TRANSPERSONAL THEORY

AND EDUCATION

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Two major experiences led me to the decision to propose a study which explores educational environments in the light of a transpersonal theory of human development. First, during my graduate studies I immersed myself in the exploration of the theoretical foundations of transpersonal psychology. I discovered rather quickly that it would add to the depth of my understanding if I were to try out one of the suggested ways towards heightened awareness and consciousness development which are central themes of transpersonal theory. One of the suggested paths is meditation. As a meditator of now four years I have begun to experience some of the immediate practical benefits of meditation as described in theoretical discussions and empirical studies of meditation (Benson, 1975; Carrington, 1977; Earle, 1981; Walsh, 1977, 1978, 1983;): an increased ability to center or concentrate on the present moment, an increased ability to physically and mentally relax, and, most importantly, a feeling of increased harmony between my acts and my thoughts. These changes are best illustrated with some examples. Instead of fighting for concentration when I correct students' papers (perhaps because my mind is preoc-

cupied by an upsetting event in the morning, or because I anticipate trouble at the next day dentist visit), I have learned to relax within myself, not to resist the stream of consciousness but to observe it with increasing equanimity. As a consequence, I simply concentrate on the task at hand, my thoughts and my actions merge, and the result is a general feeling of well-being. (This certainly does not yet work at all times; but the progress is encouraging.)

The second and most influential experience that led to this study happened as a result of my examination of the current literature regarding transpersonal psychology, especially its explanations of human development, and of studies concerning meditation with children. Transpersonal psychologists treat childhood experiences primarily as belonging to stages of development that occur before the onset of transpersonal development. The main argument for this position seems to be that a person has to have established a sense of selfhood before development to transcend the self can begin (White, 1972; Wilber, 1980, 1989). Further, the majority of studies of meditation with children focuses either on physical benefits, i.e. increased muscle relaxation (Murdock, 1978, 1987), or on cognitive aspects, i.e. mental alertness or reduced test anxiety (Carsello and Creaser, 1978; Linden, 1973). It appears that there exist two significant limitations of the current literature: First, studies of meditating with children lack exploration of the possible spiritual and/or emotional component of

meditation comparable to research on meditation with adults. This might be - at least in part - a consequence of the difficulties inherent in emotion research and of the virtual non-existence of literature on children's spirituality. Second, transpersonal psychologists have not yet addressed the question of whether one can distinguish between childhood experiences which are relevant for later transpersonal development in a very general sense only, i.e. insofar as "normal" healthy development is part of the path to eventual transpersonal development, and childhood experiences which contain a spiritual/emotional aspect that makes them directly relevant for later transpersonal development, i.e. clear indications of a spiritual practice in accordance with transpersonal theory.

Transpersonal Explanations of Childhood Development

Transpersonal psychologists have dealt with development during childhood in a number of ways. Perhaps the best established theory of transpersonal development is that of Ken Wilber (1980, 1989). He describes childhood as characterized by "pre-personal" and "personal" existence. The developing child's task is to form a stable sense of identity, a self that functions as "the executor of psychological organization, integration, and coordination" (Wilber, 1981, p. 42). In Wilber's theory, transpersonal development begins characteristically in adulthood.

Michael Washburn (1988) offers a less cognitive, more psychodynamically oriented explanation of transpersonal development. He posits that before the Oedipal crisis, the child exists in unity with a "dynamic ground," the child's mother. (An analysis of Washburn's theory allows for the suggestion that his term "mother" can be replaced by the term "primary caretaker" without altering his argument.) As the need for independence grows, the child cuts loose from this original unity. The formation of the ego is now in the foreground of development. Ego development, on Washburn's interpretation, can be understood primarily as self concept development or, more precisely, as realization of potential self concepts. One major aspect of this development is the realization of one's separateness from other humans, a separateness that is encouraged by traditional models of child development. This is the beginning of a phase in development when dualism sets in and the mode of thinking in opposites rather than unities follows the traditional Western model of positivism: mind is set against body, logic is set against intuition.[1] Only later in development is a reconciliation between ego and dynamic ground possible.

There have been sporadic attempts to define certain childhood experiences as actual transpersonal experiences (Armstrong, 1984; Chinen, 1985; Miller, 1988; Nikola,

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1. For a more detailed discussion of the concept of logical positivism see Chapter III a.

1988;). Armstrong's (1984) description of such experiences focuses on children's spiritual lives and compares them to peak experiences of seasoned meditators. His strongest argument for transpersonal experiences in childhood is the following suggestion:

> [T]his more transpersonal perspective of child development conceives of the infant as developing within the context of a larger whole [ultimate ground of being, ultimate consciousness], which under certain circumstances the child is capable of perceiving. (p. 215)

Roberts (1989) theorizes that it is possible to reconceptualize development, including child development, by defining it within the following paradigm: Human mind and body are indivisible. Therefore traditional developmental theories which emphasize <u>either</u> cognitive development <u>or</u> physical development, social development <u>or</u> personality development are simply incomplete and produce a fragmented picture of humans. He asserts that the term 'consciousness' is ambiguous because traditional theories of development as well as transpersonal theories use it, but in very different ways. His suggestion is to use the term 'mindbody states' instead of 'altered states of consciousness.' Roberts develops a model of human development where different mindbody states are utilized for different tasks in life. The basic idea is that different tasks require different mindbody states for optimal solutions, and that children can be trained to experience and use different mindbody states.

> [M]indbody produces and uses a large number of psychophysiological states. ... A mindbody state is a system or pattern of overall psychological

and physiological functioning at any one time. (p. 84)

Within this framework, childhood experiences are taken out of the realm of traditional developmental explanations which exclude discussion of different mindbody states. However, Roberts does not specifically discuss child development. Rather he indirectly addresses it by suggesting ways in which educational systems could accomodate and make use of different mindbody states.

The Concept of Spirituality

One of the core concepts of transpersonal theory is "spirituality." It starts to get complicated and ambiguous when one searches for a leading definition of this term. Definitions range from simple comparisons with mystical states (Capra, 1982, 1988; Ornstein, 1972, 1986) to explanations rooted in Eastern philosophies (Capra, 1975, 1983; Young, 1986) to descriptions of what it is not, i.e. by Viktor Frankl (Schultz, 1977) or Abraham Maslow (White, 1972). If one looks to the most established theorist, Ken Wilber, for a firm definition of spirituality, one does so without results.

With regard to the spiritual life of children, Robert Coles (1990) wrote one of the most comprehensive books to date. It is an account of many years of interviews with preadolescents from all over the world, from all different religious backgrounds. Although Coles is a psychiatrist, the focus of his investigation is not on adult categoriza-

tion or evaluation of children's spiritual experiences. Rather, he attempted to let his informants, i.e. children, speak for themselves. Through this clearly phenomenological approach.

> I have wanted to learn from young people that exquisitely private sense of things that nurtures their spirituality ... I realized how much there is to recover from our Sunday school and Hebrew school past, from our nine-year-old or ten-year-old life, when the mysteries of the Bible or the Koran lived hard by the mysteries of childhood itself. The questions ..."Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?" are the eternal questions children ask more intensely, unremittingly, and subtly than we sometimes imagine. (p.36-37)

Coles clearly looked at spirituality within the framework of organized religion, and he is not a transpersonal psychologist. Yet, he echoes transpersonal thought when he insists that each human being is in search for his or her personal spiritual life; that human development needs to include the spiritual component to be complete, i.e. psychologically healthy; Coles concludes that the individual spiritual journeys may be different from one another. Yet, they are but different paths to the realization of one's essential unity with the Origin of Being, with God, and the essential connectedness with other human beings.

Preliminary Suggestions

Reflecting on the current literature has led me to the following conclusions:

1. Empirical research on altered states of conscious-

ness, especially meditation, follows for the most part the established procedures of Western scientific investigation which aim for descriptions of individual differences. This involves "a concrete, face-value analysis of observable behavior" (Maddi, 1989, p.5) and is exemplified in studies about the relationship of meditation and locus of control (Nardo & Raymond, 1979), field dependence (Linden, 1973), skin temperature changes (Credidio, 1982), and numerous other research studies.

2. Within the transpersonal tradition, spirituality lacks satisfying definition. It is used mainly in reports about altered states of consciousness, i. e. ASC's, in adults. It has not been explicitely compared and contrasted with existing definitions in major religions. It has not been given meaning with regard to preadolescent children. It has not been explored as to its influence in educational settings.

3. Transpersonal psychologists have in general accepted views of child development as described in such traditional theories as those of Freud (1949), Erikson (1963), Piaget (1952), or Kohlberg (1984), without attempting to place them in a transpersonal context.

An examination of childhood in the specific light of transpersonal developmental theory produces a number of complex questions and confronts the researcher with the need to find a methodological approach that is in accordance with the underlying philosophy of transpersonal thought.

One crucial question is if certain childhood *experiences* are relevant for later, adult, transpersonal development, or if *development* during childhood can actually take the forms of transpersonal development. One would either have to conceive of transpersonal development as an extension of "normal", ordinary healthy development or as an alternative to such development, one that includes transpersonal *child* development. To my knowledge, this question has not yet been proposed in this form.

Questions of the Research Approach

With regard to methodological issues, transpersonal theory presents a special challenge. At the core of transpersonal theories is the concept of ASC's (Boucouvalas, 1980; Tageson, 1982; Tart, 1986; Wilber, 1981). ASC's imply a change in the subjective consciousness of a person. Transpersonal theory is therefore characterized by the notion of change and of subjectivity with regard to consciousness.

It is assumed that humans are capable of various different (altered) states of consciousness, and that such ASC's provide access to transpersonal experience, transcendence of the boundaries of one's self in the quest for unity with the ultimate ground of being or - as most religions of the world call it - with God. In spite of quite useful *theoretical* descriptions of the nature of (adult) transpersonal experience (Wilber, 1980), the concepts involved, e.g.

consciousness, ASC, transcendence of self, present centeredness, spirituality, have either been explained in a theoretical - philosophical context, using e.g. a world view that includes the idea of a unified consciousness (Washburn, 1988); or certain concepts that lend themselves to operational definitions have been selected for research purposes. The most prominent examples can be found in studies of ASC, including the majority of meditation studies. Isolating transpersonal concepts for the purpose of investigating them in a traditional scientific manner means to adopt the premises of logical positivism. The researcher assumes that the validity of a scientific construct is established when there exists a clear correspondence between that concept and some publicly observable phenomenon. Such assumptions are too limiting for transpersonal psychology. As explained above, change in subjective consciousness cannot be satisfactorily operationalized in the traditional scientific manner, i.e. in terms of some publicly observable data, including behavior. The state of self-transcendence or spiritual enlightenment, a goal of transpersonal development, is characterized by the subjective experience of oneness with the ultimate ground of being. The path towards transcendence of self is unique to the individual. Therefore, those concepts - central to transpersonal psychology and inherently subjective - would lose meaning if reduced to objective phenomena.

