying he believed this benefit came as a result of his earlier spiritual training having “taken root.” He said:

In moments of intense pressure, I don’t think I could just call it up [spiritual guidance] if it weren’t deep inside of me....I think in spirituality...if you aren’t in touch with it, and

it's not deeply rooted in you...I just don't think you can go through a crisis and use it as part of your stability.

Berry also saw her spirituality as a valuable resource. She told me because she was able to turn to God in times of difficulty she found "that hope, that inspiration, and that motivation that really only comes to a spiritual leader."

Five participants said spirituality comforted or reassured them and gave them confidence in their ability to carry out job responsibilities. Frank reported that "the comfort spirituality provides to me is a private thing when I sit back at the end of the day I hope I have behaved in ways that are consistent with my spirituality." Robin's spirituality "gave her peace of mind" about leadership decisions, helped her when she felt depressed, and gave her a feeling of being "protected" in the life threatening situations she sometimes faced in her job.

For Dorothy it was a matter of reassurance. She said, "periodically [through prayer and meditation] I'll get reassurance," regarding her ability to handle job challenges for which otherwise she would have felt "totally unprepared." Berry also told me about the courage her spirituality gave her when facing situations at work that would have overwhelmed her if she had not had spiritual grounding. She stated, "I'm comforted in the fact that God is certainly not going to ask me to do something that He has not prepared me for." Vanessa also expressed the feeling that her deepening spirituality "made me more confident" when she had to present programs for large national audiences, something she feels she could never have done earlier in her career and before she felt anchored in her spiritual understanding.

### *Shapes Perception of Power*

The way in which an individual perceives or understands the inherent power granted to a leader defines an organizational culture. Whether it is an egalitarian learning organization made

up of coworkers sharing responsibilities or a regimented hierarchy of employees who fulfill strictly regulated job descriptions, the leader's use of power affects how each employee performs. According to the participants in this study, spirituality very much influences the way one views the appropriate use of power in the leadership relationship.

Ten of the fifteen participants understood the leader's power to be different from the traditional, authoritarian view of managing the behavior of coworkers. Frank made the point that the role of educational leader required a different type of leadership. He said, "I think the jobs people have in an information society don't lend themselves to an authoritarian type of relationship." Many of the participants saw power as something to be shared or even given away. Mike told me:

I started my career in leadership in the authoritative or power model of leadership [in the military], but my thirty something years of experience... and really my spiritual life... has taught me that leadership is really about serving others, not controlling others. It's not about power. It's about giving away power.

Brahma had a very similar outlook for he stated "a true leader has a servant's heart." He told me that Gandhi's teachings concerning the value of all work had deeply influenced him. For Brahma, the leader is no more important than the follower, and should step out to lead only by request of those who need his particular expertise. His view of the use of the leader's power was made clear when he said, "The word boss is very offensive. It has all those connotations that I don't relate to."

For Ellen spiritually influenced leadership is "not the 'I'm your supervisor and you are my subordinate' type of thing....but just recognizing potential and leadership in other people and being able to share that leadership with them." Caesar said the type of leadership he "gravitated

toward” had a “service perspective” and “combined spirituality with service and political and social change.”

Fico also said that for her leadership “was not about the power...but to help people make a change for the better.” Bill stated that he did not feel comfortable in the traditional “boss” role, but felt more like “a team leader,” one who “treated people like I would like to be treated.” For Bowman a leader should help coworkers seek answers while “empowering them and letting them do their job.” Therefore, the most commonly held view of the participants was that power was best handled by encouraging others in the relationship to share it.

### *Influences Decision Making*

When the fifteen participants were asked to describe a leadership experience which demonstrated their being spiritually influenced, thirteen of the fifteen told stories related to making difficult decisions. Bowman believed that spirituality and religious training “can influence you a great deal...and will impact how you make decisions in a leadership role.” Frank said that for those who are spiritually influenced “there is a Higher Power that is present in your thinking that guides you in making decisions.”

The participants spoke of a variety of ways in which decision making was affected by spirituality. They seemed to rely on a spiritually influenced ethical framework to deal with day to day administrative tasks, but most of the specific incidents described related to making difficult decisions seemed to center around issues of social justice. In the previous section we examined the participants’ perception regarding the appropriate use of power. Although most spoke of a desire to share power in the workplace, it seems apparent that when situations arose concerning honesty, equity, or the well being of others, these individuals did not hesitate to wield the

leader's power to make decisions which, in their mind, were for the greater good and remained true to their strongly held spiritual beliefs.

Frank told me that one important role of spirituality was to “make me uncomfortable with decisions that are not clear cut.” He said his spiritual beliefs made him unwilling to settle for easy, temporary fixes in complicated situations. His beliefs made him see that “spiritual people do things not for immediate gratification...sometimes they do things that are personally painful or harmful, but hopefully there is a greater good that comes of it.” Ellen told of an incident which offered a clear example of just such a painful decision. She spoke of her decision as an elected leader to include previously marginalized citizens on a very controversial governmental board. Due to these citizens' lack of governing experience, the board did not produce results in a timely fashion which led to Ellen's being personally criticized and very publicly attacked for the board's failure to produce the results expected. She defended her selection of board members by saying that leadership was not simply a matter of making fast decisions and producing quick results, but that leaders in her position should work to create community and address inequities.

Other participants also described detailed incidents where they made leadership decisions using spiritual beliefs as a moral compass. Frank told of a time at work when he was in “a moral dilemma” concerning whether or not to win a sought-after professor to his university by secretly granting him a child care benefit which was normally determined by a lottery system among other employees. His spirituality influenced him to ponder his possible actions and decide, “I know what is the right thing to do...not the easiest thing to do in this case, but it is the right thing.” The end result was that “I wound up not bending,” and, while some of his university colleagues were not pleased, Frank reported that his decision not to grant an unfair advantage to the professor “allowed him to sleep at night.” Bowman also saw a need for a spiritual influence

on decision making and stated, “When it [a decision] is not black and white, when it’s gray...then you’ve got to go back to the core values [provided by spirituality] you have.”

The leaders in this study believed the ethical framework provided by their spiritual understanding was integral to their ability to make fair and sound decisions in the workplace. In fact Brahma said that examining the leader’s willingness to make difficult decisions might be key in the identification of a spiritually influenced leader. For him, one who was spiritually influenced did not evade issues involving social justice or disappear in times of controversy. On a bulletin board in his office he had written this quotation from Dante: “The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in times of great moral crisis maintain their neutrality.”

Mike also credited his spirituality for giving him the courage to make the right decision in two very volatile leadership incidents. In one leadership role he was asked to falsify records. In the other his administrators refused to accept his suggestions for humanitarian changes in the work place. He stated “my spiritual beliefs and my way of leading led to both a firing and a resignation early in my career. I’ve had to stand up for what I believed.”

