Faith-based pedagogues, educators who connect their work as teachers with their religious philosophy, working in America institutions of higher education, often find themselves in a hostile environment. The purpose of this study is to examine the life stories of a specific group of faith-based pedagogues, Bahái educators who in connecting their religious theology to their profession as teachers embody teaching as worship.

In order to construct a context for understanding the relationship between these pedagogues and their students and colleagues in academic settings, I present a brief historical perspective on the relationship between religion and higher education. I devote specific attention to the repositioning of religious theory and authority in America's universities and colleges.

In 2005, I collected tape-recorded life histories of five Bahái educators working in universities and colleges in North Carolina and Ohio. In this dissertation, I examine the open-ended narratives for intertextuality, silence, selectivity and slippage in order to gain a better understanding of the subjects' interpretation of their lives in the context of faith and higher education.

By exploring the presence of Bahái religious principles and secular themes throughout their individual and collective narratives with emphasis on their religious principles, I offer some understanding of how their perception of their role as educators along with their interpretation of religious philosophy, and

professional experience help shape their teaching and work environments.

Furthermore I compare and contrast the effect of human secularism and religious

theory on the academic experiences of teachers and students, utilizing my own

narrative as an example. Such an examination also provides an indication of the

influence the work of Bahái Faith-Based pedagogues have on the lives of their

students and coworkers. Their life stories also provide some indication of the

impact of their religious and spiritual thoughts on the communities in which they

live.   With the modern challenges faced by our society, I found that the

narrators' common discourse of peace and unity serve as possible models of

leadership for refashioning what I see as a growing national movement towards

selfish materialism and global disrespect.

TEACHING AS WORSHIP: PEDAGOGY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE

NARRATIVES OF BAHÁI EDUCATORS

by

Tracey Booth Snipes

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Approved by

Dr. Kathleen Casey
Committee Chair

To the Divine Creator

To my grandmothers
Mrs. Eula Mae Burnette
Mrs. Evelyn Booth Howard
And Mrs. Lenora Gunter

To my daughters
Nakyyah Lenora Snipes
And Yazmia Nancey Snipes

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Blessed is that teacher who shall arise to instruct the children, and to guide the people into the pathways of God, the Bestower, the Well-Beloved.

- Bahá'u'lláh

What would happen if the current system of higher education in America embraced a spiritual pedagogy? What if that spiritual pedagogy was directly linked to an organized faith? Moreover, what if the teachings of that faith were centered on themes of world unity, justice, and love of humanity? In this dissertation, I present five Bahái professors whose pedagogy is based on spiritual values. While the American academy may not be aware of the gifts and challenges of this Bahái approach to education, these professors believe that teaching is religious and a form of worshiping God.

In the Bahái Faith, there are several guiding principles that serve as the foundation of the laws and obligations by which individual believers are expected to serve and worship. Perhaps one of the most fundamental of the beliefs of the faith is "independent investigation." Believers are expected to seek out knowledge for themselves, rather than to solely espouse and rely on the teachings of others. Simply put, it is each individual's independent responsibility

to seek and understand knowledge. In my independent investigation, I seek answers to the following questions:

1. How are other Bahái educators practicing the vocation of education in environments that are not necessarily inviting to Bahái principles of education?

2. What are the conspicuous and subversive means by which these teachers are educating their students while remaining obedient to the laws of the faith?

3. What are the struggles and rewards of their teaching experiences?

4. Do they experience marginalization or discrimination in the education community by identifying themselves as Bahái educators?

5. How do they manage issues of "separation of church and state"?

6. What do these educators have to offer their communities?

A second recurrent guiding principle of the Bahái Faith calls for "universal education" for all. As educators, we are on a mission of sorts to bring education to as many members of the word as possible. This goal of education is not only for their betterment, but also for the betterment of society as a whole. For those of us working in the profession of teaching, we view **teaching as worship**. This is not only a religious or spiritual agenda but a political one as well. I am interested in uncovering practical methods for how my fellow teachers were taking on this great and at times daunting task of merging the religious and the political in the learning environment of today's educational system. I feel these

two principles served both as an impetus and the guiding forces by which my desire to learn more about the religious and spiritual influences on the pedagogical practices of Bahái educators lead me to this research.

The third incentive for my research of Bahái educators is the scarcity of publications that examine Bahái educators who teach in the secular sphere. When conducting the scholarly literature review for this project, I had great difficulty locating information about Bahái educators outside of those offered directly by sources of the Bahái Faith such as the Bahái administrative order of individual believers and Bahái organizations. Most of the literature relevant to my research deals with the general themes of spirituality and teaching.

One article of particular relevance is authored by Dillard, Abdur-Rashid, and Tyson (2000), *My Soul is a Witness: Affirming Pedagogies of the Spirit.* In this text, the authors provide a brief gaze into the life and pedagogical practices of an African American college professor as she interacts and builds relationships with her students. The articles evaluates the effective techniques that this professor utilize to engage her students in conversation and course activity for the courses she teaches which focus on multiculturalism. I choose the article because it addresses several intriguing questions that I would like to learn more about in my own research.

The following excerpt from Dillard et al. (2000) provides an eloquent explanation of my goal in conducting this research and an excellent cultural framework for the work of the educator's voices I hope to share

> What is spirituality in education? Spirituality in education is education with purpose, education that is libratory work, education that is emancipation. What is spirituality in education? Spirituality in education is education that connects, education that is about building relationships between and across teachers and students, males and females, Others and Ourselves. (Dillard et al., 2000, p. 447)

The article resonates with my support of spirituality in education. Furthermore, I respect the use of a qualitative narrative methodology in the research. The researchers provide information and data collected from interviews, the interviewees' poetry, and classroom conversation, transcriptions of the professor's students when conversing about the teacher as well as the professor's interpretation of her own work. The authors provided a brief comparison and contrast between traditional positivist research and narratives as well as research in "ethnocultural epistemologies of the spirit." The authors value and support the pedagogical practice of teachers of color and the impact spirituality has on their teaching and relationships with their students.

A second article of interest is Crossman's (2003) *Secular Spiritual Development in Education from International and Global Perspectives*. This article addresses "secular spirituality" in relation to developing an international perspective in the classroom. The article also offers suggestions as to how this spirituality would function in classrooms globally.

I found this article to be captivating in many new ways. This piece of writing introduced me to new ways of thinking about the presence of spiritually in schools. The concept of "secular spirituality," which was a novel concept to me,

provided me with an understanding of the differences in interpretation between a spirituality connected to a religious tradition versus one that may not be. The article addresses some of the challenges faced by teachers who explore and utilize spiritual and religious concepts. In educational institutions, perhaps one of their most difficult challenges has been adapting to multiple and competing interpretations of what spirituality is.

While there are some observable commonalities across the continuum of spiritual and religious traditions, there are quite a few differences. I believe that these are fundamental moral values underlying all faith traditions however one or another of these may be stressed in any one tradition. Such values may include ideas and ideals surrounding themes of faith, peace, and truth. However, traditions and spiritual practices often depart from their similarities when examined in terms of cultural distinctions, geographical location, and ritual.

> Secular spirituality is often defined in relation to religion with some recognizing conceptual overlaps . . . and others maintaining a clear distinction between the two . . . Even where spirituality is clearly distinguished from religion, there are variations in how the term is perceived. (Crossman, 2003, p. 504)

Crossman addresses the issue of hegemony in relation to the past definitions of spirituality, which have often been provided by the West. I do not agree with Crossman's suggestion that spirituality could completely be divorced from religion, or more specifically acknowledgment of God. It is refreshing, however, to learn that the institutions of education are seriously beginning to

address one of the problems that have developed because of "separation of church and state" and the decaying moral conduct of America's teachers and students.

The third and possibly most influential reading in my research was that of bell hooks (1994), *Teaching to Transgress.* In *Engaged Pedagogy*, the first chapter of hooks' work, she addresses the idea of teaching as something sacred. I feel that this concept is probably fundamental to educators who utilize what I would call a spiritual pedagogy

> To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred: who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. (hooks, 1994, p. 13)

hooks suggests that those who teach utilizing this view of education teach to the individual gifts of those they interact with. She addresses the fact that such teaching pedagogy is a liberatory practice that frees its students from "banking method" teaching, as defined by Paulo Freire. Furthermore, she suggests that such teaching emphasizes the well-being of its students and is a form of healing. She quotes Thich Nhat Hanh when explaining this concept:

> His focus on a holistic approach to learning and spiritual practice enabled me to overcome years of socialization that had taught me to believe a classroom was diminished if students and professors regarded one another as "whole" human beings, striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world. (hooks, 1994, pp. 14-15)

While these articles do not directly relate to the specific practices of Bahái education, they do offer a fundamental understanding of spirituality in action within the classroom. I believe this "spirituality in action" is a fundamental element of the pedagogical practices of Bahái educators. I hope that this dissertation will add to a growing body of research and writing, which begins to understand the life experiences and view of the Bahái educator.

In conducting my research, I develop a better understanding of the spirituality operating among a group of Bahái educators to whom I feel a deep sense of kinship. This kinship is a result both of our religious affiliation with the Bahái faith and our personal relationships as friends and colleagues. It is important to clarify that I chose to interview people whom I have grown to know over the past 10 years as a Bahái convert. Each of these people (with the exception of one) is a Bahái convert from Christianity, like me. I choose to interview these five professors because of the relationships we have with each other. The authors are university professors with whom I have had the opportunity of developing closer relationships. Our relationships have been founded in our common faith and our common professional aspirations as educators.

 I find the ethnic and cultural make up of the narrators to be somewhat indicative of the diversity found in the Bahái Faith. I have given each interviewee a pseudonym based on the dominant themes I found in their narratives. The first respondent, Professor Noble, is an African American woman, born to Liberian

parents. She was born in New York and raised in Liberia. She later returned to the U. S. and now resides North Carolina where she teaches history at a historically black university (HBCU). A second respondent, also serving as a professor and administrator at an HBCU, has somewhat of a different history. Dr. Justice, an African American man, came to the field of education with a background in criminal justice and law enforcement. Dr. Seeker, a White man, teaches at a predominantly white North Carolina state institution, and has an extensive history of national and international travel. My final two respondents provide an interesting dynamic. This married couple, she a White American and he a Chinese American, have ties to North Carolina but currently teach in Ohio institutions of higher education.

I came to know each of the narrators during various Bahái activities. These interactions include but are not limited to religious worship and fellowship, study of the holy scriptures of the Bahái Faith, administrative and organizational events. Nevertheless, most importantly I had the opportunity to develop personal relationships with each of them and count them among my friends, mentors, and heroes.

By utilizing a narrative approach I create a space where voices of my fellow Bahái educators can be heard, I too feel empowered as an educator. As Riessman states," We cannot give voice, but we do hear voices that we record and interpret" (as cited in Casey, 1995-1996, p. 223). I have found answers to my most pressing questions in this process. I also feel a certain sense of closeness

with these teachers as we together acknowledged the relationship we shared not only as Baháis but also as Bahái educators, who have chosen the vocation of education as a means of worship.

The question I posed to these narrators was "I am interviewing Bahái educators. Tell me the story of your life" (Casey, 1993). I resisted the urge to ask clarifying questions through out the process, as I feared that by doing so I might distract the authors' thought process and unintentionally guide their responses astray. This was difficult for me however. I did clarify correct spelling and pronouncing of novel vocabulary and proper names after the interview process.

As Cynthia Dillard (1995) writes, ". . . our interests originate as much out of our own personal biographical situations and previous and current life circumstances as out of a sense of what we are working to bring into being" (p. 542). This statement speaks powerfully to my personal connection with this research. As stated early, there is a limited amount of research that has been conducted on the life experiences of Bahái educators. There is even less evidence of research that has been conducted on this subject matter that utilizes narrative research. My specific contribution to the literature therefore draws on current literature, which exposes the relationship between the spiritual and the pedagogical practices of educators. I hope to create a place where the voices of successful Bahái educators, who utilize a spiritual pedagogy, can be heard in the midst of traditional Christian and secular discussions of the effect of teacher's spirituality and religious beliefs on the students and the educational environment.

This work can advance and enhance research that examines the pedagogical practices of those educators who view teaching as a vocation or specific form of worship in the development of humanity. These professors build relationships while simultaneously rendering worship to a higher power. The Bahái faith encourages members of the faith to view work as worship to God and I feel that the life stories presented in this research is an excellent example of such work and worship. These narratives will provide a practical application for others to understand the rewards and gifts of incorporating spirituality and religious beliefs into the classroom in a manner that is neither dogmatic nor oppressive, but rather liberatory and healing. Furthermore, their life stories offer an example of how faith-based pedagogy can benefit humanity worldwide in the building of a more just and peaceful society.

In Chapter I, I introduced the research project and the theme of "teaching as worship." I define teaching as worship in terms of understanding the work that I and others like me do as university professors who profess a religious inspiration in teaching. These people like me I term **Faith-based pedagogues**. I present a brief introduction to some of the scholarly literature, which I feel is supportive of my concept of faith-based pedagogy. I introduced some of the critical question I seek to examine in my research. I also introduce the participants of my qualitative study and give a brief description of their religious and work experience.

In Chapter II, I provide a review of scholarly literature that examines the evolving relationship of religion and higher education in America. This chapter devotes specific attention to the repositioning of religious and spiritual dimensions in education and its impact on society. The chapter focuses on the progression of institutions of higher education from a religious base, during the colonial period, to a more secular based, during modern times. In addition, the chapter examines some of the social and cultural influences that also facilitated the country's colleges and universities shift from a religious focus to one that is more secular.

In Chapter III, utilizing my personal narrative as an example, I compare and contrast the influence of **secular** and **religious** themes on my education and others enrolled in institutions of higher education. I draw a comparison between the treatment of religious and secular themes I have seen in traditionally white institutions as well as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). I also reflect on my clinical and teaching preparation. I speak of my personal spiritual evolution. I focus how that evolution contributed to my current spiritual and religious faith-based pedagogy.

Chapter IV examines the **faith-based pedagogue's** role in institutions of higher educations such as colleges and universities. In the chapter, I devote attention to the benefits and challenges of welcoming the voices of these educators, into institutions of higher education. These educators, who link the work they do as professionals to their worship to God, offer a new dynamic to the

ever-increasing pluralistic American community. I focus on the contribution their presence brings to the democratic classroom and how that presence can help shape positive social development. The positive developments I believe are shaped by the relationships they establish and maintain with their students, colleges, and communities.

I examine the practicality of utilizing narrative research methodology when examining the life stories of Bahái Faith-based pedagogues in Chapter V. Using the conceptual framework outline in the previous chapters I examine the benefits and challenges of utilizing a faith-based approach to education in higher education with specific attention to the narratives of Bahái educators. I compare and contrast the logistics of such pedagogy with those of more extremist and moderate approaches in education as well as those dedicated to a more secular focus of educating. I also address the importance of recognizing and understanding my own subjectivity in the research process. I explain how such subjectivity informs my understanding of the narrator's life stories.

In Chapter VI, I present the life stories of Bahái faith-based pedagogues. I examine their narratives for the presence of both Bahái religious themes and secular themes. I devote attention to the emergence of religious and secular language and to the building of a premise to support the relevance of such language by examining both sacred Bahái text and secular philosophy. I examine their individual and collective narratives for the presence of silence, slippage, and

selectivity and present my interpretation of commonalities and differences when viewed in the context of intertextuality.

Chapter VII will discuss the importance of educators working to foster a more just and peaceful humanity. Building on the discussions in the previous chapters, I provide an example of how the work of faith-based pedagogues, such as the narrators in my research, may offer a valuable contribution to the work teachers must do to bring about a more nonviolent and caring society.

In the concluding chapter, I summarize the dissertation and offer some suggestions for future research. Lastly, I summarize the effect this research has on my spiritual and professional experience as Bahái educator.

CHAPTER II

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND SECULARISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN AMERICA

In this chapter, I present a historical perspective on religion and higher education in America. I explore the evolution of the relationship between American colleges and religious leadership in the academic setting of institutions of higher education. I dedicate specific attention to the influence of Judeo-Christian denominations on the formation of many modern colleges and universities. By examining the historical evolution of America's institutions of higher education with a religious lens, I am able to better understand the various roles held by faith-based pedagogues in colleges and universities.

Many of the country's first colleges established by the colonists were a direct response of their escaping oppression and religious persecution from their former, mostly English rulers. With the development of early American colleges in the late 1700s, the relationship between religion and the university began. As a result, the new settlers sought to distance themselves from their previous leadership in an effort to exercise new religious freedoms (Hutchinson, 2001; Thelin, 2004). While these new institutions symbolized a radical departure from the Church of England, they initially were limited to representation of Christian tradition, in particular, the Protestant denominations (Reuben, 1996; Schwehn, 2005; Thelin, 2004; Veysey, 1965). The influence of "Congregational

Protestantism" existed throughout the fabric of the colleges. Professors, students and administers alike were loyal to a Protestant form of worship. This was clearly evident in the establishment of institutions such as the college of Rhode Island where: "Appointments to the governing board of the tolerant College of Rhode Island were set by statute to follow a strict formula that limited membership to Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalist, and Anglicans" (Thelin, 2004, pp. 13-14; Burtchaell, 1998). The early colleges were somewhat diverse in regards to the ideologies governing the institutions. However, the diversity that existed during colonial times was more representative of divisions within the Christian church or sectarianism. Each school distinguished itself according to the line of Christian doctrine its constituency followed. Eventually the country did experience a change in its relationship to institutions of higher education founded on religious base. The rise of an increased interest in industry and science ultimately led to a more diverse faculty and student body as well as an increased secularized curriculum as the curriculum expanded outside of religious bounds.

With the establishment of some of the earliest colleges such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, the dominating influence of Congregationalist and Presbyterians, collectively known as the Puritans was protestant (Thelin, 2004). The curriculum was "committed to a rigorous, demanding education of young men who would become Christian gentlemen" (Thelin, 2004, p. 24). This function of colleges during this time was important for revitalizing and maintaining the elite economic class. It was important that those poised to become community leaders

were not only virtuous, devout members but also well "disciplined" in mental

capacity. Veysey (1965) explains the fusion of intellectuality and theology in the

following passage

> In considering the aims of higher education, believers in mental discipline
> began with an idea of the human soul. The soul was not composed of
> material substances, nor was it merely a part of one's mind. (In practice,
> however, the terms: "soul" and "mind" were sometimes used
> interchangeably.) The soul constituted the "vital force" which in turn
> activated mind and body. (p. 22)

These clergymen would not only serve as religious leaders in their communities

but also serve as representative of the elites they served. This commitment to

pious character was obvious when examining the curriculum of this time. School

courses were heavily devoted to Christian themes. As a result, those less

connected to the churches accused school administrators of establishing these

institutions for the purpose of educating and developing clergy. For educators,

students and citizens of the newly settled America, the nepotistic relationship

between clergy and elite rulers was problematic. This was a commonly used

argument given the large presence of religious doctrine with in the curriculum.

Conversely, a closer examination of the schools' structures reveals well-defined

boundaries existing between religious leadership and scholarship. Often there

was a strict distinction made between, for example, "magistrates," and

"ministers." Furthermore, there were no divinity degrees deferred nor did these

colleges ordain ministers or priests (Thelin, 2004). It is interesting to note,

however, that often those seeking ordination would precede their divinity study and clerical ordination with graduation from college.

While these early colleges, technically, were not theocracies, the presence of theological philosophy and sectarianism was apparent. For example, school leaders expected faculty members to subscribe to the sectarian views of the religious tradition in the schools where they taught. Because of the denominational nature of Protestant churches, its members were constantly reexamining and reshaping its interpretation of orthodoxy. Often differences held by church communities over the interpretation of doctrine led to the branching off and establishments of new churches. Consequently, these new divisions led to the establishment of new colleges that were more representative of new sects or denominations.

The branching off members of colleges to establish new congregations and colleges, created new schools more in line with the sectarian views. This was the case with the establishment of The College in Connecticut. Thelin (2004) explains the conflicts leading to the establishment of this new institution in the following passage:

> The College in Connecticut, later renamed Yale, was founded by Congregationalist who had become displeased with what they thought was theological laxity of the Harvard divines. In their new venture as 'wilderness prophet,' they soon faced some bad news: college board members were surprised to discover that their newly selected rector and their one tutor, upon whom they had relied to uphold a strict Congregational orthodoxy, had publicly declared for Episcopacy. Anglicans were not welcome in Connecticut or at its college. Illustrating the power of the external board, both the rector and tutor were dismissed

immediately, and henceforth all those who were appointed to the faculty were required to subscribe to a 'confession of Congregational orthodoxy.' (p. 4)

The influence of the religious doctrine and interpretation of Christianity of the Presbyterian sect is seen in its establishment of institutions, not only during the colonial period but also throughout the American history. While American higher education was dominated by Congregationalist during the colonial and federal periods, prior to the civil war period, the Presbyterians establishment of colleges was present (Burtchaell, 1998). Examinations of the interrelationships of The Presbyterians reveal frequent schisms and reunions. This representation can be seen in the establishment and waning of various institutions associated with their following. For example, during the middle of the nineteenth century the Presbyterian Church was "cloven in four by the issue of slavery and chronic conservative-liberal division overly evangelical piety" (Burtchaell, 1998, p. 126). This division in philosophy greatly influenced the establishment of colleges by the Presbyterians for freedman blacks. Another element of the schisms associated with the Presbyterians was evident in the establishment of what later became known as the College of Philadelphia. This institution was a result of the division of Presbyterian view over "The Great Awakening." This Great awakening was a revolutionary period for Protestants during the 1730's and 1740's of great upheaval. During this time "revivalists" called for a more personal religious experience of individual followers issuing a direct challenge to the historically established church authority, which was based in ritual and doctrine (Ahlstrom,

1972). This division resulted in two sides: The "Old Sides," which favored doctrinal orthodoxy and classical education and the "New Sides," which favored none-intellectual piety. The founding of the college of Philadelphia was more consistent with the doctrine of the followers of the "Old Sides" (Burtchaell, 1998).

The relationship between Protestant Christianity and higher education continued with the establishment of the Methodist church. With the reform movement of the church led by John Wesley, the Methodist church was established. This reform, in its very creation, countered previous notions of Christian piety. Christian church in America was no longer deeply associated with the once dominant elite Protestantism. This reform denomination embraced greater amounts of poor and rural constituencies. As a result, many of these new members exhibited an ambivalence or indifference toward formal education. (Burtchaell, 1998) The reform focused more on "saving souls." In addition, given the choice between doing so and focusing on "studies" founders of the establishment urged future clergymen to "let your studies alone" (Burtchaell, 1998, p. 257). However, eventually the Methodist would establish "literary institutions" which were birthed into institutions of higher learning. The establishment of these institutions differed from the predecessors of other sects in that the church primarily established them for the laity, not ministers. Ministers' evangelism was a foundation for their ministry, not academics. The literary institutions catered more to the "social, economic, and cultural aspirations" of the

people (Burtchaell, 1998 p. 259). Ironically, the Methodists would go on to establish more schools than any other denomination.

The Baptists, like the Methodists, initially drew a great distinction between the education of their ministers and laity. Like the Methodists, the Baptists tended to attract working class citizens. Initially Baptists were not welcoming to academic schooling of its preachers. Conversely, they viewed "learning" as a primary source of "corruption" in clergy (Burtchaell, 1998). Eventually however, there were members of the Baptist church who opposed this view of education and would later establish academies alongside seminaries of higher learning.

While sectarianism was present, there existed during the early years of the colleges some sense of unity of thought or "Unity of Truth" (Reuben, 1996). Many of the academicians of the early years followed a belief that provided for a space where God, academics and the arts could exist collectively and therefore result in the ultimate purpose of education. It is important to note that this union did not hold a prominent placement and value for science. Reuben (1996) provides a rational for the colonial educators' notion of the unity of truth in the following passage:

> Since the colonists believed that all knowledge was knowledge about God, they assumed that ultimately all truths agreed and could be unified. They thought that every educated person should know all the arts: the information yielded by one area of study was valuable only in the context of the whole. Their educational philosophy also supported the unity of knowledge and morality. The influence of Christian humanism highlighted the practical moral aims of learning and education. (p. 18)

The amalgamation of philosophies resulted in a practical form of morality consistent with the early establishments of "Christian humanism" which focused on "truth" and "goodness." This goodness provided for a space where morality and a respect for Latin, Greek could become coupled with the study of Christian theology.

The introduction of Lutherans to American culture yielded yet another interpretation of protestant Christianity. During the late nineteenth century, the influx of immigrants to the United State grew exponentially. These new ethnic groups founded colleges that were more consistent with their cultural heritage and national origin. Given that religious affiliation was more representative of ethnicity, Lutheran colleges catered to German and Scandinavian immigrants. With their arrival in America, a new concept of denominationalism had to apply. While all Lutherans held a collective fidelity to Martin Luther[1] and the Augsburg Confession.[2] Their practice of Lutheranism in America was more defined by their ethnic, geographical, and linguistic similarities (Burtchaell, 1998). Historically there have been three distinctions or denominations of Lutherans: The Eastern Colonial branch; Upper Midwest Scandinavians and Germans also known as "Confessing Lutherans"; and the German Lutherans who settled more in the Illinois and Missouri. These groups served a variety of social classes as well.

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[1] Martin Luther is the German monk credited with the reformation of Protestant traditions of the 16th century.

[2] Confession of faith in the Lutheran Church

Of the earliest institutions established by the Lutherans, perhaps Gettysburg College signifies the beginning of the Lutheran legacy in higher education. While other institutions such as Franklin College, established in 1787 primarily to cater to the German community in 1787, their success was short lived. Many of the German immigrants were poor participated less in colleges. Consequently, the college would not issue any degrees during its operation. As Germans began to flourish more financially, their relationship with collegiate education became more favorable. As was the case with the beginnings of many colleges, Gettysburg was born out of a desire to educate its clergy. When church leaders and school administrators discovered that students attending seminary were not well equipped with basic education skills such as math, grammar, and English, Gettysburg was established to help prepare the students better for seminary (Burtchaell, 1998; St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, 2006). During its earlier years, the university would undergo several eternal bouts which to debated the roll of the college in the Lutheran church. As the influences of secularization increased, the leadership struggled over the purpose of the college in providing religious leadership for the Lutheran church. It appeared that the leadership was shifting amidst its new identity as a secular institution. This was a great challenge given that many of the board members of the school were themselves members of the Lutheran clergy. Until recent years, the college has maintained its close connection to the Lutheran church although its curriculum has changed to address a more secular pupil base. The Lutherans did eventually

establish several other institutions of higher education that managed to capture the religious and academic needs of their student base (Burtchaell, 1998; Thelin, 2004).

While the religious presence in earlier years of higher education was dominated by Protestant churches, eventually the diversity of the country would yield more room for the influx of alternative interpretations of Christianity and other religious customs falling outside of the Christian tradition. This diversity would lead to the establishment of colleges and university founded by Catholics, Jews and other religious affiliations not previously occupying a space in the league of institutions of higher learning.

Catholics represented the first major group of non-protestant Christians to establish institutions of higher education in America. While Catholic institutions served students with families' heritage based in Ireland, Italy, and Eastern Europe, unlike their wealthier protestant predecessors, Early Catholic institutions tended to be located in more urban areas serving less elite populations and more working class immigrants (Thelin, 2004). The establishment of Georgetown University in 1789 marked the beginning of the Catholic legacy of higher education. While they entered the higher education arena somewhat later than several other religious groups, they would establish more institutions than the others would, seventy-six of which are still in existence (Burtchaell, 1998; Marsden, 1994). Their late entrance into academe was not only a result of the later arrival of Catholic immigrants but also reflected the practice of several

colonies deeming the practice of Catholicism illegal. This was a common practice

prior to the American Revolution (Hutchinson, 2001). Like other religious

denominations and sects, it was important that the colleges established exhibited

curriculum with was consistent with the doctrine and religious interpretations of

their founders. Catholics designed their schools to provide a catholic education

by catholic teachers for primarily catholic populations, in other words these

schools served as a ministry of the Catholic Church. However, they were

welcoming of students from none-Catholic backgrounds. Many students from the

neighborhoods and communities they served attended their institutions.

Hutchinson (2001) outlines the primary and explicit aims of the Catholic schools

> While there was a remote connection to the intellectual life, the three basic
> purposes of the first Catholic colleges were: (1) preparing boys for the
> priesthood; (2) creating centers for missionary activity; (3) and cultivating
> in boys and young men the moral virtues. (p. 2)

Like many of the protestant churches, the establishment of universities within the

Catholic community did manifest the divisions in the church. There were three

main clusters or "orders": the Jesuits, the Ursulines, and the Christian Brothers.

The early colleges adopted a "Jesuit" model for their organization which

consistent with French and German models which housed both secondary

schools and colleges within the institution (Hutchinson, 2001). The curriculum

was different form the earlier Protestant model as well in that it "combined

medieval arts and sciences with renaissance literature and a heavy emphasis on

Latin and Greek classics and Scholasticism" (Hutchinson, 2001, p. 3). As was the

case with the Protestant institutions, Catholic institution's initial purpose focused on maintaining religious autonomy and culture, however, as time progressed, they too shifted their focus from religious to more secular and academic in hopes of addressing needs or the quest for "knowledge" (Hutchinson, 2001).

