TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT IN GRADUATE SEMINARY STUDENTS

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Michele Houser Wollert
December 2003

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

UMI Number: 3119316

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI®

UMI Microform 3119316

Copyright 2004 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Copyright © 2003 by Michele Houser Wollert
All rights reserved.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Michele Houser Wollert entitled "Transformative Learning and Faith Development in Graduate Seminary Students." I have examined the final paper copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

Ralph G. Brockett, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

David Dungan

Colleen Gilrane

Marla Peterson

Mary Ziegler

Accepted for the Council:

Vice Provost and Dean of
Graduate Studies

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Leland and Ellen Houser,
wonderful encouragers, and to my husband, David Wollert, a patient
sounding board, and to my daughter Malynda,
the cause of some transformative learning in my life,
and to my late grandmother, Linda Rose Edwards,
who sacrificially promoted higher education as an ideal for her
children and grandchildren, even when she was unable to pursue it herself,
and to the rest of my family, for always believing in me,
supporting me, and holding up education as a way to
effect higher change in life.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank all of those who helped me complete my Doctor of Philosophy in Education. I would like to thank Ralph Brockett for sticking with me and offering guidance through several years of changing life situations. I would like to thank Colleen Gilrane for helping me to increase my skills in qualitative research and for several stimulating discussions of spirituality and education. I would like to thank Marla Peterson for aiding in my knowledge of counseling and career development. I would like to thank Mary Ziegler for offering her expertise in the area of transformative learning. I would also like to thank David Dungan for serving on my committee and offering a religious studies perspective on my research..

My thanks also go to Russell West for helping me with my double-blind research design and offering me the use of educational resources in my local area. I would like to thank Sheila Long, whose expertise in transcribing interviews really advanced the completion of my study. My thanks go to Keith Nakoff for contributing his expertise in graphics design to draw Figure 5.2.

I would like to thank my friends, Russell and Melanie McNutt, for their hospitality in my times of driving 100 miles to attend classes. I would also like to thank my aunt and uncle, Dawn and Bryan Hood, for their hospitality as I traveled to attend classes. I would like to thank my family, friends, and faith community, whose suggestions and encouragement made this work possible. Most importantly, I would like to give thanks to God for giving me the opportunities and abilities to explore individuals' faith development and transformative learning.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ABSTRACT

This study sought to understand the transformative learning experiences and faith development of students at a graduate theological seminary. The theories of Jack Mezirow and James Fowler were used in constituting a conceptual framework. The Barnes Fowler-Scale, an instrument designed to place individuals at a particular stage of faith development, was distributed to the whole school population. Several volunteer students from faith stages 2 through 5 were selected to be interviewed. A semi-structured interview protocol was used to learn more about the interviewees' learning experiences in seminary

The reliability of the Barnes Fowler-Scale was found to be very low with this population (α=.30). It was suggested that the instrument be used as a conversation starter, rather than as a stable indicator of faith development stage, until it had undergone more testing and revision.

A pictorial model of the overall student seminary experience was constructed after analyzing the interviews using qualitative research methods. Themes in three major life roles emerged—the Seminary Setting, the Personal Role, and the Professional Roles. Some themes explored in the Seminary Setting included curriculum, Bible, reasons for graduate education, importance of community, and the juggling/balancing act. In the Personal Role, the themes of reason, spiritual practices, why that particular seminary, support of family, personality, reflection, the past, and the future were explored. The themes of academia, prior Christian education, and the best education for a minister were examined in the academic domain under Professional Roles. In the ministerial domain under Professional Roles, the following themes were reviewed: dichotomies, denomination, and women in ministry. Faith development and transformative learning were discussed in each of the three major life roles.

Catalysts and supports for transformative learning and faith development were identified and explored in more detail. Recommendations for institutional and instructional practice were offered, and suggestions for further research in both faith development and transformative learning were made.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table of Contents

Chapter

I. Introduction 1
Problem to Be Investigated 2
Purpose of the Study 3
Research Questions 3
Significance of the Study 4
Limitations and Delimitations 6
Theoretical/Conceptual Framework 6
Mezirow and Transformation Theory 7
Controversies Surrounding Transformation Theory 10
Fowler and Faith Development 14
Criticisms of Fowler's Model 17
Transformative Learning and Faith Development Theory 20
Definitions 20
Knowing and meaning in the two models 22
Stage 3 - Stage 4 transition and the two theories 25
Young adult faith 26
Summary 29

II. Method 31
Setting for the Study 32
Population 33
Volunteers 33
Research Design and Data Collection Procedures 34
Barnes Fowler-Scale 35
Qualitative Interview 37
Data Analysis Procedures 38
Role of the Researcher 41
Timeline of the Study 42

III. Quantitative Findings 45
Participants 45
Faith-Style Groups (Stages) 46
Reliability 46
Patterns in Non-Stage Participant Responses 53
Faith-Style Groups and Question Responses 53
Faith-Style Group and Age 56
Faith-Style Group and Denomination 58
Faith-Style Group and Educational Level 58
Faith-Style Group and Course Completion 61
Summary 61

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

IV. **Description of Interviewees** 69
Sam Hendricks 69
Lisa Wentworth 72
Gus Doring 73
Roger Talent 73
Will Davidson 74
Sloan Wallace 75
Jim Smith 75
Joseph Foote 76
John Roosevelt 77
Mary Baker 78
Stan Dudley 79
Marvin Dewey 79
Ashley Hanover 80
Polly Washington 81

V. **Seminary Setting** 83
Overview of Model 83
Seminary Setting 87
Curriculum 88
Readings 88
D.Min. program 89
Old Testament Introduction and New Testament Introduction .. 92
Clinical Pastoral Education 94
Supervised Ministerial Experience 95
Thesis 96
Ministerial learning 97
Bible 99
Reasons for Graduate Education 101
Personal reasons 101
Academic goals 102
Professional reasons 104
Importance of Community 106
Negative student interactions 108
Mentor figures 109
Juggling/Balancing Act 109
Faith Development and the Seminary Setting 111
Stage 2 Participants 112
Stage 3 Participants 114
Stage 4 Participants 115
Stage 5 Participants 117
Non-Stage Participants 118
Faith Stage and Theological Stance 119

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Young Adult Faith Development 120
Transformative Learning and the Seminary Setting 122
Disorientation 122
Grounding 123
Precipitating Factors 125
Mitigating Factors 126
Summary 127

VI. Personal Role 129
Reason 129
Spiritual Practices 131
Communal 131
Personal 132
Why El-Shaddai 135
Support of Family 137
Personality 138
Reflection 139
The Past 140
Call Stories 141
Conversion 142
Past Education 144
Past Employment 145
The Future 147
Faith Development and the Personal Role 149
Stage 2 Participants 149
Stage 3 Participants 151
Stage 4 Participants 153
Stage 5 Participants 153
Non-Stage Participants 155
Aspects of Faith Development 155
Form of logic 156
Locus of authority 157
Perspective taking 157
Symbolic function 158
Form of world coherence 158
Form of moral judgment 159
Bounds of social awareness 160
Transformative Learning and the Personal Role 160
Transformation of Meaning Schemes 160
Disorientation 162
Neutral Zone 163

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Precipitating Factors 164
Mitigating Factors 166
Summary 168

VII. Professional Roles 171
The Academic Domain 171
Academia 172
Prior Christian Education 173
Best Education for a Minister 176
The Ministerial Domain 178
Dichotomies 182
Practical vs. theoretical 182
Seminary vs. real world 185
Idealism vs. realism 186
Denomination 187
Denominational change 187
El-Shaddai's denominational roots 189
Ecumenical 190
Women in Ministry 191
Faith Development in the Professional Roles 194
Transformative Learning in the Professional Roles 200
Precipitating Factors 201
Mitigating Factors 202
Summary 203

VIII. Discussion 205
Reliability of the Barnes Fowler-Scale 205
Overall Model 208
Transformative Learning 210
Faith Development and Cultural Parallels 214
Catalysts for Change 220
Supports for Change 224
Summary 227

IX. Recommendations and Conclusion 229
Recommendations 231
Recommendations for Practice 231
Institutional 231
Instructional 236
Recommendations for Further Research 244
Contributions to faith development theory 247

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Contributions to transformative learning theory 248
Summary of future research 249
Conclusion 249

References 251

Appendices 263

Vita 287

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

List of Tables

Table		Page
1.1	Fowler's Faith Development Stages	16
1.2	Suggested Parallels in Mezirow's and Fowler's Concepts	24
1.3	Faith Development and Learning from Adolescence to Mature Adulthood	28
2.1	Aspects of Faith Styles Chosen for Fowler Scale	36
3.1	Summaries of Participants and Faith Groups (Stages)	47
3.2	Cross-Classification of Responses to Question 1 and Question 2	49
3.3	Cross-Classification of Responses to Question 5 and Question 6	50
3.4	Cross-Classification of Responses to Question 8 and Question 9	52
3.5	Participants Not Categorized in a Stage and Responses	54
3.6	Responses to Paired Comparisons Shown by Overall Faith Stage	55
3.7	Frequencies of Faith-Style Groups by Age	57
3.8	Frequencies of Faith-Style Groups in Different Denominations	59
3.9	Frequencies of Faith-Style Groups in Different Completed Educational Levels	60
3.10	Cross-Classification of Status of Old Testament Introduction (OTI) Course and Faith Stage	62
3.11	Cross-Classification of Status of New Testament Introduction (NTI) Course and Faith Stage	63
3.12	Cross-Classification of Status of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Course and Faith Stage	64
3.13	Cross-Classification of Status of Supervised Ministerial Experience (SME) Course and Faith Stage	65
4.1	Participants and Some Pertinent Learning Experiences	70
5.1	Age Range of Interviewees and Faith Stage on BFS	121
8.1	Faith Stages/Tempers and Ideologies	215

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In today's culture, there seems to be a renewed interest in spirituality. As English and Gillen (2000) remark, "Spirituality! Like dandelions in the spring, the term is cropping up everywhere" (p. 1). The postmodern critique of the Enlightenment's emphasis on logical positivism may have partially contributed to the surge of interest in phenomena beyond the senses. Individuals are also searching for meaning in a new century fraught with uncertainties. The word "spirituality" is currently used in many circles, from contexts as divergent as corporate boardrooms to traditional religious communities. Its use in such a variety of settings suggests that spirituality may be a difficult concept to verbalize. English and Gillen (2000) remark that "it has such a variety of meanings that defining it is like trying to pin jelly to a wall; it does not stick" (p. 1). Hamilton and Jackson (1998) propose a three-part definition of spirituality found in themes in a study of women in the helping professions: the further development of self awareness, a sense of interconnectedness, and a relationship to a higher power. Most uses of the word would include at least part of these themes.

"Faith" is related to the concept of spirituality. Many individuals are interested in studying this phenomenon, another nebulous concept. Merriam Webster's Deluxe Dictionary (1998) defines "faith" in statements from "allegiance to duty or a person" to "something that is believed especially with strong conviction" (p. 657). A specifically-religious biblical definition of the word "faith" is related to the second sense: "Now faith

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1, NRSV). "Faith" appears to be related to one's loyalties and beliefs, which often involve a religious component.

Adult educators are committed to helping adults gain knowledge both informally and formally throughout their lives, enabling them to be lifelong learners. Within the professional field of adult education, this has usually been accomplished in the secular arena, with religious education being seen as a smaller segment of the larger field. However, according to Zinn (1997), spirituality is at the root of adult education. Spirituality can be incorporated into the traditional philosophical foundations of adult education—liberal, progressive, humanistic, and radical. Even though some adult educators have shied away from spirituality in their practice, it is an important part of individuals' everyday lives.

Many professionals in the field of adult education, particularly adult religious education, have a vested interest in exploring ways of helping individuals' faith develop. A person's faith may grow and change as the person encounters new knowledge. This development may at times involve a radical shift in one's beliefs in response to life experiences and lead to a type of learning that may truly transform a person's life. Attempting to understand more about how faith development and transformative learning occur is the focus of this study.

Problem to Be Investigated

Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation (1991a) has been studied in many settings over the past few years. Fowler's model of faith development (1981) has also

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

been examined in a variety of settings. The two models, however, have not been formally studied in juxtaposition. It has been considered an area of research interest to determine how spirituality may be a part of perspective transformation (E. W. Taylor, 1998). Specifically, an area of research might be to determine how one's spiritual nature may be altered during the transformative learning process. One way of doing this is to assess an individual's faith stage and have them describe transformative events. Relating faith development and perspective transformation also requires looking at these individuals' transformative learning experiences. This study seeks to describe the process of perspective transformation in the context of faith development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to better understand the role of faith in individuals experiencing perspective transformation. An interaction between faith development and transformative learning may be uniquely experienced by adults who are continuing their education in graduate school. Ideas that learners may encounter in graduate classes may precipitate "disorienting dilemmas" (Mezirow, 1991a) in some individuals, which may lead to transformative learning. This process may include a spiritual component. Understanding the faith development aspects of transformative learning may help educators, counselors, and religious professionals (both lay and clergy) to better address the needs that adults undergoing transformative learning may be experiencing.

Research Questions

The following primary research questions will be examined in this study of faith development and transformative learning:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1. How do adults at different levels on Fowler's model of faith development experience perspective transformation in the context of their schooling-related activities?

2. What types of experiences seem to precipitate and mitigate perspective transformation and faith transition?

A secondary research question to be explored in this study is:

3. What is the reliability of the Barnes Fowler-Scale?

Significance of the Study

It is anticipated that this study will contribute to the theoretical basis of transformation theory and faith development. Dirkx (1998) has postulated that there are four lenses through which to look at transformational learning: emancipatory, cognitive-rational, developmental, and spiritual-integrative. Although this study may contribute to all of these views of transformational learning, its most significant advancement would be in the spiritual-integrative approach. Going beyond rational thought to concentrate on extrarational, soul-based learning, this approach focuses on feelings and images. By contemplating perspective transformation in the context of faith development, more will be learned about this soul-based type of transformational learning. Helping to delineate the types of learning which take place in Fowler's different stages, adding another perspective through which to look at faith development, will be another contribution of this study.

Further research in the areas of both transformative learning and faith development will be abetted by this study. Reliability data on the Barnes Fowler-Scale could help in refining the instrument and applying it to other groups. A basis of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

comparison for using the Barnes Fowler-Scale versus the full Fowler semi-structured interview protocol will result from such a reliability analysis. Research has been done on both Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation and Fowler's stages of faith, but there has not been formal work done on juxtaposing the two models. More is known now about perspective transformation than was known in 1978 when Mezirow's book on the topic was published. Mezirow's seminal study concentrated on women returning to school as adults, but his theory has since been applied to other populations. Seminary students, many of whom are returning to school after an extended hiatus, will constitute a different group from those studied previously. Describing the results from this population may help to broaden an understanding of the transformative process.

Individuals in educational practice may also benefit from this study. Understanding how seminary coursework goes with transformative learning and faith development will give adult educators and seminary instructors more information to help in the design of educational experiences to fit their different course goals. By examining how perspective transformation has taken place in the context of faith development, a new viewpoint will be gained for helping adult students with the spiritual aspects of transformative learning. Such information on faith and learning could be of help to counselors, as well as educators, in helping adults to negotiate such a life-changing experience. This study's results could impact the future use of the Barnes Fowler-Scale as a screening tool for determining faith development (and each stage's accompanying characteristics), thereby giving educators, ministers, or other caregivers more information about the faith context of the people with whom they are working. By enabling helping

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

professionals to give better support, this study should facilitate the process of transformative learning having a positive outcome, rather than the negative potential of it becoming an endlessly self-limiting cycle (Merriam, Mott, and Lee, 1996).

Limitations and Delimitations

The sample for this study will be limited to students at a graduate theological seminary located in a mid-Southern state supported by a traditionally conservative religious movement. All returning students will be surveyed in this population study. The generalizability of the statistical results will be limited to similar populations.

There will be limitations inherent in the surveys or instruments used. The Fowler instrument that will be used does not do the fine screening that the full Fowler semi-structured interview does. Limited data are available on the reliability and validity of the scale. Demographic information used to describe the population will have the usual statistical limitations associated with the type of items being used.

The qualitative portion of the study will be limited by the amount of information that participants will share. It will also be influenced by the experiences of the researcher, as the one doing the study becomes part of the total qualitative study process.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This section will present an overview of Mezirow's transformative learning theory and Fowler's model of faith development. After this overview of the two theories, a comparison and contrast between the two models will be given, leading to a synthesis that serves as a framework for this study.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mezirow and Transformation Theory

Jack Mezirow's transformation theory is rooted in writings from fields as diverse as philosophy, psychology, sociology, neurobiology, linguistics, religion, and education (Mezirow, 1991a). However, Mezirow himself delineates what he sees as his major early influences in his latest work (2000).

According to Mezirow (2000), some of his earliest understanding was influenced by the concept of "paradigm," described in Thomas Kuhn's influential work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). Added to this was the idea of "conscientization" explained by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). The work of psychiatrist Roger Gould (1978) in the area of transformation also had a strong impact on the development of transformation theory.

Another primary influence was the development of critical theory by the Frankfurt School of German philosophers (Mezirow, 2000). This school saw critical reflection as the process by which hegemonic ideology would be unmasked. In particular, Jurgen Habermas (1984) extended the ideas of critical theory in addition to giving other alternatives. Habermas' idea that reflection was a form of self-formation that releases one from the constraint of dysfunctional beliefs was a powerful addition to critical theory. Influential ideas of Habermas that became building blocks for transformation theory include: the delineation of the concepts of communicative competence and instrumental learning as being primary provinces of learning; the identification of the dominant role of discourse in validating beliefs; and the idea of reflection as a form of self-formation (Mezirow, 1991a).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mezirow has conceptualized his theory of perspective transformation in a rather orderly fashion by dividing it into phases. These phases were created inductively from structured interviews conducted as part of a national study of women returning to college after being away for an extended hiatus. The phases of perspective transformation were delineated as follows:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of option for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning of a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and
10. A reintegration into one's life of the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. (1991a, pp. 168-169)

From these phases of the perspective transformation process, one can see that growth is implied after negotiating such a change. Mezirow argues for an interpretation of perspective transformation that can be linked to adult development. He states that:

> . . . transformation can lead developmentally toward a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable, and integrated perspective and that, insofar as it is possible, we all naturally move toward such an orientation. This is what development means in adulthood. It should be clear that a strong case can be made for calling perspective transformation the central process of adult development. (1991a, p. 155)

Some adult educators have argued that the link between adult development and perspective transformation needs to be made more explicit in Mezirow's theory. Tennant (1993), for instance, ties Mezirow's ideas of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in with normative and fundamentally transformative adult development. According to Tennant, many usual life changes may seem like they would involve transformative learning but actually fit in with expected life happenings (e.g., changes having to do with moving away from home, getting married, having a child). These readjustments may really be changes in a person's *location* within an all-encompassing, presumed world view. Tennant tries to clarify the distinction between the two:

> The transformation of meaning schemes is somehow less fundamental than perspective transformation proper. The former implies development and progress within a taken-for-granted world view. The latter implies development which results from the exposure and deconstruction of a given world view and its replacement with a new world view. (p. 39)

Mezirow does not fully agree with this distinction, however. He remarks, "Our 'world view' can also be changed without transformative learning by acquiring new meaning schemes" (1994a, p. 229).

Mezirow sees the role of the adult educator as being an organizer of enlightenment. This notion has been questioned by Collard and Law (1989) who suggest that "this in turn raises questions about the nature of that enlightenment, about its normative dimension, a problem most evident in Mezirow's discussion of perspective taking" (p. 104). If one is committed to a faith tradition, some issues of normativity are answered by that community. The adult educator is therefore an organizer of some specific enlightenment. Anchoring one's practice within that specific faith tradition while remaining open to having ideas within that tradition transformed can be a challenge for the adult religious educator. Fowler's model of faith development can be helpful for

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

addressing some of the issues raised by Mezirow's formulation concerning the balance between stability and openness.

Controversies Surrounding Transformation Theory

After presenting an overview of Mezirow's model and its roots in other disciplines, it is helpful to take a closer look at Mezirow's model within the adult education community. In an extensive review of Mezirow's work, E. W. Taylor (1998) gives an overview of items written about Mezirow. He finds two overall patterns. One pattern is a theoretical critique given in published papers focusing on issues of social action, critical pedagogy, adult development, reflection, and context and rationality. The second pattern is comprised of 40 unpublished empirical studies done by graduate students for doctoral dissertations. The theoretical debate will be reviewed in this section of the paper.

In an effort to give a flavor of the theoretical discussion about Mezirow's transformation theory, a retrospective trip will be taken through articles in the *Adult Education Quarterly* having to do with transformation theory. A debate has taken place over whether Mezirow's model addresses personal or collective change. Cunningham (1992), in a review of Mezirow's book *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, remarks that Mezirow discusses distinctions between his theory and Freire's, yet does not include his own concepts of frame, structure, and paradigm in his own model, thereby neglecting the social origins of individual growth-inhibiting assumptions. Mezirow (1992) disagrees with Cunningham's analysis and rebuts her statement. He states:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Cunningham erroneously suggests that I have failed to acknowledge that these meaning structures are produced by economic and cultural power relationships. However, this rather self-evident point is explicitly made on pages 131-138, where I discuss hegemonic ideology, false consciousness, and "implicit ideologies, language games, cultural codes; social norms, roles and practice" which constitute sociolinguistic premise distortions. (p. 251)

Clark and Wilson (1991) criticize Mezirow's theory for a lack of emphasis on context. They remark that his theory reflects "the humanistic assumption of a unified rational self" (p. 78) and argue that the contextual dimension is in itself part of the meaning structure. Mezirow's theory is itself in a particular context, and his transformation theory model reflects "the hegemonic American values of individualism, rationality, and autonomy. We cite Mezirow not for reflecting these values of the dominant culture of which he is a part, but for incorporating them uncritically within his theory" (p. 80). Mezirow replies to this critique by saying he has failed to communicate his meaning and remarks that "the cultural context is literally embodied and gives meaning to the symbolic models and meaning perspectives central to my argument" (1991b, p. 190). Mezirow goes on to say that he believes rationality is not free from the cultural context that gives it meaning.

Mezirow (1994) responds to Tennant's distinction between normative and transformative learning (1993), mentioned earlier, by saying that

> Perhaps Tennant is inadvertently calling attention to the difference between perspective transformation resulting from critical reflection and that resulting from critical self-reflection. This is an important distinction between deliberately focusing on the beliefs of others or the world and beliefs about oneself. (1994, p. 228)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Tennant (1994) replies that the purpose of his article was "to blur the boundaries between the psychological and the social. . . . My main concern is not so much with the conceptual niceties of a perspective transformation, but with the need for adult educators to adopt a developmental perspective on their work" (p. 234). The distinction between critical reflection and critical self-reflection has been made in more detail in Mezirow's later work (Mezirow, 1998).

Mezirow's distinctions between reflection and action are also discussed. His description of reflection is perhaps more complete than his characterization of action. Newman (1994) characterizes Mezirow's concept of reflection as being unique:

> Perspective transformation involves achieving a form of meta-reflection in which, if successful, we not only see the world and ourselves more clearly, we see ourselves seeing the world. We perceive our perceptions. We are aware of awareness. . . . Mezirow has directed our reflection to matters of cultural significance. In doing this Mezirow has recontextualized the act of reflection. (p. 239)

Newman goes on to say that although Mezirow has recontextualized reflection and thus the concept of self in learning, he has almost done the opposite with action.

The conversation between Mezirow and his critics continues in later articles. Mezirow (1994b) responds to both Tennant and Newman. He replies to Tennant that:

> it seems unsupportable to suggest that every perspective transformation must involve a critique of social oppression. This would have to include transformative learning pertaining to music, art, mathematics, poetry and spiritual experience as well. (p. 243)

Mezirow claims to have "decontextualized both reflection and action in an effort to construct an abstract theoretical model of adult learning" (p. 243) in his reply to Newman.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In a somewhat later article, Mezirow (1996) seems to back-pedal a bit on his earlier statements concerning his theory, perhaps due to criticism, in a 12-proposition statement of Transformation Theory. He states that transformation theory is a synthesis of the Western rational tradition's manifestation of the objectivist paradigm and the cognitive revolution's form of the interpretivist paradigm (i.e., it looks at both facts and *interpretation* of facts, which may be linked to feelings). He tries to delineate differences between meaning schemes and meaning perspectives and again addresses both reflection and action. By applying discourse in reflection and action, a person is able to test the validity of his or her beliefs and interpretations.

Pietrykowski (1996) looks at Mezirow's appropriation of Freire's and Habermas' thought into transformative learning theory. Pietrykowski's main criticisms have to do with what he considers Mezirow's artificial separation between self-reflective learning, dialogic action learning, and instrumental learning, and his depiction of adult education with the purpose of developing emancipated learners engaging in communication without distortions. Pietrykowski says his criticisms are rooted in the larger methodological concern of modern versus postmodern approaches to adult education. Pietrykowski's problem with Mezirow's theory "is the teleological nature of learning and meaning transformation posited by Mezirow" (p. 91). He thinks that Mezirow has a modern, rather than a postmodern, view of power.

> One may alternatively understand power as a process in which people participate and within which people are positioned. . . . Power is immanent in the act of knowing. . . . Actions aimed at overcoming power may result in the creation of new forms of power. (p. 92)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mezirow (1996b) replies to Pietrykowski's article by asking how one can ever come to an understanding with others without some type of bracketing of assumptions and power. "We engage in a dialectical process of discourse to share the experiences of others across differences" (p. 237). The understanding of power is presupposed by transformation theory, according to Mezirow.

One of Mezirow's more recent elaborations on his theory presents a taxonomy of critical reflection of assumptions (1998). Mezirow has divided critical reflection into two categories, objective reframing dealing with instrumental learning and subjective reframing relating to learning about oneself. The subjective reframing is more pertinent for looking at perspective transformation. One can perhaps experience objective reframing without undergoing perspective transformation since the reflection is less personal. The debate and conversation between Mezirow and his critics will in all likelihood continue, hopefully contributing to a better understanding of his important model of adult development.

Fowler and Faith Development

James Fowler's theory of faith development is based upon his grounding in developmental theorists Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, and Lawrence Kohlberg, as well as in his understanding of faith from the standpoint of his study in theology. Fowler has his own particular definition of "faith," stated as follows:

> People's evolved and evolving ways of experiencing self, others and world (as they construct them)... as related to and affected by the ultimate conditions of existence (as they construct them). . .and of shaping their live's purposes and meanings, trusts and loyalties, in light of the character of being, value and power

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> determining the ultimate conditions of existence (as grasped in their operative images—conscious and unconscious—of them). (Fowler, 1981, pp. 92-93)

As can be seen from Fowler's definition, his idea of faith may not necessarily refer to a religious phenomenon, although it often will. His idea of faith deals primarily with how people make meaning in their lives. Fowler's model is a stage model that describes characteristics of faith at particular levels. His stages of faith, along with descriptions of forces causing movement from each stage, are shown in Table 1.1. Some of these catalysts for change are developmental in origin, whereas others arise from moral or ethical dilemmas. Conversion is a change in the contents of one's faith and can happen in any of the faith stages or at any of the transitions between them.

Fowler postulates six possible relationships between formal structural stage changes and conversional changes in the arena of faith:

1. Stage change without conversional change
2. Conversional change without faith stage change
3. Conversional change that precipitates a faith stage change
4. Faith stage change that precipitates conversional change
5. Conversional change that is correlated with, and goes hand in hand with, a structural change
6. Conversional change that blocks or helps one avoid the pain of faith stage changes. (1981, p. 285-286)

By referring to Table 1.1, one may observe some particular changes that could precipitate the move from Stage 3, Synthetic-Conventional Faith, to Stage 4, Individuative-Reflective Faith. One may particularly notice that shifting from Stage 3 to Stage 4 involves a critical reflection on the origin and alteration of one's beliefs and values, as well as an acknowledgment of some "relativity" when compared with those of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 1.1
Fowler's Faith Development Stages

Stage	Characteristics	Transition to next stage
Pre-Stage: Undifferentiated Faith (The Incorporative Self)	The seeds of trust, courage, hope, and love are fused in an undifferentiated way and contend with sensed threats of abandonment, inconsistencies, and deprivations in an infant's environment.	Convergence of thought and language, opening up the use of symbols in speech and ritual play.
Stage 1: Intuitive/Projective Faith (The Impulsive Self)	The world is given meaning through parents and other primary adults by intuitively projecting meaning through imitation of those adults.	Emergence of concrete operational thinking. Resolution or submersion of Oedipal issues. Child's growing concern to know how things are and clarify what is real and what only seems to be.
Stage 2: Mythic/Literal Faith (The Imperial Self)	Meaning here is derived from those groups with which a person is affiliated; faith appropriates from the community those stories (myths) which make sense of the environment, taking them literally.	Implicit contradictions in stories that lead to reflection on meanings. Formal operational thought makes this possible. Literalism breaks down. Emergence of mutual interpersonal perspective taking necessitates more personal relationship with unifying power of ultimate environment.
Stage 3: Synthetic/Conventional Faith (The Interpersonal Self)	This is conforming faith, taking direction from popular convention, but beyond Stage 2 involving personal choices among conventions. It balances various conventional demands into a workable synthesis of meaning.	Serious clashes between valued authority sources. Marked changes by official leaders of practices previously deemed sacred. Encounters with experiences or perspectives that lead to critical reflection on how one's beliefs and values have formed and changed, and how "relative" they are to one's particular group or background. "Leaving home" may precipitate this examination.
Stage 4: Individuative/Reflective Faith (The Institutional Self)	This is a pattern of faith personally chosen and consciously differentiated from the expectations of others; autonomous.	Anarchic and disturbing inner voices may intrude. Elements from childish past, deeper self, or a gnawing sense of sterility and flatness of meaning may signal readiness for change. Stories, symbols, and myths may break in on the neatness of previous faith. Disillusionment with one's compromises and recognition that life is more complex than the stage's logic of clear distinctions and abstract concepts can comprehend, press one toward a more dialectical and multivalued approach to life truth.
Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith (The Inter-Individual Self)	This embraces the paradoxes and discontinuities into consolidative patterns; one's own system is seen interdependent with the larger human family.	This stage is divided between an untransformed world and transforming vision and loyalties. This division may yield to the call of radical actualization in the next stage.
Stage 6: Universalizing Faith (The God-Grounded Self)	This is the faith of the saint in which ultimacy, rather than self, is the point of reference.	

Note. Information from *An Introduction to Psychology of Religion*, by R. W. Crapps, 1986, Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, pp. 186-187. Also contains information from *Stages of Faith*, by J. W. Fowler, 1981, New York: Harper & Row, and *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, by J. W. Fowler, 1987, Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

others from different backgrounds. This transition in Fowler's theory sets up an interesting scenario for dialogue with Mezirow's concept of perspective transformation.

Criticisms of Fowler's Model

Fowler's methodology is also not without its critics. Although acknowledging the difficulties of conducting psychosocial research, Nelson and Aleshire (1986) point out a few difficulties associated with Fowler's methodology. The sample was not scientifically chosen, the model was developed before the interviews were administered, and sources of bias present in development research data were present. Fowler defined his phenomenon in a generic fashion and then invented a way to sort through particularity in order to look at his more general construct. The nature of the researchers used for the interview, as well as biases inherent in the questions, make it imperative to interpret the data tentatively, which is exactly what Fowler does. Nelson and Aleshire (1986) also comment on possible errors in coding the interviews. They remark:

> At each point in his research Fowler has opted for the difficult. He deals with a complex concept (faith); theorizes about it from some of the more complex approaches to understanding human development (Piaget and Erikson); and conducts the research with very difficult methods (coded, life-oriented interviews). (p. 199)

Nelson and Aleshire give Fowler high marks in many areas for his treatment of faith but recount the fact that the phenomenon he is studying is very complex, and the difficult choices Fowler made in deciding how to study faith development did not mitigate the complexity. They also remark that his theory is based on some unproved assumptions, as can be the case in research based on theological reflection.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Gender may be a bias when looking at Fowler's theory of faith development. A dissertation by Margaret Ann Cowden supports a gender-based critique of Fowler's stages. This research found that the moral development aspect in Fowler's work may be biased against women who evidence an ethic of care, rather than an ethic of justice (Cowden, 1992). Parks includes Carol Gilligan's women's moral reasoning theory in her work with young adult faith (1986). In other work, she suggests that one also look at images traditionally associated with women when thinking of personal transformation. Returning home is important after going on a spiritual pilgrimage. "The soul's discipline is shaped both by venturing *and* by abiding" (1989, p. 312).

Oser (1991), a researcher who has developed a model of religious logic which in some ways is very similar to Fowler's, found five patterns of reconstructing former religious orientations: 1) reconstruction of many stages and transitions, 2) reconstruction of one prior stage and sample, 3) reconstruction of one prior stage but not of a transition, 4) no reconstruction of former stages and transitions; and 5) low stage, no transitions. Retroactive reconstructions of ways of having faith, in light of Fowler's model, might not be possible for all respondents.

There have been several attempts to develop an instrument to measure faith development that is shorter than Fowler's full semi-structured interview [Leak, Loucks, and Bowlin (1999), Green and Hoffman (1989), Hammond (1993), Clore (1997), and Barnes, Doyle, and Johnson (1992)]. Further development work needs to be done on all these instruments. Clore (1998) found that a person's stage of faith was significantly related to attachment. Green and Hoffman (1989) found that, in general, stage was a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

good predictor of response to people in ingroups and outgroups. More relationships between faith development and other constructs need to be studied.

Theologian James Loder (1981) mentions the inadequacy of normal developmental models for dealing with religious people. In looking at Erikson's treatment of Protestant reformer Martin Luther, Loder describes how Erikson found him off the "normal" scale. Luther's basic nature was built around essentially religious matters. He describes it this way:

> The final stage in the ordinary course of development, namely confronting one's own death, is inextricably tied to the ongoing sense of void at every stage in one's life. Thus, the final crisis in normal people is the lifelong crisis for the religious personality, and the scale of normal development cannot contain, much less explain a person who brings his or her solution to life's final stage into every intervening stage. In effect, this is to reverse development from a standpoint implicitly outside it. (p. 143).

Loder (1981) later says that so-called normal human development is theologically deficient. He says it is something constructed, supported, and maintained by people so that they are drawn out of their complete four dimensions of being. Loder says so-called normal development is two-dimensional, consisting of the inadequate values of survival and satisfaction as governed by socially accepted norms:

> When the relativity and pluralism of personal and social life knows nothing deeper than two dimensions of human existence, just the self and its "world," then conscience is no stronger than is necessary for successful adaptation, and ultimacy is irrelevant. Where definitive values and the concern for ultimacy disappear, people will deplete their own being and destroy each other, ironically, in the name of survival and satisfaction (Loder, 1981, p. 162).

Fowler's theory has been criticized for presenting "two ... contradictory images of the growing self: one gaining egocentricity, one losing it" (Ford-Grabowsky, 1986, p. 7).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

As Ford-Grabowsky notes, one's ego develops rather egocentrically up through Stage 4 in Fowler's model and then becomes transcendent in Stages 5 and 6. She thinks Fowler is talking about two different strains of growth (Ford-Grabowsky, 1986).

Courtenay (1993) argues that relationships between Fowler's theory and adult education are currently tentative. He points out that the hierarchical nature of some models, including Fowler's can be problematic. A person could be considered more "worthy" at a higher stage of development. Research has been done on the effect of education on faith development, and a positive intervention was found to be possible, but this information needs to be made more available. The unattainability of Stage 6 and the unexamined higher male scores are also problems in the model. With these criticisms in mind, perhaps it will be profitable to look at transformative learning and faith development together.

Transformative Learning and Faith Development Theory

This section will examine the similarities and differences between Mezirow's concept of perspective transformation and Fowler's model of faith development in general. Specifics concerning the transition from Stage 3 to Stage 4 will then be compared and contrasted with Mezirow's ideas. A few definitions will initially be given to help negotiate this discussion.

Definitions. The definitions offered in the following section are offered in the words of Mezirow and Fowler. They are listed as an aid to understanding the two theories.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Conversion. A significant recentering of one's previous conscious or unconscious images of value and power, and the conscious adoption of a new set of master stories in the commitment to reshape one's life in a new community of interpretation and action. (Fowler, 1981, pp. 281-282)

Faith. People's evolved and evolving ways of experiencing self, others and world (as they construct them)... as related to and affected by the ultimate conditions of existence (as they construct them). . .and of shaping their live's purposes and meanings, trusts and loyalties, in light of the character of being, value and power determining the ultimate conditions of existence (as grasped in their operative images—conscious and unconscious—of them). (Fowler, 1981, pp. 92-93)

Learning. The process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action. (Mezirow, 1991a, p. 12).

Meaning perspective. The learning by which we become critically aware of the cultural and psychological assumptions that have influenced the way we see ourselves and our relationships and the way we pattern our lives. A meaning perspective refers to the structure of cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated to—and transformed by—one's past experience. (Mezirow, 1978b, p. 101)

Meaning scheme. The particular knowledge, beliefs, value judgments, and feeling that become articulated in an interpretation. Meaning schemes are the concrete

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

manifestations of our habituation orientation and expectations (meaning perspectives). (Mezirow, 1991a, p. 44).

Perspective transformation. The process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrating perspective; and finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings. (Mezirow, 1991a, p. 167) This is one of the types of transformative learning.

Transformative learning. Pertains to both the transformation of meaning schemes through content and process reflection and the transformation of meaning perspectives through premise reflection. (Mezirow, 1991a, p. 117)

Knowing and meaning in the two models. Fowler linked his concept of faith with knowing in some of his later work (Fowler, 1986). He asserts that faith is "a powerful expression of constructive knowing" (p. 20). After reviewing features of other theorists' works involving constitutive knowing, which Fowler describes as "the knowing that composes or establishes both the known and the knower in relation to the known" (p. 21), he concludes that "faith does involve constructions of the self and others, in perspective-taking, in moral analysis and judgment, and in the constitutions of self as related to others which we call ego" (p. 21). Fowler goes on to state that in faith-knowing, the modification or constitution of one's self is always a possibility.

This sounds very similar to the distinction that Mezirow makes between the transformation of meaning schemes and the transformation of meaning perspectives

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

(Mezirow, 1991a). The transformation of meaning perspectives involves one's sense of self, as does the type of knowing involved in faith. One might therefore say that faith, as Fowler defines it, is more closely related to the transformation of meaning perspectives than to the transformation of meaning schemes. Both faith and perspective transformation involve the possibility of one's self being changed. Jarvis (1993) has noted the similarity between Mezirow's idea of changing meaning perspectives and one's faith orientation: "the latter changes are much more momentous in the life of the learner, which Mezirow tends to regard rather like a religious conversion, empowerment or a 'Eureka-experience'" (p. 98).

The way that Fowler uses "conversion," however, may be more nearly related to transformation of meaning schemes. As was noted earlier in this section, one can have a conversion without a change in faith stage, and vice versa. It is a difference between form and content (Fowler, 1981). The relationship might be described as shown in Table 1.2.

Mezirow's theory contains the idea of transformation to a superior meaning perspective that moves one toward greater independence, while also allowing one's meaning structure to become more permeable (Mezirow, 1981). This makes it possible for a person to be even more inclusive and discriminating in including new perspectives. Clark (1993) links this with the all-encompassing worldview of the wise person, which is developed through perspective transformation over time. She then compares Fowler's and Mezirow's concepts of the most highly-developed type of person: "The ultimate, and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 1.2
Suggested Parallels in Mezirow's and Fowler's Concepts

Theorist	MEZIROW		FOWLER
Change	Transformation of meaning schemes=change in contents of world view		Conversion=change of faith contents
	Transformation of meaning perspectives=change in rules for construing the world		Change in faith stage=change in process of seeing the world
Theory Concepts	Types of learning	Types of reflection	Structural changes and conversional changes
Change in process only	Perspective transformation without critical reflection?	Process reflection	Stage change without conversional change
Change in content only	Learning through transformation of meaning schemes or learning new meaning schemes	Content reflection	Conversional change without faith stage change
Change in content before change in process	Learning new meaning schemes	Content-process reflection	Conversional change that precipitates a faith stage change
Change in process before change in content	Learning through perspective transformation	Premise reflection	Faith stage change that precipitates conversional change
Change in content and process	Learning through perspective transformation	Premise reflection	Conversional change that is correlated with, and goes hand in hand with, a structural change
Change in content only	Learning through meaning schemes	No reflection?	Conversional change that blocks or helps one avoid the pain of faith stage changes

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

rare, stage of universalizing faith is characterized by a sense of oneness with all people. This is fully congruent with Mezirow's superior meaning perspective" (p. 33).

Mezirow and Fowler seem to have somewhat different ideas on how one's presence at a particular point of development is related to levels of development. Mezirow states that "as we move forward to new perspectives, we can never return to those in our past. Indeed, we are continually reconstructing the reality of the past by reinterpreting it from each successive vantage point as we move from one perspective to the next." (1978b, p. 106). Fowler, on the other hand, envisions a recapitulation of previous faith stages when one undergoes conversion, healing, or growth (Fowler, 1981). He takes the work of ego psychologists and adapts the concepts of returning to earlier levels of ego functioning in order to rework or reform particular aspects of ego development. This regression can lead to freedom from and alteration of stifling patterns of earlier development, enabling further growth. Fowler states:

> In my account of the emergence of the successive stages of faith ... I identified the new strengths or virtues of faith that first take form in their respective stages. In the kind of recapitulative process I am describing here conversion would result in a re-grounding of these virtues and their reorientation in light of faith's new center of value, images of power and decisive master story. (Fowler, 1981, p. 290)

Stage 3 - Stage 4 transition and the two theories. In terms of the transition from Stage 3 to Stage 4 faith, the two theories seem to particularly complement one another. Fowler's description of the transition to Stage 4 sounds remarkably like perspective transformation:

> This stage requires breaking the balance of the last stage's dance. Its tacit system of beliefs, values, and commitments must be critically examined, and be replaced or reorganized into a more explicit meaning system. The sense of self, derived

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> from one's important roles and relationships, must be grounded in choices (and exclusions), and in a qualitatively new authority and responsibility for oneself. Roles and relations, once *constitutive* of identity, now being chosen, become *expressions* of identity. (Fowler, 1986, p. 30)

Stage 4 is when reliance on others' interpretations of the world is broken, and one learns to become responsible for one's own interpretation. As Dettoni (1993) describes it, people in this stage have developed "their own theological boundaries. Their faith is now their own and they can defend it intelligently" (p. 84).

Fowler writes about two critical components associated with the emergence of Stage 4—critical assessment of one's former assumptions and emergence of an executive ego (Fowler, 1981). People may experience only one of these two components and so be in a perpetual transition position from Stage 3 to Stage 4. This would be similar to one not making it through all ten stages of Mezirow's transformation, or perhaps only undergoing a transformation of meaning schemes. Another way of looking at the Stage 3 - Stage 4 transition is offered by Sharon Parks (1986).

Young adult faith. Parks (1986) has postulated a whole new stage of faith between Fowler's stages 3 and 4 (see Table 1.3). She asserts that this is the stage in which young adults typically find themselves today in a certain period in their lives. This young adult period occurs in a postadolescent time frame before an individual has become a full adult. Parks defines adulthood as a way of making meaning, including the ability

> (1) to be aware of one's own composing of reality, (2) to participate self-consciously in an ongoing dialogue toward truth, and (3) to be able to sustain a capacity to respond—to take responsibility for seeing and reweaving (in the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> activity of one's every day) a fitting pattern of relationships between the disparate elements of self and world. (p. 6)

Parks' new stage of young adult faith (1986) includes four aspects not mentioned by Fowler: form of cognition, form of dependence, form of community, and role of imagination. The form of cognition addresses how a person knows about self, world, and God. In the move from conventional adolescence into adulthood a person moves through four stages of cognition: authority-bound and dualistic, unqualified relativism, probing commitment, and tested commitment (Rutledge, 1992).

A juxtaposition of the theories of Mezirow, Fowler, and Parks can be reviewed in Table 1.3. As can be seen, there does seem to be quite an area of overlap among the models. Parks seems to address the "remedies" for the crisis of moving from tacit belief to critical thought more than do the others, however. The mentor or mentoring community is seen to facilitate the transition on to maturity. This study seeks to determine if the transition from tacit belief to critical thought also applies to adults who are older than traditionally-aged college students.