It becomes increasingly clear that the exclusive use of quantitative methodologies for investigating transpersonal

concepts leads to an inappropriate reductionism of the concepts' meaning. Unfortunately, the main body of research investigating ASC's, e.g. meditation studies, has so far concentrated on observing quantifiable variables like physical reactions to meditation or results on standardized tests of some cognitive ability. The only standardized instrument that proposes to measure the transpersonal component in adults (Friedman, 1983) is, in my opinion, somewhat reductionistic. By focusing primarily on presence or absence of present-centeredness, and by "measuring" how clearly a person might identify with supposedly transpersonal thoughts as exemplified in a handful of sentences, this instrument, too, puts artificial limitations on the issue. No standardized measuring instrument exists for assessing children from a transpersonal perspective. Methodological difficulties are indeed powerful. There is a great need for studies that employ methodologies which are compatible with the subjective quality of transpersonal experiences. And further, if transpersonal psychology is a <u>developmental</u> psychology, one can reasonably argue that childhood should be investigated from a <u>transpersonal</u> perspective.

One way to reconcile problems of conceptualization with the need for extending current transpersonal theories to include childhood is to start out with a philosophical framework that allows for the notion of subjectivity in scientific investigations and which does not restrict itself to a positivist perspective of science. Phenomenology and

Rupert Sheldrake's theory of morphic resonance (Grof, 1984) form such a philosophical background, while modern quantum physics provides examples of applied research (Capra, 1983). These views will be further described later in this study.

Research Questions

As an educator I am aware of the dynamics involved in teacher-student interactions. I know that those dynamics are not merely a product of directly observable actions but influenced by personality characteristics, beliefs, values, weltanschauung, i.e. a person's way and view of life, and other more covertly operating phenomena on both sides. There is ample documentation that the educational environment significantly influences students' lives (Beizer-Seidner, Stipek & Feshbach, 1988; Entwisle, Alexander, Pallas & Cadigan, 1987; Jackson, 1968). For a transpersonal psychologist interested in child development the main questions are:

1. Are there educational environments that explicitly state that they promote "spirituality" in child development?

2. What are the characteristics of such environments?

3. What are child/adult interactions like in such environments?

4. How does their concept of spirituality compare with the concept of spirituality as used by transpersonal theorists?

5. Could it be that different <u>traditional</u> spiritual philosophies intend their practices to lead to the same end as transpersonal theory suggests, i.e. full development and eventual intuitive apprehension of consciousness?

The purpose of the proposed study is to find answers to these research questions. Realizing that there exists a gap in transpersonal theory, that there are not sufficient standardized tests to quantitatively measure issues of transpersonal development, and acknowledging that an investigation of transpersonal development calls for a special methodological tools to not be emptied of its meaning, I decided that the most useful way to illuminate the complexity of these issues is to conduct a phenomenological study which will describe and compare educational environments, focus on the possible presence or absence of transpersonal components, and seek a clarification of the concept of spirituality.

Summary

The foregoing chapter presents various theoretical viewpoints regarding transpersonal theory and childhood development. It is stated that the majority of transpersonal theorists appears to accept traditional models of child development. The usefulness of such acceptance for transpersonal theory is questioned. The concept of spirituality in general and as it concerns children is explored. The use of quantitative and qualitative methodologies for the exploration of transpersonal topics is discussed in general. Five research questions are presented.

CHAPTER II

CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGIES

There are three major traditional models of the psychology of human development which form the historical background in front of which transpersonal psychology exists: behaviorism, depth psychology, and humanistic psychology. In this chapter, I describe those features of the traditional theories that distinguish them from transpersonal psychology. I then discuss the nature of transpersonal psychology in detail.

Behaviorism

Behaviorism as a psychological discipline took shape within the framework of logical positivism (Tageson, 1982). Positivists insisted that truth is what can be experienced by one's senses, that any attempt to explain the world metaphysically is simply meaningless, and that for any scientific conclusion to be "true," there has to be an observable referent.

Behaviorists apply this philosophical proposition by studying publicly <u>observable</u> human (and animal) behavior. In accord with the scientific tradition of logical positivism, explanations of the nature of humans are based on

"carefully controlled observations of public, objective, quantifiable data" (Tageson, 1982).

The behaviorist movement has not been uniform, yet is characterized by two underlying themes. First, behaviorism focuses on the process of learning. Learning is dissected into three parts: increase or decrease of a clearly definable, objectively observable response; antecedents, i.e. events that precede a response; and consequences which appear in the form of positive or negative reinforcers (Maddi, 1989). Behaviorism does not explore human consciousness because it is thought of as a private event that eludes scientific inquiry.

Depth Psychology

The primary interest of depth psychologists - such as Adler, Jung, Fromm, Erikson, and most notably Freud - is in explaining psychological forces that supposedly underlie human development. Those forces are said to be beneath conscious awareness, and form the dynamic unconscious (Tageson, 1982). Rather than exploring human consciousness, depth psychologists claim to have developed scientific methods with which "experts" can define the type of <u>unconscious</u> force that is at work in a given situation.

Depth psychology originated with Sigmund Freud's development of his theory of the unconscious (Hall, 1954). Like the behaviorists, Freud was greatly influenced by the positivistic idea that psychology is a science similar to other

natural sciences, and that the human mind can be studied and quantitatively measured. Furthermore, Freud was fascinated by the new physics of his times. The major theoretical concept concerned the conservation of energy. Freud soon conceived the human personality to be such an energy system that follows specific laws. The main energy is focused in the unconscious; the task of the depth psychologist-expert is to use scientific tools to uncover the dynamics of the unconscious. The scientific tools include free association or projective tests.

Bettelheim (1986) argues that Freud's work has been misunderstood in America due mainly to incorrect translations of his work. He indicates that psychology in Europe at the time of Freud's early professional life was closer to the human sciences, i.e. Geisteswissenschaften, than to the natural sciences, i.e. Naturwissenschaften; He believes Freud never meant to restrict psychoanalysis to the realm of the natural sciences.

While it is true that there exist indeed many weaknesses in the English translations of Freud's writings, Bettelheim's argument that Freud approached the study of the human soul from a non-clinical point of view or that his greater concern was the description of individual soul landscapes is not entirely convincing. Only the older Freud expressed doubts about psychoanalysis being an exact science; it was Freud who, fluent in English, agreed to the original translations of his work; and, most importantly,

Freud never changed his conceptualization of human development as a constant battle with contradicting inner forces. The emphasis on the individual unconscious could lead to the conclusion that Freud's theory is in opposition to Behaviorism. In reality it is only a shift in level of observation. Especially the concept of the Superego reminds of the mechanism of reward and punishment, where guilt functions as punishment and pride functions as reward. Reward and punishment are first experienced in the real world only to be internalized rapidly. One cannot help but notice that in a way some of Freud's descriptions of inner psychodynamic events resemble explanations from learning theory. The goal of psychoanalysis is to reveal the mechanisms of the unconscious and to transform them into observable events, i.e. the verbalization through the patient and to possibly change behavior, i.e. restructure the forces of the unconscious.

It is noteworthy that depth psychology began as an attempt to explain human pathology. In order to stay within the strict scientific guidelines of the times, a model had to be developed that could serve as an explanation of otherwise inexplicable behavior. Contemporary representatives of depth psychology, neofreudians, are much closer to the humanistic branch of psychology. They stress psychological health rather than pathology in their theories. Yet, the core of depth psychology remains the conflict model. This model views humans as being caught in an inevitable strug-

gle between opposite life forces. In this sense it is a reductionist model that conceptualizes humans as relatively passive and in need of an expert, i.e. the psychoanalyst, to help resolve the conflict.

Humanistic Psychology

The central theme of the humanistic perspective is its innovative conceptualization of personality development. Personality development, indeed the development of the human species, is said to be based on consciousness (Maslow, 1971). More specific, humans are capable of self-consciousness. This is a major attribute of humans and one that consequently leads to conscious experience, conscious intent, and the possibility of choices or personal freedom (Tageson, 1982).

One of the most striking differences between behaviorism and depth psychology on the one hand, and humanistic psychology on the other hand, is the latter's focus on the human potential, on healthy development, and on the idea that humans inherently strive to actualize more and more of their potential (Schultz, 1977).

Abraham Maslow, probably the most influential humanistic psychologist, originally suggested that the highest state of human development is the state of complete self-actualization. In his later years, Maslow realized that self-actualization might extend to states of consciousness <u>beyond</u> ordinary waking consciousness, and that the self-

actualizing person can experience being part of a more extended reality than the personal self (Maslow, 1971). In The Farther Reaches of Human Nature (1971), he devoted a whole chapter to the issue of transcendence, a possible state after self-actualization. However, these ideas never became part of his basic theory.

Transpersonal Psychology

Theory

In its focus, transpersonal psychology goes beyond all traditional psychological theories. The fundamental change is in the acknowledgment that man is more than matter, more than a driven element caught between conflicted forces, and more than a creation with free will and an urge for self-actualization. Reality is no longer defined as comprising only what is accessible through ordinary human consciousness; rather, there exists a larger reality, a spiritual reality, a common ground of being in which we all participate. Humans are capable of developing beyond self-actualization, can transcend the ego-self, and move towards subjective experiences of ultimate participation with the common ground of being (Tart, 1975; Walsh, 1980; Wilber, 1981).

Transpersonal psychology defines the evolution of consciousness as the essence of the evolution of the human species; the development of consciousness is the major task of the individual human being. Evolution of the species and

development of the individual are interconnected: all existence is an expression of the consciousness of a common origin, which religions might call God, but which transpersonal psychologists also call "ultimate truth", "ultimate state of consciousness", or "common ground of being" (Wilber, 1981). The goal of evolution of the human species is the realization, by all its members, of the fundamental identity with the common ground of being. An individual - after passing through necessary states of personality development, such as the formation of sense of identity, an "ego-self" (Pearl, 1989) - can attain a transpersonal level of development. This level is characterized by the capacity to not only function at the personal level, but to directly, subjectively experience the basic identity of oneself with the larger reality, namely the ultimate ground of being. It is further held that the accumulation of such individual developments will eventually lead to the universal realization of consciousness.

Altered States of Consciousness

The concept of ASC's presupposes that consciousness is a pattern of functioning, and that this pattern can be altered voluntarily (Tart, 1975). Within transpersonal psychology, ASC's are seen as different paths that have the potential of guiding a person towards transcending the ego-self and to the realization of one's participation in a larger context than what one ordinarily perceives to be

reality.

The idea of ASC's is in fact very old. The Christian spiritual traditions tell of people who experienced a transformation of ordinary consciousness through intensive prayer or particular spiritual meditations. Meditation has also been a recognized spiritual practice in most Eastern spiritual traditions (Smith, 1954). More recently, Roberts (1989) suggests to change the term ASC to "Mindbody States." His argument is that the term consciousness is prone to many different interpretations, not all in the spirit of transpersonal psychology. By using the expression mindbody instead, the emphasis is on the unity of the mind with the body, an emphasis that implicitly indicates the concern of transpersonal psychology with a holistic approach to describing human development.

The spectrum of tools to alter ones state of consciousness includes the use of hallucinogenic drugs, intensive prayer, biofeedback, and meditation.