The entrance of Jewish institutions into the area of higher education took a different route than its Christian predecessors. Like Catholics, Jews were outsiders. However, similar to the aims of the establishment of colleges by the various Christian denominations, the main goals of Jewish schools were committed to the maintaining and supporting of religious ideals as well as cultural standards. However, the Jewish presence was somewhat limited in terms of both population and funding. Therefore, the Jews formed a partnership between the University of Pennsylvania and Maimonides College at Philadelphia. In 1867 Isaac Lesser spearheaded this fledgling college. Here general college instruction was provide with special focus on Jewish standards and customs. While its presence was short lived, Maimonides did serve as the first installation in the legacy of Jewish colleges. Later in 1875, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations established the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati. Its primary focus was for the training of teachers and rabbis. Other colleges and seminaries would follow in the model of this college. It is important to note that Jewish students often did gain entry to other institutions which where founded by Christian denominations; however, they frequently faced anti-Semitism and organized attempts by the administration of those institutions to limit their

enrollment (Marsden, 1994; Thelin 2004; Veysey, 1965). The arrival of Yeshiva College in 1928 marked the foundation for a more stable Jewish presence in higher education. While its focus was more synonymous with the views of orthodox Judaism, other universities such as Brandeis University, which offered a more general and secular education, would be established (Marsden, 1994). Ironically, these institutions perhaps drew students more for cultural reasons than religious.

Although there have been other religious groups engaged with the establishment of educational institutions, for the most part, sustained colleges and universities with a religious history has been limited primarily to a Judea-Christian affiliation. This affiliation has contributed greatly to both historical and current day notions of religion and higher education. The pluralistic nature of American culture as well as the evolution of secularism has greatly challenged the theological ideas of higher education.

While these institutions began as a response to aims of their governing clergy and congregations to maintain religious theology and culture, as most of the institutions grew to be more accommodating to the diverse American culture, the battle between religious orthodoxy and secular academic emerged. Conflicting views on managing the roll of religious clerical power and the advancement of science and non-religious themes further complicated concerns held by the academic community over religious dogma. Furthermore, the advent of religious reformation, wars, slavery, and conflict over moral leadership created

more issues of division, between not only religious leadership and students but also administration and faculty.

As colleges fought to maintain their place in academia, issues of funding and philosophical differences had to be addressed to insure that there would be student bodies to teach. Some of the earlier challenges of religious feasibility in colleges occurred as the country began to examine accessibility for its ever-growing pluralism.

A fundamental source of conflicts and debates facing early colleges centered on the issue of slavery. Slavery not only sparked great debate around religious moral issues with human chattel but also confronted the notion of "educated gentlemen." The arrival of the American Civil War also brought up issues of what constituted proper Christian behavior. As the leaders and politicians of a divided country debated the morality and economics of human bondage, college students enhanced the debate by questioning biological equality of different ethnic groups or "races." One such debate was fielded by polygenesis which supported "the theory that races are the products of separate creation, hence not members of the same species" (Geiger, 2000, p. 109). Implicit in this debate was the argument by slave supporters that darker skin humans were of lesser value and even synonymous with animals. This argument was important because such a suggestion provided a basis for Christian religious teaching that gave humans ruling and the right to chattel animals. This debate also created further examination by schools as to what constituted education.

The debate over racial inferiority and slavery would also help issue in the divide between religious and scientifically supported secular education. As more participants in higher education began to move away from the churches in pursuit of more factual or scientific bases for education many argued that "scientific" presuppositions, not religious should be the foundation of the American colleges (Geiger, 2000; Thelin, 2004).

The issue of not only slavery but also race was often a divide among denominations. There were several colleges established for African Americans, by those wishing to educate freedmen as a moral response to the inhumanity of slavery. With the end of the civil war, the issue of missionary work to reach blacks became a pressing issue. In the aim of spreading Christian theology it was determined by churches that black ministers would need to be educated in order that they would be able to "read the Bible and to become self-supporting and self-directing churches" (Burtchaell, 1998, p. 395). As a result, the membership of blacks in Baptist denominations grew. The Baptists would go on to establish two colleges that catered to African Americans including Ottawa University, and Bacone College. Other denominations or sects would establish colleges for blacks as well. Some of these affiliations included the Methodist establishment of Bennett College; and Bethune-Cookman Collage; the first Black Catholic college of Xavier University and the only Lutheran historically black college of Concordia (Burtchaell, 1998; The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, 2006).

As there were church supported schools being built to educate blacks, there were several Christian affiliated colleges, especially in the southern region, which where responsible for the education of proslavery advocates. The college of William and Mary in Virginia as well as South Carolina College were examples of school that produced prominent politicians who supported slavery. Thomas Dew was recognized for writing the "intellectual" defense of slavery and was at one time president of William and Mary (Geiger, 2000; Thelin, 2004).

The debate over slavery was one of the central topics utilized when negotiating issues of Biblical interpretation and moral responsibility. Often those who supported a move toward a more scientific based and secular curriculum argued that such debates could not be proven biblically. The slavery issues were founded in a great debate over the moral responsibility of pious education against a growing acceptance of supposedly scientifically based explanations of its feasibility. Nevertheless, slavery was only part of the great divide in education. There were ever evolving issues, which challenged the responsibility of colleges and universities to educate students, which were not always accepting of a moral or religious education.

While it may be true that most colleges and universities can attribute their establishments and initial purposes deeply tied to maintaining and supporting the religious groups they represented, historical changes in the needs of faculty and students seeking to educate and be educated would show a waning in the desire to adhere to religious curriculums and commitments. The shift from a religious

focus to a more secular one was greatly affected by political shifts in the country, growing diversity and an increase focus and desire for more scientific and empirical learning. Furthermore, with the advent of Morrill Act and inevitably the federal establishment of Land-grant colleges and universities, religious institutions began to lose their majority over secularly founded institutions (Thelin, 2004).

Following the American Civil War, all institutions of the country were reexamined and restructured. Many college students, especially those in the south enlisted in the army. These men were fighting to maintain their political stations on moral issues, government rule, and the right to maintain their way of life, one that often favored white male Christian patriarchy and a concentration on more local and state control. With the end of the war, the involvement of government and government standards presented more influence on curriculum to enhance engineering, applied sciences, teacher education, and agriculture (Thelin, 2004). Other changes would grant increase educational opportunities to women.

As colleges continued to be reexamined and reconstructed, those working in education began to study and redefine previous notions of morality. Morality was no longer isolated within the context of Biblical parameters. The very purpose of education, previously seen as method for producing "virtuous" members of society, no longer generally applied to all aspects of the institution. To add to the shift in moral focus, there was growing concern over the legitimacy

of clergy rule and indoctrination of orthodoxy (Marsden, 1994). Additionally the schools were not limited to a student body that was autonomous and narrowly dedicated to religious values.

The changing political and state influence on education and the reshaping of values to serve a diverse population became evident in how students connected themselves with historically religious colleges. In 1905, a survey of state university indicated that about 40% of college attendees were not church members (Marsden, 1994). This was somewhat indicative of the philosophical and theological diversity of college students at that time. The American colleges developed a more secular stance on education. We also see the launching of state institutions. These new state institutions called for a separation of state and church. This marked a revolution in academia. Institutions of higher education became more cautious to ensure that they did not trample students' rights in the name of maintaining religious dogma.

The industrial revolution further catapulted changes in curriculum to reflect more secular and scientific bases. As industry sought to enhance its capabilities, a more concrete, scientific and technical education was required (Thelin, 2004). Education was no longer about educating ministers and moral beings but also workers that would be capable of working in new industries and further the capitalistic demands of modernity. Modernists begin to focus on a new truth, one different from the understood truth of the religious predecessors. Walter

Lippmann, an influential journalist and political commentator at the turn of

modernity explains as follows

> Modernist, by which Lippmann meant people committed to the dominant
> modern outlook, on the other hand, gave their ultimate intellectual
> allegiance to the scientific method as the essence of true education. The
> higher truth was an ever progressing ideal toward which the human
> community of scientific inquires always moved, yet never reached. Since
> truth was by definition always changing, the only thing ultimately sacred
> was the means of pursuing it. No religious or other dogmatic claim could
> be allowed to stand in its way. (Marsden, 2004, p. 329)

Further influence on the increasing forces of secularism were being driven by an

increase exploration in biological and other sciences and the establishment of

curriculum less concerned with moral and virtuous character building.

Perhaps one of the greatest influences in the changing focus in American

colleges and inevitably universities' move to secularism as well as a redefining

relationship between religion and higher education was the development of land

grant institutions. With the Morrill Act of 1862, the establishment of educational

institutions was no longer primarily a function of religious groups. The act now

granted access to states for the establishment of colleges by providing not only

funds but also physical space for new institutions (Marsden, 1994; National

Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 1995; Reuben, 1996;

Thelin, 2004). A brief synopsis of the Act follows:

> Sponsored by Congressman Justin Morrill of Vermont, who had been
> pressing for it since 1857, the act gave to every state that had remained in
> the Union a grant of 30,000 acres of public land for every member of its
> congressional delegation. Since under the Constitution every state had at

least two senators and one representative, even the smallest state
received 90,000 acres. The states were to sell this land and use the
proceeds to establish colleges in engineering, agriculture, and military
science. Over seventy "land grant" colleges, as they came to be known,
were established under the original Morrill Act; a second act in 1890
extended the land grant provisions to the sixteen southern states.
(National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges,
1995, p. 27)

The Morrill Act not only provided funding and land for the establishment of state

institutions, it also encouraged agriculture and mechanic arts and other industrial

trades that added to the earlier focuses of religious study and the classics. There

was a new turn to skilled labor in addition to philosophy and arts (Veysey, 1965).

During this time, the entrance of women into higher education increased.

More colleges began to welcome women and there were more colleges

established solely to educate women. During the antebellum colleges which were

accessed by women emphasized English and modern languages along with

music arts and domestic crafts. Many of these course offerings where consistent

with traditional religious views and established roles of women (Geiger, 2000).

While the establishment of land-grant institutions did not initially have the same

ramifications for women as men, their presence did lay a foundation for women

to have more options in the future. This act focused on a more democratic and

open access of education, and made provisions to insure that Native Americans

and African Americans, would have access to higher education without direct

responsibility to religious groups (National Association of State Universities and

Land-Grant Colleges, 1995).

Further influence of the government on the reshaping of universities and colleges religious connections are illustrated in the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963. This act granted founding to institutions with religious ties for construction of buildings and facilities for the sole purpose of "secular education." The use of facilities constructed under this act for religious purposes resulted in violation of the act and possible retraction of funds (The guide to American Law, 1983-1985). In such context, those responsible for the funding of institutions were forced to decide between financial viability and loyalty to their religious founding. As funding from religious sources decreased, the universities were forced to accept the government funding or close their doors.

While many colleges and universities established prior to the unset of state funded institutions were greatly dependent upon their religious founders for both direction in terms of curriculum and financial support from, with increase funds from government funding financial dependence became less of a primary function. The relationship however was not severed all together as evidenced by the maintenance of several institutions founded by religious groups presently. Modern institutions of higher education include both those institutions which seek maintain the religious and moral values of Christian and other religious values. Students have more options for education now and with more state funded and land grant institutions students attendance in college may not necessary be founded on religious grounds.

The relationship between religion and higher education in America has experienced several changes from colonial times to the present. Today there is a great diversity in curriculum ranging from deeply religious subject matter to agricultural, technical and other skill based subject. With such a pluralistic society and more diverse options for students and faculty, American education has moved from its religious foundation to a more academically influenced center. The growing influence of secularism continues to create a conflict between religious and nonreligious aims leading more in support of the secular and less accepting of the religious. People teaching and learning in modern institutions of higher education appear to equate academic intellect more with secular values rather than religious. Concurrently religious and values appear to have been relegated to a position of antiquation and suspicion. As education continues to evolve, a reevaluation of the value of religious worth must be examined to ensure that what is good and positive can be recaptured and appropriately utilized by students, teachers, and educators.

In this chapter, I have examined the evolving relationship between religion and secularism in American colleges and universities. I have chronicled the impact primarily, Christian, and Jewish values had on the building and shaping of these institutions of higher education. I have focused on the redefining of the relationship held between the religious academic community and the secular academic community. I end with a note on the increasing secularization of higher education, which has created the atmosphere within which the teachers in my

dissertation operate. I believe this atmosphere to be increasingly hostile and therefore antithetical to the fostering of a democratic environment.

In the following chapter, I discuss the effect of religious and human secularism on students. Utilizing my personal narrative I reflect on the various experiences I have had during my matriculation through various universities. I focus on the strengths and weaknesses I found in developing an understanding of how religious and spiritual themes influence students lives and their potential professional endeavors.

CHAPTER III

THE EFFECT OF RELIGON AND SECULARISM ON MY PERSONAL LIFE STORY AS A STUDENT AND EDUCATOR

In this chapter, I compare and contrast the influence of secular and religious views on the educational environment in higher education. Utilizing my personal narrative, I provide an example of how some of the secular and religious shaping of myself as a student and teacher influences my perception of education and ultimately my worldview. I present a supportive argument for the return of a more welcoming stance towards faith-based pedagogues like myself in the academy. It is my hope that such a return would offer opportunity for the creation or (re)creation of a more democratic process in education. In this chapter, I also present the narratives of the five fellow Bahái educators working in higher education that introduced in the introduction of this dissertation. Along with their life stories, I explore the intertextuality across our collective life experiences as faith-based pedagogues.

Through my various experiences as a student and teacher, I have come to perceive that which I interpret as the "intellectual component" of the work of university professors I have encountered, to be unwelcoming of a spiritual or religious approach to educating. In fact, the academy is not just unwelcoming; it is **hostile** towards the religious. Professors can exhibit this hostility both in terms of how they relate to other professors and to students. Members of the academy

seem to have adopted an attitude towards the religious, which is consistent with the views of secular humanism.[3] In this setting, secular views are definitely privileged over religious. However, more significantly I perceive the academy to be antagonistic and even antithetical to the principles of my faith. As a Bahái, my beliefs and practices center on the belief and worship of God, as well as the striving for unity.[4] I feel that the academy privileges human reasoning and control over any "supernatural' or "mystical" existence (www.secularhumanism.org, 2006).

My first personal encounter with higher education came during my first year in college. I was an undergraduate student at a historically black university (HBCU). While my mother had completed some work towards an associate degree in child development, I was the first member of my immediate family to attend a four-year college as a full time, residential student. My position as a first generation college student embodied an answer to the prayers of my Mother, a single parent, who hoped that I, her only daughter, would gain exposure to greater opportunities and financial independence through education. My personal goals resonated more with the latter of my mother's goals.

My own desire to secure financial independence was more at the center of the driving force behind my educational pursuits. I did not see "higher education" as a vehicle for personal growth outside of material success. I

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[3] See secular humanism in Appendix A.

[4] See Bahai principles in Appendix B.

certainly did not see it as a place to have my spiritual and religious needs met.

Moreover, I feel that the classroom environment that I encountered in my

program of study in speech language pathology reinforce my vision of higher

education as a medium for material growth while eliminating any connection to

the religious. While the program was rooted in providing educational and medical

service to individuals, it focused more on the clinical skills needed for the

profession. This approach of educating was consistent with Huebner's notion of

"technical" curricular ideology which

> reflects, almost completely, a technical value system. It has a means-ends
> rationality that approaches an economic model. End states, end products,
> or objectives are specified as carefully and as accurately as possible,
> hopefully in behavioral terms. Activates are then designed which become
> the means to these ends or objectives. (Huebner, 1975, p. 223)

For example, as we studied the educational and medical needs of individuals'

communication disorders, our focus was on their clinical needs; our ability to

evaluate and treat their deficits and the potential for profitable means of

employment in the field. My professors did not focus our attention to the

emotional, spiritual, or personal needs of the clients we would serve. This

primary focus on the professional needs versus the personal needs of clients in

the classroom was mirrored in my professor's relationship with their students. It

appeared to me that my professors, while quite concerned with my ability to

function well in the profession, and therefore represent the university well, did not

exhibit the same concern for my spiritual and emotional needs. My professors

measured my achievement or success by my ability to grasp the major concepts of the field rather than any deeper understanding. Moreover, certainly there was little to no mention of religious needs of future clients, in the classroom or myself.

This is not to say that there were not religious activities in this college environment. The contrary was true. However, the religious was reserved for venues outside of the classroom, as long as it was Christianity and as long as that religious presence maintained its place in ceremony and informal interactions. I have fond memories of various ceremonial events such as convocations, honors events, and graduations held by the university, which often resembled the worship services I had participated in during my upbringing in the Southern Black Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal Zion church. Like the church services I had attended, the university programs often began with an invocation or prayer, choir selection and call and response audience participation. In this interchange, the speakers would engage with the audience in a verbal turn taking of inspiration and encouragement. There were also several religious based organizations associated with the university such as the Gospel Choir, Student Ministries and various other groups that were connected to a specific religious theology. However, participation in these organizations was viewed as "extra curricular" and implicitly, less critical to educational importance.

The pedagogy was based on a secular humanist philosophy. This viewpoint provide a

> commitment to the use of critical reason, factual evidence, and scientific methods of inquiry, rather than faith and mysticism, in seeking solution to human problems and answers to important human questions. (Council for Secular Humanism, 2006, p. 1)

Secular humanism was pervasive in curricula content and the teaching methods of the professors. The selected readings and discussions were also grounded in secular humanist ideas. I cannot recall a time in my undergraduate career when the topic of religion or spirituality was even approached by my professors in the classroom. Given that speech pathology is a field of study that is directly linked to the caring of individuals with educational and medical difficulties and disorders I find it troubling, as I reflect that we never discussed the patients and students in terms of their spiritual needs. Our focus centered instead on their clinical needs in terms of improving their practical skills for communicating. Though we did address their emotional needs on a surface level by increasing our awareness of their sensitivities and feelings as they were related to having communication difficulties, we did not delve deeper into addressing how such struggles, which often accompany these difficulties, affected their belief systems or spiritual challenges. Furthermore, we did not address how the caring of such persons might affect us personally or spiritually as service providers. Caring for people with communication disorders, at times, can be emotionally draining and difficult. Providing students with a well-rounded set of skills that incorporate both the technical and personal skills of caring for others, such as those founded in spirituality and religion could enhance a future practitioner's ability to both, care

for others and themselves professionally. I often combine my clinical skills and knowledge with my faith when working with my clients. I believed that like myself, many of my teachers did hold specific religious traditions, and that those traditions definitely informed their teaching, given that "we teach who we are" (Palmer, 1998). Still religion and spirituality were not a classroom topic. Interesting enough, any religious impact on my college experience would have come from outside the classroom and outside of the university.

My first experience with graduate school was somewhat different. When I entered graduate school, I became a minority member of the student body and the program body. This was quite different from my experience as an undergraduate. I was one of about eight African American women in a program consisting of about 30 students total with all other students being white women. Each of us, the black students, was attending the program on full academic scholarships. Labeled a minority, I often felt unwanted and underestimated by both my peers and the professors. For the most part, there was very little effort to build personal relationships between the faculty and the black students. Must of the interactions that I had with my professors and supervisors were limited to clinical or technical matters. This was consistent with my classroom experience as an undergraduate. I felt isolated and seen only as a black student.

For this reason, the program brought in an African American professor, whom I refer to as Dr. T, to serve as our mentor and to teach courses on diversity. She was also charged with the responsibility of helping faculty and

student's in the program to understand diversity. The isolation of black students in this large body of white students and professors led to the creation of an environment where the small body of black students and professors developed an extended family both outside of the school and within the classrooms. One of the centers of this black family was the black gospel choir. In addition, Dr. T as well as the gospel choir advisor and ordained minister whom I refer to as, Mr. F and other black faculty and staff members of the university were active members along with the students. Together we prayed, sang gospel music and traveled to various churches as a family. Therefore, for the first time as a student, I socialized with my professor outside of the classroom on a personal level and it was often in the setting of the gospel choir. Furthermore, Dr. T and Mr. F met with us in their homes for leisure activities. There we often had frank discussions about our faith in God at the same time we often met great opposition by the white students who saw us as interlopers and who resented the fact that we were there on full scholarships while many of them had to work. They also resented the fact that we were given a mentor specifically based on our racial difference and this became a source of overt and covert conflict between the students and faculty. Throughout the difficulties, Dr. T would remind us and encourage us not only to do our best but to turn to our faith in God to help see us though the process. I saw her as more than a professor but a mother of sorts. This re-identification and adoption of friends and mentors as surrogate family members

is consistent with Stack's notion of "kin" as defined within the context of "social networks" and "friendship" where

> individuals begin to rely upon one another quickly, expecting wider solutions to their problems than any one person in the same situation could possibly offer . . . 'those you count on' . . . A friend who is classified as a kinsman is simultaneously given respect and responsibility. (Stack, 1974, pp. 57-58)

As a diversity specialist in the program, Dr. T was the only professor who was given professional authority to address religion, specifically, in an academic context in the classroom. It was in her diversity class that we began, as clinicians, to examine how spiritual and religious perspective of clients and clinicians influence the therapy process. For example, we examine our own personal perspectives and discussed how to manage the differences between client and clinician beliefs. However, these issues were limited to her course and I find such limiting to represent a repression of the religious in the curriculum. While Dr. T was afforded academic privilege in addressing religion and spirituality, I feel that many of the students for whom this line of discussion was a new topic in the classroom, felt that it was a bit trivial or extra curricular. Even I as a student did not yet find it to be a primary area of focus in my understanding of how to work with clients. This was however, a time when I was introduced to the complementary nature of understanding dynamics of religion and spirituality as it related to academic subject matter, albeit on a small level.

Following graduate school, I immediately began to do clinical work as a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP). Shortly after my first year of practice, I returned to my Alma Mater in the capacity of an adjunct instruction in my professional field. I was occasionally confronted with issues of religion and clinical practice. While my formal academic training had not adequately prepared me for how to deal with those issues, my personal beliefs did. For example, many of my patients often used "God talk" as well as prayer during their interaction with me in therapy. Patients often spoke of their religious faith in facing the trials of communication deficits and told often of "praying and believing" in a healing from "God." I did not yet reconcile the conversations and intersections with religion with my understanding of my standard or formal training or education; I held these situations as separate and unrelated to my overall knowledge base for my profession.

For the most part, throughout my professional career, there have been several opportunities for me to further my clinical education in the form of seminars, conferences and other types of continuing education. Moreover, like my undergraduate training and most of my master's program experience, there have been few courses offered which address the spiritual and religious dimensions of my profession. As a result, when I became a college instructor in the communication department at my Alma Mater, I initially did not provide a space in my course design for the religious or spiritual. As a new instructor, I often modeled my pedagogy after my professors in terms of what I saw as

relevant and appropriate. I had little concern about the spiritual climate of the classroom or the course content. I certainly did not contemplate issues of spirituality and education in the same thought process. Considerations of spiritual matters were reserved primarily for personal matters and self-reflection. The connection between my work as an educator and my spiritual life would surface in my conscious only after my conversion to the Bahái Faith and my awakening to critical thinking as a doctoral student.

Three years after beginning my career as a university instructor, I went through a period of spiritual questioning and searching. As a result, I converted from Christianity to The Bahái Faith. I became attracted to the faith after examining its major tenants and principles, each of which are couched with in two major themes of love and justice. Some of the major principles of the faith were centered on "oneness" or "unity" of humanity. They encompassed equality of men and women; and the elimination of prejudice of all kinds. This was the first time I had understood religious doctrine to explicitly state that all members of humanity were equal regardless of race and ethnicity or any other defining characteristic. Prior to my learning of these sacred teachings of the Bahái faith, my perception of my religious tradition, specifically as I had experienced and understood under Christianity as a Southern Black Baptist tradition, was that its customs supported the domination women by men. This was explicitly and implicitly grounded in such teachings like "Men were the head of their household" and "'Women should not be ministers." I also developed a belief that women

were created to be subservient to men given that they were men's "helpmeets" and given the fact that they were fashioned from the "rib of man," than surely they were "less than" and therefore destined to be dependent on men. This conditioning and acceptance of me as inferior with in not only my faith tradition but also the Black church was synonymous with what Williams labels as: "rampant sexism in the African-American denominational churches" (Williams, 1993, p. 191).

In regards to notions of unity and oneness, I understood that Christians were "God's chosen people" and therefore more worthy and special. Because of these teachings, I developed a feeling of superiority when comparing myself to followers of other religions. This was somewhat conflicted however, because like the teachings of inherent superiority as it was related to my station as a Christian, I also understood biblical interpretations which suggested that people of darker skin complexion where less favored by God. In fact, the very color of my skin was thought by some, black and whites, to be a symbol of God's punishment. After all, this was the simplistic explanation often given to explain slavery and racism.

These notions of Christian superiority and racial inferiority were challenged somewhat during my early stages of questioning and development of "Black Pride" as an undergrad. I had privately questioned my unfavorable place in the Christian faith, as viewed through a misogynistic and racist lens. It was not until I begin to understand the specific teachings of gender and race equality within the context of the Bahái faith that I begin to feel a sense of connection and

belief in a God that I liked. In this framework God became a loving God and not just a vengeful and "terrible" God. This new relationship with God has provided me with a more willingness and sense of responsibility towards working for the advancement of women and racial minorities in my personal and private interactions and endeavors. These changes have furthermore become and integral part of my pedagogical practices and educational philosophy.

Other principles of the faith called for universal peace upheld by a world government and independent investigation of truth. This was the first time I had understood a religion to encourage individual knowledge seeking and understanding in apposed to acquiescence to familiar religious practice. This was a great departure from my previous religious tradition as a Black Baptist, where I felt compelled to follow with blind imitation, the religious practices, and customs of my family and community. Beginning as a young child, I had adopted the religious traditions and practices of my friends and family. I went to church on Sundays, occasionally prayed before I went to sleep and accepted the Bible as the literal and undisputed truth. This, initial, unquestioning of religious practice and interpretation left me with frequent bouts of self-conflict. I definitely had a understanding of a God that was powerful and good, but I did not understand why all people did not just follow the same religious traditions if it was the "truth and the light." I also had great feelings of fear of death and damnations; given that these were frequent themes found in my experience, I had always feared God, as I had been instructed to do so. Often when I behaved "morally," it was

out of a fear rather than a commitment to some deep sense of moral fortitude. These fears followed me into my personal and professional life. As a clinician and teacher, I frequently felt that it was my moral obligation to behave ethically or I would have God to answer. My adoption of the Bahái faith influenced my clinical practice and teaching in a somewhat new manner. I continued to feel morally obligated to behave ethically, but now I felt it was more as a responsibility not only to God but also to the betterment of humanity. The benefit of morality for me was not merely for self-protection and preservation, but for the advancement of the material and spiritual advancement of humanity.

Another principle of the faith drew attention to the common foundation of all religions. The theme of an underlying unity in all the major religions reconciled for me common questions I had concerning the purpose of religious diversity. I began to view religions not as separate entities, but instead progressive revelation in an ever-unfolding covenant with God. The faith also teaches that there is a spiritual solution to the economic problems of the world. With such a solution, the extremes of wealth and poverty will be eliminated as all members of humanity become more understanding and accepting of their inherent nobility and coincidentally their responsibility to ensure that the spiritual, educational and material needs of each of its members is ensured. Additionally the faith advocates for a universal auxiliary language, which will be used to foster communication amongst diverse members of humanity and reconciled science with religion as complementing and agreeing. This is a great departure from the

perspective which is often supported in the university setting. Standard American English (SAE) is seen as the authoritative language of professional interchange. The failure to use SAE can be viewed as ignorant and therefore less worthy of respect. It is not to be used for an auxiliary or helpful purpose but as an authority or superior language. A perfect example of this is seen in the clinical practice of SLPs who are trained to insure that speakers of non-standard forms of English educated these speakers for the purpose of increasing their ability to be educated and function professionally. While we stress that dialects and language differences are not disorders, we recognized that the use of SAE is necessary for educational and professional security and advancement. In regards to the reconciling of sciences and religion, again, the faith drew a great departure from the universities relationship between the two. The Bahái faith teaches that science and religion are consistent and not adversarial and this new paradigm for me. However, the principle of "universal compulsory education" was perhaps the major principle, which bridged a major gap, held previously, between my religious life and my professional life (National Spiritual Assembly of Baháis of the United States of America, 1953).

I began to be more conscious of the spiritual climates of the various settings I operated in my personal life, and my life as a clinician and educator. I began to question my personal inspiration for everything in which I was involved. As I read more of the sacred writings of the faith, I began to view my work as a teacher differently. I began to view my work as an educator not only in terms of

distributing expert technical knowledge (Huebner, 1975), but more in terms of a "vocation" or "avocation," which interpreted through the theology of the Bahái faith is defined as a part of my spiritual calling and joy as well as worship to God. More specifically the sacred writings of the faith state: "Work done in the spirit of service is the highest form of worship" (Chamberlain, 1918, p. 83). For me, work became no longer associated with the secular, but more specifically sacred or religious.

This new understanding and reconciling of education with religion was further enhanced by my enrollment and participation in doctoral studies. My participation in the cultural studies program introduced me to new paradigms of education. As I matriculate through the program, I have developed new philosophical and theoretical bases for my pedagogical practices, which have come to enhance my previous technical knowledge for education. One of the major additions to my teaching methodology is centered on the notion of a "democratic classroom" which advocates for a classroom were both the voice of the teacher the student are welcomed into the classroom. This method of educating also creates a space where various aspects of students and teachers' values including their religious viewpoints can be heard and examined within the educational context (Freire, 2003; hooks, 1994; Shapiro & Purpel, 2005). As a participant in the program, I have had the opportunity to teach pre-service educators. I have seen a shift in my teaching practices with these students and my communication science students alike. I have begun to infuse religion and

spiritual values explicitly and implicitly in my lectures, reading assignments and class discussions. Nevertheless, I find my experience as an educator, who includes the religious along with the secular, to be somewhat isolated and rare. I have discovered pockets of like-minded people working even within the dominant atmosphere. There are those dissonant voices of the faith-based educator present and engaged in an underground struggle of sorts. In this struggle, they challenge and question the louder voices of secularism. In my experiences, however, the majority of my interactions with public institutions of higher learning have left me felling isolated and marginalized.