Mezirow's model of transformative learning and Fowler's theory of faith development have several ideas in common. Individuals undergo experiences in their lives which cause them to question their world view and go through a process of assimilating the new knowledge into a revised belief system. This process involves both meaning-making and learning. Fowler's model serves as a way of locating individuals' transformative learning in their particular way of experiencing faith. Mezirow's theory can help one to understand the process involved in the change of meaning-making

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 1.3
Faith Development and Learning from Adolescence to Mature Adulthood

	Adolescent (Conventional)		Young Adult	Adult	Mature Adult
Form of Cognition	Authority-bound Dualistic	Unqualified Relativism (Transitional)	Probing Commitment	Tested Commitment	Confirmed Commitment
Form of Dependence	Dependent/Counter-Dependent		Fragile Self-Dependence	Confident Self-Dependence	Interdependence
Form of Community	Conventional	Diffuse	Ideologically Compatible Communities (Mentoring)	Self-Selected Class or Group (Within world-as-it-is)	Open to "others"
Form of Self	Derivative		Self-Aware (Ambivalent)	Self-Reflective (Centered)	Wise-hearted
Locus of Authority	"Those Who Count" (Outside the self)		Spokespersons or Group Procedures (Validated by self)	Self (Validated by group)	Dialectic between self and selves in other groups
Form of Logic	Early Formal Operations		Full Formal Operations (Dichotomizing, Collapsing)	Full Formal Operations (Dichotomizing: Maintaining tension)	Full Formal Operations (Dialectical-Paradoxical)
Form of World Coherence	Tacit System		Explicit System ("Over-against)	Explicit System (World engaging)	Multi-Systemic
Terms of the Structure of the World	Interpersonal		"Ideal"	Pragmatic/Ideal	Integration of Pragmatic & Ideal
Form of Role-Taking	Mutual ("Third-person perspective")		Mutual (Within "ideal" community)	Mutual (With awareness of groups other than one's own)	Mutual (With groups other than one's own)
Form of Moral Judgment	Conventional (Objective truth) - interpersonal - social system		Explicit/Ideal (Contextual Relativism)	(Ethical Responsibility - Gilligan) (Principled Ethical - Kohlberg)	
(Fowler Stage	Three		Three-Four	Four	Five)
Mezirow's Process of Perspective Transformation	- Disorienting dilemma - Self-examination	Critical assessment of assumptions	- Recognition that discontent and transformation are shared - Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions - Planning a course of action - Acquisition of knowledge and skills for plans - Provisional trying of new roles	- Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles - Reintegration of life with new perspective	

Note. From *The Critical Years: Young Adults and the Search for Meaning, Faith, and Commitment*, by S. Parks, 1986, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, p. 208. Adapted with permission of the author. Also contains information from *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, by J. Mezirow, 1991, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

methods. By looking at both learning and faith development, a more complete picture of the phenomenon of transformation will be gained.

Summary

This chapter has given an introduction and overview of literature having to do with transformative learning and faith development. It has also outlined the problem being addressed, the purpose and significance of the study, and research questions. The method used to conduct this particular study of transformative learning and faith development will be described in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 will present the findings from the quantitative portion of the study, whereas Chapter 4 will describe the participants from the qualitative part of the analysis. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 will present the qualitative analysis. A discussion of the findings will be presented in Chapter 8, and recommendations and conclusions in Chapter 9.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter 2

Method

There has been considerable debate among researchers from different philosophical camps as to the nature of knowledge and the optimal way to conduct research. The largest area of debate in recent years has been between the postpositivists and the constructivists. As a researcher, I have long believed that both the postpositivists and the constructivists had part of the picture, but that neither had the whole picture. In searching for other alternatives, I came across the pragmatist view, which, to me, seemed to offer the best of all worlds.

Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) state that pragmatists believe the research question is more important than either the method they use or the worldview that is supposed to be behind the method. They compare methods, epistemology, ontology, causal linkages, and other factors from the standpoint of the schools of positivism, postpositivism, pragmatism, and constructivism and suggest that pragmatism is a rejection of either-or thinking. Pragmatism sees the utility of using both inductive and deductive logic in the research cycle and the possibility of embracing epistemological relativism in the use of both the subjective and objective points of view. Pragmatists believe that values do play a role in conducting research and in interpreting their findings, but they are not concerned about that influence.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Questions of ontology and causality are perhaps a bit more controversial. Pragmatists believe that there is an external world independent of our minds, but they also deny that "Truth" can be discovered once and for all. As one can see, these ideas contain aspects of both the postpositivist and constructivist ideologies. Pragmatists also assert that there may be causal relationships but research will never be able to totally determine them. This differs from the postpositivists' belief in lawful, stable social relationships and the constructivists' belief that all entities are affecting each other at the same time, making separation of causality from results impossible. Pragmatism is thus a "middle ground" in the degree of pessimism about the possibility of understanding causal relationships, with the constructivists being the most pessimistic and the postpositivists being the most optimistic (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

In summary, Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) and related references such as Caracelli and Greene (1993) and Howe (1988) have helped lead me to a research design from which to approach designing my further work in transformative learning. The pragmatic approach seems to me to combine the best aspects of both qualitative and quantitative research and gives a workable methodology for approaching problems. It also reflects my view of reality. Using this approach to study transformative learning and faith development may advance knowledge in both areas.

Setting for the Study

The study was conducted at a graduate theological seminary in a state in the mid-South supported by a traditionally conservative religious movement, known for the purposes of this study as "El-Shaddai Seminary." The site was chosen due to familiarity

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and access, as well as the coursework's potential for triggering "disorienting dilemmas." All of the school's students are adult learners, and the topic of faith development was of interest to several of the students, due to their focus of study.

Population

The population for the quantitative portion of the survey included all of the seminary's students. There are about 175 students at the seminary, including those enrolled in both masters' and doctoral programs. Approximately half of the students are returning students, and they were especially intended to be the focus of the study. New students just entering seminary may not have had some of the learning experiences yet that would perhaps precipitate transformative learning. It was postulated that the coursework that might lead to transformative learning would include the following classes: Old Testament Introduction, New Testament Introduction, Supervised Ministerial Experience, and Clinical Pastoral Education. This is because these courses have the potential to challenge a person's assumptions in one or all of the following areas: the nature of the biblical text, how church people operate, how people and God deal with major life happenings, an individual's own personal characteristics, or one's methods of interacting with and ministering to people.

Volunteers

Based on the results of the initial survey, approximately three volunteers from each faith development level represented were identified to be interviewed. This interview was about their seminary education and any transformative learning experiences that might be associated with it. It was found that several individuals did not

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

fall into any one faith group, so two individuals who were not easily placed in a stage were also interviewed. There were also some participants who met the criteria for more than one faith category—some of these individuals were selected to be interviewed as representatives of one of the categories, due to a lack of volunteers from some of the faith stages. Because some faith stages were less well-represented and three individuals from each faith stage did not volunteer to be interviewed, the number of participants in each stage was not equal. Only those individuals who were close enough geographically to be physically present to the researcher were contacted; some of the students who met particular stage criteria were located at points too geographically distant for the researcher to visit. The tradeoff of being physically present for the interview was chosen over the option of doing telephone interviews. Also, only a few of the students interviewed ended up being new students, as the participant volunteers in the different faith stages were at various points in their degree programs. A total of fourteen individuals was interviewed.

Research Design and Data Collection Procedures

After reading about the options suggested by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), I decided that a sequential QUAN-QUAL study was the route most useful for me in looking at transformative learning and faith development. Sequential QUAN-QUAL analysis can be done by forming groups of people/settings on the preliminary basis of QUAN data and then comparing the groups on QUAL data. This is similar to the construct identification and construction validation methods. Sequential QUAN-QUAL analysis can also be used to develop an initial framework for the qualitative/categorical analysis that occurs in the next step (Caracelli & Greene, 1993).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The data collection consisted of an initial paper-and-pencil survey plus a later qualitative interview of selected participants. The initial survey, administered by mail in the on-campus students' school mail boxes and by postal mail for the off-campus students, was made up of the Barnes Fowler-Scale (see Appendix A) and additional demographic information (see Appendix B), with an optional response card to volunteer to be a part of the qualitative phase of the study. The letter asking the initial population to participate in the study is shown in Appendix C.

Barnes Fowler-Scale

In the development of the Barnes Fowler-Scale, Barnes, Doyle, and Johnson (1992) mention that Fowler did not provide data that would make it possible to assess the validity and reliability of his results. Their work was an attempt to help remedy this problem. In its development, the Fowler scale was used in conjunction with style of belief categories: very literal (L), nuanced (N), or highly symbolic (S). Literal belief styles are more traditional, whereas symbolic belief styles are more critical. Nuanced styles of belief offer a bit of both literal and symbolic thought. Statements were devised to portray three aspects of each style as a way of testing for the internal coherence of each style. The statements, based upon Fowler's descriptions, were chosen as shown in Table 2.1.

The respondents fell into distinct faith-style groups with good consistency; on the basis of the faith-style groups it was possible to predict how individuals would answer on the issues of belief items (L, N, or S). The developers used the term "faith-style groups" to avoid having to test the sequentiality of the Fowler stages, due to time and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 2.1
Aspects of Faith Styles Chosen for Fowler Scale

Style	Aspects
2	• one who finds relatively little coherent logic to larger sequences of life's events • who equates power with authority • who sees interpersonal relations as a series of deals made between people
3	• concern for loyalty to a leader • concern for conformity to group standards • a fairly literal story-telling way of understanding doctrines
4	• a universalist outlook (an interest in relating all aspects of reality together) • a related concern for overall coherence of beliefs in a fairly logical way • a sense of adherence to objectively valid norms rather than just to one's group standards
5	• belief in the tentativeness of all standards • a related openness and flexibility of belief and tolerance of differences • a concern for general human well-being over all other standards

Note. Information from "The Formulation of a Fowler Scale: An Empirical Assessment among Catholics," by M. Barnes, D. Doyle, and B. Johnson, 1992, p. 248. In J. Astley & L. Francis (Eds.), *Christian Perspectives of Faith Development*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

cost. Faith-style groups were formed of those respondents who had chosen any given category of answer (3, 4, or 5) at least four times out of the five possible (or two times out of three for faith-style 2) (Barnes, Doyle, and Johnson, 1992). In this study, a similar analysis of the responses to the paired statements was performed.

Sixty-five percent of the initial respondents selected statements belonging to a single faith-style with a high degree of regularity, showing that the faith-style items were fairly successful in distinguishing different belief styles. Twenty-nine percent spread their responses across the options, with most of them clustering around two contiguous categories, as would be compatible with Fowler's developmental theory. Six percent of the total chose the question mark (showing no preference between the two statements) in at least five of the nine possible. Faith-style was also found to be related to education (Barnes, Doyle, and Johnson, 1992). There has been no further work to establish the reliability or validity of the scale (personal communication via e-mail from M. H. Barnes, August 2, 2002). This study therefore looked at reliability data associated with the scale's use.

Qualitative Interview

The qualitative follow-up consisted of a semi-structured interview. Approximately three individuals from each of the levels of faith development represented on the Barnes Fowler-Scale were interviewed to learn something about their transformative learning process. The intent was to explore themes that might arise among participants in the different groups, as well as overall themes. Interviews were tape-recorded and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

transcribed to allow analysis of the data. The informed consent form used with the interviewees is shown in Appendix D.

Questions asked during the qualitative portion of the study included:

1. Please tell me a little bit about your experience in higher education. How long is the degree process taking you?
2. What factors caused you to want to work on your degree?
3. How have your beliefs, values, and commitments changed as you have worked on your degree? What things at school have affected your beliefs, values, and commitments the most?
4. How has the way you make meaning in your life changed as you have worked on your degree (faith, religious beliefs, religious practices)?
5. Describe for me your biggest challenge as you are going through the degree process.
6. What has helped you the most as you are going through the degree process?
7. Which of your religious beliefs have changed the most as you have gone through the degree process? How have they changed?

The female students were also asked about their experiences being a female in a traditionally male-dominated field. The discussion was then thrown open at the end for the participants to talk about anything they wished to address.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis initially consisted of statistical investigation of the data from the Barnes Fowler-Scale. The SPSS statistical computer package was used to analyze the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

numerical data. Responses on the initial survey were coded and entered as numerical representations using SPSS. A frequency distribution was generated to show the predominance of faith stages among age groups, denominations, and educational status. Subsequently, a Chi-square analysis was done using the participants' faith stage and the courses they have taken. Primarily, the purpose of the initial data analysis was to place the participants into groups based on their faith stage for further exploration. Designation of faith stage groups was made by evaluating participant responses on the paired-comparison faith statements of the Barnes Fowler-Scale (see Appendix A). This instrument looks only at faith stages 2 through 5, which should encompass the vast majority of adults.

There has been no further work to establish the reliability or validity of the scale (personal communication via e-mail from M. H. Barnes, August 2, 2002). Consequently, there was a reliability analysis done on the numerical data in this study, using the SPSS software package. For analysis purposes, the data were assumed to be ordinal. Cronbach's alpha reliability procedure was run on the data, both with the answers to the pairs entered as 0's and 1's, and with the choices entered as the actual stages associated with each statement. A cross-tabulation procedure was run on the pairs that looked at the same stages in order to gauge the consistency of responses.

The qualitative data analysis took place after the initial quantitative analysis. Two to three respondents in each of the faith stages 2 through 5 were selected for further participation, as well as participants who did not meet the criteria to be in any one faith stage. A local education professor served as a research team member and was the only

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

one who read the information on the cards indicating a wish to be interviewed before the interviews took place. This was to ensure a double-blind procedure. He also chose the interviewees from these cards based on the stage analysis information I gave him and gave me the contact information to set up the interviews. A total of fourteen individuals was interviewed.

The questions listed in the Research Design section were used. While the interviews were being completed, the constant comparative method was used to analyze the data for themes which may be present. A person with medical transcription experience transcribed the interviews, with the researcher going over them carefully for form and content. The transcriptions were then shared back with the participants to ensure accuracy. Qualitative strategies such as those described by Glesne (1999) and Denzin and Lincoln (1998) were employed in coding and analyzing the data. After an initial stint of hand-coding the data, the QSR NUD*IST qualitative analysis software was used to code the data for themes. First, the data were coded into "free nodes," which were fairly narrowly-defined units of information. They were then organized into larger groups of themes by combining similar free nodes into a broader idea and attaching it to the "tree root." The program has a command to show the whole structure of themes arranged like the branches on a tree. An overall model was developed from looking at these larger groups of themes as a unified whole and organizing them into a "big picture."

Peer debriefing was used to help the researcher to identify assumptions in thinking which may not be supported. A bracketing interview was included in the debriefing to uncover personal assumptions and biases. The descriptions of the interviewees and the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

results of the study were shared with the participants in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the qualitative analysis.

Role of the Researcher

In the quantitative phase of the study, the role of the researcher was more remote. The surveys were distributed in the student mail boxes at the school and through the U.S. mail, and a limited amount of pertinent information about the study was given. The researcher was "out of the picture" to some extent during this phase.

During the qualitative part of the study, the researcher conducted personal interviews with selected individuals based on the initial screening. In this capacity, I shared more personal information before beginning the interviewing process and talked informally with the participants after the formal interview.

I have had prior contact with the school in question and am a seminary graduate myself. There is a bit of a "fellowship" of seminary graduates in that one has a feeling of kinship with someone undergoing the seminary process. I am also of a similar theological background to a large percentage of the students. Several of the faculty members attend the church that I currently attend and of which I was formerly a staff member. These connections helped me to gain access to the site as a researcher, particularly in knowing who to contact about the appropriate permissions.

I knew a few of the participants, primarily at an acquaintance level. Two of the participants attended the same church I did at the time they were interviewed, and two of them knew my father, who is a local minister. Still others knew me as someone in contact with the school or through past area religious activities. I had taught one of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

participant's spouse while I was an adjunct instructor at a local university, and some of my relatives attended the church where one participant was ministering. I believe these connections served to make the participants comfortable in talking with me and perhaps smoothed the way for our conversation. Any assumptions I had about the participants due to these connections was discussed with the peer debriefer.

Timeline of the Study

The final study was a two-phase analysis consisting of quantitative data explored and enlarged upon by qualitative follow-up. As the researcher, I initially had little direct personal involvement with participants but became more directly a part of the data collection/analysis procedure in the qualitative phase of the study. A former medical transcriber did the transcription of the interviews, and I reviewed them for accuracy. The interview transcriptions were shared with the interviewees to ensure accuracy. The results were organized and shared with study participants. They will also be shared with the Fowler instrument developer and El-Shaddai Seminary, as well as with the doctoral committee.

Permission was obtained from the developer of the instrument shown in Appendix A for its use in this study. Permission was also obtained to conduct the study at a graduate seminary in the mid-South. The survey was administered just prior to the Christmas school break, and interviews were conducted during the spring semester. The initial quantitative data analysis was done in January 2003, and the qualitative analysis occurred during the interview process and was concluded in July 2003. The reliability

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

work on the instrument was conducted in June 2003, and the final write-up of the results was conducted from May until October of 2003.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter 3

Quantitative Findings

As was mentioned earlier, the design of this study was a sequential QUAN-QUAL procedure. Consequently, the findings will be presented in two parts–the quantitative findings and then the qualitative findings. This chapter will focus on the quantitative results. The main purpose of the quantitative portion of the analysis was to establish groups for the qualitative analysis, but several other relationships were ascertained from the survey data.

Participants

The participants in this study were 54 students at a graduate Christian theological seminary in the Mid-South region. There were 183 surveys distributed, 120 in student mailboxes for the on-campus students, and 63 by U. S. mail for students located off-campus. Twenty-nine of the surveys that were mailed were returned, and 24 of those put in student mailboxes were returned. Nineteen interview participation cards were returned from the off-campus individuals, whereas 13 of the on-campus students returned the interview cards. This yielded a 20% survey return rate for on-campus students and a 10.8% interview card return rate. The off-campus students had a survey return rate of 46% and an interview card return rate of 30.2%. The overall survey return rate was 29%, with an interview card return rate of 17.5%. The low return rate could be partially due to the fact that the students were nearing semester finals and the Christmas break when the surveys were distributed.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Faith-Style Groups (Stages)

As can be seen in Table 3.1, there was a dispersion of cases in the different faith-style (stage) categories in this study of graduate seminary students. For purposes of determining those to interview and looking at percent responses in the different categories, the individuals who were shown in more than one stage were categorized in the higher stage.

Of those surveyed, 59% chose statements characteristic of one faith-style group enough to be categorized in that particular group. This is not too different from the 65% obtained in the original development of the instrument. Approximately 24% of those surveyed fell in more than one faith-style group, compared to 29% of the original sample. The version of the instrument used in this study did not use the question mark option, as does the alternate form of the BFS (see Appendix E); therefore, that measure could not be directly compared. However, 17% of those surveyed did not meet the criteria to be categorized in any of the faith-style groups, yielding a situation not discussed in the original formulation of the instrument (Barnes, Doyle, & Johnson, 1992).

Reliability

A reliability procedure was chosen to assess the Barnes Fowler-Scale, thereby addressing Research Question #3. The data were coded in SPSS according to the code sheet shown in Appendix D. For purposes of the reliability analysis, the faith stage groups were assumed to be ordinal. Cronbach's alpha reliability procedure was run on the nine-question paired-comparison data, with "0" corresponding to the lower stage

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 3.1
Summaries of Participants and Faith Groups (Stages)

Faith Group (Stage)	Number	Percent
Stage 2	6	11.1
Stage 3	19	35.2
Stage 4	5	9.3
Stage 5	2	3.7
Stage 2 AND Stage 3	10	18.5
Stage 2 AND Stage 4	1	1.9
Stage 3 AND Stage 5	1	1.9
Stage 4 AND Stage 5	1	1.9
Met criteria for no stage	9	16.7
Total	54	100*

*Total is slightly more than 100 percent due to rounding.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and "1" corresponding to the higher stage. A value of .30 was obtained for reliability, which is in the low range. The responses to the nine pairs were re-coded with the actual stage corresponding to the response, and Cronbach's alpha was calculated again. A reliability value of .14 was obtained with the data in this form, a value in an even lower range, perhaps reflecting the assumptions of the instrument developers that the stages reflected faith-style groups, rather than true stages.

As a further test of reliability, the three pairs of questions that addressed the same stage choices were analyzed. Questions 1 and 2 had to do with differentiating between Stage 3 and Stage 4. A cross-tabulation procedure was run to determine the amount of agreement of responses to the two questions. The results are shown in Table 3.2.

McNemar's test showed that there was no significant difference between same-stage responses on the two questions ($p=1.000$). The kappa measure showed that the strength of agreement was fair ($\kappa=0.358$, $p=0.008$). This indicates that the questionnaire probably distinguished between Stage 3 and Stage 4 responses adequately.

A similar analysis was performed on Questions 5 and 6, which had to do with differentiating between Stage 4 and Stage 5. The results are shown in Table 3.3. McNemar's test showed that there was a significant difference between same-stage responses on the two questions ($p< 0.001$). The kappa measure showed that the strength of agreement was poor ($\kappa=0.158$, $p= 0.032$). This indicates that the questionnaire was not very reliable in indicating the difference in responses between Stage 4 and Stage 5 statements. The cross-tabulation procedure was also run on Questions 8 and 9. These

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 3.2
Cross-Classification of Responses to Question 1 and Question 2

	Response to Question 2					
	Stage 3		Stage 4		Total	
Question 1 response	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Stage 3	34	63	6	11.1	40	74.1
Stage 4	7	13	7	13.0	14	25.9
Total	41	75.9	13	24.1	54	100.0

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 3.3
Cross-Classification of Responses to Question 5 and Question 6

	Response to Question 6					
	Stage 4		Stage 5		Total	
Question 5 response	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Stage 4	32	59.3	0	0	32	59.3
Stage 5	19	35.2	3	5.6	22	40.7
Total	51	94.4	3	5.6	54	100.0

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

pairs were intended to indicate the difference in Stage 3 and Stage 5 responses. The results are shown in Table 3.4.

McNemar's test showed that there was a significant difference between same-stage responses on the two questions ($p < 0.001$). The kappa measure showed that the strength of agreement was poor ($\kappa = 0.003$, $p = 0.775$). This indicates that the questionnaire was not very reliable in indicating the difference in responses between Stage 3 and Stage 5 statements.

The low reliability numbers obtained suggest that there are problems in the paired comparisons presented in the version of the Barnes Fowler-Scale used. Some of the pairs are made up of statements addressing different topics—it would be more appropriate to have statements addressing the same topic so that a person was not comparing "apples and oranges."

A Likert-type scale might be more appropriate to assess the level of faith a person has across a continuum. The other form of the instrument (shown in Appendix E) might yield a higher reliability rate. The way that the faith statement pairs were shuffled, as the instructions from the instrument developer suggested (see Appendix A), may have also affected the reliability in some way. More study needs to be done on this in the future.

The low reliability rate for the instrument suggests that the results based upon the instrument be interpreted with caution. Individuals were classified in a particular faith stage, but this may not be a reliable indicator of their actual belief system. The groupings made for purposes of establishing the interviews may be viewed as helpful for choosing individuals to interview, and may even indicate a broad level of faith development in

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 3.4
Cross-Classification of Responses to Question 8 and Question 9

	Response to Question 9					
	Stage 3		Stage 5		Total	
Question 8 response	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Stage 3	1	1.9	0	0	1	1.9
Stage 5	49	90.7	4	7.4	53	98.1
Total	50	92.6	4	7.4	54	100

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

certain areas, but they should not be viewed as impermeable boxes of belief in which people reside. This will be discussed more in the chapters having to do with the qualitative results. The other statistical procedures run upon the faith stage information should be viewed with reservation, due to the unreliability of the instrument.

Patterns in Non-Stage Participant Responses

A pattern emerged for those individuals who were not categorized in any stage. As can be seen in Table 3.5, these nine individuals answered one question as a Stage 2 person, three questions as a Stage 3 person, and either two or three questions as persons in Stage 4 and 5, respectively. The means suggest that most of these individuals chose more Stage 4 responses than Stage 5 responses. It could indicate that the instrument is shaded more toward statements characteristic of stages of faith lower than 5, even though individuals did not meet the stated qualifications to be in a particular stage.

Faith-Style Groups and Question Responses

Table 3.6 is a summary of responses of individuals in the different faith groups for each of the questions on the instrument. It is interesting to note a few things about how individuals in different stages answered the questions. For Question 1, people in no stage or Stage 3 chose the Stage 3 response more often. People in Stages 2 and 4 chose the Stage 4 response, whereas the Stage 5 people were split in which answer they chose. In Question 2, people in no stage, Stage 2, or Stage 3 chose the Stage 3 answer, whereas the Stage 4 people chose the Stage 4 answer. The Stage 5 individuals were again split in which answer they chose. For Question 3, the Stage 2 and Stage 3 individuals chose the Stage 2 answer more often. The no stage and Stage 5 individuals chose the Stage 5

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 3.5
Participants Not Categorized in a Stage and Responses

Case No.	Number of answers for Stage 2	Number of answers for Stage 3	Number of answers for Stage 4	Number of answers for Stage 5
3	1	3	2	3
8	1	3	3	2
11	1	3	3	2
74	1	3	2	3
120	1	3	3	2
125	1	3	2	3
128	1	3	3	2
148	1	3	3	2
172	1	3	3	2
MEAN	1	3	2.67	2.33

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 3.6
Responses to Paired Comparisons Shown by Overall Faith Stage

Question (faith stages)	Stage chosen in comparison	Overall Faith Stage				
		No stage (% choosing category)	Stage 2 (% choosing category)	Stage 3 (% choosing category)	Stage 4 (% choosing category)	Stage 5 (% choosing category)
Question 1 (Stage 3/4)	Stg. 3	66.67	33.33	100	16.67	50
	Stg. 4	33.33	66.67	0	83.33	50
Question 2 (Stage 3/4)	Stg. 3	55.56	83.33	100	0	50
	Stg. 4	44.44	16.67	0	100	50
Question 3 (Stage 2/5)	Stg. 2	22.22	83.33	51.72	50	0
	Stg. 5	77.78	16.67	44.83 (md)	50	100
Question 4 (Stage 2/3)	Stg. 2	0	0	16.67	0	0
	Stg. 3	100	100	83.33	100	100
Question 5 (Stage 4/5)	Stg. 4	66.67	83.33	55.17	83.33	0
	Stg. 5	33.33	16.67	44.83	16.67	100
Question 6 (Stage 4/5)	Stg. 4	100	100	100	100	25
	Stg. 5	0	0	0	0	75
Question 7 (Stage 2/4)	Stg. 2	77.78	100	79.31	50	75
	Stg. 4	22.22	0	20.69	50	25
Question 8 (Stage 3/5)	Stg. 3	0	0	3.45	0	0
	Stg. 5	100	100	96.55	100	100
Question 9 (Stage 3/5)	Stg. 3	77.78	100	100	100	92.59
	Stg. 5	22.22	0	0	0	7.41

(md)= missing data

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

answer, and the Stage 4 individuals were split in how they differentiated between the pairs. In Question 4, all the faith-style groups chose the Stage 3 answer more often than the Stage 2 statement.

On Question 5, all of the groups except the Stage 5 individuals chose the Stage 4 statements over the Stage 5 sentences. The same is true of Question 6. On Question 7, all of the groups except the Stage 4 individuals chose the Stage 2 statement over the Stage 5 statement. The Stage 4 participants were split on their responses. On Question 8, all of the groups chose the Stage 5 statement more often than the Stage 3 statement. On Question 9, all of the groups chose the Stage 3 statement more than the Stage 5 statement.

This breakdown of responses shows that the "higher" a person's faith stage does not necessarily mean picking the "higher" response in certain pairs. In theoretical terms, this could indicate some questioning of the sequentiality of stages and support the instrument developers' designation of "faith-style groups." Other explanations could be that it is a reflection of the low reliability of the instrument, or it could be an indication of the pairing of unlike items.

Faith-Style Group and Age

Frequencies of the stage responses and age groups are shown in Table 3.7. In order to have adequate numbers to perform a Chi-square analysis the age categories were collapsed into three different groups.

For further analysis, a Chi-square test was obtained for the age and faith stage data. It was found that there was no significant relationship between age and faith stage (χ^2=13.317, p=0.101).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 3.7
Frequencies of Faith-Style Groups by Age

Age range	No stage	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Total
22-27 years	4	0	13	1	3	21
28-39 years	1	4	7	1	1	14
40-65 years	4	2	8	4	0	18
Total	9	6	28	6	4	53

χ^2=13.317, p=0.101

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Faith-Style Group and Denomination

Frequencies of the person's denomination and faith stage are shown in Table 3.8. There were not enough participants in each of the denominations to perform a valid Chi-square analysis. The descriptive data seen above do give some information, however.

It can be seen that the highest number of participants were from the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ and the largest number of individuals came out in Stage 3. This could suggest that this particular church group encourages faith development in the style associated with Stage 3. Two of the four individuals who came out in Stage 5 were associated with types of Episcopal groups, perhaps suggesting that this particular denomination encourages a broader type of thinking. However, all of these results must be viewed with caution, given the unreliability of the instrument.

Faith-Style Group and Educational Level

Frequencies of educational level and faith stage are shown in Table 3.9. To ensure a valid Chi-square analysis, the levels were collapsed into two categories, as can be seen in the table. To contribute to an understanding of these data, a Chi-square analysis was performed. There was no significant relationship between educational level and faith stage in the population surveyed (χ^2=5.152, p=0.272). The predominance of Stage 3 results appears to be the main recognizable feature of this analysis. Approximately half of each of the individuals with a bachelor's and master's

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 3.8
Frequencies of Faith-Style Groups in Different Denominations

Denomination	No stage	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Total
Christian Churches and Churches of Christ	6	5	23	5	1	40
Episcopal	0	0	0	0	1	1
Episcopal Reformed	0	0	0	0	1	1
African Methodist Episcopal Zion	1	0	0	0	0	1
United Methodist Church	0	0	3	0	0	3
Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.)	0	0	1	0	0	1
Presbyterian Church in America	0	1	0	0	0	1
Other denomination	0	0	0	1	0	1
Unaffiliated/no denomination	2	0	2	0	0	4
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) & Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.)	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	9	6	29	6	4	54

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 3.9
Frequencies of Faith-Style Groups in Different Completed Educational Levels

Completed Educational Level	No stage	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Total
Bachelor's	4	4	16	2	4	30
Master's or Doctoral	5	2	13	4	0	24
Total	9	6	29	6	4	54

χ^2=5.152, p=0.272

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

came out in Stage 3, and the one person who had completed a doctorate was also in Stage 3. Perhaps the instrument is biased toward Stage 3 answers in the form in which it is given, but more analysis needs to be done on this in the future.

Faith-Style Group and Course Completion

Chi-square analyses were done on the three of the four courses mentioned on the survey and faith stage. There were not enough individuals who had completed CPE to be able to perform a valid Chi-square analysis on that course. None of the analyses showed a significant relationship between course completion and faith stage. This could again be a result of the unreliability of the instrument, and any interpretations should be made with caution. Another possible reason for a lack of significance could be the small sample size. A third reason for the lack of significance could be that in actuality there is no relationship between stage and courses. The results are shown in Tables 3.10 - 3.13. The asymptotic p-values are given, as they were similar to the exact Monte Carlo values obtained.

Summary

This chapter has presented a summary of the quantitative results of the survey, which included the Barnes Fowler-Scale and demographic information. The reliability of the Barnes Fowler-Scale with this population was shown to be very low, perhaps reflecting characteristics of the instrument or of the sample. However, a cross-tabulation procedure showed that the instrument probably distinguished between Stage 3 and Stage 4 responses adequately. Due to inconsistencies in responses, the results of the scale

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 3.10
Cross-Classification of Status of Old Testament Introduction (OTI) Course and Faith Stage

	Old Testament Introduction Course Status					
	Not taken (left blank)		Currently taking		Completed	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
No stage	0	0	3	37.5	5	12.5
Stage 2	2	40	0	0	4	10
Stage 3	2	40	5	62.5	22	55
Stage 4	1	20	0	0	5	12.5
Stage 5	0	0	0	0	4	10
Total	5	100	8	100	40	100

χ^2=11.068, p=0.198

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 3.11
Cross-Classification of Status of New Testament Introduction (NTI) Course and Faith Stage

	New Testament Introduction Course Status					
	Not taken (left blank)		Currently taking		Completed	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
No stage	3	21.43	1	16.67	4	12.12
Stage 2	1	7.14	1	16.67	4	12.12
Stage 3	9	64.29	2	33.33	18	54.55
Stage 4	1	7.14	0	0	5	15.15
Stage 5	0	0	2	33.33	2	6.06
Total	14	100	6	100	33	100

χ^2=9.458, p=0.305

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 3.12
Cross-Classification of Status of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Course and Faith Stage

	Clinical Pastoral Education Course Status			
	Not taken (left blank)		Completed	
	freq.	%	freq.	%
No stage	6	13.95	2	20
Stage 2	4	9.30	2	20
Stage 3	26	60.47	3	30
Stage 4	3	6.98	3	30
Stage 5	4	9.30	0	0
Total	43	100	10	100

n too small to calculate χ^2

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 3.13
Cross-Classification of Status of Supervised Ministerial Experience (SME) Course and Faith Stage

	Supervised Ministerial Experience (SME) Course Status					
	Not taken (left blank)		Currently taking		Completed	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
No stage	2	8.70	2	28.57	3	13.64
Stage 2	2	8.70	0	0	4	18.18
Stage 3	14	60.87	3	42.86	12	54.55
Stage 4	3	13.04	0	0	3	13.64
Stage 5	2	8.70	2	28.57	0	0
Total	23	100	7	100	22	100

χ^2=10.335, p=0.242

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

should be viewed with extreme caution. The stage in which individuals were placed does not necessarily reflect their true pattern of beliefs. The non-stage participants showed a variability in response to Stage 4 and Stage 5 questions. A person's overall faith stage did not necessarily predict which faith statement he or she would choose in the paired comparison.

There was no significant relationship between age and faith stage in this population, although more participants were in Stage 3 than in any other stage. Most of the participants were from the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, and the largest number of individuals came out in Stage 3. This suggests that this church group fosters faith development in the way reflected by Stage 3. Individuals from Episcopal groups were well-represented in the Stage 5 faith style, perhaps intimating that this denomination facilitates a more expansive type of thinking. No significant relationship was found between faith stage and educational level, perhaps reflecting features of the instrument or population, as well as the actual statistical relationship. There was no significant relationship between taking the four courses mentioned—OTI, NTI, CPE, and SME—and faith stage. It is possible that the four courses either do not affect faith stage, the low instrument reliability affects the tested faith stage to the extent it cannot show the effect of the course, or there is some effect that faith stage does not measure.

The Barnes Fowler-Scale was used as a screening tool to determine which participants to interview. However, its placing of them in certain stages should be viewed with a degree of caution. Even if the stages are not reliable, the qualitative data gathered from the interviewing process can help one to understand how graduate students at El-

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Shaddai experience seminary. The interviewees can perhaps be looked upon as representatives of El-Shaddai Seminary students in general, with their possible faith stages being of secondary import. Chapter 4 will provide an overall introduction of the interviewees, which will lead to looking at their experiences in greater detail in later chapters.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter 4

Description of Interviewees

This chapter will describe the participants involved in the qualitative portion of the study. The names used in this chapter were changed to protect confidentiality, as were some of the details about particular church schools and congregations. I am including my hunches about the participants' faith-style groups in my descriptions—their accuracy will be shown to be dubious, perhaps due to the unreliability of the Barnes Fowler-Scale (BFS). However, the imprecision of my speculations could be based on many other things. I found that my estimates were based to a large extent on my view of the person's place on the conservative-liberal theological continuum, with the more liberal being the higher faith stage. That may or may not be accurate, given Fowler's descriptions and conceptions of the different stages of faith, and may be a reflection of my own prejudices. However, Fowler's higher stages do reflect more of an internal locus of control—people who are more theologically conservative tend to have an external locus of control rooted in traditional authorities. There will be a more in-depth exploration of this later on in Chapter 8. Table 4.1 summarizes some pertinent information about each participant that will be discussed both in this chapter and in subsequent chapters.

Sam Hendricks

Sam is a first-year student in his late 30's. He is a graduate of a Bible College, and he came to El-Shaddai Seminary soon after graduating. He had grown up in the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 4.1
Participants and Some Pertinent Learning Experiences

Name	**Postu-lated Stage**	**Actual Stage from BFS**	**Learning experience having to do with seminary**	**Type of learning experience**	**Catalysts**	**Supports**
Sam Hendricks	2-3	3	broadening of beliefs	transformation of meaning schemes	course material	wife, fellow students
Lisa Wentworth	4	3	way of viewing biblical text, tradition, church history	transformation of meaning perspectives	course material	friends (school, out of school); mentor figures at home; spiritual practices; readings, historical figures
Gus Doring	3	4	women in ministry	transformation of meaning schemes	course material; thinking about daughter	wife, mentor figures (professors), fellow students
Roger Talent	4-5	5	way of viewing biblical text; call to ministry	transformation of meaning perspectives	course material; experiences in ministry	family
Will Davidson	5	5	way of viewing Bible and faith boundaries	transformation of meaning perspectives	undergraduate & graduate course material, conversations with fellow students	fellow students, congregational members, mentor figures back home, mentor figure at school (professor)
Sloan Wallace	2-3	2	broadening of beliefs	transformation of meaning schemes	course material	family, readings
Jim Smith	3-4	none	idealism vs. realism	transformation of meaning schemes	ministry experience	fellow students, spiritual practices

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 4.1 (continued)

Name	**Postu-lated Stage**	**Actual Stage from BFS**	**Learning experience having to do with seminary**	**Type of learning experience**	**Catalysts**	**Supports**
Joseph Foote	4	4	ministry to homosexuals	transformation of meaning perspectives	ministry experience	wife, fellow students, readings
John Roosevelt	3-4	none	how to live out social gospel	transformation of meaning perspectives	course material	wife, readings, historical figures
Mary Baker	3-4	3	way of viewing biblical text	transformation of meaning perspectives	course material	mentor figure (professor), husband
Stan Dudley	4	2 and 3	change in denomination	transformation of meaning perspectives	mid-life re-evaluation; death of family member	wife, other family
Marvin Dewey	4	2 and 3	broadening of beliefs	transformation of meaning schemes	course material	historical figures, readings, fellow students
Ashley Hanover	3-4	3 and 5	way of viewing biblical text	transformation of meaning perspectives	course material	fellow students, female role models
Polly Washington	3	2 and 3	way of viewing biblical text	transformation of meaning perspectives	course material	husband, mentor figure (professor)

church in the South when young but left it as a teenager to pursue a partying lifestyle. Sam spent several years in Atlanta playing in bands and trying to be a musician. He experienced a Christian conversion in Georgia and moved to Kansas to start over. He met his wife there and began working at a church. He embarked upon some Bible classes as correspondence courses and later had an opportunity to move back East to go to Bible College where both his and his wife's families were. Sam has a real hunger for education and came to seminary because he looked "at my undergraduate education as being the assembling of kind of a skeleton if you will, and then the graduate work it seemed would be fleshing that out and putting some meat on it." He does want to go on into congregational ministry. Sam is in the M.Div. program and does not seem to have experienced big conflicts in his seminary education, so far. I postulated that he would have come out as Stage 2 or Stage 3 on his survey. The BFS showed him at Stage 3.

Lisa Wentworth

Lisa is a student in her mid-20's and getting ready to graduate. She attended a Christian liberal arts college as an undergraduate, obtaining a Bible degree, and came to El-Shaddai right after graduating. She worked on a graduate degree because she did not yet feel ready to teach other people, and she had wanted to explore some of her own faith questions. She says, "I thought that seminary would be a good place to just work through that." Lisa says she might have studied literature or sociology as an undergraduate if she had known she was going on to seminary. She seems to have experienced the "disorienting dilemma" in seminary that individuals undergoing transformative learning encounter and has thought the questioning was painful at times. Lisa does appear to have

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

reached a place of peace for her and hopes to work with young adults or in urban ministry when she graduates. I believed Lisa would come out in Stage 4 on her survey, having made the transition from Stage 3 while in seminary. However, the BFS placed her in Stage 3. She is in the M.Div. program.

Gus Doring

Gus is a D.Min. student in his 50's. He is working on his Doctor of Ministry, not because he was interested in getting a degree, but because he wanted to take the classes. He states, "I think with all fields of work and ministry, it's just you need to stay fresh with the way the technology is going, and I just felt the need to keep learning." When he was a bit younger, he completed the M.Div. program at El-Shaddai and said that degree was instrumental in helping him find himself. The D.Min. process has been beneficial to him in ministry, and he appears to enjoy the way the classes are set up. Gus does not seem to have experienced a painful disorientation in seminary, but he is currently wrestling with issues concerning women in ministry. I believe he is experiencing some of the phases associated with a perspective transformation, albeit not a particularly identity-threatening process for him. My conjecture was that his faith-style group is somewhere around Stage 3. The BFS results showed him in Stage 4.

Roger Talent

Roger is a thesis-only M.A.R. student in his 30's. Roger entered El-Shaddai with the intent of starting church plants (new congregations) and is leaving the school believing he should not be in the ministry. He has a background in music and worked for a national chain of copying stores before coming to seminary. Roger came to El-Shaddai

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

because it was well-respected in his church tradition, and he states, "I think it's Providential that I came here, rather than one of the other places, because I respect its vision." After his experiences in seminary and some soul-searching, Roger now thinks he should be going into engineering. He is taking classes preparing to enter engineering school, and his wife is looking at teaching positions near the school he wishes to attend. He is not sure if/when he will finish his thesis to obtain the M.A.R. degree. Roger has changed denominations while he has been at El-Shaddai (from Christian Church to Episcopal), and he still appears to be in transition with some of his faith questions. I think Roger has definitely undergone a perspective transformation due to his seminary experiences and has not yet come to a new place of comfort for him. My hunch was that Roger's survey results would show him to be in Stage 4 or 5, and the BFS placed him in Stage 5.

Will Davidson

Will is a continuing student in the M.Div. program in his 20's. He came to El-Shaddai after graduating from a local Christian liberal arts college, and he really feels the importance of Christian fellowship. He states, "That was one of the major reasons that this place did end up being my choice for seminary, because of the community, and I knew it would be challenging." Will currently serves as a youth minister while attending seminary and appears to really be enjoying both experiences. Although Will does talk about being confronted with challenging material at El-Shaddai, I believe he experienced more earth-shaking transformative learning at the undergraduate level. He appears to be using the fruit of that prior transformation in his current ministry. Will seems to have a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

very broad view of faith, and I believed he would come out in Stage 5 on the BFS. I correctly placed him, according to the BFS.

Sloan Wallace

Sloan Wallace is a new student at El-Shaddai, although he is a continuing seminary student. He began his study at a large evangelical seminary in Chicago. He is around 30 years old and is in the M.Div. program. Sloan transferred to El-Shaddai because it was less expensive and because it was near to his parents. He is a new father and thought that it was important to be near family at this time in life. The idea of being educated was something ingrained in him. As he recounts, "In my growing up years I would say we, my brother and I, hung out with lots of adults, and a lot of those adults were preachers and professors, and so it was just sort of a Wallace milieu of being, you know, educated." Sloan wants to give others a better Christian education than he experienced growing up, and he wanted to learn more so he could be a good mentor. He seems to have experienced some disorienting dilemmas in higher education, more as an undergraduate, but they appear to have more made him re-frame what he did think, rather than change what he actually believed. I would place Sloan at around Stage 2 or 3 on the survey; the BFS confirmed my Stage 2 impression.

Jim Smith

Jim Smith is a D.Min. student in his 40's. He actually works in development at El-Shaddai and had to leave congregational ministry in order to work on his doctorate. Jim thought that the D.Min. would better prepare him to face some difficult ministry situations, and he "felt like this was probably the last opportunity I was going to have

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

maybe for some more formal education and a degree, and I just felt like I needed to take advantage of it." Jim seems to really like the format of the D.Min. classes, although he questions whether a person can stay in ministry and do the degree. He has some fears about being able to get a congregational ministry position after he finishes his degree, since he will have been out of the pulpit for a few years. Jim appears to have warring selves—I saw them named the Idealist and the Realist. He is wrestling some with issues concerning women in ministry, but they seem more from the realistic standpoint, rather than a faith standpoint. Jim seems to be experiencing some disorientation concerning if godliness equals being a successful minister. He is undergoing the questioning typical of transformative learning, and although it may not be gut-wrenching for him, I think his wrestling is definitely uncomfortable for him right now. I would place Jim's responses on the Barnes Fowler-Scale at around Stage 3 or 4. He did not meet the criteria for any stage on the BFS.

Joseph Foote

Joseph Foote is a thesis-only M.Div. student in his 30's. He has a very practical orientation to faith and is not afraid to take on controversial issues. He chose to attend El-Shaddai because he could marry theory and practice as a student: "So I thought it would be more valuable to be pastoring while I was at school, and I think it was more valuable, so that's pretty much the factor that led me to El-Shaddai over Conwell, because I could be pastor of a church." Joseph had attended Georgia Tech and studied the history of technology in society. Although he experienced the partying lifestyle in college, he felt called back to a more Christian life, and the ministry, afterwards. He has

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

worked at several mountain churches while being a seminary student. Joseph recently had to confront the homosexual issue in the local congregation and is trying to structure the most appropriate ministerial response to Christian homosexuals. This issue has caused him to change his thesis topic to ministry to homosexuals and has perhaps given him the needed impetus to put the passion into getting such a large project done. I think Joseph is currently experiencing transformative learning, but I believe it was more brought about by the congregational situation than by his formal class work. He says El-Shaddai has given him the tools to promote critical, honest thinking about tough issues. I think Joseph would be placed at around Stage 4 on the survey. The BFS confirmed my hunch.

John Roosevelt

John Roosevelt is a graduating M.A.R student in his mid-30's. He attended a local Christian liberal arts college and also has a Master's in Social Work. John intends to work on a Ph.D. in History after getting done at El-Shaddai. He chose El-Shaddai for its ability to prepare him for doctoral work, and he was from the area and had also lived in the area while working on his undergraduate degree. As he recounts, "My grandmother had died, and I came down here and just got back around the community . . . saw the El-Shaddai Village. I mean it was almost like I got caught up in the nostalgia of it all." John had worked in a church prior to attending seminary, and he continues to be on a church staff while he is a student. He does not appear to have had painful transformations happen while he was in seminary, but he is wrestling with issues of social justice. I think John could be said to be confronting the "disorienting dilemma" of how much people of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

faith are to advocate for social change. This perhaps reflects his background as a social worker. I think John could be placed at Stage 3 or 4 on the BFS. However, he did not meet the criteria for any of the stages on the instrument.