The issue of having the courage to speak up on moral issues when others remained silent was shared by other participants. Robin also told of a decision she had to make between risking her job and defending the rights of one of her coworkers. She had witnessed a paraprofessional being cruelly embarrassed by a supervisor in a large group meeting. Robin told of feeling compelled by her spiritual beliefs to go to her supervisor and address the inappropriate behavior although she knew she might lose her job because of the decision to interfere. She simply stated, “You know sometime you gotta stand up and make people treat people like you want them to be treated.”

### *Impacts Communication*

Leaders must be skilled in communicating their visions, goals, and directions to coworkers, and equally as capable of understanding the communication received back from them. Keeping open lines of communication and being able to encode and decode messages appropriately are vital to the success of any leader. Descriptions provided by the participants in this study helped me to realize that the leaders' spirituality directly impacted how they communicated. Although the standard model of ideal communication is linear and involves only a sender and a receiver, the model of communication which appears to be used by a spiritually influenced leader is more of a triangle with a connection to a Higher Being located between the two. I picture this in my mind as spirituality performing the role of an uplink satellite through which all communication is channeled. Spirituality serves as static filter, amplifier, possibly even translator for more effective transmission of ideas between the leader and others within the organization. I think my understanding of this spiritual communication model can be best explained by this story from Robin, the adult literacy educator whose job seemed to be full of interesting challenges.

In this incident Robin used spiritually inspired communication to defuse a potentially dangerous situation. She told about being caught between two mentally ill patients in a Welfare to Work program who were about to start throwing punches. Her success in handling this volatile situation hinged on her ability to communicate. She knew "I had to first get myself together spiritually so I could say what needed to be said, in the right way and in the right tone, so it wouldn't offend anybody." She explained the situation further by stating,

Had I not stepped back and got myself together [through a quick prayer for guidance], there would a been a terrible fight in there, because that lady was about 235 [pounds], and



she was ready to go. I could just see somebody gettin hurt, and all the other people in there were afraid they were gonna get hurt....once I got in my car, I thanked the Lord...for His angels and everything in there. There was like a calmness in there once I started speaking to Him.

While Robin's experience involved receiving guidance from God concerning what to say in a particular situation, Caesar told me of a spiritually influenced leadership moment in which he sensed guidance from a Higher Being telling him not to speak. This had occurred during a break out session of a leadership seminar he was facilitating. Caesar overheard another instructor making a completely inappropriate, judgmental comment about a much maligned minority population. His immediate desire was to respond in a way he had many times in the past where he would confront the guilty party publicly to bring the issue out for discussion. Before he could act upon this, he felt an inward guidance not to respond in his usual manner, but to remain silent. His concern about the incident made for a very uncomfortable night, and he arrived back at the conference the next morning feeling he really needed to do something about it. As he approached the meeting room of that particular break out group, he witnessed students within the group taking the instructor aside to confront him about the very issue Caesar wished to address. He felt that by remaining silent and trusting this guidance which directed him not to communicate, his inaction had allowed leadership to arise from within the group to produce a much more effective renunciation of prejudice.

Other experiences were shared with me about communication being directly affected by what the participant believed to be divine intervention. For two of the participants, Bill and Vanessa, it was difficult for them to describe just exactly what had occurred.

Bill provided a wonderful description of a moment of spiritually influenced communication when he told of a particularly challenging assignment he had encountered as a part of an international task force in an African developing nation. Others in the task force could speak either the nation's language or French, which was also understood there. He could speak only English. This seemed to be an insurmountable problem, not only in his work with the native farmers, but in simply trying to survive the lonely isolation of being unable to communicate in his personal time as well. He told me "after 4 to 6 weeks over there I was really ready to head home. I was full of anxiety and had had a lot of disappointment on the whole trip." Luckily for Bill, this event soon occurred:

It was around Easter time, and they [a family with whom he had been trying to work] invited me to go to Easter Mass... It wasn't the religious setting [to which I was accustomed], but it was enlightening. Suddenly I got just a very warm feeling...it was just really....I don't know how to explain it using words....you know...it was really spiritual for me... a connection across cultures... Although I still couldn't understand the language, the rituals were the same. Wow... from then on I was able to take things more in stride, really get to know people, to meet them and find out who they were. It was a great experience.

This incident seemed to break open a line of communication, or possibly a willingness to explore alternate forms of communication, which enabled Bill to perform the role of agricultural leader within that community.

Bowman made the point in his interview that being able to communicate was extremely important for a leader. He believed that a spiritually influenced leader would "find a way to present things in a light where people understood them and were inspired to act." I was reminded

of his comment during Vanessa's interview when I asked her to describe the way she led in her organization. She told me of various incidents, but was adamant in her belief that her ability to communicate with large audiences of her coworkers was vital to her success as a leader and educator. Vanessa felt her spirituality made it possible for her to be able to communicate with coworkers charismatically and effectively. She reported that many times she would prepare a presentation only to find that once she stepped on the stage, she never actually used those notes. In many of those instances she did not really remember exactly what she had said afterwards. She reported that in what she considered her most effective presentations, her coworkers would tease her "about Vanessa being in her zone." She believed it was her spirituality that gave her the message the audience needed for that time, and provided her with the confidence to deliver it. The way she described the event was almost like an out of body experience in which she was only a messenger. She told me:

I think as an educator...when you really get them [those being trained] to get it...to feel it spiritually from the inside... to understand what their role really is....that's when you go, "That was good...that was a spiritual moment." I impacted 27 managers who would go back and impact all their staff to better serve families!

These were but four of the interesting experiences shared with me which highlight the impact spirituality has on the leaders' abilities to communicate with others. The precursor to all these communications, however, seemed to be the participants' belief that they could send, and in turn receive communication from a Higher Being which enabled them to deal with problems in a way they would not have done without that connection, guidance, or intervention. The data showed that participants devoted time to the cultivation of this transcendent connection.

While most mentioned prayer, a few seemed to have a running conversation with a very personal God. Robin made constant reference to speaking with God as she went about her job working in a dangerous low income housing project. She told of the time one of her clients was about to shoot herself and she said “OK, God, I gotta do something...come on in there with me Lord.” Berry was another who explained her communication with God as “Just talking to God...I wouldn’t necessarily call it praying.”

Other forms of communication with a Higher Power were mentioned as well. Five mentioned reading scriptures from religious texts as a way to hear the “Word” of God. Berry said “I feel God speaks to me from his Word and I can communicate back to Him by thinking of the scriptures through the day or by reflecting on them or by actually applying the things He’s teaching.” She told me of reading a particular scripture one morning which directly influenced the way she chose to communicate with a disgruntled coworker concerning a misunderstanding which had occurred on a business trip.

Several mentioned “hearing” communication from God. Shequethia tells of “listening to that inner voice,” while Dorothy told of hearing “a still, small voice saying ‘You’re gonna do it...It’ll happen.’” Five participants spoke of “feeling” God’s presence in the workplace. Dorothy told of quiet times with the Lord when she would have a “I know You’re there” kind of moment. Berry spoke of times when she “felt the Presence of God,” and Frank spoke of God as “an abiding Presence.”