As a life learner, I have been involved in the university, for the latter half of my life, both as a student and as an educator. It is difficult for me to understand how individuals professing a religious viewpoint of the world are expected to divorce their religious selves in order to participate in the educational process. Ironically, my religious beliefs specially support the notion that the very purpose of education was for the increasing understanding and knowledge of God (Universal House of Justice, 1978).

The behaviors of many professors and university administration that I have observed are consistent with the characteristics of secular humanist viewpoints. The alienation of religious and spiritual language as well as isolation of religion outside of the core curriculum creates an artificial schism of thought, one which supports the notion that religion and work, specifically the educating of others, should be dichotomized and estranged. This estrangement creates two

competing and often conflicting thoughts of educating in my conscious. As a Bahái I have a different understanding of knowledge with the primary belief of a **supernatural** God and the notion that belief and worship of God should be the foundation of ones life pursuits and aspirations, especially in the pursuit of knowledge (Universal House of Justice, 1978). While my religious beliefs do not exclude reason or the importance of human contemplation and questioning, faith is a fundamental part component of the religious. This viewpoint is, very different form the views of human secularism or academic knowledge. My understanding supports a sense of humility and is far removed from the arrogant tendency of professors to discount the religious for the secular. Academic knowledge is greatly valued but it does not supersede faith in a mystical God. Knowledge of God is more important. In fact, teaching is therefore regarded highly in the faith because of its link to the improving the ability to understand God and therefore exercise faith.

This contrasted greatly with what I see present in the academy. Within the academy, human reasoning and knowledge is valued over a faith in God for increasing one's understanding and knowledge.[5] The driving force behind being "educated" is not necessarily for increasing one's understanding of God but for individualist goals. The academy appears to be consistent with the views of secular humanism, where supernatural and mysticism are rejected and replaced with "reason" (Council for Secular Humanism, 2006). Furthermore, knowledge

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[5] See Secular Humanism, Appendix A.

building seems to be routed in the examination of facts and draws on an implicit separation between the religious and scientific. Scientific discovery is valued in terms of what it can ultimately generate materially. This dichotomy between science and religion created yet another conflict in my religious faith and the technical knowledge view.

As a Bahái I see science and religion as complimentary not adversaries (National Spiritual Assembly of Baháis of the United States of America, 2006). Explicitly elements in nature and biology are frequently referred to in the sacred writings to provide metaphors for understanding the spiritual and supernatural elements of faith and religion. For example, the writings often use the human body as an analogy for understanding unity and diversity of the human spirit as well as the relationship between God and humanity. One specific example is presented when using the central figure of the faith, Bahá'u'lláh, as the "Divine physician" of the "body of humanity" (Universal House of Justice, 1978). There are also comparisons of humans being the "leaves of one tree'' and the "roses of one garden" when addressing issues of unity in diversity. The faith encourages the literal understanding of science as a base for grasping a spiritual understanding. In the university setting, there seems to be an environment were only "information," which can be supported by tangible elements or facts, with no link to the "mystical' or "mysterious," can be counted as credible. We see this exhibited in the adoption of such language as "empirical," "factual" or substantiated" or "objective" information should be the bases for true knowledge.

This supports secular humanist principles, which are committed to "factual" evidence, scientific methods of inquiry rather than faith and "mysticism" (Council for Secular Humanism, 2006). Such thinking suggests that knowledge can only be credible and therefore valuable when offered in what I see as an artificial sense of "objectivity." Such objectivity is based on a standard, which must there for be subject to provability via the five senses, thereby leaving no place for mystical or supernatural. In this context, the religious is rendered "unreal" and there is no place for faith.

The notion of objectivity become furthermore problematic for me as a Bahái educator in that my faith is a major proponent of "independent investigation of truth" (Holley, 1923, p. 276). This is the principle I interpret in two manners. The first interpretation being that we must seek out truth, knowledge, and understanding for ourselves in a critical manner and not relay on the "truths" of our ancestors. Secondly, I understand this independent investigation of truth to suggest that everyone can develop an understanding consistent with their perceptions and therefore are subjective to their capacity to interpret and understand. This mode of thinking is incompatible with a notion that there is one "objective" manner of interpreting anything. While the secular view of interpreting information is also supportive of critical thinking, it also suggest that only that which can be measured by the factual should be interpreted as credible and that the viewing of knowledge through the lens of faith or mystical is unreliable (Council for Secular Humanism, 2006).

Such hostile viewing of the religious by the tenants of secular humanism has lead to a hostile environment for the religious professor and student. This privileging of the secular over the religious limits students and professors' ability to enhance the classroom and knowledge base. Educating in this manner is based on a narrow view and perspective and creates an unnecessary dichotomy between the religious and secular. The presence of such a dichotomy leads to perpetration of violence on those involved in the educational process (Freire, 2003). This violence is created by attempting to force teachers and students to divorce themselves form their religious selves or more specifically their personal voice from their academic or "technical" voice in order to participate in the university process of education. This rejection of the religious in the open forum of the classroom is dangerous in that it does not allow religious views to be openly discussed and therefore examined and challenged.

The diversity in both religious and secular views, perspectives and interpretations continues to be present in the teachers and professors. Even though the varied and sometimes contrasting voices of the religious are silenced, its presence is manifested in other manners through the persistent struggles of the silenced and the arrogant posturing of the privileged academic voice. This is both true for students and teachers because we as teachers and students, operating within a pluralistic environment, bring our selves to the forefront in all the arenas we operate in. As Palmer explains

> Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. (Palmer, 1998, p. 2)

The manner in which teachers and students perspectives, religious and secular, are manifested offer multiple and competing interpretation of how educational content is understood, experienced, and interpreted. In my most recent years of teaching, I have become more aware of how complementing and contradicting voices have emerged through various forms in the university. I have observed professors and students interacting in class discussions, written interchanges and various other university settings outside of the classroom.

As a lecturer, I have watched my own teaching evolve as I have made changes in my theological and philosophical understandings of education. I first experienced changes with my fellow educators. Initially following my conversion to the Bahái Faith, I became very paranoid and somewhat perplexed about how I would even inform others that I had developed a new lens for understanding religion. While we rarely engaged in discussions where religion was the topic, academically or casually, I had always assumed that the majority of my colleagues working at the HBCU were Christian. Moreover, as stated earlier this was reinforced in various non-academic social events. I had formally witnesses, and participated in the implicit and explicit isolating of "outsiders" or professors and students who were openly practicing religion other than my interpretation of

Christianity such as Muslims, Catholics, Jews and other traditions we often discounted all together and did not bother to learn more about. I had great fears that my colleagues would now see me as one of these outsiders. This was a perplexing experience because I understood that my religious voice was expected to maintain itself outside of the classroom as a Christian, within this secularized environment, but I also understood that that was operating under some understood notion that I was still a Christian. To be a Bahái academician was something all together new and "weird." While it was clear to me that there was a separation between the religious and the academic, I feared that the lack of acceptance of my differing religious views would discount my intelligence and academic credibility as well. I was uncomfortable participating in the "small talk" which is often present in the informal interchanges between teachers. Such conversations center around recapping of weekend events where teachers talk about their social activates and church involvements. Furthermore, my new religious views were often out of step with some religious interpretations of my comrades. For example, often I would hear teachers speak about the decrease in students outside church participation and how they felt it had contributed to the erosion of certain "Christian" moral values. How was I to tell these people, that I too had abandoned the church and found a new religious and spiritual experience? While this is an example of more subtle instances of religious influence on professor's views, there are those of a more obvious nature.

My interactions with my students however have been somewhat different. I have begun to see more of my religious interpretations in how I interact with my students. For example, as a Bahái, I have been charged with insuring that I not only fight for justice for humanity but that I also make sure that I conduct myself in a just manner when interacting with others. Specifically, when I feel that issues of justice needs to be addressed or resolved in my classroom, I recall the sacred scripture of the faith, which specifically states,

> O Oppressors on earth! Withdraw your hands from tyranny, for I have pledged Myself not to forgive any man's injustice. This is My covenant which I have irrevocably decreed in the preserved tablet and sealed with My seal. (Bahá'u'lláh, 2002, p. 5)

In addition, there are several other times when I refer to the writings of my faith tradition for guidance in my teaching. I am aware that many other teachers like me behave similarly with respect to their teaching endeavors. The presence of theological structuring of pedagogical practices exists secretly and openly. Its presences changes with the events of our ever-changing social issues.

In recent years, as our American society has become more diverse and global, I have noticed an upsurge in more conspicuous and confrontational voices of academicians who are operating under what I see as an extremist posturing of views, both religious and secular. I have also been exposed to the more moderated and welcoming point of views of religious, spiritual, and non-religious professors.

With the various world events, which have centered on religious

fanaticisms and extremist behaviors such as terrorism, there has been an

increase in the activities of extremist Christian organizations such as the Eagle

Forum. [6] While their influence on college campuses may not be a physical

existence at all universities, their sentiment, and ideological presence is

becoming more conspicuous. According to the Eagle Forum mission, the goals of

its supporters are to

> to enable conservative and pro-family men and women to participate in
> the process of self-government and public policy making so that America
> will continue to be a land of individual liberty, respect for family integrity,
> public and private virtue, and private enterprise. (Eagle Forum, 2006)

In the educational foundations course that I instruct which consists of

undergraduate pre-service educators and future educational administrators, we

frequently discuss sensitive and controversial topics as they relate to public

education. Some of these topics include but are not limited to issues of racial and

gender inequality, poverty, moral education, students with disabilities in

education, hegemony, and sexual orientation. Often in our discussions, the

intersection the relationship between religious doctrine and moral behaviors arise

in the conversation. While I do not require students to state their religious views,

some of their statements are consistent with the views of Eagle Forum. For

example, when discussion the rights of homosexual students and parents in the

context of public education, I often have students who make comments or

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[6] See Eagle Forum, Appendix C.

statements such as "homosexuality and bisexuality" are "anti-Christian," "against

the Bible," "Sinful," or an "abomination." Each of these statements echoes a

viewpoint of groups such as the Eagle Forum, which boast their leadership in

"the ten-year battle to defeat the misnamed Equal Rights Amendment with it

hidden agenda of tax-funded abortions and same-sex marriages" (Eagle Forum,

2006). Other sentiments, which I have found present in classroom discussion,

written essays, and sidewall conversations, which are consistent with Eagle

forum views, include xenophobic view points which

> oppose all encroachments against American sovereignty through treaties
> (such as the International Criminal Court) and United Nations conferences
> (such as those aimed at imposing energy restrictions on the U. S.,
> registering privately owned guns, imposing global taxes, or promoting
> feminist goals). (Eagle Forum, 2006)

I have also frequently observed students using language which they state in

connection with honoring of "the institution of marriage," and anti-feminist

viewpoints (Eagle Forum, 2006).

As a teacher advocating for a democratic classroom, I want these voices

to be present in the classroom where they can be confronted and examined

(Shor & Freire, 1987). I think that the predomination of secularism and secular

voice has contributed to the recent increase in these sentiments along with

recent events. These ultra-conservative views are often confronted openly by

students espousing secular views which on the contrary, often remark that

religious views such as those held by Eagle Forum have no place in the public school.

Students supporting secular views often site "Separation of Church and State" as a ground for this interpretation of school appropriateness. They often focus their arguments on the notion that because public schools and even public universities are state funded; the members in these institutions must refrain from incorporating religion into "any part" of what they do. To do so is to infringe on the rights of the non-religious. Some students even go as far as to suggest that if people want to practice their religion in any fashion, they should do so outside of public supported space. In the courses, I teach in speech and speech pathology, I have seen an increase in the presence of secular views as well such as those supportive of education for the advancement of economic and material gains, "individual goals, and gains," a need for "rational" thinking, all of which are consistent with secular humanist views (American Humanist, 2006). Often I find that students are preoccupied with the utilization of education for the purpose of material gain that they are for any humanitarian or self-improvement purpose.

As a student in a doctoral program, which focuses on cultural studies, I have had yet another experience. My identification as a student exposes me to the perspectives of my professors and peers in a somewhat different manner that my location as a teacher interacting with students. The program content is geared towards fostering a democratic educational environment. Many of my professors embody both religious and secular views and are open about how

their philosophies influence their teaching and life experience. At the same time, I am exposed the interactions with the diverse students in our program. Some of my peers are openly religious, openly non-religious while still others identify themselves as in a state of "searching for spiritually." Because I believe my professors often provide a place for democratic discussion, I am able to hear and contribute to the dialogic process of exposing, analyzing, and changing my way of interpreting the world. The open forum is vital for my development of new ideas and critical thinking. If I did not have the opportunity to participate in this process I feel my views would be stagnant, unexamined and therefore less value to my life experience.

Nevertheless, managing a democratic classroom is not easy. On the contrary, educating in a manner were a dominating view is present is far easier to do. Maintaining an authoritative stance towards education where one viewpoint is offered as knowledge and rejects conflict is of a singular focus. One can prepare for rebuttals if necessary or they can merely offer their viewpoint as right and appropriate.

The teacher who encourages a democratic classroom may find himself or herself in a somewhat more precarious situation. Especially if they seek to create a place, where the religious and secular coexist and interact with each other in a more equitable format. Teachers must first acknowledge their own perspectives while accepting the authority they hold as the teacher (Shor & Freire, 1987). They have the responsibility of allowing their views to be examined and critiqued

while remaining open to the "multiplicity of perspectives" they will encounter in

the classroom (Casey, 2004). hooks suggests that doing so is at the foundation

of an engaged pedagogy and is not only beneficial for students but educators as

well

> 'engaged pedagogy' is more demanding than conventional critical or
> feminist pedagogy. For, unlike these two teaching practices, it emphasizes
> well being. That means that teachers must be actively committed to a
> process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are
> to teach in a manner that empowers students. (hooks, 1994, p. 15)

The benefit to the student allows students to bring their whole selves to the

classroom. They must be prepared to examine their beliefs as well as those of

others. However, this examination is valuable in that it allows students to build

upon and renew their philosophies and ideologies through their supporting and

re-examination. Students, like teachers, become exposed to new ideas where

they can test and reshape their understandings of their life and the world.

As professors and students, we must reexamine the privileging of secular

views over the religious in university and colleges. As both began to occupy a

more equitable place in our institutions of higher education, students, and

professors with create an educational environment whereby both groups along

with society can experience more enriched and informed philosophical and

theological interpretations and perspectives of the world. Modern universities,

which have been saturated with the views of secular humanism can benefit

greatly form the alternative views and faith based pedagogues. Students who

present themselves to the university should be welcomed into this space as whole beings and allowed to strengthen their beliefs, learn about others and consequently have their lives changed.

CHAPTER IV

FAITH-BASED PEDAGOGY

The vocation of teaching is one of both great rewards and great sacrifices. While it is often referred to as the most honorable profession, there are several, like myself, for whom the art of teaching and learning with others holds a more profound and intrinsic value. From my perspective teaching is far more than a career or a job I have been formally trained for; it is also a source of meaning and great purpose in my life. For numerous others and me teaching is a way of serving God, a spiritual practice, a form of worship. These parameters help define our practice as faith-based pedagogues. By "faith-based pedagogue, I am referring to those educators who view their work as teachers through the lens of their religious or spiritual belief (Dillard et al., 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shahjahan, 2004a). The gifts of this form of worship benefit not only the faith-based educator, but also the students they teach, the institutions they occupy and communities they serve.

Because these teachers are responding to that part of themselves which is sacred, they bring to the classroom the voice of the spiritual and the religious (Dillard et al., 2000). This voice is often missing or silenced in the currently public educational settings were the classroom, through the privileging of science and history of the spiritual has been secularized and divorced of spiritual relevance

(Apple 2001; hooks, 2003; Tisdell, 2003). This one-sided approach has failed to present competing versions of interpretation of classroom content and has contributed to a marginalization of a spiritual viewpoint.

Since the current environment in education has grown hostile to the religious, it is important that the faith-based pedagogue resist the use of dogma and proselytism as a means for sharing their religious viewpoints. Instead, these educators will need to create and maintain a democratic classroom, which will welcome and allow students and teachers to bring their authentic selves to the learning process. By doing so, the classroom becomes a place of growth for both students and teachers where both can harmoniously in the service of humanity (Shor & Freire, 1987).

In this chapter, I explore the vocation of teaching as viewed through the lens of the faith-based pedagogue. I offer this interpretation with a specific emphasis on my own religious beliefs as member of the Bahái Faith, a relatively new world religion. I wish to examine what worship means to the faith-based educator and how their unique lens of educating can contribute to the diversity of intellectual knowledge in a manner that is not dogmatic. I offer some personal examples relevant to my experience as a Bahái educator and draw on similarities that are present in other traditions.

This notion of "work as worship" is composed of two key elements: "work" and "worship" and in this work becomes synonymous with "teaching." By "work," I am referring to the professional occupations one takes up in the service of

humanity (Fox, 1994; Rohani, 2002). While my interpretation of "worship" draws on my understanding of praise and service, one performs to show guidance and faith in of their God. While I distinguish between these two elements for the purpose of clarity and definition, I do not support dichotomizing of the terms, which I feel has been a result of secularization. On the contrary, I find that the relationship between work and worship is evident in the writings and teachings of world religions.

Traditionally, faithful work is a special form of worship. In addition, it is through the service to others that our work becomes more meaningful and sacred. For example, in the book of Matthew from The Holy Bible, Jesus Christ emphasizes the importance of work as worship when he urges the people to "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Bible: Matthew 5:16). Later Christ emphasizes the importance of the serving others through the service of others: "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many" (Bible: Matthew 20:28). In the Bahái faith, the religious tradition that I follow, explicitly acknowledges the relationship between work and worship. The Kita'b-i-aqdas or "The Most Holy Book," states

> O people of Bahá' [people of God]! It is incumbent upon each one of you to engage in some occupation-such as a craft, a trade or the like. We have exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship of the one true God. (Bahá'u'lláh, 1992, p. 30)

Because of the historical link between worship and work, the conceptualization of "work as worship" may invoke visions of the faithful performing services such as feeding the hungry or healing the sick. The designation of teaching as a form of worship may not be universally recognized as a customary form of devotion, but for those who are familiar with the frequent sacrifices and priceless rewards that accompany teaching, the interpretation of teaching as a form of worship is unmistakable (Dillard et al., 2000; Palmer, 1998; Tisdell, 2003).

The challenges and benefits that educators encounter daily speak to a deep and organic embodiment of their very being. In other words, the personal connection to teaching is part of your unique purpose or calling in life (Palmer, 1998). By "calling," I am referring to that deep sense of or attraction to a particular vocation; a vocation that we fill drawn to and purposeful in carrying out. While the skills for a calling such as teaching may require development and shaping, in the form of formal education, the impetus for the development of a faith-based approach to teaching is often linked to a more organic and visceral element of personhood (Palmer, 1998). Because this teaching is also a source of great joy and happiness for many who teach, and because educators are often seen as operating in passions of leadership, I find the notion of "prophetic spirituality" as defined by Cornell West to be applicable in the examination of the faith-based educators work. Michael E. Dantley provides and excellent

summation of this prophetic spirituality with specific reference to education in the

following passage

> The second type of leadership grounded in West's prophetic spirituality I am calling pragmatic leadership. This leadership is based upon West's notions of inescapable opportunism. Inescapable opportunism contextualized the work of schools and their leadership in the broader social political, and economic environment. (Dantley, 2003, p. 184)

Furthermore, I understand this calling to be a reflection of that part of us that is

natural, familiar, and purposeful. In response to this calling to teach, we often find

ourselves, at time, while in the very act of our craft, experiencing deeply sacred

connections (Palmer, 1983; Shahjahn, 2004b). Numerous times, I have been

engaged in some intense and thought provoking dialogue with my students, and

suddenly experience what I can only describe as a mystical feeling or profound

spiritual connection. Often these experiences serve as confirmation of some

spiritual or sacred truth that I can link directly to my religious beliefs and

practices. "Sacred" refers to that which is "worthy of respect" (Palmer, 1998, p.

111). These experiences speak to a calling to teach. However, recognition for

this relationship between the religious and the activities of the classroom is not

enough to complete the faith-based pedagogue's presence in the classroom.

Educators, who view teaching as worship, regard these mystical experiences as

inspirations and influence on future pedagogical practices.

Now it is important at this time to differentiate between spirituality and

religion. Even though the two are interrelated, they are not homogeneous.

According to Michael Lerner, spirituality is "a lived experience, a set of practices, and a consciousness that aligns us with a sense of the sanctity of All Being" (Lerner, 2000). Religion, while it may evoke a similar relationship with the sacred, is differentiate by its doctrine, system, principles, and is often associated with some manifestation of God (hooks, 2003; Lerner, 2000; National Bahái Education Task Force, 1995; Tisdell, 2003). Furthermore, while the spiritual may be present in the religious, one does not need to identify with a religious tradition in order to claim the spiritual.

While I would define my call to teach as a spiritual experience, the guiding principles of the practice in my religious traditions, the Bahái Faith, nurtured that spiritual calling. In the Bahái faith, teaching, especially the teaching of children, is highly exalted and praised. Teaching is seen as fundamental in the development and nurturing of harmony and peace for humanity: "Not only should children come to understand the purpose of education both for the individual and for humanity, but children should be taught form early childhood to love and respect their teachers' high station" (National Bahái Education Task Force, 1995, p. 195). For Baháis, education is not nearly for the purpose of gather new facts and memorizing new information. The meaning and purpose of true education is essentially linked to an individual's spiritual well being:

> The education and training of children is among the most meritorious acts of humankind and draweth down the grace and favor of the All-Merciful, for education is the indispensable foundation of all human excellence and alloweth man to work his way to the heights of abiding glory. (Universal House of Justice, 1978, p. 129)

For many Bahái educators, teaching is clearly defined as meaningful service and worship. Teaching is an expression of faith. It is important that I be able to link the feelings of fulfillment and purposefulness experience in the classroom. Those times when I am able to connect my desire to teach and my profound spiritual connection with my sacred beliefs are most meaningful.

While I feel deeply rewarded, it is important that the connection I make between the classroom and my religious call not infringe on the religious freedoms of my students or fellow educators. For me this translates into willingness on my part to listen to and engage with the voices of my students and colleagues that may be consistent with and or in opposition to my own personal views. The academy and specifically the classroom should be a place where diverse interpretations of life experiences are present (Shor & Freire, 1987). It is not a place were extremist ideologies should be inflicted on students by their teachers. I do believe that a variety of views should be present. However, forcing others to except your views is dogmatic, violent, and destructive. Such conduct infringes on personal rights and liberties. The misuse of classroom space by dogmatic educators has been counter productive, resulting in the resistance and marginalization of the faith-based pedagogue (Crossman, 2003). Instead, they should introduce their students to their views and allow them to judge for themselves.

The current environment in most public educational settings is not only resistive to, but also suspicious of faith-based pedagogies. In some cases, most

vividly apparent in academe, the environment is anti-religious (Dillard et al., 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shahjahan, 2004b). This hostility towards the religious, which is often centered in the "separation of church and state" debate, is further exasperated in part by the less than favorable actions of some educators operating from an extremist interpretation of their religious tradition (Milligan, 2003; Zajonc, 2003). Often educators have misused the classroom as a platform to proselytize or indoctrinate others with their religious beliefs. Too often authoritarian professors exercising power over their students through intimidation and persecution, attempt to push their individual religious beliefs. The classroom is not a place for such harassment. Instead it should, be a safe place of both spiritual and intellectual growth (Crossman, 2003; Shor & Freire, 1987; Tisdell, 2003).

As an open space for students and teachers to interact in a more welcoming and nurturing relationship, the classroom becomes a location of exploration and stimulation. When speaking of the open classroom, I am referring to a definition consistent with the "democratic classroom." This classroom welcomes, often through dialogic process, the voices, and experiences of those from varied social, economic, racial, and gendered backgrounds. The democratic classroom does not prescribe to elitism or hierarchical classifications of authority and welcomes the critique and deconstruction of various social norms and standards, especially those that are oppressive (Freire, 2003; hooks, 1994). Furthermore, this democratic classroom requires that those engaged in the

process of critique and deconstruction must generalize their examinations and transformations beyond the classroom. According to hooks, "Embracing the concept of a democratic education will see teaching and learning as taking place constantly" (hooks, 2003, p. 202).

It is unrealistic to suggest that those interacting in the learning process can artificially divorce themselves from their religious beliefs. The educational community should not expect students and teachers to dichotomize their spiritual and their academic selves. Regardless of legislation and hostility, "teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness" (Palmer, 1998, p. 2). As a result we truly "teach who we are" and learn with who we are, including our religious and spiritual selves (Palmer, 1998, p. 1). This engagement of the full selves of teacher/learn fosters the democratic classroom and is inclusive of that part of themselves which is religious, or not.

This notion of teaching as worship, allows for the full embodiment of teachers' religious selves can benefit classrooms and the academy in other capacities, specifically in terms of fostering a learning environment respectful for diversity and difference. As the academy becomes more convivial to diverse populations, it will be necessary to acknowledge and develop hospitable environments for educators who are marginalized and alienated base on their open profession of religious tradition and practice. The marginalization of members from cultural and ethnic backgrounds which openly exercise their spiritual and religious beliefs in all venues of their lives, even education, has

resulted in a "swinging of the pendulum" of sorts whereby the religious has been replaced by the secular academic (Crossman, 2003; Dillard et al., 2000). This favoring of secular values such as empirical knowledge, market valuing and materialism, often distance educators and students whose belief systems are contrary to such values rendering their voices silenced as well as the silencing of the spiritual in the academy (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Tisdell, 2003).

Classrooms that provide a space for the spiritual and religious may become more inclusive of diverse populations through the development of understanding and the building of relationships between the religious and the secular. This building results in construction of a place where the voice of the spiritual is heard. Dillard et al. (2000) remind us

> Spirituality and this business called education implies relationships whether that's relationships with the Creator or relationships with other people or relationships with family or with students. (p. 448)

The marginalization of various culturally diverse educators will decrease when the educational setting becomes more open to those who utilize spiritual discourse.

It is the responsibility of faith-based pedagogue to ensure the development and maintenance of the democratic classroom. This requires a balancing of the religious and the academic in a manner that is exclusive of indoctrination. However, how does one educate and survive in the current educational environment while maintaining commitment to one's religious self? I

think the answers to that question can be as numerous as those that ponder it. It is paramount that teachers remain vigilant in ensuring that their religious perspectives serve as a source of enrichment. For many this will mean researching and locating that part of their religious tradition, which speaks to unity, and love of humanity.

I find there is guidance provided in my own religious traditions, which supports, unity and love while at the same warns against inappropriate use of teaching. I acknowledge that some may equate the notion of the "faith-based pedagogue" with fundamentalist extremist, my religious tradition explicitly and specifically provides direction about the issues of indoctrination. While it is incumbent upon us as Baháis to share our faith with others, the importance of building meaningful and authentic relationships is far more encouraged than teaching for the sake of teaching. The Bahái faith forbids proselytism and as an alternative instructs one to "let deeds not words be our adorning" (Effendi, 1939). Education in this context requires that its teachers refrain from the insistence of conversion of individuals to a certain religious tradition. This does not mean that there are not certain principles and beliefs that the Bahái teachers feel to be vital for the classroom. It does however suggest that virtuous behavior, teaching by example, is the most appropriate method of teaching these important beliefs. For example, the Bahái faith is composed of several principles that incorporate maintaining social justice and unity. Of course, I would hope that others would share my desire for a harmonious and just society. It is not sufficient to instruct

others to engage in such behavior. I should also ensure that I treat my students and colleagues justly and that I strive openly for accord in the classroom and academy. Such behavior develops and helps maintain meaningful relationships and mutual trust and respect. Failure on my part to abide by these principles is an act of disloyalty to my religious beliefs and is destructive to relationships in the educational environment. Furthermore, such behavior offers credence to the argument that the sacred and the secular cannot simultaneously occupy the institution of education.

The sacred and the secular can coexist resulting in constructive and meaningful experience (Austin, 2004; Tisdell, 2003). There are other principles of my faith tradition which I feel would benefit the classroom and I am sure that teachers of other religious traditions can identify educational value in their specific religious beliefs. These values can exist in the classroom without encroaching on others' freedoms. Faith-based educators can offer more to the classroom than respect of various religious views. They also foster the resisting of dogmatic teaching and practices while at the same time providing a particular view and interpretation of education. While there are several different religious traditions, there are spiritual similarities and commonalities in the teaching of these religions. Some commonalities include respect and love for humanity, the value of life as sacred, honesty and the protection for the vulnerable members of society. These similarities can be beneficial to the classroom.