Mary Baker

Mary is continuing M.A.R student in her 20's. She came to El-Shaddai Seminary after finishing a bachelor's degree in economics and business and working for around three years. Middle Eastern studies had been a hobby of hers for years, and she came to El-Shaddai to pursue her dream of being an archaeological linguist. She first began graduate work at a local state university, trying to create a degree that would work for her. She recalls, "I did not know anything about El-Shaddai at all. It's just that I'd go there for my Hebrew, and then when I met with the admissions advisor fell in love with it." Mary hopes to go on to do a Ph.D. in Epigraphy and Archaeology after her work at El-Shaddai. Her faith development is wrapped up in her interest in archaeology, and she appears to have experienced transformative learning in her seminary work. The study of Old Testament issues in biblical criticism has made her question and re-define her way of looking at formative stories in her faith, as well as her current faith process itself. She does make the decision not to change some of her views, even in light of the "hard facts" presented in some of her study. Mary seems to have come to a place of peace for herself, and I think she would be in the Stage 3 to Stage 4 area on the BFS. The survey placed her at Stage 3.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Stan Dudley

Stan Dudley is a student in his 40's graduating with an M.A.R. However, he already has an M.A. in Sociology and an Ed.D. degree and is doing this work at El-Shaddai for different reasons than many students. In addition to talking about preparation for ministry situations as being an important reason for studying at a seminary, Stan mentions that he likes school for its own sake. He says that school keeps him disciplined and fits in with his beliefs about mental processes. As Stan muses,

> I'm one of those people who believe that the mind and the brain and the thoughts can be exercised, and then develop . . .and need to be. . .that the mind can become dull from lack of use. And maybe I don't know if that's true to the extent that I believe that is, but I guess I have enough conviction and worry that that might be the case, that I think that's important.

Stan has experienced transformative learning recently, but it does not appear to be caused by the seminary experience. He rather attributes it to events in his personal life and views his seminary work as confirming what was already transpiring. Stan recently changed denominations from the Christian Church to the Presbyterian Church (USA) and spoke at length about the factors that caused this. This rather arduous process of changing ordination credentials seems to have really been a challenging, yet fulfilling, journey for him. Stan is a bit uncertain about what will happen next, as he is actively planning not to be in school for really the first time in his adult life. I would place Stan at around Stage 4 on the BFS, but the instrument showed him at Stage 2 and Stage 3.

Marvin Dewey

Marvin is a D.Min. student in his late 20's. He completed his M.Div. at El-Shaddai and then applied for the doctoral program just as soon as he had the required

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

three years of ministerial experience after his master's degree. He has a very practical view of seminary and wants to really combine the theory and practice aspects of seminary education to a greater extent. Marvin drove from a mountain church a few hours away to El-Shaddai for his master's work. He lives closer to the seminary for the doctoral program. In addition to citing the facts that seminary better prepares a minister for his or her work and that several mentor figures in his life were seminary graduates, he mentions the importance of being seen as a learner by people in his congregation as one reason for his continuing his education. Marvin states,

> I'm serving a lot of Baby Boomers, and I don't know . . . quite frankly, they seem to think that they are the only generation that knows anything, and so it was really important to let them know that I'm still a student; I'm still working on my degree. It turns down the volume a little bit when they know that you are working to be the best that you can be.

He has experienced learning in seminary, but it does not appear to be exactly transformative learning. He mentions that he was not really surprised by the "controversial" ideas presented in seminary classes—he describes them as concepts he kind of knew all along subconsciously. Marvin's ideas seem to be his own, so I would place him at around Stage 4 in Fowler's model. However, the BFS showed him at Stage 2 and Stage 3.

Ashley Hanover

Ashley is a new M.Div. student in her early 20's. She came to El-Shaddai after completing a Bible degree at a local Christian liberal arts college. She jokes about her undergraduate influences for studying at the seminary being a conspiracy: "The majority of the programs are kind of to gear you up toward a graduate program, and I think their

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

education was great, because they made me realize that I didn't know a lot." Ashley speaks about feeling different as a youngster when being around people of faith and found that her views, particularly political ones related to her faith, were confirmed in college. She seems to be experiencing transformative learning in her view of the biblical text, especially concerning issues of biblical criticism brought on by her Old Testament Introduction class, but it does not present itself as being a painful process for her. She is wrestling with issues of being a woman in ministry in a tradition that is not very accepting of that in practice, and she hopes to plow some new ground and be a role model for others. I would probably place Ashley between Stage 3 and Stage 4 on the BFS. She came out as both Stage 3 and Stage 5 on the actual questionnaire.

Polly Washington

Polly is a continuing M.Div. student in her mid-20's. She and her husband Bruce both came to El-Shaddai on scholarship to prepare for ministry together. She attended a Bible College in the upper Midwest and remembers feeling like she was not ready for ministry at graduation. An encouraging comment to her from one of her professors in undergraduate school helps to keep her motivated. She comments, "And then when I found out that we were going to come to graduate school, one of my favorite professors at Bible College, he said, 'you know, you need to dig your wells deep.'" This idea of firmly being nourished by a source of life gives her a lot of strength. Polly is concentrating on Christian Care and Counseling, which has a chaplaincy type of focus, in her degree program, and she loves her study. She has felt the need and the responsibility to really support her husband in their seminary experience together, which he has found extremely

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

painful. Polly herself has done some questioning related to perspective transformation, but it seems to have caused her to grip more strongly to some of her previous beliefs in the process. She talks about the limits of questioning and says a person has to stand on something, preferably something that has given a lot of people practical help in living. My thoughts are that Polly would be somewhere around Stage 3 on the BFS. The instrument showed her at both Stage 2 and Stage 3.

This chapter has given a brief profile of the individuals who were interviewed for this study. Postulated faith stages were mentioned for each individual, and the actual faith stages were given. Some pertinent learning experiences, along with catalysts and supports, have been briefly presented and will be discussed more fully in later chapters. Chapter 5 will begin a presentation of the qualitative findings that emerged from the conversations with the participants described in this chapter.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter 5

Seminary Setting

This chapter will give an overview of the model of transformative learning and faith development in this study constructed using naturalistic inquiry. The component of the model that has been termed Seminary Setting will then be explored in more detail.

Overview of Model

As was stated earlier, this study had the intent of understanding both transformative learning and faith development in graduate seminary students. As the study progressed, a more coherent picture of the experience of the participants began to emerge. It included aspects of time, life roles, and the environment in which the individuals found themselves while in seminary. The pervading essences of transformative learning and faith development infused the themes discovered in this study. An overall picture began to materialize that could describe the experience of the individuals studied. Figure 5.1 shows my conception of the interrelationships among the components of the seminarians' lives that emerged. This figure is but a cross-section of the larger process which may be described as shown in Figure 5.2. The processes of faith development and transformative learning are so pervasive that it is difficult to show them in two dimensions. The third dimension revealed by the comparison of the two figures gives a feel of what may be happening before and after the boundaries of the model shown in Figure 5.1, which focuses on one particular time period in the participants' lives.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

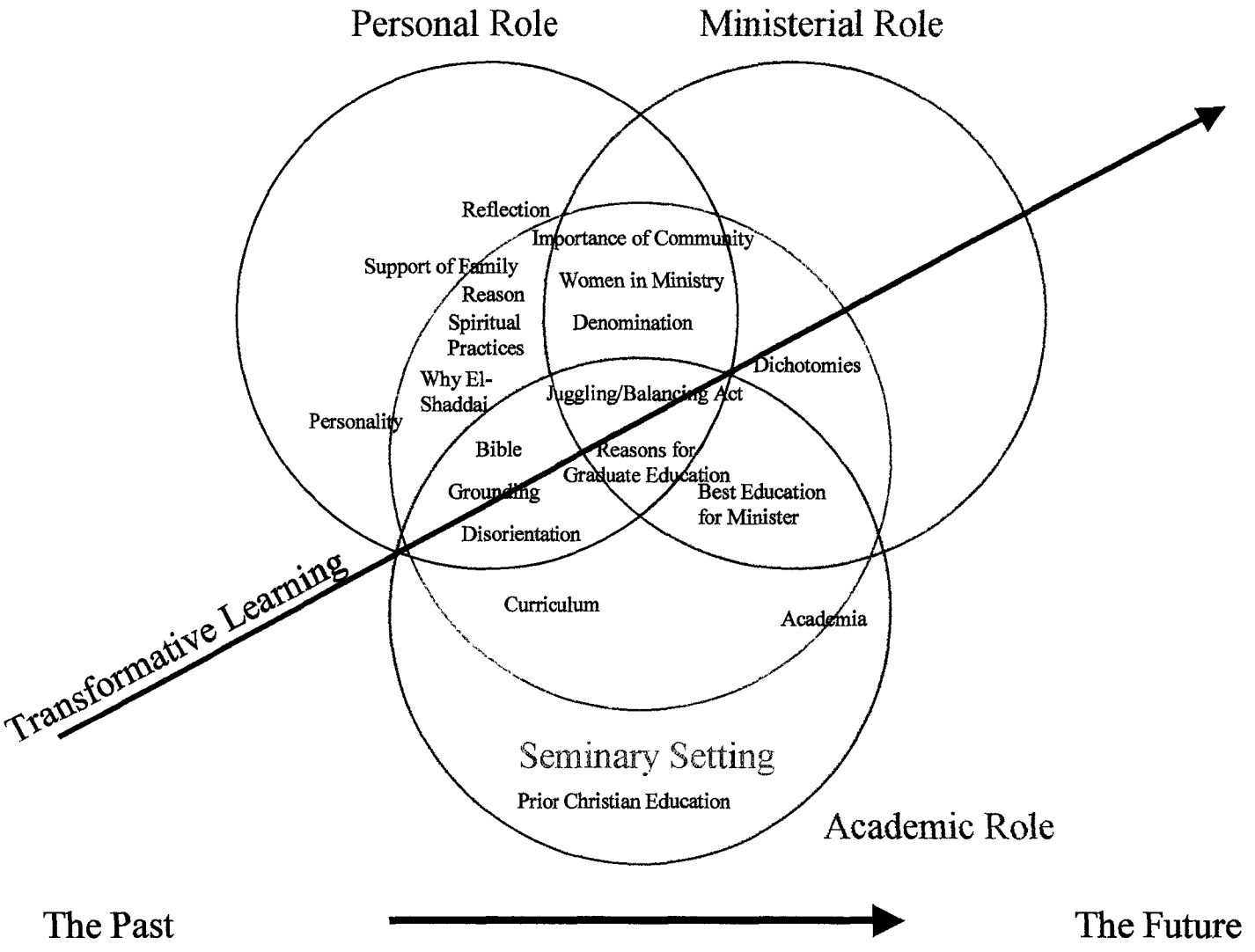


Figure 5.1
El-Shaddai Seminary Worlds

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

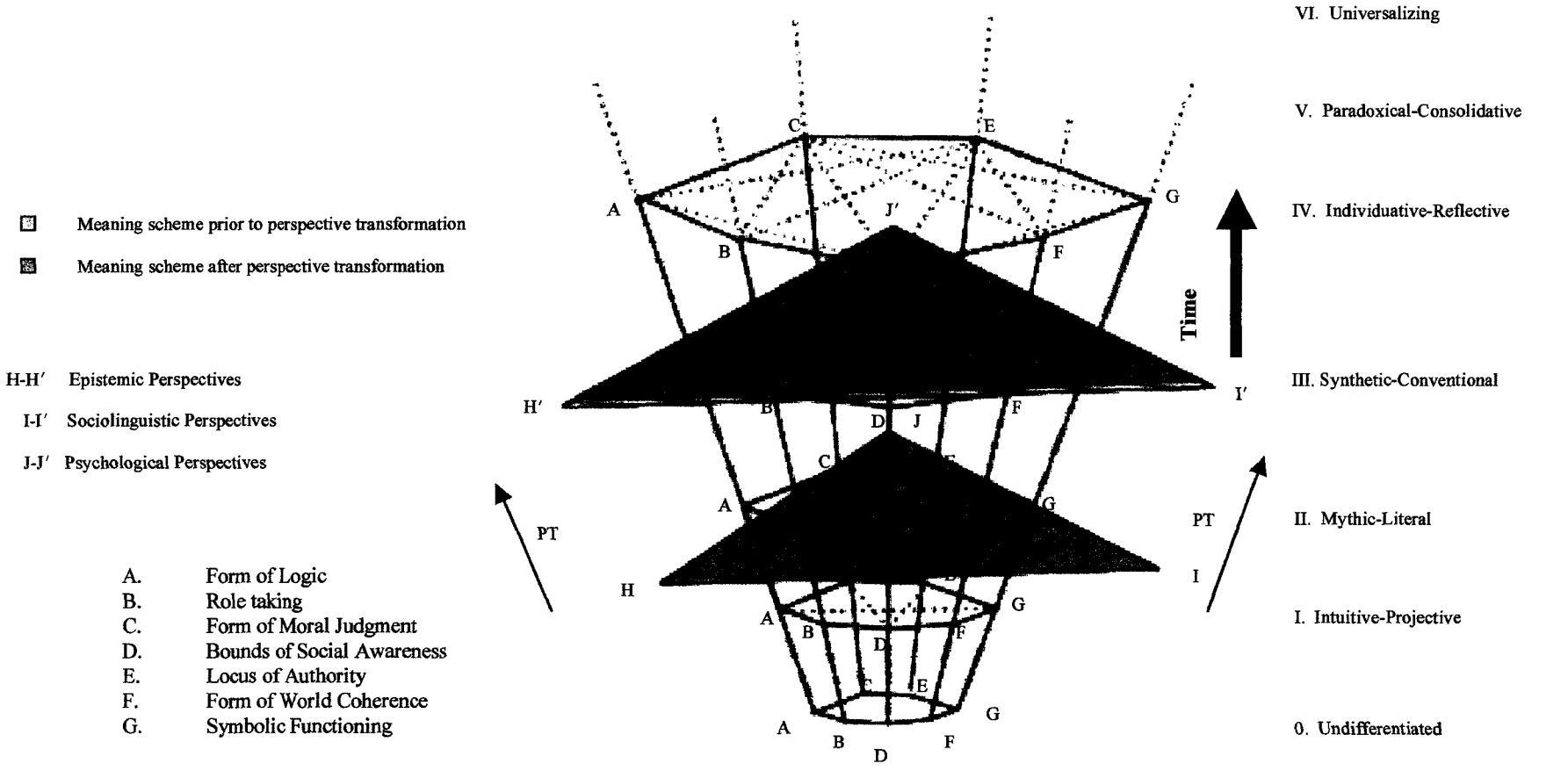


Figure 5.2
Seminary Setting, Faith Development, and Transformative Learning

This diagram is adapted from a diagram appearing on page 32 of Faith Development and Fowler, published by Religious Education Press, and used with permission.

From "Faith and the Structuring of Meaning," by J. W. Fowler, 1986. In C. R. Dykstra & S. Parks (Eds.), Faith Development And Fowler, Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press. Also contains information from Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning,By J. Mezirow, 1991, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The Venn diagram model depicted in Figure 5.1 shows the overlap and independence of a few key aspects of the participants' lives. The personal role, which is defined as aspects having to do with a person's psychological development, is important to each individual's identity. The ministerial role and the academic role can perhaps be placed together under the idea of professional roles. Some seminary students are or hope to be involved in professional ministry, whereas others have academic aspirations. However, the role of minister can be an informal one consisting of function, and all students are involved in some type of academic role, even if it is not their primary goal. Therefore, the ministerial role is seen as that of helping someone while being seen as a person of faith, and the academic role is described as that of being a student, whatever the setting, or having some interaction with schools. The seminary environment includes all aspects of life as a seminary student, including both in-class and out-of-class interactions and activities. These four circles represent concepts that exist roughly in the present time, meaning the time in seminary. However, ideas and happenings that took place in the past or may affect the future are related to the current experience, as can be seen by the presence of time in the diagram.

The perspective transformation and faith development themes exist across the other dimensions described. Faith development, for instance, is seen as occurring as an individual's beliefs, values, and commitments burgeon, while transformative learning shows an augmentation of a person's meaning perspectives. This may happen as is shown in Figure 5.2. To simplify explanation of the main concepts having to do with the seminarians' life happenings, three main areas will be discussed: Seminary Setting,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Professional Roles, and the Personal Role. The words and concepts written inside the circles show the existence of some themes in more than one life function. For purposes of clarity, the themes will only be included in the discussion of one of these major circles.

Since faith development and transformative learning occur across the dimensions, they will both be discussed in each major life area. Transformative learning can come from any direction, and it can be at any place in the time frame relative to the seminary experience. Any arena may serve as a catalyst for perspective transformation. A few happenings that may precipitate transformative learning will be discussed in an effort to address Research Question #2. Transformative learning can lead to large alterations in a person's life, such as a change in denomination or a change of call. In an effort to address Research Question #1, faith development and perspective transformation will be discussed according to the individuals who came out at each stage on the Barnes Fowler-Scale (BFS) under each of the three major areas, even though these results should be viewed with caution, due to the unreliability of the instrument.

Seminary Setting

The themes in this major life area have to do with experiences which the participants had as a result of being a seminary student. Items which strongly relate to the schooling experience, both in and out of the classroom, will be addressed. Major themes to be discussed in the seminary setting include: Curriculum, Bible, Reasons for Graduate Education, the Importance of Community, and the Juggling/Balancing Act. Although some of these are present in more than one circle in the Venn diagram in Figure 5.1, their strongest presence seems to be in the seminary setting.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Curriculum

The theme of Curriculum was prevalent in most students' experience, and it refers to issues having to do with the way the degree programs are set up at El-Shaddai and the course requirements. A number of primary topics will be explored in this section. These include: readings, the D.Min. program, Old Testament Introduction and New Testament Introduction, Clinical Pastoral Education, Supervised Ministerial Experience, the thesis, and ministerial learning. Several minor themes emerged which will not be discussed here.

Readings. Most of the students at both the master's and doctoral levels had very positive things to say about the required readings for their courses. The exposure to writers from the past was mentioned as being beneficial in ministry by several students. Stan and John in particular mention the readings as being extremely helpful. John remarks that the readings were one of the things that caused him to learn the most in seminary:

> Some of them [experiences that caused him to learn the most] would be . . .obviously having to read primary sources, having to read ancient works of church history. . . in your normal everyday church, nobody's going to know who Tertullian was. They probably wouldn't know who Origen was either. You know, different things. . . forcing me to read things that people said and consider that, and just think that perhaps they might have had a few good ideas.

Marvin says that the readings have helped him to open up his eyes to see things from other individuals' viewpoints and challenges his thinking. Reading can thus be a catalyst for change:

> Most helpful are the voices that speak from a perspective that is other than my own. Both courses. . . both D. Min. courses that I have read thus far. I have had

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> books that I resonated with and said, "yeah, that's pretty much my opinion," and I have read books that I have said, "this person is on the move," and some of your professors seem to delight in picking books of both types, and I actually like [that]. I like reading books that make apparent sense to me and encountering books that I just. . . you know, I'll read them, and they'll sit on my shelf the rest of my life. I'll never pick them up again because I think that person is out to lunch, but being able to say "that person's out to lunch" is good for me. It allows somebody else to make the suggestions that I don't like and then mull them over. . . say, "now this person is a thinking Christian. Uh, what's their motivation for coming at me this way?" and that's helpful. I guess if I were left to my own devices, I would become a creature of habit, and I would only head for places that I am more comfortable.

However, reading does have its limits in effecting change. As Jim muses:

> So those things I think are very essential. . .very important. And those are the things I would name. The books have been great, and the teachers have been great. But I don't know any more. Maybe it's just the period of life that I'm in. I don't know if anymore a book is going to change my life at this point. I think it's going to be something else—people. I think it's what you learn in books, but I think I'm at the point in my life at least. . . for whatever the reasons, because it hasn't always been this way. . .but I don't think what I'm going to learn out of a book is going to necessarily change my life. It's going to be what I see in the lives of people.

D.Min. program. Students in the Doctor of Ministry program in general appeared to really like the format of the courses, which promote an equality of learners and instructor. The application of life and ministry experience to the course material was viewed as being invaluable. Jim describes the set-up of the classes according to what might be considered an adult education model:

> Well, the. . . of course, the Doctor of Ministry program is set up so that it's not very lecture-oriented. You are only in the class with 6 or 8 or 9 other people, and you are there all day long for a week. So that is a big difference. It's not like the Master of Divinity where you came and took a class and bolted the building to go so you could make it to your youth group meeting in time or something like that. It's much more conversational. It's much more dialogical, much more. . . it has content to it, but we're not just sitting and taking notes and having to figure out how we're going to put those back down on a piece of paper come test time. It is

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> much more life-oriented, so that allows, I think, for a lot more time for reflection. And the students are from a wider area than they were in the master's. In fact, a number of the students I have been in there with are from international environments, so you can't help but want to hear their views on things. So it's much more slow paced, much more conversational in nature, much more give-and-take. And the professor, of course, is somewhat of an authority figure, but they are also sometimes more participants in the class than they are . . .than standing up front and lecturing on some particular topic. In fact, very little of that has been [that way], so that's been very helpful.

This is similar to the action learning process described by Marsick (1990). Marsick's model applies to the workplace, but the D.Min. program integrates workplace learning with academic material. The key aspects of Marsick's view of the action learning/facilitation process are: action, reflection, and the building of one's own theories. Jim's description seems to suggest that these things are included in the D.Min. classes.

Marvin talks about how the D.Min. interactions with other students have helped him to enrich his ministry. He appreciates the fact that professors do not attempt to impose certain views upon the learners at the doctoral level:

> But at the D. Min. level, you can look around the room, and you can look at our idiosyncrasies, and some of us are older than others, and realize that we have pretty much made up our minds about who we are and don't need to be indoctrinated at this point but do need to learn and need to enrich our ministries. And so that creates, I think, a better partnership between teacher and student and between the students themselves.

Marvin speaks of the community that is formed among the D.Min. students:

> The D. Min. classes are such a small club that it's a lot more intense. You are there for the week, and your friends are there for the week, and you sit down at the table, and you eat together, and you sit through class together, and all of your down time is spent together. And so it's intensified . . . El-Shaddai intensified into a week. And there are advantages and disadvantages to that, but I think the conversations are even richer, especially since everybody is coming from a different place, further away. It makes everything even more fun.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The disadvantages of this are that students do not have enough time together. Marvin laments this fact:

> Disadvantages of course are the fact that one week is not enough time to get to really get to know these people. You feel like they are worth getting to know and by the end of the week your appetite is whet for friendship, but you know they go back to [their local home state] or the Northwest or wherever they are from. Of course you know the foreign students are at El-Shaddai, but that does you no good when you've got to go home, too, but I would have lengthened it, but that would have destroyed the advantage of the program.

The D.Min. program culminates in a project that incorporates a practical application of the coursework the students have taken. Coming up with the project is a challenge for many of the doctoral students. As Gus explains:

> I think the biggest challenge was determining the project, because I enjoyed all the coursework. And, as a I said, ten classes, and I think about seven or eight classes are just used as a need to come up with a project. And the Doctor of Ministry project is something hands-on, and in addition to the research you do on a project, [it] is through ministry at a local church or hospital ministry. [It] is sort of hands on, that other people work with you, and I just couldn't . . . .There I was, interested about some projects, but you know didn't have the passion to want to do all the research about something kind of . . .not necessarily hohum, but so I was going to do some things on leadership, the relation between ministers and elders and things. And [I] had to sound a little bit interested, but yet there seemed to be a lot of things being written about that, and so I had trouble. . . probably spent about a year praying and thinking about a project. I wrote some things out about leadership and even submitted it, you know, to the school for approval, and it had initial approval. And then when we found out that Mom had Alzheimer's disease, it just seemed like a light bulb went off. We didn't know anything about it, and I didn't think that too many other churches or Christians were doing too much about it, so I began researching it, and it just seemed like that was the passion. And so, until that point, I think coming up with a project, something that I was that interested in. . . but I wanted to do the research and, you know, get the people to help me, you know, a doctor and a nurse in my church, you know, review the paper and a couple of other people I had to interview and things. [It was] a lot of hands on instead of, you know, doing research and a long remote Greek word in the New Testament, so I think that the biggest challenge was coming up with a project.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Old Testament Introduction and New Testament Introduction. The Old Testament Introduction (OTI) course was one course early identified as having to do with promoting transformative learning. Looking at the text through the lenses of biblical criticism is often what provokes students' emotions, due to the inquiry into what is behind the words and stories viewed as sacred. Although having taken the course or not was not significantly related to faith stage in a statistical sense, many seminarians mention its influence on their thinking. Polly reminisces about the problematic experience of one of her friends regarding the JEDP theory (a concept of biblical criticism having to do with how the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, was formed):

> Well, I remember one time when in Old Testament Intro our first year, I had a friend that came from Georgia Tech, and so she didn't have any of the background biblical classes that I had, and we learned the JEDP stuff. And I agree with some of it and don't agree with all of it kind of thing. And it was interesting because Dr. Evans taught us the whole JEDP theory, and then we took an exam on it, and then the next week he was like "now these are the faults in it." And I remember we took our break because it was an evening class, and my friend was like "I thought that was the thing." And so she was really frustrated, because she put all this stock in it, and then she found out that it's maybe not, you know, a hundred percent true. That was one thing that helped me, like at the beginning, of realizing that I have to filter things myself and stuff.

Some students do not seem to have a difficulty with the material encountered in the Old Testament Introduction class, given their own power to think for themselves. Sam describes his experience:

> Speaking in terms of classroom and teaching that is being given I'm not bothered by anything. Nothing much to be bothered by the Hebrew class to get . . .Intro to Christian doctrine. Nothing really to be bothered with there. People experience a lot of problems, as you probably well know, in the Old Testament classes and probably New Testament as well, which I have not had yet. But, um, the views that I have developed especially through my undergraduate work concerning the Bible and the nature of the text, it doesn't bother me anything that it says. I won't

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> agree with everything, of course, but that freedom to disagree is extended here. Academically I have no complaints about the experience. I'm not bothered by anything that they've said or done.

After mentioning that the questioning in the OTI class was helpful to her and that her professor was very pastoral in how he taught, Ashley describes the power of the concepts she encountered. She remarks:

> For me to believe that Noah's Ark didn't happen or maybe the creation story isn't really, well exactly, true, to think of the Bible I guess more as literature has been really cool, even [though it] sounds funny. It's kind of been neat to doubt the resurrection and come up with. . . you see all these scholars that really don't believe in the resurrection, and you wonder "how in the world do they call themselves a Christian?." So it's things like that you can reconcile that and find the powers and the mysteries of the Gospel instead of the facts that were there. So that's been really helpful, I guess, for me, and I guess they've changed the way I read the Bible.

New Testament Introduction (NTI) is another course postulated as promoting changes in thinking that might be viewed as perspective transformation. Again, it is the cross-examination of the sacred text through the tools of biblical criticism that often provokes students' discomposure. It is not mentioned as often by itself as causing difficulty for the students interviewed, however. NTI is usually talked about in the same breath as OTI when talking about a course's power to cause discomfort. In Sam's and Polly's previous comments, one can see the negative emotions attached to the class by some students. However, Ashley also remarks positively about the course:

> It's been nice having New Testament because you understand a little bit more when Paul talks about being a colony or being a citizen of heaven, not of Rome. And, kind of, it doesn't directly apply, but I guess it kind of applies to the situation that we're in today, especially the events or the parts of that.

Ashley, however, does question if NTI will be helpful for her in ministry:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> And I know the New Testament Introduction course isn't going to be, at least on the surface, really practical, so it's been hard to break down the barriers with some professors and feel like you have, I guess, a Christian relationship with them. Sometimes it's just professor/student.

Clinical Pastoral Education. Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is a type of counseling program that focuses on chaplaincy in a variety of settings. It involves intensive self-examination and the review of one's interactions in pastoral situations. In some ways, it is similar to the field training which clinical therapists do. It was also viewed as being a course which might promote transformative learning, due to the difficult emotional and pastoral situations that students may face. Polly is the only one of the interviewees that specifically mentioned her reactions to the course, perhaps due to her degree concentration, Christian Care and Counseling. It will be reviewed here, however, since it is one of the courses that was specifically targeted on the survey. The population who volunteered to be interviewed, for whatever reason, did not include many people who had already taken the course.

Polly mentions the difficulty of CPE, but largely comments on how much she enjoys working with people. The practical nature of the course is very appealing to her:

> I think it's been great that. . . like I've learned all of this stuff, and I ate it up, but it was not until the CPE. . . that it's really exciting, because it's like I have all this stuff in my head, and now I get to use it. And so it's been both, and I really think CPE is hard, and it's hard to fit in your schedule and your life, but I've never had anything help me in such a short amount of time and so intensely.

CPE is draining, due to the intense interactions with people needing help. Polly laments:

> And I'm so tired at night, sometimes I don't know what hit me, but I know that it's changed me, and so now I understand why. . . I'm not comparing myself to Jesus. . . but I understand why He had to get away. . . .and rest, because it's like I've been zapped.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CPE, an interdenominational program, is offered through an endeavor at a local Veteran's Administration. Polly says it has undoubtedly helped her to learn the most in her time in seminary:

> CPE. . . and I know it's not directly El-Shaddai, but it's something I have to do for my degree, and definitely I think I've learned the most and the fastest. And it's crazy, because it hurts, and sometimes I just don't want to do it, but at the same time I love what it's done for me. Sounds like Toyota [laughs].

Supervised Ministerial Experience. The Supervised Ministerial Experience (SME) is a required course for all M.Div. students and involves active participation in a ministry situation with an experienced minister overseeing each student's duties. Meeting with fellow students in accountability groups is also a part of the SME initiative. Some of the situations that students might encounter in actual ministry were postulated as precipitating transformative learning.

Ashley speaks of her SME experience in very positive terms as one of the schooling-relating experiences that caused her to learn the most:

> I think my internship. I got to follow my minister around at the church I attend and actually preach one Sunday. That congregation was weird, because it's professors, but we got to visit a lot of older people that had kind of, uh, disconnected from the church, and they're parents of members or something. I guess learning how to speak to those people, how to pray for them, show how you genuinely care, and probably also just looking at the congregation and try to find the dynamics and stuff and understand congregations as a whole. And that they're all different, and they all go through certain things, and that they're buried throughout the country, I guess. And so my particular experience has been great, because it's been completely different from the church I grew up in.

Polly's experience, on the other hand, was not as positive, and she thought the groups of students could have been set up in a way that was more helpful:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> With us with the SME program, it's like we came in. . . I know he's trying as hard as he can to make a spiritual foundation along with us. . . but it was like one of the classes was accountability groups, and there are only two of us girls in there, so of course we can be an accountability group, "see you there," and it worked out because we were both real talkative. But for other people like, it's like "you four guys in your group, get personal, and, you know, go," and they weren't ready for that. . . . Like the first time that we've really kinda gotten anything out [of it] is theological integration, which is our last year, where we're writing. . . you write a paper on your spiritual gifts and your experiences. And then we present it to the class, and everybody reads it, and then that class period is discussing you. And for the first time, we actually got to know each other, and it's been four years, you know. And it would be neat to have that more at the beginning, and maybe to have the same accountability group throughout, and to get to know each other, and to have somebody that you can go to and say, "I am so mad," or "this isn't working." But it's also very difficult to do if people aren't willing to.

It did not help Polly's experience that her supervising minister did not offer much help in the internship part of SME. In fact, she mentioned that the church in which she and her husband did their internship is now on the "black list" of those to be involved with the SME work. The contrast between her experience and Ashley's seems to be the seriousness with which the supervising minister took the internship and the responsibility of being a mentor to the seminary student.

Thesis. A thesis is required for both M.A.R. and M.Div. students, unless a special project is requested. Going through the thesis process was cited as being very helpful by several students. Stan mentions the thesis as being helpful to him, in terms of being one of the things that caused him to learn the most:

> As far as El-Shaddai is concerned, Dr. Newton is one. The other one is this thesis process, because of the literature. Exposure to the . . . to Lesslie Newbigin and literature on missional theology that has a Reformed . . . from someone who has a Reformed background.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Joseph talks about the passion required for doing the thesis, as he considers changing his topic to the conservative Christian response to Christian homosexuals:

> Yeah. It's definitely something that I've been kind of immersed in, so it's like one of the school recruiters said, if you do a thesis on something you're not interested in, you probably won't do it. So you need something you can keep, so I could probably do a pretty good thesis now if I just sit down and do it.

Lisa says working on her thesis has been therapeutic:

> I'm just glad it's done right now. That's been a good process to go through, too, because I think I worked through some of my own restlessness in doing that. It's probably the most self-serving thesis on the campus.

However, John talks about the difficulty of doing a thesis as one of the challenges that has confronted him at seminary:

> Certainly the thesis was a challenge. I mean, you know, I don't want to minimize that. I'd never written above a fifteen-page term paper in my life, and my thesis came out to be about 75. . .but so, that was a challenge to think like that.

Several of the students interviewed mentioned their thesis topics and seemed very willing to talk about them. Within the range of theological education, there was quite a broad range of topics. They included: the missional theology of Lesslie Newbigin; what the church's response should be to homosexuals; the life of Richard Baxter, a 17th century English Puritan who was a prolific writer; and young adults' faith perspective in the church.

Ministerial learning. Several students had feelings about the juxtaposition of theory and practice that resulted from working in a church while going to seminary. This ministerial learning appears to be above and beyond that required in the SME component

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the curriculum and impacted some students' choice of courses greatly. Marvin reflects:

> And the experience that I had at El-Shaddai Seminary was highly useful in several ways, and I wonder sometimes if it would have been less useful if I hadn't been working. The questions that I came to the classroom with came directly from the field in which I was working, and it colored not only the questions I asked in the classroom but which classrooms I decided I would be in.

Joseph made his choice to attend El-Shaddai with the idea of combining serving a church while being a seminary student:

> . . .so I thought that would be more valuable to be pastoring while I was at school, and I think it was more valuable, so that's pretty much the factor that led me to El-Shaddai over Conwell, because I could be pastor of a church.

Joseph has more to say about the utility of combining the seminary and work learning experiences:

> I do believe I learned more about practical ministry from serving in the church I was at than I did in seminary. To be honest, seminary wasn't that helpful in how to be a pastor. I learned that more from doing it, and you know, you can talk all day about. . . like we had a counseling class that was good but practically worthless in a real life situation. . . but I learned more from being a pastor how. . . when somebody comes to us grieving, you know, I thought about, like what I learned in counseling classes, you know to invite them into the story, all that . . .but that was okay. But you really had to learn that just by having grieving people come to you and make mistakes and things like that, but it did give me some grounding, you know. I just thought I had to come up with some of this the easy way. Seminary taught me more how to think rather than what to think, and how to form an opinion rather than what opinion to have, and how to form a belief instead of what belief to have. And I really value that at El-Shaddai that. . . it wasn't just we're going to teach this particular denomination's tenants, but really we're going to give you the tools so that you can take the Bible and you can take your faith and make it.

However, John does not mention his experience in working at a local church as being as separate from his seminary work:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Just that my time at seminary has led me to work for this local church, and that involves a lot of my time in a good way, certainly, whether it be friends or whatever. It's hard when you have so many groups of friends, and it's hard to keep up with everybody.

Bible

Several participants talked about their view of the Bible changing as a result of their seminary experiences. Part of this change of how they looked at a sacred text did accompany a person's faith development and transformative learning. This will be discussed in more detail later on in the chapter. Due to its role in Christian life, this area has quite a bit of power to affect seminarians' worldviews. Some participants reaffirmed their ideas about the importance of Scripture as a result of the things they learned at seminary. Lisa remarks about the Bible's role in giving an anchor: "Maybe it's a good surprise, but when you remove Scripture from the equation, you can go all kinds of places with talking about God and Jesus and things like that." In a somewhat humorous story from his congregational work, Joseph comments on the transformative power of the biblical text:

> I had a deacon tell me within this last year, and I don't think he meant it, and I don't think he meant to say it, but I think it really was in his heart. He said, "I don't care what the Bible says—this is what I believe." What he believed he thought was based on the Bible, but he wasn't comfortable enough to plunge into the Bible and let the Bible change his belief.

The tools of biblical criticism caused some of the participants to re-examine their views of the Bible. Mary describes an example of how this worked for her:

> For example, a lot of stories in the Old Testament, and since Old Testament is my field, those have been the stories that I love. . .things that I just hung my faith on. We began to examine the life of David more closely, and there are even variances within the. . . or differences within the Scripture about who may have killed

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Goliath. Was it David? Was it Elhanan? And I tease Dr. Rogers that he's not ruining this Bible story for me. . . that David killed Goliath—I don't care what he says.

Marvin also recounts how his perspective on the sacred text has altered:

> My attitude towards the Bible itself has changed the most. I went from my first year at Hatfield College. . . I went from having the attitude of the Bible as a flat univocal book to a rich monopoly of voices. And that is probably the most dramatic change, although, as I said before, I suspected all along that this was the case, but I didn't know how much so. I grew up knowing that I had different books and different authors with different attitudes and different views, but I didn't know how many different voices, and I didn't know how different those views were until they were contrasted for me, until I could see that I had multiple authors in books that I had once thought were single authors, and multiple traditions smaller and larger within books and within sets of books and within genres of books, and that was probably the most dramatic change.
>
> On the other hand, there can be a negative side to studying the Bible analytically.

Polly's view of biblical criticism is not as positive, and she picks and chooses what she accepts from that type of study:

> I remember one time when a professor was saying. . . we were in Hebrew. But anyway, they were talking something about how the Hebrews have different humor than us and a different writing style, and how I kept thinking "it's ridiculous to think." I mean, [they were saying] "it's just so elementary that anyone would ever believe that Jonah was really a true story. He was truly swallowed by a whale." And I think, "I kind of just don't believe that." That kind of shows the amazingness of God to me with such a ridiculous story, but he was saying, "you know, it's so stupid if anybody ever believed that." And I would just think. . . it felt really good for me to sit down and think, "I still believe in the big fish, you know" and be okay with it and not feel panicked or anything. I felt calm about it, and, I mean, he's incredibly intelligent, but I didn't feel threatened or anything by that.

Roger recounts how his view of the biblical text has become more complicated from when he entered seminary. He no longer finds the simple answers he once sought in the sacred writing:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> I suppose I was quite ignorant of the complexities of the text, the complexities of the Bible as a source of guidance. I came in thinking the Bible contains all truth in terms of how we need to govern ourselves, and any differences we have is either a matter of obstinance, or a matter of misinterpretation, or a matter of study that needs to be refined. And what I found is that you really abuse the Bible, you really make the Bible into something it hasn't been historically if you try to make it that. It certainly. . . [I] still hope that it's normative and authoritative, but in quite a different way, and cannot be authoritative the way it's meant to be if we try to be a literalist about it, or if we try to be patternistic about it, or if we try to make it the only source of . . . our only source in terms of how we organize ourselves at the church.

A person's view of the Bible can be a very powerful motivator in his or her ministerial practice. Although not caused by his seminary work, Stan's perspective on biblical interpretation is part of what led him to change denominations:

> It is dealing with interpretation of Scripture. Yeah. It has to do . . .just to be as concise as I can. It has to do with the difference between what in theological terms are Arminianism and Calvinism. It's the difference between Arminianism and Reformed understanding of Scripture. It's not really biblical applications but biblical interpretation.

Reasons for Graduate Education

The reasons for entering El-Shaddai Seminary as a graduate student are myriad and serve as an interesting study in themselves for adult educators. However, for purposes of this study, the examination will look at the big picture. The reasons for graduate study seemed to cluster around personal, professional, and academic grounds. For purposes of discussion, they will be included in this section.

Personal reasons. Some personal reasons for graduate seminary education included having a hunger for education and wanting to answer one's own questions. Gus says, "It's not like I necessarily like being a professional student kind of mentality, but it's just the hunger for learning and being able to relate to people, and I think that's the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

key." Lisa mentions wanting to explore some of her own questions: "Also, I've just [had] some of my own wonderings and questions about stuff. I thought that seminary would be a good place to just work through that." Stan mentions that he likes to stay in school because he believes that the mind needs to be exercised:

> I'm one of those people who believe that the mind and the brain and the thoughts can be exercised, and then develop. . . and need to be. . . that the mind can become dull from lack of use. And maybe I don't know if that's true to the extent that I believe that is, but I guess I have enough conviction and worry that that might be the case, that I think that's important.

An interest factor in the field of theology is there for the participants. Sloan, in particular, mentions this as a reason for attending seminary:

> I would like to be able to say this in deference to all the other good things to study, but I don't really see much point in studying anything else. Not because they aren't valuable, but other disciplines in my mind don't get at the, you know, the what it means to be a person or, you know, those sorts of big questions in life. . . what it means to exist on this earth sorts of questions like theology is.

Jim felt like he was being offered the chance of a lifetime to get a terminal degree, so he chose to take it:

> And what led me back to school was I just felt like this was probably the last opportunity I was going to have maybe for some more formal education and a degree, and I just felt like I needed to take advantage of it. So a position came open here at the school to work as their Associate Director of Development, and in turn I get to work on my Doctor of Ministry. So I just felt like this was probably it and would be a good chance for me to do that. . . and probably my last chance.

Academic goals. A few of the participants have goals of continuing on in academia. However, the academic reasons for attending seminary began with prior schooling for some individuals. Will, Sloan, and Ashley all talk about their

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

undergraduate programs causing them to want or see the need to go on to graduate school. Ashley states:

> Well, I think it's a conspiracy. I joke about that with when you're at Hatfield or just any liberal arts school, honestly, especially a Christian liberal arts school. The majority of the programs are kind of to gear you up toward a graduate program, and I think their education was great, because they made me realize that I didn't know a lot.

John and Mary both have the goal of going on to do Ph.D. work, and John has already been accepted into a doctoral program upon graduation. They both saw El-Shaddai as having a role in their eventual academic careers. John says:

> So, I just knew . . . I don't know, I grew up around some of the professors, but one thing. . . what I wanted to do was I really wanted to work on a Ph.D., God willing. So I thought it would be better to come to El-Shaddai to study something to develop relationships with the professors who could write recommendations. Because I thought if I just took classes at a regular university for an M.A. in History, which is only 30 hours, I could finish it so quickly I might be out before anybody knew who I was. I also wanted to study more theology in the future, to where if I did teach, I could still work in a church and have some credibility with that degree.

Interestingly, both John and Mary also mention not being happy with the jobs that they had prior to coming to El-Shaddai. Perhaps the work dissatisfaction was an indication that they were wanting to pursue another type of career, an academic one. Mary remarks:

> But after working for about three years, my husband was about to be transferred, which did not happen, but I thought, "I hate what I'm doing. Even if I stay in business I've got to go back, and I'm going to have to do Hebrew. I'm going to have to do something to equip myself to move into that realm." And then when he did not get transferred, I thought it was time for me to go back to school.

Jim mentions the possibility of an academic position as a reason for him pursuing a D.Min., although it is not his primary goal. He reasons:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> It does allow you to teach . . . most of the colleges that I probably would try to teach for would probably prefer that I have a Ph.D. But since I have a master's, a Doctor of Ministry does allow me some latitude that I wouldn't have just with a master's degree. So if I was to move from the church movement into a school environment, then the Doctor of Ministry would serve a practical purpose for me.

Professional reasons. This category comprises most of the reasons that people cited for attending graduate seminary. For them, being a graduate student at El-Shaddai was all about being a better minister. Marvin mentions that being seen as a student helps him in his ministry:

> You know, here I am 29, and it's worse here than it was in Blacke. You know, I served a generation of grandparents in Blacke County, and they were willing to accept that some amount of wisdom could come from somebody from my generation, being the grandparent/grandson relationship, they were a little more lenient. But here in Georgeville, I'm serving a lot of Baby Boomers, and I don't know. . . quite frankly, they seem to think that they are the only generation that knows anything, and so it was really important to let them know that I'm still a student, I'm still working on my degree. It turns down the volume a little bit when they know that you are working to be the best that you can be.

Several participants commented that they felt like they needed to know more to do a good job as a minister. Sam says:

> So all of that made a lot of sense and by my second year I think it was my second year as a sophomore. . . I realized you know what I've got it in me physically and we can pull together the finances, resources, or whatever that I really should go on to graduate work to add on to what I've done here and to get a better understanding of the kinds of things I've been talking about and to find out how those things can inform me in serving more effectively a ministry.

Being seen as the "expert" on matters of faith is alluded to by a few of the participants as being a prompt to study more. Roger remarks:

> I think anyone who is going to be, you know, the resident. A minister wears many hats. One of them that he wears is the resident theologian, and I think it just is about being irresponsible to people who you are serving if you really didn't

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> engage that, so this place is a lot about that. About examining cognitively matters of faith.

A few of the participants said that they did not feel ready to go minister when they graduated from undergraduate work, so they went on to graduate school. Lisa says she went to graduate school "partly because I thought I didn't pay enough attention in college. I did well in the classes, but I felt like I wasn't ready yet to teach other people."

Depending upon the background of the student, seminary might be required to go into the ministry. Will says, in a somewhat Platonic understanding of knowledge:

> I suppose my regional clergy committee wouldn't be thrilled with hearing me say that "well, it's required for ordination, for one thing," so I always knew that seminary was something that would be expected if I wanted to go into ministry. . . .I knew that there was so much that I wanted to learn and so much that I needed to learn to go and share with people in congregations who had helped to found these schools but couldn't leave their jobs and positions and come here themselves. So I just sort of felt an obligation to learn as much as I could to take that back to them, and I guess my understanding of ministry is an understanding of equipping. That is that, you know, I learn as much as I can to go back in and share what I know with people in the congregation and learn from them, and together we equip each other to do the ministry.

Gus speaks of the need to remain current as an impetus for graduate education. He sees working on his "terminal" degree as a type of continuing education:

> I think with all fields of work and ministry it's just you need to stay fresh with the way the technology is going, and I just felt the need to keep learning. And so I really wasn't necessarily as interested in the program or the degree as I was in taking the classes. And as I began to get one class out of the way and then another one and final thesis, you know, you need to think of a project, you know. So I did it to be a better minister to help understand people and problems and things like that, so. . .