These times of communication with God whether through prayer, by reading scriptures, through hearing or by feeling His presence definitely influenced the way these leaders communicated with followers.

## Styles of Leadership

From the beginning of leadership studies, researchers have been describing particular “styles” of leadership by observing and categorizing common behaviors or traits of those who lead. This final research question was asked in order to discover how participants would self describe their particular style of leadership. While many of the participants were familiar with some of the better known leadership theories (transactional, transformational, servant, and team), some had very limited knowledge of the topic. Without providing any set of definitions of possible leadership style choices, I simply asked participants to describe their style of leading. This was to help me understand more about their perception of leadership, as well as reveal if there were any particular styles of leadership common among individuals who had been identified as spiritually influenced leaders. I found that while there were some commonalities, there was no one style practiced by all fifteen participants.

### *A Diversity of Leadership Styles*

Among the participants there were five styles of leadership described which most closely matched the theories of servant, team, transactional, transformational, and situational leadership. Some described using more than one style of leadership. Seven made some reference to what could be described as servant leadership, two promoted team leadership, three appeared to favor transactional leadership, four described actions indicative of transformative leadership, and three spoke of using multiple styles of leadership which seemed to describe situational leadership.

Of the fifteen participants, seven described actions of servant leadership, similar to the popular model in which leaders shift focus from their own needs to the needs and interests of followers. Shequethia revealed, “I’m heavily influenced by servant leadership,” and Frank said that servant leadership “reflects a lot of things that I try to use on a day to day basis.” Mike was

very clear in his explanation, “My spiritual life has taught me that leadership is really about serving others, not about controlling others.” Brahma, a strong supporter of servant leadership, called himself “a reluctant leader” who believed that work should be very egalitarian. He was influenced by Gandhian philosophy, and explained a part of it by saying “Everything is very important ...the one who changes a bandage on a goat’s leg is no lesser in making the world go forward than those who are planning to alter it in some other way....That’s a remarkable lesson you know.” Berry referred to her sculpture depicting Jesus washing the feet of His disciples, and spoke of her desire to serve others within the organization.

Henrietta and Ellen, while not specifically labeling themselves as servant leaders, described behaviors consistent with this theory. As Henrietta said, “I think it is really important to do my best to get the right person in the job, and do a really good job of training them, and supporting them with all they need.” Ellen saw her strongest point as her ability to “recognize potential and leadership in other people...to support them, seek out their advice, and include other people in the decision making process... to share that leadership with them.”

Two other participants described their practice similarly, but favored being seen as leaders of a team. Bill described it this way, “I feel I’m more of a facilitator, a team leader. I don’t necessarily tell people what to do. I guide, direct, and provide advice and support.” A major difference between the participants who described themselves as servant leaders and those who favored a team leader approach could best be described in terms of equality. The team leaders refused to wield power over coworkers, wanting to share equally in the task, yet unlike servant leaders who were also willing to share power, the team leaders did not describe any behaviors indicating a desire to make themselves subservient to their coworkers as many of the servant leaders did.

Three of the participants' descriptions of leadership style placed them more in a traditional, authoritative model, very task-oriented, similar to the description given for transactional leaders described by Burns (1978) as those who are led by his/her values of honesty, responsibility, and fairness concretely tied to the everyday world of making a living. Dorothy spoke of coordinating the work of teachers within her department saying, "I would say I like rules and structure," with one of her main concerns being "trying to make sure decisions are fair, that they are equitable." When Robin explained the way she led she told me that "you're concerned with what they think, but you know what you need to do to get the task done." DV considered himself "to be a positive leader" seeking to encourage and reward those who worked with him, yet he was also concerned about those who might misinterpret his encouragement as weakness and "think they can step all over me."

Four of the participants (Fico, Vanessa, Bowman, and Berry) described behaviors that might be labeled as transformational, showing evidence of exhibiting the four traits long associated with that style: idealized influence (charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Along with speaking of being influenced by their strong moral values, they exuded self confidence, and seemed to see it as their responsibility to inspire others as they led the way toward accomplishing worthy goals for the betterment of all concerned. Fico reported that she tried to emulate her father who had quite a reputation for being a transformational leader in Puerto Rico. She recognized the importance of a good reputation, was deeply concerned and involved in the lives of those she led, and said she "liked to give freedom to the people I am giving leadership to for I believe they can grow more that way." Vanessa also talked about the importance of having an impeccable reputation. She evidenced her inspired gift of communication with coworkers when she told me about being "in her zone" as

she delivered training presentations. She also told of her deep personal concern for those she led, and her visionary role in the organization seeing her role as “a leader [who] looks out ahead and plans to take people where they need to go.” Bowman spoke of his “heart-felt” calling to be a charismatic leader for a large youth organization. He stressed the importance of showing individual respect and concern for all involved, basing his leadership on sound moral values, and tried “to take a personal interest in [others] personal goals, and trying to help them accomplish those goals. Berry also mentioned traits indicative of a transformational leader. She believed herself to be inspired by a Higher Power to lead, grounded in sound moral values, and one who showed individual concern for well being of her coworkers.

Upon rereading participant transcripts countless times, I realized that three participants (Caesar, Bowman, and Berry) did not fit into just one style of leadership, but exhibited and discussed characteristics from several different styles. In fact, Caesar was very clear on this point. While he related incidents that seemed, at times, indicative of a tendency toward servant leadership, he stated:

I think my style of leadership is very situational...so I don't think it fits one style. To me, the notion of leadership and the activities related to it are very situational...and they are very relational...so whoever is involved, a different style of leadership is needed. I try to be very reflective about situations that are happening...what does it need at that time? If someone were assessing me, they would see multiple styles.

Caesar went on to describe his most comfortable style of leadership as more of a “leader from the back of the room.” He had used this term earlier in the interview to describe how Myles Horton had operated as a facilitator of workshops at the Highlander Center. His youthful observations of this adult education icon seemed to very much influence how he chose to lead in



his ensuing roles as a leadership educator. He stressed the importance of staying in the background while encouraging and aiding others within the group to lead. He laughingly told me he wanted to write a book called “Too Much Leadership” based on all the poor examples of leadership he had observed. He felt that a leader should be focused more on “others” and not on “self” as many of the traditional models of leadership promoted.