The current adopting of "character education" and similar secular attempts at teaching morals offer evidence that the valuing of these sacred principles are being revisited and examined for their assistance in addressing negative consequences brought on by secularization and the hidden curriculum of individualism, rampant capitalism and market valuing. Such valuing has led to the disruption of social life for many and has resulted in a need to reexamine the human need "to do right" and return focus to "compassion, attention and gratitude" (Miller, 1995). These three principles, which are dependent upon each other, directly confront the values supported by the hidden curriculum and the negative outcomes of secular views. However, their presence is somewhat shadowed within a hidden configuration and is often passed off as widely excepted secular ethics (Crossman, 2003). The active presence of the faith-based educator allows for the examination and exposing of the hidden curriculum in a manner that can also provide alternatives.

Denial of the religious influence on such values is reckless and disrespectful to their religious origin. Perhaps teachers see these virtues through the lens of their religious selves can offer a new dynamic, which may not be consistent with secularization. The faith-based educator can offer more to the classroom than the teaching of moral and character values. In an environment that has become somewhat privileged by the academic voice, these teachers can offer an alternative view of mainstreamed ethics and conventional knowledge

that has often been taken for granted and artificially dichotomized from it spiritual and religious roots.

Along with the classroom, secularism has greatly affected the world as a whole. While not all of its influence has been negative, I believe the increasing influence of such secular themes as materialism and individualism have resulted in the disproportioned distribution of wealth and suffering and consequently an increase in upheaval and violent conflict worldwide. We have witnessed the insurgence of wars and poverty, which I believe to be greatly influenced by the unrest of the poor, as well as a generalized disrespect for the sacred nature of human life. Admittedly, much of this distress appears to be at the hands of those professing a religious agenda. Perhaps an increase in a more earnest dialogue between the peoples of the world incorporating the voices of not only secular philosophers and educators but religious and spiritual philosophers as well may contribute to a more humane society worldwide.

The craft of teaching is a profession that encompasses a great deal of responsibility to the care and respect of fellow human beings. Historically, the failure of dogmatic and religious zealots to respect this responsibility has lead to the current hostile and resistive stance in public education against religious pedagogues. However, the classroom as well as the academy has to become a place where those teachers who have answered the call to worship and serve God in the vocation of teaching, because for these teachers, educating subsists at the very core of their being. They are capable of enriching the classroom in a

meaningful and respectful manner as long as they, along with their students, are not forced to dichotomize their religious and academic selves. The more harmonious relationship of religion and intellect has the potential to not only change the lives of those engaged in the education process but society as a whole.

In the next chapter, I continue my analysis of faith-based pedagogy by explaining my research methodology. By examining the purpose of the qualitative style of narrative research, I explain how this methodology is the most appropriate form of research for examining the life stories of Bahái educators. I also address my own subjectivity in this chapter and speak to my position as a researcher.

CHAPTER V

**THE IMPORTANCE OF USING NARRATIVE TO TELL THE
LIFE STORIES OF BAHÁI EDUCATORS**

The intent of this chapter is to examine the importance of the use of

narrative research in examining the life stories of Bahái educators working in

higher education. Because I identify myself as a Bahái educator in higher

education, I must first situate myself in this research. I discuss the importance of

my use of narrative research in the study of Bahái educators by examining

relationships that I hold with the narrators and the narratives. I also look at the

importance of understanding language when conducting and analyzing narrative

text. Finally, I address the analytical possibilities of narrative research when

examining data related to my chosen subject matter.

Researchers have used various methods to examine the life experiences

of educators. Prior to the introduction of narrative research as a viable method of

inquiry, most commonly used forms of research often utilized positivist methods

which often presented a somewhat objectified view of its subjects (Casey, 1995-

1996) This method of inquiry focused on the researcher's interpretation of the

researcher's own observation. The researcher's specific inspirations,

perceptions, and influence on their research were not examined or emphasized.

Often this form of research resulted in the misinterpretation of the subjects'

opinions and perceptions as false or faulty. Researchers reported these

interpretations in such a manner as to present the information as "objective," while in reality it may only consist of a minute amount of actual material from the perspective of the subject (Casey, 1995-1996; Dillard, 1995; Peshkin, 1998).

Narrative research, as its name implies, allows research subjects to become authors of their own life stories through the development of individual narratives. Furthermore, because I examine the individual and collective life stories, narrative research is an excellent method of inquiry because members of groups often share common ideas, philosophies, and language (Casey, 2004). Interviewees, often responding to open ended questions, shape and navigate their own stories using their specific language and perspective. Such "grand tour" questioning allow for the sharing of specific information while at the same time allowing the author to have power over the direction of their comments

> Such questions are deigned to be directive enough to require concrete and precise responses, yet open enough to allow the interviewee . . . to recall anything they think might be important or amusing. On the basis of their usually very lengthy response to this initial question, the interview should have a wealth of material to begin more specific questioning. In this way, a typical interview has been structured by the interviewee, but is clarified by the follow-up questioning of the interviewer. (Quantz, 1992, p. 189)

With the increased use of narrative research in the 1980's, specifically in the field of education, the shortcomings of the previous methods were improved upon by providing a method of research which allows subjects of research to structure their own stories while simultaneously providing a place where researchers can locate themselves in the research process (Casey, 1995).

As I begin to look at the lives of my fellow colleagues in higher education, my subjectivity as a researcher on this topic is apparent. The participants and share a common religious tradition and vocation as we identify ourselves as Baháí educators. This identification is significant when encountering the modern view of education that is widely associated and often synonymous with definitions of secular views. This identification as Baháí educators is examined along the backdrop of a more common interpretation of education in the secular realm.

While I collected the life stories of others, my own subjectivities influenced the analysis of this data throughout the entire process (Peshkin, 1998). In fact, this is the foundation of my research. This inspiration for research echoes in the remarks of Dillard addressing the goals of research: ". . . our interests originate as much out of our own personal biographical situations and previous and current life circumstances as out of a sense of what we are working to bring into being (Greene, 1978 as cited in Dillard, 1995, p. 543). I hope to examine the similarities and difference of the life stories I will collect and my own life experience.

Because of the "separation of church and state" debate, as well as other debates surrounding the legitimacy of spirituality, religion and academics, the academy has become a hostile environment for those like the Baháí educator espousing a faith-pedagogy. Consequently, there has been a lack of religious language and a limited environment for such voices to be heard (Purpel, 2005; Shahjahan, 2004b; Tisdell, 2003; Zajonc, 2003). Because the Baháí educator's

voice has been limited in its location in the discourse of education, I bring this voice to the forefront of present interpretations of faith-based pedagogy through the telling of individual stories and in tern bring my own voice to the forefront as well.

The use of narrative research not only provides a place for the voices of those I am examining to be present but also helps me identify my own subjectivity in gathering and interpreting the data I collected. Because this subject matter is so personal to me, it is inevitable that my subjectivity is present in the "underbrush" of this research experience (Peshkin, 1998, p. 20). Nevertheless, I do not feel that my subjectivity "burdened" the research process. Instead, I feel I was able to exercise this subjectivity in a manner that enhanced the overall understanding of faith-based pedagogues like me (Peshkin, 1998, p. 20). Furthermore, narrative research allows me to look at the relationships I hold with the interviewees and to evaluate how, together, we maneuver and shaped the research process.

The collection of oral life histories requires that there is some sense of respect and trust between the researcher and the narrator. After all, the interviewees or authors are offering personal aspects of their lives and understand that I will examine and analyze their stories. In order for the interaction to be meaningful, it requires the development and maintenance of a relationship of sorts. Because I am a Bahái, I share a religious tradition with the interviewees and, therefore, already have a "semi" trustful relationship. As stated

previously the voice of the Bahái educator is somewhat new to the discourse of the academy. For this reason, as I suspected, the respondents in my study appeared to use language, which protected the reputation of the faith. This becomes even more vital when examining the relationship of religion, an often-taboo subject in education, and pedagogy. It was imperative that the authors and I established trust for the success of the research. When trust is adequately established, it allows the participants to be more open and forthcoming with each other and to create a more meaningful process. When I speak of "respect and trust," I am referring to the relationship that exists between interviewer and interviewee that will allow both participants to interact openly and honestly without undo anxiety and fear.

I also adopted a form of agreement between the participants, be it understood or spoken, which implicitly stated that I treat the information that we shared with integrity and respect. Trust and respect was deeply founded in the commonalities that I shared with my interviewees and the relationships we have developed. As I suspected, we based these relationships around our shared understanding of the Bahái faith, our shared interpretation on the Bahái faith and our similar interpretation of the relationship between faith and education. I chose to elicit the life stories directly from the perspective of the subjects. The collection of directly quoted narratives provided more information to my interpretive context because they provide specific examples of life experiences linked to the Bahái

faith and education. The relationship, respect, and trust that the authors and I share together greatly influence the overall research process.

Because I interviewed people with whom I hold a previous relationship, our relationships greatly affected the construction and interpretation of the authored stories. I constantly monitored my personal interactions with authors and the narrative or what is termed "an enhanced awareness that should result from a formal, systematic monitoring of self" (Peshkin, 1998, p. 19). While I know each participant in a different capacity, there are some commonalities to the overall relationships that we hold. Furthermore, I share with each participant a history surrounding the interpretive community of the Bahái faith. The second aspect of our relationship is linked to our shared vocation. Each participant is currently a teaching professor in an institution of Higher education and is aware that I am a doctoral student with a background in higher education as well. I feel that the respondent's interpretation of my experience greatly influenced their expectation of my interpretation of their narratives as well as the oral construction of their discourse and text. Furthermore, the construction of their narrative holds a deeply personal element to them for me. I often found commonalities between my own narrative and theirs. The information they shared with me greatly influenced my interpretation of the world as Bahái educator. This connection between the researcher and the authors speaks to the personal nature of narrative research as apposed to other more objective methods of inquiry. .

Overall, narrative research has profoundly affected not only on my relationship with the respondents but my relationship with the research overall.

Even as my connection with each respondent affected the narrative process, there were new relationships that emerged with the creation and interaction with the actual text of the narrative for both the authors and me as the researcher. This process is autobiographical in nature and required that the participants construct an oral history. These oral histories undoubtedly invoked both positive and negative memories related to the research of the Bahái faith and the institution of higher learning. However, most importantly these narratives were based on a disclosure of personal thoughts and feelings and self-reflection (Casey, 1995-1996). As I began to examine the narratives, I saw each author through a new clarified lens. This lens often removed stereotypes and unrealistic expectation I had previous held for my narrators by allowing me to see the strengths and weaknesses of each narrator in the context of their self-authored life stories.

The authoring of narratives also requires a certain amount of responsibility and power. As Grumet (1991) asserts, storytelling is ". . . a negotiation of power . . . even telling a story to a friend is risky business: the better the friend, the riskier the business" (p. 68). The author has the power to determine and shape the narrative in any form they wish. Its construction is completely under her/his control.

I too, as the one receiving the narrative, developed a personal relationship with the story. Not only was this the foundation of my research inquiry, it was a window into a possible understanding of my own personal and professional life. I hope that these life stories will continue to lend new clarity to my understanding of the intersection of my religious and professional life. For this reason, I have found narrative research to be both exhilarating while at the same time extremely frightening. I have so many questions of the texts and so may expectations and hopes. These individual life stories, captured by my own observation, have inevitably and forever become a part of my frame of reference and life experience. I have chosen to research a group of people who are very similar and familiar to me, which is often the case in narrative research (Kleinman, 1983). This created a great challenge for me as a researcher because the information that I came to understand from this process has had positive and negative impact on my own view of the world. However, because I am dealing with a group of human beings who I believe to be involved in a less familiar interpretation of education, I believe that there is no other method of research I could have used that would have afforded me the insight into the nuances of their lives other than the collection of their life stories. This was very personal process and required that I become engaged with the author and the narrative even if it were in the context of interviewing and observation.

In narrative research, the emergence of various relationships is inevitable. These relationships will occur between the author and the researcher, the author

and the narrative, and the researcher and the narrative. Because narrative research involves the sharing of personal stories these relationships must be respectful and trustworthy. While specific dynamics of emotion, expectation, and interpretation, shape the relationship of the research, these dynamics are invaluable and are unique to the narrative form of inquiry.

Because narrative research is predicated upon the creation and construction of oral life histories, this method of research is vital in providing a text for examining language. I am specifically interested in how Bahái educators in higher learning use language in the construction of the individual or "self" and collective identity (Brinthaupt & Lipka, 1992, as cited in Casey, 1995-1996, p. 213). I am further interested in the collective nature of their discourse and how they use that discourse to exert their voice in the academy. By examining their individual and collective use of language, I found that I was able to extrapolate some understanding of their construction of identity, discourse, and voice from their narratives.

Interpreting the identity of the narrator as it emerges from observing the text provides some insight into the nuances and unspoken characteristics of the author's life and experiences. However, it is importance that the selves created in the authoring of the text are not necessary construed by the researcher as "truths" or direct reflections of the individual but instead a creation of the author, which conveys some element of meaning to the author and the reader (Casey, 2004). Through the reading of the narrative self, we are able to navigate with the

author understanding of some component of their self (Pinar, 1988). How the narrators identify themselves was of particular interest to me because I hoped to determine if the form of self and group identification were complementary or derogatory in nature. I also desired to see if the manners in which the authors identified themselves collectively and if so if those commonalties indicated general themes associated with their religious and pedagogical views. I believe that the labeling that the authors attached to themselves as well as how they referred to and reference themselves in the text will evidence the author's interpretation of self.

Through the process of conducting this research, I feel I have begun to create a space where the voices of this unique group of educators can be heard. (Riessman, 1993). Because the Bahái educators are somewhat of a novelty in the academy, their voices are foreign and marginalized in the discourse usually associated with higher education. In addition, these educators are somewhat "othered" because of their religious views and the purpose of education. By "othered," I am referring to the marginalization which often takes place when a less familiar group of people or set of ideas are somewhat isolated from the majority or prevailing discourse. In this context of marginalization, it has been intriguing to observe how these teachers exercise their voices.

Since individual politics accommodate and inform voice, I have witnessed the presences of political parameters affecting the narrator's application of voice as well as there overall discourse. Such political parameters have included their

views on justice, race unity, and educational value. When speaking of the

political I am assuming the notion offered by Casey (1995-1996) and that is

consistent with a "reconseptualization" of previous notions:

> Perhaps the most important development within this strand of narrative
> research has been a reconseptualization of what it means to be 'political.'
> Central to this redefinition is the recognition that the personal is political
> and, furthermore, that power is exercised in all relationships, not just those
> connected to the state. (p. 238)

By examining their life stories, I have found examples of their voicing in the

context of their professional interactions with students and colleagues. In

addition, I have also found that I juxtaposed my own interpretations of the

authors' voices and political orientations onto what I may perceive as perceptions

of those less familiar with Bahái theology and discourse. In this regard, I

identified several themes of what I interpret as libratory education and the

democracy in the classroom. I discuss my interpretation in more detail in the

narrative analysis chapter.

Each narrative offered some view into the individual identity, voice, and

personal politics of each narrator. However, because I interviewed several Bahái

educators, my examination of the collective intertextuality, or presence of

common themes and ideas in their narratives, revealed a better understanding of

their communal discourse. Currently several widely accepted components of the

educational discourse exist which are consistent with secular interpretations of

education. This presence of secularism is pervasive throughout the modern

American educational system from primary to higher education and has

contributed greatly to the reification of what we think of as "public education"

(Crossman, 2003; Fraser & Groontenboer, 2004) . Some of these notions of

education are centered around but not limited to individualism, western morals

and values, competition, market values and materialism (Apple, 2001; Aronowitz,

2005; hooks 2003). My examination of the similarities and differences between

the educational discourse of the Bahái educator and that of the more familiarly

accepted discourse has revealed several consistencies across the continuum. I

found themes of faith revealed through the narratives that I felt were also

consistent with educational discourse that is more widely accepted as secular.

Narrative research provides a text for examining language. Through the

examination of the intertextuality of the life stories of Bahái educators in working

in positions of higher education, I was able to reveal some of the individual and

collective notions of self. By presenting their lives in this context, a space is

created where the voice of these educators as well as their collective educational

discourse may be heard and examined.

Narrative research requires the creation and analysis of a text. Like other

forms of research, the researcher analyzes and interprets the data or text.

Because the researcher greatly influences the new product, the perceptions

creation a new meaning in the text. This allows the interviewees to structure their

own narratives. Moreover, because the narrator has authored the text, the

researcher must remember that the author created the text in context and shaped the text using their personal inspirations and perceptions (Casey, 2004).

To generate narratives of Bahái teachers working in higher education, I asked a single question, "I'm interviewing Bahái educators, tell me the story of your life." I believe this open-ended question encouraged the respondents to speak to their life stories with some reference to the Bahái faith and education thus creating a text, which formed more purposeful data for analysis. With such a broadly constructed interview question, I feel I encouraged the creation of a somewhat lengthy oral history (Riessman, 1993), but I feel it was necessary. In limiting and isolating the data in such a manner, the nuances and detail of that data became more observable.

I do recognize that maintaining the context of the narrative does not guarantee a uniform interpretation by those who read it. However, by maintaining the narrative's context, I believe the reader is able to find a more representative understanding of the author's meaning. In addition, Riessman cautions the dismantling of oral histories that are often consistent with traditional methods of qualitative research:

> Traditional approaches to qualitative analysis often fracture theses text in the service of interpretation and generalization by taking bits and pieces, snippets of a response edited out of context. They eliminate the sequential and structural features that characterize narrative accounts. (Riessman, 1993, p. 60)

Narrative research moves away from the objectification of subjects and creates a space where readers can observe and appreciate the text in the context of their own subjectivity (Sommer, as cited in Casey, 1995-1996, p. 221). Narrative research is dependent on creating and analyzing life stories, the observation this form of subjectivity is possible and has served as an inspiration for me in terms of understanding the lives of Bahái educators like myself.

While one of the goals in analyzing narratives is to observe for the presence of author subjectivity, a second purpose of the analysis is to expose those aspects of the author's story that may not be obvious or intentionally revealed. This method of analysis, intertextuality, reveals common strands or themes. Researchers can use intertextuality to analyze individual and groupings of texts of respondents, which can become helpful in understanding individual and collective subjectivities (Casey, 1995-1996; Roseboro, 2005). This tool can reveal **selectivity**, **silence**, and **slippage**, all of which enrich the understanding of the text (Bakhtin, as cited in Casey, 2004, p. 20). Metaphors found in the narratives reveal valuable information about the common experiences and perception of the author(s).

Because the collection of life histories are extrapolated from the construction of oral texts, the location of selectivity is imperative in unveiling those instances were the author's choice of subject matter is more clarified than originally stated. Selectivity can provide a context for recognizing and understanding information not explicitly stated but implied in the text. When

examining collective text, selectivity can offer invaluable information about groups common ideologies subjectivities given that members of groups often share a common language and discourse (Casey, 1995-1996, 2004).

These individual languages and collective discourse can also be identified by what is not spoken or expounded upon. Often one can observe the implication of unstated events or thoughts by attending to the presence of silence. In many cases, what is left unsaid speaks volumes. In addition, there are those stands or common themes found in the narrative where the meaning is unclear or ambiguous. This lack of clarity and ambiguity can be incidental or intentional and therefore invaluable in providing insight into the meaning and purpose of the narrative.

As I anticipated, there were quite a few instances when the text revealed slippage. Slippage in the narrative is indicative of inexactness, vagueness, or revising language by the authors. There were several instances of slippage present in the narratives both individually and collectively. The presence of this slippage caused me to search for a deeper meaning in the text than first revealed. In that sense, slippage in the text led to the formation of more complex and dynamic questions on my behalf as a researcher and Bahái educator.

Each of the methods stated above, selectivity, silence and slippage, allow for the reader of the narrative to gain even more insight into the text than that which stated. These elements provide a context for understanding the individual and collective language and discourse of the Bahái educator as well as provide

me, the researcher, with insight into my own similarities and difference of language with the group I identify.

Narrative research is a unique form of qualitative research that fashions a space where research subjects, by becoming authors of their life stories, develop narrative text. The researchers' subjectivity greatly influences the understanding of the texts through the process of analyzing while also presenting the authors' perceptions in a more meaningful manner. I found this method of inquiry to be excellent for my examination of the life stories of Bahái teachers in higher education. It not only values the perceptions and interpretations of the authors but also allowed for the subjectivity of myself, the researcher. I found myself easily situated within the group of teachers examined. Furthermore, I feel I was able to uncover the specific language of these teachers in terms of locating their individual and collective identities, voices, and discourses.

In this chapter, I have examined the importance of using narrative research understanding the life stories of Bahái faith based educators working in higher education. in chapter six I present the narratives of those five Bahái educators. Their life stories are presented with specific attention given to the analysis of Bahái and secular themes. I examine the presence of these themes for individual narratives as well as collective. Intertextuality and the presence of silence, slippage and selectivity are analyzed to assist in developing a better understanding of how these authors express their life stories.

CHAPTER VI

THE NARRATIVES

In this chapter, I present the life stories of Bahái educators working in positions of higher education. These five people represent a sampling of the Bahái community in terms of gender, ethnicity, and worldview. I was inspired to interview these people both out of respect and admiration I held for each of them individually and collectively. I was further inspired by the commonalties I have found myself to share with them. Through the collecting of their life stories I hope to foster a greater understanding of what I do as a believer and educator. I also hope to encourage the academic community to become more welcoming of the contribution that these faith-based educators have to offer.

Each narrative is presented with a brief reference to my relationship with each respondent to provide a context for understanding subjectivity. I have given each narrator a pseudonym as well and the specific names of some institutions have been removed to protect the identity of the respondents. Sacred text from the Bahái Faith has been used to introduce each respondent as well. I choose a text that I felt is reprehensive of my overall personal interpretation of their life stories.

I present each narrative applying both a religious and secular interpretation individually and through the use of intertextuality exam the

narratives for the presence of Bahái principle and themes. I also extrapolate

common secular and academic themes both individually and collectively. In this

process, I attend not only to my interpretation of these themes but my subjectivity

in that interpretation. To offer clarity, I present examples of sacred text, which

provide more explicit examples of my interpretation. I also utilized philosophical

points of reference to assist in understanding the conclusions I draw in reference

to more secular or none-Bahái themes.

Professor Noble

O SON OF SPIRIT! Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Arabic Hidden Words)

When I first met Professor Noble, I had recently declared my faith in

Bahá'u'lláh. I had started busying myself with becoming more involved in

activities that made me feel more aligned with the principles of the new faith I had

adopted I became involved in a community choir that created to bring members

from diverse racial and religious backgrounds together to heal racism. Ever since

I could remember, I loved singing. I had been involved in several gospel choirs

throughout my youth and early adult years and was hoping the Baháis, as the

Christians had gospel choirs.

Given that one of the major principles of the Bahái faith was the

recognition of all humans as equals, specifically the quest of the faith to eliminate

prejudice and racism of all kinds, this sounded like the perfect match. The fact

that three Baháis had started the choir, this sounded like as good a venture as any. Noble was one of the members of the choir who welcomed me into the choir and helped to deepen[7] me more about the new faith I had embraced.

Professor Noble, an American born descendent of revolutionary Marcus Garvey,[8] not only joined me in choir practice and performances but demonstrated what I came to understand as her divine call, early on and throughout our interactions, her great ability to teacher and inspire others. She emphasized the magnanimity and peerage inherently present in all of God's children, regardless of race, nationality, gender or any other distinguishing characteristic. This sentiment echoed in her teaching philosophies.

> So each individual has been born noble with talents and faculties and they must bring their own talents to the tables. And this is how I teach today. I run my entire class like a community of learners. Everyone who enters the classroom, they are noble. Everyone has talents and faculties. My job as an educator is to guide and enlighten and enrich those that come into the class setting.

She easily guided me by what seemed to be her natural ability to teach. As I would get to know her and here hear life story, I would gain a better understanding of her passion and energy for teaching and the Bahái Faith.

Noble was born in New York to Liberian parents. At the age of three, she traveled to Liberia when her maternal grandfather brought her mother and

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[7] "Deepen" is a term commonly used by members of the Bahai faith to indicate researching and learning more about a given subject or specifically the Bahai Faith.

[8] Marcus Garvey, who lived from 1887 to 1940 was a Jamaican born black nationalist who is famous for his creation of the 'Back to Africa' movement in the United States.

siblings to Africa. She did not live in the city but returned to the country where

she eventually attended missionary schools taught predominately by Americans

and other westerners. This early experience with western teaching methods

served as a foundation for her future endeavors as a professional educator,

specifically one founded and guided by a strong and passionate faith-based

pedagogy. Noble's early educational experiences were anything but calm and

simple. When speaking of her schooling, she gives vivid incite into the struggles

of educational experiences of her youth in Liberia as well as the disparity she

observed between government schools, missionary schools, and private schools

> Education in Liberia was kind of rough. The country was relatively new.
> We had a lot of female teachers. They were eighth and ninth grade
> graduates who got out of school and tried to teach others the little bit they
> knew. And we had missionaries. The Catholic people sent missionaries
> out. So mostly education in Liberia was private school. Then you had
> some what we call government schools which were not as good. The
> Methodist had a school. The Baptist had a school and so forth and so
> forth. Then there were private schools. Parents actually paid from their
> pocket. It didn't come out of taxes. The government school was free per
> say. Education there was purportedly not as good as the missionary
> schools like the Catholic and so forth.

She attended several different private schools as well as a government-

supported school. As Noble chronicles her years in the various schools she,

reflects on her impression of the education and teachers she encountered in the

differing western influenced schools.

> The Methodist opened up a school when I was in the fifth grade and I was
> there for about two months and in the mean while my mom had already
> signed me up to go to a Lutheran boarding school. So I was in the

> Methodist school for two months and then I went to a boarding school by Lutheran missionaries. Now those teachers were qualified. They were missionaries. I remember a fellow from California and all around. They had people who had actually been to Teachers College and so forth.
>
> At first, I didn't want to go to the school but I started learning different stuff and so I stayed there two years and then when I went back to the capital city, Monrovia, I went to a school called the American Cooperative School, commonly known as ACS. That was a school founded for basically American diplomats children and American who were just there working on heir own and who had to send their children to school.

Noble left ACS when she was in the 11th grade. She attended Liberian schools from kindergarten to the forth grade, two months of the fifth grade and then returned after attending the diplomats school after 11th grade were she completed high school. During the 11th and 12th grade, she was in Future Teachers Association where she seriously contemplated becoming a teacher. As she acknowledges the unmistakable influence of American curriculum on her and her peers, she draws a great distinction between the educational aspirations and attitudes of Liberian and American students. The desire of Liberian children to attend school was great. Many children and their families worked for the sole purpose of paying for school. She remarks that while the education was somewhat "rote" and technology was not readily available, she and her peers did not have discipline problems. Skipping school was unheard of. Moreover, although school was expensive, families made every effort and sacrifice to ensure their students opportunities to attend.

> Now one thing about the education in Liberia that I really liked was the fact that everybody wanted to go to school. Everybody wanted to go to school! Education was so scarce people really wanted to go to school. You would have people who parents couldn't pay for school coming to do work at your house. Just to get the opportunity to go to school. They ask you: "Please pay my school fees. I'll do this work for you or I'll do that work for you and so forth. Cutting school was not anything you thought about. Everybody just wanted to go to school.

This collective desire to attend schools even served as a means for addressing discipline problems outside of the school inasmuch as a punishment for poor behavior at home was the prohibition from attending school. While this method of punishment was a great deterrent from misbehavior, the community did not necessarily support a parent's decision to withhold students from school as Noble explains

> And so one of the punishments that parent would give a child is to say: "Don't go to school" You're not going to school tomorrow. You're not going to school for two days." And that was real punishment. All the neighbors would come and beg: "Please! You're messing with the future. Please let them go to school." And the kid be crying: "Ah please! Please I'm sorry for what I did. Please let me go to school please!"

The great desire to participate in school was also present in what Noble describes as a healthy since of competition. In this school environment students aimed to be at the top of the class academically. She implies that this competition was not divisive or destructive in any way but instead spurred students to strive for academic excellence:

> There was a healthy competition in the schools. People wanted to be first in the class. We call it "I'm coming first in the class." And they all wanted it.

> But there was no animosity. The culture was one of really (emphasizing) really, really, really wanting to get educated. Glad you were getting educated. And since you were in the school you wanted to be number one in the school. We call it "DUX." D-U-X. Dux of the class.

Nobel emphasizes the difference in the competitive model she experienced in Africa as apposed to what she has come to understand in America. Furthermore, she draws a comparison between the goal of African schools and American schools in terms of the ultimate goal of education in general

> Nobody ever told you that you went to school to get a job. You went to school to better yourself. Now how you better yourself was left up to discretion but they always said you go to school to better yourself. You've got to go to school. You've [got to] go learn 'book.'

The community's support for education provided a strong foundation for Noble's future aspirations to teach. However, there were other economic and cultural forces deeply affecting her pull towards the education system. Her position as a direct descendent of the one of the countries icons, Marcus Garvey, placed her in an interesting position of status in a country, which she found to have a strong class system. Furthermore, when she came to Liberia, she was afforded an education that many other students did not have access to. This provided her with a quite early introduction to the role as teacher to her peers

> Now speaking of education in Liberia, 50-60 percent of Liberians did not go to school. They could not afford it. And even if they could afford it there was not enough schools for people to go to.

> The class system was very rigid. You had upper elite and those were basically people who were descendants of blacks who came from America.
>
> Now my mother's father was a successor to Marcus Garvey. He was the head of the UNIA[9] when Marcus Garvey died. And he finally took my mom and her sisters and brothers to Africa. And they didn't stay in the city. They stayed in one of the counties. And there was a school there.
>
> I remember when I was in fourth grade I went up to visit and when I went to visit the school, the teacher there invited me to come and teach forth grade. I remember I just learn how to multiply for example 424 time 24. I just learned how to do that so I said "I'm gone teach yaw that.'