Stan says that all of his education, even that which was not expressly theological, has helped him in ministry:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> And so I think my master's program and my doctorate program have given me some angles, some perspectives, have, if I can use some of the terminology, have given me some meaning perspectives that it made me hopefully. . . made me into a better communicator and better minister, a better pastor, a better counselor, hopefully.

Importance of Community

The impact that community relationships has made on the participants is a theme that arises over and over again in their interviews. Community has helped some people make the decision to enter El-Shaddai, and it has supported others in their times of disorientation. Mary speaks of how the community has helped her in her faith development:

> And when I came to El-Shaddai the community there totally embraced me, and totally the people there went out of their way to form relationships with me, and they just had such a way of it just totally disarmed all of that and began over the last three semesters to just break down some really terrible habits that I felt that God was dealing with me too. And I just was not happy, because I wasn't living. I was just kind of existing and getting things done. And so for me, my experience with my professors and fellow students is what has changed my values and my commitments, because I have found myself just looking at my schedule and putting very few things on there. I don't make myself notes to call and check on people, I just try to [think], "you know, I just think I need to call and check on that person" when it comes to my mind. You know just a normal forming of relationships and that has bled over.

Some of the participants mentioned that it was especially good to have this support when people in other areas of their lives may not understand what they are going through. Ashley states:

> I think a big part of it was in the classroom, but I'm really lucky to have a group of. . . most of them are guys that I kind of have been through college and now first years of seminary with. . . we just talk about it all the time. And I know it makes my husband mad, but it's been really helpful to go through a community, even though we don't live together. . .to struggle with the same things. And you find that they come to the same conclusions as you, where your family may find

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> something different and really not support what you think, but you know that your friends are coming to the same conclusions. It's encouraging to know they're just strong Christians and know what's going on.

Some of the students who were serving in congregational ministries commented that their church community was very important for their seminary process. Will recounts:

> At church I have people who. . .you know, I can't say enough about how loving and caring they are. I have people come into my office every other day asking how seminary is going, what am I learning, what can I share with them about my experience. We have actually had two people from my congregation who have decided to come to El-Shaddai to study, and I think that's happened because they had an El-Shaddai student there, and they've seen the kind of stuff I've been studying. And there is a real desire for theological education there with two of them, so it's been wonderful to have a community that understands what I'm going through and is willing to recognize that I might spend 17 hours in this week instead of the twenty I'm supposed to because I'm trying to keep up on studies or take a day of rest and try to relax and process everything that's going on.

The dependence upon a church community is not universal, however, and John sees this as a problem:

> There's a lot of people disenchanted with the church . . . going to seminary, which seems odd to me. I know some people who go to seminary who don't go to church, and that just seems odd. And they say, "me and my wife we pray and we read scripture and play the guitar," and that's great, but it just doesn't seem to be the model that I see in the New Testament. You know—community—if it doesn't help you, maybe you can help somebody else. That's not very widespread, but there's some of it.

Although the support of the community at seminary is important, it was stated that the community there could be too insular at times. Lisa thought it was meaningful for her to have a community away from seminary:

> The other I think is that I had a job in a restaurant while I was in seminary, and that was like the most vital ministry that I could have imagined having during seminary. And I just look at other people who are content to just be surrounded by Christians all the time, so I guess I'm going back to the other question about what bothers me, but that's one of them. When I think about just losing touch

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> with the larger culture and with other people. And so even though I would say that I wonder if the majority of people are anchored in God and that they are motivated by the desire to serve God, but sometimes that becomes so just internal. . . . I think in the same way that it was a challenge to be in different worlds, it was really good to go and spend the weekend working at the restaurant [with people] who are not anywhere close to this world. You know who are still pretty carefree and are still just people to have fun with. The chance to kind of step away from the intense academic. . . . But I think one of the interesting things about restaurants is they kind of become little communities. You know, you work and work together, and then when it's over you are friends, so that's who you go out with too. So it's just been helpful to keep some kind of balance. Reading books full of big words and going to movies with friends.

Negative student interactions. Although the vast majority of the comments made about the seminary community are extremely positive, that does not mean that <u>all</u> interactions are helpful. There were some types of student interactions that were termed as being negative and unhelpful. A person's position on the conservative-liberal theological continuum can affect relationships with other students. Polly comments on this in describing her husband's difficult experiences:

> He's felt at times that he's been persecuted in the classroom by like. . . in one class, I think it was World Religions last year, and it was. . . he was excited because he wanted to learn about the world religions and where they're coming from so that he could minister to them. And it was. . . I wasn't in the class, but from his perception he felt like it was more of a tolerance for every religion. And he's not one. . . he's not combative, but he is one to question, and so he got pegged as the class fundamentalist, and so he got attacked like by all the students. He got attacked pretty much every day, and so he would come away thinking, "okay, is there something wrong with me? Is there something wrong with them?" "What's going on?". . . .And especially being pegged a fundamentalist at this school at this time. . . it seems like fundamentalist is the worse thing that you can be called, and it's not always that bad, I don't think.

Another type of negative interaction that is mentioned has to do with academics. Theological education is not immune from some of the pitfalls of other types of academia. Lisa speaks of being startled at these interactions:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> There have been good surprises, but the first ones that come to my mind are kind of negative. One of the things that has surprised me is kind of the way that the students interact with each other and some of the competition that goes on in the classroom. Some of the labeling, you know.

Mentor figures. A vital aspect of community for several individuals was the presence of mentor figures. These figures might have been individuals from the past who influenced them to go to seminary, but for many of the participants, the mentor was a professor from El-Shaddai. Polly comments:

> That's how Dr. Ernst I think for me has been the most influential and informative professor that I've had, because he also shows outside of the class that he cares about us. Like last year we lived in [another state] and commuted every week, and he actually said, "if you guys need a place to stay, you know, you can stay with Rose and I." And I had never. . . like we had friends that said that, but never a professor, and so he had really showed that he was more than just a classroom.

Polly goes on to comment that a mentor relationship cannot be too artificially forced, as was evident from some attempts made by the school:

> I remember one time they tried having a lunch with us, the first year students, with like retired ministers from the area, but there was such a cultural and generational difference that it was like "hi, I'm". . . I was wearing an Old Navy shirt, and the minister is like "Old Navy . . . now is that from, you know, a military store?" I was like, "oh, my gosh. It's a store." . . . . We were supposed to find mentors even in the church that we're doing our internship at somewhere, and that didn't really work. It doesn't work to be forced with a mentor, but sometimes if you have no idea who to ask to be your mentor. . . and then our internship was horrid.

Juggling/Balancing Act

As can be seen from the Venn diagram earlier in this chapter, the seminary students are operating in several different worlds at once. This existence in multiple contexts necessitates a juggling and balancing act for most of the learners interviewed.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The juggling is seen as what is the most difficult part of seminary by many. Sam comments:

> I think it's more the balancing act because I want to be a good husband. I want to be growing with my walk with Christ every day, but I also want to do well at whatever I'm doing. And the events that have lead me and things that have brought me here and allowed me to come has convinced me that there is no question about it, God has brought me here, and this is where I need to be. And so I want to do a good job, and like many people, I get frustrated when my goals are blocked or when there is more put on me than I know I can do. I don't mind having a lot put on me in different areas of life if I know I have a chance of getting that done, but I found out about my third week here you cannot do it all and I had to totally rethink you know in my undergraduate work you could put in, if you wanted to, you could work hard enough and you could read every book and write every paper and do everything, and here that's not true. At least not so far as my experience. Forty-two hours a week of school work and there is still loose ends that I haven't gotten to. I sacrifice that and let it go. Yeah, that's been the heart of my concern, prayers, discussion, people, my wife is this balance between taking care of myself, taking care of my wife, being a good student, and trying to get myself prepared like I should be in order to go on from here and do other things.

This juggling and balancing act is accentuated for the distance students. Joseph describes what a typical day was like for him at one point in his seminary career:

> I mean one of the biggest challenges at first well not first but kind of just on an earthly level. . . just the time constraints. At the time, I was single, but you figure out with driving down, whether it's Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday and Friday. . . . drive down Tuesday, and I would spend the night. I have relatives that I would stay the night with. . .and then be here Wednesday and then drive back. A two-hour drive each way over some pretty bad roads and then, you know, be involved in ministry and back and forth and also doing the study and things like that. So that was a real challenge. There were sometimes when I would. . .especially when I started dating my wife. . .that we would have Wednesday night service, and I'd have whatever time I could get with her Wednesday night. And so sometimes I would get here at 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning and, you know, study for a Greek test or whatever, and then be in class at 8:00, and then go through a whole day of class and then drive back. . . and for a while I was driving back and forth two hours each way. Just the stress—well, that's just part of it.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Strangely enough, though, the balancing act is seen as exhilarating by some students. Marvin, describing his life as a distance student, states:

> Wednesdays were the toughest days of all. I would get up at 5:00, be on the road by 6:00; I would get out of my car and walk straight into the classroom at 8:00. I was in class from 8:00 until lunch. . . lunch break with James and his buddies, my old Hatfield buddies. Then I was back in class until 4:30 because of the Practical Ministries on Wednesdays. I would get done at 4:30. I would jump into my car and start driving. At 6:30 I would get out of my car and walk into the sanctuary to teach Wednesday night Bible study, and I was done. . . let's see 6:30 to 7:30. . .talk with your church people for a few minutes afterwards. I was done at 8:00 that night. So a 12- to 14- to 16- hour day. And I loved it. I loved it. It was the most perverse thing of all, and I would have done it forever if my student loans hadn't come through.

Faith Development and the Seminary Setting

Aspects of faith development expressly having to do with the seminary environment will be discussed here. Faith was a primary theme which came through in the individual interviews. Although the Barnes Fowler-Scale (BFS) was not very reliable in this study, the faith-style group results will be used as a convenient way to group participants' responses for discussion and for purposes of addressing Research Question #1: "How do adults at different levels on Fowler's model of faith development experience perspective transformation in the context of their schooling-related activities?"

Some participants met the criteria for more than one stage but were chosen to represent only one of these stages. This was done due to the availability and location of volunteer participants. It was decided that being able to meet with a person face-to-face, even though he or she might be categorized in more than one stage, was more important than having someone purely in one stage who would have to be interviewed over the telephone.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Stage 2 Participants

These individuals, according to the BFS, gave responses associated with the Mythic/Literal faith-style group. The things the participants have to say, not surprisingly when the instrument reliability is considered, do not really go along with the description of this stage. As seen in Table 1.1, this stage may be characterized as describing individuals whose meaning is derived from the groups with which they are affiliated. People with this faith style appropriate from the community those stories (myths) that make sense of the environment and take them literally (Crapps, 1986). Fowler says that formal operational thought helps individuals to transition from this stage (Fowler, 1981). All of the individuals interviewed were clearly using formal operational thought, again making the characterization of these individuals' faith style suspect.

Sloan's faith development in the seminary environment appears to be greatly affected by his view of academics. The way that he describes his views shows that he does not think with literalism. Sloan particularly has something to say about how his values have changed as a result of academic work:

> I would say because I'm not a straight A student I value efficiency in a way that calls into question much of what it means to be a good student, what it means to be a good Christian, what it means to be like. . . you know it's easy in academics, in learning, to feel like this goal of the paper being done by this date with this grade is the goal. And that just so detracts from the purpose of learning that I've learned to value a little more, uh . . . I'm not sure if "inefficiency," but to value something other than efficiency being the goal, other than product being the goal.

Marvin (both Stage 2 and Stage 3) mentions his relationship with other students as being helpful for his faith development at seminary. Interactions with individuals from other contexts and other cultures are particularly beneficial. He appears to derive

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

meaning from comparing his group to other groups. Marvin says, "You'll be talking about what your church is doing for worship, or you'll hear a foreign national student about how it's done in Brazil or how it's done in Korea, and those conversations are very enlightening."

Stan (both Stage 2 and Stage 3) finds the hand of God directing him along his paths in life, including his career in seminary. His relationship with the divine is greater than just stories which make literal sense of his environment. In particular, the content of some of the courses he describes as being helpful in his faith development:

> But it ended up right there at the end of school. . .at the program at El-Shaddai I ended up looking at a lot of literature that probably has ended up being some of the most influential literature for me, in terms of ministry, that I've been exposed to. It was in the area of missions, so that was. . . I count as divine Providence. It's very, very helpful this last year of work on the thesis.

Polly (both Stage 2 and Stage 3) has gained self-confidence in her own personal views, and this has helped to strengthen her faith. Her reflections seem more characteristic of Individuative/Reflective Faith than Mythic/Literal Faith. She appears to embrace her views, even in the act of their being questioned in seminary classes:

> And so it helped me get stronger in my beliefs, even it they seem ridiculous to other people. It's just helped me, yeah, be stronger and not really care that much about what maybe smarter people think, but just how I just really believe about God and some of the things He's done, but be okay with other ideas too.

These individuals do not appear to really be exhibiting Mythic/Literal Faith, but the progression from old ways of thinking to new ways of thinking is evident.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Stage 3 Participants

These individuals, according to the BFS, evidence Synthetic/Conventional Faith. Again, the responses are not totally characteristic of this group. As can be seen in Table 1.1, this faith-style group shows a conforming faith, taking direction from popular convention. It does involve personal choices among conventions and balances various conventional demands into a workable synthesis of meaning (Crapps, 1986).

Sam has experienced a broadening of beliefs in the seminary environment, even in his first semester. His ability to say there are many things that cannot be explained and the lessening need to argue about his beliefs are more characteristic of Individuative/Reflective Faith. Sam describes the widening of his convictions as one of his surprises:

> The second thing that I could say that has surprised is, put it in quotes, from a professor here that "we really don't know what we are talking about." Um, the longer I've been in education and the more I learn the more I become or less likely I am to argue or be apologetic about biblical doctrine or biblical beliefs. I still believe there are there is a central core of beliefs and a faith in practice that we need to adhere to and abide by that is present in the Bible. But at the same time . . . I've learned that this is my Introduction to Christian Mission class. While we can see a lot things for sure and while we know that God is present, He loves us, He cares, while we recognize that the Bible is God's word, that we recognize the feeling of the Holy Spirit, there is still so much that we cannot say for sure—so many things that we cannot explain.

Lisa describes her faith in terms of decision-making as a result of her seminary experience. Both Stage 3 and Stage 4 faith-style groups contain an element of choice in their characteristics. However, Lisa's seems more illustrative of Individuative/Reflective faith, as her ideals are becoming autonomous. She describes her faith journey as a change in process, rather than content:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> I guess so, but maybe it would help to say that it's a decision, as opposed to just fact. I don't know. Instead of saying, "yes, I know for sure that this is how it works," I would say, "I have decided to live as if this is how it works." Is that . . .? Does that make it clearer? I think instead of saying that I know that the church is right about everything or I know that Scripture is true about everything. . . well, I wouldn't try to convince somebody of that anymore. I would just say I've decided to buy into that and let my life be a reflection of it. That's the best I can say.

Mary's faith has taken on a dimension of being sure of God's presence in her everyday life. A lot of this has resulted from her talking to God about her questions. Again, her meaning-making appears autonomous. The element of choice is also present in her description:

> Because I remember being. . . thinking to myself, "well if we don't know, if we know that certain of these things are not necessarily a historical fact, then how do I know that God is a historical fact? How do I know that He's real?" I've wrestled with that question, I think, in one way or another every day. Some weeks I would have days that were really hard, and some weeks I would have days that I was okay, but God was always there with me. And I knew that because when I would find myself questioning things, I would just say, "I want to believe in You. I choose to believe in You. How. . . you know, show me when I'm having these days that it's hard. Let me know."

The responses of these individuals call into question the accuracy of the BFS's placement of them in Stage 3. However, the element of choice is present in the descriptions of both Stage 3 and Stage 4. The individuals who came out in Stage 3 appear to be using more individual decision-making than would be expected of people truly in this faith-style group.

Stage 4 Participants

These people answered in the Individuative/Reflective faith-style group on the BFS. Their responses are a bit more typical of Fowler's description of this stage (1981).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

As Crapps (1986) says, this pattern of faith is personally chosen and consciously differentiated from others' expectations and is truly autonomous.

Joseph's faith development at seminary has had a lot to do with his rational processes. He no longer sees things in "black and white." In particular, his understanding of experience and faith has changed:

> But it's kind of my understanding that things are not black and white, and I think a lot of Christians almost want things black and white. It's probably part of spiritual maturity. When I was first a Christian I had it terrible, because like I said I am very scientific, and I kind of had this view of "okay, well, if the Bible says it was six days creation, so it's got to be six days." You know you can't. . . even though in the back of my mind I'm thinking, "okay, that doesn't make sense with what we see in the world around us. Why would God reveal a world that is much older?" And so. . .but you just have to take it to the back of your mind and say, "it's black and white—it's got to be this way. So throw out everything else." So even though that stuff is hanging around your mind you just have to ignore it. But come to seminary, and, like I said, I'm going to Old Testament class and to hear a wise, respected Christian godly person say, "it's not black and white. It might be six days. God could do that. It might be a longer period. That's not really what's important. What's important is that God did it."

Gus' faith sense has been affected by his coursework at El-Shaddai, particularly in his addressing the issue of women in ministry, something that is still being debated in his faith tradition. He does not look at it from a purely intellectual standpoint—he makes the issue personal in his exploration of it:

> And then, you know, I left in '85 and started back probably, I don't know, '94 or '95 or probably took my first class. Like I said it was a slow way. . .if you want to get me out of here. [There are] just so many more females interested in serving God, which I think is very exciting, but I don't whether we in the church—ministers, daughters, and deacons— know how to handle it, and so I think it comes up in different classes . . .that we come up with [what] primarily Dr. A taught on. . . "Women in Ministry in the New Testament" I think was the official title to it. So he told us about how a local church, you know, spent years praying about it, and looking at the Scriptures, and [it was] just was kind of an eye

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> opener. And I wrote a paper on "what if my daughter decides to go into ministry?"

These two individuals wrestle with things on the personal level and are able to deal with contradictions in information, a hallmark of Individuative/Reflective Faith.

Stage 5 Participants

These participants evidence Conjunctive Faith, based on the results of the BFS. These responses are also a bit more in line with those described by Fowler (1981). People with this faith style embrace the paradoxes and discontinuities into consolidative patterns and see their own system as interdependent with the larger human family (Crapps, 1986).

Ashley (both Stage 3 and Stage 5) has a view of faith influenced by the seminary experience which has to do with her sense of call to ministry. There is a purpose behind going through difficult experiences, one that reaches beyond herself to people in the future, hopefully:

> And there's some balance that needs to be found, I guess, and I think probably just seeing the light that I know what I'm doing this for. . . for good. It's just not my personal hell, it's really something that. . . I guess there's a goal out there, whether that's being in ministry in the position where women aren't supposed to be in these churches, or encouraging other women to press on if they feel the calling, I guess. I have no idea what I'm going to do after I graduate, but I know that there's something out there, I guess, and wherever I'll fulfill a role in any kind of manner, I guess.

Will's faith development in the seminary environment actually is a continuation of what was begun in his undergraduate work at Hatfield College, a Christian liberal arts college. His ideas were challenged much more in the past and he has come to understand his faith in a new way. He recounts it in the following way:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Well, I came in, and I have to back track and start at Hatfield because so much of my faith formation occurred here. I came in from what I consider a moderate to conservative Disciple congregation, and I came in with some very preconceived notions about what ministry was, what the church was, what the Gospel was, what was right, and what was wrong, and my horizon just sort of expanded exponentially with my program at Hatfield and then coming here. And I guess I'm comfortable now wearing a label of liberal, or whatever term you'd like to use for that. I just can't. . . I can't box myself into those narrow little understandings that I used to have, so I think I've become much more accepting of people with different traditions, people with different values and understandings of ministry and of the Gospel, and of religion as a whole. And I think that that's occurred because I've been introduced to so many people throughout the ages of the church and life who have influenced me to see that, you know, that I don't know everything, and I can't approach life with that kind of understanding anymore.

Roger has come to see the limitations of a cognitive approach to faith through his seminary study. He has not yet found a satisfying replacement for this method of thinking, although he is aware that faith is more than that:

> Because it is very aggressive, very critical, very . . .you know this is a fine institution academically, and I think they are just pretty rigorous about in particular biblical studies, clinical study. And so, at the one hand, as you are engaging it's reinforcing that cognitive idea and, on the other hand, it's taking you places. It's taking you to conclusions where you realize this is as far as you're going to get, and you really need to go further.

Will and Ashley seem a bit more comfortable with living with paradox than Roger does, but this may have to do with Roger's career change away from ministry.

Non-Stage Participants

Two of the participants did not meet the criteria set out by the authors of the BFS for inclusion in a particular stage. It was thought that it would be helpful to talk with these individuals to gain a better understanding of their experience. Interestingly, they both discuss finances and how they relate to their faith.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

John is struggling with how he is to respond to the plight of the poor and oppressed after taking seminary courses in liberation theology. That is probably his largest area of transformation and the area in which he is still in conflict:

> You know, I'm not a radical. Capitalism is my philosophy, as best it can be. It's certainly imperfect, so I'm not necessarily a radical socialist or anything, but I certainly see how . . .or for radical redistribution of the wealth. . . that's where I'm conflicted, because it almost seems like. . .I don't know. We're concerned about someone who calls our church, and they don't have money to pay their light bill, but we're not concerned about that person out there who doesn't have health insurance, or we're not concerned about race relations.

Jim finds that his faith has been affected the most by his encounters with students from other cultures while he is at El-Shaddai. Their commitment has helped him to reaffirm his own:

> It's more I think something here in the environment. So many people from so many different places and a lot of people sacrificing to be here. Students here who are away from their families. Some of these African students haven't seen their families in two or three years and won't see them for another year or two. What are they sacrificing for? A degree from El-Shaddai is not going to earn them a lot of money in Africa. What are they sacrificing for? You know it's the same for any of the students from Korea or India or any of those foreign students. A degree from a graduate school in the United States isn't going to particularly open any great doors for them financially or professionally in India or Africa, so what are they here for? Well, they are here to try to improve themselves so that they can be the very best minister they can when they return home. Why would they do that if there's not something more to it than the financial part of it? There is obviously something more to it than just the financial part of it. That has, I think. . . has helped to reaffirm some things in my life.

Faith Stage and Theological Stance

Some, but not all, of my own preconceived notions about Fowler's model and the perceived level of conservativism or liberalism did appear to bear out in how the individuals scored on the instrument. My own bias was that the more "liberal" a person,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the "higher" the stage he or she would be in. This was based on my understanding of Fowler's model, assuming that the stages were ordinal. Sloan said he was more conservative than the typical El-Shaddai student (as will be seen in the Transformative Learning section later in this chapter), and he was placed in Stage 2 based on the BFS instrument. Will remarked that he was comfortable with the label of "liberal," and he ended up in Stage 5 with the BFS. Ashley appeared more comfortable with "liberal" ideas and met the criteria for both Stage 5 and Stage 3. Mary spoke out against excesses of liberal thought and came out in both Stage 2 and Stage 3. However, many people in between did not totally fit in with these expectations. More study needs to be done on this in the future to see if there is actually any connection between the two.

Young Adult Faith Development

Of special interest in this discussion may be the idea of young adult faith development. Parks (1986), in her study of young adult faith development, says adulthood is hard to define. However, it may be advantageous to give particular attention to those under 30 in the sample interviewed for this study. Information from Parks may prove helpful in looking at these individuals. Mary, Polly, Lisa, Will, Ashley, and Marvin are all under 30. In particular, Mary, Polly, and Lisa all speak of the pain of having assumptions challenged. Table 5.1 shows a breakdown of the age and the faith style-group on the BFS of this study's participants.

This study's interviews do not show if the postulated Stage 3-4 transition may or may not occur in young adulthood. The unreliability of the BFS makes this concept difficult to explore with the El-Shaddai population. However, the primary place of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 5.1
Age Range of Interviewees and Faith Stage on BFS

Participant	Stage on BFS	Age Range
Mary	3	Under 30
Polly	2 and 3	Under 30
Lisa	3	Under 30
Will	5	Under 30
Ashley	3 and 5	Under 30
Marvin	2 and 3	Under 30
Roger	5	30's
Sloan	2	30's
John	none	30's
Sam	3	30's
Joseph	4	30's
Stan	2 and 3	40 or above
Gus	4	40 or above
Jim	none	40 or above

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

mentor or mentoring community, as seen in Parks' study (1986), is reiterated in this analysis. The mentor idea will be explored more in Chapters 6 and 7.

Transformative Learning and the Seminary Setting

This section will look a bit at how individuals may have experienced transformative learning, as described in Chapter 1, in the seminary environment. Most of the types of learning could go into the other roles of an individual's life, the Personal or Professional, but a few that have to do more with the school environment will be illustrated here. There is evidently a process at work that seems parallel to the phases identified by Mezirow (1991a).

Disorientation

Some students experience a disorientation associated with the seminary environment itself that turns out to be very painful. This is akin to the "disorienting dilemma" described by Mezirow (1991a). Seminary is not what they thought it would be. Polly describes the experience of her and her husband:

> And as we have moved through these four years, we have gotten some serious spiritual scars, and I think that surprised me. . . I think that might be the biggest surprise . . .because I thought that we were going to come in here and become super heroes. And we're coming out beat up and hurting.

Although he talks earlier about the grounding he has felt in encountering questioning, Sloan also describes his disorientation in the classroom as being what caused him to learn the most:

> Crisis. . .not just in what's going on in my life, but when you get into class and a question arises. And you come in with this preconceived set of assumptions, and that's called into question, or you go into a class and a certain question arises, and everybody is talking a certain way, and you think "wait, wait, wait! That doesn't

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> compute with any of A) my experience or B) what I know about, you know, a given set of facts about that thing, the question." That sort of impresses me as well in the classroom. Just feeling discombobulated.

The disorientation associated with the seminary environment causes some people to negotiate a career change. Roger describes his experience:

> I came here with the idea of starting a church plant, thinking I could start a church from scratch the way I thought it should be and found out that I was probably not the right kind of profile to be a church planter number one, and, number two, that would probably create a church that was more problematic to the church universal than helpful. So I take that away, and when I take that initial assumption away, there is nothing left about me I think personality wise that in this day to be a minister. In fact I was becoming aware of my eyes opening to a lot of significant conflicts everywhere.

Grounding

This aspect is one that could be described as "drawing a line in the sand." When experiencing a questioning of beliefs, people have to have something to hold on to. Some students have become more entrenched in their views due to the things they have encountered in seminary, perhaps as a reaction against having too much called into question. Polly offers a classic view of this concept: "Sometimes I think 'yeah, people get so open-minded their brains fall out.' I don't know. You know, 'come back. Stand on something.'" Sloan describes how this has worked for him in a bit more detailed terms:

> I don't feel a crisis here. What's interesting at El-Shaddai has been in some way it has ossified some conservative beliefs about interpretation of the Bible in me. In other words, I think I've become a little more conservative than you would think the typical El-Shaddai student coming in would be. Because my impression is that typical El-Shaddai students, you know. . . I wouldn't want too high percentage of what that typical number would be. . . but come in thinking, you know, much like I did going into Wheaton, "I'm going to come out with this great storehouse of information and facts to prove, you know, to the world once and for

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> all that such and such a thing is true." And they leave having learned how to ask the right questions and not having the answers. And that's certainly the case for me, too. But some of what I've experienced here is less sheer exposition of text whereby I learn how to be a good preacher and pastor as much as learning "the academic world right now is going through this, and you need to know this. . ." which in my mind is not as helpful. That in a sense is a crisis for me right now, but it's also hardening for me some conservatively-held views about hermeneutics and how to interpret the Bible and things like that. Does that make sense?

Lisa says her rediscovery of doing basic spiritual practices has grounded her in the midst of her questioning. She describes it like this:

> One of the things that has continually surprised me is the power of doing the simple things like reading Scripture, praying, and meeting with other people. Those things have a lot of power even in the ministry.

Marvin suggests that the average person may have more a sense of personal grounding than the "professional religionist" has given him or her credit for in the area of faith. He speaks of knowing a lot of information subconsciously when he was confronted with new ideas and being surprised by that fact:

> How much information was revealed to me that I already knew subconsciously. They would tell me things. They would spring some fact on me and expect that fact to floor me, and I would say, "I've known that all along, somehow." Dr. Newton expected me to flip my wig when he told me that idolatry was rampant in ancient Israelite culture that the Israelites had basically borrowed Canaanite culture for the most part, and that the cult of Yahweh was a very small thing surrounded by all this idol worship. It didn't surprise me in the least. It wasn't this great chewing glass moment that everybody said it was going to be, and so it was with a lot of things that they thought they were springing on me that really didn't surprise me at all. . .to speak of the church not as you have the old. . .the bad old days of the Roman Catholic Church, then the glorious Reformation. Then the even more glorious Restoration Movement and then they turn that on intense and say, "no, actually the church is a series of reform movements happening pretty much every generation all the way up to the modern day," and then to look at me and say, "how do you feel now?" I would say it doesn't surprise me, and what that tells me is that subconsciously Christians know a lot more than they might acknowledge ever.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

This grounding idea is something that is not really present in Mezirow's phases of perspective transformation (1991a). Since my introduction to this theory, the idea of "where does the questioning of assumptions stop?" has been of paramount interest to me. A person can question so much that he or she is questioning rational thought itself, in philosophical terms experiencing circular thinking. Perhaps rational thought is at some point a noumenon, a thing in itself separate from our intellectual perception of it. (I have always had a philosophical problem with "using the brain to study the brain." In a practical sense, a person cannot be questioning *everything* in his or her life at once, or there would be too much turmoil to function. Probably the part of the process which Mezirow identifies which would be most closely aligned with grounding is Step #4, "recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change" (p. 168). In Mezirow's model, grounding is communally-based, and that would be partially true for the El-Shaddai students. However, for most of them, the biblical text is still the primary anchor, even though their thinking about the canon and their understanding of its development and writing may undergo drastic changes.

Precipitating Factors

The events that tended to precipitate transformative learning in the seminary setting among this study's participants include classes in biblical criticism (particularly the first ones such as Old Testament Introduction and New Testament Introduction), Christian doctrine, and those in liberation theology. As can be seen from comments by Lisa, Mary, and Polly, when one begins to question one's deeply-held notions about the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

biblical text and the nature of God, a very profound confusion may take place. This questioning has to do with what a person thinks he or she knows about God, the ultimate reality. This transformation is very much bigger than cognitive factors—it includes affective factors and spiritual factors also. This supports the observation of E. W. Taylor (2000) that critical reflection and affective learning are independent in many studies of transformative learning. This will be seen more in the discussion of transformative learning in the next two chapters. Liberation theology courses cause one to look at the social ramifications of one's faith, especially what one's faith would have one to do about the oppressed. John's comments show the power of these types of classes to cause one discomfort. These reflections echo the debates over whether transformative learning is individual or social or both (Cunningham, 1992; Mezirow, 1992). Negative student interactions in the seminary environment can precipitate transformation, as can be deduced from Polly's explanations. Challenging the notions of the traditional church in coursework can also catalyze transformative learning, as can be seen in Gus' comments about women in ministry. See Table 4.1 for some of the transformative events and supports mentioned by the different participants.

Mitigating Factors

There were several things mentioned by the participants that seemed to help make the transformative learning experience more manageable. Having professors as mentors in a personal relationship was something which helped and was particularly mentioned by Mary, Polly, and Gus. This echoes the findings of Parks' study of young adult faith development (1986). The importance of the community, as was described earlier in this

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

chapter, was also of paramount consequence in helping students negotiate difficult transitions. This reflects the realization of others' negotiating a difficult worldview transition, as alluded to in Mezirow's model (1991a). Although the students are not in cohorts at El-Shaddai, they echo the sentiments reported in Harris' study (2003) at another church-related school, Fresno Pacific University, in which students said they could not have finished their program without the sense of community they received from their fellow students. This includes both the in-school community and the out-of-school community many students experience. The support of family was also mentioned as a mitigating factor when one is undergoing existential questioning. Some of these factors will be discussed further in other chapters.

Summary

This chapter has looked at the overall model of students' experience at El-Shaddai Seminary, demarcating student experiences into three areas: the Seminary Setting, Personal Role, and Professional Roles. The Seminary Setting has been described in detail, with the major themes of Curriculum, Bible, Reasons for Graduate Education, Importance of Community, and the Juggling/Balancing Act being discussed. Faith development was reviewed, with characteristics of each stage being explored in the interviewees' comments. It was seen that the participants' comments did not necessarily reflect the characteristics of their supposed stage of development. Special attention was given to a person's faith stage and theological stance and to young adult faith development. Some support was found for the idea that the more theologically conservative individuals would fall lower on Fowler's stages than the more theologically

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

liberal. Young adults, in particular, mentioned the value that mentors could have in their learning.

The interviewees' experiences with transformative learning were then investigated, with distinct notice being given to the themes of Disorientation and Grounding. Precipitating and mitigating factors were also examined, with elements such as coursework and negative student interactions being seen to serve as catalysts. Mitigating factors included the support of fellow students, mentoring professors, family support, and out-of-school friends. As can be seen, aspects of the Seminary Setting bleed over into other circles in students' lives. Chapter 6 will give a closer look at one of these— the Personal Role—and explore more deeply the experiences of participants in this study.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter 6

Personal Role

The Personal Role is an integral part of each student's identity as a seminary student. It is defined as the group of themes relating to a person's psychological development, both in the cognitive and emotional realms. As mentioned earlier, the faith development and transformative learning domains cut across all of the roles and will be discussed at length in their relationship to the Personal Role in individuals' lives. This chapter will explore the themes uncovered in the interviews that relate to the Personal Role, as depicted earlier in Figure 5.1. These themes include Reason, Spiritual Practices, Why El-Shaddai, Support of Family, Personality, Reflection, The Past, and The Future.

Reason

This theme has to do with how a person's thinking about faith has changed as a result of his or her seminary experiences, particularly in rational, cognitive respects. For many students, seminary is the first time that matters of faith have really been examined critically. Joseph talks about El-Shaddai giving him tools for thinking that continue to help him in his ministry now:

> And again at this particular seminary, again to go back to the homosexual issue, when that issue came up, I knew enough to get a book that was just for lack of better terms "pro-homosexual" and get a book that was "anti-homosexual" and compare the two. Because if you just read that kind of anti-homosexual book, if you will, there are lots of verses and everything, you'd close the book and say, "well, that settles it." But then you read the pro-homosexual it's kind of a different view, and it gave the sense of being able to say, "these are the Scriptures they use and the arguments they use. This is the opposite side. And now which one seems the most honest and genuine and has the support of the Bible?" So that really helped, because you could stack books on any topic. You know, you can

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> stack books on both sides of you. . . that take both opposite sides. . . but you have to learn to see which argument is more valid. I don't mean that way, but still. . . I mean like in my ministry now, again I still do my sermons on Saturday so that didn't help a bit, but it did help with knowing how to research and base arguments. When I read a commentary now, I'm not saying I can judge the commentary, but I can kind of tell when the argument is a little more strained than another one.

Joseph feels that reason gives one a counter-balance to the unhealthy extremes which some people resort to when dealing with matters of faith:

> But I'm also skeptical in the sense that, you know, a lot of people say that God guided me to give poisoned Kool-Aid to all our followers, so I'm very skeptical. So if I just feel like God is telling me to minister to these people who are so oppressed in our society, I'm not just going to go by gut feeling. I'm going to study it and know.

Marvin says being able to use reason to look at different perspectives has taken him out of his comfort zone and opened him up to other ideas. He describes it this way:

> Most helpful are the voices that speak from a perspective that is other than my own. Both courses. . . both D. Min. courses that I have read thus far. . . . I guess if I were left to my own devices, I would become a creature of habit, and I would only head for places that I am more comfortable.

However, reason does have its limitations in helping one to experience faith in God. As Roger recounts:

> You can't with any kind of reasonable or logical argument establish much about truth. I mean we can't get to truth without engaging that but [can't] rely solely on that. There is always going to be a counter argument. There are always going to be unknowns that we just can't deal with. There are always, you know. And so I kind of assumed that I thought I would find through future study or deeper study. It was kind of elusive. And then emotionally or spiritually, I suppose, it leaves one kind of dry if that's what religion is, if it's a reasoned approach to proposition.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Spiritual Practices

This part of the model has to do with the spiritual disciplines in which the seminary students engage. For some students, these are formal activities in which they participate with others. For other students, the spiritual practices are something that they engage in privately, preferably in solitude. Some students say their practices have changed as a result of seminary, whereas others do not report much of an alteration.

Communal

The communal aspects of spiritual practice tend to deal with worship in some form. However, what "worship" is may be part of the students' changed or reawakened understanding. Sloan says his seminary experience has given him words to talk about what he thinks worship should be:

> Yeah, with regard to worship. Yeah. I've lead a million you know "worship services" where it's just me and a guitar, and, you know, we're singing songs and calling it worship. Not that it is not or cannot be. And I think I came into seminary with sort of that assumption at least intellectually about what worship was though I had experienced different better worship that asks something of you kinds of worship. I wasn't able to name it at that as that at the time, but looking back I can see that that's the kind of worship I grew up with. . .something that demanded something of me.

Will began a daily communal reading of the Book of Common Prayer with several friends when he was an undergraduate. This communal practice of an often-solitary activity was extremely meaningful for him, but the continuation of these endeavors in seminary has been difficult:

> I have tried my best to continue them. It's not as easy to continue the daily communal prayer, because there generally don't tend to be as many people here interested in that, and schedules are so hard to coordinate. I do continue to do the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> evening office on my own, and I do that as regularly as a can. There are some days when, you know, I get in from a session meeting, and I have 300 pages of reading to do, and I fall asleep reading, and I don't have chance to do the daily office, but I do miss that. I would say that those experiences definitely gave me a vocabulary of faith, and I miss that, and I miss that communal experience.

Attending chapel and being exposed to different types of worship has been beneficial for some. John says:

> I think chapel was very formative for me. I haven't been able to go that much this year because of work, but the first year, especially, having liturgy and having communion in certain ways that I'd never had before. You know, calling it the Eucharist and finding out that means "thanksgiving." You know, reading what Thomas Cranmer thought about the real presence in the body and in the bread and wine. Just different things like that makes you think, "you know, some of these guys, they. . . some of them have some good things to say," so we . . .and we just ignore them, because we're not whatever we say they are.

Personal

Many individuals think about personal activities when asked about spiritual practices. Prayer and Bible reading are among the things most commonly mentioned of the solitary enterprises. Jim took a D.Min. spiritual formation course in which several spiritual disciplines were studied and experienced. He says it has been life-changing in his way of practicing spirituality:

> Well, there are other effects. There was this concept of "centering" which I think is very valid. It goes by different names in different traditions, different Christian traditions, and I suppose it could all go under the concept of trying to give your entire life over to the Lord. And so trying to do that daily has made a big difference. It has been a very, very big difference. And even just the fact that it taught me that you have to make time for these kinds of things. They are not going to happen automatically. You have to make time for prayer, and prayer can be very haphazard and very routine if you want to let it be that way. So that has carried over very well. In other words it's been over a year. And I mean like most diets and things usually after you get over initial period, you go back to the way that you were before, but there have been several aspects of that that have

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> continued on and become more or less permanent parts of my life. And I enjoy them, and I don't intend to give them up.

However, a few of the participants say that their spiritual practices have not changed as a result of their seminary study. Marvin describes how his spiritual exercises have been influenced:

> Not much, to be honest. Very little has changed concerning my own spiritual practice. I have more information to go into those spiritual practices with, and there were a couple of really helpful formation courses concerning meditation and prayer, fasting, and so maybe my attitudes towards those things were enriched, but honestly, I can't say I enjoy a church service or it means less or more to me, I guess.

Mary says that although her practices have not changed, she finds herself talking more to God on a continual basis, so that prayer for her has changed. She prayed before, but not the way she does now:

> I don't think my practices have changed. I will say this. I find myself. . . although I feel like for several years I've kind of been moving in this direction. . . that this past year or past six months, actually, I find myself just talking to God. I find myself losing a lot of the language that I felt like "I should always pray this way," or I find myself just talking. I mean very often I find my prayers based on a particular Scripture, because, like I said, the power of God's Word, factual or not, is just too real in my life. And too many times that I have known His healing and direction and through the written Word to ever be able to ignore that, but like I said, I find it's just a more intimate. . .it's just more of a relationship with God. . .like I said, although I have always had that kind of special relationship. It's like, until I came to El-Shaddai, I could never lose the "churchy" words. I could never. I felt like that Scripture in the New Testament that it talks about vain repetition. I always felt like I had to cover all my bases with God, and I just don't feel that way anymore. I feel like grace is something I've just barely begun to breath the air of.

Many of the seminarians come from a "low-church" tradition that eschews the use of aids to worship other than the sacred text. The introduction of the use of external aids to personal spirituality is described by John:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> I wouldn't say I have icons in the house now, but I have crosses and at least one Celtic cross. I wouldn't say that I pray in front of it or something like that, but like, I use all. I look at the Book of Common Prayer. That's something. As far as the lectionary is concerned. . . I don't get to preach that often, but I've looked before to help me find things to preach on and just tried to use the lectionary.

The exposure to other traditions of thought than those to which they were usually accustomed, particularly Eastern Christianity, was mentioned as being influential by several participants. Stan says that it affected how he thinks about his spiritual practices:

> Eastern Orthodoxy . . . one of the things that Protestantism can learn. . . all Protestantism. . . all Protestant traditions can learn from Eastern Christianity is the veneration of the majesty of God. When I worship, when I pray, when I read Scripture, I think I probably think more about the majesty, the sovereignty, the fear and trembling component of awesomeness of God's character and of His being more than I would have.

In addition to mentioning traditional spiritual practices, a couple of the participants spoke about looking at neutral activities as spiritual. Sloan speaks of the seminary academic experience itself as being something spiritual for him. He describes tedious academic labor as a form of spiritual development:

> I mean sometimes if you're doing some Greek or Hebrew you get some sense of that, just because it's drudgery, but the sheer drudgery of it is of spiritual benefit beyond knowing Greek or Hebrew. It's like what math teachers always say, "you know this is as much about the discipline of what you're doing as it is being able to use the quadratic formula." . . . So that's something that I value out of seminary, and it's important to do because it's just like a lot of things in life. You know it's like washing dishes. I hate washing dishes. I detest it with a passion, but I know that, you know, that it forms character. And I know that God is using my washing of the dishes to ease my wife's mind when she comes home from work, and I know that that's of value and important to her, so I do it. I hate doing it, but as I do it more for those good reasons. . . in theological terms, a redemptive reason. You know the drudgery becomes an enjoyment even, and I think seminary is good like that. . . . from drudgery to enjoyment. [*Interviewer: Sounds like the title of a book—"From Drudgery to Enjoyment."*] Not one that I would read. Not that I wouldn't like to after Chapter One.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Lisa echoes this sense of making ordinary life activities a part of one's spiritual practices:

> I think because your life in school is so busy, too, that you can't. . . it's harder to find the discipline [to say] from this hour to this hour, I'm going to read scripture or whatever. That just doesn't work for school life, so trying to find ways to make reading a hundred pages of history sacramental you kind of just have to see your whole life as spiritual. When I go to the restaurant and I'm trying to wait on tables, I try to make that a spiritual discipline —watch the things that I say, my attitude toward what I'm doing. It's not quite the monastery life to people like I think it is. You have to find ways to designate a certain time period for doing it.

Spiritual practices thus appear to be an important aspect of seminarians' lives, whether or not these activities are expressly viewed as such externally. The intent is what makes an activity "spiritual."

Why El-Shaddai

The reasons why the seminarians chose to attend El-Shaddai Seminary in particular are related to aspects of their personal lives. This theme of reasons for coming to this specific seminary recurred time and again as the participants described their past experience and their time at El-Shaddai. Professional goals, opportunity, community, and academic reputation were among the reasons given for coming to this particular seminary.

Mary's professional goals led her to El-Shaddai. She had actually tried to create a degree to suit her purposes at another school:

> But I actually started at a state university and went for a semester there trying to create a degree. I did not know anything about El-Shaddai at all. It's just that I'd go there for my Hebrew, and then when I met with the admissions advisor fell in love with it. I found out that I could very easily do an Old Testament Ancient Near Eastern Degree there that would equip me really to go on and do a Ph.D. in Epigraphy and Archaeology, and so here I am.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The knocking of opportunity really led some of the students to this particular school. Polly describes the call to come to El-Shaddai that cemented the couple's decision to attend seminary:

> Well, actually it's kind of weird, because Bruce and I (that's my husband), when we were graduating from Bible College, we both knew that we wanted to serve God together. And we wanted to actually do it together, but we didn't know where and what. And he got a lot of, like, ministry opportunities, but they were concentrated on him. And he was very determined that he kept saying the door has to be wide enough for both of us, so we kept praying about it and praying about it, and then a couple of months after we graduated, we still didn't know what we were going to do. We were engaged, and then we got a call from the recruitment director saying, "we've got some scholarships. Come on down." It was like "oh, maybe that's what God wants us to do." And it was actually something for both of us, so we came down here, and now we're kind of at the same point of "now, what?" you know. But so, that's pretty much. . . we're kind of like river rats, we just kind of flow around, and it seems like this is where God wanted us to come for the time being.

Will says his coming to El-Shaddai was largely a result of the community he experienced as an undergraduate, which he saw being continued at the graduate level:

> That was one of the major reasons that this place did end up being my choice for seminary, because of the community, and I knew it would be challenging. I knew that El-Shaddai understood the kind of curriculum I had had in undergraduate school, and I knew that I wouldn't have the same thing over again.