Bowman also seemed to be a situational leader. He held two distinct and completely different leadership roles within his one job description. He was a state program leader for a division of youth development professionals, yet he was also the recognized leader for a huge statewide youth organization made up of teenagers, counselors, parents, and volunteers. At one point he described his style of leading the professional staff as, “not autocratic in any way, and I’m very much about listening and working with people, trying to accomplish things as a team.” This was very similar to the view held by Bill who also understood his role as an educational leader of equally qualified coworkers as being part of a team. But later, Bowman told of a leadership role “that speaks truer to my heart and soul, what I think I’m really about, and maybe what I’m most effective at...and that’s being the leader of [the large youth organization].” He said, “I think in that role, perhaps charismatic and impassioned...and heartfelt would better describe my leadership style.” As he continued his description of this leadership role, he described the actions of one who could easily be categorized as a transformational leader. Therefore, Bowman exhibited characteristics of multiple leadership styles practiced in varying professional situations.

Berry was another participant who showed evidence of practicing more than one style of leadership. She talked about being committed to servant leadership, and gave examples of situations that upheld this view, but she also talked about the importance of spiritually influenced

leaders “having vision” to lead the organization toward goals good for everyone concerned. She told me, “I think my job and my working reputation is very critical to the success of our program. If people misinterpret what I say or what I communicate it would have a negative impact. I’ve just learned that communication is very important.” Berry also told me she enjoyed “researching a need, getting other people involved, then using my creativity to get other people to share those ideas and concerns.” All of these descriptions provide a view of Berry that seems to indicate that in certain situations she has practiced situational leadership in her organization.

### *Perception of Spirituality Influences Leadership Style*

Upon reviewing participants’ responses to the first two questions of the study, it appears the way these leaders described their leadership style reflects their perception of spirituality. For example, Robin perceived her Protestant religion and her spirituality as the same concept. She was very much influenced by a close personal relationship with a loving God who provided exacting rules and regulations to govern her daily behavior. He was the leader of her life, providing love, protection, guidance, and security to her. In roles where she must become leader, her behavior seemed to reproduce this relationship. In dealings with coworkers Robin seemed very open, welcoming, and loving. She stood up to defend the paraprofessional attacked by another, thereby providing protection for one in her care. Yet there were rules to be followed and she felt that “sometimes you have to take control” of those with whom you work because “you know what you need to do to get the task done.” As God held power over her, she, in turn, held a benevolent power over others and described her style of leadership in ways that seemed authoritative and task oriented.

Brahma provided another clear example of how his perceptions of spirituality and his view of a spiritually influenced leadership determined his style of leadership practice. Brahma’s

Hindu-Buddhist perspective allowed him to see the Western concept of religion as separate from his belief of spirituality as a “philosophy of being.” His idea of God was not as personal or absolute as Robin’s Protestant one. He was also very much influenced by the Hindu belief in tolerance concerning the spiritual beliefs of others and by Gandhi’s teachings concerning service to mankind and the value of all work. From this world view, it was easy to understand why he called himself “a reluctant leader,” and was comfortable leading only when asked to do so by coworkers. He accepted the role with a “servant’s heart,” and expressed his wish for coworkers to understand he had the “sincerest desire to lead us into a direction that is good for all.”

This connection between perception of spirituality and perception of leadership was evident in Caesar’s data as well. Remember, Caesar is a “collector” of religions. As he traveled the globe he observed, studied, and participated in the religious rituals of a variety of wisdom traditions. He expresses a very individualistic, eclectic sort of spirituality. In no way could he be considered evangelistic, nor was he convinced that one particular way of worshiping the Higher Being was any better than another. His way of leading parallels his spiritual understanding for he seemed to be a collector of leadership styles as well. He told me very clearly that he practiced multiple styles of leadership, not just one. He adjusted the style of his practice to the situation and to the individuals involved. In the leadership trainings he “led from the back of the room,” observing the interactions of the participants and allowing leadership to emerge from within the group.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of spirituality in the practice of adult education leaders. The findings provide us a better understanding of what we are discussing when leadership educators and practitioners talk of spirituality as it relates to leadership.

Delving into how educational leaders perceived and defined the term “spirituality” helps us to understand that when most educators talk of incorporating spirituality into their leadership practice, they are not referring to bringing specific religious practices or rituals into the workplace. This re-defining of what was once considered the interchangeable terms spirituality and religion into a dichotomy of the personal spirituality versus the group religion seems to free educational leaders from the negativity and divisiveness sometimes encountered in settings where there is a great diversity in religious beliefs. It allows leaders to take the most beneficial and socially conscious spiritual teachings, those concepts recognized worldwide as worthy, and incorporate them into their “way of being” in professional life. While religious beliefs varied in the sample, the basic spiritual understandings of what is appropriate behavior for an educational leader truly varied very little. They talked of working for the greater good, helping coworkers to personally grow and develop, of looking for the good in every person, of the importance of having integrity, being fair, truthful, compassionate, kind, encouraging, unselfish, consistent, and persistent.

These spiritually influenced leaders seem to find it impossible to separate spirituality from the professional role for their understanding of personal identity seemed to be inextricably intertwined with their spiritual beliefs. This identity as a spiritually influenced leader was one that evolved over time with all participants reporting that their understanding of spirituality deepened and matured after the age of 25. The participants attributed this phenomenon to: their encounters with challenging life events, their examination of spiritual and religious beliefs, taking time to reflect upon stressful events and spiritual findings, and finally their making a conscious choice to adapt those spiritual teachings which best fit their personal worldview.

Although there were ten different religious affiliations represented in the sample, there were distinct commonalities in the way the participants defined spirituality. As noted above, spirituality was perceived as distinct from, but related to religion and as a part of identity, but they also defined spirituality as a connection with a Higher Power, as a connection with others, and as a connection with nature.

With this clarification of what spirituality meant to these educators, it was then possible to explore the role that spirituality played in their practice of leadership. While each of the leaders gave many examples of leadership challenges and times of great stress, the leadership load seemed to be made bearable by their being connected with a Higher Power, a resource in times of challenge. Spirituality shaped their perception of the appropriate use of power, encouraging a willingness to share power with others. It influenced decision making and the way they communicated with others.

Styles of leadership reported by the study participants varied. Servant leadership was the most common, but there were also team leaders, more traditional transactional leaders, transformational leaders, and those who used a variety of styles depending on the follower and the situation. The style of leadership practiced by participants seemed directly connected to their perception of spirituality.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of spirituality in the practice of adult education leaders. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do adult education leaders perceive and describe their experience of spirituality?
2. How do adult education leaders perceive and describe their experiences of a spiritually-influenced practice of leadership?
3. How do adult education leaders perceive and describe their style of leadership?

Fifteen adult education leaders agreed to be interviewed for this study. The method of selection was a purposeful one made from the recommendations of adult education professors, from students enrolled in the adult education doctoral program, and from other practicing adult educators. The criteria for sample selection consisted of the following:

1. Participants are identified as reputational leaders within a field of adult education.
2. Participants acknowledge that spirituality plays a role in their practice of leadership.
3. Participants should be 35 years of age or older.