Noble's family situation, as well as her participation in different religiously founded schools, contributed to the since of questioning that she would later incorporate in her teaching. Noble's parents separated during her youth. Her father left the family and she remarked that she felt emotionally abandoned by her mother. As a result she often felt alienated and spent quite a bit of time alone and questioning some of the existential questions in life.

> Now I was a very precocious child. I felt alienated. My father had left me and my mom. My mom, I felt she hade emotionally abandoned me so I use to have a lot of time to go in my room and think and ponder. And I always started asking questions. I was asking questions like: Why are we? Why am I a Methodist? Why the Baptists? And nobody could answer.

She eventually began to question her religious identification. Specifically she wanted to know why she followed the religious traditions of her family. The questions would follow her into her early years as a college student attending the

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[9] The UNIA is the acronym for The Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League, an international organization founded by Marcus Garvey.

University of Liberia. Here she was introduced to the Bahái faith and eventually

begin to resolve former question about religion and the purpose of life.

> When I got out of high school [on] December 10th. I got out of high school and I briefly went to the University of Liberia. I met a fellow. One day just accidentally and he introduced me to the Bahái Faith. I was very excited. Upon investigation, I found what I would concern the purpose of living. The hatred I felt towards my father, I began to gradually discard because I now understood a lot of things that I didn't understand before. Mainly that I'm not responsible for other people's decisions. I make my own choices. Everything's about choices and that we are all here to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.

Following high school, Noble began to develop her plans for a career. During her

primary school years, she had always excelled at languages and had desired to

be a language teacher. The occasional role as peer teacher coupled with

participation in Future Teachers Association had offered her some incite into the

life of and educator. While she had planed to be a teacher as a child, as she

grew into adulthood, she realized that teaching did not pay much. As a result,

she decided to study business in college in hopes of making more money. The

average salary for teachers in Liberia was quite low at that time.

> And because I was very good at language, I just knew I was [going to] be a language teacher. I even got a chance to practice doing some French. Some teaching of the French Language . . . I learned it pretty good so that was my teaching experience as of high school. When I came to college, I did business because I wanted to go back, make some money and then go into teaching because teachers didn't make anything, about 100 dollars a month or something. We didn't make much. 150 maybe. It eventually went to 600 dollars a month.
>
> But I decided I was going to do business. Go back and do business. Get enough money, build my house and do what I had to do so I could be

financially sound, then I was going to into teaching, which like I said made peanuts. I did teach periodically.

As a college student, she also became more active as a Bahái and began to see the importance of education in the "advancement of humanity" which is one of the main foundations of the religion. The advancement requires that all members of the society grow and become educated as a means for increasing the welfare of the global society. She was eventually able to bring together her understanding and love for education with a new understanding of a deeper spiritual purpose for education.

> They [Liberian youth] knew they wanted to better themselves. Now what was missing was "why" and that is what I found out when I became a Bahái. Why do we wan tot better ourselves? Because we have to advance society. And society cannot advance with everybody doing backwards stuff. So each individual has been born noble with talents and faculties and they must bring their own talents to the tables…Now as I began to develop as a Bahái, I understood that the purpose of the human race is to advance the civilization. Each day we must grow human relationships. Each day we must grow in our individual responsibility towards the human race. There fore education has to be an integral part of our lives. A true education should make each individual so good as to bring their talents to the fabric of humanity.

After college, Nobel continued to teach. She eventually married and had two children but speaks little of her personal life and marriage. She did share with me that she has worked to teach her children to understand the importance of education and to foster critical thinking and individual responsibility. She eventually came to teach in the U. S. both as an alternative school for youth in danger of dropping out or expulsion and as a college professor at a HBCU in

North Carolina. Several themes and principles emerge in Nobel's teaching philosophy when she speaks about student interactions and various scenarios she has experienced in the classroom. I came to view her pedagogy in both spiritual and philosophical terms. Her teaching exhibits various Bahái themes as well as the engaged pedagogical philosophies common with the teachings of Paulo Freire. She reflects on some specific points in her teaching which have been reaffirming in her educational and spiritual goals

Bahái themes are most obvious in the language she uses to describe her relationships with students and her inspirations for education. As stated earlier, perhaps the most conspicuous use of Bahái themes and language is evident in her use of "Nobility" as a foundation for understanding and working with her students. She expounds upon this theme when speaking of how she uses history to teach about the nobility of each human:

> Each individual has been born noble with talents and faculties and they must bring their own talents to the tables. And this is how I teach today. I run my entire class like a community of learners. Everyone who enters the classroom, they are noble.

Her uses of "nobility" show a direct connection to the sacred text of the Bahái faith. One body of revealed text from the prophet founder of the Bahái faith, Bahá'u'lláh, contains the foundation for this affirmation of human nobility. This writing is contained in the text of his Arabic translation of The Hidden Words and is frequently used by members of the Bahái community as an exemplification of inherent equality of each member of humanity based on their God given nobility:

> O SON OF SPIRIT! Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased
> thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created. (Bahá'u'lláh 2002)

Nobel uses the theme of nobility along with another prevailing theme of the Bahái

Faith, which is concerned, with the advancement of humanity. In the Bahái

community, humanity is viewed as an ever-changing and spiritually evolving

humanity. This civilization matures over time with the inevitable goals of

advancement towards a more harmonious and just society. Furthermore, this

advancement is directly connected to the education of humanity, both academic

and spiritual education. An example in Nobel's direct connection between this

spiritual them and her teaching practice illustrated in her description of her

individual teaching practices

> I actually use history to show how far humanity has come. I use history to
> show that human experience into how we began to divide. And why we
> have to tap our nobility to make a better society. That without each
> individual, we cannot . . . We will; not succeed. Each individual has to be
> an integral part.
>
> No matter what the color of skin, no matter what religion or creed, we must
> come together as we carry the world forward; as we advance to our
> destiny as a human race . . . We must of a necessity concentrate on that
> which will take humanity to another level of development. And we owe it to
> the future.

This view for human advancement is seen as divine and evident in the following

Bahái quote and echoed through various quotes and sacred writings of the faith.

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahia's of the Unites states quotes the

writings of on of the central figures of the faith, Abdu'l-Bahá' as follows:

> What then is the mission of the divine prophets? Their mission is the education and advancement of the world of humanity. They are the real teachers and educators, the universal instructors of mankind. (NSA 1943, p. 273)

When speaking of her specific role as a teacher, she utilizes yet another theme of common use in the Bahái community. This metaphoric representation of the teacher depicts individuals' responsibility based not on selfish or egocentric desires but instead one which seeks to be used as an instrument of Gods divine purpose. In this role, teachers, like Nobel, seek to teach as a direct responsibility to the work of God or what I interpret as work as worship. Acting in such a spiritual role Nobel becomes a guide. As the "hollow reed," she is an instrument utilized by the divine to do the work of God and to lead not push the students into their roles and responsibilities to humanity

> Its impacting many people's lives. But I'm just an instrument. It's not about me. I'm just an instrument. Hopefully I can become a hollow reed through which the pith of self has been blown. Its not about me its about advancement of the planets.

The connection in how she speaks about her role is evident in writings from Abdu'l-Bahá, a central figure of the Bahái Faith, when he speaks of the divine role God's servants, or reeds:

> This reed is a Perfect Man Who is likened to a reed, and the manner of its likeness is this: when the interior of a reed is empty and free from all matter, it will produce beautiful melodies; and as the sound and melodies do not come from the reed, but from the flute player who blows upon it, so the sanctified heart of that blessed Being is free and emptied from all save God, pure and exempt from the attachments of all human conditions, and

is the companion of the Divine Spirit. Whatever He utters is not from Himself, but from the real flute player, and it is a divine inspiration. (NSA, 1993, p. 45)

There are other threaded themes present in the narrative and teaching of Noble which are not as explicitly explored but nevertheless are present. She stresses the importance of building unity in order to foster service to the human race and is a proponent of the use of education as the development of 'knowledge, eloquent speech, wisdom and spiritual perceptions' each of which are explicitly part of the Bahái discourse. While the presence of Bahái themes is obvious in Noble's pedagogy, there are also other characteristics of her teaching philosophies which representative of those outside of the Bahái Faith. I found the description of her teaching methods to be consistent with the teachings of Paulo Freire. Freirean teaching calls for an anti-banking, active engagement of students and teachers in an educational process were ideas are not "deposited" and "consumed" by students. Instead, students become involved in the dialogue and part of the democratic process or education and questioning and critical thinking is encouraged (Freire, 2003). Nobel echoes Freire's anti-banking education as she describes her role as a teacher and her vision for the students' role in the education process:

One of the things I have learned is the students must be a part of creating their curriculum or creating that means whereby the curriculum is implemented. For example if the North Carolina curriculum says: "Teach the civil war," okay so we can teach the civil war, but how we do it can be guided by me as an educator but the student have to have an input into how we implement the lesson. They have to feel ownership.

Utilizing the themes of her faith along with those common with education philosophy she draws a connection between what may be her ultimate goal in educating, one that returns to her original goals of facilitating the awareness of her students' nobility and their role in the advancement of humanity. This is reflected when she states: "Education is really about knowledge, eloquent speech, wisdom and spiritual perception. We must question. It's not about rote learning. It's critical thinking."

Noble spoke openly about how she viewed her role as an educator. While she frequently drew direct connections between her teaching and religious and philosophies there were yet portions of her story, which I only came to understand when I examined the more implicit or unspoken, levels of her life story. The silence, selectivity, and slippage presence in her narrative provided views into her experience as a Bahái as well as an educator.

What was most apparent in the narrative of her life story is the absence of adult personal information. She provided her story as a youth, but as she chronicled her life into adulthood, there appeared to be an abrupt end at early adulthood with a brief summary of her college experience. She spoke sparingly about her siblings, husband or children. The exclusion of these significant family members suggests a great protection of her personal life. She spoke scarcely about her formal college teacher education although it appears that she was formally prepared to be a teacher. The exclusion of such personal information is accompanied somewhat by a selective attention to her family in general terms as

is demonstrated when she describes her family in terms of "my mothers siblings" and "my children."

I also found Professor Nobel to be selective in her use of Bahái language. She was very careful when using Bahái terminology. She carefully emphasized her philosophies as Bahái rather than her own. She often gave the credit of her thoughts to the faith rather than herself. Some portions of her narrative were interesting in context of her teaching philosophy. While she often admonishes the purpose of education to be for material gain, she does imply that the profession of teaching is not one, which is necessarily financially feasible. In fact, she specifically speaks of seeking a business degree in order to be more economically independent while simultaneously desiring to become a teacher. In this since education seems to serve as a commodity that could serve another purpose other than personal improvement or "betterment." The comparison becomes more significant when I begin to understand how she viewed education in current college system as one, which seeks to serve the purpose of educating for getting a job:

> Why are we getting educated? We are coming into (pause) especially I've discovered, America, to my dismay we are actually told: "We are going to school to get a job" Well the way I see myself as a Bahái educator, a job is a collateral effect, accentually, we are actually going to school to be a better member of the human race.

The conflict in her narrative may be an example of the evolution of her education philosophy from a young college student to an adult college professor.

I also observed a struggle in her goal to remain as the "hollow reed." While her narrative utilizes language, which appears to deliberately, remove her as responsible for her successful and meaningful teaching, it is evident that the work she has done with students as well as people like myself has had a positive impact. She does admit some personal joy in recognizing that her work has been positive to her students. This is clear when she spoke exuberantly about overhearing a students comment on her teaching style

> So I was passing and I heard this little boy say to another boy: "You know what I want Ms. Noble cause everybody says I'm bad but the day when [she] teaches make you want to be good. I just wanna be good" And I passed like I didn't hear but then I said to myself:" Wow, you mean to tell me this approach really does this to that young man?"

By referring to her teaching and pedagogy as "this approach" she negates herself somewhat and diverts credit elsewhere but it is clear to me that she is the person responsible for the positive effect on the young student's life.

Professor Noble's life story is a quintessential example of the faith-based pedagogues. She chronicles her life in terms of significant events in the evolutions of her own education as a young student as it emerges into her life as a teacher. She consistently utilizes Bahái themes to tell her life story with some integration of secular education philosophy. Through her life story, we gain entry into the life of a Bahái educator and their interpretation of their work as worship to God and humanity. Her teaching has inspired fellow students as well as my self

and has help to inspire and facilitate understanding of our inherent nobility as human being.

Dr. Seeker

O NOBLE Friends! O Seekers for the Kingdom of God! Man all over the world is seeking for God. All that exists is God; but the Reality of Divinity is holy above all understanding (Abdu'l-Bahá).

I came to know Dr. Seeker when I began to investigate North Carolina in the hopes of locating members of the Bahái faith who were working in higher education. I had spoken with him casually while attending various events but had not had the pleasure of knowing him. In my search to gather participants for my research, I would come to be on familiar terms with this self-proclaimed "hippie" as he shared his life story and all the great adventures of his life as a quintessential nomad.

Dr. Seeker has lived and is living quite an interesting and well-traveled life. He is the prototypical world citizen having traveled domestically and internationally throughout his life. Interestingly enough, most of his traveling resulted appeared to have been spurred by various educational quests and knowledge seeking ventures. The domestic segment of his globetrotting began in his youth. Born the first of four children Dr. Seeker's earliest recollections are of his family living for 10 years in campus housing of a private school where his father taught. Because the academy where he lived drew both a national and international group of students, he felt exposed to a diversity of "world views" and

perspectives through the interactions he shared with his extended family of students and residents. The relationships he shared with school community appear to have served as an introduction to his identification as a world citizen. In his words "that was very important for my world view because I was never sort of confined by the nuclear notion of family." His father's summer teaching excursions to other parts of the country further enhanced and helped develop his global view.

> [This] academy drew an international population, a national population. It was a privileged [community] but one that was committed to a liberal view of the world. I felt as if my family gave [me] not only the gift of a good education but also allowed me to grow up in an atmosphere that functioned as a broader family. And that was very important for my worldview because I was never sort of confined by the nuclear notion of family.

Recognizing the elite nature of his living experiences, his father spent many summer working for different educational programs to expose him and his siblings to diverse communities. Two of these programs were Upward Bound and A Better Chance. With constant traveling during the summers, by the age of 12, he had traveled to 48 states including Massachusetts, Minnesota, California, and Colorado.

At the age of fourteen, he embarked on international traveling when he accompanied his father and the hockey team he coached to Europe. While he traveled as a member of the team, he was actually much younger than the team members were and often "wandered" around Europe while his father was quite

busy working with the team. He remembers that he accompanied his father as they traveled behind what was termed the Iron Curtain at that time to Czechoslovakia. He refers to this experience as introducing him to the feeling of being a minority for the first time:

> When I was fourteen my dad was a hockey coach and I traveled to Europe as a fourteen year old as part of his team. But he was very busy with the team and I was younger than the other people on the team so I had time to where I could travel and wander through European cities. We went behind the Iron Curtain to Czechoslovakia and I remember just the experience of being alone and young in an individual country realizing, feeling myself as a minority for the first time.

At the age of 16, Dr. Seeker launched his solo traveling when he boarded a Greyhound bound for Isle Royale National Park in Michigan where he hiked alone, for the most part, meeting up with a friend later in Utah. Ironically, it was at this young age that he saw the emergence of an uncommon faith that he would be protected regardless of what he encountered:

> I was alone for weeks confronting very elemental fears like: Would I be trampled by a moose? In fact I was out there alone and I hitchhiked around out west. I met a friend in Utah and hitched hiked around there and got a sense of assort of power that I could travel.
>
> That I could discover new things and also in some was that I would be protected in that experience. Even though I was young and naïve. I had a faith that I would get what I needed.

Following high school, he took a year off before college to travel to Sweden where he attend Swedish gymnasium and learned the Swedish language. Although he no longer uses the language, the linguistic experienced lunched an

insatiable love for language prompting him to read the dictionary front to back. As

he puts it, "I really got into words."

Dr. Seeker applied and was accepted to Williams College but, again,

desiring to travel, deferred his admission for two years. He did eventually enroll in

classes but invested little during this time academically. During that time he was

"exploring" and "partying" a lot and did not feel "intellectually fulfilled." He did

however become interested in self-analysis his sophomore year. During this time,

he began to question the purpose of his education and searched for a

prospective on the meaning of education.

> So I think psychology was important for me to begin to question what was
> happening in my experience. How do I understand my mind and its
> priorities. And it was during that January that I realized that I really needed
> to understand what education was all about. That I was being given this
> education but I didn't understand its meaning and that I needed to search
> for prospective on what the meaning of education was.

Determined not to "go through the motions" of learning, he decided to take yet

another year off from college. After working and raising $1,200 over the summer,

he traveled to New Zealand and Australia. He continued to rely on his

faithfulness in an unseen protection.

> That year was an intense year for me. It was the year of my spiritual birth
> really because I went through as much unlearning as learning. I
> questioned the whole premise, all the premises of what had been taught to
> me culturally. I realized that culture was relative and that its truths were
> relative. That I could not rely on them for ultimate meaning. And that's a
> very sobering experience for a young person.

He recalled during one week in this period where he again was alone in the wilderness. He had walked for a week through a national parking chanting. He spent five days sitting on a river unclothed and abstaining from food in great mystical contemplation searching for meaning. Shortly after this period while still in New Zealand, he learned of the Bahái faith. He recounts his discovery of the Bahái Faith:

> I was in a small town on the south island of New Zealand. I had come into town and I was going to camp in a little park outside of town, out in the woods where I didn't have to pay any money for accommodations. I was sitting in a hotel and I talked to a woman. I told her I had just come in and wanted to see directions.
>
> She said "Why don't you come and stay at our house. The guy who runs the house loves to have guest. He's very open. Keeps an open house." And I said sure and this is the kind of thing that happens when you travel and are open to meet people. There is a whole traveling culture of people. I went to this place and this man was very open and I remember the night . . . I remember him at midnight praying the midnight prayer of the Bahái Faith . . . opening my spiritual eye. And after three days he left me a book. William Sears, *Thief in the Night.*

He studied the book and began to meditate on the teachings of the faith. He traveled further in the country and encountered another woman who silently handed him a copy of Bahái sacred scripture, *The Hidden Words*. He refers to this experience as one of great mysticism and wonder. He read the writing and found them to be very overpowering and yet reassuring that he would be provided with his spiritual requests.

His continued study of the faith revealed its teaching of individual responsibility and role in the "advancement of humanity." Fostered somewhat of a desire to return to the once familiar and comfort of community and the company of others,

> I was moving in such a mystical direction to whether I was going to come back or whether I was going to connect with people and I think that's the first thing that the Bahái Faith gave me was the realization that I could not fulfill my destiny in isolation of other humans. That I needed to come back and work within culture, within society in fact that the very structures of human society needed to be reformed and altered as part of the process of salvation.

Shortly after this period of awakening, his grandfather passed away and he traveled back to New York for the funeral. He had not officially become a Bahái yet but was aligning his behavior more with the faith. Accordingly, He was no longer drinking or taking drugs as he had done in his earlier years of exploration. After his grandfathers funeral he traveled downtown to the Bahái center in Manhattan. Finding the building locked he searched the yellow pages and found a listing for the Bahái International Community at the United Nations (UN). At the UN, he found bookshelves filled with Bahái literature. Because the literature was reserved for the delegates of the UN he was not able to take any of the literature with him, with the exception of a copy of *A Call to the Nations* by Shoghi Effendi.

He "devoured" the book but still needed more information. That following fall semester he traveled to the Bahái house of Worship for the American

continent in Wilmette, Illinois. Unlike his previous excursions, he was able to use the experience for a course he was enrolled in. In that aim he decided to write a paper on Horace Holland, a prominent member of the Bahái faith who had attended the same colleges as he. Daily he read several of Holland's papers and traveled to the house of worship. During this time became involved with the Chicago Bahái community and began renting an apartment with some Baháis. By this time, he had also investigated several of the other world religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Islam. He added to this religious study his personal experience of having been raised by an Episcopalian mother and Catholic father. Although his father had been required to raise him as a Catholic, he felt no true connection to the spirituality of that faith tradition. He viewed it more as a "social phenomenon" rather than a religious one. His reflection on all he had learned about religion including the Bahái faith provided him with an understanding of the Bahái Faith's teaching of an underlying unity in the world religions. Therefore, at the age of 23 he became a Bahái.

Following his graduation from Williams College, an undergraduate liberal arts college in western Massachusetts, he applied to Stanford University for graduate school planning to major in education. Because he had virtually grown up in a school and his father had been a teacher, school was home for him. Teaching seemed natural. While at Stanford, he worked toward his teaching credentials and began student teaching. He was studying social studies and

English as well. After an "intense" year of teaching as a high school teacher, he decided that he needed to travel again.

Following graduation and after securing a grant from Berkley for a research program, he traveled to pick weeds in the ancient Greek ruins for a month. He was expected to bring the knowledge of his experience back to incorporate in the classroom; however, he had no desire to return. He instead wanted to travel to the Bahái holy land in Haifa Israel. After traveling to Haifa via Cyprus, he learned that although he was a Bahái, he still needed permission to come to the holy land. He was granted a three day visit during which time he served as a gardener in the terraces of the holy land. His three days turned into six months.

> Then it was a very special moment for me because I lived in [a] truly international community. One that was spiritually informed. One were I had sort of a glimpse at what a global community premised upon the idea of unity could be like. A much more evolved vision of what I had had at the boarding school but along the lines of this vision of an organically, powerfully informed community.

Unfortunately, his student loans became due and he had to return to the US and work in order to pay them off.

Prior to his leaving Stanford he had met the woman who would become his wife. When he returned to the states to get a job, they had an opportunity to resume and develop their relationship. They were both teaching in California. They decided to travel to rural Guatemala and work on a Bahái project there. When they returned, they had the opportunity to teach at San Mate California.

The diversity of the community, again, offered further confirmation of the diverse global community. The experience served as a great motivator for both he and his fiancé to teach internationally.

> I was teaching at San Mate California and the diversity of that community made it a teaching experience unlike anything I'd ever had because there was pare of the bay of San Francisco that had been filled in and then a hill that had wealthy people living on it and they all went to the same public school.
>
> So the community in the public school, the classroom community was more diverse than any community I've ever been to with the exception perhaps of the one I Haifa which was remarkable. There were five or six different types of Asian and also Latinos from all kinds of different national communities. Anglos were a minority and it made me teach American History a different way.

The two got married over the summer and after a honeymoon in the Shetland Islands they traveled to Pakistan where he taught children literature and history for three years. He describes the children he worked with as "privileged." His experience in Pakistan has contributed greatly to his current interest in educating westerners about the diversity of the Islamic community.

> We were teaching American curriculum but we were teaching Pakistani children, privileged student who also taught us about their culture. We were completely living in a Pakistani community. That were I got my primary intellectual interest that I have been working on ever sense which is 'American attitudes towards Islam.' Not only informed by the Bahái vision that Islam has a place in the evolution in human society but living in Pakistan we realized that the west attitudes toward Islam was that they were Orientalist. They were to informed by any real dialogue with Islam.

Following his time in Pakistan, he decided to apply to graduate school again. He and his wife were trying to have children at the time of his acceptance at Yale University. They returned to the Connecticut where they stayed for 10 years while he studied American Studies. During this time, they had four children and became very active in family life while teaching at a few different universities. He and his family eventually traveled back to Australia where he taught at an Episcopal high school. He and his wife taught at public schools, international schools, elite colleges, and commuter universities finally returning to teach in North Carolina for a prominent state university where he now teaches American Studies.

His move to North Carolina offered him the opportunity to teach in an intellectually stimulating environment and provided him with the opportunity to be fully "engaged" in a very involved Bahái community. These were new experiences for him. He now works to integrate family life, teaching, and Bahái service in the service of unity. He feels that the teachings of the faith have helped him to "feel at home in the world on one level but also content with the ultimate homelessness of life in this world."

> So at this point of my life, I have three very important phases, elements that I work my best to integrate: an active family culture with four children, an advanced research position where I am teaching undergraduates and graduate student and a life of Bahái service in which I'm working with community members and also trying to advance the society by applying Bahái principles in a way that can help to bring about a fuller and more just society.

He expresses a great sense of gratitude and responsibility to act on the knowledge he had gained from his various traveling, educational, and religious experiences. He exercises this gratitude and responsibility in this classroom, which he refers to as an "intense laboratory." One of his goals is to provide his students with a perspective that their cultures do not provide and to provoke "ways of thinking and questioning the complacency of cultural conventions." He views these tools as important for achieving the goals of advancing civilization, which is an ultimate goal education for him. Dr. Seeker expressed these goals are particularly important for American students given the role that the country plays internationally and the power that the country has. He admits that bringing students to an understanding of the position is challenging but necessary for the future advancement of the global society:

> I see enormous challenge in the future. I think that there's still a lot of unlearning that our own culture has to do before it can rise and play its role in the world. Yet I think it's crucial to understand American experience because the power of this nation, upon the power of this nation depends the nature of the world community that's going to evolve in our lifetime.

Dr. Seeker views his responsibility as a college professor and Bahái, provides him with a great opportunity to help the students he teach to understand and grasp their position. His goal is to teach his students to be "accountable" for every human on earth.

When examining Dr. Seeker's teaching philosophy through the telling of his life story, for Bahái themes, there are several which are immediately

apparent. The first of which is his constant attention to global citizenship. His very life story is a metaphor for world citizenship. For example, he begins his story by illustrating how his early living arrangements in a boarding school greatly introduced him national and international students. He refers to this experience as essential for his "world view":

> I felt as if my family gave not only the gift of a good education but also allowed me to grow up in an atmosphere that functioned as a broader family. And that was very important for my world view because I was never sort of confined by the nuclear notion of family.

Dr. Seeker's use of this Bahái theme is manifested when examined within the context of the following Bahái doctrine as expressed by the Universal House of Justice of the Baháis:[10]

> The concept of world citizenship is a direct result of the contraction of the world into a single neighborhood through scientific advances and of the indisputable interdependence of nations. Love of all the world's peoples does not exclude love of one's country.
>
> The advantage of the part in a world society is best served by promoting the advantage of the whole. Current international activities in various fields which nurture mutual affection and a sense of solidarity among peoples need greatly to be increased. (Marks, 1986, p. 688)

Dr. Seeker draws a connection between the Bahái Faith's doctrine and his pedagogical goals, explicitly, speaking of his role as and educator of American students and his aim of

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[10] The Universal House of Justice is the international governing body of the Bahai Faith.

What type of leadership is going to have an enormous responsibility on Americans to use their power and privilege, not only to support their own self-interest, national interest, but to serve the interest of humanity.

He expands his pedagogy from world citizenship to include other themes of the Bahái faith, which center on unity. This unity is defined by a goal of abolishing prejudices based on ethnicity, nationality, or religious differences. He expresses his pedagogical concept of unity when he states

I hope that I can play through education, through Bahái service some small part in helping the growth of this more world embracing perspective. To teach that we need to be accountable or every human on earth. That when one looks at the notion of "We the people" it is not a radicalized people, it is not a religious people, it is not a national people, but it is our species, or race, our family that needs to be embraced as the ultimate community.

His comments show a direct relation to the holy writings of the prophet founder of the Bahái Faith which states

O CHILDREN OF MEN! Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory. (Bahá'u'lláh, 2002, p. 68)

These themes of global citizenship and unity combine to foster the principles of yet another Bahái theme in Dr. Seeker's teaching. The notion of the

advancement of humanity of civilization is expressed in his pedagogy. He draws

a connection between developing students' global responsibility to a broader duty

of fostering this advancement when he encourages his students "To break

through those limitations and to imagine a clear and broader attention of future

for a human community." This attitude draws from Bahái teachings which

advocates for a

> Commitment to the cause of international peace; the abolition of extremes
> of wealth and poverty that were undermining the unity of society; the
> overcoming of national, racial and other prejudices; the encouragement of
> equality in the education of boys and girls; the need to shake off the
> shackles of ancient dogmas that were inhibiting investigation of reality –
> these principles for the advancement of civilization. (Universal House of
> Justice, 2001, p. 25)

Dr. Seeker's teaching philosophy was also evident of ideas which bridge

his interpretation of the Bahái principles with teachings more commonly viewed

as secular. He frequently speaks of an "unlearning" of conventional social

constructions, which I found to be consistent with the teachings of Antonio

Gramsci. He appears to seek to foster, in his students, a rejection of hegemonic

thinking. It appears that Dr. Seeker hopes to contribute to the development of

"organic intellectuals" which will grow to question and challenge conventional

theories of power and social construction (Gramsci, 1971). This theory becomes

evident when Dr. Seeker states, "I like to provide students with perspectives that

their culture doesn't normally give them. To provoke ways of thinking and

questioning the complacency of cultural conventions. I think there are multiple ways of knowing and representing culture."

In addition to the theological and theoretical underpinnings present in his teaching and life experiences, I saw his life in several metaphoric representations. With the beginning of the telling of his story, it becomes apparent that he has traveled quiet a bit. Interestingly, his travel seems to suggest some need to address a nomadic relationship he feels with the world. He specifically references his life as being one, which is ultimately an existence of "homelessness," and frequently expresses a great "need' to travel and be alone. While it appears that his family may have resolved former aspirations for solitude, he continues to express a desire to continue to travel.