Roger knew of El-Shaddai's academic reputation, and that definitely influenced his decision to attend the seminary:

> . . . this is the premier institution for churches I come from. You know I guess it's only one of the few. I think it's three that I know of in terms of graduate seminary, and I didn't have much knowledge in the other three. I think it's Providential that I came here, rather than one of the other places, because I respect its vision.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Other reasons for attending El-Shaddai specifically include the fact for Marvin that mentor figures had attended the school and for Sloan that cost and family proximity made a program transfer beneficial.

Support of Family

The theme of Support of Family is important in the Personal Role. The foundation of many married students' lives is the support their spouses offer. When asked what has helped her the most in her seminary experience, Mary replies:

> My husband's support. I mean, he is just always there for me, and he does his work, and I think constantly picks up my slack all the time. And his love and encouragement has helped me the most.

Sam ponders how his experience may differ from that of single students:

> I've heard at least one student here say that he looked at married students as having a harder time than single students. This was coming from a single student, and I pointed out that that was not necessarily so. I mean my wife does you know 95% of the cooking, does 95% of the cleaning, laundry—me help out where I can when I'm at the point to do that, but there is no question about it that she does most of the housework when school is in session.

Stan says his wife has helped him out in a very concrete fashion with his school work:

> Another thing that helps anytime your life is busy is a spouse that really supports that and understands, and in my case my particular case is a wife who is was willing to do a lot of my typing. . . who was a much better typist than me and who really spoiled me in that process. I mean, I sit at the word processor, but she . . . you know, my 40 to 50 words a minute she's able to type 100, 110, 120 words a minute. I owe a tremendous debt to my wife. She took a lot of load because she did a lot of typing for me.

However, spouses were not the only family members that are viewed as being supportive. Stan elaborates on this:

> I had a family who helped. I had parents who were always supportive in all my education. . . at El-Shaddai, who even throughout the process were willing to help

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> me out financially at hard times with it. That helped. There were lots of people . . .you know, the education of a lot of people is drawn out due to financial difficulties. You can't pay for your school. You know my wife's a teacher. I was a preacher. We weren't, you know. . .we did okay, but seminary is expensive, and education is expensive, so my folks have helped me out from time to time, you know, as I needed it.

Support of family can thus be seen in many forms—from emotional to financial, from intangible to concrete.

Personality

The theme of personality surfaced in the faith development and transformative learning interviews. The individuals in the study described this as an inner collection of characteristics that affected their view of their faith and did or did not suit them to do certain things in life. Roger describes his personality as something that made him decide he should not pursue ministry as a career:

> I came here with the idea of starting a church plant, thinking I could start a church from scratch the way I thought it should be and found out that I was probably not the right kind of profile to be a church planter number one, and, number two, that would probably create a church that was more problematic to the church universal than helpful. So I take that away, and when I take that initial assumption away, there is nothing left about me I think personality wise that in this day to be a minister. In fact I was becoming aware of my eyes opening to a lot of significant conflicts everywhere. I made an attempt to resolve those conflicts by moving to the Episcopal Church and pursuing ordination there, but that just made it more clear that it wasn't that. The issues were bigger than individual conflicts or theological, finding a theological home, that really I just wasn't called to ministry.

Lisa says that her personality is what makes her want to look at difficult questions and is partially what led her to seminary. She just cannot be satisfied with the simple, pat answers to hard questions that are sometimes given in local congregations:

> I think some of that is just that I've kind of come to see that it's just a personality thing. I'm a person who wants to get in there and study the hard stuff. You know

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> I'm a person who wants to question and go, "oh, why does Jesus say this?", or "yeah, does God know this?". You know I want to ask those kinds of questions and the church just wasn't/isn't always a good place for that.

Mary describes her personality in terms of being the type of person that usually has to have hard details and facts to understand something. She describes it in terms of a personality inventory she took. It surprises her that her faith can exist without her former certainties:

> That I could believe in God if the Bible was not all a fact, but that doesn't surprise me, because by nature. . . like on that personality test I'm a high "I," which is, you know, the people lover, but I'm also a pretty high "C." I'm real detailed, real conscientious, love school, I'm real fact-oriented, I'm the Trivial Pursuit queen. To be able to trust in things. . . you know, but I'm also pretty emotional, so I never can say, "oh, I have to have hard factual evidence of the existence of God." No, I won't say that, but I thought that all the evidence was out there, but we just haven't found it yet.

Jim describes his personality in terms of how important the community is to him:

> And I think though the prayers and the support of others around you. . . I think is for me a very critical thing, and that might just might be a function of how my personality is put together, but it's very important for me to know that others are praying for me and are supporting me.

This ability to look at one's personal make-up in critical terms can be a very helpful tool in negotiating the seminary experience.

Reflection

Reflection, the time and ability to inwardly process personal experience and external information, comes forth as being crucial for participants. Polly says this is something she has just learned to do in seminary:

> I've also learned how to be self-reflective, and that's a new thing for me, too, because I'm an extrovert as much as I can be. Like I force myself even to actually sit down and think, "why did I do that? Why did I think that way? Why am I

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> forcing people in these directions and stuff?" And so that's really helped a lot. He [Dr. Ernst] started that, and then now it's full force at . . .because all those reflection papers.

Jim echoes the helpfulness of time for reflection. He particularly embraces the time in school as an opportune season to do this and says this is what has helped him the most in seminary:

> Oh. I think time to reflect. . . which at least when you're in school you've got time to reflect on things and when you're out in the job sometimes you don't. Things are happening too fast. So . . . time to reflect and prioritize.

Will finds the process of reflecting for this study beneficial. He describes it this way:

> But I think it's a good thing to remember those experiences and to name what has shaped you, because if you can name what has shaped you, then you can share your faith journey and your faith experience with other people. And I think that's really where the grace of God can become alive, you know, when it's to use the Baptist phrase, "we can name it and claim it."

This is perhaps similar to what is termed in the adult education community "reflection in action" (Schön, 1987). Ministers and other individuals in theologically-related professions perhaps have an advantage in that their workplace lends itself to personal learning through action and then reflection. Individuals can thus integrate personal and job-related development and help others to help build their theory through action (Marsick, 1990).

The Past

Past happenings in the personal domain influenced seminarians' experiences in the present, both in their decision to come to seminary and in their perception of the school. The flow of time from past to present to future really seems to resonate with the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ideas of transformative learning and faith development. Several sub-themes will be presented in this section, including call stories, conversion, past education, and past employment. As will be seen, these remnants of the past affect the interviewees' lives today.

Call Stories

Many of the participants had anecdotes about how they came to be called to the ministry or to a theologically-related profession. This sense of calling is what provoked them to come to El-Shaddai and sustains them in their academic process.

Joseph recalls feeling a sense of being called to the ministry in high school and then not going with that prodding until after college. He feels that being in the ministry is the only thing that will make him happy:

> But I kind of felt like the more I try to run away from God the more He keeps calling me back. I knew I wouldn't really be satisfied unless I was doing full-time ministry, so at the time when I graduated from Georgia Tech when I changed out of engineering I should have changed colleges really. I mean, it's an engineering school, but I wanted to stay there because I was, you know, already that far into it. But I kind of knew when I got out that I . . . well, some people told me if I go to college and pursue engineering and that's not where I'm called to, the Lord will call me back, you know. And I think He really did. I wasn't really ever happy, so. . . and then here recently with a lot of big changes in the last four months. . .and kind of questioned, "well, should I consider doing or keep doing the ministry or do something else?", but it's always just like not an option to not do the ministry.

Many participants remember being pulled toward the ministry from a early point in their lives. Jim remarks:

> It was a pretty long process, but I had wanted to. . . from the time I was a young person I had wanted to spend at least some portion of my life in ministry for a local church, so that was what I was able to do for about 20 years.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Although many think of calling as a being a thing that only ministers experience, Mary describes her sense of being pulled to a career in academics in Middle Eastern studies in similar terms:

> And since I was a very small child, I had always been interested in foreign language, and I did business as only really to be able to feed myself and work in the international sphere. But the more I kept joking about. . . I kept telling my best friend and my husband, "that's what I want to do when I grow up." And the more I kept joking about it, it felt very comfortable to me, and you know, finally I began to realize that was just God continuing to water a seed that had been planted in me from very early on to, you know, "why not do your hobby for a living?". You know, it's do what you love. I guess I just thought real people don't do that.

The sense of call can thus act as a catalyst for personal change and can serve as a motivating factor for school and other life activities.

Conversion

A few of the participants described their Christian conversion as a turning point in their past lives. Joseph, although he experienced Christian conversion as a teenager, saw that event as pointing him on the road that eventually led him to El-Shaddai. He reminisces:

> Anyway, so my mom really pressured me to go to church, and I was at that time, though, I was very . . . I have always been very scientific-minded and very rational, and I was proud to be an agnostic. I loved to argue with Christians about how silly their faith was and very rational, I guess. And my mom finally bribed me into going to church, and I was real overwhelmed by the love I found there, and I had a good relationship with the pastor, and really he was a person who kind of engaged the faith on an intellectual level, too. So we talked a lot and talked a lot. I remember when I went to. . . when I accepted the Lord, it wasn't a big dramatic vision or you know or ground shaking . . . didn't go to the mourner's bench or anything, but just sort of came to this conclusion. I guess I kind of worked it out that, you know, you don't always have to be able to explain or rationalize everything. But I remember going to the pastor just one day and saying, "by the way, Tom, I think I want to get baptized in the next service or

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> whenever I can," and he was a little shocked, but it was just like that. But ever since when I became a Christian, I guess, you know, I really. . . it was a real life-changing transformative thing.

In Fowler's terms, Joseph did experience conversion, "those sudden or gradual processes that lead to significant changes in the *contents* of faith" (1981, p. 285). Joseph may have also experienced a faith *stage* change—the *process* of his Christian meaning-making seems a bit different than his agnostic meaning-making, in many ways being less based on pure logic. He also seems to have learned to include affective factors in his meaning-making when he was experiencing conversion.

It is unclear exactly how Sam's conversion proceeded, however. Although he definitely experienced a change in faith *contents*, he doesn't really talk about a change in the *process* of his meaning-making. Sam describes his conversion after he was an adult as a prelude to his career in seminary:

> Um . . . just to give you a thirty second block history. I grew up in a Baptist church in North Carolina. I was baptized at twelve. There was no real follow-up at the church and no discipleship of any kind and no small groups, nothing. I was just pretty much left alone. I didn't know what to do, but then when I was sixteen I was hanging out with all the wrong people and you know a kind of rowdy kid . . . drinking, partying, running around and that kind of thing. I left home when I was eighteen and moved to Georgia and spent about eight years in Atlanta. I wanted to be a musician and spent most of those years playing in bands, working in a full time job with an audio/visual company and trying to foresee music trends on the side. I accepted Christ in December of 1990 after being eight years in Atlanta. . . . I moved to Wichita to start over with my brother-in-law, moved in with him. Uh, so my Christian learning really began in January of 1991, and I was pulled to a really neat girl in church and spent a lot of, you know, Wednesday nights, Sunday nights, and I went as often as I could. . . . I was working full-time in that church on the maintenance staff and began taking Moody Bible Institute correspondence courses on the side around 1995, and it just. . . some way or another I just became . . . hooked on the idea that I needed to learn what the Bible was, and I needed to know more about what was in there and what it meant for me

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> and for people and . . . it was just something that kind of developed . . .this hunger.

Conversion for both of these individuals appears to have involved dramatic changes in their life activities. Their faith development will be discussed more later on in this chapter.

Past Education

Students' past education at the undergraduate level influenced their decision to come on to seminary or colored their perceptions of the experience. There is an interesting demographic breakdown in the fourteen interviewees—only two of these participants came from non-church-related undergraduate schools. Seven of the participants attended the local Christian liberal arts college loosely affiliated with the seminary, for purposes of this discussion called "Hatfield College." One participant attended another local Christian liberal arts college, whereas three of the participants attended other non-local church schools affiliated with the seminary's religious tradition. One participant attended a non-local Christian liberal arts school not affiliated with El-Shaddai's religious movement. Two of the participants had other master's degrees, Stan in sociology and John in social work, and Stan also holds a doctorate in adult education.

The students who mention their undergraduate work as influencing their faith development, and thus their decision to attend El-Shaddai, the most are those who graduated from Hatfield College. Stan declares:

> Beliefs, values, commitments were very much affected at the undergraduate at Hatfield. You know, I could give you some specific things from undergraduate work that really forged and developed. . . they're integral parts of my spiritual formation.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Marvin speaks of his undergraduate work as laying a foundation for further study:

> Well, I went to Hatfield College, a Christian liberal arts college, and I was very satisfied with the degree I got there. I had a choice between going to Hatfield College and going to Bible College. In the end I chose Hatfield, because I wanted to be around the sort of people who might be in my congregation, as opposed to really being around people who would also be ministers. I wanted to be around the sort of people who might end up being my elders and deacons, and that was why I chose Hatfield. The four years that I was there I developed some good Bible experience and some good steps forward in exegetical method. The humanities-style approach of learning broadened my horizons in terms of understanding a given culture, which in turn helped improve my understanding of the area that I grew up in. There were a lot of things here that I had missed, and looking at it in a broader perspective really helped me to minister to the congregations that I've worked with.

The two participants who attended non-church-related schools did not speak of their undergraduate learning as being related to their seminary experience in the same fashion. Interestingly enough, one of them, Joseph, started out in engineering and then changed his major. Roger is now leaving seminary and going into engineering. Scientific leanings and ministerial proclivities may thus not be as dissimilar as they are sometimes perceived as being.

Past Employment

The jobs that a person has had in the past before entering ministry affected the decision to attend seminary or colored their perception of the experience. Past employment has helped to form some of the participants' identities, even if just giving them a springboard from which to explore new ideas. Some of the participants had experiences in past jobs that told them they needed to do something different. Mary's priorities when she worked in the field of business helped her to decide she needed to make a change:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> I think when I was doing a business degree and when I worked in the business field. . . and this is not to slam that arena at all. . . but it was not a good match for me, because I had a really hard time not totally over-committing myself, not being so schedule-oriented. It was just for me, because that's not my calling it was a rat race. And I found that began to bleed over. I found myself my last year of college being so intent on studying that I really limited time with friends. When I graduated and began to work, my job was so demanding, that. . . a lot of overtime. . . and I really it just seemed like visiting with my family or my friends was checking something else off my list, and it was not.

Not all of the participants left another field because they felt dissatisfaction with it. John describes his experience as a social worker, noting that he left that field to pursue another calling:

> All in all, I worked at social work probably from the time of. . . like 1989 to about 1998. . . so almost 9 years. And I was a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and I worked with the severely mentally ill, and I was director of some partial hospitalization programs, and I was also an emergency crisis worker. I've also been a director of quality improvement and risk management, so I've done a little bit of everything in mental health. I really liked mental health. The only reason I left it is because my church in Biggsville said, "Hey, we'd like to bring you on staff to do some things with us," and so I did, feeling that kind of as a calling.

Stan has worked in a lot of different types of positions while pursuing his academic interests, particularly his doctoral degree. However, he has been a minister of a church concurrently for most of that. He worked for the government and a local school system during this past time in his life. The juggling/balancing act mentioned in the Seminary Setting section really bled over into his personal role during his doctoral work, but he always knew he wanted to end up back in the ministry:

> I did, or part of the time [I did have a church]. For part of the time. . . so my life was very fragmented. I lived in Georgeville, had a church in Autumn Grove, I worked in High View, and went to school in Goldborough. So it was sort of a logistical. . . maybe a nightmare. But after a while I came to the point where I had to satisfy the residency requirement for course work, and so I had to move up and do, you know, the year of two semesters of full-time work. So I had to let the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> church go, and so I didn't have a church toward the end of that period. . . . [While working for the government I found out] our part of the funding was being cut, so we needed to know that we had about 3 weeks to go, so I had to find a job in a hurry. So I knew I wanted to eventually end up back in the ministry, back in the church.

Perhaps this past employment experience helped Stan to negotiate the juggling required at El-Shaddai for the master's degree he is completing. It seemed to also confirm his desire to remain in ministry, even while experiencing many other life-changing things.

The Future

The future has a role in most of the participants' seminary experience. Some are perhaps going toward a particular goal, or some have no idea what they will be doing after school. There appears to be both apprehension and excitement present when the future is contemplated. Lisa says this lack of clear direction for the future has been one of the challenges in her seminary experience:

> I think there is also the challenge of one of the things that's bothered me while I've been here is I don't know exactly what I'm doing when I get out. So when you have, you know, ten papers to write, and you're sitting there in front of the computer and nothing is coming to you, it's hard to do all that without knowing the end, without knowing exactly if there is a place for you when you leave. I think, you know, now that I'm closer to the end I can see that kind of going away and now I'm starting to think about real-life jobs that I might have. It gets a little easier.

The sense of purpose that some participants have is the counterweight to a lack of knowledge of what the future holds. Polly says:

> I'm the kind of person who looks at the light at the end of the tunnel and knowing that there is something that God is preparing us for. That has been the most helpful. Knowing that for some reason He wants us here, and He is going to use us. And I'm really excited about seeing whatever it is that He's got planned for us, and why did He have us come here and get all this education. So that's been really helpful.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Some of the students who are further along in their careers also experience apprehension about the future. Their lives have changed during their seminary time, and they are not sure where that will lead them. Jim is concerned that his time in school may have limited his opportunities in congregational ministry:

> The other issues are issues of now. . . and I was somewhat worried about this. . . now that I've taken myself out of a local church context for three or four years, am I going to be able to get back in? Is anybody going to want me? Are they going to wonder what have you been doing up there for three or four years? You know, so that was a risk factor that I guess we'll just have to see how that plays out. We'll just have to see what happens there. Whether this turned out to be a wise move to just sort of take myself out of circulation for three or four years or not, and we'll just have to see. I'm trusting that it was.

There are also trepidations about meeting the situations that ministry might present. Jim continues:

> But I think also there is a bit of anxiety, I guess, in that I'm still realizing that no degree program can fully prepare you for some of the challenges that you will face, whether that is going through a ministerial program or training to be a school teacher or doctor. . .whatever the situation is. No degree program can fully equip you with the full range of experiences and challenges that you might have. So that's a little scary. . . to realize I can go to school the rest of my life and not be fully prepared. So you think, "well, where do I go to get prepared?", and I guess the answer to that is that there are some things that only can be learned outside a formal classroom. An informal education is doing better and better and better at making what you learn inside the classroom somehow match up with what you face, whether you're a nurse, or whatever the situation might be. But still yet you can't quite make the reality of the school room or the reality of the church or the reality of the hospital, whatever it might be. . . you still can't seem to quite make it what a student experiences in a classroom. . . . Some of them [challenges], I guess, you'll just have to figure out as you go. And maybe what an education does is maybe just try to give you some of the tools to figure it out as you go. So. . . but it would be nice to graduate and know that you are fully prepared.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Stan's concerns about the future, on the other hand, have more to do with his not being in school. It will be a different experience for him not to be a student. His experience is perhaps atypical for a graduate student:

> All I can say is I think since school has been such a consistent constant part of my life, I really do have a certain degree of stress about the prospect of not being in school. And I guess I've made my mind up for the foreseeable future to not be in school, and this is the first time in my entire life that I have, you know, because I told you there was a couple of years I wasn't between my doctorate program and when I started back to Gordon-Conwell . . . or started to Gordon-Conwell and then to El-Shaddai. But even throughout that whole time I was thinking about it. I think this is the first time I have deliberately not thought about that. . . I have deliberately thought about not being in school, and so I don't know. It's like a new chapter. . . . So that's . . .what's on my mind right now is "well what does this mean? What do I do? What fills the void? Is it writing, or is there something else I just haven't thought about yet that does pertain to school?"

The future can thus be either a motivator or a point of anxiety for the students. It has the power to catalyze or paralyze, depending upon the individual's point of view.

Faith Development and the Personal Role

Faith development in the personal realm shows how individuals' perception of beliefs, values, and commitments has influenced their psychological and cognitive functioning. As mentioned earlier, faith permeates the three different realms of life, so it is difficult to disentangle one role from another in this discussion. For purposes of illustration, however, faith aspects emphasizing the Personal Role will be described. Each of the participants in each stage will be briefly visited.

Stage 2 Participants

This group is supposedly Mythic/Literal in its perception of faith development, but, as mentioned in Chapter 5, the low reliability of the instrument calls this into

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

question. Their statements all reflect a worldview that is much more symbolic than this stage is alleged to reflect.

Sloan says he was surprised by some things he learned, which made him re-think how he thought about his faith. It challenged some of his Platonic ideas about the separation of flesh and mind. When asked about surprises in seminary, Sloan replied:

> I would say the human creation and the earthiness of what it means to be a Christian. You know you grow up thinking everything is spiritual. I guess what I mean by that is you interpret things as if matter is bad and is the body. . . is what keeps, you know. . . that the body is the sinful part, the fleshly part, that keeps us from the good spiritual part. How earthy and human and flesh fleshly Christian faith is. That would be one of the first things that comes to mind, I guess.

Sloan's ideas are congruent with Celtic spirituality, which "reclaims earthy images as both spiritual and as part of everyday messiness" (English, Fenwick, & Parsons, 2003, p. 82). There is a popular movement toward these ideas, perhaps as a result of the fragmentation of today's culture.

The other three participants in this group also met the requirements for Stage 3. In keeping with the earlier-stated ideas in Chapter 5 about the position of a person on the liberal or conservative end of the theological spectrum, there are aspects of Marvin's interview that perhaps give insight on the faith stage he reflected. He criticizes the historical-critical method being applied to ancient writings, a more theologically conservative position:

> The things that have bothered me the most has been sometimes an attitude in the classroom both among teachers and students. One that "we know more than the ancient church did. We know more about ancient peoples than they knew about themselves." Somehow we see fit to analyze their words and turn their words on their head and assume, for example. . . assume the authorship is a falsehood and not take a document at its word. . .somehow because we are smarter or better

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> trained or more knowledgeable than they were. That type of arrogance really bothered me.

The theme of arrogance, both found in others and recognized in himself, was found throughout Marvin's comments.

Events in the Personal Role are described a bit more clearly by the other two participants in this stage. Stan sees some events in his personal life fed into the transition in thinking which preceded his denominational change:

> At any rate, so there were things on the personal side of life like that, and I think also. . . I think all that was compounded by the death of my brother-in-law. I think that probably fed into the equation. You know, I think I mentioned earlier lots of life stressors, the death of my brother-in-law, just on a personal side of life, discontentment, dissatisfaction, all of which fit together, just opened me to a whole new way of thinking about things.

Polly's personal faith development has been supported by school. It is tied in with her career plans and how she relates to her husband also:

> I mean everything, I'm very. . . we're very wrapped up in each other, I think, and but just seeing the whole. . . that I know. . . I know I've been developed a lot, and that's exciting. And so I think that if we would have never come here, I wouldn't know in the same way, and this has really equipped me to be able to do it. I think I would have tried, maybe, but I think I would have messed up a lot more than now I have something to draw from.

Stage 3 Participants

These participants came out in the Synthetic/Conventional category on the Barnes Fowler-Scale. As shown in Chapter 5, their responses do not necessarily reflect the description of that stage. A few statements having to do with their personal lives will be explored.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Sam sees his faith development as mitigating his argumentative temperament a bit. He is less defensive due to the influence of his seminary experience:

> And I've always thought that if I didn't go into ministry I probably would have been a lawyer, because I like a good debate as well as anybody. I like to fight and get ugly, but I like to spar a little bit and see what we can come up with. And it's been surprising to me here to see how much I will now let go or many of my defenses, if you will, have been taken down and how willing I am to sit in one case with a local Muslim director here at lunch one time and not feel threatened by that and not feel like I've got to somehow turn him into a Christian within the hour. So I've been put at ease a little bit, and it's a good feeling. But I've been surprised at how quickly that's happened, but I credit my professors a lot with that. Just opening my eyes a little bit to helping and really probably should operate within the church and within the Christian experience.

Lisa's experience in the faith realm is definitely tied to her emotions. There are both upheaval and resolution types of experiences in her affective repertoire. She describes her feelings this way:

> I think that there is a lot of freedom just in being a Christian. And you know you can go and have a year where you are completely confused by everything. And you're baffled, and you're hurt, and all that stuff, and still come back to, you know, standing in front of God and feeling all right about everything. I think this is a safe place to do a lot of that questioning, so that's encouraging to me.

Mary's faith development at seminary has had a positive emotional impact in the long run. She depicts it this way:

> I'm just better inside and out. I'm just better, calmer, less nervous, less afraid and more aware of God's love and grace for me as being something that's His. . .choosing and nothing to do with my merit, and that happens to be personal study and just kind of the icing on the cake, because that's where I live. That's where I spend most of my time, other than just here at home with my husband. That's where I see God's face when it's played out.

Although some of the participants in this stage did talk about the emotional difficulties of their seminary experience, the end result appears to be a more inclusive, freer perspective.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Stage 4 Participants

This group is indicative of Individuative/Reflective faith, according to the Barnes Fowler-Scale. These participants do show evidence of having a faith of their own, but individuals in some of the other groups do also.

Joseph talks about exploring his beliefs about homosexuality in order to respond to certain individuals in the best way. He knows he does not have all the answers, but that is all right. He shows how his tolerance for ambiguity has been developed:

> This is where I'm right in the middle of right now, but this homosexual question, you know, I just don't know right now whether it's completely wrong, completely right, or somewhere in the middle, but from seminary I've learned that's not really my problem. That's God's problem, you know. My problem is "how do I minister to that person." It's been a challenge to kind of get that focused on what I'm really supposed to do. I do get a sense. I'm being critical, but some pastors feel like their job as a pastor is to have every answer. . .to have it all black and white. There is no question about it. I think seminary helped me to have that range.

Gus finds sharing his own personal experiences with others to be very constructive in emotional aspects of his faith development:

> There was just six to eight of us in a seminar class, and it was the best class I ever participated in. . .sharing in a way the journey we have to go through in life. Sometimes we have some struggles; we still have to rely on Christ to help and serve even though your heart might be breaking, or you may need somebody to serve you or encourage you, so I think that perspective is very helpful to me in learning.

Stage 5 Participants

Participants in this group are supposedly evidencing Conjunctive faith in their lives. This is presumably a broader view of the world and faith than is present in the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

other previous clusters. These participants do articulate a large worldview, and this is perhaps a hallmark of their level of faith development.

Ashley, who also met the criteria for Stage 3, says her emotions have been liberated by the questioning she has done in seminary. Fear and freedom seem to be two sides of the same coin for her:

> I know people get scared when you say you don't believe in this or that, but I feel like it's kind of liberated me in a sense, because I don't have to believe in that for God to be real, because I know that God is real, no matter what. A lot of things I learned last year kind of started that . . . it just continued as I keep learning.

Will's faith development includes a new appreciation of God's love. His faith focus in the emotional realm has to do with relationship:

> Probably my understanding of God and how God relates to human beings. I came in to Hatfield and the Hatfield experience that brought me here with an understanding of God as, you know, the Divine Judge who sits in the heavens loving people, but at the same time expecting certain things from people. And even though I grew up with an understanding of God as love, there was always that thought in the back of my mind that, you know, if I don't do this, maybe God won't love me as much, or maybe God will be mad at me. And I think that's changed a great deal, because I see God now as, you know, we talk about seeing John of the Cross, who sees God as, you know, the lover who comes to him in the night. And I think God is in some ways, you know, a lover who pursues us and desires above all to have a relationship with us.

Roger recounts how his larger view of the church has made him see feel that he did not have all the answers. His personal development is seen as only a part of a larger whole:

> And as my vision broadened of the church, what really was wrong with the church was bigger than me, and so any kind of idiosyncratic solution, any kind of personal solution on my part was probably not appropriate.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Non-Stage Participants

These participants did not meet the criteria for any one of the faith stages, but they evidence some characteristics of several of them. Both of the non-stage participants have something to say about their personal role and faith development.

John talks about how the past flows into the present for him. It helps him to feel that his personal views are only a small part of a larger theological reality:

> I think I enjoy studying it [history], but I was a little surprised how much the link to the past would affect my view of the present in terms of my own personal . . . I wouldn't say personal . . . my view of theology, my view of understanding God. Almost understanding that it's not . . . we love to say it's a personal thing, but it's almost. . .it's so much bigger than us.

Jim has been encouraged in his faith by the things that he has learned at seminary. His religious faith has been re-energized by his study:

> Well, I don't know if I learned it specifically, but maybe it just reinforced it. . . that the Gospel contains within it hope that cannot be found anywhere else in society. . .that it has something to give that nothing else can give, and you know you can. And now I guess I'm talking in large about the area of meaning for your life, and hope for the future, and eternal hope, and those kinds of things. The Gospel can impart a certain strength and a certain love, not only for this life, but I guess I call it "energy for living" that I'm not sure is totally present in any other aspect of our society.

Aspects of Faith Development

Fowler (1981) divides the stages of faith into aspects, based upon the theories he used to build his model and other characteristics of development he sees. The aspects of faith development include form of logic, perspective taking, form of moral judgment, bounds of social awareness, locus of authority, form of world coherence, and symbolic function. One may perhaps wonder how many of these aspects have to change for a full

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

faith stage change to occur. There were examples of each of these aspects in the interviews conducted.

Form of logic. As can be seen earlier in the "Reason" section, individuals do talk about how their thinking has changed as a result of their seminary experience. Fowler (1981) uses Piaget's terms to describe the form of logic used by participants in the various stages (also see Table 1.3). According to Fowler, people in Stage 2 use concrete operational thinking, whereas individuals in the other three stages represented in the BFS evidence formal operational thought. Fowler further divides the form of logic in formal operational thought into different types, with Stage 3 showing early formal operations, Stage 4 formal operations (dichotomizing), and Stage 5 formal operations (dialectical). Fowler goes on to say that Stage 6 shows formal operations (synthetic).

Reason is very important to Joseph, as can be seen by some of his earlier comments. Joseph talks about a form of logic that moves from literal into a dichotomous type of thinking in comparing the way he thinks now with how some other people think:

> I'm going to pick an example like I remember the class that gave people the most struggle that I noticed was the Old Testament class. . . and especially from what I noticed were the people that were in Bible College had more of a struggle. Because they would say like in Genesis the creation story, "well, one way to read it is very literally like a scientific textbook that got graded at six 24-hour days, and that's a valid way to read it, but another way is to look at it more poetically and to say, you know, God created it, and the 6 days could be more figurative. And it could have happened with a big bang and evolution and all that." And so that was kind of good, because again it gave a look at things very intellectually. It gave some intellectual leeway, but it's also within the faith boundary, so it was there was never the question of God did create it, but how did God create it? So that really helped my beliefs, and I think it's given me more of a. . . even looking at where I'm at now. I stick with any conservative biblical background in that I take everything from the Bible, but I've got a lot more leeway within that range, whereas, you know, a lot of people it's kind of like, "this is what I believe."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Locus of authority. As individuals develop in their faith, the locus of authority moves from more of an external basis of control to an internal basis, although it is informed by other individuals' views. Again, Joseph is rather aware of how his locus of authority, reason, and faith interact. He describes his views in fairly classic Stage 4 terms:

> So I guess that's the. . . I'm trying to think of where I was before I came to seminary and after, and I think that's one of the best things it did was. . . I would reject an approach to faith that was just sort of a "believe it even if it doesn't make any sense" kind of thing. I don't mean that you have to understand everything. I don't understand the Trinity or resurrection, I mean in the sense of understanding how God does these things, but I'm also at the same time not just going to say I'm just going to believe this whether or not I truly came to that on my own or not. . . not on my own, but I'm getting confused so . . . I'm not just going to believe something because somebody said it. I want to see it either through the Bible or through reason or something like that. So seminary kind of taught me to be intellectually honest and as well as to be faithful.

Perspective taking. Fowler (1981) uses Selman's terms of perspective taking when describing this aspect of faith. A person moves form rudimentary empathy in Stage 1 to "mutual, with the commonwealth of being" in Stage 6. Will shows some of the characteristics of a Stage 5 person in his perspective taking, which in *Stages of Faith* is termed as "mutual with groups, classes and traditions 'other' than one's own" (p. 245):

> I don't know if I can pinpoint any one particular idea or event. I think it was just continually encountering people with views that were different from mine and encountering people who, you know, although they may have had different ideas and understandings than I have, they lived a life that I wanted to live. You know they were people. . . meeting the Jewish people up in Willsville, people at the synagogue, B'nai Sholom, and seeing all that they did in their community to make a difference, and meeting the people at the Muslim community center here in Edwardstown, and seeing how much they love each other and how much they want to help the community. You know, being in constant conversation and contact with people who are different from myself challenged me to see that I see God in them, and I can't deny that, and I shouldn't try to deny that, because, you

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> know, I can learn from them just as much as they can learn from me. And, you know, I think I grew up with the understanding that, you know, as Christians we need to go out and talk to these people, we need to tell them that God loves them. And, you know, maybe they can tell us something about how much God loves us.

Symbolic function. This aspect shows how symbols operate in a person's meaning-making. According to Fowler (1981), a person moves from a magical/numinous understanding in Stage 1 to an "evocative power of symbols actualized through unification of reality mediated by symbols and the self" in Stage 6 (p. 245). Will shows Stage 5's postcritical reunification of foundational symbolic power and meaning. The power is both in the reality in and beyond the symbol and in the self's unconscious processes:

> And I think it's changed my understanding of how God relates to people of other faiths as well, because I don't see God as having a black line in the sand that says, you know, "you're in," and "you're out," because I think all religion is a reaching out to God. It's a response of human beings to what they feel to be the creative impulse within them. . .that spark of God that is within them. And, you know, that understanding of God as a divine lover who is in search of people to be in a relationship with . . .I can't reconcile that understanding of God with a God who would just simply reject people because they don't have the right understanding. I think that God honors that religious impulse in all people, because it's a reaching out to God, and God is trying to reach out to them. And so, you know, that is definitely a change from what I grew up with, because, you know, I did grow up with, you know, the line in the sand, "you're either a Christian" or "you're not," and that's not as easy to say anymore for me.

Form of world coherence. According to Fowler (1981), a person moves from an episodic form of world coherence to one showing the "unitive actuality felt and paritcipated unity of 'One beyond the many'" (p. 245) in Stage 6. Lisa describes the move from Stage 3's tacit system of felt meanings to an explicit system which is conceptually mediated in Stage 4:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> I guess so, but maybe it would help to say that it's [faith] a decision, as opposed to just fact. I don't know. Instead of saying, "yes, I know for sure that this is how it works," I would say, "I have decided to live as if this is how it works." Is that . . .? Does that make it clearer? I think instead of saying that I know that the church is right about everything or I know that Scripture is true about everything. . . well, I wouldn't try to convince somebody of that anymore. I would just say I've decided to buy into that and let my life be a reflection of it. That's the best I can say.

Form of moral judgment. Fowler (1981) uses Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning in his model. Individuals move from a punishment/reward orientation in Stage 1 to a "loyalty to being" aspect in Stage 6. Joseph shows some Stage 4 thought, with a "reflective relativism or class-based universalism" (p. 245):

> When I was first a Christian, I was a high school student, and the use of alcohol never entered the equation because I was seventeen or whatever, but it was just wrong and I knew that. And then going to college, of course like I said, I didn't really follow very well, and I was in a fraternity, so the use of alcohol was a whole different story, and I did. But when I kind of got back to being in the kind of reaffirmed, when I, you know, got back to being a Christian and doing what Christians ought to do, I just knew it was wrong again. And it was funny, because through the time of seminary I really had to stop and say, "why is that wrong?". You know, "why is it wrong to even have a beer?". Now in the tradition that I was in, the [conservative Protestant churches], and living in the South, is kind of they know drinking a beer is wrong, you know. But even from the time I was in seminary on. . . and this has been a gradual process. . . I've come to realize, "no, it's not." You know, there are abuses, and there are things like that, but again it's not black and white. It's not "no, it's wrong, or yes, it's right." There is kind of more a variety that "no, it's not wrong, but there are instances where it is wrong, and it's something to be careful of" and things like that. So that's something that's really changed. . .just not having a yes or no answer to everything. I know it's dangerous. It's easier if you're leading a church just to say "okay" . . . to use alcohol [as an example]. . . because some uses of alcohol can be bad and there are some people that could be a real mine field. . . just say "no, it's all wrong altogether," but again, I don't think that's honest. I think it's better to say, "yes it is permissible, but it's not always beneficial. Be careful with it, you know, and you're probably better not to ever taste a drink than to kind of take a chance."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bounds of social awareness. Fowler (1981) says in this aspect of faith development that individuals move from a social awareness of the family and primal others in Stage 1 to an identification with the species in Stage 6. Marvin describes how his awareness is greater than to groups he personally sees, although he tends to identify with communities which share his ideology, congruent with a Stage 4 understanding of social awareness:

> You'll be talking about what your church is doing for worship, or you'll hear a foreign national student about how it's done in Brazil or how it's done in Korea, and those conversations are very enlightening. . . to hear from people who live next door to Muslims every day and what their attitude is towards Muslims, as opposed to what the television tells us to think about Muslims. Same with Buddhists or peoples that we here in a racially homogenized rural area of a Southern state don't get to encounter.

Transformative Learning and the Personal Role

Transformative learning seems to have a place in the personal roles of the participants in the study. Confronting the "disorienting dilemma" that precipitates transformative learning appears to contain affective, cognitive, and spiritual elements. In this section, transformative learning having to do with the personal lives of the participants will be briefly explored.

Transformation of Meaning Schemes

This theme deals with how a process of looking at faith may have changed without a change in its contents. In encountering this phenomenon, many students are perhaps experiencing transformation of meaning schemes, rather than transformation of meaning perspectives. This is different from the Grounding described in Chapter 5 within the context of transformative learning in that the participants do not describe a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

feeling of threat. The anchor for many students is described in personal terms. Gus remarks that his beliefs have not changed that dramatically:

> I don't think my beliefs have changed any as much as they hopefully have a stronger foundation. [I'm] more confident about my relationship with God and matters of faith and things, so I think a greater appreciation, you know, that the word of God works and that we can trust him and things like that.

Sam remarks that he now feels that he has more of a personal sense of purpose:

> And so values, beliefs, commitments all those thus far for me have not been threatened, but they've been reinforced and helped given me a more nurture behind my purpose and helped crystallize a little bit more about. . . crystallize my personal vision for what it is God wants me to do, if that makes sense. So the matter of a reinforcement of a role there.

Even though Marvin talked earlier about how the readings for school challenged him, he describes how his mindset perhaps does not lend itself to experiencing perspective transformation from school material. Notice how he *does not intend* to have his major worldview challenged:

> And part of it is I'm pretty hard-headed when it comes to reading materials. I have friends who read things, and it runs all over them, and it bothers them, and they lose sleep over what an author says about worship or prayer. That was never me. I read it. I would look at it according to the framework that I already have, and if it makes no sense, if it doesn't resonate in form or in diet, I let it roll. I let it go away.

There may have to be some level of openness to personally challenging ideas for a true dilemma to be encountered. Sloan and Sam also made remarks suggesting that they were immune from the profound discomfort that some of the information with which they were presented might cause. As can be seen from some of their comments in Chapter 5, they had made up their minds about some key issues, and their viewpoints were not available for challenge. Sloan talks about having this conservative beliefs strengthened, and Sam

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

says he is not bothered by some of the provocative seminary classes due to views of the biblical text he developed in undergraduate school. Although not as clearly stated as Marvin's comment, their statements suggest a present defense against a lot of information that challenges assumptions.

Disorientation

This theme has to do with the questioning and bewilderment that may ensue when one no longer takes certain ways of viewing the world for granted. This happens in the personal arena, as it does in the other major life circles discussed. Joseph describes the cognitive aspects of trying to process new information:

> And it helped me to realize that you. . . when you have just something that you've been taught or something you've held, and then all the facts go against it, there is a way to kind of assimilate that together where you take what you believe and take what you see and work on that. I think the word is "cognitive dissonance" in this area. You know, you have what you see and what you believe are different. It's still hard.

As can be seen from these remarks, being confronted in this way strikes at the heart of one's being. Roger states that this was the case in his life: "Just the challenge of trying to integrate all this personally was probably pretty significant too."

Polly evidently experienced this disorientation extremely vividly in the personal realm. Her words are clearly those of perspective transformation:

> I think sometimes it feels like they're tearing down all of your former assumptions, I guess, and then it sometimes. . . it doesn't feel like they give you anything to build it back with. It's like "okay, everything you ever knew might not be true. Okay, bye." You know, and it's like okay, and I can understand the strength of building it back up by yourself, but sometimes it's really been frustrating at times.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The desire for a mentor is seen very clearly in her words, echoing what Mezirow (1991a) found in seeing others who have negotiated a similar change in thinking. On the flip side, Stan thinks that being disoriented can help one to become more faithful:

> Maybe life is better when you're out of your comfort zone. Maybe from the spiritual standpoint, maybe all of us are more faithful when life is not so comfortable and are more spiritual when life is more comfortable, so maybe with a new comfort zone, maybe there is a new kind of challenge to be faithful and to be spiritual as I am out of my comfort zone. Anyway, be that as it may, that's where I'm at.

Spiritual practices are thus seen as a tempering factor for some in the midst of intense personal change.

Neutral Zone

Fowler (1987) describes a place where one can be while in the dynamics of faith change as a "neutral zone." In this zone, a person may be dislocated in space and time, and meaning structures have been shaken or destroyed. This sounds very similar to the process of perspective transformation. Roger describes the feelings associated with this "neutral zone" quite evocatively.

> That kind of leaves me where I am now. Struggling really to rebuild faith, you know, to try to find what does the existence of God mean. What applications does it have in life if we strip it of all kinds of religious cliché, you know? I was very able, very adept at discussing, using the language of religion, the language of theology, and to manipulate argument cognitively, rationally. But trying to move beyond that has been a struggle—you know I guess because I relied so long on religious language to be the kind of way I describe and process faith and now because ever what I've gone through this process has widened my vision. And, number two, I'm moving away from being a professional practitioner of religion. Those debates are still keen and important, but they are less relevant to me. And so "what does faith mean?" has kind of moved away from those things, you know, away from arguments and thoughts that I would have engaged in if I had been asked that question before. And now I have to find new ways and it's that and being concerned with that. Plus the challenges of normal family life, as well as

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> trying to pursue a new vocation yet can easily crowd out that. And so right now it's like I'm trying to rebuild, I guess mostly internally, with not a lot of external activity on my part that would alert anyone to the fact, that to rebuild faith. But it's what I, you know, when I do stop and think about it, that's where I am is where I'm thinking.

Fowler's contention is that time in the neutral zone helps a person to re-evaluate where he or she has been and is important to the discernment of where to go next. As he states, "It is crucial that we affirm in this place the trust and hope that the One who made us will in due season disclose the gift of new direction and restored purpose and energy" (1987, p. 111).

Precipitating Factors

Most of the precipitating factors mentioned by the participants were in the Seminary Setting realm. Stan, however, does describe some factors from the Personal Role part of his life that clearly helped lead him to a denominational change. He tells it this way:

> Later in life, and more recently, I guess, two or three things that I can point and put my finger on and say "these are direct influences in the change on the personal side of life. . . ." One is, you know, having gone through a just. . .a just . . . really a terrible period, I don't know . . .emotionally, and just one of those dark periods of life, I guess, that most people are . . .most don't. I don't know, but a lot of people have at one time or another, you know, in life. I went through a period like that that I became very reflective about life. Not that. . . I think that's my bent anyway, but I mean became very reflective, very analytical about life, and just a dark period of, I don't know, personal turmoil. And, you know, I can't put my life on . . .put my finger on life circumstances and say, "well, that's what caused it. . . ." I think there was a new misery level that came to light. . .in the search for making sense of life and ministry and truth and biblical truth. Anyway, that compounded the misery level, and at the time in a hard way, but after the fact in a wonderful way. . . a way that I wouldn't trade for anything in the world. So to that extent, the transition, I think, got forged on an anvil of difficulty and hardship. . . . [It was] mentally and emotionally a real period of struggle, personal struggle, and I think probably at that time I was the most prayerful I've ever been. . . . At any

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> rate, so there were things on the personal side of life like that, and I think also. . . I think all that was compounded by the death of my brother-in-law. I think that probably fed into the equation. You know, I think I mentioned earlier lots of life stressors, the death of my brother-in-law, just on a personal side of life, discontentment, dissatisfaction, all of which fit together, just opened me to a whole new way of thinking about things.

One may wonder how much change has to take place for a transformation of perspectives, rather than of meaning schemes, to occur. Stan is still a Christian, but he has a different way of being a Christian. He does seem to have negotiated most of the steps in Mezirow's model, as listed in Chapter 1 (1991a), so it does seem as if perspective transformation has occurred. Looking back at the ideas of faith development, one could probably say that Stan was experiencing more of a change in faith *process*, rather than faith *contents*. However, some of his faith contents have changed, those specifically related to interpretation of Scripture and how he implements that in his profession. One would probably have to talk to Stan on all of the aspects of Fowler's model to see if he was also undergoing a faith stage change, in addition to conversion (Fowler, 1981). Since Stan has completed a graduate degree in adult education, he is aware of Mezirow's model of perspective transformation. Part of his understanding that others have negotiated similar changes in worldview may be wrapped up in his understanding of the transformative learning model itself. This awareness could have led him in appropriate directions to seek support as he was undergoing his change in denomination. His theoretical knowledge could have heightened his self-awareness, giving him more ammunition for negotiating a transition.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In Stan's life, there also appears to be a mid-life re-evaluation going on, perhaps as described by Levinson in his work with men (1978). Jim mentions this aspect also in his decision to leave his job and attend El-Shaddai: "But like I say, I just felt like I was at a kind of mid-life crossroads, and this opportunity presented itself, and I felt like it was worth the time and the effort and so forth to do it." However, the death of a family member also had its role in Stan's denominational change, clearly pointing to affective catalysts other than developmental changes which may have a role in perspective transformation.