Potential participants were contacted by email with an informal letter which outlined the purpose of the study, criteria for selection, as well as explained all the interview procedures and expectations. The final selection rested with participants who self identified as leaders within their chosen adult education profession, and who willingly acknowledged their spirituality as playing a role in their practice of leadership. Once the study was underway I enlarged the initial

sample using a snowball sampling technique, asking original participants for recommendations as well. Semi-structured participant interviews were conducted lasting on average about one and one half hours. Physical documentation of items in the workspace which reflected the participants' spiritual beliefs were observed and recorded to provide a form of triangulation of data. Five follow up phone calls and three follow up interviews were conducted to clarify information gathered in the first interviews. This was done to better understand the beliefs of those who differed most from my cultural upbringing in order that I might represent their voice more accurately. All participants were emailed a draft of the findings and asked to respond to the accuracy of voice and interpretation. Thirteen participants responded with comments, possible additions, corrections, and interpretations. Many of the participants took their role in this phenomenological research project very seriously, and truly became co-researchers in the process by offering advice, additional information, and constructive criticism.

This final chapter will bring together the findings from the interviews, additional member check input, and include the valuable insights of my advisory committee. In it I present a summary of the study's findings, conclusions, and a discussion of the implications for practice and recommendations for further research.

### Summary of the Findings

Data from this study was collected and analyzed using phenomenological techniques in order to discover possible commonalities of understandings and/or of practice among a diverse sample of spiritually influenced adult education leaders. The findings relate to three themes, perception of spirituality, description of spiritually influenced leadership, and choice of leadership style.

The participants in this study found it impossible to separate their spiritual understanding from their daily professional practice of leadership for spirituality was very much a part of their personal identity. The leaders perceived spirituality as a deeply personal search for meaning which brought them into a web of connection with a Higher Being, with other people, and with all of creation. They did not see spiritually influenced leadership as being in any way inappropriate or in conflict with the First Amendment's requirement of separation of church and state because they perceived spirituality as different from religion. For them, religion referred to organized institutions or churches while spirituality was an indwelling spirit guiding the participants to treat others as they would like to be treated.

In the practice of leadership, spirituality played an important role in the formation of these leaders and upon their subsequent behavior in the workplace. Spirituality provided a calling to the profession, instilled an ethical framework, and served as a resource in times of challenge. It influenced their use of power, their decision making, and the way they communicated with coworkers.

Just as the participants were involved in a variety of religious practices, they also practiced a variety of leadership styles. The way they perceived leadership and their choice of leadership style reflected the participants' perception of spirituality.

### Conclusions and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of spirituality in the practice of adult education leaders. I wanted to examine how spiritually influenced leaders perceived and defined spirituality, how they described their practice of leadership, and if they identified with any one particular style of leadership. After collecting and analyzing the data I arrived at the following



conclusions: (1) for spiritually influenced adult education leaders spirituality is the matrix of leadership; (2) in the practice of leadership spirituality shapes the perception of power, influences decision making, and impacts communication with coworkers; and (3) spiritually influenced leaders exhibit a diversity of leadership styles.

*Conclusion 1: For Spiritually Influenced Adult Education Leaders*

*Spirituality is the Matrix of Leadership*

After analysis of the data, I reviewed the condensed findings and struggled to find a word which could best convey how the participants described their perceptions of the role of spirituality in the practice of leadership. What was the phenomenological “essence” of spirituality in leadership? I reviewed the descriptive words of the participants. Their role as an educational leader originated from a spiritual “calling” or sense of “mission.” Leadership was “rooted” in or “grounded” by spirituality. Spirituality provided the “framework,” the “way of life,” the “worldview,” a “wholeness,” and the “driving force” of their leadership as it “shaped,” “informed,” “guided,” “directed,” “encouraged,” and “determined” their practice of it. What phrase or concept expressed all those descriptions? The word matrix came to mind. I went to the Free Dictionary by Farlex online (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/matrix>) and found that a matrix could be: “A situation or surrounding substance within which something else originates, develops, or is contained.” It could also be considered “the womb,” or “the formative cells,” or “the ground substance.” Matrix was the word for which I had been searching. For these participants, spirituality seemed to be the matrix of leadership.

As I searched for support of this conclusion in other scholarly works, I discovered a statement made by a participant in recent adult education research. The study (Courtenay & Milton, 2004) sought “to understand the role of spirituality in adult education from the

perspective of adult instructors and learners” (p.101). In the article describing the research, an adult education professor (identified as Henry) told the researchers that his goal for the inclusion of spirituality in teaching “is [to] help people become aware of the matrix in which they are embedded. And the way in which that matrix implicitly, by and large, implicitly shapes and gives meaning and sense to their lives and consciousness” (p. 104). That quotation presents a similar idea of spirituality as a matrix which I propose shapes and gives meaning to the practice of leadership described by my participants.

Other pieces of the definitional puzzle which support the idea of a spiritual matrix and align with the findings in my study can be found in recent studies conducted within adult education by Tisdell (2000) and Groen (2001). Tisdell’s (2000) study found that female adult educators who taught for social change were motivated by their spirituality. Groen’s (2001) study reported that the adult educators she interviewed believed their chosen professional role was a vocation or calling which gave them purpose in their practice of leadership.

Outside the field of adult education Delbecq’s (1999) study of business executives provides another pillar of support. Similar to the educational leaders of my study, Delbecq’s business leaders stated that spirituality helped them to view their career as a calling and gave them a sense of vocation. (These three studies seem to indicate that leadership may *originate* in spirituality.) The participants in Delbecq’s study also credited spirituality with giving them courage to face the challenges of executive leadership. This was very similar to the descriptions of my participants. Jacobsen’s (1994) national study of transformational leaders is another to be cited in support of this conclusion for he found that spirituality played a crucial role in the *development* of leaders.

Two other studies specifically designed to study transformational leadership also appear in part to support this conclusion. The quantitative study by Field (2003) provides a general congruence with the findings for his report confirmed a positive correlation between transformational leadership and spirituality. Hartsfield's (2003) study also found that spirituality could be one of three predictor variables for identifying transformational leaders.

These studies provide different points of agreement with this conclusion and seem to indicate that leadership originates, develops, and is contained in spirituality; therefore, I propose that spirituality is the matrix for leadership. This is a major contribution to leadership literature for if one recognizes spirituality as the matrix out of which leadership originates, and by which it is shaped, then one must acknowledge the importance of further research into this phenomena about which very little is known. In this developing field of research I feel my study of spiritually influenced adult education leaders serves as a qualitative springboard from which other studies may be launched in an attempt to verify or invalidate the findings.