This nomadic behavior is further enhanced by a constant need to seek out knowledge. This teacher-as-seeker was present through his pursuit of gathering information about the Bahái faith prior to his declaration to the faith at age 23. He traveled nationally and internationally in search of Bahái literature and studied the information voraciously. This seeking of knowledge extended to his education pursuits. In the process of working on his undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degrees, he took great advantage of any opportunity to link his studies with opportunities to travel including when he traveled to Haifa Israel and Greece.

The presence of Bahái themes, social philosophy, and metaphors echo loudly from Dr. Seeker's narrative. He is very frank about his aspirations as a Bahái educator and his history of travel and education. I would like to understand

more about how he views his formal education. Most of his college experiences, both as a student and teacher, took place in elite American colleges and universities. He did not draw great attention to these institutions but casually referred to the schools when chronicling his studies. I would be interested in learning how he feels how teaching and learning takes place in these institutions. While he acknowledges a sense of privilege in his younger years, I wonder if he views the choices he has made as a student and teacher to work in these universities and colleges in the same sense. When he speaks of "unlearning," I wonder if this is a comparative analysis of his previous educational experience with what he aims to do as a teacher.

Dr. Seeker's life as a Bahái educator illustrates a great desire by professors like himself who seek to draw a connection between their spiritual and religious beliefs and their professional work. He recognizes that his position as an educator affords him the opportunity and responsibility of working towards fostering social responsibility and unity globally. While he acknowledges that this is a great challenge, he appears nonetheless equipped with an abiding faith and intellectual grounding that will allow him to be successful in his endeavors.

Dr. Justice

One sees a reflected light in the thoughts of all, signs of the desire for this unity. Through Bahá'u'lláh hearts have been attracted. All are agreed that to establish justice between the members of the human family is the most stupendous task of the ages. (Abdu'l-Bahá, Divine Philosophy, as cited in Chamberlain, 1918, p. 61)

When I first met Dr. Justice, I instantly felt a sense of approbation and respect for him. His dress of African print dashikis layered over business slacks coupled with his love of jazz and occasional use of 1970's era colloquialisms left me with the impression that he was the epitome of the well-educated black man that many young professionals in my generation admired and aspired to emulate. I had witnessed him lead several Bahái spiritual gatherings, which was indicative of the trust the Bahái community placed in him. He seemed to be confident and comfortable in his delivery. The members of the community appeared to hang on his every word as he guided the community through spiritual, administrative and fellowship portions of gatherings. When I had the opportunity to interview Dr. Justice and hear a little about his life story, I felt confirmed in many of my perceptions about him. I also found that he fit outside of my box of stereotypes in many other ways.

Dr. Justice was born one of seven children in northeast Washington DC. His family lived in public housing, which he referred to as "The Projects." He described his parents as hard working people who both held government jobs in order to provide a living for their family. Although there was not a lot of money for extras for a family of seven children, his childhood was generally a happy one:

> Growing up as one might expect, there were seven of us so my father worked a couple of jobs at times. He worked for the postal service as a security officer. And my mom worked for the Department of Treasure. Then she went to the post office to work. So we did not have, I mean we did not go hungry. We had clothes on our back but we were not by any means wealthy or well off.

The neighborhood he was reared in was a place where everyone looked out for each other, especially the children. His neighbors and friends functioned as members of an extended "family." He compares his childhood to that of the African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child":

> You could sleep outside. You didn't lock your doors. You would not think about talking back to an older person, one of your elders. Not to mention rob them as they are doing currently. So there was a sense of community. There was a sense of family and your neighbors were also like a segregate family.

Dr. Justice was educated in the D. C. public schools system. While he did successfully completed school, he spent quite a lot of time during his 10th grade year in pool halls. He admitted that he and his friends occasionally spent some of that time drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes. Schools were "uneventful" for him and he really had no desire to attend college and certainly no aspirations of attaining a Ph.D. at that time.

His relationship with religion during his youth was somewhat uneventful as well. He was raised a Methodist and attended church "every Sunday" However, he remembers that participation in religion activity was more of an expectation and community routine than a personal choice. Religious goals appeared to be less of a motivation for attending church

> Well I was raised a Methodist and we were required to go to church every Sunday and my parents did not go often but they made certain that we'd go. We had to get up out of the house. And once going to church I found five dollars so that certainly heightened my enthusiasm for going to church

because I continued to search for money. And church was a cornerstone
so to speak for community life, you know. You went to church.

Therefore, the attendance of school and church was a norm with little intrinsic

purpose for his life at that time. Because he had not pursued his education with

any specific goals for after school, his senior year left him with limited

opportunities for a professional career. He did however have some interest in law

enforcement and decided to take "the test" to become a police cadet. After

successfully passing the test, he went to work for the DC police department. He

remembers that he would have missed the opportunity to be a police cadet had it

not been for one teacher:

I passed the test and all I needed to do now was get out of high school.
And this one teacher said, 'I can't pass you. You very seldom come.' So
after we had our conversation she said you know 'get out of here.'

His experience as a police officer became as an impetus for his career in

higher education. The racism he experienced while working as a police officer

coupled with the experiences of his youth provided him with a desired to combat

racism and seek justice. Because his community had somewhat "buffered" him

from racism as a youth, he had not come accustomed to a more general sense of

inequality experienced with his peers living outside of his D. C. community. He

rarely ventured out of his community and consequently had limited personal

interactions outside of the black community.

He did recall one experience, which gave him some of an understanding of the presence of racism operating throughout America during the 1950s and 1960s. This memory eventually served as a frame of reference for the work he did as a police officer.

> Being in South Carolina, Lancaster, we had a cousin. We were going to the theater. I must have been about ten at the time and I'm use to just going up to the front and he said 'no you can't go to the front' and I said 'why not?' and so I insisted that we went to the front and they told us in no uncertain terms that colored had to use the side door to enter. People of color could only sit upstairs in the balcony.

That experience made such an impression on his life. When he became a police officer, he was determined to treat people equally regardless of race, even if this equal treatment meant equal justice for breaking the law.

As a black police officer working in some of the upper class areas of D. C., which Dr. Justice referred to as the "Gold Coast," he began to have an increasing urge for justice. The Gold Coast fell outside of the community he was raised. When he became a patroller in his community he enforced the law as expected. However when he worked outside of his community he realized that there were different expectations for people depending on their color. His superiors did not expect him to ticket wealthier white traffic violators. When he wrote tickets anyway, they reassigned him to lower income areas. These experiences left him with a deeper understanding of the prevalence of racial inequality:

> I tried to embrace justice. For instance, there were some areas of DC, the Gold Coast, as they use to call it. And they would not expect you to write

tickets and I did. And they never sent me back up there in that area but then they would expect you to write tickets in the lower income area. It seemed to be unfair or rather unjust.

He continued his worked as a police officer and eventually was married. Unfortunately, his marriage did not work out. It was during this time that he began to consider returning to school. He decided to leave the D. C. area and the police force. Wanting to travel, and possibly go to college, he entered the U. S. Air force. His entrance into the arm forces, would ironically lead to his introduction to the Bahái faith.

> I went into the Air force. [I] was stationed over seas in Germany. But it was while I was in Texas in basic tech school at Shepard Air force base that I learned of the faith, the Bahái Faith. And to say that was a turning point would be an understatement.

It was a very turbulent time for him as he was going through a divorce. In addition, he was smoking and drinking more than ever. However, he was also developing a love for jazz. As a result, a fellow white officer invited him and some other black officers to his home to listen to some jazz. When he went to hear the music of his sergeant, he also began to hear about the Bahái Faith.

> And while in tech school you know we were into jazz and this tech sergeant, he said he had a lot of jazz so he invited us over to his home to make some tapes, these reel-to-reel tapes.

While listening to the music he noticed a picture of Abdu'l-Bahá, one of the central figures of the Bahái Faith. Although he admits initially dismissing the

picture, this meeting did emerge into other meetings where he asked more

questions and began to study the teachings of the faith.

> So we went over and he had a picture of Abdu'l-Bahái on his TV. We
> asked if that was his cousin or uncle or something and he said, "No, it's
> Abdu'l-Bahái." And we just dismissed him at the time.

Dr. Justice remembers that he was "still smoking, drinking, and really at what [he]

would consider being a low point" when he began to study more about the faith.

The teaching of the religion made sense to him. He agreed with the faith's vision

for unity but was somewhat challenged by its intolerance of alcohol consumption.

After some time the stress of the divorce, drinking and smoking became too

much for him and he sought divine intervention. As a result, he experienced a

mystical and miraculous experience which would lead him to become a Bahái:

> I was in a room one day up on base, prayed. Kind of hard to describe, to
> God to give me one more chance and that was after learning about the
> faith. I guess it was about three weeks. And the teaching made sense.
> The principles made sense. Really offering a broader perspective about
> humanity and one's responsibility.

He admits that while the principle of the faith resonated with him on a logical

level, the faith's prohibition of alcohol consumption and smoking of tobacco

continued to be a great challenge to him. He had never envisioned that he

would not drink.

> And so at that time I prayed in my dorm to give me one more chance.
> After that experience, I had no urge to smoke. I just stopped. It wasn't a
> prayer. It was when I was considering being a Bahái and a very turbulent

time with the divorce as far as the alcohol and stuff. You know so it wasn't any particular prayer[11] it was sort of like a call for help.

And as attractive as I found the principles of the faith. That was something that my mom, in terms of service, she was, I guess, a giant in that regard. And so when I became, when I was having this conversation with God, cause that's what prayer is, this alcohol, just took that away. Stop drinking and smoking at the same time. Just stopped.

His conversion to the Bahái Faith was a great transformative event in his life. With his new found understanding of his responsibility as an integral member of humanity. Shortly after becoming a Bahái, he became stationed in Germany. It was in Germany that he had more life changing events as a result of converting to the Bahái faith. He lived for two years with a German Bahái family, which he admits, is something he would never have considered before becoming a Bahái. This exposure also had a profound effect on his attitude towards education. This family's embracement of him encouraged him to view his life not only in terms of his individual desires but also as a responsibility to serve humanity as a whole.

So I lived with a family in Germany for most of my time in Germany, for two years actually. And was introduced into the Bahái community in Germany. So it was a wonderful experience. And living with a German family and again that's something I never would have done had I not been a Bahái. Just being exposed to different people and changing value again. Being challenge by this call to serve. A challenge to determine ones path.

As a result, he decided to attend the University of Maryland at College Park. He went on to get his master's at Howard University and at that time

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[11] In the Bahai Faith, members of the faith recite many revealed prayers verbatim. However members of the faith are not forbidden from personal prayers.

decided to pursue a Ph.D. at Rutgers.[12] In his words, he "chose education" as his "path of service." He began teaching after college in various settings including the D. C. jail and in Esic County. He eventually came to teach in an HBCU in North Carolina where he heads the criminal justice department.

> I guess a question is why education? What makes one think that people care what they think or should care what they think? Why education? I was motivated to be an educatory by what I saw as a need, I was goanna say and urgent need, a pressing need as least for people to recognize our common humanity.

During his different teaching experiences, he developed a pedagogy that focuses on facilitating critical thinking skills and fostering service to humanity through fighting for justice. Many of the students he initially worked with were incarcerated. He wanted to help his students find another path in life. He sought to encourage his students to recognize their place in humanity as a global one impacting and affecting the lives of people all around the world. He specifically views the faith as a foundation for his work as an educator and references the principles of the faith in his teaching goals when he states

> So the question: How can one challenge people to be critical and analytical thinkers and embrace some sense of social responsibility? Because in this notion of just or injustice or it's coupled with that. How can we transform humanity? And I thought that the Bahái Faith offered that blueprint.

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[12] Ironically, he became the first person of color to defend in the School of Criminal Justice at a prestigious state institution.

Dr. Justice draws a connection between his experience in criminal justice, his

identification as a Bahái, and his pedagogical aims as he illustrates his lifelong

teaching philosophy as Bahái educator:

> So the question of how to incorporate the principles of the faith into
> education. And again consistent with that individual challenge to act. Our
> responsibility or collective interest. All those things being important in
> Criminal Justice of course, from my days in police department and
> beyond.
>
> But to challenge the student in being analytical and critical thinkers and try
> to challenge one to look at the global, the wider, the larger humanity. Of
> course I think that's were the future lies. So that's the Bahái challenge to
> serve one and the sense of injustice two was what took me to education.

As a university professor and administrator, Dr. Justice has had several

opportunities to develop and exercise his teaching methodologies with students

both domestically and internationally. The amalgamation of academic and

spiritual principles in his research and teaching has culminated into his being

named a Fulbright scholar. Dr. Justice viewed this advent not only in academic

terms but also in religious terms given the irony surrounding his receipt of the

prestigious award.

> I was fortunate enough to have an opportunity to receive a Fulbright
> Scholar. So I went to Uganda, Kampala Uganda for the latter part of '98
> and '99. That was interesting within itself. Fulbright scholars, typically
> being white that year. And it was the year after the Universal House of
> Justice called for people of African descent to go to Africa to encourage
> and inspire those leaders. And it was after that call that I decided to apply
> for the Fulbright.

The significance of his receiving the award becomes somewhat miraculous as he continues to describe the rare circumstances surrounding the commonalities of his fellow recipients. These significances seem more than ironic when revealing the location, ethnicity, and religion of his companions, unknown to him at the time.

> The three persons from North Carolina, who went to Africa, were all people of color. And the chance of that happening is rare, I mean it's beyond rare. And in addition, all three were Baháis. And the chances of that happening is (pause). And no one knew that the other one had applied for a Fulbright.

Working as a Fulbright scholar in Africa contributed greatly to his insight philosophy. Furthermore, the experiences gave him more incite into the impact of racism internationally. His interactions with the youth in Africa gave him a deeper understanding of the influence of years of colonialism and British rule. This has contributed to his fight against racial injustice worldwide. While in Africa, he and the other Bahái Fulbright Scholars established a Bahái club for the youth there. He recalls that they had to work hard in order to acclimate students to a learning style that was different from the rote learning they were accustomed to as a holdover of colonial rule. In that endeavor, he began to facilitate their students' development of critical thinking while developing his teaching style. He remembers the time as being both challenging for him and the other teachers as well as the students they worked with.

> I had a tremendous opportunity when I was in Uganda at Makerere University, and while there, I had a real opportunity to advocate for youth. As a Fulbright coming from the U. S., they mistakenly put you up on a pedestal. As I reflect the yolk of colonialism and how times change and the British are gone but they are still there.

This interaction with the African students provided Dr. Justice with a practical setting to put into practice his theories of student engagement. He worked hard to help the students develop critical thinking and analytical skills. He draws a comparison between his methodology and that of the traditional colonial style:

> My teaching style, I'm engaging. I don't stand there and lecture, but in the British system, it's rote learning. They don't make eye contact, they just write down what you're saying and I could tell [them] the world was flat and they would say "the world is flat." And they found it very challenging for someone to engage them and respect what their thoughts were and to ask them to think and talk.

Dr. Justice's travel to Africa served as not only a vital experience in his development of pedagogy but also as an inspiration in his continued fight against the injustices of racism. His participation with an exclusive gathering of Bahái men of African decent also contributed greatly to his pedagogical aims in the pursuit of justice.

> 19 years ago, Billy Roberts started the Black Men's gathering and like colonialism on the brothers and sisters on the continent [Africa]. The [Universal] House of Justice calls them baneful evils of racism. Being at the Black Men's gathering and looking at the power of faith to transform souls. The black Men's gathering has certainly been an impetus over the past years in terms of what I do here.[13]

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[13] The Black Men's gathering is an annual event, which brings together African American men who are members of the Bahai Faith to discuss relevant issues.

Dr. Justice now works for an HBCU in North Carolina. While most of the work he does in higher education is centered around the administrative and research duties he holds as a department chair he continues to work to encourage critical thinking skills in the students he works with. He also hopes to instill in those students a greater sense of responsibility for fighting for justice and equality. He views his work in this area as his attempt at service to humanity.

> So education, being an educator or making an attempt to be an educator is my humble attempt at service. If I had not been a Bahái, I certainly would not have been [a teacher].

Dr. Justice remarried and is raising a family with his wife. At the time of our interview, he was serving as a member of a local spiritual assembly, the governing body of local Bahái communities, and a university professor. He works to encourage students to further their education and to pursue not only undergraduate degrees but masters as well. He refers to his work as his "humble attempt at service" and hopes to inspire future generations to embrace a sense of civic engagement.

Several Bahái themes are present in the telling Dr Justice's life story. The early portions of his story spoke frankly about the disconnection he felt with the religious practice he experienced prior to becoming a Bahái. This information is significant when examining one of the main principles of the faith; independent investigation of truth as explained below:

> The first principle Bahá'u'lláh urged was the independent investigation of truth. "Each individual," he said, "is following the faith of his ancestors who themselves are lost in the maze of tradition. Reality is steeped in dogmas and doctrines. If each investigate for himself, he will find that Reality is one; does not admit of multiplicity; is not divisible. All will find the same foundation and all will be at peace." (Holley, 1923, p. 276)

Dr. Justice specifically speaks about how the guiding principles of the faith were a great draw for him in being active and connected to the faith. Upon studying and accepting the faith, we hear from Dr. Justice about the impact of being connected with the religion he studies and felt more connected to. He also uses the language of independent investigation metaphorically to speak about his role as an educator compelled to foster critical thinking and analytical thinking with the students he works with.

Another Bahái principle prevalent throughout the life and pedagogy of Dr. Justice relates to his work with the social injustices of racism. One of the principles of the faith calls for the "abandoning of all prejudices among mankind" (MacNutt, 1982, p. 434). He frequently spoke about how his experiences with racism as a youth, police officer, graduate student, and teacher served as a great motivator to fight for racial justice in all the work he does, especially as an educator.

Dr. Justice uses the advent of his decision to teach to connect with yet another theme in the Bahái Faith. He constantly characterizes the work he does as an educator as his "humble attempt at service." This service is a theme

frequently expressed in the faith and was a direct request of the prophet founder and central figure of the faith, Bahá'u'lláh and Abdu'l-Bahá.

> My highest wish and desire is that ye who are my children may be educated according to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and may receive a Bahá'í training; that ye may each become a lighted candle in the world of humanity, may be devoted to the service of all mankind, may give up your rest and comfort, so that ye may become the cause of the tranquility of the world of creation. (Universal House of Justice, 1978, p. 141)

Other philosophies prevalent in the teaching methodology of Dr. Justice are similar to the engaged pedagogy of Paulo Freire. Like Freire, he strives to evoke his students to become active "engaged" members in the classroom (Freire, 2003). He referred to his teaching style as "engaging" and spoke of the challenge of teaching students more accustomed to rote learning. His goal is to develop critical and analytical thinking skills for enhanced in order to enhance their learning.

I also saw his interpretation of his life as a Bahái educator as mystical. While the "mystical" experiences of his life may not be explicitly linked to principles of the Bahái faith, it important that his use of mystical language and God talk emerges only in the context of his introduction, acceptances and practice as a Bahái. Dr. Justice frequently spoke of mystical experiences in his life including his deliverance from alcohol and tobacco, his prominent acceptance as a Fulbright Scholar and his participation in the "transformative" Black Men's Gathering. There was no significant mystical or God talk when referring to his life as a Christian youth.

His narrative speaks quite openly about his childhood but does not go into much detail about his personal life as an adult outside of his religious and teaching experiences. He mentioned his second marriage and son only briefly and did not provide much detail about their relationships. Most of his life story centered on his religious beliefs and teaching experiences.

I also found his remembrance of his military experience told only in reference to his study of the Bahái faith. I am curious to learn of the individual experiences he had prior to his declaration. He spoke of the inequalities he experience while working in the D. C. police department. I wonder if he experienced or witnessed similar injustices during his enlistment in the military. I would also like to know if he had any experiences with religious groups other than the Bahái faith and Christianity.

While I am left with many questions following the telling of his story, I do have a greater understanding of his interpretation of his work as a Bahái educator. He makes declarative connections between what he believes religiously and what he aims to do educationally. His 'humble attempt at service' to the Bahái faith as an educator is indicative of the importance his religious values and professional responsibilities hold for the responsibility he feels for global humanity.

Dr. Faithful

Despite the apparent world tribulations of the present hour, the Dawn of a new Day approaches, and it is the privilege of every man and woman alive

to-day to work serenely and faithfully for the Coming of the World Peace and true human brotherhood. (Abdu'l-Bahái, as cited in Balyuzi, 1971, p. 12)

Dr. Faithful and I became friends about five years before our interview. We were members of a group of Bahái women who spent quite a bit of our spare time together. For me having the opportunity to interview her was a perfect example of why I gave her the pseudonym Dr. Faithful. I have always felt her to be such a wonderful example of a committed Bahái. She strives to ensure that her actions and words are consistent with what she professes to believe as a Bahái. As expected she was enthusiastically accepted my invitation to be interviewed as a part of my dissertation. She was one of the main women in my circle of friends who encouraged me and offered prayers for me when I was applying for doctoral study. She offered reassurance that I was "Ph.D. material" and assured me that I would be successful in a doctoral program. She gave me wonderful advice concerning the graduate process and remarked that such an endeavor, on my part, was a wonderful way to serve the faith. During my tenure as a doctoral student she moved to Ohio and became a new mother. As a result we don't spend as much time together as before, but on those rare times that we do, she makes a point to enquire about my academic progress and offer me encouragement and support.

She was born the fifth of six children; four biological, two adopted. She was reared in a small mountain community in North Carolina. At the age of five, her parents became Baháis, an occasion she labels as a "seminal event" in her

life. Aside from her parents' declaration as Baháis, she refers to her childhood as

"not terribly eventful." She does indicate, however, that her adopted siblings

struggled with mental illness and that her older siblings were quite rebellious in

their teenage years, which "added a different element." When her parents

traveled to the Caribbean islands to become Bahái pioneers, she went to college.

> When the parents went to Barbados, I started school at [a prestigious
> North Carolina state Institution]. I had paid a lot of attention to my school
> grades if not my schoolwork and had always excelled. I was valedictorian
> of my high school class by one calculation, if you include honors and
> salutatorian if you don't include honors.

She expressed interest in Davidson College and Duke University but found one

to be "too expensive and so, so, so small" and the other as "snooty." She

remarks that she really "love[d]" her undergraduate institution, which is part of a

state system, but remembers one poignant event which had a profound influence

on how she grew to understand the world and her identification as a Bahái.

> I was invited to be a debutante because of my family heritage when I
> guess I was a freshman or sophomore. That really stands out in my mind
> because when I contacted my parents, they said, "Well we really don't
> have enough money to support you in doing that." Moreover, my mother
> asked me how many debutants I thought would be there of other races.
> That was really a powerful question. Because I was pretty sure it was only
> [going to] be white rich girls, I decided not to "deb" and for some reason
> never got into the sorority.

She admits that while she "did pretty well in school," almost as an act of rebellion

she decided to travel to Ireland during her sophomore and junior year on a Bahái

youth year of service.[14] She found the experience very inspiring for her as a

Bahái and a student:

> It was an extraordinary experience of growing in my faith and my belief in Bahá'u'lláh and my sense of the world. I wanted to stay longer but the National Assembly[15] advised me it would be better for me to finish my education. So I came back to the states and I think I got 4.0 from then on.

She graduated with honors in the top four percent of her class, Summa Cum

Laude, Phi Beta Kappa. She had planned to attend graduate school after

graduation in hopes of becoming an organizational psychologist. However, she

also wanted to complete another year of service at the Bahái World Center in

Haifa, Israel.

She went to Israel to the Bahái holy land where she served in human

resources personnel office. She found it to be a great spiritual experience

although she admits it was quite challenging to work so closely to the holy

shrines of Baháulláh and The Bab, the central figures of the Bahái faith.

> So I went to Israel and loved it. It's extraordinarily difficult to perform a service because being that near to the shrines and amazing servants of the faith. Your ego gets really tested. It's really difficult and very rewarding. I loved it.

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[14] The youth year of service is a period of time dedicated by young Bahais to the service of the Bahai faith and community. It is a period that is designed to facilitate spiritual and intellectual growth. While not required it is strongly encouraged for any young Bahai who is able to complete at least one year.

[15] The National Spiritual Assembly (NSA) is the national administrative governing body for the Bahais in any given nation.

Incidentally, while she was in the Haifa, she trained the man that would later

become her husband. She also met several prominent and significant members

of the faith during this time that would have a profound effect on her spiritual and

professional life. One of these individuals became one of her spiritual and

educational mentors.

> I had the real joy of working with a Bahái author, Adib Trieste, who ended up being elected to the Universal House of Justice. And he wrote four books called the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh volumes one, two, three, and four. And then a couple subsequent books including *The Covenant* and *The Child of the Covenant* that are historical overviews of the Bahái Faith as well as the writings[16]. And I would help type those. He was a mentor to me and a wonderful, wonderful guiding light and that was a real joy of my life.

While serving at the center she also met and fell in love with a young

Bahái. Consequently, when he returned to Georgia after serving in Haifa, she

decided to attend Georgia Tech for graduate school. She excelled in graduate

school with the exception of statistics but unfortunately, the relationship did not

last. By now, she was pursuing a doctoral degree and had become somewhat

ambivalent about finishing school.

> [The] statistics [course] combined with [us] deciding to break up combined with coming back to the states from Israel made for a very difficult mix. So I stayed at Georgia Tech for a year and decided I didn't know if I was [going to] quit school or what but I thought I'd quit my doctoral program.

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[16] The term "writings" refer to the holy scriptures revealed by the central figures of the Bahai Faith.

At that time, she had a friend who was attending Old Dominion University and

suggested she may enjoy the organizational psychology program there.

Therefore, she transferred to Old Dominion in pursuit of her doctoral degree.

During her doctoral studies at both schools, she was also receiving great

guidance for another mentor and member of the Universal House of Justice, the

international governing administration of the Bahái Faith. He provided great

moral support from the holy land and she felt it helped her get through the

program.

> Also during this time I was corresponding with another mentor in Haifa
> who is a member of the Universal House of Justice and who's been a real
> guiding hand to me for a long time and he basically said he'd sic the dogs
> on me if I quit my doctoral program. He had to tell me that a couple of
> times. But he told me that when I was at Georgia /tech and I'm pretty sure
> he told me that again about my third year at Old Dominion when I was
> ready to quit again.

During this time she feels she developed her critical thinking skills. She also met

and fell in love with another young man. Unlike her earlier boyfriend, this young

man was not a Bahái. After a period of dating they decided to get married;

however, they ended the engagement due to differences in religious beliefs

concerning child rearing.

> I met [a young man] there [Old Dominion]. He and I were involved for four
> years. He was not a Bahái and we finally broke up once my parents gave
> consent for us to get married.[17] Pretty sure that one of the reasons was we

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[17] Bahais and their fiancés are required to get "consent" or permission from all living parents to
marry.

had an impasse and said: "Okay we can do this" and he decided that he didn't want our children to go to Bahái feast[18] since he couldn't go and that was a show stopper for me so [we] remained good friends but we, thank the lord, did not get married.

Shortly after the engagement ended, Dr. Faithful completed her dissertation and successfully graduated from the doctoral program. While she admits it was not easy, she does not feel that she applied herself as much as she could have in the process.

I graduated fro ODU with very good grades and felt really good about it. It was tough writing my dissertation. I don't think I put in as much energy as I would have liked but I worked at it. And graduated with very good standing.

Following school, she decided to work for a corporate conglomerate in North Carolina. Her tenure in the company's human resources department occurred during an important merger for the company. She worked for the company for five years in "various vice president and senior vice president roles in small and different parts" of the company. She was responsible for ensuring that the two companies merging could work well together.

At this point, she resumed her friendship with the young man she trained in Haifa. They would eventually marry nine years after their meeting while he was completing his Ph.D. at Berkley. After they married, he accepted a tenure tract teaching position at Ohio State University. They decided to relocate to Ohio but

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[18] Bahai feasts occur every 19 days to mark the beginning of a new Bahai month. Only Bahais are permitted to attend.

Dr. Faithful decided to commute for a while. During this time with the company,

she became very ill. She feels that the illness was a direct result of feelings she

had concerning the company's merger. Specifically, she feared she would not be

able to work through the merger with integrity.

> I think part of me getting sick was being worried that I couldn't do my job
> with the degree of integrity that I wanted. Not that there was anything
> under the table or overtly unethical, but that I didn't feel it was truly going
> to be a merger. It really was their way or the highway and for better for
> worse. And there were loads of things in the acquired company that were
> outstandingly positive that we were going to loose in the transaction. At
> any rate I got really sick and decided not to change roles but just to leave
> [the company].

She eventually resigned her position and discontinued commuting to North

Carolina. She felt this decision helped to stay in Ohio helped she and her

husband to "form roots" and "solidify" their marriage.

Following her move to Ohio and her self-imposed hiatus from corporate

America, she slowly recovered from her illness. During this time, she also helped

co-author a book which focused on marriage preparation and finding a suitable

marriage partner. She refers to this book as a workbook versus a scholarly piece.

She describes the book as a practical self-help guide based in the Bahái

principles. She enjoyed writing the book and in doing so was able to address

some internal conflicts she had regarding scholarly writing

> It's not a scholarly piece that you see written up in an academic journal but
> it's a practical self-help guide based in the Bahái principles. And this is
> something were I came to a friction point in terms of Bahái scholarship of
> really wanting to do a scholarly piece but also wanting to do something

very accessible. And [her Bahái mentor] really wanted me to do something scholarly. That's his style of writing, that's his approach and both he and [former fiancé] interestingly, felt strongly that I should hone those skills and that it's a place where my talents can be expressed.