Mitigating Factors

The mitigating factors discussed in Chapter 5 also are helpful in the Personal Role. The support of family, friends in seminary, and mentors offer a shelter to blunt the difficulties of perspective transformation. As evidenced in the discussion of spiritual practices in this chapter, these activities are also helpful for individuals undergoing a change in worldview or faith process.

The idea of mentors, as was mentioned back in Chapter 5, rings especially loud for some. In particular, Lisa discusses having mentor figures back at home who helped her through her personal difficult times. Part of the appeal of these figures to her is their separation from the seminary environment:

> I think too through the whole process I've stayed in touch with my minister and his wife who had discipled me. And keeping in touch with them, I know there will be times I'll say something, and they will say, "do you really believe that?" They just kind of keep me in check, kind of calling me back to the way that I first learned it.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

As Parks (2000) in a later work describes, higher education, professional education and the professions, the workplace, travel, the natural environment, families, and religious faith communities can all serve as mentoring communities. As can be seen by Lisa's comments, having support both inside and outside of the school environment can be helpful for many students. Gus, Mary, and Polly also describe the important mentor-like role of professors in their lives. Parks (2000) says that professors in any academic discipline can be spiritual guides, but that is perhaps doubly-true for those in a theological discipline.

Mezirow's idea (1991a) that one can recognize that others have undergone a similar process to which one is experiencing in perspective transformation can also be applied to painful situations that one may have viewed dubiously previously. These "negative mentors" can perhaps help one to know that things will get better. Polly recounts meeting some seminary students further along in the program in her orientation for El-Shaddai and being very disillusioned with them:

> Well, another surprise was . . .during the orientation. . . . And they had a panel of older students, so we could ask them questions and stuff, and I remember one of the guys. . . one of us, you know, little people asked one of the older students, you know, "how is your spirituality?" And one of the guys said, "well, to be honest, it's horrible right now, and it's really suffered, and I've really been hurt." And I think at the time I was really ticked off, because I was like "we're supposed to be the best of the best, supposedly. We're in seminary, you know, and people are going to. . .no matter if we like or not, church members are going to look at us and say, 'you have a Master's in Divinity, so, you know, you've got like this extra hold on God, and you're going to show me how to get there, you know.'" And so I was thinking, "if you can't keep up with your spirituality, then there is something wrong with you."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

She says that currently she is where these older students were then. She describes it this way:

> We don't have a church here, and I usually work Sunday mornings. And so my excuse in my mind sometimes is "well, if I work Sunday mornings, my co-workers can go to church, and they have a church," and . . .but right now, I'm almost to the point of that guy that I was upset with four years ago because my spiritual life. . . . My prayer life is okay, but I really need more feeding from an outside source, and I get some of that at the V.A., but not enough.

Polly does have hope that the process of learning will have a better outcome than it feels like now: "We're just in the transitional time, and we're going to keep on trying to get there." Mentors can thus be individuals that have negotiated a similar road, whether or not one actually looks up to them.

Summary

This chapter has described students' experiences in the Personal Role with themes relating to a person's psychological development, both in the cognitive and emotional realms. Reason, the support of family, and the reasons for attending El-Shaddai were discussed. Professional goals, opportunity, community, and academic reputation were among the reasons given for coming to this particular seminary. Other themes that were explored in this chapter include: personality, reflection, the past, and the future. The aspects of change in faith development were examined, with special attention being given to Fowler's six aspects describing each stage: form of logic, locus of authority, perspective taking, symbolic function, form of world coherence, form of moral judgment, and bounds of social awareness. Precipitating and mitigating factors for transformative learning in the Personal Role were discussed in this chapter, with the importance of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

mentor-figures again being highlighted. In Chapter 7, experiences in the Professional Roles will be examined.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter 7

Professional Roles

As can be seen in the Venn diagram in Chapter 5 (Figure 5.1), another main theme that arises in the interviews with the participants is their Professional Roles. This primary theme has to do with how the students see themselves and how they perform in their chosen capacities in whatever specific career role or informal function they may be serving. The two major professional domains in which the participants seem to operate are Academic, in which the individual is seen as a student, scholar, and/or future professor, and Ministerial, in which the person works in a clerical capacity, be that in a local congregation, chaplaincy, or some other setting involving religious leadership. In this chapter, these two roles will be explored in greater detail as they contribute to the experiences of the seminary students interviewed.

The Academic Domain

The Academic Role is one in which all of the participants have been involved in at some time or another, as they are all students in a seminary. However, some students see this role as much more primary than others. The academic role is affected by past experiences, particularly in Christian education, no matter whether that occurred in the local church setting or in a church-related school context. In the Academic Role, the following sub-themes will be investigated: academia, prior Christian education, and the best education for a minister.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Academia

Some of the master's participants hope to go on further in academia after competing their degree. A few of the students found their seminary experiences to support their future goals favorably. Mary describes her encounter in learning about academia while at El-Shaddai as eye-opening:

> But I don't think I ever really was aware of how the academic world worked, and if I want to go on and teach and study inscriptions and what not. . .the publishing side of it, and how all that kind of works, and, you know, the side of being a professor and, you know, maybe studying this summer, and how when you find things as a scholar you have to publish them and what not. . . . Actually a lot of it was meaningless to me [before], because I'm the type of person who would just like to be locked away in an attic somewhere studying.

John considered his future plans as a scholar in his decision to attend El-Shaddai. He has multiple reasons for wanting to go to that particular school, some pragmatic and some ideological:

> I don't know. . . I grew up around some of the professors, but one thing. . . what I wanted to do was I really wanted to work on a Ph.D., God willing. So I thought it would be better to come to El-Shaddai to study something to develop relationships with the professors who could write recommendations. Because I thought if I just took classes at a regular university for an MA in History, which is only 30 hours, I could finish it so quickly I might be out before anybody knew who I was. I also wanted to study more theology in the future, to where if I did teach, I could still work in a church and have some credibility with that degree.

Sloan, on the other hand, was assured in his mind that doing further academic work is not what he wants to be doing. It has to do with his view of what is important:

> I for a time wanted to go on to a Ph. D. to teach, but for the second time am convinced that at least for me the place to be is the church, because that's where theory and practice really meet. And I think you . . .the professors at El-Shaddai, they wouldn't say anything different than that. . . but the part that bothers me is that to be a professor at El-Shaddai means you have to give yourself to the opposite of practice, I guess. Yeah. You know in a perfect world seminary and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> church would be the same place. And maybe even seminaries, as we know them today, developed from that kind of scheme.

It is interesting to note that all three of these individuals reflect to some extent a conflict between practicality and academic study—Mary with her understanding of how academia works, John with his concerns about what a person has to do to continue academic study, and Sloan with his struggle over the theory/practice split evident in theology—a dilemma that is found throughout the professions. This conflict between the theoretical and practical is paralleled in the dichotomies reviewed in the Ministerial section of this chapter.

The "ivory tower" mentality is thus viewed as being problematic to students' futures as professionals, either in a ministerial or an academic profession. Interestingly, the two master's degrees offered at El-Shaddai supposedly address the professional goals of both types of students, with the Master of Arts in Religion being an academic degree and the Master of Divinity being a professional ministry degree. Some students who complete the Master of Divinity do go on to further academic study also, however, and it is even preferred in some doctoral programs. A reflective practice orientation to study may help to address the theory vs. practice concern, as was mentioned briefly in Chapter 6 in the Reflection section. These ideas will be discussed further in Chapters 8 and 9.

Prior Christian Education

This theme has to do with the type of faith-related education that people received in the past and its relationship to their goals as students. Some students felt that their Christian education in the past in their local congregations had failed them, whereas some

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

students' Bible College background colored their El-Shaddai perceptions. A few of the participants remarked that higher education was not seen as being important in their church tradition or was distrusted outright in the culture.

Sloan and Lisa both feel let down by their Christian education growing up. They feel as if certain things in their faith development would have been better if their needs had been adequately addressed. Lisa thinks that her seminary experience might not have been as disturbing if she had been confronted with some of the difficult concepts she was exposed to in seminary earlier:

> We had studied, you know, the fact that these kind of wandering messiah types, that that was a regular thing back then, and that Christ was just kind of . . .Jesus was just kind of a figure. He really fit that mold pretty well. It wasn't those ideas that bothered me. I wasn't bothered by thinking that there was other kinds of Jesus figures around. It was just kind of a feeling of "why wasn't I ever told this before?" Did nobody know this? Did they know it, and they just didn't think people could handle it? I think now they probably just haven't studied that far and don't know that, but I think it kind of makes you go, "You know I spent twenty years in the church before this, and I never heard these things. Why not?"

In another perspective on the past, Sloan's desire to remedy the experience he had growing up in church is partly what led him into ministry:

> And couple that with my church experience growing up, which was me and a couple of friends at the most in youth group in my Christian education experience at church. Coupled with a feeling like there was a dearth of let me just say. . . my. . . I think I feel like my Christian education slighted me. It was so poor growing up within the church. So I think that was a factor for me too. Thinking, you know, "I want to help build a church that is well, you know, the church, the body in a way that does justice to what it means to be the church."

Jim, in a soliloquy on economics and ministry, remarks that higher education is not seen as that valuable in his church background. He muses:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Now as far as financial or monetary or whatever. . . of course in the ministry in the X Churches a higher degree virtually mean nothing. I mean you don't really automatically get more money to minister at an X Church just because you have a master's or a post grad degree. You may. That would just depend on a lot of different factors, and so vocationally, as far as the local church, it doesn't improve your economic standing.

Joseph, in a humorous observation on the local culture, remarks that there is even a suspicion of higher education among some church groups. He relates:

> In fact, especially in this culture around here, there is almost a distrust of too much education. My aunt lives right around the corner here, and I remember I was studying Hebrew one day, and she said, "well, the church I go to. . . our pastor doesn't have much education, but he's real loud," and she meant that as a compliment. You know I spent so much time studying this Hebrew, and she honestly said. . .and it's almost a joke around here. . . "well, if you just read the King James, you wouldn't need all that Hebrew."

The formal education that a person received before coming to El-Shaddai colors his or her perception of the seminary experience. In particular, students who attended a Bible College, which is traditionally a more conservative type of institution, seem to have more trouble processing some of the information at El-Shaddai . Joseph describes it this way:

> But then there's another side of that if you're coming. . .and again I notice this a lot it's happened to me, and it also happened a lot more I think to some of my friends from like Bible College where they might have been in Sunday School and kind of had everything spoon fed and then went to Bible College. And it wasn't so much spoon fed as intravenously injected. But then I come here, and it's like instead of having all this stability, there is more of a flux, and so that's a little discouraging. . . just to think you come from all these answers, and you kind of walk away with questions. But I think that's just, you know, part of your spiritual maturity. It's kind of, to make an analogy, you might feel stifled when you're a child and your parents tell you what time to get up and what time to go to bed, when to do your laundry and when not to, and you want to get away from that. And when you go to college, you get that freedom, but on the other hand nobody tells you to do your laundry, and your laundry might not get done. So it's sort of kind of the good and the bad. You get the freedom that you don't have to do

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> laundry if you don't want to, but you've still got the responsibility of it. So in the faith sense, you get spoon fed a lot, and when you come to seminary, they give you a lot more freedom to formulate your opinions and know why you believe what you believe, but there is also some danger involved.

Joseph is not a Bible College graduate himself, but other Bible College graduates such as Polly have had some difficulty with El-Shaddai's emphasis on critical thinking, as can be seen from some of her previous comments about the Jonah story, for example, in the Bible section of Chapter 5.

Best Education for a Minister

This theme has to do with considering what is the best preparation for a person going into ministry. This idea was not expressly brought up by the interviewer—it emerged from the participants' themselves.

In addition to Joseph's aforementioned comments, others believe that a broader undergraduate background may be a better preparation for ministry than one specifically targeted toward biblical study. Although he would not change the way he did things, Gus—a Bible College graduate—muses on other types of educational experiences:

> One of my youth ministers and I . . . we talked about this a few years ago. He went to Bible College out in Washington, and, even though we felt like our education was good, it was so inadequate, and I think that most probably Bible College Presidents would probably feel the same way. This is enough to get you started, but when you leave Bible College, they're not saying, "don't ever study or don't ever take another class." But I don't see . . .in a lot of ways I wasn't the least bit ready for ministry when I left Bible College, and I listened and I took the classes. Maybe part of it is you're naïve, and you are 22 years old when you get out. It was interesting that I thought that way growing up in the Midwest, and my friend Norm, our youth minister from Washington, felt that way growing up there. And we talked about . . .we felt like what we knew about Hatfield or maybe liberal arts prepares you more for ministry. And I could just hear the Bible College people just rolling over in their graves about this, but we both felt like that makes sense. But it just . . .it didn't really prepare you for ministry, and I

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> think part of it was . . . "sugar coating" is not the right word, but it's almost like too much like the parent who wants to be your friend and instead of your parent. And I think in Bible College the mindset is you know, if you work hard and love God and love people, everybody is going to love you. . .and the church will be full. And then you get out, and you struggle a little bit, you know, and you have your first nasty elders' meeting or something, and you realize it. I don't remember talking about nasty elders' meetings in Bible College, but I think if I had to do it over again I'd do it the same way.

Gus goes on to explore this further by thinking about some people he's known with other types of educational backgrounds:

> I just have been, you know, I've been impressed with Hatfield, and I just wondered with liberal arts. . . El-Shaddai is getting a lot of State Tech students because of the campus ministry down there. And I just wonder whether having that kind of a background, taking, you know, sociology classes and other things. . . you know, [in] the Bible College you know a lot of Bible, and we need to read that. I don't think that prepared me to be effective in the culture. It's more than just going to a pulpit or a classroom and interpreting the Bible or teaching somebody, so. . . and I don't. . . probably Bible College can't change that or doesn't change that, and then I felt like maybe the kids who are in liberal arts college and are taking the humanities classes and looking more at people. . . and in a Christian liberal arts college, looking at people through God's eyes, as opposed to just a strict concentration in the word of God that maybe, maybe, they're more ready for ministry. This is a what do you call it, unresearched. . . two guys talking in an office one day. And I just felt like it was pretty amazing that he felt that way on the West Coast and I felt that way. And I don't think it's because we were messing up or lousy ministers necessarily, but it just felt like you had to get out and ask a lot of questions or pray a lot when you got out of Bible College. You know, you usually were away from those professors, so you kind of had to make it on your own, so we kind of thought about that. It was just something we thought about.

Stan echoes this sense that ministers need a broad background in order to have the tools to be effective in our current culture:

> I think ministers. . . you have to have the doctrinal, theological education. There's no substitute for that. You have to have that. You need that. You know, all things considered, that's the most important, but exposure to other things in a liberal arts ways of thinking is critical. It's critical, I think, for communication. It helps you think outside of the box, and, wow, in postmodern cultures we really

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> need to do that more than ever. You know, postmodern culture is boundary-less thinking, and, you know, exposure to other disciplines helps you think outside of the box, and yet empowers you to bring boundaries back to thinking that a postmodern culture needs. This postmodern culture . . .one of the crying needs is boundaried thinking, and I think that exposure to other academic disciplines might help to provide boundaried thinking for biblical truth that make sense to people in a new and creative way.

The Ministerial Domain

The professional ministerial role was claimed by some participants as their identity. This role is usually seen as being related to the congregational ministry arena, and it includes aspects of identity, as well as professional activity.

Several of the participants commented on feeling a load of responsibility with becoming a minister. Joseph describes it somewhat from the viewpoint of having to be a "all things to all people:"

> I know a lot of pastors feel. . .and this is part of our culture, or whatever. . .that you have to have every answer to a Bible question. You have to be able to make everybody happy, even when there is conflicting needs and wants and things. You have to be able to counsel, you know, every situation. Sometimes it's a real challenge, you know. You come in here with that burden.

Sloan's feelings of responsibility have gotten in the way of his learning in the past, due to the intense importance he puts on his study:

> The sense that this learning is eminently important and practical, and . . .yeah, I mean every day in class or in my reading. I have trouble reading, because I come across something and I'll think, "oh, that's so good. I'll use that when . . ." or something like that, and I get lost thinking about that for a while. You know I'll reread twenty times, so my reading is really slow because of that kind of stuff. And it almost for me gets to be too much that way. So not only is that something that has helped, but it is also a weight. It is a sense of . . . I mean it's a sense of the world that it rests on. Not whether I learn this but someone's . . .you know, someone's ability to know Christ later in life may hinge on my ability to, you know, to study and show myself approved. . . .Yeah. But I think it has been more

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> of a help. It was initially for me a hindrance I think, early on in my seminary years.

Added to Ashley's sense of responsibility is her goal of being a role model for other women who may come after:

> That's for sure. . .of being ordained, if that would ever happen in the future, it will kind of seal that responsibility, I think. An issue for me [is that] I need to try to seek ordination from my home church. They believe a woman can do anything but being an elder and preach. [It] might be kind of a long road to try to seek ordination from them, but it is a huge responsibility. That's why.

Preaching is seen as an immensely important activity in the ministerial role. Jim thinks that is where a person learns the most:

> The preaching experience itself, I think, is probably the primary learning experience of ministry. There is nothing quite like just week in and week out having to connect with people from the pulpit. I think that probably is the primary learning experience, so the practical experiences, I guess, are I think indispensable. *[Interviewer: So are you preaching every week right now?]* Not every week. No. I have just done some revivals, and I get asked to guest preach and that kind of thing. But that's pretty much it right now, and so I think that that's. . . the primary learning experience for ministers is the pulpit. I don't think there is anything quite like that moment of truth each Sunday that you have to stand before people and address their needs one way or the other, and I think I don't think there is any substitution for that, to tell you the truth.

Marvin says that preaching is transformational for him, in a classic theological view: " It is impossible to impart the Gospel without having you change along the way. In the telling of the Gospel, both the teller and the hearer experience a change."

A significant part of Stan's reasons for changing denominations has to do with preaching. He felt that he had to be in a denomination which supported his remarks from the pulpit:

> But the thing that's different is that as a Presbyterian minister I have the constitution of the church, which consists of a confessional history and heritage

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> book, a Book of Confessions, a Westminster Confession, that squarely, squarely backs up Reformed interpretation of history. So if I make sweeping . . .from the pulpit, from the podium, whenever I make sweeping types of interpretations that are very, very classic Reformed statements, I have a history and a heritage who are totally behind that that I didn't have. . . that I wouldn't have as an X Church minister, because it's a non-confessional church.

Ashley's sense that she has abilities to use in the pulpit heavily influenced her decision to attend El-Shaddai:

> I kind of felt like I may have a gift for preaching towards the end of my college years and said that I would try it out at El-Shaddai, I guess, and see where that led me, so I know what church to go into if I should go to a denomination that would prefer women, or accept them, I should say.

Another theme that came to be seen was a bit of a paradox—a very godly person may not necessarily become the most successful minister. This is mainly due to being a change agent in a traditionally unchanging organization, the local congregation. Jim describes it this way:

> I think that to fully be the person of God, to fully be a godly person may or may not lead me to be a particularly successful minister. . . . In other words, if I fully embrace certain truths which I think might indeed be accurate, say about gender, that may mean that I will not be a highly successful minister. Because holding on to some of those truths in certain church situations will put you in a great tension with other individuals in the church, and so the challenge. . . I think my greatest challenge or one of my greatest challenges will be that I may not be able to fully become the person I ought and need to be and at the same time practice that fully in the church.

Joseph equates this with being a prophet in one's own congregation. He seems willing to take on the challenge, even being somewhat aggravated with hearing a person talk about the dangers of doing this:

> And it's one thing to say something. . . and I remember one professor, and this just really rankled me. . . but he said something about "you can't preach prophetically to people who are paying you." In other words, "you can't really say

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> what the Bible says, because you're always going to be afraid of losing your paycheck." And that really bothered me, because, you know, I've always been willing to lose a paycheck and to be honest to the Word, but I think from where he was, was the ivory tower kind of thing, he kind of had the impression that the preacher always has to watch out for losing his job kind of thing.

A few other things mentioned about the ministerial role have to do with one's ministerial identity, preparing the way for others, and becoming better equipped to serve others. Marvin mentions that being a minister has totally shaped who he is. His ministerial identity cannot be separated from his personal identity:

> They [personal and ministry contexts] are so intertwined. It is hard for me. For example I am part of the Optimist Club here, and it's not part of my job description to be part of the Optimist Club, but it's part of my own personal job description to be part of the Optimist Club. If I go to a community event, other people go to enjoy themselves. I go because I am the minister in the area, and, you know, so many things. If I go and I have a cookout at some member's house, I can't just go for a cookout at a member's house. I am the minister. And that's not just me. That is reflected in the people that I serve, too, because when I go and see Emmie down at [the retirement home], she says "the minister is here." She doesn't say "good old Marvin is here" or "young Marvin is here." "The minister is here." And so it's hard for me to unentangle my personal commitment from my commitment as a minister. I had an uncle ask me a year ago what I would do if I weren't a minister. I said, "frankly, I would be somebody else. That's an impossible question to answer, because I would be somebody else."

This sense of willingness to let one's personal identity be subsumed is paralleled in Jim's description of voluntarily serving as a John the Baptist figure, getting ready for someone else to come. He states it this way:

> . . .you might consider that a lot of what you do at the churches or with the ministries you serve might be preparatory for somebody else. You know all you might be doing is preparatory for somebody else who could come along and would be able to take that. . . even do more with it. Once again, you know, you can't be too hung up on yourself then. You might just be an intermediary and just serving for a while and then stepping out of the way for somebody else.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ashley's ideas about being a minister in a local congregation are what help her in the midst of her school work. Her vision of what she hopes to be in the future sustains her now:

> I think feeling like there's a purpose. . .that when I get out, I know that I'm going to be better qualified or trained, and able to answer more questions, or able to ask more questions so members can figure out things for themselves.

Dichotomies

In the course of the interviews, there arose a few sets of contrasts that were said to be issues for the participants. The dichotomies are seen as opposites that seem to be battling with one another in the course of individuals' lives. Not all of these were equally pertinent to all participants, but they are worthy of examination in light of their larger applicability. All of the dichotomies have to do with looking at the possible versus the actual in some way.

Practical vs. theoretical. This particular theme was the strongest dichotomy that was mentioned by the participants. It reflects the conflict with information and knowledge that have to do with the world of ideas, as opposed to skills and knowledge that have to do with practice, particularly ministerial practice. Sloan thinks that between the worlds of theory and practice there is a great divide, and that causes him some grief:

> What have I learned that's bothered me the most? That there is a huge, huge void between academic, the academic world of theology at least, and the church in a few senses. One, to, you know, to be at a place like El-Shaddai, you have to hole yourself in the library and I mean in order frankly to get hired anywhere or even to make it through a Ph.D. You have to do this certain set of things that can so easily be totally divorced from practice, I guess. That bothers me.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Joseph believes that he learned more about ministry from working in a church than he did from school. He describes it this way:

> I do believe I learned more about practical ministry from serving in the church I was at than I did in seminary. To be honest, seminary wasn't that helpful in how to be a pastor. I learned that more from doing it, and you know, you can talk all day about. . . like we had a counseling class that was good but practically worthless in a real life situation. . . but I learned more from being a pastor how. . . when somebody comes to us grieving, you know, I thought about, like what I learned in counseling classes, you know to invite them into the story, all that . . .but that was okay. But you really had to learn that just by having grieving people come to you and make mistakes and things like that, but it did give me some grounding, you know. I just thought I had to come up with some of this the easy way.

Marvin talks about school and work being different things, but he found his seminary experience to be more helpful because he was working at the same time. He says:

> And the experience that I had at El-Shaddai Seminary was highly useful in several ways, and I wonder sometimes if it would have been less useful if I hadn't been working. The questions that I came to the classroom with came directly from the field in which I was working, and it colored not only the questions I asked in the classroom but which classrooms I decided I would be in.

John, on the other hand, disagrees with individuals who say that the seminary was too theoretical. He was able to find ways apply the material he was learning:

> I don't know. . . I mean, they say there's no practical application. I took a class on the Apostles' Creed, and then as soon as I did that, I taught like a 12-week Sunday School class on the basic beliefs of the Christian faith, and, you know, that's pretty practical to me, and a lot of the Dr. Newton classes I've taken here have stressed different ways of evangelism.

Both Lisa and Polly say they have been able to take the things they've learned into pastoral counseling situations. Lisa recounts her experience:

> Another thing that would probably fit into that would be we had the hospital check on something that we did. That was big for me just in kind of negotiating between all the stuff we've studied and actually talking [with people] who are in a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> hospital bed. It helps me to see that what we're doing here can be helpful on a practical level. Just because when you've spent three years sitting in classroom discussing suffering, discussing, you know, what does it mean to be hurt. How do we deal with "did God cause this?" or "can God fix this?". . . those kind of big questions. And then that is something that you can bring into a hospital room to help somebody work through and being angry with God, or whatever. So I would say that was one point when kind of a combination of the stuff I've learned in the classroom and then having to be out there was part of the requirements was a good thing.

Jim finds that his wrestling between the theoretical and the practical has to do with working on the degree itself. His professional doctoral program, designed to be completed while working in ministry, has not worked that way for him:

> And that bothers me that a degree program that is supposed to be set up for you to remain in ministry while you were working on the degree program. . . . I couldn't do it that way, so I had to do it another way. But that's about it, really. I think some of the classes could be even more practical than they are. They've got it split 50/50. Fifty [percent] of them are. . . you know you are studying the subject matter, and 50% of them are supposed to be very practically-oriented. And I think a lot of the people coming here wish it was even more practically-oriented rather than theoretical, if that's the right word. It could be even more that way, but to say that I'm disappointed in the program. . . I'm really not. I'm more disappointed in the circumstances that made it so that I couldn't do the program the way that it was set up to be done, so that's, I think, been a greater disappointment.

The courses seen as being the most practical are the counseling courses. Marvin, Ashley, and Polly all mention these courses as being some of the most helpful. Ashley is changing the focus of her degree due to taking some counseling classes. She remarks on their pragmatic nature: "It's probably one of the reasons I went to. . . decided to take some more Christian Care and Counseling classes, because I'm more practical." Marvin makes a hierarchical list of courses that have been helpful to him in ministry:

> Certainly the counseling courses. The ones I took with Dr. James and Chad O'Neill were probably the most dramatic. Behind that would be the Christian Doctrine courses that I took with Dr. Newton. The exegetical courses increased

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> my knowledge and honed my exegetical method, which was really crucial to how I approach scripture.

Seminary vs. real world. This dichotomy was also a very strong one mentioned by the participants. The theme has to do with how issues and ideas are perceived in a theological school, as opposed to how they are dealt with in the local congregation or with people outside the seminary.

Several students talked specifically about the issue of women in ministry, which is still a controversial topic in conservative churches. This issue will be discussed more fully in its own section, but in addressing this topic, Jim speaks more broadly about the division between seminary and the real world:

> In other words. . . in a seminary classroom you are free to throw all kinds of things out, discuss all kinds of things. You can work from a theoretical basis, but when you get in a local church, you can't work so much from a theoretical basis. You have certain givens and certain constraints. You have the history of the congregation to take into consideration, and even though the churches in this area I think have come a long, long way, you know it probably wouldn't be the best thing to do in this area to just have a woman preach the very next Sunday that you've become the minister of a church.

Roger sees this dichotomy as being part of the reason he is not ending up in the ministry:

> And there was another majority, minority rather, that I put myself in, who as I was that was really trying that said, "this is, wow, compelling, and if it's compelling here in the classroom, then it should be compelling personally and that should mean something to me personally. How am I going to lead a church that hasn't shared this experience with me and for whom faced, brought bluntly, with these kind of ideas with who would reject them or would find them challenging or unorthodox?" It seemed like most of the students were pragmatic about it. I guess my personality is just that's. . . one reason why I . . . that's one thing that called up questions about whether I was called to ministry or not, because I couldn't do that. I couldn't be clear and honest about where I stood on theological issues, and, you know, I was unable to secure a number of student ministries because I was asked some test-type questions, and I tried to be honest with them.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Roger notices this in the local congregations from his original church background. He explains how one of his professors characterizes the issue:

> But it bothers me that. . . and even one of those professors, one of my favorite professor here said . . .that I can't remember exactly how he said it, "in a lot of ways we are preparing students for a world that doesn't exist." And locally they try to do quite a bit to lead churches, and then you'll find a couple of congregations in this area in which they've had considerable influence. But that doesn't really mean a lot to. . . you know, those two churches in this area can't employ the output of the school, and you know they just don't have the power or the will to kind of exert that kind of influence.

Joseph sees the school and larger world divide more in practical terms. He thinks that students isolate themselves by some choices they make. He particularly views student housing in a negative light:

> And I remember when they were trying to get the student housing, and they were really promoting it. I just thought that was a horrible idea, and I still do. I mean again. . . because I think having housing for international students or for those who just needed to be around here was really good, but I think the emphasis should have been getting people into the ministry while they're at seminary. And as long as there is cheap available housing, people would be more inclined to stick around here, and so they'll walk up the hill to seminary, and then they'll walk down the hill and be around seminarians and never be around real people. You know what I mean by "real people."

Idealism vs. realism. This conflict has to do with how things "should be," as opposed to how things actually "are." Jim has the clearest articulation of this dichotomy, although it is touched upon in some things that the other participants say. Jim speaks of his dueling selves—the Idealist and the Realist:

> And I hate to let the realist go, because I think I hate to let the idealist go, because if you don't have that at work in your life in some way maybe you don't have anything to shoot for. But yeah, I'm going to have to come to some kind of a truce. Oh, excuse me. I'm going to have to come to some kind of <u>honorable</u> truce. And those are areas for prayer, too. . . you know, just to admit that to the Lord that you would like to do the best you can, and if the best you can do is not

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> as good as you'd like, just may have to try to come to some kind of peace about that. I'm not there yet, so I think that is a conflict. So I think that is a struggle I'm going through at this current time. Because you hate to let that part of yourself die, and you can't, but somehow it does have to be brought to some kind of a marriage with reality, I guess. It's just like anything else. Too many politicians go into politics wanting to do good and then along the way find that all kinds of compromises have to be done, and I think that is probably true in our area. You know you go into certain things wanting to accomplish certain things in a certain way. Sometimes you can, I guess, and sometimes you can't, and you just have to somehow work and trust that the Lord is at work in all that. . . even if it's pretty difficult to see, and I sure would like to see it.

Interestingly, this particular dichotomy is identified by Parks (1986) in her study of young adults. As individuals move from an adult faith understanding into a mature adult understanding, their terms of the structure of the world moves from pragmatic/ideal to an integration of the pragmatic and ideal (see Table 1.3 in this document).

Denomination

Issues having to do with the church group with which the participants were affiliated surfaced in the interviews. The school is affiliated with a particular church group, but students are also from other denominations. The students' denominational ties are very much related to their ministerial identities and their faith development. A few prominent themes highlighted here include denominational change, school's denominational roots, and ecumenical.

Denominational change. A few of the participants have changed denominations while at seminary or are working in a denomination that is not their original one. This move in denominations can be precipitated by many different factors, including the seminary experience. Roger made a denominational change due to feeling conflicted in his pursuit of ministry:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> I made an attempt to resolve those conflicts by moving to the Episcopal Church and pursuing ordination there, but that just made it more clear that it wasn't that. The issues were bigger than individual conflicts or theological, finding a theological home, that really I just wasn't called to ministry.

Stan's denominational change resulted from events that happened over a time period. This event has been a pivotal one in his spiritual development, and he spends quite a bit of time talking about it. He mentions events in his personal life that served as a catalyst for his transition, as can be seen by some of his comments in Chapter 6. A period of mid-life reflection, as well as the death of a family member, contributed to his desire for change. School, although not the catalyst for his shift, served a definite purpose for him during this time:

> I can't . . . there's nothing I can point to at El-Shaddai that I could say "well, that's responsible for my denominational transition." There is nothing that suddenly caused me to make this transition. It's more on the personal side of life, but as that happened . . .as that transition happened, it was progressive as far as school was concerned. It's not quite as progressive on the personal side of life. That was a lot more dramatic in short term, but as far as school was concerned, it was progressive kinds of confirmation that I really needed in academics.

Stan remarks that no denomination will ever be totally perfect for any one person. He has had to struggle with what he saw as being the most important:

> So it was difficult, and I'm fearful that some people think . . . well, I've even been asked. . . I mean I know this is the case. . .some people kind of think, "well, does everything just check off for you fine now?" And the answer to that is "no." My denomination is not perfect. There are lots of problems in my denomination, lots of them that really bother me, that really concern me . . .ones that cause me difficulty. With that said, I . . . and I don't. . . you know, again I'm going to be careful how I say this. I think there are problems in the X Church. . . and the Y Church . . . I think there are problems there too. I think the problems are a little different. I had to sit down with myself and say, "what's at the top of the list? What's most important? What's going to serve the ends of ministry, occupation, and calling the best?" And in final analysis, it was this transition. Again, does every single thing check off on a checklist? And it doesn't, and, you know, my

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> guess is that for truly thinking people. . . and I know there are those people who don't think a lot about doctrine and theology and things like that. . .you know, I did a paper one time in one of my classes on denominational switching and was . . . and discovered in some surveys I did that a tremendous amount of people are where they are by reason of, you know, friendship, and it doesn't have very much to do . . . they're not very concerned about doctrine, theology, those kinds of things. Some people it's not important to. For those that it is important, my guess is that not very many people are going to say "everything does check off," no matter where they are, unless you go out and start the First Church of Yourself. You know, I don't think that there are very many people who would say that. That's not the case now.

El-Shaddai's denominational roots. This theme is touched upon in many instances, but it is most elaborated upon by a participant who is working in a church not from the school's affiliation. The seminary is supported by churches from one particular theological background, but it has students from several denominations, and ideas and theology from several denominations are discussed and studied in classes. Will speaks of his frustration with the school's adherence to denominational ties:

> Oh, finally I get to get on my soapbox. Hm. There have been those great moments when tradition has sort of fallen away, and we've been just one community, but I think that part of what bothers me is, in so many subtle ways, there are still entrenched understandings that where we come from, this tradition that we come from is right, that we're willing to talk to other people, we're willing to learn with them, but we want to do it on our turf, we want to do it our way. . . . And so it's been frustrating to encounter those poles where you just hit a brick wall, and they say, "no, that this isn't going to happen." And you think, "you know, we're in a graduate school, we're in seminary, we're all here for the same purpose, and yet you want to keep everything in this nice little box." And that has been very frustrating. You know I have a couple of friends [who work in churches not from the school's tradition] . . . . And we have really found strength in each other in sharing those concerns we have you know, weekly or monthly complaint sessions where we sit down and have lunch and, you know, "Arrrggghhh!" go through our list of frustrations with the school and the situation.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Other students from the predominant church background talk about learning more about their own denominational background in seminary and appreciating aspects of it they had not encountered before.

Ecumenical. In spite of frustrations such as those described by Will, several of the participants express an increased sense of ecumenicity. They feel that there is value in Christians from all backgrounds working together. Joseph articulates this neatly:

> I took a lot of classes with Professor Newton who really looks at a lot of different faiths, you know, and things like that, and the Catholics and things like that. And again it was kind of helpful to see that our goal shouldn't be some allegiance to one denomination or movement or something but to the people of God. That's been encouraging, because I can work with other groups, even groups that I may disagree with some parts of theology, and if we're working toward the same goal—God—that's what's important.

John echoes this sense of feeling like the church is larger than he conceived of it as being earlier in his life: "I think I've gotten more ecumenical, you know, not so much of a 'we're the church, we believe it right, everybody else is wrong,' much more, 'gosh, we agree on so much.'"

Will summarizes some of this quite neatly in his view of the seminary classroom. His growing ecumenicity was a bit of a surprise to him:

> So I think it's been important for me to learn that denominational tradition is not as important as maybe I grew up thinking it was. And that was surprising, because I think a lot of times we grow up in churches, and we think that, you know, our denominational tradition is the most important thing. . . how we as Disciples or how these Presbyterians or Lutherans see these things, and learning that in graduate school those things really aren't as important. You don't look across the classroom, you know, and hear someone make a comment and say, "oh, that's the Lutheran saying that." You just recognize that that is a person that you know who is part of your community, and that person is making a statement that is valuable to them, and you hear it as that, and not as a Lutheran comment or Episcopalian comment.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Students in general thus appear to have had their denominational views widened and perhaps not see a person's church background as being as important as they once thought it was.

Women in Ministry

The issue of the role of women in ministry is a large one in conservative churches. The fact that there is an issue has to do with the theological interpretation of certain Scripture passages concerning the roles of men and women in church situations. The most publicized traditional view is that women were not to be the primary church leaders; however, this is being challenged as more scholarship comes to light and past interpretations are examined in light of the historical-critical method. Several of the participants, including some of the women, noted a change in their thinking about what women could or should do in ministry situations. Gus talks about his change in thinking and how it has affected his family relationships:

> I think we're. . .I think we're opening up new areas you know for females to serve, depending upon the church and the region and all that kind of stuff, you know, but I just think we need to wrestle with "why couldn't God call, you know, a girl into ministry?" and I think obviously He does. So I think the Doctor of Ministry program has helped me to see that probably girls are thinking, "duh, how come you couldn't see it before that?" You know, but I think that's something that the church needs to wrestle with, and I think look at it a little more than that. [I] didn't need to go home and say, "hey, you know, I want you ladies to go into ministry," but I remember preaching some sermons on those Scriptures, taking another look at the verses about the Apostle Paul and what did he mean by, you know, certain passages. Hopefully I'm educating not only my church, but you know the relationship I have with my daughter.

Joseph speaks of this issue as an example in his explanation of "cognitive dissonance:"

> I mean, there are things like, you know. . . I know a topic that was kind of big for a while was women in ministry kind of thing. . .where you look at the facts, and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> there is no reason why women aren't involved in ministry, and even biblically they are, but there are a few verses that say women should not speak. How do you mesh those two together?

Will, although he has not gone through a big change in his thinking toward women in ministry during his time in seminary, does try to use his past experience in working with congregational members struggling with this issue:

> I've got some youth members who are considering ministry as a vocation, and two of them are female, and they are really trying to, you know, discern a call to ministry and understand what it means to receive a call to ministry and be a female and face some of the discrimination that is still very present in the church. And those kind of conversations are very different. The sensitivity that I've learned in those earlier conversations in undergraduate school I think prepared me for those conversations.

The seminary experience itself appears to be very encouraging and supportive for the female students. In fact, things are so heartening at the school, that the positive energy can be a pressure. Polly says:

> Actually it's almost to the point where we're held up a little bit higher, but it's kind of frustrating, because you get encouraged so much and held up here, and you're told "yeah, you can do anything that God has, you know, available for you," and then you go out in the church and they're like "you're a girl. You can't do anything."

The fact that females are in a minority and face fewer opportunities after seminary may even give them an advantage while in school. Polly quips:

> I think it's kind of funny, because here everybody kind of holds you up, because you are a female student, and you're in seminary, and so they have been very, very encouraging. It's kind of a joke that girls start with an A and work their way down, and guys start with a D and work their way up. And so we've had nothing but encouragement from our professors.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mary echoes this uncomfortable feeling with having an advantage because of her gender. Her feelings have more to do with an academic position than a ministry one. She describes it this way:

> I told Dr. Rogers the one consolation to me that females have advantage is that there were probably times throughout history they may have been actually better students or what not, and they may have been passed over because of their gender. And at the same time, I really don't like it—I really want to do this because of my merit. I don't want to do. . .if I'm just . . .I don't know. If I have recognition only because I'm a female, it's hollow to me. That's the only thing.

The reality of what happens after seminary does intrude upon that experience, however. Lisa remarks upon how the school environment does not match the "real world" environment in describing her experience as a female student:

> It hasn't been a big deal. You know the good thing about it is that it's not a big deal here. They don't single you out. If they do, they're trying to do it for a good reason which I resent that. I don't want you to have me do something just because I'm a female, which happens around here a little bit. And it bugs me, but the bad thing, I think, about how gracious and encouraging to women [they are] is that it's not what's going to happen when I try to find a job.

Ashley is trying to enjoy her experience as a student and not worry too much about the future: "And it's been nice to be here, but it's also been kind of a reality check to know that there are plenty of churches out there that still just don't see women in that capacity, so it's nice to be here."

Jim, in his description of wrestling with this issue, perhaps sums everything up in his thinking out loud. Maybe people are getting bent out of shape over something that is not a big deal. He goes through his view of Scriptures talking about women in ministry:

> I wish there were more instead of you just get little glimpses here or there that you know Paul obviously had. . . .people that helped him in ministry that were male and female, but it didn't go into detail about what they did, which makes me

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> wonder if they thought it was all that critical. But I have, or I found there sort of a. . . that I probably have more a flexible [view] than many of the churches that I served. So then that leaves trying to figure out "just how important is this issue that you're trying to figure out?".

Faith Development in the Professional Roles

The faith development of the participants is shown in perceptions of their professional roles. As mentioned in previous chapters, the placement of these individuals within Fowler's stages should be interpreted with caution. Those statements that expressly have to do with the participant's professional roles will be highlighted whenever possible.

The aspects of faith chosen to represent each stage of faith in the BFS will be explored in this section (Barnes, Doyle, and Johnson, 1992). An overview of these characteristics were presented in Table 2.2. The choice of these aspects, which were reflected in the questions, may help to explain the lower reliability of the instrument. All of the aspects having to do with each stage were not represented.

The aspects chosen to represent Stage 2 on the BFS were that a person does not find much logic to larger sequences of life's events, the person equates power with authority, and he or she sees interpersonal relations as a series of deals made between people (Barnes, Doyle, and Johnson, 1992). Sloan, who came out in Stage 2 on the BFS, makes a statement that is diametrically opposed to the aspect of faith supposedly measured in which one finds relatively little coherent logic to larger sequences of life events. He sees a very definite purpose in his journey to El-Shaddai, reflected in a sequence of several events.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> After two years of M.Div. work at Trinity and in Chicago, I decided to take a full-time youth ministry position and was at that church for four years, and just after, you know, three years started to get a sense that not only did I just not know the Bible well enough, because that was definitely that was goading me to go back to school, but thinking, "you know, I'm a guy who looks at the big picture, talks in big terms about the world and you know. Those sorts of things and people like that are in school, and they write books and articles." So I think part of it was an attraction of the expectations that I'd always felt. That success was that as well. So those two coupled together. . . looking back, I think that's what was going on.

In this quote, one can see that Sloan considers himself to be a "big picture" thinker, very different from a supposed Stage 2 person. He continues his observations as he reflects on subsequent events:

> You know, also what else would also may have been going on was, you know, God was somehow moving me to El-Shaddai so I could finish a Ph. D. faster. You know, in theory at the time I was thinking this, so I could get through an M.Div. cheaply. . .go on to Ph. D. And that became a way for God to say, "let me remind that your calling really is to the church, you know." Because I've had this second calling to church, although I've never called it that before I'd say about four months ago. When I realized as a parent, as a husband, you know, I don't want to go through six years, you know, not being a parent or husband. . . and I'm in this situation where God has obviously called me to be a parent and husband, because that where I'm at. So to do justice to their needs I think was what made me think the second time around, "I don't think I want to do the Ph. D." And I also missed ministry. I look back, and I think I really enjoyed those years. In a way I was comfortable with who I am, and in the academic setting I don't feel like I am as comfortable as I thought I would be.

Sloan's comments show very clearly that the results of the BFS should be viewed with caution in understanding how a person views God's leading in his or her life. Sloan has definitely seen a pattern and organization in how God has worked in his life.

Polly perhaps shows her tendency to equate power with authority in her view of what she is learning in class. However, this is something that is changing for her. As she

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

says, "I can't sponge things, and I have to be more discerning of a person, which is not natural for me, because I would just rather accept things and float along, you know."

The aspects of faith chosen for the BFS to describe Style 3 are concern for loyalty to a leader, concern for conformity to group standards, and a fairly literal story-telling way of understanding doctrines (Barnes, Doyle, and Johnson, 1992). In Sam's following comment, one can see a concern for conformity to group standards being tempered by what he is learning in seminary. It is almost as if he is beginning to move from a Stage 3 understanding of faith, but he has not yet made the full transition:

> You have to give people latitude to differ in what they believe. Again. . . it was not that I grew up in a legalistic tradition or church, but I think by nature I want things to be black and white. I want to nail things down and catalog things, organize them, and I've learned that in terms of beliefs might I say, uh, broaden that and theology or even biblical doctrine. You just can't stick to arguments and indicative statements and proofs. Beliefs have to be something that can be articulated, but they also have to be something that can be lived. And sometimes in order for people to ever see, uh, see the truth about who God is and the fact that He loves them and that He has a purpose for their life sometimes those people don't need to be argued with or they don't need be given a book or a theological encyclopedia. They just need latitude and room to believe what they want to believe for a while, and then we as mature Christians need to allow them to do that so they can grow and, if possible, perhaps become more correct or correct us in some way.

Mary, who came out in Stage 3 on the BFS, shows a tongue-in-cheek side when she speaks about her view of certain biblical stories. She has had a fairly literal story-telling way of understanding some doctrines, as is supposedly characteristic of this faith style, but this is changing for her. As she wryly commented in a quote in Chapter 5, she can intellectually think about David not killing Goliath, but her personal meaning-making does not accept that. Sam's comments in Chapter 5 about how he does not feel pressured

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to conform to any certain group standard show that he is comfortable with a diversity of views, in direct opposition to a Stage 3 stance.