Meditation

Although there exist many different kinds of meditation traditions and techniques, meditation is essentially a form of training attention (Linden, 1973). Through continuous practice , the meditator becomes increasingly able to suspend the incessant stream of ordinary consciousness, moves closer to the present, and refines awareness of the subjective elements of experience. The key to such refined aware-

ness seems to be the giving up of resistance to the creations of consciousness.

The main body of research on meditation describes the alteration of physical states, such as increased alpha wave production, or changes in cognition, such as enhanced field independence or reduced anxiety (Benson, 1975; Credidio, 1982; Earle, 1981).

Spirituality

It is stated in Chapter I that the term spirituality is used in many different ways by authors writing in the transpersonal tradition. This section presents samples of this diversity.

A large number of writers draw in their arguments for a spiritual component of human development heavily on Eastern philosophies, especially on the idea that a spiritual experience is the intuitive apprehension of one's basic, existential oneness with the origin of creation, with God. This experience can take on many forms. Shinzen Young (1986) describes it so: " [M]editation...is a journey to where one is. The distance separating starting point and goal is zero" (p. 9).

The meditator eventually may be able to experience some form of ASC's, but this is not a goal. The aim is for a deeper and deeper understanding of one's basic, i.e. spiritual, nature and the realization of unity with the common ground. Although this last aim could be understood as comprising an

ASC in itself, it goes beyond that. Once ultimate realization of consciousness is attained, one is not in a particular state per se; rather consciousness as such is reached which includes all possible ASC's. By moving through layer after layer of levels of consciousness, one might arrive at the point of origin, the self, but the transcended self.

The same kind of unity as the essence of a spiritual experience is described within the Christian tradition. Deikman (1972) discusses the spiritual experience of unity as part of the mystic experience, and quotes William James:

> In [Christian mysticism] we find the same recurring note, so that there is about mystical utterance an eternal unanimity which ought to make a critic stop and think, and which brings it about that the mystical classics have ... neither birthday nor native land. Perpetually telling of the unity of man with God, their speech antedates languages, and they do not grow old. (p. 214)

Charles Tart (1975), on the other hand, is much more interested in establishing the notion that <u>direct</u> experience of spirituality is a result of experiencing some ASC's.

> These spiritual psychologies emphasize the necessity of experiencing various spiritual things for oneself, rather than just believing them, and provide various kinds of techniques for altering one's state of consciousness in order to experience directly the bases of the spiritual path. (p.55)

Although he regrets the inadequacy of our language for descriptions of what he calls "spiritual psychologies," he becomes more concrete than any other transpersonal theorist. He, too, emphasizes the connection between spirituality, a feeling of oneness, and ego-transcendence:

> Conscious spiritual intuition reveals the meaning of life in terms of images and symbols during waking hours. It can also operate during altered states of consciousness,such as the burning-bush experience of Moses ... Superconscious spiritual intuition is meditative experience in its most sublime form ... It provides insight into the spiritual oneness of all existence and into the mystery of Being as the nontemporal ground of the universe. [It is] the kind of ontological experience in which the subject-object dichotomy is completely transcended. (p.247)

Then there are those writers who explain spirituality as connected to traditional religions. Maslow (1972) defines spirituality as inherent in peak experiences, and warns against the dangers of organized religion:

> In a word, organized religion can be thought of as an effort to communicate peak-experiences to non-peakers, to teach them, to apply them, etc. Often ... this job falls into the hands of non-peakers. ... In addition, ...this essential core-religious experience may be embedded either in a theistic, supernatural context or in a non-theistic context. (p.355-356)

Capra (1975, 1983) alerts the reader to the inseparable connection between spirituality and religion:

> For an understanding of any of these philosophies to be described, it is important to realize that they are religious in essence. Their main aim is the direct mystical experience of reality, and since this experience is religious by nature, they are inseparable from religion. (p. 85)

And finally, Tart (1975) makes an effort to encourage scientific investigations of spirituality:

> The realm of the spiritual, and the connected realm of altered states of consciousness, is one of the most powerful forces that shape man's life and destiny. I think attempting to keep these realms and the realm of science separate is dangerous, and I hope we will go on to develop state-specific sciences and similar endeavors that will start building bridges between them. (p.58)

Experiencing what is called the ultimate interconnectedness of all creation could have a very realistic implication for human development: It might lead individuals to the realization that - to use Buber's (1958) metaphor - the I and the Thou are one, and that "I" is ultimately responsible for "Thou."

Summary

Chapter II first presents an overview of the major traditional models of human development, i.e. Behaviorism, Depth Psychology and Humanistic Psychology. A major portion of the chapter is devoted to examples from the literature with regard to descriptions of transpersonal theory. A brief section contains specifics of ASC's, of the general trend of studies regarding meditation practice, as well as of the concept of spirituality. A variety of examples documents different definitions of spirituality and highlights the ambiguity of the use of the concept.

CHAPTER III

PHENOMENOLOGY, THE HUMAN SCIENCE APPROACH AND TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

In Chapter I, I suggested that the subject of this study, transpersonal child development, is best investigated by applying phenomenological methodology. In this Chapter, I describe major features of the philosophy of phenomenology, how it provides the basis for qualitative methodology and the human sciences, and how these issues relate to transpersonal psychology.

The Philosophy of Phenomenology

The birth of phenomenology took place in Europe around the turn of this century. Its most eminent proponents were Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean Paul Sartre (Kvale, 1983). Phenomenology advocates a conception of the origin and nature of knowledge, i.e. an epistemology, that focuses on the understanding and acknowledgment of consciousness and subjective experience. Levin (1983) writes in his discourse about Husserl's approach:

> Phenomenology puts itself in the service of humanism <u>whenever</u> its articulation of human experience is aimed at a self-awareness and self-understanding that respond to the inborn needs of human nature and challenge us to deepen our awareness and develop our ownmost potential for being. Considered experientally, this potential

> lies in, and indeed essentially constitutes, the very depth of experience. (...) Thus, humanism requires a phenomenology of depth, a phenomenology capable of being true to our essential nature and serving us by deepening and opening up our experience of being (p. 218).

Phenomenology sets itself in opposition to the positivistic view of the world and of human beings. From the standpoint of positivism, human beings are conceptualized as separate entities, particles in the universe that can be held constant for the purpose of objective scientific investigation. Positivism further holds that it is imperative to focus on a limited, predefined number of variables during one's scientific inquiry. In doing so, the world and humans are endowed with a static quality, and the assumption is made that any phenomena under investigation can be understood in a static way.

Phenomenology holds that the essence of human existence cannot be adequately conceptualized by using a mechanistic model of humans. It rejects the static model of the world. Rather, it employs Husserl's concept of "Gemeingeist" (Carr, 1983). Gemeingeist, becomes difficult to translate because of the geist, which means spirit as well as idea. Essentially, Gemeingeist points towards a unity in spirit of all humans, and might well be freely translated as unifying consciousness. By recording intersubjective experience, the researcher in the phenomenological tradition brings to common consciousness somebody else's experience which in turn was discovered by sharing - through participation - in a common object, what Husserl calls "internal time-

consciousness" (Carr, 1983).

Phenomenology is a "description of conscious experience in order to uncover essential structures in that experience" (McBride & Schrag, 1983, p. 274). As such it is part of the human sciences. The literature provides repeated references to the original concept from which the term 'human sciences' was translated. It is the German word Geisteswissenschaft (Aanstoos, 1984; Degrood, 1976; McBride and Schrag, 1983; Rist, 1977). A more direct translation would be to say "the science of the spirit." Yet, even this almost verbatim translation misses the true meaning of the word 'Geist', for it means spirit as well as human essence, soul as well as mind. It is not even limited to science about humans but can also be interpreted to mean 'all that is transcended, above ordinary consciousness.'

The humanistic aspect of phenomenology thus parallels closely transpersonal psychology's major ideas: It, too, acknowledges the validity (and centrality) of subjective experiences. It adopts a world view that rejects the conceptualization of humans as static, isolated entities. Subjective experience and reflective consciousness are dynamic components of subjects which cannot be fully understood by remaining on the outside. The phenomenological researcher feels obligated to describe that subjective inside as fully as possible. It is suggested that there exists a deep interconnectedness between all matters of existence. Finally, human experience is viewed primarily as

the experience of progressively unfolding consciousness. Within this model, reality as well as consciousness are properties of the individual human, subject to alteration due to subjective experience.

Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research Orientations

To do scientific research means, traditionally, to identify, measure and statistically analyze specified variables. The educational researcher who employs such criteria for educational research imitates the natural scientist in the positivistic tradition. Eisner (1985) reports:

> The belief that educational research is a form of inquiry whose conclusions can be couched only in numbers is so pervasive that, of seventy-five articles published in the Educational Research Journal from 1981 through 1983, only two were nonstatistical. (p.15)

It is unfortunate that so-called quantitative methodologies and qualitative methodologies are perceived as mutually exclusive. While it is true that the selection of scientific inquiry in part evolves, or should evolve, from the researcher's philosophical orientation, the main concern should be to match the tools to the task. In dealing with human experience, feelings, and levels of consciousness, restricting one's tools to the comparison of numbers is simply inadequate.

Tart (1975) discusses in detail the need for state-specific sciences. He argues that the exploration of ASC's would be more fruitful if the investigators/scientists could

be observers, subjects, and experimenters.

> If such sciences could be created, we would have groups of highly skilled, trained, and dedicated practitioners able to achieve certain d-ASC's, and able to agree with one another that they had attained the common state. (p.39)

So far, however, state-specific sciences for the exploration of ASC's or for main concepts of transpersonal psychology do not exist.

Rist (1977) explains the essential difference between quantitative and qualitative methodologies: In quantitative research,

> human events are assumed to be lawful; (...)efforts are predicated upon a belief in the correctness of the scientific method as it is practiced in the natural sciences. (...) qualitative methodologies assume there is value to an analysis of both the inner and outer perspective of human behavior. In the German, the term is verstehen. (p. 44)

"Verstehen" means more than "understand," or "know." It is a concept that transcends knowledge and points towards deep comprehension of phenomena. An analogy with language might be helpful to clarify the issue further. A student of a foreign language might be absolutely fluent in that language. A true verstehen of the language will elude him or her if language fluency is not accompanied by comprehension of the culture that created this language. One of the most difficult tasks of an interpreter is to match words with the underlying meaning. In the same manner, one of the most difficult tasks of the human scientist is to match the statistical data to the actual subjective experience of the subjects. Qualitative research, and in particular the

method of participant observer provide a tool for solving this problem.

The Insider's Viewpoint

Edmund Husserl (McBride & Schrag, 1983) advocates to go "zu den Sachen selbst." This means that the researcher has to get as close to the phenomena under investigation as possible. The detached, 'objective' point of observation of the positivist does not allow the uncovering of the subjective reality of the observed subjects.