*Conclusion 2: In the Practice of Leadership Spirituality Shapes the Perception of Power, Influences Decision Making, and Impacts Communication with Coworkers*

The word matrix is also used in computer science referring to the network of intersections between input and output leads in a computer. The matrix of a computer functions as an encoder and decoder for the machine. This is an apt analogy for the way spirituality works in the practice of leadership. It is the lens through which my participants decoded their world and, subsequently, encoded their response to that world by influencing the activities or practice of leadership. Spirituality shaped their perception regarding the appropriate use of power, influenced their decision making, and impacted their communication with others. This conclusion agrees with the research of Jacobsen (1994) who found that transformational leaders, "diverse in terms of

organizational setting, geography, background and gender, shared a common belief that spirituality lies at the heart of their activity” (p. 93). The heart of that leadership “activity” could easily be defined as that which relates to the leader’s power, decision making, and ability to communicate.

Eleven of my participants talked about “sharing power” or “giving away power” or “empowering others,” with six equating this sharing of power as a form of service leadership. Again, my findings coincided with Delbecq’s (1999) study which found that spirituality was the integrative force which helped leaders to perform the role of business executive as a form of service to others, rather than as a way to have power over others. Fairholm (1997) reported his informal survey conducted with nineteen mid-level managers in which they established one of the characteristics of spiritual leadership as being “first a servant” (p. 112). This seemed to echo the shift of power within the leader/follower relationship mentioned by the leaders in my study. Therefore, my study is important for its confirmation of the previous research by Delbecq (1999), Fairholm (1997), and Jacobsen (1994). It also seems to be in agreement with the teaching of Mary Follett Parker (1920) who adamantly declared the appropriate role of power within leadership as more of a “power-with” follower, and not as “power-over” type of relationship.

In this study the role of spirituality in the leader’s professional decision making was repeatedly described. Spirituality, for all the participants, provided a moral compass which guided them in ambiguous situations when difficult decisions had to be made. In Fairholm’s (1997) informal study, 100% of respondents perceived spirituality as either very important (63%) or important (37%) in shaping the leader’s values and ethics. While my study confirmed Fairholm’s findings, it goes beyond making the simple connection between spirituality and ethics to offering descriptions of how the leaders’ spirituality influenced ethical framework specifically

impacts decision making in educational settings. This is an important contribution to the literature because it may prompt a closer scrutiny of spiritually impacted decisions to determine whether those decisions were congruent with organizational goals and to reflect upon possible consequences of making such decisions.

Communication has long been recognized as vital to successful leadership. In this study participants related stories of how spirituality influenced the way they viewed their responsibility to others and how this determined the way they communicated with coworkers: how they listened, responded or didn't respond, spoke or remained silent, attempted to inspire, defended, supported, sometimes chastised, prodded, and even fired coworkers. Their communication with others seemed to be affected by their communication with a Higher Power. I did not find any research study which focused on spirituality/leadership and communication with coworkers. For this reason my study is especially important as it establishes a link between the two concepts and points to an area of research ripe for examination.

*Conclusion 3: Spiritually Influenced Leaders Exhibit a Diversity of  
Leadership Styles*

When I first horizontalized the data from this study, I immediately recognized there were a group of participants who described their style of leadership similar to the servant leadership theory developed by Greenleaf (1977) and promoted by recent popular leadership authors (Covey, 1989; DePree, 1987; Kouzes & Posner, 1995). I had expected that. But upon rereading the interviews, I realized there were not so many "pure" styles of servant leadership as I had first thought.

Three participants had to be recognized as practicing more than one style of leadership. These two might be more accurately described as ascribing to one of the contingency or

situational theories of leadership (Fiedler, 1967; House, 1996; Jago, 1982; Vroom & Yetton, 1973) which were based on the flexibility of the leader and the importance of recognizing situational factors and identifying follower characteristics before choosing a particular style of leadership to use.

I also found three authoritarian, task-oriented leaders, similar to the description given for transactional leaders described by Burns (1978) as those who are led by his/her values of honesty, responsibility, and fairness concretely tied to the everyday world of making a living. There were two who identified with the concept of team leadership similar to that described by Hill (1997) as “organized groups composed of members who are interdependent, who share common goals, and who must coordinate their activities to accomplish these goals” (p. 159). Four participants described characteristics and actions matching those of Burns’ (1978) transformational leadership theory further developed by Avolio and Bass (1987) as a leader who exhibits an idealized influence (charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration for followers.

From these findings, I concluded that spiritually influenced leadership is not the sole property of any one style of leadership. This conclusion makes an important contribution to the literature for three (Field, 2003; Hartsfield, 2003; and Jacobsen, 1994) of the five empirical studies found which studied leadership and spirituality have particularly focused on spirituality within transformational leadership to the exclusion of all other styles. While previous researchers seem to consider the heroic transformational leadership style as a perfect setting in which to study a possible connection to spirituality, the practices of those who employ more traditional, management oriented styles of leadership can not be ignored for they will also provide valuable insight into the role of spirituality in leadership. Based on my findings, spiritually influenced

leadership is not so much a particular style, but more of a worldview, a perceptual lens which influences the way one may practice many styles of leadership. I propose that the individual's style of leadership reflects their perception of spirituality.

### Implications for Practice

While all adult education organizations can benefit from the findings of this study, I think professionals in the fields of Human Resource and Organizational Development and in Leadership Education are those who can make the most immediate use of this information. Their job is focused on the task of identifying and/or training leaders. A small segment of leadership scholars (Bolman & Deal, 1995; Conger, 1994; Fairholm, 1997) and authors of popular leadership literature (Covey, 1991; DePree, 1987; Hawley, 1993) have promoted an inclusion of spirituality in leadership for the past 10 years. Now leadership studies (Field, 2003; Hartsfield, 2003; Jacobsen, 1994) have begun to provide support for a positive correlation existing between leadership and spirituality. But this has been a topic carefully avoided in professional trainings until recently. If leadership educators are to move toward an acceptance of this trend and begin to adapt their curriculum, it is important to understand why it is now possible to negotiate topics previously deemed taboo. My qualitative study provides a rationale for change in leadership education practice. One of the key arguments for the inclusion and further study of spirituality in leadership can be grounded by acknowledging the change of terminology or definition which has evolved over the last decade. It is no longer a matter of religion, but of spirituality.

By perceiving spirituality as the individual connection to a Higher Being which informs our search for meaning and identity, and as distinct from religion, which is then seen as the organizational codification of spiritual rituals and practices, one can begin to see beyond differences in religion to find commonalities in universal beliefs and understandings. Shared

spiritual understandings can be a positive part of that commonality and an accepted part of leadership if viewed from that perspective. Therefore, the emerging societal trend toward defining spirituality and religion as separate, though related concepts provides the rationale for the leaders' inclusion of spirituality into leadership practice.

The findings from this study can help educators overcome any qualms they may have had previously about exploring the spiritual dimension of leadership. As my data shows, this shift in definition of spirituality is already well established, at least among those who lead in adult education. This finding is in agreement with Forman's (2004) study on what he called the Grassroots Spirituality movement. He proposed that "we may be witnessing a theological shift reflected in our language use, for when people use a word differently, they're starting to think differently" (p. 49). By acknowledging this distinction and making clear the difference between the definitions of religion and spirituality, the issue of separation of church and state can be navigated successfully in leadership classes and workshops.