In Stage 4, the following aspects were chosen for the BFS—a universalist outlook (an interest in relating all aspects of reality together), a related concern for the overall coherence of beliefs in a fairly logical way, and a sense of adherence to objectively valid norms rather than just to one's group standards (Barnes, Doyle, and Johnson, 1992). Joseph's comment illustrates very clearly this conceptualization of objectively valid norms:

> You know this is just such a sticky topic, and this is one of the number one issues in Christianity today. . . in America anyway. To be loving and to accept an active homosexual as a Christian is way going against the tide, but I'm not. . . but because of having that experience here in seminary, I'm not going to base my opinion just on what is the most comfortable or the direction everybody else is going. I'm going to have to take the Word and just really pray. And it's been hard on me because I do believe in what I am I trying to say. . . you know, having leading by God and knowing God's will and having the Spirit guide you. But if I come to this conclusion that God is calling me to minister to homosexuals. . . and based on the Bible and considering all the arguments and all. . . that I'm going to do it, regardless of the cost.

Gus shows an interest in relating all aspects of reality together in describing what he likes about his course work:

> But the Doctor of Ministry is just designed that way, so, you know, with each class you took, whether it was a New Testament or an Old Testament class or ministry. . . For instance, I took a crisis counseling class; it might even have been one of my favorite Doctor of Ministry classes. Dr. B. taught that from Hatfield, and the flood had just come through the Old River, so we spent a day up in Tall Mountain interviewing people—the minister of First Baptist Church and a couple of members and what they went through. Also, that week there was a chaplain who was in Vietnam and told about that experience. There was a . . .I think she was a nurse. I think she was a head nurse or over a floor or something at the VA, and she had a blood clot, and she told about how she got through that. I think a cerebral hemorrhage type thing. And so that was information. . .kind of like front

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> line information. . . that these are people who have been in struggles, so you could easily take back to the crisis, you know, the people in your church are facing, you know, with their cancers and things. And I think the way that the professor taught the Doctor of Ministry class was just really, really refreshing, because he would usually bring in other speakers and things. And I think you see the subject from several different view points, in addition to the feedback from the students that are in there, too, so I think that was the most interesting thing. It's more than just taking one class and having one professor, you know, wax eloquently for days on end or weeks on end or something.

The aspects of faith chosen to reflect Stage 5 are a belief in the tentativeness of all standards, a related openness and flexibility of belief and tolerance of differences, and a concern for general human well-being over all other standards (Barnes, Doyle, and Johnson, 1992). Will's understanding shows a belief in the tentativeness of standards.

> And I think it's changed my understanding of how God relates to people of other faiths as well, because I don't see God as having a black line in the sand that says, you know, "you're in," and "you're out," because I think all religion is a reaching out to God. It's a response of human beings to what they feel to be the creative impulse within them. . .that spark of God that is within them. And, you know, that understanding of God as a divine lover who is in search of people to be in a relationship with . . .I can't reconcile that understanding of God with a God who would just simply reject people because they don't have the right understanding. I think that God honors that religious impulse in all people, because it's a reaching out to God, and God is trying to reach out to them. And so, you know, that is definitely a change from what I grew up with, because, you know, I did grow up with, you know, the line in the sand, "you're either a Christian" or "you're not," and that's not as easy to say anymore for me.

Roger's comments also show a belief in the tentativeness of standards:

> I guess it's the absolutism. I still cringe at the word "relativist," but I suppose qualified a certain way and said in a certain context I would be happy to say that's what I am. It seems like a lot of things are made up of relationships and just everything is just more incredibly complex than I ever really realized. And I guess not only here but I guess just as I tried to keep my eyes open about the world and growing a little bit older each year now, it just seems more and more that's the way things are. When it comes to politics, when it comes to society, when it comes to personal relationships, I'm not ready to say I have the answer or I'm not

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> ready to say this always is what should be, because everything seems super complex. I suppose that's the most significant change.

The non-stage participants exhibit some qualities from several of the different aspects mentioned, perhaps causing them not to have enough of the ones chosen for the BFS to be placed in any one stage. However, these participants in particular seem to engage the concern for human well-being. John says:

> We're concerned about someone who calls our church, and they don't have money to pay their light bill, but we're not concerned about that person out there who doesn't have health insurance, or we're not concerned about race relations. Where I live. . . I don't know what the population spread is, but I would imagine it's very small for minorities. It seems like there's a growing Hispanic population, and there are some churches doing things about that. First Big Church hired a Hispanic minister. . .but to me it. . . what do I do?

Jim seems particularly engaged by what he can learn from the international students, showing his interest in relating all aspects of reality together:

> Well, probably from the contact with the international students. . .how their context of ministry is just so completely different from every standpoint. . . from finances to what they have to work with to buildings to views within their culture, and also then you realize that there is a very. . . that to minister in America is a different thing. I mean you would have known that. You could have guessed that it's a different thing to be a minister in America than it is to be a minister in Thailand or Korea. And then you could have known that, but not until I actually sit around the table with other students did I really begin to realize how very different their contexts are. Some of the students also are missionaries to different places, and so they are American, but they have been ministering, you know, wherever, for 15 or 20 years, and their experiences are vastly different. . .vastly different than the American experience, which I think is a very success- oriented thing even in the church. . .you know, "how are we going to be successful?" whereas in a lot of other places they are just trying to think about "how are we going to survive?," "how are we going to get the government to let us meet?," "how are we going to feed the people?." You know the context is very, very different.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The inclusion of three aspects to represent each stage's thought in the BFS (Barnes, Doyle, and Johnson, 1992), rather than the full six that Fowler includes in his work (Fowler, 1981), may perhaps have influenced the reliability of the scale. This exploration of individual responses to several of these aspects highlights how this smaller snapshot of a person's habitual ways of making meaning may have affected their placement in a particular group.

Transformative Learning in the Professional Roles

As indicated in previous chapters, transformative learning cuts across the roles in which a person operates. Issues that have to do with an individual's Professional Roles will be examined here. Special attention will be given to content, process, and premise reflection. Mezirow (1991a) uses Dewey's ideas about learning as problem solving to describe what he means about these types of reflection. Content reflection has to do with reflecting on the content or description of a problem. Reflecting on the strategies and procedures used in problem solving, whether during or after taking action, describes process reflection. Premise reflection, which Mezirow sees as critiquing a special type of assumption, has to do with problem *posing* as distinct from problem *solving*. As Mezirow states, "Problem posing involves making a taken-for-granted situation problematic, raising questions regarding its validity" (p. 105). Content and process reflection lead to a transformation of meaning schemes, whereas premise reflection leads one to transformation of meaning perspectives. Mezirow calls both types of learning transformative: "Transformative learning results in new or transformed meaning schemes or, when reflection focuses on premises, transformed meaning perspectives" (p. 117).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Precipitating Factors

There may be situations in professional life that cause a person to re-evaluate his or her profession and make needed life changes, perhaps even changing professions or going back to school. Mary experienced this before she decided to leave her job in business and go to graduate school. She sees that what she has been doing is not moving her toward where she wants to be. This appears to be a type of process reflection, as can be seen in her quote in Chapter 5 about going back to school when she thought her husband was about to be transferred. Marvin echoes this sense of continuing education because of dissatisfaction; in the process, he appears to be undergoing content reflection. His own personal feelings about how he is doing professionally drive him to action:

> Because there is a guilt that goes with being a minister along the lines of "am I doing enough to be the best minister that I can be?" And, you know, as much as arrogance. . .guilt is a driving factor as much as arrogance is, and the two go to war with each other every day. "You're a crummy minister," "you're a great minister," "you're a crummy minister," "you're a great minister." And going to El-Shaddai silences both voices for me. Not permanently. There are times when I have a character flaw that brings these things back.

Encountering difficult congregational situations can lead to perspective transformation, as can be seen in Joseph's struggles with how to best minister to homosexuals. He speaks about the occurrence in his congregation which caused him to go back to the Bible to help him re-evaluate his assumptions. He does appear to be engaging in premise reflection:

> I'm not going to be able to not be a Christian, but I like. . . homosexuality is a good one. I've always this feeling, I don't know why, but the church has let down in ministering to a vast population that feels like the Lord doesn't love them, because they've been told that. So when these two ladies came to our church, there was a real cognitive dissonance. A lot of people said, "it's wrong, you

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> know, no question," and I got that sense from a lot of people in seminary, you know. "I know what creation is, and I don't want to hear anything else." But when they came, I had to say, "okay, let me plunge back into the Bible. That's something I've not really studied, and what we think we know the Bible says about it isn't always what it is when we jump into it."

Mitigating Factors

As mentioned in previous chapters, assistance encountered externally can help to dampen the impact of transformation. The support of family, friends, and mentor figures can all ameliorate the difficulties of the learning process. One additional factor not mentioned in previous chapters that can be beneficial in negotiating transformative learning is encountered in the Professional Role. Surprisingly enough, the flip side of congregational factors are that they can be sources of support for the students also. Will describes the "challenge" in working with a supportive group of people:

> The biggest challenge for me is that I'm serving a wonderful congregation. They have blessed me in so many ways and have taught me so many things about ministry. My first love is ministry, and I find myself drawn more and more in ministry and not focus so much on my studies. And yet I know that studies are very important, because they provide a foundation to do that ministry, and for me the biggest challenge is finding a balance between those two. The people in my congregation are constantly encouraging me: "Seminary should be your first priority right now, and we should be second." But it's very hard, because just . . .because they say those things I just look at them and go, "Ohhhh."

Will paradoxically finds that this support makes him want to spend more time with the people in the congregation than with his seminary study. The love and understanding of the congregation become a bit of a distraction from the school process, but they do help to mitigate the effects of the arduous reflection that is required for his study.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Summary

This chapter has looked at how this study's seminary students learn in their Professional Roles. In the Academic Role, the themes of academia, Christian education, and the best education for a minister were explored. In the Ministerial Role, the themes of responsibility, preaching, godliness does not equal success, ministerial identity, preparing the way for others, and becoming better equipped to serve others were examined. Several dichotomies were reviewed, issues having to do with denomination were appraised, and concerns involving women in ministry were investigated. An overview of faith development, particularly focusing on the aspects of faith reflected in the BFS was undergone. A view of transformative learning appertaining to Professional Roles, especially concentrating on different types of reflection, was then undertaken. In Chapter 8, the overall findings will be discussed in their larger context within the educational community.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter 8

Discussion

As was described earlier, the purpose of this study was to understand transformative learning in the context of faith development, particularly as evidenced by graduate seminary students. The following primary research questions were examined in this study of faith development and transformative learning:

1. How do adults at different levels on Fowler's model of faith development experience perspective transformation in the context of their schooling-related activities?

2. What types of experiences seem to precipitate and mitigate perspective transformation and faith transition?

A secondary research question explored in this study was:

3. What is the reliability of the Barnes Fowler-Scale?

For purposes of clarifying the discussion, the secondary research question (Question #3) will be treated first.

Reliability of the Barnes Fowler-Scale

As was discussed in Chapter 3, the reliability of the form of the Barnes Fowler-Scale (BFS) used in this study was very low. When the responses were coded in a binary fashion, the reliability value obtained was .30. When the responses were coded with the actual stage data, assuming ordinal data, a reliability value of .14 was obtained. Both of these reliability values were in a low range. This suggests that just because an individual met the criteria for one particular faith stage during this completion of the instrument

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

does not mean that he or she would necessarily have results for the same stage the next time the instrument was completed.

The cross-classification procedures run as further tests of the reliability support the low numbers obtained, although in a cross-classification of Questions 1 and 2, which deal with Stage 3 and Stage 4 responses, it was found that the instrument did distinguish between these stages adequately (McNemar's test, $p=1.000$; $\kappa=0.358$, $p=0.008$). However, in the other cross-classifications done, the instrument did not reliably indicate differences in the stages. For Questions 5 and 6, which differentiated between Stage 4 and Stage 5, a significant difference was found between same-stage responses on the two questions (McNemar's test, $p<0.001$; $\kappa=0.158$, $p=0.032$). For Questions 8 and 9, which show the differences between Stage 3 and Stage 5 answers, McNemar's test showed a significant difference between same-stage responses ($p<0.001$), and the kappa measure indicated poor strength of agreement ($\kappa=0.003$, $p=0.775$). This suggests that just because a person answered according to one particular stage on one pair of statements, it does not necessarily mean that he or she would answer according to the same stage on the other pair of statements dealing with the same two stages. Overall, this means that a person's assessed faith stage may vary considerably according to the questions asked or according to the time the BFS was completed.

Since the instrument was used as a screening tool for choosing participants, its results must be interpreted with caution. In explorations and discussions of individuals in certain faith-style groups or stages, the placement of this study's participants may not be accurate. Since several participants came out in more than one faith stage and some did not meet the criteria for any particular faith stage, the lines are perhaps blurred between

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the experiences of individuals in different stages. This leads to the re-interpretation of Research Question #1. Rather than look at how individuals in different faith stages experience perspective transformation, it perhaps might be a better way of approaching the question to talk about how seminary students in general experience perspective transformation and discuss this in context of their particular faith-style group, as obtained from this administration of the BFS, which may or may not be a stable indicator of their overall faith experience.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the alternate form of the BFS might have yielded higher reliability (see Appendix E). The population with which this study was done may have had representatives in stages that the BFS identified less well. In the creation of their own faith development scale, Leak, Loucks, and Bowlin (1999) mention that they used the BFS in a separate study and obtained an internal consistency, assessed with the coefficient alpha, to be .53, with an average inter-item correlation of .11. The reliability in the current study is less than this, perhaps reflecting the population with which it was used. Leak, Loucks, and Bowlin (1999) do not say what the size of their sample was or the type of population that was studied, so it is difficult to draw parallels. Green and Hoffman's study (1989) showed partial support for the notion that Stage 4 can be a transition period in terms of a person's perceptions of ingroup and outgroup members. In general, they found that stage was a good predictor of response to people in ingroups and outgroups. Perhaps the stage makeup of the population affected the results, as the predominant number of respondents were in Stage 3, supposedly before negotiating the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

change to greater self-awareness. Some of the questions did contain information relating to ingroup and outgroup members.

Because of the low reliability of the BFS, it is suggested that it be used as a conversation-starter and not as a stable indicator of faith stage. Other instruments, such as ones created by Leak, Loucks, and Bowlin (1999), Green and Hoffman (1989), Hammond (1993), or Clore (1997), may be used to gain a better indication of an individual's faith development. Of course, the full Fowler semi-structured interview protocol may also be employed to assess an individual's level of growth (Moseley, Jarvis, & Fowler, 1986).

Overall Model

In seeking to look at Research Question #1 and Research Question #2, a pictorial model of the participants' seminary experiences was constructed (see Figure 5.1). The model was checked against the participants' perceptions of their time in seminary. The division of students' lives into multiple spheres is paralleled in other adult development works, such as Merriam and Clark (1991), Tennant and Pogson (1995), and Merriam and Caffarella (1991). An effort to pictorially juxtapose Fowler's and Mezirow's work was shown in Figure 5.2.

The inclusion of time in the overall model arose from the participants themselves, but it receives support from other venues. In their discussion of the nature of the spiritual journey, English, Fenwick, and Parsons (2003) note that spirituality has a time dimension, whether it is a lifetime, an immediate healing, or time after or beyond life. According to Griffin (1988), postmodern spirituality has given individuals a new relationship to time.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

As he states, "The present moment of experience is seen to enfold within itself, in some respect and to some degree, the entire past. Every individual, in fact, *is* its enfoldment of the past and its present reaction thereto" (pp. 15-16). However, postmodern spirituality does not see the future as related to the present in the same way the past is, because that would imply that the future is as settled as the past, insinuating there is no free will. Griffin (1988) states, "But it *is* constitutive of the present that there will *be* a future, and indeed a future that grows out of the present and incorporates its contributions" (p. 16). Postmodern spirituality has another basis for interest in the future: people are concerned about the future of the world because they are invested in the ageless divine reality.

The dichotomies present in the model have echoes in other writings on spiritual issues. Fowler (1996) has a paradoxical image of what he wants to help form young women and men to be that parallels Jim's idealist/realist battle. Fowler desires to nurture students in church-sponsored schools to be "Tough-Minded Visionaries and Skillful and Resourceful Idealists" (p. 233).

The juggling that a lot of the students seem to be doing may influence their time in the transformative learning process—they may take longer than they would have if they did not have to attend to so many activities. Merriam, Mott, and Lee (1996) found that the time to grapple with a tough experience varied individually and likely could not be sped up. The adult had to have the psychological room in life to make a place for learning. McClusky's theory of margin (Meriam & Caffarella, 1991) addresses this. A person has to have a margin of power left over after meeting life's load in order to have the energy to participate in learning. This theory also suggests that some students may

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

not have the energy to wrestle with controversial material while in seminary and may just postpone or decline dealing with difficult issues. Roger's comments in Chapter 6 in the "Neutral zone" section illustrate this. He is juggling a lot of things in life right now and does not have a lot of time to work on rebuilding his faith.

There is one caveat in looking at the bigger picture of faith development and transformative learning shown in Figure 5.2. Merriam, Mott, and Lee's study (1996) suggests that not all transformative learning moves one into a larger, more-inclusive perspective if the process is seen as too threatening to the self. In these instances, individuals may move to a smaller, less-inclusive perspective until enough time has passed so that the wounds received were sufficiently healed for the person to move on. Therefore, the time dimension shown in the model may not be as straightforwardly linear as it initially appears.

Transformative Learning

In an attempt to address Research Question #1, a review of perspective transformation and faith stage with the participants will be presented. Most of the participants appeared to have experienced transformative learning, some in the form of transformation of meaning perspectives and some in the form of transformation of meaning schemes. As mentioned earlier, the transformation of meaning perspectives is the more disruptive and life-changing process of the two. Participants who appeared to really experience perspective transformation seemed to cluster around the Stage 3 level in Fowler's scheme, as indicated by the BFS.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Support was obtained for the basic process outlined in Mezirow's groundbreaking discussion of his theory, as outlined in Chapter 1. For discussion purposes, his process is again presented here:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of option for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning of a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and
10. A reintegration into one's life of the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. (1991a, pp. 168-169)

The juxtaposition of Fowler's concepts with Mezirow's allows one to look at the spiritual dimensions of this process. Step #3 in Mezirow's conception is given a religious twist in this study. This "critical reassessment of epistemic, sociocultural or psychic assumptions" in some cases was shown to address specific religious beliefs.

The results of this study confirm in a general fashion the parallels shown in the two models in Table 1.2. The low reliability of the BFS calls into question the placement of individuals in a particular stage, however. Some participants appeared to be describing a change in faith stage, but this could not be documented within the parameters of this study. The different types of reflection shown in Table 1.2 were reflected by the participants, as was shown in Chapter 7.

Kegan (2000), in a fascinating look at what actually changes in transformative learning, shows that one's epistemologies are what change. He sees the two types of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

processes behind epistemology as 1) meaning-forming, the procedure we use to shape an understandable meaning out of the raw material of our experience, both inner and outer, and 2) reforming our meaning-forming, the metaprocess in which we change the very form by which we make meaning. Kegan believes that this metaprocess is what actually changes in transformative learning. In an elaborate diagram reminiscent of Fowler's stages, he depicts five increasingly complex epistemologies. The last three parallel many of the discussions of the pre-modern, modern, and post-modern periods that will be examined in this chapter. He shows cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal lines of development. In traditionalism, the epistemology is the socialized mind, in modernism, the self-authoring mind, and in post-modernism, the self-transforming mind.

Brookfield (2000) comments that critical reflection and transformative learning are not the same thing. Critical reflection is a necessary but not sufficient condition of transformative learning. Brookfield states, "As Mezirow acknowledges, the assumptions one holds can be exactly the same after critical reflection as they were before" (p. 142). This could perhaps be viewed as similar to the Grounding theme mentioned in Chapter 5. There are some things in a person's life which are beyond suspicion, and there has to be some foundation from which to do one's questioning. Lisa's comments in Chapter 5 illustrate this when she discusses how if one removes the Bible from one's theological explorations, then he or she is just floundering around.

The results of this study suggest that Mezirow's model could be characterized in an interior-individual classification system. Maxwell (2002) utilizes this classification scheme for several philosophers/educators, citing Wilber's four-quadrant model, which

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

looks at interior (hermeneutic, interpretive, dealing with consciousness), exterior (monological, empirical, positivistic, dealing with form), individual, and collective paths. Although the Frankfurt school, which greatly influenced Mezirow, is put in the interior-collective quadrant by Maxwell, Mezirow's work appears to be more individual than collective in nature, a fact debated in a look at the literature in Chapter 1. I therefore placed him in with the other "spiritual" educators, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Jack Miller, and Maria Montessori, who look at interior-individual types of thinking.

In a more social reading of Mezirow's model, Brookfield (2000) describes transformative learning as ideology critique. When it serves this function, the two purposes of critical reflection are to identify and critique the power dynamics that infuse the practice of adult education and to uncover hegemonic assumptions. These concepts can be brought to the table in studying liberation theology and in looking at the culture of this particular seminary. Dei (2001) echoes this concept: "Spirituality cannot be discussed outside the contexts of power" (p. 122). John's comments show how he is re-thinking his responsibility toward the poor and oppressed. He appears to be experiencing a reassessment of what the church should be to those with less power.

As a variant way of viewing learning from the traditional view that emphasizes mastery and achievement, a spiritual perspective can help humans to realize that there is a lot they cannot control; realizing this can lead to humility. Spiritual learning is transformative because it helps people see the world with new eyes (Miller, 2001). In this study, this was evidenced by Polly's, Roger's, and Joseph's comments, in particular.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Faith Development and Cultural Parallels

In a continuation of the exploration of Research Question #1, a review of faith development in the context of the participants' experiences will be initiated. As mentioned earlier, the faith stages of the participants had to be viewed with caution. However, one could see a few aspects of the respondents' comments which resonated with the stage he or she was supposed to inhabit, as could be seen in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

In my own personal seminary experience, I remember a fellow student who became very upset while studying Fowler's theory. He thought that the model was arrogant, as if it had a patent on true spiritual development. In some ways, he had a good point. Fowler's model is not about upholding tradition, which is one viewpoint. Rather, is about becoming more open-minded. For a person from a theologically conservative viewpoint, this is antithetical. Becoming more open to experiences is viewed as "higher" than is hanging on to traditional views. A certain viewpoint is presupposed that purports to describe "development" as one becoming more "liberal." In certain circles of theological thought, this might be challenged. (My fellow student became upset with other things and eventually left that particular seminary.)

Fowler (1996) helps to give an interpretation of this in a discussion of the two broad coalitions which are often at odds over values, lifestyle options, and public policy in this country. He speaks of them as two tempers—the orthodox and the progressive—and sees them as faith orientations, both in *content* and *process*. Fowler then goes on to propose a practical postmodern temper which focuses on *systems* and *systems awareness*. One can see an overview of his characterizations in Table 8.1. This

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Table 8.1
Faith Stages/Tempers and Ideologies

Faith Stage/Temper	**Faith Consciousness**	**Religion**	**Politics**	**Organization**
Synthetic-Conventional; rooted in pre-Enlightenment; *orthodox*	Tacit; interpersonal; non-critical; external locus of authority	"Some of my best friends are . . ."; assumed superiority; *mystery-mastery*	Reduced to personal qualities of leaders or reference groups; *organic society*	Hierarchical authority; information control
Individuative-Reflective; rooted in Enlightenment; *progressive*	Explicit; autonomous; critical-reflective; internal locus of authority	Dichotomous; competing truth claims; either exclusive truth or relativism; *demythologizing*	Ideological; claim chosen political and economic philosophy as defining self; *social contract*	Specialization; differentiation of function; rational-bureaucratic organization
Conjunctive; emerging post-Enlightenment outlook; practical postmodern	Multiple perspectives and systems; second naiveté; commitment in embraced pluralism	All reality outlooks are constructed; God's reality exceeds our constructs; integrate conscious and unconscious	Multiple realities; multiple systems; beyond ideology; ecological inter-dependence; covenant	Ecological networks; multi-related project orientation; information-driven; flexibility

Note. From *Faithful Change: The Personal and Public Challenges of Postmodern Life*, by J. W. Fowler, 1996, pp. 165, 174. Nashville: Abingdon Press. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

appropriation of historical frameworks for individual development is an attempt to integrate the individual and communal aspects of our culture. Fundamentalism would perhaps be represented in the traditional aspects of Fowler's table in Synthetic-Conventional (Stage 3) faith, although Streib (2001) sees fundamentalism as also being portrayed in Fowler's Mythic-Literal stage (Stage 2). A middle-of-the-road theological view would perhaps be shown in the Individuative-Reflective (Stage 4) row in the table. A more theologically liberal position would be represented in Conjunctive (Stage 5) faith, shown in the bottom row of Fowler's characterization in Table 8.1. O'Sullivan (1999) is more critical in his view of the extremely-conservative position than is Fowler: "Religious fundamentalism, whether it be Christian, Judaic, or Islamic, represents a failure of nerve in the operations of the human spirit" (O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 260). Polly echoes this in her perception, reviewed in Chapter 5 in the "Negative student interactions" section, that fundamentalism was viewed as something really bad at El-Shaddai, although she herself did not see it as such.

It perhaps might be helpful to look at another framework for addressing the topics of religious fundamentalism, conservatism, and liberalism. Most Christian groups look at four areas in informing their theological journey, although the United Methodists probably have stated it the most clearly. They point to the beliefs of John Wesley that "the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason" (Book of Discipline, 2002, p. 77). Of these four—Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason—probably only two, experience and reason, are directly addressed in the faith development and transformative

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

learning models. One's *view* of Scripture and tradition is, however, also included in the theories' concepts. The importance that one places on each of these four probably helps to situate a person in Fowler's stages and may determine the areas in which one is most susceptible to perspective transformation. Interestingly enough, Fowler is a United Methodist minister and perhaps unconsciously or consciously carries these foundational elements in his model in some form.

These four areas were echoed by the current study's participants. The themes of Reason and Bible were discussed in Chapter 5. The theme of The Past, reviewed in Chapter 6, actually includes tradition as one of its sub-themes, as can be seen by John's comment: "I think I enjoy studying it [history], but I was a little surprised how much the link to the past would affect my view of the present in terms of my own personal. . . I wouldn't say personal. . . my view of theology, my view of understanding God." In addition to these three areas mentioned, all of the interviewees described personal experience.

Fowler, in response to the critique of his theory offered by Streib (2001), states that the structuring of faith operations is only half the story, with the *contents* of faith constituting the other portion (Fowler, 2001). Streib (2001) thinks that Fowler's model appropriates too readily the structural-developmental paradigm and minimizes the effect of life history on faith development. He offers a new view of faith development as occurring in nonhierarchical styles, which may overlap over a person's lifetime. Fowler (2001) does hold to the claim that his faith stages are sequential, invariant, and hierarchical. This confidence in these claims is based on the research in many fields

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

supporting Erikson's work, Kohlberg's and Piaget's efforts in the constructivist-developmental tradition, and the theological endeavors of H. Richard Niebuhr. However, he proposes some "types" of faith that can crosscut stages but not replace them.

Fowler (2001) describes these four types of faith as 1) totalizing, 2) rational critical, 3) conflicted or oscillating, and 4) diffuse. The totalizing type consists of people who have internalized "a set of rigid beliefs, taboos, and prescribed patterns of thought and action" (p. 170). The locus of authority is in a leader, a creed, or an ideology, and is characterized as heteronomous. The rational critical type is made up of people who try to critically correlate religious or ideological tenets and commitments with their own experience and other authorities. These individuals will critically examine their own self and beliefs.

The conflicted or oscillating type reflects a "restless, existentially engaged seeker of truth who has lost an early relation of trust and faith" (Fowler, 2001, p. 170). Friedrich Nietzsche or Albert Camus would be examples of this type. These individuals try to establish moral and intellectual integrity in a cold, cruel, conflicted world. The diffuse type describes individuals whose faith is fragmented, unintegrated, or incoherent. A pattern of drifting commitments relates to a stunted capacity for intimacy and true affiliation. There may have never been any bonding or close ties in the lives of these people.

As can be seen in Table 8.1, Fowler (1987) says that the transition from Stage 3 to Stage 4 parallels in individuals and communities the struggle of intellectuals in Europe and North America in the revolutionary time period of the Enlightenment. Making that

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

transition today has the same potentials for both freedom and self-deception that the original period evidenced, in both the personal and communal realms.

Individuative-reflective faith involves critically examining and exercising choice over one's previously-unchallenged faith perspectives. This is what happened in the Enlightenment when the culture was scrutinized and evaluated using critical reasoning past symbols, beliefs, and traditions. The loss is that many symbols no longer have power because they are recognized as symbols. The initiative to communicate meaning passes from the symbol to the person analyzing it (Fowler, 1987).

The self-deception involved in this stage occurs when one falls prey to the illusion of a more complete control of self and of the conditions of existence than is actually the case. This stage may find a person becoming overly self-dependent, until he or she realizes that there is loneliness, vulnerability, and lack of intimacy in such a stance. A person may also realize that one is embedded in complex systems that are beyond control. Finally, a hunger for other sources of guidance may drive a person on to further development (Fowler, 1987).

In a similar vein, C. Taylor (1996) posits a two-dimensional continuum of spiritualities—on the horizontal axis one proceeds from Christian to pagan spiritualities, while the vertical axis goes from transcendence to life-centredness. In a discussion of the placement of today's spiritualities, he draws an arrow going off at an angle from the life-centredness end of the vertical axis to represent the Nietzschean anti-life stance. C. Taylor thinks that the agelong tendency to be fascinated by death and violence is part of our human religious nature. It is the shadow side of our yearning for something more.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

This feeling of reaction formation is paralleled in Merriam, Mott, and Lee's study (1996) of transformative learning gone awry. C. Taylor (1996) believes that the only way to escape from this pull toward violence in this life-centered society may be to turn more toward transcendence and give oneself to the love of a good beyond life.

It can be seen from this discussion that perhaps an individual's faith stage is not solely a personal phenomenon—it is also a reflection of the culture in which he or she was brought up or in which he or she is operating. In this light, the fact that most of the current study's participants were in Stage 3 and most of them were from a particular denominational background is not seen as surprising. From some of the student comments, it appears as if El-Shaddai Seminary is a Stage 4 school working inside a largely Stage 3 denomination. Some students may be experiencing a cultural conflict between school and church. How a person's cultural background interacts with life events will be explored in the next section.

Catalysts for Change

In an effort to address Research Question #2, factors that seem to precipitate perspective transformation and faith development will be explored. One catalyst for change found among some of the participants (or people they knew) was that academic information that they were being exposed to did not match their belief system about the Bible. As several of the participants remarked, using the tools of literary criticism can show an arrogance toward the thing being studied. Using these tools to study classic texts is of course not confined to biblical studies. Palmer (1998) comments on how these tools can be used incorrectly:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> In the study of literature, it is now common to teach classic texts through analytical lenses that show how riddled they are with the biases of their authors and their times. From this standpoint, it does not matter that *Moby Dick* reaches deep into such great things in the human experience as hubris and destiny. It only matters that Melville was a patriarchal bigot. David Denby has shown the hubris of this posture itself: it gives us, teachers and students alike, feelings of superiority to the text, thereby depriving us of the chance to learn anything from it except how superior we are. . . . When we reduce great things to such dismissive categories, we rob them of their selfhood and deprive them of their voice. (pp. 109-110)

Most of the students who commented on this topic did not feel that the classes at El-Shaddai that used biblical criticism overstepped the mark—their comments about arrogance seemed to be more about the methodology of biblical criticism itself. Perhaps this caution about the potential arrogance of the literary analyst is a helpful antidote to using critical techniques indiscriminately. However, the comments from study participants could also be a reaction against having assumptions challenged.

Personal traumas, such as a person's life stage, death of a loved one, and/or career troubles, emerged as other experiences that might precipitate a change in thinking. As English, Fenwick, and Parsons (2003) point out, the concept of living with pain is universal in spiritual traditions. Healey (1989) describes it this way:

> As perspective transformation theory so aptly points out, significant life experiences such as sickness, suffering, and death can sometimes lead to change in how adults see their world, and they can lead to a questioning of their assumptions and their life direction. (p. 115)

Stan's comments in Chapter 6 describe how events in his personal life, primarily the death of a family member and mid-life re-evaluation, precipitated his denominational change. Merriam, Mott, and Lee (1996) have identified that catalysts for change may not always lead one to larger, more inclusive ways of thinking. By using self-reports, they

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

uncovered a few events that might lead to negative learning—ending a relationship, educational challenge, death of a spouse, being a crime victim, divorce, having a work related incident, betrayal by spouse, being a veteran, and finding out that one was adopted as a child.

Fowler himself suggests three broad categories of the origins and kinds of change which one may encounter in the realm of faith: developmental, reconstructive, and that undertaken in response to intrusive marker events (Fowler, 1987). Developmental change takes place as the self is forming and maturing. Growth takes place on several levels, including the following: biological or bodily maturation, perceptual and cognitive development, emotional and affective maturation, and capacities for moral and social responsibility. Faith development can include all of these levels in response to one's experience of the divine.

Reconstructive change occurs in the guises of transformation and restoration, breaking down and building up, restoring and healing, and/or conversion and life redirection (Fowler, 1987). This type of change is necessitated by the inheritance of wounds, warps, or fallibilities which become part of one's selfhood in the processes of growth and development. These wounds are caused both by choices imposed by others and those made by oneself. Many individuals come to the point where the stories they are living become problematic, no matter what degree of fallenness or befallenness is in their lives. Some significant portion of a person's life collapses or seems in danger of imminent collapse, causing one to undertake deconstructive and reconstructive work in his or her life.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The other category Fowler (1987) identifies is change as the response to intrusive marker events. These marker events are things that happen after which our lives will never be the same. Some are happy events, yet others destroy the foundation of our lives and can be prepared for only by having a life and community grounded in faith and a relationship with the divine. A few examples that Fowler cites of types of students he has had are similar to participants in the current study. He lists the following individuals and their faith-challenging life experiences:

1. who are newly wed or newly re-wed
2. a few persons who at or near midlife are changing careers or reentering careers after several years out
3. one who is recovering from a first heart attack; another who has a cancer in remission
4. one or more who have recently become unemployed
5. a couple whose son or daughter has just shared with them that he or she is gay
6. an older adult who has recently lost a grown son or daughter to a brief illness or an accident (1987, pp. 105-106)

After looking at these catalysts for change, one can see that life events from several realms can affect one's faith development and transformative learning. These events can either be viewed as positive or negative. The individual phenomenon of faith development was shown to parallel the cultural influences of our time, corresponding to particular faith stages/tempers. Perhaps faith stage is also a reflection of denomination or religious affiliation. In any case, changes in one's faith process or contents and transformative learning can be disruptive to an individual's usual way of operating. The next section will look at supports for this type of change.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Supports for Change

In continuing to address Research Question #2, an examination of supports for change will be conducted. In Mezirow's original model, finding a community to help one negotiate the transformative learning process is implied in Step #4 (Mezirow, 1991a). Merriam, Mott, and Lee (1996) found that the reduction in the threat to the self through support can reverse a negative learning process. In the current study, the following supports emerged: family, friends undergoing the same process, friends outside of seminary, church members, ministers or friends back home, and faculty members. Parks (2000) lists many of the same factors in her work on mentoring young adults as were uncovered in this study. As mentioned earlier, Parks views higher education as "at least some measure a community of imagination in which every professor is potentially a spiritual guide and every syllabus a confession of faith" (p. 159). The most effective educators are those, according to Parks, who find in their work some composing of meaning or faith. Using the literal meaning of the word "professor," an educator-professor should be one who leads toward truth by professing his or her ideas, anxieties, and truth convictions in a way that encourages dialogue in the learners. In mentoring relationships, the verified commitments of the teacher and the developing commitments of the student correspond for a period of time. As Parks concludes, "In manifold ways, higher education serves—consciously or unconsciously—as a mentoring environment for the re-formation of meaning and faith" (p. 172). Mentoring professors are expressly mentioned by name by Polly, Mary, and Gus in the current study and are seen as types of spiritual guides.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Palmer (1998) writes eloquently about the concept of community. His image of teaching has spiritual overtones: "to teach is to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced" (p. 95). He says this community of truth reaches very deeply into our assumptions about reality and our ideas about how we come to know things. It claims that "*reality is a web of communal relationships, and we can know reality only by being in community with it*" (p. 95). Palmer's model of the community of truth shows learners being in relationship with the subject being studied, as well as with their fellow learners, going away from an old object-expert-amateur understanding. Dei (2001) has a similar view of the subject-object relationship:

> In fact, while spiritual knowledge challenges subject-object dualism, it simultaneously upholds "objectivity" to the subjective experience and, similarly, some "subjectivity" to the objective reality. The subjective is capable of comprehending the "objective universe." Subjectivity is a personal interpretation while objectivity can be simply the material and immaterial reality. (p. 125)

These types of models of knowing definitely have applicability for theological education.

In the permeable boundary between higher and professional education that Parks (2000) increasingly sees, one can perhaps find the seminary environment. As seen earlier, there is both an academic component and a professional practice component at El-Shaddai. Parks sees part of the work of professional education as being to expand the scope of meaning-making which young professionals will use to make important choices. This means helping them to have a systemic, rather than an interpersonal, ethic. Having this larger ethic can at times prove problematic for students trying to work in systems that do not have this larger view, as Roger states:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> And there was another majority, minority rather, that I put myself in, who as I was that was really trying that said, "this is, wow, compelling, and if it's compelling here in the classroom, then it should be compelling personally and that should mean something to me personally. How am I going to lead a church that hasn't shared this experience with me and for whom faced, brought bluntly, with these kind of ideas with who would reject them or would find them challenging or unorthodox?" It seemed like most of the students were pragmatic about it. I guess my personality is just. . . that's one reason why I. . . that's one thing that called up questions about whether I was called to ministry or not because I couldn't do that. I couldn't be clear and honest about where I stood on theological issues, and, you know, I was unable to secure a number of student ministries because I was asked some test-type questions, and I tried to be honest with them.

Roger's inability to "hold back" his insights caused him to look at changing careers, but the mis-match could have been in the systems with which he was working, rather than in him personally, although he does talk about exploring different denominational possibilities. Perhaps he just did not find a good professional environment in which to share his theological insights.

Workplaces, which are also involved in the seminary environment, form a primary role in establishing meaning, power, and faith in young adults (Parks, 2000). Initiation into the world of work as an adult serves a large purpose:

> How the enterprise is undertaken; how its purposes are named; who matters; how moral choices are or are not recognized engaged, and decided—all affect the formation of the young adult's sense of self and world and structure major features of the young adult's meaning making. (p. 182)

Ashley relates the importance of her internship experience to her continuation in the ministry, and Polly mentions the discouragement fostered by the less-than-helpful internship experienced by her husband and herself.

The place of families in a mentoring role is that they can function to validate an honorable identity and help the young adult across time to continue his or her sense of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

self and integrity (Parks, 2000). Roger and Lisa talk about the difficulty of explaining what they are going through "back home," but they also seem to value having that other environment away from seminary which helps in their grounding. Mary recounts the story of how she discussed some of the ideas she was encountering with her father, although she has probably ended up at a different place than he is. Development involves both leaving home and returning properly.

Religious faith communities are another mentoring environment Parks (2000) addresses. El-Shaddai could also be put in this category. These types of communities can help young adults by being open to big questions and helping them to live in a plurality of religious traditions. As Parks states, "When we encounter the other, there often arises not just greater appreciation for the integrity of the other but new appreciation as well for one's own heritage and its gifts" (p. 201). Faith communities can also give young adults a place to be truly at home. They can also offer stories, symbols, and songs to help them give language to their faith. They also help to form young adult faith by recognizing the gifts of young adults and giving them hope.

Although not all of the seminary students are young adults, many of the issues raised could apply to adults later in life. Perhaps one never fully outgrows the need for a mentor, and the ultimate Mentor is a divine one.

Summary

This chapter has looked at the results of the study in the context of other literature having to do with adult education, transformative learning, and faith development. The following primary research questions were examined in this study and in this chapter:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1. How do adults at different levels on Fowler's model of faith development experience perspective transformation in the context of their schooling-related activities?

2. What types of experiences seem to precipitate and mitigate perspective transformation and faith transition?

3. What is the reliability of the Barnes Fowler-Scale?

In addressing Research Question #3, the statistics behind the reliability calculations for the BFS were explored, and the reliability was shown to be very low. It was recommended that the results of the instrument be viewed with caution.

While endeavoring to address Research Question #1, the overall model of the El-Shaddai Seminary student experiences was discussed. Support was found in other sources for many of the items included in Figure 5.1. Transformative learning was reviewed in the context of faith development, and faith development and cultural parallels were investigated. While considering Research Question #2, catalysts for change and supports for change were identified and inspected. In Chapter 9, recommendations for research and practice will be made, and the study will be brought to a conclusion.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapter 9

Recommendations and Conclusion

This chapter will look at both recommendations for practice that resulted from this study and at recommendations for further research on transformative learning and faith development. Some of the factors discussed in previous sections will be reviewed, and the current study will be summarized and concluded.

The purpose of this study was to better understand the role of faith in individuals experiencing transformative learning. In particular, the focus of this research was to explore the learning that may take place in graduate seminaries where the transformative process may include a spiritual component. It was hoped that understanding the faith development aspects of transformative learning would help educators, counselors, and religious professionals (both lay and clergy) to better address the needs that adults undergoing transformative learning may be experiencing.

The following primary research questions were examined in this study of faith development and transformative learning:

1. How do adults at different levels on Fowler's model of faith development experience perspective transformation in the context of their schooling-related activities?

2. What types of experiences seem to precipitate and mitigate perspective transformation and faith transition?

A secondary research question explored in this study was:

3. What is the reliability of the Barnes Fowler-Scale?

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

A questionnaire was distributed to all students at a graduate theological seminary in the mid-South. It included the Barnes Fowler-Scale (see Appendix A) and demographic information about the respondent (see Appendix B). A return card was incorporated for individuals who wished to volunteer to be interviewed for the qualitative part of the study (see Appendix B). The Barnes Fowler-Scale (BFS) was used as a screening tool to place individuals in particular faith stages.

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed, and the BFS was shown to have a low reliability (α=.30). It was recommended that the results be interpreted with caution. A selected number of volunteers from the faith stages represented in the instrument were interviewed. An overall model of the students' experiences was constructed after the data were analyzed using qualitative methods.

The following three major life themes emerged from the interviews: the Seminary Setting, the Personal Role, and the Professional Roles. Some themes explored in the Seminary Setting included curriculum, Bible, reasons for graduate education, importance of community, and the juggling/balancing act. In the Personal Role, the themes of reason, spiritual practices, why that particular seminary, support of family, personality reflection, the past, and the future were explored. The themes of academia, prior Christian education, and the best education for a minister were examined in the academic domain under Professional Roles. In the ministerial domain under Professional Roles, the following themes were reviewed: dichotomies, denomination, and women in ministry.

Faith development and transformative learning were discussed in each of the three major life roles. Controversial course information, difficult job situations, and mid-life

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

transitions were some of the catalysts identified for transformative learning and faith development. Supports for these processes, such as mentor figures, friends, and spiritual practices, were explored in more detail. In light of these findings, recommendations can be made for both practice and research, as can be seen in the following section.

Recommendations

The results of this study suggest some items that can be addressed to improve the graduate education of seminary students. There are also suggestions for further research to improve our understanding of transformative learning and faith development. Recommendations for practice, both at the institutional level and the instructional level, will be examined first.

Recommendations for Practice

In this section, the recommendations for the practice of higher education in graduate seminaries will be discussed. Although the recommendations are based on the results of findings of a study specifically at El-Shaddai Seminary, the results can perhaps be generalized to other similar institutions. The practitioner will have to review the characteristics of his or her particular institution and decide how it does or does not compare to the situations encountered at El-Shaddai Seminary. The recommendations in this section will be divided into institutional and instructional practice.

Institutional. From this study, the importance of mentors was highlighted, as it has been in other works on young adult faith development (Parks, 1986; Parks, 2000). First, it is recommended that graduate seminaries continue in their pursuit to establish student mentors, particularly in ways to find more naturally-occurring, less force-fit

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

encounters. From the participants, it sounds as if some things have been tried in the past at El-Shaddai Seminary, such as trying to match up students with retired ministers. Initiatives such as this could perhaps be continued, but more guidelines could be given to both parties to try to bridge the age and cultural gap. Another possibility might be to set up times for faculty members to informally interact with students, perhaps over a meal. This might provide other opportunities to form more personal relationships.

Second, from the participant responses, it appears as if graduate seminaries need to ensure that there are hands-on ministerial experiences and to provide ways of incorporating the theoretical with the practical. Some students engaged in ministerial jobs have that readily built-in, but other students appear to need more help with that. The internships done as part of the M.Div. program at El-Shaddai seem to help, but perhaps more application-oriented activities need to be built into the general coursework. Students who are pursuing an expressly academic career, such as the M.A.R. students at El-Shaddai, also need opportunities to practice the concepts they are learning, whether in a ministerial or an academic setting.

Third, the presence of women faculty is something that seems to be important to some of the female students in this study. Although there has been a full-time female faculty member in the past at El-Shaddai Seminary, she is currently part-time, and there are no other female faculty members, other than occasional adjunct instructors. Processing some of the difficult information encountered in seminary might be easier for some of the female students, and some male students, for that matter, if there were more

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

women on faculty. Some individuals relate better to one gender or another, and having options would aid overall in students' development.

A fourth recommendation would be to have someone, perhaps someone not in a teaching role, available for students to talk with when experiencing dilemmas related to school work A professional advisor or counselor might be a good investment for schools to help students process whatever difficulties they may be facing. Having a person trained in some of the following educational interventions would be a plus.