Participant observation is a recommended design approach when the phenomenon of interest is not well understood (Jorgensen, 1989). Reasons for a lack of familiarity with the phenomenon can be, among other things, the complexity of the issue or the lack of comprehensive data about it. Through participant observation the researcher approaches a phenomenon very closely and is in a position to report and reflect on lived experience. Becoming a participant observer resembles some of the eastern spiritual practices that provide access paths for adult transpersonal development. Sitting quietly and for extended periods of time, attempting to let go of resistance, becoming an observer of oneself so as to not judge but understand, engaging in a non-dualistic way of knowing as opposed to conceptual analysis - all these steps in transpersonal development correspond with the essential task of phenomenological research, namely to "disclose...meaning, including the implicit dimensions,

relations, and relative importance with the essential structure of the phenomenon" (Wertz, 1984, p. 32).

The phenomenological researcher's quest is for the gestalt and the unifying principle of a particular phenomenon. The method of participant observation provides the researcher with a philosophically and conceptually adequate tool for investigating the inherent subjectivity of transpersonal concepts.

Discussions on methodology questions often circle around the question of the validity of subjective meaning. Chapter IV addresses this issue in depth. The validity of subjectivity is closely related with definitions of reality. The phenomenological research approach as well as transpersonal psychology rest on the following concept of reality: Ultimately, we all create our own reality. We experience the world and ourselves in it through our senses, we create meaning for ourselves and base our interactions on this meaning. Our subjective map of the world has serious consequences for our behavior. It is irrelevant that someone else might judge this subjective world map to be flawed, full of "logical" errors - it is the only reality on which we base our behavior. As Jorgensen (1989) puts it, what happens to people in their everyday life is their subjective reality, their only reality. The method of participant observation allows the researcher to get close to the every day world of the informants. The researcher's task becomes one of uncovering and truthfully reporting the multifaceted

layers that constitute reality to the participants.

The Analytic Cycle

Jorgensen (1989) characterizes analysis as a process of breaking the research material into pieces for the purpose of further investigation. In qualitative research, the process of analysis is used to uncover specific clusters of related data. The initial research process is characterized by gaining access to the phenomena of interest, and by collecting substantial field notes. During analysis, the focus is not so much on data collection as on approaching the data with an open mind. While the basic research questions will guide the investigator in sifting through the collection of material, he or she approaches these records relatively free from preconceived ideas about possible results. It is at this point that the researcher brings to light the patterns of the phenomena by detecting existing landscapes of meaning . Instead of using an existing pattern and analyzing the data by dividing them into those which fit or do not fit the pattern, the phenomenological researcher tries to bring to light inherent patterns of meaning. Wertz (1984) explains:

> Though we use the word 'analysis,' we do not mean any sort of objectifying reduction into static elements but rather the explication of the dynamically flowing phenomenon. (p. 40)

This type of analysis, too, is in the spirit of transpersonal psychology: The human subject is not a quantifia-

ble, static object, but truly a subject.

Communicating findings

Communicating findings of qualitative research is a process that involves several steps. First, the writing process begins as soon as the researcher enters the field of investigation. Field notes are taken as extensively as possible, recording a multiplicity of factors (Jorgensen, 1989): physical descriptions of the environment, observations of interactions of subjects, interviews with them, and personal reflections of the observer. It is best to keep separate records of observation and personal reaction to later ease the process of illuminated analysis.

The next step is to analyze the records as described previously. This part of the writing process consists mainly of grouping and reorganizing collected material.

Once dominant characteristics of the phenomena are mapped out, writing proceeds to an account of these characteristics in an organized fashion. Some of the material collected will not be reported if it turns out not to illuminate the issues. Although every qualitative study uses a unique form of data presentation, some such general guidelines as described above can be followed (Jorgensen, 1989). Some parts of material cannot be easily integrated in the body of the text but are reported in epilogues or afterwords or appendices.

Specific issues of the writing process as they relate

to this study are addressed in Chapter IV.

Summary

After a brief description of the philosophy of phenomenology, the qualitative research process of becoming a participant observer is discussed in a general philosophical context. Special attention is given to the issues of the insider's viewpoint, the analytic cycle and the task of communicating findings.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

This chapter details methodological issues of qualitative research and how they relate to the present study. The comprehensiveness of this chapter has one main reason: clear accurate and complete description of the many complex steps involved in this type of research is the major way in which qualitative research assures reliability. At this point, no attempt is made to argue for the superiority of a qualitative methodology. The reasons for choosing a phenomenological approach have already been detailed in Chapters I and III. For an excellent theoretical treatise regarding social phenomenology in general the reader may want to turn to Valerie Suransky's research (Suransky, 1977). Any comparisons with quantitative methodologies merely serve to illustrate specific assumptions and goals of this study.

This chapter contains the following sections:

1. The invention phase: Setting and participants
2. The discovery phase: Gathering information
3. The interpretation phase: Setting/person - specific themes
4. The Explanation phase: Communicating findings

5. Alternatives to hypothesis testing
6. Validity and reliability
7. Strengths and limitations

The Invention Phase: Settings and Participants

The original research questions in this study were presented in Chapter I. Transpersonal psychology's central theme, the gradual unfolding of consciousness as an aspect of both the development of the individual and the evolution of the human species, definitely contains a spiritual component. Spirituality is seen as the to-be-rediscovered variable in the developmental equation; asserting that consciousness develops/evolves towards a "common ground of being" (Wilber, 1980, 1989), towards the "ultimate Truth" (Washburn, 1988) or the "Godhead" (Tart, 1975) implies some sort of spiritual guiding principle or source. A clear framework for determining the characteristics of "spirituality", however, can be found neither in the major accounts of transpersonal theory (Tart, 1975; Walsh and Vaughan, 1980; Washburn, 1988; Wilber, 1975, 1980) nor in the better known experiential documents (Armstrong, 1984; Koltko, 1989; Murdock, 1987; Wilber, 1989). The selection of educational settings for the purpose of this study was therefore guided by the requirement that each setting should have an <u>expressed</u> spiritual context.

It is generally recommended when engaging in this kind

of field work to avoid familiar environments; by choosing relatively unfamiliar terrain the chances for richer theoretical discussions rise (Stainback and Stainback, 1988). Based on these prerequisites, I selected three possible observation sites.

Research Sites

School A is a Catholic parochial school (K - 12) located in the lower middle class section of a Midwestern city with approximately 500,000 residents. School B is a private school (K - 12) located at the outskirts of a mid-sized city (population: 80,000) in the same geographical area. It bases its stated purpose on Christian fundamentalist thought. School C is a small private school serving the Jewish community of another Midwestern city (population: approximately 400,000).

Gaining Access

During the Spring of 1990 I contacted the principals of Schools A and B by phone and discussed with them the scope of this study. I then arranged for a personal meeting with each principal and the teacher who would be my main contact within the individual school. I followed the same procedure in the late Fall of 1990 with School C.

In all three cases I was able to gain permission for the study despite the necessarily very broad scope of the investigation. The assurance of total confidentiality and

anonymity combined with the utmost openness as to the purpose of the study on my part strongly contributed to the positive tone of these initial contacts. Additionally, I presented myself truthfully as a novice who wanted to learn from the informants the essence of the particular spiritual aspects at each school. Although I had carefully choreographed these initial steps towards data collection, I had a first taste of what it meant to make on-the-scene modifications of planned procedure: During each initial personal contact an array of emotions ranging from suspicion to defensiveness had to be overcome; it was overcome mainly by paying close attention to the individuals involved and by being willing to accommodate their concerns.

The teachers and the students of third - and fourth grade classrooms were the primary participants of this study. In School A the principal suggested to observe the third grade. In School B the fourth grade teacher made the decision to participate after an hour long personal interview with me. In School C the principal initially suggested the fourth grade teacher; she accepted after she had talked with me for about half an hour.

There are three interrelated reasons why I observed third and fourth grades instead of choosing one over the other. It is not within the requirements of qualitative research to exercise extreme control of variables, such as age, so as to exclude variation of said variable for the purpose of strengthening validity. Therefore, I could focus

on preadolescent children without having to match the participants with regard to their age. The literature guided me to the use of third and fourth grades. Wilber (1980, 1989) explains that the "ego-realm" is the last portion of the "outward arc", i.e. it is before adolescence, between the ages of four and twelve, that an individual's "interpersonal relationships become intra-psychic structures" (p.31). Wilber divides the ego realm into three stages. The second stage, the middle ego, lasts from about seven years to twelve years. My selection of third and fourth graders made for participants which interacted with adults in a highly verbal way. This, in turn, resulted in a large collection of direct quotes of children's contributions to interactions. The verbal accounts together with the nonverbal ones are rich unaltered primary data.

It was agreed that I could come and go as I pleased; however, the teachers expressed positive feelings about the fact that I usually coordinated my visitation schedule with them.

Duration and Nature of Visits

I visited Schools A and B during April and May 1990 for two or three days per week. The visits to School C took place during December and January 1990/91. I spent approximately eighty hours each in School A and in School B, and approximately sixty hours in School C. In all three cases I usually was at the site before school started in the morning

and left late in the afternoon with the teacher. I chose this intensive way of observation over short, one - or two hour long visits because it seemed to be the most promising way for establishing the necessary rapport. It speeded up the process of becoming an almost natural part of the setting. By spending whole school days with the contact teacher whenever possible three more things happened: One, I got to know the setting specific routines rather quickly; two, it reassured the participating teachers that my role truly was that of the learner; and, three, I was allowed to participate much earlier in the process than I had anticipated; this helped me discover what I had in common with the participants, share those aspects, and in turn be given information more freely, informally, and personally. Also, I was able to get to know the individual students by name and establish positive contact with them very early on. It all added up to a good base for trust and a certain emotional connectedness that was one of the developmental cornerstones of this study.

The Discovery Phase: Gathering Information

The general framework for the inquiry is provided by the basic research questions as stated in Chapter I. The specific method employed is that of the participant observer. In Chapter III, I presented arguments for using this particular methodology. There, I also outlined general

guidelines for how participant observation is carried out.

In the present section, I will summarize what kind of information was gathered for this study and what specific data collection and recording methods I employed.

Six different types of information form the body of data in this study. The major data source is the collection of participant observations. Every day I spent in one of these settings, some informal talks with the contact teachers, other faculty and staff members as well as with students provided additional data. Each contact teacher agreed to a formal interview combined with a pile sort task. I was allowed to freely tour the various institutions and record detailed descriptions of the physical environment of each setting. The principals provided me with parent handbooks, flyers specifying school policy and philosophy; the teachers let me borrow textbooks and virtually any written material in which I showed interest. In this manner I accumulated a variety of written documents about the settings. Finally, students permitted me to look at their written work. I was allowed to make copies of one assignment that I deemed especially valuable for demonstrating a particular point of view.

By using such a variety of data I followed the highly recommended principle of data diversity (Stainback & Stainback, 1988). Following are some observations and comments regarding the properties of these six types of information.

My role as participant observer was not the same in

each setting, nor was it the same with each person I had contact with. The role also changed within settings due to the development and, consequently, change of the various relationships. The general trend was as follows: Participation increased in all settings with time. Once they had themselves committed to the project, adults usually permitted moderate participation. With regard to the students my role changed from passive participation to various forms of moderate participation.