Dr. Faithful was not compelled to pursue what she referred to as scholarly writing, in spite of her academic training or strong persistence of her mentors and friends. Although she admits enjoying the academic experience, she does not aspire towards research.

To date that [scholarly writing] hasn't resonated for me. I haven't enjoyed the research side of the PhD which is ironic (laughing) because that's a large part of the PhD. I've enjoyed the learning. I've enjoyed the application. Maybe some day I'll enjoy research.

She also did other work during her period of recovery from her illness. She found that stage in her life to be renewing in her understanding of herself. Although she was very ill, she feels that this time has paid off extremely and feels very "blessed" as a result.

So I wrote the book and did a lot of other projects that were a lot of fun. Sort of growth and development. I did a lot of my own work during the time that I was sick in order to really work on developing a sense of peace and worth in the eyes of God. That I was a valuable child of God. That was a pretty dramatic and traumatic process but one that's paid off extraordinarily.

In the beginning of 2004, she realized that she was well enough to go back to work and she "really wanted to make money" and "take a job in which [she] could succeed but not feel that [her] whole identity was tied to the job." She

searched online and found a job in Ohio, which required a Ph.D. and 5-10 years

of corporate experience in human resources. The fact that the position was set at

a university meant a change of venue for Dr. Faithful. . Prior to learning of this

job, she had never seen herself working in higher education. Upon researching

the job requirements of the new position at an adult-centered university, she

found that it was more consistent with her personal career goals and was a place

where she could "thrive."

> So I looked into this job and it was at a university. I hadn't really ever seen
> myself working in higher education unless it was in non-tenured roles. So
> I've always thought: "well I'd enjoy community college were I could just
> teach or maybe a private college where there isn't a heavy tenure base'
> but not really thinking that was something I'd pursue. But it looked like this
> job prescription had been written for me. So I went to the university,
> interviewed for the department chair for the Human Resources
> Management Program.

She took the job and is currently serving in the capacity of the chair. While most

of her responsibilities are administrative in nature, she does consider herself a

Bahái educator. She gives a brief description of her responsibilities as a

department chair:

> My two main jobs do not involve teaching. One job is to create the
> curriculum for the human resources management program and the other
> is to manage the adjuncts who do most of the teaching. So we have
> masters and Ph.D. level instructors who are not full time professors. They
> are active in their field. So I get human resources managers and so on
> and they teach the classes that I've develop so they're conversant with the
> field. they know it well. They can elaborate on the courses I've develop
> and they don't have to worry about doing the development work. But it
> means that I don't get any time or much time in the classroom.

In this role, she tries to integrate the principles of the faith into her work responsibilities. Specifically, she tries to place emphasis on developing ethics, integrity, and diversity.

> As a Bahái educator I wouldn't say that I actively do anything unique via the courses that directly integrates Bahái principle because I would feel that was a conflict of interest if it was something in order to propagate the Bahái faith.[19] Having said that I emphasize aspects that I believe spiritually are absolutely critical that may not get the same coverage from another instructor or designer or course developer.
>
> Two things that stand out for that are my emphasis on developing ethics and having the practitioners that we're training really pay attention to issues of ethics and integrity and then also diversity, which you know gets a lot of lip service in the field of human resources and is slowly gaining ground I believe as being a legitimate aspect of doing business well and understanding it.
>
> So I think those are two places in terms of integrating Bahái life into my professional life. I also really strive to act with integrity within the education system and to be a trustworthy colleague, boss and subordinate. And so I think I'd call it living the life in the work place.

Dr. Faithful continues to strive towards "living the life" as a Bahái educator. She has worked especially hard to not allow her professional identity overshadow her spiritual identity. She spoke candidly about the challenges she faces in this aim, as well as some of the benefits she has recognized.

> I really strive to be of service and not carry around my title of "Ph.D." That's a big thing that my mom talked to be about very early when she was hoping that I wouldn't then see myself as "Dr." but that I would see myself as [her birth name] and present myself to the world [birth name] because titles can be so separating for people. So I've really strived to do that.

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[19] The Bahai Faith prohibits proselytizing by its members.

Having said that, it does help (laughing) to open a few doors for credibility. Its why I was asked to co-author a book. Was one of the reasons. And it helps offer legitimacy to a lot of projects and that kind of thing. So when used appropriately I think it's a great leveraging tool but used inappropriately can be a pretty negative thing. Obviously if it demeans anyone else or is used to be a "one-ups-manship" tool.

Dr. Faithful and her husband recently welcomed their first child, a daughter, into their lives. She does not see herself working in higher education much longer as a result. In her words, "I don't feel like I'm any revolutionary force in education. I just try in any environment that I'm in to be a positive influence.

Dr. Faithful's narrative is laden with Bahái themes. She speaks candidly about her goals as a Bahái educator as well as her goals as a professional. The influence of the faith is evident from the beginning of her life story when she remarks that her life was "not terribly eventful" with the exception of the "seminal event" of her parents' declaration as Baháis. I found this to be a profound and declarative statement relative to her identification as a Bahái. The selection of this declaration so early in her life story makes it clear that she wants the audience of her story to understand her life in the context of her religious beliefs.

Later on in her story, she reveals her relationship with the Bahái theme of race unity when she recalls her invitation to be a debutante. She vividly recalls her reaction to her mother's questioning of the ethnic diversity of women she would be associating with should she become a debutante. As she states, she is quite sure that there will not be women of color evolved in the process and consequently she decides not to become a debutante. Her selection of this

incident out of her undergraduate experience is indicative and consistent with

Bahái teaching about race unity. Abdu'l-Bahá provides guidance to members of

the Bahái faith regarding race unity in the following passage:

> We must banish prejudice. Religious, patriotic, racial prejudices
> must disappear, for they are the destroyers of human society. We
> must become the cause of the unity of the human race.
> (Chamberlain, 1918, p. 25)

Dr. Faithful's reaction to her parents' questioning and significant identification of

this event in her life signifies her commitment to the faith's teachings about race

unity. We also observe the effect of this principle on her life when she speaks

about her role in education to promote diversity.

Interestingly she provided quite a few scenarios that provided specific

examples of the teachings of the Bahái faith. The scenarios captured both the

context of her work as a professional and her personal choices. For example,

she gives examples of the teachings of the Bahái faith with regard to both marital

laws and religious practices when she tells of her decision not to marry when she

was not able to come to an agreement with her fiancé when deciding if their

children would be able to attend Bahái feast.

Again, I was able to identify enactment of Bahái practices in her

professional work when she talks directly of her role as a Bahái educator when

she specifically aims against "propagating" the faith. The National assembly of

the Bahia's of the United States provide clear guidance regarding proselytizing

No proselytizing. It is true that Bahá'u'lláh lays on every Bahá'í the duty to teach His Faith. At the same time, however, we are forbidden to proselytize, so it is important for all the believers to understand the difference between teaching and proselytizing. It is a significant difference and, in some countries where teaching a religion is permitted, but proselytizing is forbidden, the distinction is made in the law of the land. Proselytizing implies bringing undue pressure to bear upon someone to change his Faith. It is also usually understood to imply the making of threats or the offering of material benefits as an inducement to conversion. (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 1998)

Dr. Faithful provided more general examples of the faith's impact on her life. She often speaks as her work as a student and professional in relation to her aspirations to be faithful and obedient to the teaching of the faith. She uses words like integrity, truthfulness, and honesty as examples of her understanding of her role and responsibility as a Bahái. She also speaks clearly about the powerful influences of her travel to the Bahái holy land in Haifa Israel and her Bahái youth years of service. Baháis view both the practice of pilgrimage and the youth year of service as significant spiritually enhancing events. She uses her experiences during both events to illustrate their profound influences on her life.

I also interpreted some of Dr. Faithful's narrative in terms of more secular themes. At times, she used language consistent with quantifiable achievement and her background in human resources. She recurrently provided examples of her academic achievement in terms of her grade point averages, class standing, and position. She admitted that she viewed these achievements proudly. This provides some slippage in terms of understanding her aims to not be viewed as her profession but as an individual. We see her use of business language, which

is consistent with her background in HR when she refers to her job responsibilities in terms of "managing." She does however balance this language quite well and link her achievements and business relationships with spiritual and God talk.

I found Dr. Faithful's life story to be well supported with examples of her interpretation of her life as a Bahái educator. She provides frequent and specific examples of how the faith influenced life as a student and professional. She also gave examples of its influence on her personal life especially in the context of her previous engagements and later marriage. She is extremely supportive of the faith and strikes me as a very committed and steadfast member of the Bahái community. Her story was somewhat silence concerning the intricacies of her childhood and early youth. While it's obvious that she as well as many of her other immediate family members are converts to the Bahái faith, I would like to know what her religious traditions, if any, were prior to her conversion. In addition, in my effort to understand her declaration as a Bahái, I found it interesting that she did not have a conversion story. I would like to gain a better understanding of her what motivated her to become a Bahái specifically. This subject is especially intriguing when recognizing that not all of her siblings became Bahia's. As a Bahái I understand that even children reared in the homes of Bahái parents, are not assumed to be active members of the Bahái faith until their fifteenth year when they can, if they so choose, formally declare followers of

the faith or otherwise. In the telling of her story I am left to assume that she formally became a Bahái at some point in her youth but I am not sure when.

Even with these questions are left lingering, I continue to find her story compelling and inspiring. Her story provides me with an overwhelming since of the awards and challenges someone such as herself faces in the aspiration of being a Bahái educator. Her aspirations towards excellence in her spiritual, personal and professional life provides me with some indication and inspiration of what I can expect in my own endeavors.

Professor Econ

Bahá'u'lláh set forth principles of guidance and teaching for economic readjustment. Regulations were revealed by Him which insure the welfare of the commonwealth. As the rich man enjoys his life surrounded by ease and luxuries, so the poor man must likewise have a home and be provided with sustenance and comforts commensurate with his needs. This readjustment of the social economic is of the greatest importance inasmuch as it insures the stability of the world of humanity; and until it is effected, happiness and prosperity are impossible. (Abdu'l-Bahá)

Professor Econ is currently an economics professor working at an Ohio university. I met him through his wife, Dr. Faithful, during their residence in North Carolina. As a Chinese American economics professor, I must admit I initially accompanied my perception of him with stereotypes I held frequently associated with Asian American professionals. Some of these stereotypes included an assumption that he possessed genus intellect and that he was the quintessential math genius. I must admit, as I began to know him on a personal level, those assumptions were substantiated in many ways. One day when visiting with him, I

realized that he was writing what amounted to a math equation. A math equation

in of itself may not seem very significant; however, the fact that this equation

comprised more than one page of figures and symbols was amazing to me. I also

learned that he was a wonderful young man who could be quite competitive

when playing any sport with a group of children. Yes, he was a very intelligent

but he could also be a lot of fun.

When sharing his story with me he began by chronicling his entrance into

college after high school. This time was significant for two reasons, one being

that he did not directly attend a university after graduation and two that it was

during this time he became a Bahái.

> I actually finished high school and didn't go straight to university. I went to
> junior college to save some money and I was sort of undecided about
> what major is should choose. I also became a Bahái about that time. So I
> ended up going to San Diego State University and majoring in economics.
> I think part of that was because I was influenced by some of what Shoghi
> Effendi[20] said which is to major in economics or one of the social sciences
> or history or something like that.

After majoring in economics, he still did not feel that he had a "concrete plan."

Therefore, he decided to travel to Haifa Israel after graduation to serve the faith

and seek guidance in the Bahái holy land. While there, he was able to expand his

understanding about different career options related to economic development

> In Haifa I sort of learned about various professions as well from a lot of
> people that worked there such as economic development so I wanted to

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[20] Shoghi Effendi is one of the central figures of the Bahai who faith who was considered the guardian of the faith.

do economic development. I did some research on that and discovered that agriculture economics is something that can get one a job in development and so that's what I did.

After further research, he decided to apply to various masters programs aiming to major in agricultural economics. Consequently, he attended the University of Arizona. At that time, he had no intentions of going beyond his master's degree. He planned to complete graduate school and work for a nonprofit institution or international development agency. However, during his graduate studies, many of his professors encouraged him to pursue doctoral studies. In the process, he discovered that he enjoyed research. Therefore, he began to explore his options for attending a doctoral program. In his exploration, he found the path of education as a feasible path towards his goals for economic development

I figured, well I'm going to find a few of the really good Ph.D. programs out there and see if I get financial aid and admissions. If I didn't go on and work and if I did I'd do a PhD. I figured that if I did a Ph.D. I probably would want to do research which meant that I would probably have to go into academics of some sort to do that for a career. So I figured I'd apply to some of the really good programs that really placed people into academic positions.

Following his masters he applied to various programs, which he felt would help placed him in a strong "academic program." He applied to mostly Ivy League programs and was accepted at Berkley. He attended Berkley on a full scholarship with the intention of studying development. Once there he decided to "broaden" his scope and studied general economics. He became interested in understanding specifically how economic institutions, legal policies and all

economics can affect behavior. Accordingly, he ended up studying a lot about

"game theory" and reward and punishment.

> I begin to study and applied myself to being a good economist in addition
> to just focusing on being a development economist. So I ended up just
> mainly studying general economics when I was at Berkley and I wrote a
> dissertation about economic theory related to a body of research called
> 'Contract Theory.' Basically contract theory is studying how people trade
> commodities or resources or conduct economic transactions outside of
> formal markets.

As he continued in his studies, he was able to draw a better connection between

economics and his ultimate goals for serving humanity and his faith. This

ultimately led him to understand economics in the context of social welfare.

> So I figured that by studying that [economic transactions outside of formal
> markets] and studying economic outcomes and how people were affected
> by various public policies and through legal institutions and things of that
> nature I could see how I could impact social welfare. I was really
> interested in learning about how economic institutions, legal policies and
> all economics can affect behavior.

> That's what I was really interested in because I think ultimately that was
> more inclined with my interpretation of what Shoghi Effendi had in mind
> which is for us to study social sciences to se how people behave and what
> motivates people.

After receiving his doctorate degree, he applied to several academic

programs and accepted an offer at an Ohio university where he currently teaches

and conducts research, while balancing the responsibilities of a tenure track

position. He continues to work toward developing understanding economic

development and with the hopes of eventually developing a connection between

current economic developments within the context of the Bahái teachings.

> Well first of all as part of my job I have to do research and publish. So a lot
> of my research is geared towards publications but I think in the long run I
> would really like to write a book or do some sort of a research program
> that looks at the institutions of the Bahái Faith and the administrative order
> of the Bahái Faith and sort of to understand the reward and punishment
> mechanisms within the institutions.

He hopes to use his research to help others to understand the wisdom of the

administrative order in terms of organizing society. Specifically he hopes to

demonstrate how the Bahái administrative institutions including local spiritual

assemblies, national spiritual assemblies and the Universal House of Justice,

provide an excellent model for administrative organization.

> Now as Bahái I guess part of what I'm hoping to get is I'm hoping to show
> that the administrative order leads to the highest degree of social welfare
> even using non-Bahái academic methodology. So what I'm hoping to do,
> I'm hoping to show that just using tools of economics I can show the
> power of the administrative order the Bahái administrative order.

He also hopes to construct a social economic development project. He

admits that those are more long-term goals given that he has been occupied with

publishing papers and getting tenure. However, his long-term goals are to use his

academic training to serve the faith. In the final segments of his narrative this

Bahái educator provides an excellent summary of how his religious beliefs have

become connected with his professional aspirations, ultimately directing him into

the field of education.

I guess ultimately the reason why I got into my field is because being at the world center and being inspired by Bahái scholars as well as Bahái advisor and consultants who just guided me along the way, I really enjoy my field [and] my research right now. I'm looking in long terms to figure out how I could use my academic training to serve the faith. That's ultimately what motivates me.

Professor Econ continues to reside in Ohio with his wife and new daughter. He continues to teach and conduct research in his respective interest areas. He is working persistently towards gaining tenure while developing his ideas for the social and economic development of humanity.

Professor Econ's narrative provides and excellent example of how Bahái educators working in higher education utilized their professional roles and responsibilities to teach the Bahái Faith. In the telling of his story, he explicitly provided a link between his interpretation of the writings and teachings of the faith and his personal goals towards serving the faith. His work as a teacher and researcher in economics provides a direct path for him to address the faith's encouragement of members of the faith like himself to address social and economic development issues. A direct connection to such encouragement is evident in the following Bahái writing:

It cannot be over-emphasized that venturing into social and economic development rests upon the fundamental principles enshrined in the Teachings concerning the inter-relationship between the spiritual and material aspects of life, and if social and economic activity is not placed on a spiritual basis it may well prove counter-productive or even harmful, as without a spiritual base the people are likely to become corrupt or materialistic. (Hornby, 1994, p. 552)

Dr. Econ appears to build on the teaching set forth in those writing by extending his work to include another key element of the faith's teaching. This is manifested in his goal of developing a project that will utilize the governing bodies of the faith explicitly. This goal is consistent with prophecy from the faith, which foretells of a time of universal peace when a "Universal House of Justice" will govern humanity.

> He [Bahá'u'lláh] has ordained and established the House of Justice, which is endowed with a political as well as a religious function, the consummate union and blending of church and state. This institution is under the protecting power of Bahá'u'lláh Himself. A universal, or international, House of Justice shall also be organized. Its rulings shall be in accordance with the commands and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, and that which the Universal House of Justice ordains shall be obeyed by all mankind. This international House of Justice shall be appointed and organized from the Houses of Justice of the whole world, and all the world shall come under its administration. (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 1982, p. 455)

Bahái themes of social economics and universal political administration overwhelmingly consume Dr. Econ's narrative. There are, however, present in his story, an indication of the pressure he experiences as he attempts to maneuver his aspirations in the academic setting. He spoke frankly of the need to write and "publish" as much possible in order for him to attain tenure. I interpreted such renderings as indicative of some of the less personally gratifying work one must complete in order to reach more self-fulfilling goals when working in the academic setting. I interpreted this writing and publishing as a "necessary evil" in the pursuit of God's work. I also saw his very entrance into the field of

teaching in the same manner. When he speaks of his decision to become a university professor, it was as though his choice was born more out of a desire to work towards developmental and research goals rather than one born out of any great intrinsic desire to teach.

I found it interesting that his narrative centered mainly on his research and development work. The silence in reference to his actual teaching left me with questions about his specific pedagogical practices. I was curious to understand what specific teaching philosophy prevailed in his classroom. I also wondered what were the daily rewards and challenges he faced as a teacher and how he viewed his relationship with his student. Other areas of silence and selectivity in his life story left me with unanswered questions as well. Although I personally know of his wife and daughter, their presence was not manifested in his narrative. Nor did he speak of any other people specifically including family, friends, or Bahái community. He selected to limit the "story of his life" to one focused on addressing a specific social economic goal of the Bahái Faith with a relative chronically of his academic preparation towards that goal. Little else was obvious.

The presence of Bahái themes was evident both in my examination of individual narrative the examination of intertextuality of the narrative collectively as well as metaphoric identifications. While all of the specific themes previously listed were not explicitly addressed by the participants, specific principles of the oneness of God, the oneness of religion, the oneness of humanity, independent

investigation of truth, compulsory education, a spiritual solution to economic problems, and universal peace upheld by a world government were each principles manifested the narratives. Furthermore, these Bahái educators also explicitly discuss the overarching themes of unity, justice, service to humanity and advancement of human civilization in the telling of their life stories.

Dr Justice, Dr. Faithful, and Dr. Seeker particularly address the principles of the oneness of God, the oneness of religion and the oneness of humanity in their narratives. For example Dr, Seeker in telling of his spiritual quest to learn more about the world religions, illustrates how he came to understand and except the teaching of the Bahái Faith concerning the unity of God and religion. Dr. Justice speaks of the unity of religion as well as the unity of humankind when addressing issues of race unity. He provided specific examples of how racism personally touched his life and how he utilized those experiences to aid in his teaching of others to work to eradicate prejudice and fight injustice. Dr. Faithful uses her experience of being invited to participate in what she interpreted as an exclusively White women's organization to illustrate her admonishment of racial prejudice and disunity.

Themes of independent investigation of truth and compulsory education are also expressed throughout the narratives. For example, Professor Nobel spoke specifically about her aims of encouraging her students to "investigate truth" and increase their knowledge about world history events. She speaks specifically about the importance of education not only in her personal

experiences but also in the experiences she has with her students. In this example I also found the illustration of the metaphor of the Teacher as Guide. In like manner, professor Seeker spoke eloquently about the work he does as a college professor and the teaching he has done internationally. He gave examples of how the various educational settings and experiences he encountered, served as invaluable sources of motivation for his work as an educator. Furthermore he emphasized his work to insure that diverse members of the international society as well as in the United States were educated.

Both Dr. Econ and Dr. Seeker speak about the guiding nature of the Universal House of Justice (UHJ) in their personal and professional lives. They specifically offer the UHJ as an example of how a world governing power such as itself could serve as the perfect example and administration. in addition, they suggest such leadership would help alleviate issues of social injustice and economic disparity and imbalance on a global perspective.

General Bahái themes of justice, service to humanity, the advancement of civilization are frequented throughout the narratives as well. With the exception of Dr. Econ, each of the Bahái educators spoke about their work as educators in terms of advancing civilization. Moreover, while Dr. Econ did not use the explicit language of "advancement" to name his work, the underpinnings of his goals of offering the UHJ as an example of world government is consistent with Bahái teaching regarding the advancement of civilization. Each respondent did however speak of his or her work in terms of service to humanity. They drew a direct

connection between their teaching, research and administrative duties in higher education and their aspirations of serving the faith presenting themselves metaphorically as Teachers as servants to God and Teachers as servants to Humanity.

There were other similarities found in the life stories of the Bahái educators. Dr. Seeker, Dr. Justice, and Dr. Econ each spoke of their travel and pilgrimage to the Bahái Holy Land in Haifa Israel. They spoke of how their experiences at the holy land help guide them in their work as educators both in terms of mystical and practical terms. While Dr. Justice and Professor Noble did not speak of pilgrimage, they did speak of their travel outside of America and how their experiences in Africa and Europe provided perspective on world issues and international communities. The influence of international travel on life experience and teaching is also expressed in the stories of Dr. Seeker and Dr. Faithful.

Yet another commonality shared between the respondents is their use of God talk, and Common Bahái Language. Each respondent specifically identified faith in a God, as would be the case with a declared Bahái. They used instances of "mystical" experiences in explaining their perspective and interpretation of life events and frequently used common language shared by Baháis such as "advancement of civilization," "inherent nobility," and "oneness." They each spoke of the central figures and governing administration of the faith which is also

common in the Baháí discourse. Each professor either directly or indirectly quoted the writings and teaching of the Baháí Faith at some point in their stories.

Perhaps one more similarity found across the narratives is the presence of each Baháís journey to becoming a Baháí. Professor Noble, Dr. Seeker and Dr Justice each spoke of how they learned about the Baháí Faith and ultimately became Baháís. Dr. Faithful and Dr. Econ do not provide a specific scenario depicting the specific time of their declaration as a Baháí however, they each alluded to their change in religious practice during their narrative.

The presentation of themselves as Baháí educators was greatly supported by their use of Baháí principles, Baháí themes, and common language. However, there were other similarities found in their narratives, which were indicated more by what they did not say. For example, there appeared to be a common silence concerning marriage and family present throughout the narratives of Dr. Justice, Dr. Econ, and Professor Noble. In listening to their stories, I found their "life stories" limited to information relative to their interpretation of the Baháí Faith in terms of their work as educators. Conversely, Dr. Seeker and Dr. Faithful spoke about their families and marriages but again more in the context of education and religion.

I also identified another point of silence as well as selectivity in the exclusion of negative or unfavorable comments in relation to the Baháí faith. None of the respondents spoke of the Baháí faith in any manner that was less than favorable. While they may have spoke of their individual struggles with

coming to understand and except the teachings of the faith, as in the example of Dr. Justice's desire to give up smoking and Dr. Seeker's aspiration to stop "experimenting" with drugs in order to be in accordance with the faith, no one appeared to have expressed any negative experience with the teachings or the faith or the Bahái communities. Their silence in this area left me questioning any challenges or conflicts they may have experience. I would expect some conflict would arise when converting religions, however there were no such conflicts voiced.

There where some consistencies present in their narratives that I identify as more related to secular themes than religious ones. Each respondent spoke of their formal education in preparing for their professional careers. However, their responses regarding their college experiences were provided little detail about their specific learning experiences in those institutions. Ironically in their explanations about their formal education, I found their experience with education to be somewhat consistent with what I saw as education as a commodity. For example, Professor Noble clearly acknowledges that while she aspired to be an educator, the low pay of education, led her to pursue a Business degree as a source of a more financially secure field. It is also interesting to note that each of the respondents acknowledge their attendance to prestigious and in some cases elite colleges and universities but did not draw a direct connection to the educations they received in those institutions to their personal ideologies

regarding education. Instead, they presented more of a spiritual and religious connection to their work as professional educators.

Ironically, when discussing their former educational experiences, the professors seemed to de-emphasize or detract from their college educations somewhat. When examining their narratives I was left with a sense that their college experiences were less than joyful experiences. For example, Dr. Seeker, referring to his spiritual education, spoke of having to 'unlearn" certain aspects of his education in order to shape and develop his own pedagogy. In this same aim, Dr. Justice spoke of being the first "person of color" to graduate from his respective doctoral program which I did not get the impression was an easy or pleasant experience for him. This distraction from what I would term a "traditional education" became somewhat clearer when presences of such terms as "engagement" and "critical thinking" were repeated in the three of the narratives.

Professor Noble, along with Dr. Justice and Dr. Seeker each spoke passionately about their teaching pedagogy. In doing so, they expressed ideals such as "democratic classrooms" and "anti-banking" education as well as an "engaged pedagogy," all terms consistent with the teachings of Paulo Freire. Dr. Seeker seems to expand this methodology to include some of the idealistic views of Antonio Gramsci's rejection of hegemonic oppression when he seeks to "provide" his students with "perspectives their culture does not normally give them."

The presence of Bahái and more secular educational themes are indicative of the relationships these educators have both with their religious and professional communities. Furthermore, the import they place on meaningful and significant interactions and connections with their students further illustrate the importance they place on establishing relationships with their students. Relationships are a vital part of the work they do. Their maneuvering and interconnecting of these three major types of relationships throughout their various higher education settings provide an intriguing lens through which I became to understand their life work as educators as worship.

This chapter concludes my discussion of faith-based pedagogues. By examining the narratives of five Bahái educators working in higher education, I have presented concrete examples of how these pedagogues draw together their religious and educational responsibilities into their work. This work transforms their religious and professional commitment into "teaching as worship." In this paradigm, they are challenged to operate in what I see as an increasingly secularized academic environment that at times can be quite antithetical to their religious ideas. However, it is imperative that they successfully maneuver this environment in order to assist their students, colleagues, and communities in building a more peaceful society.

In the conclusion of this dissertation, I consider the role faith-based pedagogues play in shaping a more just and peaceful society. I draw attention to the distinctive perspective they have to offer the process of building unity. This

perspective which is founded in a spiritual commitment to their life work as

educators has the potential to facilitate conversations and actions which may

draw what I see as an overly secularized humanity to become more connected

with itself on a global level.

CHAPTER VII

POSITIONING THE EDUCATOR FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

In this dissertation, I have explored various aspects of Bahái educators who I believe see their teaching as worship. In a response to the sacred calling I see enacted in their lives, these faith-based pedagogues connect the work they do as educators to the sacred practice of worshiping God. While this is not necessarily a new concept in higher education, it is a concept that appears to have evolved from a position of prominence and leadership to one of marginalization and hostility with in the academy. I believe this evolution has paralleled the evolution of American society's adaptation and privileging of secular humanist views over religious. Because the secular view exhibits an arrogance, which makes no distinction between God and people, I believe it to a sense in humanity that allows for disrespect and disregard whenever convenient. After all, if there is no power greater than man, decisions, even vile and dangerous as they may be, can easily be construed as divine. I feel this repositioning has negatively affected the educational environment nationally and globally by increasing materialistic individualism. In addition, I see this individualism as detrimental to the peaceful existence of humanity.

By presenting the life histories of educators who appear to be successfully navigating the educational environment of modern colleges and universities, I

hope to provide a lens through which to view, interpret, appreciate, and understand the role they are poised to take. I believe as individuals who possess a spiritual and religious interpretations coupled with an intellectual knowledge of democracy and unity, these and other teachers can foster a dialogue which will lead to a more just and peaceful society nationally and internationally. I believe this change can happen not only in higher education but all aspects of education, including public, private and social.

In this chapter I explore the role educators such as faith-based pedagogues working in higher education, can play in fostering a more peaceful and just world. I chose to focus on the themes of peace and justice in education as I felt these are frequent themes found present not only in the religious doctrine of the Bahái Faith but those in other religious traditions as well. If faith-based pedagogues are to be active members of a democratic education, I feel it is imperative that they utilize their roles to address these issues. I provide a brief historical perspective of the role of education as it related to justice and peace and present an example for developing a paradigm more consistent with embracing a more peaceful society through education. I use excerpts from the life story of the educators in this research to provide examples of how their work in education potentially assists the aims of peace and justice.