A form of supportive personal advisement can help learners adjust as they are questioning their own assumptions (Cranton, 1994). The Action-Reason-Thematic Technique (ARTT) developed by Peters (1990) may help educators work with adults undergoing critical thinking. The five steps involved in this technique are:

1. Identification of the interviewee's problem
2. Establishment of the time frame of the problem
3. Identification and description of specific actions taken to solve the problem
4. Identification and description of reasons for each action taken
5. Reduction of actions and reasons to argument themes. (p. 318)

Another technique which may help teachers working with adults in the process of transformative learning is the Therapeutic Learning Program developed by Gould (1990). The seven steps used in this type of short-term therapy are:

1. Identifying and framing the function to be recovered
2. Clarifying the action intention
3. Distinguishing realistic dangers from exaggerated fears
4. Isolating and exposing the fears as predictions confused with memories
5. Explaining the origins of catastrophic predictions
6. Demonstrating and diminishing self-fulfilling prophecies
7. Consolidating new views of reality (pp. 140-144)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Interestingly, this method was developed as a computer program to enable learners to process their own difficulties. It can, however, be adapted for an actual person to work with learners on difficulties they may be having.

The communal learning experiences that take place both inside and outside of the classroom appeared to be meaningful to the seminary students in the current study. A fifth suggestion is that the current practice of community be continued and perhaps enlarged to include more intentional interactions, such as will be described from some other programs.

In describing the spiritual dimensions of lay ministry programs, Zeph (2000) delineates three key components of programs that encourage learners' spiritual development: critical reflection, integrating life experience with academics, and learning within a community. She cites as an example the Loyola Institute for Ministry Extension (LIMEX) program, which uses a four-step reflection process which she likens to Mezirow's perspective transformation. The process used in the LIMEX program becomes a toolkit for many students to use in dealing with ministry, workplace, and personal situations.

One church-related school uses a devotion to help group members coalesce. This devotion happens weekly and lasts for about 10 minutes. Individuals' devotions can be expressly religious or not—they mainly involve sharing something meaningful with one another. This school also uses a "secret supporter" system, in which a person is assigned to another to give anonymous gifts, notes of encouragement, and so forth, during the semester. The students also experience "breaking bread" together in a communal lunch.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

All of these practices have been helpful at this school for establishing community, which the learners have found to be invaluable (Harris, 2003). This idea of community also has spiritual benefits. Zeph (2000) states, "The use of a learning community can model for participants a relationship with others and with all of creation that can foster a relationship with the divine" (p. 83).

Sixth, from the interviews conducted in this study, it can be seen that seminaries perhaps need to be more intentional in including distance students in school activities. These students are making a large sacrifice in terms of their time to be able to go to seminary, sometimes having jobs to support their learning in school, and they need to feel like they are full members of the community. Again, some type of organized lunch time interaction might be a way of fostering relationships among distance students, local students, and faculty.

The students interviewed seemed to be interested in spiritual formation, and some of the participants found El-Shaddai's endeavors in that direction very meaningful. However, for some, the formation process did not work as it should. The school has made a good start in spiritual formation program, but a seventh suggestion is that it continue to develop it. There appears to be a need for more guidelines for the small groups when they are initially formed, with exercises encouraging group members to share more about themselves so that the groups can be more helpful.

In an interesting view of the topic of spirituality, Zohar and Marshall (2000) offer scientific evidence for the existence of what they term "spiritual intelligence" (SQ). They claim there is a "God spot" in the brain that is a necessary but not sufficient condition for

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

SQ. They offer six paths toward a greater SQ: the path of duty, the path of nurturing, the path of knowledge, the path of *personal transformation*, the path of brotherhood, and the path of servant leadership. They offer a new model of the self and give a brief personality type chapter to help the reader determine which path(s) might be more helpful for him or her. Perhaps studying some of these models and learning more their own personalities and/or inclinations could help individuals to participate more fully in the spiritual formation experience.

Finally, from the comments of one of the participants, it would be helpful if El-Shaddai had more different denominational supports in place. Students from more denominational backgrounds could be served at the school if some courses specific to certain groups were occasionally offered. The school might also consider hiring faculty members from some different denominational backgrounds. This would give support to students not from the predominant church background at the seminary and offer a wider range of viewpoints on theological topics.

Instructional. In general, the participants in this study spoke very favorably about faculty support of students. First, this is something that should be continued at El-Shaddai, with some suggestions for mentoring and offering educational support also being incorporated. Graduate seminaries in general should keep in mind the idea of the professor as spiritual guide and keep this in mind while hiring faculty members.

Brookfield (1987) offers several suggestions for helping a person examine his or her assumptions. Techniques such as critical questioning, critical incident exercises, criteria analysis, role play and critical debate, and crisis-decision simulations can be used

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to help uncover the assumptions underlying one's thoughts and actions. Many of these techniques are already used in some of the practical ministry courses such as Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at El-Shaddai and other graduate seminaries. However, a second suggestion is that the applicability of activities such as these could be larger than methods already in place. By uncovering the assumptions in a direct fashion behind some of their own taken-for-granted beliefs, as well as those of the controversial material being encountered, some students could be better helped to process any discord they may be experiencing. The teacher is key as facilitator in the critical thinking process. Brookfield (1987) envisions a critical thinking teacher as a facilitator, with the role being "helper of learning" (p. 235). This may sometimes mean not being physically present as learners are dialoguing together, but it may also mean being an outside helping voice to get the group process back on track.

Cranton (1994) offers several suggestions for ways to support individuals undergoing transformative learning, some of which may be useful for seminary faculty in a third recommendation. She suggests that the teacher be authentic, having a congruence between how he or she acts outside the classroom and in it. This may also involve admitting to errors and any fallibility in grappling with a topic. Also, this calls for an instructor's words and actions to be comparable.

Fourth, teachers must also be careful about fostering group interaction. This may involve having a group come to an agreement on topics, learning activities, objectives, and the like. Groups may need to be encouraged to share resources and expertise and discouraged from competition among group members. Evaluation can be done

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

individually or by self-evaluation to try to dampen competition. The instructor may also assume the observer or other outside role while a group works on an activity (Cranton, 1994).

Cranton (1994) also suggests that educators encourage learner networks among students undergoing transformative learning. She defines a learner network as "any sustained relationship among fellow learners either within a formal setting such as a course or an informal setting such as a self-help group" (p. 196). In a fifth suggestion, educators should use strategies such as the following to encourage the development of networks: use small-group activities or discussions, form project groups, encourage the creation of study partnerships, suggest peer teaching, and refer learners to each other when they ask questions of the teacher (Cranton, 1994).

Tisdell (2003) offers seven principles for a type of education which is spiritually grounded and culturally relevant. Keeping these principles in mind is a sixth recommendation offered to instructors. Tisdell believes that using these elements in higher education can create a potentially transformative environment:

- An emphasis on authenticity (both spiritual and cultural)
- An environment that allows for the exploration of:
    1. The cognitive (through readings and discussion of ideas)
    2. The affective and relational (through connection with other people and connection of ideas to life experience)
    3. The symbolic (through art forms such as poetry, visual art, music, drama)
- Readings that reflect the cultures of the members of the class, and the cultural pluralism of the geographical area relevant to the course content
- Exploration of individual and communal dimensions of cultural and other dimensions of identity
- Collaborative work that envisions and presents manifestations of multiple dimensions of learning and strategies for change

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

- Celebration of learning and provision for closure to the course
- Recognition of the limitations of the higher education classroom, and that transformation is an ongoing process that takes time (pp. 212-213)

Seventh, when individuals' assumptions, beliefs, and values are made explicit, there will many times be conflict. The instructor must then help to maintain the ideal conditions for dialogue, in which respect for dissenting views is practiced (Cranton, 1994). The educator can also help with this by not maintaining a power position and modeling questioning his or her own assumptions. This can also aid in preventing students from uncritically accepting the teacher's position on issues. If a student makes a decision after dialogue that the educator is ethically opposed to, he or she can withdraw educational support from that area but still work with the learner in other areas (Cranton, 1994).

Cranton (1994) also suggests that educators support any action plans that students may have. As students revise their assumptions, they may need to act on these revisions, which may influence interpersonal relationships, organizations, or societies. Cranton suggests an overall strategy to help in supporting action:

- Set a feasible goal or objective that is stated in terms of behaviors or actions.
- Distinguish between short-term and long-term goals and include both.
- Set the boundaries for each goal.
- Consider alternatives, options, consequences, and back-up plans.
- Specify how the plan will be implemented.
- Plan more than one strategy for getting feedback from others.
- Be prepared to revise the action plan if or when it does not appear to be working. (pp. 206-207)

Most students seemed very happy with the content of the curriculum. Instructors need to keep up the challenging readings that are assigned in classes. Most students

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

found them to be extremely thought-provoking, even if they did not agree with all of them.

Curriculum theorist Patrick Slattery (1995) believes that curriculum in general needs to move from theology as curriculum text, as it was in the premodern period, and curriculum as technological text, as it was in the modern period, to curriculum as theological text in the postmodern period. This postmodern type of curriculum is ecumenical, communitarian, spiritual, and evidences critical literacy and faith seeking wisdom. Most of the types of things discussed from the classes at El-Shaddai seemed to meet these criteria.

Next, the "adult learning model" that is used in the D.Min. classes needs to be continued. The participants found it extremely helpful to learn from the instructor, the texts and readings, and other students. The egalitarian sense of learning was perceived to be nurturing and profitable for their ministries. It would be helpful to perhaps incorporate this type of learning model more into the master's classes. The students would then make the learning their own more, and it would help in the processing of the controversial ideas they may be learning about.

The idea of "sacred space" may be helpful for this. This special area, set aside from the everyday world, often for purpose of worship, may be evidenced in learning environments (English, Fenwick, & Parsons, 2003). Sacred space consists of several elements, according to Vella (2000). They include dialogue, respect for learners, accountability, and inviting a moral stance from the adult learner. This is much less of a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

lecture-oriented type of environment and would involve some changes in several classes if the school chose to incorporate the "adult learning model" more.

Another suggestion is that El-Shaddai and other seminaries need to find more ways of bridging the seminary/real world divide, as was described by several of the participants. It might be good to bring more community members into the classes or conduct some of the classes off-site. Inviting congregation members to sit in on a class occasionally might also be helpful. This could be done informally or formally as an effort by the school. Tisdell (2003), who encourages collaborative work in her discussion of spirituality and adult education, suggests that collaborative activities relate theory to real-life practice. The use of group or communal learning, as described earlier, may also help to address this divide.

Learning covenants may be one way of making the learning more personally applicable. Wickett (2000), while describing that others claim that a higher power or God has a relationship with professionals who work with clients, powerfully asserts that adult educators are invoking a spiritual dimension when they use learning covenants. The term suggests an emphasis on the relationship, not the content, of the agreement. The conditions of covenants apply to both parties. They are a level of commitment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of respect for the other person, benefits, sanctions, connection with other aspects of society and life experience, and an evolving nature. Learning covenants could perhaps be used for special courses or projects that involved more of an individual emphasis.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The aspect of vocation is one that needs to be explored a bit more at El-Shaddai Seminary, and perhaps other seminaries, as well. As both Fowler (1984) and Parks (2000) point out, young adulthood is the time in which most individuals develop their vocational dream. A supportive religious community is extremely important for this. Fowler (1984) states it quite clearly. He says that a faithful Christian community must provide a potent testimony: "*it must witness to the faithfulness and power of a providential God who invites, helps to shape, and invests in active partnership with those who genuinely seek to respond to their callings*" (p. 144). At least one of the participants experienced a change in calling while at El-Shaddai and did not appear to have a lot of support in negotiating his change from the ministry. Perhaps the person recommended earlier who serves a type of counseling role on campus in the context of helping students to process schooling-related concerns can also serve as a support person for vocational issues.

Not all of the seminary students at El-Shaddai and other graduate seminaries are young adults. Middle adulthood often involves the purification and deepening of vocation (Fowler, 1984). This could be seen in a couple of this study's participants. As Levinson (1978) and others have pointed out, this may be a time when individuals re-evaluate and reform some of the important structures in their lives. It may be a time when both men and women look at deepening their spiritual foundations and look at their relationship to the Divine. If the individuals are in the Conjunctive Faith stage, then they may be experiencing an invitation to express their faith in new, wider ways. This may particularly be the case if the limitations of self-reliance in Stage 4 are brought home in a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

dramatic fashion, as is often the case (Fowler, 1984). Again, the professional counselor/advisor could offer support to individuals who might be undergoing mid-life transitions.

Although none of the study participants were older adults, there are some that attend El-Shaddai Seminary and other graduate seminaries. Fowler (1984) sees older adults as "witnesses and guarantors of vocation" (p. 146). These individuals can evidence a life-affirming balance between showing care for others and being faithful to their own callings. The qualities they have developed through their years of faithful work give them authority to encourage and validate young adults entering or seeking to establish their vocation or middle-aged adults grappling in the midstream of vocation (Fowler, 1984). Perhaps the personal advisor proposed could also deal in vocational issues for all three broad age groups and foster conversations between those who have wisdom to offer one another.

These vocational issues are at the heart of the seminary experience and encompass spiritual features. Our society is not always helpful in negotiating one's vocation, and many people look for answers in the spiritual realm. Recovering a sense of joy about life and expressing it is part of finding one's calling. O'Sullivan (1999) puts this quite nicely:

> The loss of our sense of place in the cosmos and the corresponding loss of ritual concerning our participation in the great mystery of life are significant. The inability to express our sense of ecstasy and gratitude for the *gift of life* constitutes a loss of meaning about our vocation and place in the larger life processes. (p. 281)

Hopefully, study in the seminary environment and the experience of a caring faith community will help many individuals to find their vocational meaning

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Finally, I would suggest that if an individual or institution chooses to use the BFS further, that it be employed as a conversation-starter, not as a stable tool for establishing faith stage. The low reliability of the instrument with this study's participants calls into question its utility in placing someone at a certain level of development. However, by getting individuals to talk about how they feel about certain aspects of faith, some fruitful areas of dialogue may be opened for further exploration.

Recommendations for Further Research

This section will look at suggestions for further research, both in the area of transformative learning and in faith development theory. Further research in transformative learning is needed in the realm of spirituality. The topics of spirituality and transformative learning are beginning to be explored together, as is evidenced by several recent books, but they have not been looked at much in the expressly religious environment. Some questions are still present which are key to the experience of perspective transformation. Some of them have been perceived by others, such as those posed to E. W. Taylor (1998) by his students:

> Why do certain triggers in our lives result in a perspective transformation and others not?. . . What needs to take place for the trigger to evolve into a perspective transformation? . . . What amount of change constitutes a perspective transformation? How often could a perspective transformation occur in a person's lifetime? (p. 44)

Finding research designs to explore some of these questions more directly is a challenge, due to the elusive nature of the topic, but creating them could help us to learn a lot more about the process. As E. W. Taylor (1998) has noted earlier, empirical research designs of transformative learning are few and far between. Developing some new ways of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

studying the perspective transformation phenomenon empirically would give some whole new methods of communicating about and perhaps predicting the process.

Developing an instrument to measure perspective transformation would greatly aid adult education practitioners. If there were some way to identify specific beliefs behind particular types of epistemic, sociolinguistic, and psychological perspectives, then perhaps this could be done. Perhaps Fowler's six aspects of faith development could provide a framework from which to look at aspects of meaning perspectives. The juxtaposition of the two models in Figure 5.2 may aid in this conceptually.

A research design which would assess a person's faith development both before and after a potentially transformative event or experience would be helpful in understanding both processes. In the seminary environment, this might be accomplished by assessing a person's faith development level at the beginning of a particular course or year of study and then assessing it again at the completion of that course or year. The courses which introduce students to biblical criticism (such as Old Testament Introduction or New Testament Introduction) or which cause a great deal of personal evaluation (such as Clinical Pastoral Education) would be candidate courses.

Another way of conducting research on perspective transformation is to have study participants self-identify events which have been transformative in their own lives. Using critical incident reports, such as described by Brookfield (1990), can be one way of helping individuals to see how their assumptions have changed. Again, finding a way to do this empirically by identifying categories of experiences would be a challenging study, but one that could be potentially groundbreaking in the field of adult education. Some of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the mixed method designs alluded to in Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) in Chapter 2 could perhaps contribute the most knowledge to the field, by tapping into the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative designs of study.

A longitudinal research design would also be helpful in studying the phenomena of faith development and transformative learning. This would certainly help to get at the question raised of how many times a person undergoes perspective transformation in a lifetime. If a person's basic worldview and/or faith development could be assessed, say every five years, perhaps some of the triggers and catalysts for transformative learning and change in faith stage could be better understood. Patterns might emerge that would provide more of a "big picture" framework for looking at world-altering change in a person's life. They could then be put in the context of other adult development theories that look at characteristics concerning the whole adult lifespan. A few longitudinal studies have been attempted on transformative learning (Baumgartner, 2002; King, 2002), but they have concentrated on shorter time periods and did not expressly include spiritual dimensions.

Finding a valid, reliable, and brief way to establish a person's placement in Fowler's model is still a research need. More research needs to be done with both forms of the BFS; in particular, reliability and validity data need to be gathered with several populations. The other instruments and scales mentioned earlier also need more validity and reliability work [Leak, Loucks, and Bowlin (1999), Green and Hoffman (1989), Hammond (1993), and Clore (1997)].

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The longitudinal study mentioned earlier might also help researchers to better understand faith development. One concept that might be explored further using this venue is the sequentiality of Fowler's faith development stages. Also, researchers could better study the points in life at which different stages of faith occur, and the dynamics of faith stage change and conversion could be better understood. As mentioned with transformative learning, a longitudinal design could perhaps give a better idea about the triggers and catalysts for change, and larger patterns may emerge. A few longitudinal studies of faith development have been undertaken (Lee & Foster, 1994; White, 1986), but they have not included the concept of transformative learning.

Contributions to faith development theory. Although the low reliability of the BFS calls into question anything learned about Fowler's faith stages quantitatively, the qualitative data in this study offer a bit more information on the model. The descriptions of the interviewees' experiences suggest that individuals may not always be neatly placed in any one stage. Perhaps some aspects of their faith life are at one level of development, while others are at another level. The actual picture may be something much more complex than the processes shown in Figure 5.2. Each faith stage may not be a flat plane but may resemble more of a topographic landscape. In his initial description of faith stages, Fowler (1981) may have carried preconceived notions from Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg into the conceptual model, characterizing faith stages as more linear than they may actually be. This may be shown in the fictional conversation between the three developmental theorists found in his seminal book (1981). Naturalistic inquiry in this study has shown a much less tidy process of development. Perhaps combining Fowler's

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

later work on faith types (2001) with the earlier model of faith stages (1981) gets at the mechanisms of faith development better. Another possibility might be that something that looks very different, such as Streib's overlapping wave-shaped styles of faith (2001), may be more accurate in depicting faith development. Further naturalistic inquiry into the shape and processes of faith development is recommended.

Contributions to transformative learning theory. The idea of grounding which came from the study participants is a proposed addition to transformative learning theory. As can be seen back in Chapter 1, this concept is not present in Mezirow's initial model (1991a). In the midst of questioning a host of assumptions, there must be something to be an anchor to a person's thinking. Many times this is an idea or an object that the person *decides* is to be the stopping point of questioning. Everything cannot be questioned at once for a person to live. One can look back at the Greek skeptic philosophers to see some unwanted consequences when questioning is taken to its utmost end. Friends of Pyrrho of Elis reportedly had to follow him around to keep him out of the way of runaway carts, biting dogs, and precipices because he was too intent on "suspending judgment" to react to such everyday concerns (Diogenes Laertius, ca. 225/1970). Philosophers such as Arcesilaus and Carneades argued against the ability to know anything and finally came to a point of saying that one has to accept the "reasonable" or "probable" to be able to exist (Long, 1986). Perhaps future research on transformative learning can explore this concept of grounding and its implications further with other populations.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Summary of future research. Due to the elusive nature of the topics of transformative learning and faith development, a great deal of creativity and imagination will need to be employed to study these phenomena in more detail. Appropriating English and Gillen's remark about defining spirituality in Chapter 1 to research in these two areas is perhaps befitting: "it is like trying to pin jelly to a wall" (2000, p. 1). The challenge will be in finding new ways to do the "pinning."

Conclusion

This study has looked at transformative learning and faith development in graduate seminary students at El-Shaddai Seminary. It used the Barnes Fowler-Scale (BFS) to determine an individual's placement in Fowler's stages of faith (1981). The reliability of the instrument in this study was shown to be low, so the stage results should be viewed with caution. Transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991a) and faith development (Fowler, 1981) were explored through selection of a few individuals from each faith stage as shown on the BFS for interviewing. A model was constructed of the themes which emerged from the participants, and implications for faith development and transformative learning were discussed. Recommendations were made both for practice and for future research.

The different views of epistemology and critiques of our history and culture encountered during this study have been personally helpful for me. They have reinforced my view that educators have a great responsibility in portraying truth and knowledge to adult learners and helping them to discover it for themselves. Educators cannot simply assume that all views are equally valid in integrating spirituality into their practice. As

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

English, Fenwick, and Parsons (2003) state, "We believe simplistic relativism as a doctrine for spirituality and morality is inadequate. Educators are not called to neutrality" (p. 25). Individuals bring their own particular culture and context to the table. Dei (2001) asserts that "a discussion of spirituality in education must be read as the antithesis to the concept that the learning of curriculum is ever solely 'universal,' where universal means neutral and common to all" (p. 131). Educators thus have a great responsibility to remain true to their own spirituality, morality, and truth seeking, while enabling students to pursue a right path in their own contexts in these areas.

It is my hope that educators, counselors, ministers, administrators, and students find this study helpful in negotiating, planning, advising, ministering, teaching, and learning. Faith development and transformative learning are part of the adult human experience and are worthy of a great investment of effort. Doing this study has been a spiritual experience in many ways for me, and I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to work with these topics.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

REFERENCES

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

REFERENCES

Barnes, M., Doyle, D., & Johnson, B. (1992). The formulation of a Fowler scale: An empirical assessment among Catholics. In J. Astley & L. Francis (Eds.), *Christian Perspectives of Faith Development* (pp. 245-255). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Baumgartner, L. M. (2002). Living and learning with HIV/AIDS: Transformational tales continued. *Adult Education Quarterly, 53*(1), 44-59.

Brookfield, S. D. (1987). *Developing critical thinkers: Challenging adults to explore alternative ways of thinking and acting*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield, S. (1990). Using critical incidents to explore assumptions. In J. Mezirow and Associates (Eds.), *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood* (pp. 177-193). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield, S. D. (2000). Transformative learning as ideology critique. In J. Mezirow, (Ed.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 125-148). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Caracelli, V.S., & Greene, J. C. (1993). Data analysis strategies for mixed-method evaluation designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 15* (2), 195-207.

Clark, M. C. (1993). Truth, belief, and knowledge. In P. Jarvis & N. Walters (Eds.), *Adult education and theological interpretations* (pp. 19-34). Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company.

Clark, M. C., & Wilson, A. L. (1991). Context and rationality in Mezirow's theory of transformational learning. *Adult Education Quarterly, 41*(2), 75-91.

Clore, V. (1997). Faith development in adults: Scale of measurement and relation to attachment. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

Collard, S. & Law, M. (1989). The limits of perspective transformation: A critique of Mezirow's theory. *Adult Education Quarterly, 39*(2), 99-107.

Courtenay, B. (1993). Personhood—Personal and faith development. In P. Jarvis & N. Walters (Eds.), *Adult education and theological interpretations*. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Cowden, M. A. (1992). *Faith development in women: A comparison of the moral development theories of Carol Gilligan and Lawrence Kohlberg and the faith development theory of James Fowler.* Ann Arbor, MI: UMI.

Cranton, P. (1994). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning: A guide for educators of adults.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Crapps, R. W. (1986). *An introduction to psychology of religion.* Macon, GA: Mercer University Press.

Creswell, J. W. (1995). *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cunningham, P.M. (1992). From Freire to feminism: The North American experience within critical pedagogy. *Adult Education Quarterly, 42*(3), 180-191.

Datta, L. (1994). Paradigm wars: A basis for peaceful coexistence and beyond. In C. S. Reichardt & S. F. Rallis (Eds.), *The qualitative-quantitative debate: New perspectives* (pp. 53-70). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Dei, G. J. S. (2001). Spiritual knowing and transformative learning. In E. O'Sullivan, A. Morrell, & M. A. O'Connor (Eds.), *Expanding the boundaries of transformative learning: Essays on theory and practice* (pp. 121-133). New York: Palgrave.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998), Eds. *Strategies of qualitative inquiry.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Dettoni, J. M. (1993). Psychology of adulthood. In K. O. Gangel & J. C. Wilhoit (Eds.), *The Christian educator's handbook on adult education.* Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books.

Diogenes Laertius (1970). *Lives of eminent philosophers* (R. D. Hicks, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Original work published ca. 225)

Dirkx, J. (1998). Transformative learning theory in the practice of adult education. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Education, 7*, 1-14.

English, L. M., Fenwick, T. J., & Parsons, J. (2003). *Spirituality of adult education and training.* Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company.

English, L. M., & Gillen, M. A. (Ed.). (2000). *Addressing the spiritual dimensions of adult learning: What educators can do.* New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, no. 85. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ford-Grabowsky, M. (1986). What developmental phenomenon is Fowler study? *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 5*(3), 5-13.

Fowler, J. W. (1981). *Stages of faith.* New York: Harper & Row.

Fowler, J. W. (1984). *Becoming adult, becoming Christian: Adult development and Christian faith.* San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Fowler, J. W. (1986). Faith and the structuring of meaning. In C. R. Dykstra & S. Parks (Eds.), *Faith development and Fowler* (pp. 15-42). Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press.

Fowler, J. W. (1987). *Faith development and pastoral care.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Fowler, J. W. (1996). *Faithful change: The personal and public challenges of postmodern life.* Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Fowler, J. W. (2001). Faith development theory and the postmodern challenges. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 11*(3), 159-172.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: Herter and Herter.

Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction.* New York: Longman.

Gould, R. (1978). *Transformation: Growth and change in adult life.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Gould, R. L. (1990). The therapeutic learning program. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning* (pp. 134-156). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Green, C. W. & Hoffman, C. L. (1989). Stages of faith and perceptions of similar and dissimilar others. *Review of Religious Research, 30*(3), 246-255.

Griffin, D. R. (1988). Introduction: Postmodern spirituality and society. In D. R. Griffin (Ed.), *Spirituality and society: Postmodern visions* (pp. 1-31). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action. Vol. 1: Reason and the rationalization of society* (T. McCarthy, Trans.). Boston: Beacon Press.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Hamilton, D. M., & Jackson, M. H. (1998). Spiritual development: Paths and processes. *Journal of Instructional Psychology 25* (4), 262-270.

Hammond, C. D. (1993). The relationship of faith development stages and the type and degree of irrational beliefs in adult church members. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR.

Harris, B. A. (2003). The power of creating a spiritual learning community. *Adult Learning, 12*(3), 22-23.

Healey, C. (1989). *Modern spiritual writers: Their legacies of prayer.* New York: Alba House.

Howe, K. R. (1988). Against the quantitative-qualitative incompatibility thesis or dogmas die hard. *Educational Researcher, 17* (8), 10-16.

Jarvis, P. (1993). Meaning, being and learning. In P. Jarvis & N. Walters (Eds.), *Adult education and theological interpretations* (pp. 91-104). Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company.

Kegan, R. (2000). What "form" transforms? A constructive-developmental approach to transformative learning. In J. Mezirow, (Ed.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 35-69). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

King, K. P. (2002). *A journey of transformation: A model of educators' learning experiences in educational technology.* (ERIC Resources in Education No. ED472069).

Krathwohl, D. R. (1993). *Methods of educational and social science research: An integrated approach.* White Plains, NY: Longman.

Kuhn, T. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Leak, G. K., Loucks, A. A., & Bowlin, P. (1999). Development and initial validation of an objective measure of faith development. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 9*(2), 105-124.

Lee, D. J., & Foster, P. S. (1994). Memories and assessments of a Christian college: A longitudinal study. In D. J. Lee & P. S. Foster (Eds.), *Assessment in Christian higher education: Rhetoric and reality* (pp. 103-140). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Levinson, D. J. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Loder, J. E. (1981). *The transforming moment: Understanding convictional experiences*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Long, A. A. (1986). *Hellenistic philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Marsick, V. J. (1990). Action learning and reflection in the workplace. In J. Mezirow and Associates (Eds.), *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood* (pp. 23-46). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Maxwell, M. (2002). What is curriculum anyway? In E. O'Sullivan, A. Morrell, & M. A. O'Connor (Eds.), *Expanding the boundaries of transformative learning: Essays on theory and practice* (pp. 13-22). New York: Palgrave.

Merriam, S. B. & Caffarella, R. S. (1991). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., & Clark, M. C. (1991). *Lifelines: Patterns of work, love, and learning in adulthood*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., Mott, V. W., & Lee, M.-Y. (1996). Learning that comes from the negative interpretation of life experience. *Studies in Continuing Education, 18*(1), 1-23.

Merriam Webster's Deluxe Dictionary, Tenth Collegiate Addition (1998). Pleasantville, NY: The Reader's Digest Association, Inc.

Mezirow, J. (1978a). *Education for perspective transformation: Women's re-entry programs for community colleges*. New York: Teachers College.

Mezirow, J. (1978b). Perspective-transformation. *Adult Education, XXVIII* (2), 100-110.

Mezirow, J. (1981). A critical theory of adult learning and education. *Adult Education, 32*(1), 3-24.

Mezirow, J. (1985). Concept and action in adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly, 3*(21), 3-24.

Mezirow, J. (1991a). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mezirow, J. (1991b). Transformative theory and cultural context: A reply to Clark and Wilson. *Adult Education Quarterly, 41*(3), 188-192.

Mezirow, J. (1992). Transformation theory: Critique and confusion. *Adult Education Quarterly, 42*(4), 250-252.

Mezirow, J. (1994a). Understanding transformation theory. *Adult Education Quarterly, 44*(4), 222-232.

Mezirow, J. (1994b). Response to Mark Tennant and Michael Newman. *Adult Education Quarterly, 44*(4), 243-244.

Mezirow, J. (1996). Contemporary paradigms of learning. *Adult Education Quarterly, 46*(3), 158-173.

Mezirow, J. (1996b). Beyond Freire and Habermas: Confusion. A response to Bruce Pietrykowski. *Adult Education Quarterly, 46*(4), 237-239.

Mezirow, J. (1998). On critical reflection. *Adult Education Quarterly, 48*(3), 185-198.

Mezirow, J. (2000). (Ed.). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miller, J. P. (2001). Learning from a spiritual perspective. In E. O'Sullivan, A. Morrell, & M. A. O'Connor (Eds.), *Expanding the boundaries of transformative learning: Essays on theory and practice* (pp. 95-102). New York: Palgrave.

Moseley, R. M., Jarvis, D., & Fowler, J. W. (1986). Manual for faith development research. Atlanta : Center for Faith Development, Candler School of Theology, Emory University.

Nelson, C. E. & Aleshire, D. (1986). Research in faith development. In C. R. Dykstra & S. Parks (Eds.), *Faith development and Fowler*. Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press.

Newman, M. (1994). Response to *Understanding Transformation Theory. Adult Education Quarterly, 44*(4), 236-242.

O'Sullivan, E. (1999). *Transformative learning: Educational vision for the 21st century.* New York: Zed Books.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Oser, F. K. (1991). Toward a logic of religious development: A reply to my critics. In J. W. Fowler, K. E. Nipkow, and F. Schweitzer (Eds.), *Stages of faith and religious development*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company.

Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Parks, S. (1986). *The critical years: Young adults and the search for meaning, faith and commitment*. San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers.

Parks, S. D. (2000). *Big questions, worthy dreams: Mentoring young adults in their search for meaning, purpose, and faith.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Peters, J. (1990). The Action-Reason-Thematic technique: Spying on the self. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning* (pp. 314-335). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Pietrykowski, B. (1996). Knowledge and power in adult education: Beyond Freire and Habermas. *Adult Education Quarterly, 46*(2), 82-97.

Rutledge, M. (1992). Faith development: Bridging theory and practice. In J. Astley & L. J. Francis (Eds.), *Christian perspectives on faith development: A reader* (pp. 354-369). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Slattery, P. (1995). *Curriculum development in the postmodern era.* New York: Garland Publishing.

Streib, H. (2001). Faith development theory revisited: The religious styles perspective. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 11*(3), 143-158.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (1998). *Mixed methodology: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Taylor, C. (1996). Spirituality of life—and its shadow. *Compass, 14*(2), 10-13.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Taylor, E. W. (1997). Building upon the theoretical debate: A critical review of the empirical studies of Mezirow's transformative learning theory. *Adult Education Quarterly, 48*(1), 34-59.

Taylor, E. W. (1998). *The theory and practice of transformative learning: A critical review*. (ERIC Resources in Education No. ED423422).

Taylor, E. W. (2000). Analyzing research on transformative learning theory. In J. Mezirow, (Ed.). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 285-328). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Tennant, M. C. (1993). Perspective transformation and adult development. *Adult Education Quarterly, 44*(1), 34-42.

Tennant, M. C. (1994). Response to *Understanding Transformation Theory. Adult Education Quarterly, 44*(4), 233-235.

Tennant, M. & Pogson, P. (1995). *Learning and change in the adult years: A developmental perspective*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Tisdell, E. J. (2003). *Exploring spirituality and culture in adult and higher education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

United Methodist Church (2002). *The book of discipline of the United Methodist Church.* Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House.

Vella, J. (2000). A spirited epistemology: Honoring the adult learner as subject. In L. M. English & M. A. Gillen, (Eds.), *Addressing the spiritual dimensions of adult learning: What educators can do* (pp. 7-16). New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, no. 85. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

White, V.. (1986). *Longitudinal study of Catholic college undergraduates' affiliation and faith development.* (ERIC Resources in Education No. ED286401).

Wickett, R. E. Y. (2000). The learning covenant. In L. M. English & M. A. Gillen, (Eds.), *Addressing the spiritual dimensions of adult learning: What educators can do* (pp. 39-47). New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, no. 85. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Zeph, C. P. (2000). The spiritual dimensions of lay ministry programs. In L. M. English & M. A. Gillen, (Eds.), *Addressing the spiritual dimensions of adult learning: What educators can do* (pp. 77-84). New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, no. 85. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Zinn, L. M. (1997). Spirituality in adult education. *Adult Learning 8* (4), 26-30.

Zohar, D. & Marshall, I. (2000). *SQ: Connecting with our spiritual intelligence*. New York: Bloomsbury

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

APPENDICES

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

APPENDIX A

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

[COPYRIGHT 1994, MICHAEL HORACE BARNES]

THE BARNES FOWLER-SCALE [**BFS**]: revised.

Used with permission of the author.

INSTRUCTIONS: Pick whichever of the two statements you feel more at home with, even if you do not agree with it completely. The two statements of each pair are not necessarily on the same topic. Even if you like both statements in each pair or dislike both, nonetheless pick the one with which you are more comfortable (or less uncomfortable).

1. A True religiousness lies mainly in a sense of sincere and devoted loyalty to God.
   B It is important to reflect on one's beliefs to make them reasonable and logically coherent.

2. A The best religious leaders inspire sincere religiousness in others.
   B Religious leaders must be reasonable, consistent, and objective in their interpretation of doctrines.

3. A We should do what God wants, so that God will help us in return.
   B The word "God" stands for the ultimate meaning of life, which people seek in different ways.

4. A Those who do what God wants are given special rewards.
   B God grants comfort and strength to those who are loyal and faithful.

5. A There are basic moral teachings which are objectively valid for all people everywhere.
   B The basic purpose of moral teachings is to guide people to care for all others.

6. A God's revealed truth is meant for all people everywhere.
   B No set of religious beliefs is the whole and final truth for everyone.

7. A God can do whatever God wants.
   B It is good to be able to show the rational plausibility of one's religious faith.

8. A It is good for a person to be loyal to the religious tradition in which the person was raised.
   B To teach compassion even for the stranger is one of the most important goals of religion.

9. A Those who follow God share in a joy others may not understand.
   B Most people in the world are doing their best to live decent lives.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

APPENDIX B

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What is your age range? _____22-27 ____28-33 ____34-39 _____40-45 ____46-50
   _____51-55 ____ 56-60 ____ 61-65 _____ 66-70 ____71-75

2. Which degree are you seeking? ____ M.A.R. _____ M.Div. ____ D. Min.

3. Which of the following courses are you currently taking or have you completed? (Please check all that apply.)

Currently taking		Completed
_____	New Testament Introduction	_____
_____	Old Testament Introduction	_____
_____	Clinical Pastoral Education	_____
_____	Clinical SME (Supervised Ministerial Experience)	_____

4. Is this your first semester at El-Shaddai? Yes _____ No _____

5. Are you a thesis-only student? Yes _____ No _____

6. What is your gender? Male _____ Female _____

7. What is your completed educational level?

   Bachelor's _____ Area of study _____
   Master's _____ Area of study _____
   Doctoral _____ Area of study _____

8. What is your denomination? See reverse side.

9. I am hoping to interview several individuals about their schooling-related experiences. The topics to be discussed are faith development and transformative learning. The information will be used to better understand both processes, and your name and personal data will be kept confidential. The results of the study will be given back to you for your review. If you are willing to be interviewed, please complete the attached postcard and return it (either to the designated box in El-Shaddai's library or in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Denominational Affiliation

Anglican Church of Canada _____
American Baptist _____
Baptist General Conference _____
Baptist Missionary Assoc. _____
Canadian Baptist Ministries _____
Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists ____
Conservative Baptist Association of America ___
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship _____
Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada _____
General Association of General Baptists _____
Independent Baptist _____
National Baptist Convention _____
North American Baptist Conference _____
Progressive National Baptist Convention _____
Southern Baptist Convention _____
Baptist, other _____
Brethren Church (Ashland, OH) _____
Church of the Brethren _____
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) _____
Christian Churches and Churches of Christ ____
Christian and Missionary Alliance _____
Church of God (Anderson, IN) _____
Church of the Nazarene _____
Churches of Christ _____
Churches of God, General Conference _____
Episcopal _____
Episcopal Reformed _____
Evangelical Congregational Church _____
Evangelical Covenant Church _____
Evangelical Formosan Church _____
Evangelical Free Church of America _____
Evangelical Free Church of Canada _____
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America _____
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada _____
Lutheran Church - Canada _____
Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod _____
Lutheran, other _____
Mennonite Brethren Church in N. A. _____
Mennonite Church _____
African Methodist Episcopal _____
African Methodist Episcopal Zion _____
United Methodist Church _____
Methodist, other _____
Moravian Church in America _____
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America _____
Orthodox Church in America _____
Assemblies of God _____
Church of God (Cleveland, TN) _____
Pentecostal, other _____
Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church _____
Cumberland Presbyterian Church _____
Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.) _____
Presbyterian Church in America _____
Presbyterian Church in Canada _____
Reformed Presbyterian _____
Presbyterian, other _____
Christian Reformed Church _____
Reformed Church in America _____
Religious Society of Friends _____
Roman Catholic _____
Seventh-Day Adventist _____
Swedenborgian Church, General Convention ___
Unitarian Universalist _____
United Church of Canada _____
United Church of Christ _____
Other denomination _____
Unaffiliated/No denomination _____

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Information included on postcard

Yes, I would be willing to be interviewed as part of Michele Houser Wollert's study on Transformative Learning and Faith Development in Graduate Seminary Students. Here is my contact information:

Name _____

Phone number _____

E-mail address _____

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

APPENDIX C

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Dear El-Shaddai Student:

My name is Michele Houser Wollert, and I am a 1990 M.A.R. graduate of Emmanuel School of Religion. Since completing my degree at Emmanuel, I have been pursuing a Ph.D. in Education at the University of Tennessee. My area of concentration for my Ph.D. is adult education, and I would like to ask your help in my dissertation research. I am interested in how seminary students experience changes in their lives and in their faith during their seminary work. My study has to do with looking at these changes in the context of adult learning. These areas are probably of high interest to you as a current seminary student.

Attached you will find a short questionnaire asking for some information about you and your beliefs. Would you please take 5-10 minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it (either to the designated box in El-Shaddai's library or in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope) by (date to be inserted), if possible? By reflecting on some of your beliefs, you may come to an increased understanding of your faith.

I am also hoping to interview several individuals about their schooling-related experiences. The topics to be discussed are faith development and transformative learning. The information will be used to better understand both processes. The transcripts and analysis of the interviews will be given back to you for your review. If, in addition to completing the questionnaire, you would be willing to be interviewed, please detach the postcard included with the survey, provide the requested contact information, and return it (either to the drop box or in the return envelope). If you are one of the volunteers selected to be interviewed for this project, you will be contacted at a later time.

The results of this study will be used to help educators, counselors, ministers, and other interested people better understand faith development and transformative learning. This increased understanding will aid these helping professionals to improve their service to individuals with whom they work, both in programming and individual practice

Please read the informed consent below. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at phone no. or e-mail . You may also contact my doctoral committee chair, Dr. Ralph Brockett, at phone no. Thank you so much for your help in studying transformative learning and faith development.

Sincerely,

Michele Houser Wollert
Phone number
E-mail

Informed Consent

You should not encounter any risks greater than those ordinarily encountered in your daily life in this study, and your name and personal data will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed. Return of the completed questionnaire constitutes your consent to participate.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

APPENDIX D

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Transformative Learning and Faith Development in Graduate Seminary Students

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to learn about the process of transformative learning and faith development which may be part of going through a graduate seminary program. Your participation involves participating in interviews and conversations for around an hour with the principal investigator, Michele Houser Wollert, during the winter, spring, or summer of 2003.

When I interview you, I would like to ask your permission to audiotape or take notes during our interview to help me accurately represent the information you have provided. In addition, papers to be presented at conferences or submitted for publication will be shared with any participants who are represented in them. Tapes will be erased after they have been transcribed and copies of the transcriptions given to the participants for feedback. Transcripts and fieldnotes will be stored in a restricted-access storage area in the principal investigator's home for a period of three years, at which time they will be destroyed.

All of your responses and actions will be held in confidence by the investigator, with pseudonyms used instead of real names to identify you or other persons in the study, unless your explicit permission is obtained. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from participation at any time and/or refuse to answer any question without incurring penalty. There are no risks involved other than those present in everyday life. The benefits to you may be in the process of reflecting and responding to the research process and may also be in the knowledge gained from the project's findings. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

You may contact the investigator, Michele Houser Wollert, at phone no. at any time if you have further questions about the project or your participation in it. You may also contact my doctoral committee chair, Dr. Ralph Brockett, at phone no. You may contact the University of Tennessee's Office of Research at phone no. if you have any questions about your rights as a participant.

CONSENT

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form.

Participant's name _____

Participant's signature _____

Date _____

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

APPENDIX E

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Barnes' Fowler Faith Scale. Sheet #1.
Circle the appropriate letter to indicate whether you definitely agree (A), agree mildly (a); disagree mildly (b), or definitely disagree (B). As a last resort, if you cannot decide at all, circle the question mark (?).

1.5	People have to make their own best choices about religion, as conscientiously as they can.	A	a	?	b	B
2.3	True religiousness lies mainly in a sense of sincere and devoted loyalty to God.	A	a	?	b	B
3.5	Most people in the world are doing their best to live decent lives.	A	a	?	b	B
4.2	Those who do what God wants are given special rewards.	A	a	?	b	B
5.4	It is important to try to make sense out of how God acts and why.	A	a	?	b	B
6.2	A good way to relate to God is to do what God wants, so that God will help you in return.	A	a	?	b	B
7.5	The word "God" stands for the ultimate meaning of life, which people seek in different ways.	A	a	?	b	B
8.4	It is important to reflect on one's beliefs to make them reasonable and logically coherent.	A	a	?	b	B
9.3	The family of religious believers will often find themselves out of step with the world.	A	a	?	b	B
10.4	God's revealed truth is meant for all people everywhere.	A	a	?	b	B
11.5	No set of religious beliefs is the whole and final truth for everyone.	A	a	?	b	B
12.3	It is important to follow religious leaders whose words and example can inspire sincere religiousness.	A	a	?	b	B
13.2	God can do whatever God wants.	A	a	?	b	B
14.4	Religious leaders must be reasonable, consistent, and objective in their interpretation of doctrines.	A	a	?	b	B
15.3	It is good for a person to be loyal to the religious tradition in which the person was raised.	A	a	?	b	B
16.4	There are basic moral teachings which are objectively valid for all people everywhere.	A	a	?	b	B
17.3	God grants comfort and strength to those who are loyal and faithful.	A	a	?	b	B
18.5	The purpose of moral teachings can only be to guide people towards the one ideal of care for every person.	A	a	?	b	B

© 1989 Michael Horace Barnes

Used with permission of the author.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

[To the scorer. These are the questions 1-18. The number after the decimal point indicates which Fowler stage it is supposed to represent. You will get clearer results if you pair items, and force the respondent to choose between the pairs. (See sheet #2 for this.) A person who is consistent enough to pick items indicating Fowler stage 3 three out of four times whether it is paired with a stage 2, 4, or 5 item, can be classified as predominantly stage 3. July, 2002.]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

VITA

Merri Michele Houser Wollert was born in Bristol, TN, on June 9, 1964. She was raised in Blountville, TN, and went to elementary and junior high school in Sullivan County. She graduated from Sullivan Central High School in 1982. From there, she went on to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and received a B.S. in Industrial Engineering in 1986. After working in industry, she attended Emmanuel School of Religion and completed a Master of Arts in Religion in 1990. She was employed at Oak Ridge National Laboratory for four years and later attained an M.A. in Christian Education from the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, VA, in 1996.

Michele has had several years of experience in church work, serving as minister or director of Christian education in several local church settings. She has also acted as an adjunct instructor at East Tennessee State University (ETSU) and Northeast State Technical Community College, among other schools. She currently is an advisor with the Educational Opportunity Center, a Federal TRIO program, at ETSU, working to help adults to pursue higher education.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.