The flavor of informal talks varied with the type of participant. Contact with the various adults changed from nonspecific small-talk to the exchange of factual information to -at least in two cases- a natural mix of both. Those students who allowed me to come close needed to satisfy their curiosity about me first at their own pace before they were willing to open up and make our contacts a give and take.

The literature provides useful guidelines for the use of semi-structured interviews and pile sort tasks (Coles, 1990; Stainback & Stainback, 1988; Weller & Romney, 1988). Flexibility is recommended; personal reactions should be somewhat controlled; the interview setting should be comfortable for the participant; and elaboration is to be encouraged. By following these guidelines the researcher stands a good chance that the course of the talk is primarily shaped by the participants.

In the course of preparing the literature review for

this study I had accumulated a large number of index cards on which I had written terms, half-sentences, and questions as they appeared in the various books and articles that I read. At some point I decided to create a set of such cards that would be a representative sample of the topic I was investigating. I made sure to include a wide variety of viewpoints in this sample set.

It was this pile of fifty-six index cards that I brought to the interviews. The contact teachers were asked to sort the cards in as many piles as they wanted, using any organizing principle that they wanted. The only condition was that they verbalize their thoughts and feelings as they went along and that they explain the sorting categories to me. The content of the cards is reproduced in Appendix A.

At first, I faithfully recorded physical features of the various settings simply because it is one of the requirements for accurate documentation. I realized quickly that certain physical features of the learning environment played a role in the types of interactions I observed. For example, in School C a counter close to the classroom exit served as sort of a private recovery area for children in stressful situations.

The various types of written documents as described above proved to be especially useful when it came to comparing stated school philosophy with day to day events. Every school had a specific official school handbook detailing philosophy, procedures and schedules. School B was the only

one where the actual textbooks used by the students in all the general subjects (i.e. math, language arts, and science/social studies) were especially created to promote the stated spiritual philosophy of that school. I had asked the children of School A for permission to make copies of some of their work. One assignment represented to me a particularly clear example of one of the points I wanted to make in Chapter V. Excerpts of their compositions are located in Appendix B. In none of the other two schools did I find such a clear, unsolicited written example.

Recording observations in writing was the primary method of recording data. In addition, I used a microcassette recorder for three purposes: to talk to myself on the way home from the schools about impressions and observations; to record the more formal talks with the teachers; and to covertly tape short segments of incidents in the classrooms. Using the tape recorder openly in the classroom would have been too distracting. I accumulated several hundred pages of notes, including the transcripts of tapes.

The literature suggests general guidelines for keeping a journal of field notes : one should record as many verbatim accounts as possible; entries should be legible by the researcher; they should be in chronological order, and they should also contain the researchers "experiences, ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs, ... problems ..." (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p.55). Stainback and Stainback (1988) warn against using so-called interpretive

words, like "messy" or "ineffective", and encourage explicit descriptions. Others recommend balancing one's technique of recording with the overall organizing principles (Van Maanen, 1983). This means in fact to stay open towards the possibility of having to change technical aspects of the recording process. Finally, most every discussion on how to take field notes includes suggestions as to the specific notations one can use.

My field notes underwent several stages of development with regard to their physical appearance as well as the type of entries.

At my first visit I used a note pad and a mechanical pencil. I discontinued both the same day: the note pad made to much noise when I had to turn the page; the lead in the pencil broke often and the print was too light for comfortable reading. Over the months I used various spiral bound notebooks and black felt pens.

It was important to develop a notation pattern that would make it possible for me to distinguish between the types of entry I made and that would let me record nonverbal observations without using words, thus speeding up the writing process. I used two kinds of notations. The first kind follows an often recommended pattern; I used it very consciously from the start:

" " for direct quotes

' ' for paraphrases

< > for personal comments along the way

_____ for time divisions.

I soon found that I made a number of other notations:

* arrows in the margins to indicate special personal emphasis
* double and triple solid lines to indicate the length of pauses
* underlining words to indicate speech melody and emphasis
* simple brackets to continue abbreviated descriptions after direct quote.

Every time I went back to a school, I felt more able to legibly and fully include my personal feelings at the time of the entry. I came to understand that responsible analysis, which was to happen much later in the research process, was not harmed by such "irresponsible" personal entries; in fact, they became necessary if I wanted to keep myself open and record accurately.

The Interpretation Phase: Setting/ Person Specific Themes

In the discussion about the analytic cycle of phenomenological research (Chapter III) I described the specifics of reflecting on the collected data. In short, the goal of this phase is to extract meaning from the data. The present section describes the process of sorting through the field notes and trying to identify major characteristics of the various educational environments and the people in it. In doing so, specific "maps" of educational environments became

transparent, which I will describe in Chapters V, VI, and VII.

The first step in my search for essential themes was to categorize the observations. This meant to read through each page of the original notes and make a decision as to what heading to give a particular entry. Following is an example of an entry from my second visit to School B, and the added margin notations[1]:

> J. has a problem with what somebody said about him being so tall. (T) comforts j. other kid says "hey now you made j.feel bad.." (T): "we are unique (reference to Psalms)..God made us wonderfully unique."
>
> K/K conflict
> T. conf. interf.
> K. as discp.

In the above example the three categories (in order) denote a conflict between the students, the teacher entering this conflict, and one of the students also taking on the role of a disciplinarian through scolding.

Phase two was characterized by mechanical work: Copies were made of the original entries; then I cut them up and pasted entries for the same field together. In this manner I started to build collections of specific headings. At the same time I was able to set aside those personal entries that had served to vent personal feelings, fears, etc. The number of categories was still overwhelming; so was the amount of paper I had to deal with at this point.

This lead to phase three, a rigorous reevaluation of my

1.The abbreviated notations mean: K = kid or student; (T) = the classroom teacher

margin notations. I began using a word processing program and a hard disk drive that enabled me to shift entries from one file to another with ease. I began to tally my margin notations and ended up with a list of categories for each School; next to the category was a graphic display as to how often I had made a particular entry. For example, in School C I originally counted twenty-six different categories for the times the classroom teacher and the students were together. This is how part of such a list for one set of observations looked (- each dot represents one instance):

```
*  T-K conflict pos. res.: .......
*  T-K conflict ending in T. command: ..............
*  T-K conflict ending in T. nonverbal aggression: .......
*  T-K conflict ending in mark on
board: ......................
```

These lists were useful in at least two ways: they showed me quickly and graphically which of the categories appeared how often; and they aided me in the next step which was another round of category analysis with the goal to reduce their number and fleshing out the essential features.

In phase four I discarded those entries in the various categories that I deemed weak examples. The remaining entries I resorted on the computer and printed hard copies of the collection of observations for each category for each school.

Finally, I read through each category, first by itself, then in conjunction with what I deemed to be similar categories; I consolidated categories, resorted the entries and

eventually saw core themes for each school emerge.

Chapters V, VI, and VII portray the spiritual landscapes of the three schools as they emerged from this process of observation, selection, transcription, and synthesis.

The Explanation Phase: Communication and Meta-Findings

After the individual patterns for each school had emerged and a preliminary description had been rendered, the emphasis of the analytic energy was on the process of detecting patterns that might concern more than just the individual context of one particular school. The focus was on comparing and contrasting the data; on setting them in relation to each other as well as to the original research questions; on entering into a communication between the questions I had started out with and the answers that evolved from what my informants had shared with me. This was also a time of reformulating the questions I had started out with, being guided solely by the need to be truthful to the collected data. In practical terms, it meant building and rebuilding the structure of this study many times. The result is this thesis. Major themes connecting the three schools, as well as an assessment as to the meaning of these findings are contained in Chapter VII.

Alternatives to Hypothesis Testing

Ordinarily, a research study sets out with any number

of hypotheses to be supported or discarded. The whole process of data collection serves this purpose. The early statement of hypotheses gives direction to the investigation (Kazdin, 1982; Serlin, 1987. This type of research is most widely used to confirm a theory that is already in place, or at least parts of it.

Transpersonal theory, especially when it comes to pre-adolescent children is not yet firmly in place. Major concepts, especially the terms "spiritual" or "spirituality" are used by theoreticians without guiding definitions . It is evident from the literature that these concepts appear to have an important place within the theory. It is also conceivable that spirituality may be defined in various ways by the "subjects" of an investigation such as the present one.

The stage is set for the researcher to acknowledge that the use of the hypothesis testing model of inquiry would be a mistake: If I do not know what I will discover, i.e. if spirituality possibly exists in various forms for the same end, namely increased awareness/ development of conscious-ness, I cannot -via methodology- pretend that I actually do know, i.e. use an operationalized definition of spirituality that I, for lack of examples, create myself for the purpose of a study. Consequently, an alternative methodology has to be chosen. My method of choice was the qualitative approach of participant observation.

Stainback and Stainback (1988) outline ten ways in

which quantitative and qualitative research differ from each other. They can be paraphrased as follows:

1. The purpose of a study shifts from a prediction model to one that aims at extending theory.
2. Definitions of reality shift from stable to relative.
3. The scientific viewpoint shifts from objective to subjective.
4. Introduction of personal values into the study becomes justifiable.
5. Control of variables is given up in favor of widening the base of variables.
6. The possibility of changing the original research focus, especially during the analytic phase, is accepted.
7. Data change from being objective/static to being subjective/dynamic.
8. There is no requirement to use standardized instruments.
9. Research conditions change from researcher controlled to natural.
10. Results aim at depth rather than breadth.

The present study illustrates each of these points clearly. In the absence of information regarding preadolescent children in educational settings and spirituality, the purpose of this study had to move from mere prediction to extraction of meaning and increasing understanding for theoretical positions. The traditional stable concept of reality was abandoned in favor of that of a dynamic reality. As already discussed in Chapter I, it is consistent with the

philosophical base of transpersonal psychology to accept this view. The latest arguments from the so-called hard sciences with regard to reality make it at least plausible, "if not desirable ... to thrust mankind into the role of creator as well as observer and participant" (Casti, 1990). I validated the participants' subjective, shared reality by giving a detailed account of the whole process of data collection, and by discussing aspects of the shared reality without alteration. This was only possible by assuming a particular viewpoint. By choosing the qualitative methodology of participant observation I traded the 'objective' outsider point of view in favor of becoming an insider. This brought with it the introduction of my personal values as most clearly indicated by the selection of the research problem and by the decision to focus on particular aspects as stated in Chapter I. The above issues speak directly to the question of validity and will be more fully addressed in the next section of this Chapter. Focus and orientation of this study were strictly in the phenomenological tradition: in order to look at the original research questions in a holistic manner, I collected a wide variety of data, as documented in the previous sections of this Chapter. The focus of analysis and synthesis was primarily on the exploration of concepts, e.g. spirituality, and the widening of transpersonal theory to include a discussion of preadolescent developmental influences in particular educational settings. This is a necessary difference from the quantita-

tive focus of isolating and controlling variables for the purpose of hypothesis testing. Another difference concerns the type of data, of instrumentation, and of conditions. Quantitative methodologies are meant to ensure the collection of "objective" data that are somehow enough alike so they can be compared with each other. Researcher controlled conditions are imperative. Having decided on the intrinsic appropriateness of a qualitative approach to my research questions, I collected data in natural settings. The collected data were subjective, and by assuming the role of participant observer I made myself the instrument with which to take measurements. The results of this study might not be replicable in this form. However, the structure of this study can serve as model for similar studies. Reliability and validity were considered. In accordance with the requirements of the chosen methodology I gave priority to validity.