Of course, the findings from this study suggest another way for leadership educators to approach the spiritual component of leadership without stressing the religion/spirituality dichotomy. Participants in this study described spirituality as being "who I am." They equated spirituality with identity. Already in leadership education there is a component which encourages developing leaders to discover more about themselves, to explore identity. Rather than just stopping with a cursory overview (which normally includes only a few personality identification instruments), I think this study implies that leadership curriculum should be redesigned to include an in depth study of identity or stages of human development.

For example, this new identity exploration unit within a leadership development curriculum could include the work of Maslow (1962) who is well known for his theory



proposing stages of identity development leading toward the highest stage which he called self-actualization. In Maslow's work he also stressed the importance of everyone developing a framework of values, "a religion or surrogate-religion to live by and understand by" (p. 206). This could introduce an opportunity to explore and discuss the importance of ethics in a responsible practice of leadership.

The work of Erikson (1968) might also provide a springboard for a discussion of spirituality from a psychological perspective for he promoted the ideal development of identity as becoming "ever more inclusive as the individual grows aware of a widening circle of others significant to him, from the maternal person to 'mankind'" (p. 19). The view of spiritual interconnectedness similar to that discussed by my participants could be explored at this point.

A natural progression in a leadership identity curriculum could be to explore what Ogilvy (1981) said was the last stage of identity development, "the quest for eternal truths" (p. 499). Ogilvy issued a challenge for everyone to come to terms with the spiritual dimensions of human existence. He cautioned that "to ignore that dimension is to be less than fully human; to inflate the spiritual dimension into fanaticism is to pervert the religious impulse," and warns of "the difficult task of steering an even course between the two extremities of ignoring and perverting our spiritual life" (p. 499).

With this admonition in mind, one might begin an overview of world religions or encourage exploration of differing spiritual traditions. Participants in my study credited the examination of other spiritual traditions as an activity which broadened their perspective and promoted their tolerance of others whose religious views differed from their own. Branching out to include a discussion of cultural diversity would be appropriate at this time. The ultimate goal for this section of the curriculum would be for the participants to discover commonalities of

spiritual beliefs which could provide the establishment of an inclusive ethical framework for use within a diverse organization.

Another implication for practice provided by this study relates to choice of leadership style. One of the findings that surprised me was the variety of leadership styles exhibited by the participants, all of whom had been identified as spiritually influenced. While seven did practice a form of servant leadership (the style most commonly discussed when the topic of spiritual leadership is broached), it was not the overwhelming style of choice. Spiritually influenced leadership is exhibited in a variety of styles. This conclusion has an important implication for those leaders who are searching for ways to include spirituality in practice, and who may, because of the amount of literature now promoting servant leadership, feel this is the only avenue of expression. Those who are spiritually influenced have other options, and should consider those before locking into a particular style.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

Previously reviewed literature and leadership studies tell us that characteristics of spiritually influenced leaders are desirable in organizations (Delbecq, 1999; Fairholm, 1997; Mitroff & Denton, 1999). My study indicated that spiritual influence determines how leaders perceive power, make decisions, and communicate with others. Each of these three leadership areas of responsibility could be a study in and of itself, with the researcher seeking to confirm or disprove this spiritual influence. Other studies might focus on exploring other areas of leadership possibly impacted by spirituality.

While this study revealed that the development of a spiritually influenced leader evolved over time, it did not tell us how these leaders felt they had been trained or prepared for the leadership role. Was it important that all 15 of these participants had some type of religious

training in childhood? A future study might explore life histories of spiritually influenced leaders to discover any commonalities of developmental experiences.

My study indicated that spiritually influenced leaders of adult education defined spirituality and religion as different though related concepts. It would be interesting to conduct a study of leaders within the field whose practice was not identified as being spiritually influenced. Would they define the terms religion and spirituality in the same way?

The connection of spirituality to the leader's ability to communicate effectively begs to be explored. Is the communication model of a spiritually influenced leader with his or her followers truly more of a triangle with the connection to a Higher Being acting as an amplifier or static filter between the two? And how common are the transcendental communication occurrences described by my participants? Do others act as channels through which sacred guidance is delivered in training presentations or break up fights with a divinely directed choice of words? How many other spiritually influenced leaders act in ways they otherwise would not because something (which they perceived as Divine Guidance) told them to speak or not to speak or showed them ways to communicate which defied language barriers? All these questions could fuel some really interesting studies.

The issue of leadership style examined in this research suggests future study to examine the connection between how an individual perceives the Higher Being and his/her place in the cosmos to how they perceive their role as a leader within a professional organization. Would other studies confirm or refute my proposal that spiritually influenced individuals unconsciously replicate this sacred relationship in secular leadership settings?

These are but a few of the questions which could be explored regarding spirituality and leadership. It is a fascinating field of research, and one I feel will only gain in academic

credibility and acceptance in the coming years. As international leadership educators stated in a recent journal article (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2004):

The deeper dimensions of transformational change represent a largely unexplored territory both in current management research and in our understanding of leadership in general. This....concerns not what leaders do and how they do it – but the who, who we are and the inner place or source from which we operate, both individually and collectively. (p. 15)

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APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Research Question 1:****How do adult education leaders describe their style of leadership?****Interview questions:**

Describe for me your style of leadership.

Describe for me the actions of an outstanding leader?

Are there any leaders of the past or present on which you pattern your leadership behavior?

**Research Question 2:****How do adult education leaders perceive and describe spirituality?****Interview Questions:**

It is important for me to understand how you perceive spirituality. Please describe an event in your life which you believe was deeply spiritual.

What would you say is your definition of spirituality?

Describe how you viewed spirituality at age 25...and now. Do those views differ, if so, how?

Describe your thoughts and feelings concerning these two words...religion and spirituality?

**Research Question 3:****How do adult education leaders perceive and describe their experiences of spiritually influenced leadership?****Interview Questions:**

Describe for me a specific incidence in your professional life where you felt your spirituality very much influenced the way you performed your role as a leader.

Describe for me specific leadership activities you feel are influenced by your spirituality.

What do you believe are the advantages or disadvantages of a spiritually influenced form of leadership?