For teachers educating amidst the current social climate of national and international unrest, war, and the continuation and development of various social injustices such as class-ism, racism, and sexism, it is imperative that we

recognize and assume the responsibility we have to educate for justice and

peace (Lerner, 2005; Purpel, 2005; Shapiro, 2004). If humanity is to find

sustainable healthy modes of living and interacting, it will most likely require that

our educators become agents of change and inspiration towards a more just and

peaceful society. By "just and peaceful society," I am advocating for an all-

embracing civilization that is dedicated to the individual and collective well being

of all members of humanity. This humanity would treat each human being with

dignity and respect and ensure that all of its basic emotional and material needs

met and maintained (Lerner, 2000). I believe Professor Noble verbalizes

eloquently my vision for teachers who are poised to do this work as she seeks to

infuse her students with a sense of their own dignity and respect she states

> So each individual has been born noble with talents and faculties and they
> must bring their own talents to the table. And this is how I teach today. I
> run my entire class like a community of learners. Everyone who enters the
> classroom, they are noble. Everyone has talents and faculties. My job as
> an educator is to guide and enlighten and enrich those that come into the
> class setting.

 While this may seem to be an unrealistic goal to undertake, It is one that is

necessary and will contribute to the development of a more meaningful and

worthwhile life and globally. To teach for justice and peace requires that we

radically transform our understanding of how and why we educate. In order to do

so we must begin to explore and develop new paradigms of educating, modeling

justice and peace in our educational institutions and the community, and

encouraging others to develop and exercise peace and justice in their daily interactions and endeavors.

In my conclusion I wish to offer some basic suggestions that educators may find accommodating when evaluating and developing a pedagogy that will facilitate the building and maintenance of a more just and peaceful society. In short, I would like to present some practical means for examining what it means to educate for peace and justice.

The first stride in developing a pedagogy consistent with fostering a more just and peaceful society requires an examination of some of the historical and contemporary influences on modern education and to use that examination as a foundation for change and development of new and meaningful paradigms. These influences should be examined in the context of their effect on formal education and informal education. By formal education, I am referring to the education that is constructed and executed within educational institutions of learning such as public schools and institutions of higher learning while my interpretation of informal education refers to the interaction we have with individuals in our respective communities through conversations and engagements not formally constructed for learning (hooks, 2003).

When critically evaluating the historical aims of education, specifically in the western context, it can be observed that the goals of education have not necessarily been concerned with embracing the principles of a just and peaceful diverse community. Examining modern American formal education for example,

reveals a system of schooling which was actually developed to foster nationalism and the indoctrination of unilateral political ideals and values systems. Dr. Seeker refers to this system of indoctrination when speaking to his "spiritual birth" and a need for "unlearning." Teachers with such an interpretation may assist other students in recognizing the indoctrination of individualism often exposed in a secularized academy

> That year was an intense year for me. It was the year of my spiritual birth really because I went through as much unlearning as learning. I questioned the whole premise, all the premises of what had been taught to me culturally. I realized that culture was relative and that its truths were relative. That I could not rely on them for ultimate meaning.

At the inception of our formal educational system in the 1830s and 1840s, the goal of education was to create a place where some members from different segments of the American culture would come together and be educated to facilitate the development of a "common social and political ideology," impart "government policy," and become under "state control" (Spring, 2003). The goal of education was not to exam issues of oppression and justice but instead to insure the common political and consumerist goals would be established. Institutions of higher learning were similar in their goals for educating (hooks, 1994, 2003; Giroux, 2003; West, 2004).

It is furthermore important to observe that these elite primary and secondary educational institutions were limited primarily to white men (Spring,

2003). Women and people of color were not fully welcomed into the arena of education for years until the 1960s.

There was always a more informal method of education. Examining issues of diversity is relevant given that often upheaval and mistreatment can be linked to a conflict between members from differing and diverse populations. Often marginalized members of the society were educated at the side of their elders and caregivers (King, 1995; Lemann, 1992). These students experienced first hand the effects of an unjust and volatile society through their personal experience of exclusion and oppression. For them education was rooted in daily life experiences. Often those receiving formal education were educated on how to continue oppression while others were informally educated towards surviving and ending oppression (King, 1995; Lemann, 1992). An example of such learning can be seen in the narrative of Dr. Justice when he speaks of the education he received from his cousin during the time of a racially segregated America.

> Being in South Carolina, Lancaster, we had a cousin. We were going to the theater. I must have about ten at the time and I'm use to just going up to the front and he said 'no you can't go to the front' and is said 'why not?' and so I insisted that we went to the front and they told us in no uncertain terms that colored had to use the side door to enter. People of color could only sit upstairs in the balcony.

I believe such experiences for faith-based educators and all educators provide and invaluable lesson for understanding the need for justice. When these teachers become agents for change, I believe they draw from these personal experiences in order to help move their students forward in understanding and

empathizing with those who have been oppressed and violated. I can personally attest to the use of experiences of marginalization and oppression as a tool in educating. My experiences or exclusion and marginalization during my master's program has mad me more attuned to students that I may see as a minority in the classes I teach.

> I was one of about eight African American women in a program consisting of about 30 students total with all other students being white women. Each of us, the black students, was attending the program on full academic scholarships. Labeled a minority, I often felt unwanted and underestimate by both my [white] peers and the [white] professors.

I make a special effort to befriend these students and encourage other students to foster trust and acceptance of the students. I feel the voice of the minority student is often misunderstood and misrepresented. The absence of these voices, like my own, from early educational institutions provided for a system founded in marginalization.

When educational institutions provided access, albeit limited, the system continued the ideals of white male supremacy and power. When the formal curriculum had to adapt to make a place for a more diverse and changing student body, the ideals of consumerism, materialism, hierarchical structure and nationalism were added to become the framework of the hidden curriculum (Apple, 2001; West, 2004). The education of students began to focus more on preparing students to be prepared for jobs, which would enable them to live

comfortably. The aims of nationalism were also furthered as notions of competition and elitism became more present in the educational goals as well.

The secular ideals of materialism and superiority remain present in current education, within the institutions of learning and the overall social climate in the West. American culture, for example, has become a place committed to the relentless pursuit of power, control, and consumption and the collection of things. This has resulted in the unjust treatment of an ever-growing segment of not only Americans but members of the global citizenship worldwide. An ideology of power and possessions has led to an imbalance in the distribution of basic material needs globally resulting in an increasing gulf between the rich and powerful and the poor and powerless. This gulf has ignited wars, famine depletion of the world's resources and various other human miseries. Henry Giroux addresses the impact of such political and consumerist movements in higher education when examining the impact of what he terms "neoliberalism": "The current regime of neoliberalism and the incursion of corporate power into higher education present difficult problems and demand a profoundly committed sense of collective resistance" (Giroux, 2003, p. 197).

In order to cultivate a collective resistance and more equitable distribution of comfort and civility, educators must be part of a new movement politically and socially committed to the fashioning of new paradigms for educating (Freire, 2003; Lerner, 2000; Reagan, 2005). These new paradigms should revisit the alternative values found in the fundamental makeup of the world's various

civilizations that speak to the material and social health of all humanity. We must

develop pedagogies that will function in and out of the classroom to further

justice and peace. To teach for justice and peace means that we must educate

beyond the classroom. The roll of education should be examined in the institution

and in the communities as large (hooks, 2003). Because schools are often under

the political control of the state in which they exists, it is naive to believe that

schools, at any level will be the most efficient and reliable source of change.

Nevertheless, they are a part of the process. Purpel and McLaurin (2004) present

a strong argument to this case in their critique of the roll of schools in reshaping

community:

> Indeed, it is important that institutions that are constituted as primarily
> educative in character (e.g. schools, universities, nursery schools) be
> aware of each other's role and contributions . . . whatever is done should
> be in harmony with a society's most emancipator and visionary goals. (p.
> 126)

Examining the "emancipatory and visionary goals" will assist in the overall

development of new ideals and social goals.

The development of new paradigms will also require us to create a more

equitable representation of the various cultures of humanity. We must examine

the language and sources of our traditional educational foundations. This will

require that we begin critically evaluating various literatures, art, value systems,

and resources of diverse cultures (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Tanaka,

2003). Doing so will bring their voices and experiences to the forefront of our

minds and facilitate understanding and inclusion of diverse ideals. Limiting our visions to myopic views of the world in terms of our own desires and needs encourages the continuation of injustice and indifference through ignorance and indifference.

We must find modes of navigating through present discourse and ideals which are representative of traditional and limiting paradigms of understanding. New paradigms of justice and peace must be developed. We will need to develop new discourses which are representative of previously silenced voices. We may begin by challenging the current interpretations of notions as "justice' and "peace." We as educators must bring a new meanings to these words which abandon previous nationalist and self-serving western denotation and connotation. We must examine the interpretation of justice and peace as construed not only through the eyes of middle class residents of the wealthiest super power on earth but we must also interpret through the eyes of those who have lived in a world where imperialist societies daily invade their lands, people and values systems in effort to satisfy individualistic goals.

It is imperative that educators become more active in forging progressive educational and social curriculums. Purpel and McLaurin encourage us to empower ourselves as educators for transformation of education in terms of nurturing a better understanding of various "modes of knowledge." Furthermore, we are encouraged to develop a "sense of Historicity" and increase our focus on development of social skills which foster community. We should create

environments were critical consciousness and critical thinking are encouraged

foster imagination, creativity and play in the learning process (Purpel & McLaurin,

2004). These practical applications will provide a new framework for peace and

justice by transforming our ideas about what is important and valuable.

Educators like Dr. Justice infuse this notion of critical thinking in their pedagogy.

He explains:

> But to challenge the student in being analytical and critical thinkers and try
> to challenge one to look at the global, the wider, the larger humanity. Of
> course I think that's were the future lies.

These new applications argue against the modern secular notion of education,

which suggest that schooling be consistent with the fostering of competition and

market fundamentalist values (Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2003; West, 2004). Such

goals of infusing critical thinking instead foster the questioning of such values

and facilitate change.

Individually we must perform a more personal critique of our own

epistemologies, motivations, and inspirations for educating. We must examine

our individual discourses and pedagogies and be ceaselessly aware of our

professional and social interactions and the impact those interactions have on

shaping the experiences of others. Often regimes of oppression and upheaval

continue due to the lack of self-appraisal and reexamination of ideals and value

systems through tenets of hegemony and apathy. If we allow and require

ourselves to access those personal moments of injustice that we have

experienced in our lives, we may be able to utilize those visceral experiences as our own historical point of reference. We must be careful not to become vengeful as we reflect on our own mistreatments. Instead our focus should be on insuring that others are not subjected to similar experiences. Through the exploring and reshaping of behaviors, this act of reparation becomes a source of healing for ourselves and the world.

Too often, the social amnesia of individual and societal moments of injustice has lead to the perpetuation of pain and suffering on others. Oppression at the hands of the formerly oppressed results in a long-standing continuation of injustice and cataclysm. Paulo Freire warns against this hypocritical behavior when he admonishes ". . . the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it), become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both" (Freire, 2003, p. 44). When we remain conscious of the emotional and physical responses to injustice, we are more likely to act in a just and peaceful manner (Greene, 1988).

Educators can create a place where recollections, present experiences, and visions for the future can be openly examined and critiqued by actively and dialogically engaging ourselves in public and private discussions surrounding issues of peace and justice. Through frank and honest dialogue, we can generate new opportunities for change (Shor & Freire, 1987). Daily we must examine how our living, privately and publicly, may be contributing to oppression and violence in the lives of others. An examination of such private and public

living is exemplified in Dr. Faithful's recognition that her participation in an elite

segregated organization challenged to her spiritual rearing:

> Moreover, my mother asked me how many debutants I thought would be there of other races. That was really a powerful question because I was pretty sure it was only [going to] be white rich girls. I decided not to "deb" and for some reason never got into the sorority.

Through our constant self-critiquing and activism, we can participate in education

for others. Implicitly and explicitly, we must be agents of change in our personal

lives. In addition, we must present those lives as constant examples of lived

experience in justice and peace (Lerner, 2000; West 2004).

Presenting our lives as living examples for justice and peace is no easy

task. It will require us to be vividly and viscerally intoned with our own life

experiences concerning injustice and turmoil as well as our clearly discerned

interpretations of justice and peace. Inspiring peaceful behavior in others will also

necessitate that we model such behaviors during our interactions with students in

the classroom, our interactions with our colleagues; and our daily exchanges

throughout our community connections.

While we often see the classroom as the primary location of our

pedagogical espousing of thoughts and ideas, our interactions outside of the

classroom are just as vital in influencing and reshaping social change (hooks,

2003). We have so many casual and causal contacts outside of the institution, it

would be remiss of us to not take advantage of these opportunities create

dialogic and practical instances of change and development in the area of peace

and justice. Often we, as "experts" in our perspective fields of interest, are called upon, by the community to speak or lead discussions that are relevant to the cause. These opportunities afford us an excellent opportunity to model justice and peace. However, the work with community is not limited to public engagements. Through our common interactions, there are always opportunities to model just behavior. Moments as simple as courteous and safe driving on the highway, for example, can provide appropriate modeling. After all, how can we confront the global issues of divisive and destructive competition, if we cannot even allow our fellow citizens the right-of-way on the roads of our own country? Our just behavior should be present and evident in the teaching environment and our social interchanges.

Of course as educators, we do spend quite a bit of time in our institutions of learning, both in the classroom and in surrounding areas as we work with students and colleagues. As an adjunct instructor in higher education, it has been amazing to me how faculty members can be unfair and unkind to each other. And the most astonishing phenomena about surrounding the presence of this despicable behavior, is that many of these professional educators often teach students about issues about peace and justice, and yet, they can not treat their fellow academicians with common courtesy. I have also witnessed similar behavior in the actions of public school teachers. Just attend a PTA board executive board meeting and you may be amazed at the angry words and underhandedness that takes place. Of course, I am not suggesting this is the

norm, but the fact that it is present at all provides a very revealing look into our overall societal behaviors. Although colleagues and general situations present in educational settings can be challenging to all of us, we must persevere, and provide and example of how to arrive at harmonious solutions without unnecessary contention.

While our community interactions and professional contacts with colleges and administers provide us with excellent opportunities to model justice and peace, there is no doubt that the classroom will provide us with unlimited opportunities to model our theoretical frameworks of justice and peace. It is the classroom where we hope to have a captivated audience (Shor & Freire, 1987). The classroom should be a place where students witness peace and justice in action. They must be places where students are treated with kindness, patience, and fairness. Justice and peace should be evident in our learning objectives, class assignments, and activities, learning materials, evaluation techniques and our common treatment of students. This will require us to expose our student to the various instances of injustice and anti-peaceful activities taking place daily. Often our students in the West are naive about some of the atrocities that are commonplace for the majority of the world's citizens. Students cannot be inspired to fight for justice if they are operating under a woeful lack of understanding and knowledge about the lives of others. We must make sure that our students as well as we feel free to share our stories and have open discussion in the classroom (hooks, 1994; Shor & Freire 1987).

We should not only treat our students well but also insist that they treat each other with courtesy and respect. When contention and disagreements arise, it is our responsibility to ensure that problems are resolved justly and peacefully. Students are often more aware of what you do than what you say. Your actions become the foundation of your pedagogy peace and justice. Dr. Faithful explains how she strives to exemplify integrity in her daily interactions with students and colleagues:

> I also really strive to act with integrity within the education system and to be a trustworthy colleague, boss and subordinate. And so I think I'd call it living the life in the work place.

Once pedagogy of peace and justice has been established and well implemented in the classroom, it should serve as an inspiration to students to become agents for justice and peace in their daily experiences and interactions. It is not enough to develop new theoretical frameworks of justice and peace or simply model those new paradigms for others. In order to be truly effective in teaching justice and peace, we must inspire our students to do something. We can inspire our students by encouraging and even stirring them towards action (Purpel & McLaurin, 2004; Shapiro, 2004).

Those we teach should be encouraged to examine their daily lives and to become activist against those issues of injustice and upheaval, which affect them more personally and immediately. They must be encouraged to critique their individual situations and to be empowered to advocate for themselves. This can

be simply done by asking students to create an illustration of their own histories and life experiences. They should be encouraged to share their personal life stories. They should be asked: "What have your experiences been with injustice and upheaval? When have you felt instances of injustice? What does justice and peace mean to you? What should you do to change these situations?" We can help our students devise a plan of action and then be committed to supporting them as they began to navigate themselves towards solutions.

In addition, we should encourage students and others to fight for peace and justice on behalf of others. By exposing them to the stories and lives of others, students can gain a better awareness of the injustices in the world. Students should be invited to participate in open dialogue, social movements, and protest as well as to implement simple changes in daily behaviors. While every situation may not be linked to us at a personal and immediate level, we must recognize and teach others that the problems of others will impact our lives at some level whether we are conscious of it or not. This also means helping others to recognize when their privilege may afford them the opportunity to fight on the behalf of others. This will mean developing compassion and caring in others (Fox, 1994; Katz, Noddings, & Strike, 1999; Miller, 1995). This appears to be one of the pedagogical goals of Dr. Seeker when he states,

> I hope that I can play through education, through Bahái service some
> small part in helping the growth of this more world embracing perspective.
> To teach that we need to be accountable of every human on earth, that
> when one looks at the notion of "We the people" it is not a racialized
> people, it is not a religious people, it is not a national people, but it is our

species, or race, our family that needs to be embraced a the ultimate community.

Connecting ourselves to humanity as a whole, allows us to become present and aware of the suffering of our fellow humanity (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 1952). We have to develop a sense of community responsibility.

Teaching for justice and peace in today's social climate of injustice and upheaval requires that today's educators develop new paradigms of peace and justice. Furthermore, it requires that as teachers we model appropriate behaviors consistent with justice and peace. Faith-based pedagogues, while they own no monopoly over the ability to teach for justice and peace, possess a particularly distinctive incite for such a venture. Because most of the world religions are based in justice and peace, their commitment to these ideals, when appropriately applied, offer humanity a new paradigm for healing the world.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Human education signifies civilization and progress -- that is to say, government, administration, charitable works, trades, arts and handicrafts, sciences, great inventions and discoveries and elaborate institutions, which are the activities essential to man as distinguished from the animal.

-Abdu'l-Bahái

My dissertation aims to create a space where the voices and life experiences of **Bahái faith-based** pedagogues, like me, can begin to be heard and understood. In Chapter I, I introduce theme of "**teaching as worship**." I use the chapter to present a theoretical framework for understanding the positioning of spiritual and religious themes in the life work of those teaching as worship utilizing a brief introduction to some of scholarly literature I have found to be key and relevant to the theme of teaching as worship. I present some of the critical questions I seek to examine in my research. I introduce the participants of my qualitative research study and give a brief description of their religious and work experience.

In Chapter II, I provide a more in depth review of scholarly literature that examines the evolving relationship between religion and higher education in America. I devote specific attention to the repositioning of religious and spiritual elements in education. Furthermore, I examine the emerging presence of human

secularism in universities and colleges and the increasing marginalizing of religious authority.

In Chapter III, I compare and contrast the influence of **secular** and **religious** themes on my education and others enrolled in institutions of higher education. Utilizing my personal narrative as an example, I compare my interactions and perceptions of those in HBCUs and White institutions. I devote the majority of this chapter to the examination of my personal spiritual evolution both personally and professional as an educator.

In Chapter IV, I examine the **faith-based pedagogue's** role in colleges and universities. I focus on the contributions and challenges these pedagogues have to offer institutions of higher education in a pluralistic American community. I examine the contribution their presence brings to the democratic classroom and how that presence can help shape positive social development through the building of relationships.

In Chapter V, I examine the practicality of utilizing **narrative research** methodology to explore the life stories of Bahái Faith-based pedagogues. Using the conceptual framework outline in the previous chapters, I examine the benefits and challenges of utilizing a faith-based approach to education in higher education with specific attention to the narratives of Bahái educators. I compare and contrast the pedagogy of Bahái faith-based pedagogues with the pedagogy of religious extremist and moderates; and human secularist. I also address the

importance of recognizing and understanding my own subjectivity in the research process.

In Chapter VI, I present the life stories of five Bahái faith-based pedagogues. By analyzing individual narratives as well as the intertextuality of collective narratives, I examine the presence of Bahái and secular themes. I also analyze individual and the collective narratives for the presence of silence, slippage, and selectivity and present my interpretation of commonalities and differences.

 Chapter VII discusses the role faith-based pedagogues and other educators play in developing and maintaining more peaceful and just societies worldwide. Building on the discussions in the previous chapters and providing examples from the narratives of the Bahái faith-based pedagogues, I provide an example of how the; work of these educators can assist the process.

It is my hope and desire that the research I have conducted will add to an increasing investigation into the life work of Bahái faith-based pedagogues. Future research should examine the life histories of Bahái educators worldwide. There should be more research to examine their work throughout all levels of education including primary and secondary schooling. Their work should be examined in private and public settings as well. I hope to add to the research I have conducted in this dissertation by examining the life stories of more Bahái educators in the areas identified.

Writing this dissertation has been a great spiritual and educational experience for me. In examining the life history of friends, heroes and colleges, I have come to a deeper understanding of my own role as a Bahái, educator, and human being. In seeking to create a space where the voice of Bahái educators can be heard, I have created a space where my own voice can be heard. As I reflect on what I have learned from the participants in my research as well as America's history with religion and education, I realize my life has been forever changed and challenged. I feel charged with a profound responsibility to ensure that I remain connected and dedicated to my spirit, my family and fiends, my students, my faith community, and my world community . In that aim, I seek to insure that when connecting my teaching as worship, I exemplify the ideals of unity, peace, and justice. Through such commitment, I will be a positive force in the "human education" which "signifies civilization and progress" which Abdul-Bahái speaks of in the title of the final chapter of this dissertation.

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APPENDIX A

WHAT IS SECULAR HUMANISM?

Secular Humanism is a term which has come into use in the last thirty years to describe a world view with the following elements and principles:

- A conviction that dogmas, ideologies and traditions, whether religious, political or social, must be weighed and tested by each individual and not simply accepted on faith.

- Commitment to the use of critical reason, factual evidence, and scientific methods of inquiry, rather than faith and mysticism, in seeking solutions to human problems and answers to important human questions.

- A primary concern with fulfillment, growth, and creativity for both the individual and humankind in general.

- A constant search for objective truth, with the understanding that new knowledge and experience constantly alter our imperfect perception of it.

- A concern for this life and a commitment to making it meaningful through better understanding of ourselves, our history, our intellectual and artistic achievements, and the outlooks of those who differ from us.

- A search for viable individual, social and political principles of ethical conduct, judging them on their ability to enhance human well-being and individual responsibility.

- A conviction that with reason, an open marketplace of ideas, good will, and tolerance, progress can be made in building a better world for ourselves and our children.

Adapted from Secular Humanism main beliefs from www.Secularhumanism.org

APPENDIX B

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BAHÁI FAITH

In examining the intertextuality shared between the life stories of the Bahái educators, I found the emergence of common Bahái themes to appear immediately. In order to understand these themes, I have provided a brief introduction to the Bahái Faith and its common themes and principles. In providing this history I hope to provide a perspective for understanding the life experiences of these professors.

In the context of the evolution of organized religion, the Bahái Faith is the newest of the world religions marking its official establishment in the year 1844. At this time, the Bab, founder of the Babi faith, and predecessor to the Bahái faith, predicted the coming of a new prophet in Persia. The Bab, whose name translates in English as "Gate" or "Door," herald the coming of Bahá'u'lláh, who was to become the prophet founder of the Bahái Faith (Abdu'l-Bahái, 1980). Bahá'u'lláh, whose name means the glory of God,

> declared plainly and repeatedly, that He was the long-expected
> educator and teacher of all peoples, the channel of a wondrous
> Grace that would transcend all previous outpouring, in which all
> previous forms of religion would become merged, as rivers merge
> in the ocean. (Esslemont, 1980, p. 5)

With the establishment of the Bahái Faith, the following principles of the faith were set forth as guides for its followers. These principles are couched with in

overarching themes of unity, justice, service to humanity and advancement of human civilization

- There is only one God (Oneness of God).

- All religions share a common foundation (Oneness of Religion) .

- Humankind is one. People of all races, nations, economic groups, and religious backgrounds are equal in the sight of God (Oneness of Humanity).

- Each individual is responsible for investigating truth for himself (Independent Investigation of truth).

- Science and religion harmonize. Science without religion is materialism-religion without science is superstition.

- Men and women are equal.

- Every child is entitled to a sound, basic education (Compulsory education).

- There is a spiritual solution to economic problems.

- The world needs an international, auxiliary language.

- Universal peace must be established and protected by a world commonwealth (Universal peace upheld by a world government).

  (adapted from SABR 1995)

Bahá'u'lláh, the prophet founder and leader of the faith, served as its central figure until his death May 29, 1892. During his leadership, he revealed several

holy writings and teachings for the faith. These writings serve as scriptures for the modern followers of the faith. During his reign as prophet founder of the religion, he also faced great persecution, banishment, imprisonment form Persian officials, and Muslim clerics (Esslemont, 1980).

Following his passing, Abdul-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh's eldest son, whose name means "servant of Bahái, served as the central figure of the faith until his death November 25, 1921. Abdul-Bahái, also named the Center of the Covenant by his father, became the "authoritative Interpreter of the teachings" of Bahá'u'lláh (Esslemont, 1980, p. 55). During his leadership, he traveled to several countries outside of Persia teaching and establishing the faith. He, like his father, authored several writings relevant to the Bahái Faith. Following the death of Abdul-Bahá, the leadership of the faith passed to Abdul-Bahá's grandson, Shoghi Effendi. He led the faith until his sudden death in 1957.

Shoghi Effendi, referred to as the Guardian of the Bahái Faith, interpreted, and translated the writings of Abdul-Bahái. He also set into motion the beginning of what would come to serve as the administrative order of the Bahái Faith today more commonly known as the Universal House of Justice (UHJ). At the time of his death, the faith fell into the Hands of the Cause. These were specific individuals established by Shoghi Effendi in 1951 to serve "important services in the work of the guardian" (Taherzadeh, 2000, p. 357).The UHJ was established in 1963 and became the authoritative leadership of the faith. This nine-seated membership, elected annually by the National Spiritual Assemblies of Bahái

worldwide, resides in the Bahái holy land of Haifa Israel. The members of the faith in any given nation establish the National Spiritual Assembles (NSA). Each nation is comprised of several Local Spiritual Assemblies (LSA), which are elected by the Bahái members of that community. A community may be comprised of Baháis in any given city, county community or township. depending on the geographical location of the believers. Like the UJH, each local and national assembly is composed of nine members and serves as the governing body of that community or nation. Unlike many previously established religions, there is no clergy in the faith and all members of the NSA and LSA are elected via secrete ballot by its community.

Members of the Bahái Faith are individuals who declare a recognition of Bahá'u'lláh as the manifestation of God in present day. They follow the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh as well as the principles set forth by the faith. Furthermore, they except the Universal House of Justice as the authoritative leadership of the faith and are responsible for teaching the faith and upholding the themes and principles of the faith in personal, professional, and social endeavors.

APPENDIX C

EAGLE FORUM MANIFESTO

Eagle Forum supports American sovereignty

We oppose all encroachments against American sovereignty through treaties (such as the International Criminal Court) and United Nations conferences (such as those aimed at imposing energy restrictions on the U.S., registering privately owned guns, imposing global taxes, or promoting feminist goals).

We oppose sending U.S. troops to participate in foreign "engagements" or wars unless U.S. national security is at stake and Congress's constitutional power is respected.

We support the deployment of an anti-ballistic missile defense to protect American lives.

We support establishing English as our official language.

Eagle Forum supports American freedoms

We support large-scale reduction in income taxes.

We support the immediate cessation of electronic profiling, i.e., entering personal information about law-abiding citizens on government databases or vaccine registries.

We support putting control of health care spending in the hands of individuals by making health insurance tax deductible for all persons, not just for employers.

We support the private enterprise system and reject the false dogma that tax-and-spend government can solve our social and economic problems.

Eagle Forum supports the Constitution

We oppose all efforts to call a new Constitutional Convention that could rewrite our U.S. Constitution.

We support the sanctity of human life as a gift from our Creator, as proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence.

We support congressional action to curb the Imperial Judiciary by refusing to confirm activist judges and repealing federal laws that diminish the Tenth Amendment.

We support the right of individuals to keep and bear arms, as guaranteed in the Second Amendment.

We oppose statehood for the District of Columbia or Puerto Rico.

We support making elections honest by requiring positive identification for voters, cleaning up registration rolls, and enforcing ballot security.

Eagle Forum exposes the radical feminists

We honor the institution of marriage and the role of the fulltime homemaker.

Eagle Forum successfully led the ten-year battle to defeat the misnamed Equal Rights Amendment with its hidden agenda of tax-funded abortions and same-sex marriages.

Eagle Forum supports traditional education

Every child should be able to read by the end of the first grade and should be

taught to read using phonics. We urge parents to teach their own children to read before they enter school. Reducing illiteracy is an Eagle Forum priority.

We oppose and deplore the dumbing down of the academic curriculum through fads such as Outcome-Based Education and self-esteem courses, and we oppose liberal propaganda in the curriculum through global education and Political Correctness.

We support parents' rights to guide the education of their own children, to protect their children against immoral instruction and materials, and to home school without oppressive government regulation.

We oppose federal control of the public school classroom through Goals 2000, School-to-Work, national tests, or national standards.

Eagle Forum was a primary factor in passing the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment, and we strongly support its enforcement to protect children against psychological testing without parental consent.

We oppose the feminist goals of federally financed and regulated childcare and the feminization of the military.

Adapted from Eagle Forum : http://www.eagleforum.org/misc/descript.html