Validity and Reliability Questions

Kirk and Miller (1986) say about validity and reliability:

> ... Loosely speaking, 'reliability' is the extent to which a measurement procedure yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out; 'validity' is the extent to which it gives the correct answer. (p.19)

Judd and Kenny (1981) demonstrate the contradictions a researcher may encounter in the search for the acceptable balance between validity and reliability: seven of the

eleven chapters of their book deal with threats to the different kinds of validity in quantitative research designs. Judd and Kenny also point out that there is usually a trade-off between reliability and validity: quantitative methodologies generally sacrifice validity, favor reliability, and put strong faith in the selection of research strategies designed to take care of the various "threats" to validity and reliability.

Kirk and Miller (1986) as well as a number of other authors (Patton, 1980; Spradley, 1980) discuss validity and reliability issues in qualitative research. To the familiar discussion of Type I and Type II errors, typical issues in quantitative research, Kirk and Miller add a so-called Type III error. The consequences of committing the first two errors are clearly explained by Judd and Kenny (1981):

> In fact, however, there are two types of conclusion errors that can be made concerning the presence of treatment effects. The first type of error is to conclude that treatment effects exist when in fact they do not. The second type of error is to conclude that treatment effects do not exist when they in fact do. This distinction is identical to the Type I versus Type II error distinction that is a fundamental part of most introductory statistics textbooks. (p. 29)

Committing a Type III error means to ask the wrong questions. Kirk and Miller explain:

> Asking the wrong question actually is the source of most validity errors. Devices to guard against asking the wrong question are critically important to the researcher. ... It is also true that the more diffuse and less focused the method, the wider net it casts. This, too, is a basic argument for the value of qualitative research. (p.30)
> Qualitative research - and this study in particular -

starts out with a rather broad range of interest. The participants themselves helped create the 'right' questions: 'right' for the particular people involved. In qualitative research, validity checks take place throughout the entire fieldwork and during the analysis and synthesis cycles: Once I was able to actually observe, write down, and interview, hypotheses and concept definitions, categories and theoretical assertions emerged within me and were constantly tested; as a participant observer I developed a sensitivity concerning my assumptions about meanings, interactions, and other parts of my data, and their actual meaning.

This research did not start out with variables that could be controlled; rather, such variables or themes, patterns, were detected in the course of the study. Still, I had different but equally important validity checks along the way. The detailed description of settings and events has at its base the world view of the study participants. All through my personal encounters with the participants I stayed sensitive to the particular environment; I brought to the research a considerable amount of knowledge regarding the general theory, namely transpersonal psychology; and I stayed in the field until I had a clear understanding of the specific education/spiritual landscape. I repeatedly made sure that I called what I measured by the right name. This process was particularly important in shaping the final definition of the term "spirituality". Had I started out with a concrete definition, this expansion of meaning would

not have been possible.

Stainback and Stainback (1988) state that

> In qualitative research, findings can be considered valid if there is a fit between what is intended to be studied and what actually is studied. ... In this context [the researchers] attempt to obtain data unfiltered through the concepts, operational definitions, and rating scales of the researcher. (p. 97)

To make sure that this was the case in the present study, I followed these general guidelines: a) Enter settings with the least amount of intrusion possible. b) Learn to become 'one of them.' c) Learn to recognize <u>when</u> you have a noticeable impact on the situation.

This is how I incorporated these suggestions: Through the method of participant observation I collected data that were relatively free from my own filtering devices. I established relationships that enabled me to blend into the scene and be as natural and unobtrusive as possible. However, I was certainly aware of my presence as a factor in the observed processes. To make this awareness transparent in the research process, I notated in the field journal my personal feelings as well as incidents when I thought that my presence was dominant in a particular happening. The prolonged encounters in each setting clarified which patterns were truly setting/participant specific and which were not. In the final analysis it seems very likely that the data truly reflect the aim of the study. Bolster (1983) as quoted in Stainback and Stainback (1988) lends support to the validity checks I used:

> The eventual description is validated in two ways: referentially - the explanatory generalizations must be

> consistent with repeated patterns of events recorded in the observational data; and situationally - the explanatory framework must be consistent with the meanings teachers and students draw from and impose upon the classroom situation. (p.98)

When it comes to reliability issues, Kirk and Miller (1986) alert the researcher to the fact that certain assumptions from quantitative research are not applicable. The assumptions that reliability means the same method will always prove the same answer, and that there will be stability of observations over time are simply unusable in the case of the present study because their acceptance would mean to deny setting and participant development. The traditional definitions of reliability imply consistency in data production. This approach is irrelevant in qualitative research mainly because there is no predetermined design to follow. Even if I went into the same settings for a second study, I might obtain different data due to different contextual variables - and that is an accepted, even expected consequence of qualitative methodology. It also would be theoretically inconsistent if I insisted on static, objective data when the reason for use of qualitative methodology was to obtain rich, subjective data that might change over time.

Reliability in qualitative research has a different meaning. Stainback and Stainback (1988) explain:

> From a qualitative perspective, reliability is viewed as the fit between what actually occurs in the setting under study and what is recorded as data. It is not literal consistency across different observations. (p. 101)

Several different procedural choices are suggested to strengthen that kind of reliability. The most common procedure is the detailed recording process in the field. To an outsider, the extreme occupation with details in one's observations could appear to be obsessive when in fact it is in the service of reliability. Another procedure concerns obtaining feedback from participants as to the accuracy of the researcher's observations. Two other options are to do fieldwork in teams or to have an outside researcher accompany the original researcher and verify the accuracy of field notes.

I used the first two procedures to establish reliability. Throughout this study, I provide rigorous and detailed documentation of the research process, of preparation, data collection, and analysis. In order to assure reliability I made distinctions in my original notations between actual verbal or nonverbal events and my personal impressions or inferences or interpretations, i.e. I separated data from 'noise' as much as I could during actual recording. Secondly, I made sure that I contacted the participants whenever I heard or saw something that in my opinion needed further explanation, or when I felt the need to make sure I understood the participant's intentions correctly. Many times the informal talks with the participants between observations and interviews became such reliability checkpoints.

Strengths and Limitations

As a phenomenological researcher I want to understand and describe a part of the world that I consider relevant to the field of transpersonal psychology. One major problem in this enterprise is the fact that a match is sought between non-linear subjective reality and the linear language of description. As Tart (1975) and Wilber (1990) so aptly discuss, transpersonal psychology is in need of state-specific science and language.

Casti (1990) summarizes the problem of description:

> ... objective reality is a physical fiction brought on by our lack of linguistic sophistication and inability to comprehend what it could possibly be like in a world of pure potential. (p. 453)

One way to bridge this basic philosophical conflict is to use methodology in such a way that there is strong congruence with the theoretical base of the study. In the present case I attempted a harmonious balance between the spirit of transpersonal psychology and my research process. In the following section I will illustrate four aspects of this attempt. They also represent four Taoist principles as described by Hunt and Hait (1990). At the same time they are essential ingredients of qualitative methodology.

Nonresistance means going with it, not against it. In assuming the role of participant observer I left as many of my assumptions as I could behind and paid respect to the point of view of the informants.

Allowing intuition to accompany analysis, I created for myself individual power. By showing the participants that they are accepted and respected as individuals as they are,

they gained individual power.

The principle of balance is closely related to nonresistance. It, too, addresses the need to pay attention to the here and now and not to get caught up in micro-managing a here and now that will take its own course anyway. One potential source of imbalance in this research process was my habit of interpreting educational settings in the light of my role as a teacher. Having been a teacher in grade school and at the University level for a total of fifteen years I needed to learn not to use past experiences as the framework for categorizing my observations.

Finally, an equivalent to harmony, establishing balance between inside and outside, between me and the environment was another step in the direction of establishing congruence between methodology and underlying philosophy. I felt this process at work in encounters with participants when my or the participants' openness and honesty in sharing life made all of us more vulnerable to each other but also more real.

I believe that trying to establish a close fit between underlying theory and methodology as described above contributed to the depth of this study. Depth is probably its most significant strength.

I make no claim as to direct generalizability of this study. This was an investigation of three dynamic settings and the people in it. None of them were alike. However, there are two possible avenues for generalizations from this study: One, the detailed documentation of the research

process in this study can be used by other researchers in their efforts to understand other, similar realities. Two, conclusions from this research can serve as working hypotheses for other investigators in similar settings. The concept of working hypotheses includes the idea that a detailed description of settings and procedures enables future researchers to make informed judgments as to the similarity/dissimilarity of their own research settings and observations. I hope that this study indeed proves to be useful reference point for similar investigations.

Once more I want to state that I do not pretend to have been objective in the traditional sense. Any researcher, regardless of whether she uses quantitative or qualitative methods, inserts the human element in the research process: the quantitative researcher via the particular selection of hypotheses and measurement instruments; the qualitative researcher through the particular personal involvement that is inherent in the methodology. If, however, objectivity is understood to mean the serious effort to be as reliable and valid as possible, then this study is also objective.

Each of the three selected schools has its spiritual philosophy based in a different religion. I do not assert that these schools are the most complete representatives of their individual religions.

In the section on validity and reliability I already addressed the question of replicability. I believe there is a strong need to continue with studies like this one.

Information from such diverse fields as quantum physics, developmental psychology, and philosophy point with increasing urgency towards the need to redefine and consider the spiritual component in human development. While preadolescent children spend a considerable amount of their lives in educational settings, one needs to investigate these places as to their spiritual context. I hope that research in educational settings will focus increasingly on this holistic conception of development.

Summary

Methodological issues of qualitative research particular to the present study form the content of this chapter. Detailed description is provided about the following issues: How to gain access to the research sites and establish the necessary trusting environment for the research process; what kind of data were collected; how the data were interpreted and how various themes specific to the different settings were discovered; and how findings were communicated. Alternatives to hypothesis testing and reasons for choosing such alternatives are suggested. Issues of reliability and validity are presented in the light of qualitative methodology. Strengths and limitations of this study are documented. This section also includes a brief discussion about ways to reconcile transpersonal theory with the chosen methodology.

CHAPTER V

SCHOOL A: ...WE ARE THE BRANCHES

In Chapter IV, sections 3 and 4, I discussed the specific ways in which I extracted meaning from the collected data. This process involved the detection of themes, of topics, characteristic for the spiritual landscape of the individual schools and, at a later point in the research process, the search for issues that encompass all three schools and point towards interpretation and implications that go beyond the limits of the individual settings. Following the introduction to School A is a description of such emerging core themes for this school.