Describe for me you think and feel when you hear the phrase “separation of church and state”

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE PAGE OF

BRACKETING/REDUCTION OF MIKE TRANSCRIPT



	Interview transcript	Horizontalization
<b>J</b>	<b>Let's talk about your style of leadership. The field of adult education is broad and diverse, with probably about as many ways to perform the task of leading as there are existing programs. Describe for me the way that you lead, your particular style of leadership.</b>	
<b>Mike</b>	Well, to use one of the labels...there are a lot of different style of leadership, but servant leadership is definitely a leadership style that I heavily subscribe to. I think leadership is largely about stewardship, not about ownership...ahhhh...leadership is not about controlling...I think...you know I started my career in leadership in the authoritative or power model of leadership but my thirty something years of experience has taught me...and really my spiritual life has taught me that leadership is really about serving others, not controlling others. It's not about power, it's about giving away power and equipping others...so that's a long way of saying that servant leadership is what I ascribe to....ahhh...my leadership style is very participatory...ahhh...it's....I like to subscribe to...what I often talk about is leading from the heart...and ahhh...so that's the way I try.....authentic....I would rather have people think of me as authentic leader....someone who is concerned with their welfare..and uhh....very concerned with the people I lead...very....ahhhh....I'm a feeler...you know my Meyers Briggs is....ahhhh....I'm a bleedin extravert but I'm intuitive.....ummmm...I'm ENFJ....so I'm a feeler. All decisions I consider the human impact it makes. I'm very sensitive to the... how my leadership impacts people	<p><b>servant leadership</b> is definitely a leadership style that I heavily subscribe to. I think leadership <b>is largely about stewardship, not about ownership...ahhhh...leadership is not about controlling</b></p> <p><b>I started my career in leadership in the authoritative or power model</b> of leadership but my thirty something years of experience has taught me...and really <b>my spiritual life has taught me that leadership is really about serving others, not controlling others. It's not about power, it's about giving away power</b> and equipping others...</p> <p><b>my leadership style is very participatory...</b></p> <p>I often talk about is <b>leading from the heart</b></p> <p><b>....I would rather have people think of me as authentic leader....someone who is concerned with their welfare..</b></p> <p><b>All decisions I consider the human impact it makes. I'm very sensitive to the... how my leadership impacts people</b></p>

## APPENDIX C

### SAMPLE OF HORIZONTALIZATION PROCESS

CLUSTERING OF INVARIANT THEMES ACROSS DATA SETS  
REFERENCES TO DEEPLY SPIRITUAL EVENT – BIRTH EXPERIENCES

DV	FRANK	HENRIETTA
<p>I had the privilege of standing there...<b>trying to help my wife in the process</b>, although I don't know how much help I provided...</p> <p>But <b>when I saw my son come out I thought that was a realization that this was not an accident...and that there is a God out there that makes all this possible</b></p> <p>It was one of those times where if you had met any atheists who didn't believe that God existed, where this whole thing is just an accident and we die and we're just gone...<b>I would have had a lot of experience at that instance to tell an atheist, "There is a God, you gotta see my son now</b></p> <p><b>I remember for a few seconds in there I just was out in space....I didn't know what was taking place.</b></p> <p>I always believed there was God, but that was just a big proof. <b>That to me was just the most amazing experience...</b> I was looking at that little human there... I was in the process of something just amazing...and then <b>when he started to scream I came back to reality....</b></p>	<p>The one that comes to mind quickly....and probably does for a lot of people is <b>the birth of a child...</b></p> <p>we have two daughters. <b>I was present for both of those... you understand in those situations that there is a whole lot more going on here than I can understand.</b></p> <p>My wife of course was conscious at the time....<b>after the excitement and the awe, we talked about our responsibility to the girls...what this was going to mean long term...</b></p> <p>that sort of thing, so yeah, we <b>identified it as spiritual.</b></p>	<p>One of the most spiritual things that ever happened to me is <b>the birth of my children...</b></p> <p>because...because you think that...I mean you kind of see that...I don't know...it kinda makes you...</p> <p>it really kind of <b>makes you grow up inside and decide who you're gonna be as a person....and who you want your children to be.</b></p> <p>And I think that makes you real...<b>that made me really deeply reflect on...ummm... what life's all about....</b></p>

## APPENDIX D

### TEXTURAL DESCRIPTION FROM FOUR BIRTH EXPERIENCES

### **DEEPLY SPIRITUAL EVENTS: BIRTH**

It's a strange kind of euphoria that you have only at that time.

I was so happy.... there was no fear...

It was a lot of excitement...looking towards the future.

That deep, deep sense of belonging to each other

When I saw my son come out I thought that was a realization that this was not an accident...and that there is a God out there that makes all this possible

I remember for a few seconds in there I just was out in space....I didn't know what was taking place. That was the biggest thing. I always believed there was God, but that was just a big proof. I was in the process of something just amazing...and then when he started to scream I came back to reality...

I think that experience is the one that will always stick with me....the one that taught me that there is some Supreme Power out there.

Realize that life is not an accident...and that we die to go somewhere else...it's a cycle....

It really kind of makes you grow up inside and decide who you're gonna be as a person.... and who you want your children to be.

I think that makes you really deeply reflect on what life's all about....

You understand in those situations that there is a whole lot more going on here than I can understand

After the excitement and the awe, we talked about our responsibility to the girls...what this was going to mean long term...

### **FIELD NOTE DESCRIPTIONS OF PARTICIPANT BEHAVIOR AT THAT MOMENT**

Smiling....excitedly moves arms in retelling of the event, projects a sense of awe, wonder

Looks beyond me as he tries to describe his condition of "being out there", beyond reality

Emotional, tears up....pause....shifts in his chair, looks down, 4 seconds before speaking again

Emotional moment, pauses, clears throat, smiles without words as he regains his voice

Pauses, shifts, secret smile as though in remembrance of event only she shared, pause

Smiles, exudes pride, happiness, very emotional as he searches for description of euphoria

### **STUCTURAL DESCRIPTION OF ALL BIRTH EXPERIENCES**

**Henrietta, Bill, Frank, DV:** witnessing and participating in the birth process - triangle

Emotional event, perceived connection between Higher Being, themselves, another person

### **SYNTHESIS OF TEXTURAL AND STRUCTURAL - BIRTH EXPERIENCES**

Birth experiences are deeply spiritual for they are an emotionally overwhelming time of connection not only between the individual and the Higher Being, but between the individual and other persons, an interconnectedness. This moment of connection forever changed the way these individuals made meaning and functioned in their world.

## APPENDIX E

SAMPLE EMAIL SENT TO ALL PARTICIPANTS FOR FINAL MEMBER CHECK

Hello XXXXXX,

I am in the data analysis stage of my spirituality study and I would like for you to do a "member check". Could you read through the attached tentative findings, locate those sections which mention you (remember you are XXXXX in this study), and evaluate whether I have represented you and your words appropriately.

Please let me know if there are any corrections to be made concerning accuracy of the quotations or interpretation of your data. Also, if you have any other comments or thoughts concerning this topic, please don't hesitate to include those in your return email as well.

Also, I am beginning work on the conclusions chapter and I welcome your input concerning what you think would be the most important conclusion to draw from this study. I am trying to narrow down to three main conclusions and find myself too close to the data to do this as well as I would like.

As always, I deeply appreciate your giving me the time it will take to include this task in an already busy schedule, and I thank you for being a wonderful participant. Your wisdom contributed greatly to this study.

Jeanette Fleming  
Adult Education Graduate Student  
University of Georgia