Introduction

School A is a Catholic parochial school. It serves about 250 children from preschool through 12th grade. Each classroom is self-contained. Up to fourth grade the children are taught by one home room teacher in all subjects except Spanish and Music. In the higher grades different teachers teach different subjects. The students come mainly from middle- or lower middle class homes. About 90% of the

school population is Catholic. The principal, Jack[1], has almost completed his Ph. D. in Administration. The parish church is on the school grounds. The school itself and a second building where the students have lunch and music education huddle around the church and are made of the same kind of red brick. Whenever children move from their classroom to lunch or to music education or to recess outside, they have to pass through the preschool room.

The third grade classroom where I did most of my observations is located on the second floor of the school building. It has an extremely high ceiling and a row of large windows with curtains and iron gates in front of them. The floor is covered with a new blue green velvety carpet. On it are individual tables in neat rows for each student. Two walls have two blackboards each. A large wooden cross hangs on the front wall. To its left and right are bulletin boards with banners. In large gold letters it reads: "Jesus is the vine" and "we are the branches." In the back wall is a door to a utility closet. Next to it hang the class rules and various items for geography lessons, such as a puzzle of the states of the U.S. Besides the usual flag, there is a big statue of Mary on the file cabinet and a small statue of a Saint on the bookcase which extends almost the whole length of the wall under the windows.

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1. In this chapter as well as in following chapters all names are fictitious. Teacher will be abbreviated as (T); principal will be abbreviated as (P).

There are 24 children in this class, seven girls and seventeen boys. Twenty students are white and two of the students are black. Many of the students' parents went to the same school, and so did their grandparents. As (P) Jack puts it, "we serve a multigenerational population and we are like a little village."

In the official advertisement flyer three points are highlighted: a) the school philosophy is based on the message of Jesus as it pertains to community and service. b) the curriculum is seen as a developmental process rather than a static description of content. It is understood as an opportunity to let "Christian social principles permeate" everything that happens in that school. c) the home is seen as the main influence on a child's development, especially value development. The faculty's role is characterized as reinforcing parental education.

The official handbook lists five school goals. They are - in order of listing - spiritual, intellectual, moral-social, psychological, and physical. Aspects of these goals will be discussed further in this Chapter and in Chapter VIII. All children are required to wear a particular uniform. The bottom line with regard to expected behavior is expressed in the following statement: "Behavior which reflects Gospel values is expected." Every Wednesday and on special occasions such as Good Friday the whole school participates in the liturgy. Classes take turns in the preparation of the Masses.

Core Themes of the Spiritual Landscape of School A

Prayer as Ritual

> (#1)[2]. A necessary expression of humans is a belief in something higher than themselves. I exist within the universe but we are not the universe and we are not master creator ... something is always greater than we are ... no matter how spiritual we think we are.
> ((T) Jane)
>
> (#2) I think I'm okay. I'm not like a movie star but I'm special. God was good to me, and I'm glad!
> (Joe, student)

When I arrived at School A for my first visit, I knew in my head that I would witness formal religious education as well as prayer as part of the school day. Still I was caught by surprise when the school bell rang and (T)Jane slowly turned towards the wooden cross on the West wall, folded her hands, looked around calmly, and one by one the students assumed the same position, until it was quiet and the morning prayer started. What startled me more than the actual prayers was the ritualistic quality of the event, the calmness that surrounded these twenty four children and their teacher, the concentration that radiated from their prayers. In his description of the purpose of rituals,

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2. The notation system used throughout this study, e.g. #1, #2, marks direct quotes from the field notes. Quotes from participants are always verbatim. Narrative passages within such numbered items are taken verbatim from the fieldnotes and have occasionally been edited for easier readability, i.e. punctuation added and abbreviated sentences completed.

Smith (1958) asserts that, among other things, ritual gives us direction. Observations of the morning prayer ritual confirmed this clearly. First, individual students said their personal intentions, (see #3 below), then they all prayed the Lord's Prayer . In doing so, the whole class, including the teacher, came together as equals, as a community, guided by the same principle, i.e. the idea that the new day is best started by sharing with one's fellow human beings as well as with God something personally meaningful, be it good or bad, and to ask for God's guidance.

> (#3) (T) Jane greets everyone at the door with a few warm words. After some announcements she turns towards the cross and asks the children for their intentions for the day. When a child wants to say a petition, he or she raises the hand and is called by the teacher. Each student makes a very personal comment. Willie asks that his father might soon find a job; Jack asks if he could be helped with his talking out; Frank would like his grandmother to get well again. Occasionally the teacher adds a personal remark such as 'I hope so, too' or "I'm truly sorry about that.'
>
> (#4) After some visits I notice that (T) Jane sometimes quietly introduces the personal petitions: "Help me to accept what you want me to do. ... Let's offer our day to Jesus while we say our petitions."
>
> (#5) Today the children seem especially drawn into their morning prayer ritual. IT has been raining for weeks, and the gray outside makes for an almost dark classroom in the morning. So they pray: "For all of us a good day ... for my daddy's travel because he has to go away so far ... for my sick grandma, she is still not okay ... for me, 'cause I need all the help I can get (everybody chuckles) ... for not putting soap again on my toothbrush."

One of the clearest examples of the morning ritual as a catalyst for community experience occurred one day when

Karen came to school rather distraught because her turtle had died that night. Petitions and prayer served a variety of functions that morning: it helped Karen focus her grief, express it in a safe environment, and receive in turn support from her fellow students and from the teacher.

> (#6)Karen comes this morning with tears in her eyes. She tells us that her turtle had died during the night. When everybody is ready for the morning petitions (T)Jane suggests that Karen might want to include her turtle in the prayers. Karen prays: "I wish that my turtle will not have to suffer anymore, and that I will hurt less soon. Thank you, God, for giving me this friend. I am so very sad." (T) Jane gives her a big, quiet hug, and I see tears in some kids' eyes.

What follows that day in terms of personal petitions is an astonishing array of pleas to end all kinds of suffering. It is as if by being allowed to share the personal suffering of one of their classmates the other students became aware of a general level of suffering.

> (#7) Now the other children articulate these petitions: "Please take care of my parents today ... help all the endangered species in the wild ... help my cousin who has problems with her baby; she is not married and all alone now ... please help the people in the crackhouses that I saw on TV last night, don't be angry at them ...for my relatives ...please can you make the rain stop?

At a later visit, again during a heavy period of rain, the morning ritual seemed to become a device for overcoming, or at least verbalizing, darkness, fear, gloom.

> (#8) Again, it has rained for weeks, at least that is what it feels like. There were floods in the area. The classroom is constantly dark and that settles on the mood of the kids and everyone. Willie prays for a missing child and for 2 people who died.. (T.) Jane leads us into quiet prayer, then says: "Let's give all our actions today to the Lord, all day, let us ask him for guidance, and that we do his will." Then the Our

> Father is prayed with hands held. Finally a special prayer for a kid in the neighborhood who got killed in the flood the night before.

During these morning rituals, the students truly listen to one another. On more than one occasion I heard them talk among each other about a particular petition somebody had said. The act of sharing before regular classwork starts is not only an opportunity to focus on each other but also on the task ahead. It quiets the children down; it is a signal that now one needs to listen; it is the first and most verbal way for the teacher to acknowledge that she and the students are equal members of the classroom community.

At the time of my first visit these morning prayers had already been established rituals: everybody knew what would happen and in which order. These instances were one of very few where teacher control was not an issue. I never saw (T)Jane look at her watch when the children had lots of petitions. She made sure everybody had their say. It is my opinion that her total acceptance of the students at prayer time was the primary reason why I never observed any off-task action during those times. The perfectly modeled and truly meant interest in each individual was reflected in an unexpectedly mature gentleness with which the individual students treated each other.

Another way in which rituals influence the events in School A has to do with the weekly celebration of Mass and with the influence of the Church year on the learning context. These influences form the context for the following

two sections.

Mass as a Ritual

Every Wednesday, the whole school marches across the school yard into the church to celebrate Mass. This lasts about forty-five minutes. A different group of students is responsible for the liturgy at different times. The readings are presented by students of various grades. The teachers sit with their students, and there are always some parents or other parishioners at Mass.

Two things caught my attention from the very first time I accompanied the class to church. First, similar to the mood at morning prayer, the children lined up for Mass without much delay or teacher commands.

> (#9) (T) Jane greets every student personally. After the bell rings, she takes care of lunch count. Then she says quietly: "It's just about time to get ready for Mass. Let's get in line then." The children put their jackets on calmly, walk to the door in small groups, quietly chatting with each other.
>
> (#10) Anthony has lined up last for going to Mass. He seems restless today, punches the air with his right fist, makes groaning sounds. The other children ignore him. (T) Jane puts her arm gently around him and says: "I know it's sometimes real hard for you in church. What do you say: think of today as helping your friends concentrate... try, Anthony, try." Her voice is friendly, compassionate, and Anthony visibly relaxes.

Second, during Mass the students were extremely disciplined. There was only occasional whispering between children; I observed no pushing or shoving or giggling. Most children followed the readings, had their songbooks open, and actively participated. At first I had my doubts.

(#11) I looked at the schedule for today and realized that immediately after Mass the children will go to recess. I am with them in the parking lot which serves as recess area. It is treeless and has absolutely nothing to offer except space. I expect the children to work out their energies that were so perfectly hidden during Mass.

(#12) In a few minutes we will go to Mass again. I wonder when I will witness storm after the calm of the Mass. I am afraid I am missing some connection here.

Over time, however, I realized that going to Mass was not a dreaded event. Only in my anticipation was it something one HAD to do, one HAD to sit still, and later at recess one got really wild to make up for it. After I had worked through my own feelings I realized that for the students Mass was just another ritual, an event that occurred with regularity, that was basically non-threatening, and that involved a particular community experience because all the children of the school met each other and met other people of the Parish, sometimes a parent. Additionally, the ritual of Mass itself has variety: one moves up and down, kneels and sits; prayer and singing are followed by periods of silence; and in between one is told an educating and mysterious story.

In light of this new realization as to the contextual variables of Mass, I began to understand why during recess I did not see the aggressive behavior I had expected. The children were not forced to behave in a certain way. They had come to accept the ritual of Mass for what it was and did not need external measures like teacher threats to behave appropriately. In the absence of adult coercion

there was no need for getting rid of hidden aggression: there was none to begin with.

The Church Year's Influence on the Learning Context

When the children return to the classroom from recess after Mass, the only period of formal religious instruction follows. (T)Jane had told me during one of my early visits that the school adopts a particular theme for each school year.

> (#13) (T) Jane and I sit in the teachers' lounge. We are alone. I ask her what she thinks is a particular characteristic of the parochial school system. She replies: "Here we talk about vision and values and underlying themes. We pick one each year, e.g. service or love or hope. This year it is service. And we interpret it especially Christian or Catholic."

In the same manner as the teachers' efforts circle around implementing the particular "vision of the year", the students are given the opportunity to experience any learning content in the context of the yearly church cycle as defined by the major Catholic feasts. The teacher's vision and the characteristics of a particular part of the church year form the environment in which the individual spiritual development is supposed to take place.

The time of year when I visited School A was probably the most important time for a Catholic: the weeks before and after Easter, and Easter itself. Accordingly, the main issues the teacher and the students discussed circled around the cross and around unselfish love.

(#14) (T)Jane guides the children from a literal interpretation of the cross (for which they have lots of examples) to the 'invisible' cross that children also may carry. She talks about "crosses that we don't choose, like if you are having a really really hard time."

This particular discussion is exemplary for similar ones that I observed in School A. When the topic concerned elements of the Catholic spiritual tradition, (T)Jane displays total patience and handles time generously. It is obvious that she wants her students to discover the personal meaning of such rather abstract concepts as the cross of Jesus.

(#15) After about twenty minutes, spent mostly by the children suggesting different interpretations of the meaning for the cross, a group of about five seems to make a special personal connection. Scott: "So... if somebody mistreats me that might be a cross." (T) Jane: "There you go! Think about those inside feelings of feeling bad." Suddenly the children become agitated. Loud aaaaaa's and oooooo's fill the room. After about twenty minutes they have discovered their personal crosses: sadness, being hurt, fear.

The way (T)Jane elaborates on the meaning of the cross ties in with the Easter themes of love and hope.

(#16) (T)Jane: "And that's why there's two things we should remember when we think about our cross: to be thankful for those who help us with our crosses and to help carry crosses for others." The students continue to discuss how they could do it.

At an earlier visit the children read some Psalms during the religious education period. The following discussion was a mix between strictly knowledge and comprehension type questions and an exploration of the concept "unselfish love."

(#17) (T)Jane introduces the term 'unselfish love' after the students, especially with the help of Scott,

had given the following description: "Well, he just did this and nobody forced him ... he wanted to do good ... he did not ask for a reward ...he did not think oh what will I get for this." Then they continue and shout out examples of their life, e.g.: "When I gave half of my sandwich to Bob." (T) Jane smiles: "It's not always easy but it sure makes us feel good inside, doesn't it."

During one of the Masses, the traditional foot washing ceremony was reenacted. Imitating Jesus, the priest actually washes one foot of a number of teachers and staff. (T)Jane and the children discuss this event afterwards. Again, the emphasis is on the practical aspect of this ritual. As always, she only stops the discussion when it is evident that the concept makes practical sense to the students.

(#18) When (T)Jane asks what the children thought about Father washing the feet, Tiny jumps up: "He did not have to do it." Brad: "No, but he does things like that .. like Jesus." (T)Jane: "But why would he do such a thing?" Anthony: "Because it's just a way of doing good and not being so selfish, I mean it's not just great fun to wash their feet." Eventually they agree that it's like doing things for others even if other people would laugh at you.

One of (T)Jane's personal strengths is her capacity for humor. Even in the midst of a rather serious talk about some concept from the Bible reading or from Mass she enjoys a good laugh with her students. The incidents with the definition of 'angel' and the meaning of Easter serve as examples.

(#19) They read and then talk about the part of the story where someone has an angel look on the face. (T) Jane: "What's an angel?" There is total silence. (T) Jane with an amused chuckle: "I don't believe you little Catholic Christians don't give me an answer on this..." The kids grin, giggle, then there is some shouting: "It's something that flies around

(laughter)... a saint ...a messenger of God ... created by God before humans." In the end they agree that an angel's main characteristic is innocence.

(#20) The topic today is Christ's resurrection. They discuss the meaning for about twenty minutes, read from the Gospel, explore the idea why Easter is the most important feast for Christian people around the world. Finally (T) Jane looks at Sandra: "So why are we excited?" Sandra starts to giggle: "Because we eat and eat and get fat." Everybody joins in the laughter.

When such "aberrations" from the topic first happened, I anticipated anger on the part of the teacher. In time I came to understand that by allowing this kind of humor to happen, and by taking part in it, the teacher created a mood that made it possible for her students to participate in prolonged discussion about abstract concepts.

Another important message explored after one Mass was the issue of how to handle oneself when faced with some kind of adversity. What struck me as important was the idea that solutions should be sought not only for one's personal problems but for other people in need.

(#21) Sandra talks about her legs (- she has lost her right leg in an accident): "Sometimes I feel pretty left out and want to cry. But then I think that I still have my other leg. And then I invent things that make me feel better, like I compete with myself and now I can hop across the whole parking lot without my crutches." Other children murmur: "That's true...she's really good... she doesn't give up."

(#22) A Peace Corps volunteer was at school and talked about his experience. (T)Jane: "He did something more than just looking for his problems. He gave of his talents and energy to others." She explains how he helped in the farm project and how he shared his knowledge with the natives so that they could become more independent. John: " He helped solve <u>their</u> problem just because he wanted to help."

In the school handbook, the spiritual goal of education

In the school handbook, the spiritual goal of education is listed before all others. It states among others the following: equal dignity among creation; being in need of self worth; giving and receiving love and respect. The goal is to 'awaken an awareness of responsibilities members of God's family have to themselves, their families, their community, and to God.' In the following sections I will show in what ways these issues are treated in (T) Jane's classroom.

Personal Dignity Through Acceptance, Love, and Compassion

> (#23) (T)Jane in one of our informal talks tells me: "A young child seems to relate everything to self.. like mentioned: if I really loved them I wouldn't really give them so much homework or I would listen every time they want to talk to me...and sometimes it is hard to balance... I am here as a Catholic educator, I have resolved that within myself when I read the Gospels: the Lord was kind, he was merciful but he was the most demanding that you read about in history and he gave you a choice : you may and you may not.. and so .. what do the kids think of us (chuckle) one minute we teach them to love God and be kind and be merciful and the next minute we say you will sit down and you will get this done or..something like that. "

One of the tasks during the analytic phase of this study was to categorize my observations. One of the categories for School A I had labeled "tkpos" (i.e. teacher-kid, positive). It signified positive interactions between teacher and students, mostly more private remarks, but also forms of encouragement and signs of respect or compassion for the student. At the end of the labeling process I noticed that the numbers supported my general impression: I

had noted almost twice as many "tkpos" incidents than the two negative categories taken together, i.e. "ifthen", indicating authoritarian type teacher control (example: "If you want to play with us you need to be very quiet.") and "tkconf", indicating some sort of confrontation between teacher and students that ended in bad mood rather than a decisive "win" of either student or teacher (example: J. S. throws a book down. (T)Jane: "J.S., books cost money." J.S.: "But they are mine." (T)Jane sighs; J.S. looks sheepish).

(T)Jane handles students' desperation with kindness and conveys the idea that it's okay to feel that way, even in the middle of school work.

> (#24) Charles now cries and is desperate. He wants to do the assigned math problem but is unusually tired today. (T)Jane gives him a kleenex without much ado, keeps up her quiet voice but basically leaves him alone, puts her hand on his shoulder. Charles cries and tries hard to swallow it. After about three minutes he says quietly: "I am okay again."

> (#25) Karen's turtle dies. She wrote 2 magnificent poems about him - about: calling him and there was just silence, and feeling very empty; and a second poem that rhymed and had a line about "wanted you to see my children" and how it can't be; a friend.. to tell the secrets and thoughts. "Good-bye my friend, rest in peace forever." (T)Jane: "How wonderful. I can feel what he meant to you, it makes me cry." Other kids: "Me, too." I sit there all choked up myself.

(T)Jane's humor complements her personal interest in the students. It is the ease with which she engages in friendly exchanges with her students that help them not to take themselves too seriously.

(#26) Jack is having a hard time staying on track today. T. pats him on shoulder, turns his paper around. Anthony has almost nothing written yet. (T)Jane puts her arm around him: "Dig, dig inside." Anthony: "Just what I wanted to do." They both grin at each other. Rubs Charles' back: "Coming up with some great ones?"

(#27) Keith comes in 10 minutes late; class is already working; as soon as he walks in, (T)Jane asks him the current question about pollen, he stops, answers with a smile; she smiles, too. All is very warm and relaxed. Her equanimity in such situations is extraordinary, she wants to teach and all she does makes things move in this direction.

(#28) "Poor Anthony didn't know that spelling would be part of being alive." She pats him on the shoulder. Anthony who was on the verge of a frustrated explosion exhales loudly several times and throws his arms in the air in comical desperation.

The same kind of respect is conveyed by the teacher in most of her disciplinary actions. She uses two main types of discipline. First, she discusses problems with the students and makes it very clear that it is <u>their</u> responsibility to take care of the situation.

(#29) (T)Jane walks around and helps individual kids. Anthony continues to rock on chair and lean back in dangerous fashion. (T): "The only way it will stop is if <u>you</u> decide that you don't need to move the chair around." Anthony sighs loudly, rolls his eyes, nods and stops rocking.

(#30) Brent made a mistake and explains that he has to redo it. (T)Jane: "When are you planning to do it?" "As soon as today's assignment is done." " Is recess involved?" Brent nods slowly "Yes." The whole exchange is as if between two equally concerned business partners.

(#31) At 10:10 restless noise becomes distracting. (T)Jane: "Let me make a suggestion: we can all do our part by stopping the unnecessary noise.....(waits) Now if the humming would stop we are on track." Constant decrease of noise. Kids settle nicely. No hard word was necessary.

The other way of enforcing some disciplinary action and

at the same time teaching as well as modeling personal responsibility occurred in what I came to term "we-disc." It is a form of interaction between teacher and students regarding some disciplinary problem that primarily manifests itself in three forms: (T)Jane tells the students what would be the most useful action.

> (#32) At 11 A.M. I hear for the first time "shhh." (T)Jane: "Some have not yet done [the assignment], so we need to be quiet to hear it; a polite way to do it would be to just stop [the papernoise] if your teacher asks you." Noise decreases.

> (#33) (T)Jane to Tim who raises his hand because he can't find his answer sheet: "Timmy, it will not help if you raise your hand; looking for it might help." Tim makes a mockingly surprised face and starts rummaging through his desk. Eventually he finds it and waves it in the air. (T): "Good."

Occasionally, the teacher has a student explain to her or to the group what should be done.

> (#34) (T)Jane: "Jack would you <u>please</u> explain to me classroom procedure for throwing away things?" He does so. "Well, now you explained it, so what would be fair for you to do or say?" Jack: "I'm really sorry." (T): "That will do for the first time but not for the second. I hope you understand now."

The main issue here is that at no time it appears as if the teacher enforces rules for their own sake or because she experiences disobedience as a personal offense. She is entirely consumed by the effort to help the students become aware of their transgressions and how to take responsibility for them.

Other times she asks a student for the most useful solution to a problem. In this last form, (T)Jane does not leave room for a solution outside class rules.

(#35) To Frank who gets up in the middle of an explanation and walks across the room: "Frank stay with us - is this the best time to go to the wastebasket?" Frank shakes his head.

(#36) Keith chats casually with Willie during (T)Jane's explanation of how to plant the tomato seeds. (T): "Keith, tell us why your name will go on the board now." "It's for not waiting my turn to talk." His face remains calm, so does his voice and the teacher's.

This respectful, accepting manner in which the teacher treats the children finds its reflection in student-student interactions. One of the most startling impressions I had when I first started to observe in School A was the virtual absence of physical or verbal aggression among the students. My first reaction was to assume that they must be under a very strict discipline lid, i.e. harsh punishment for misbehavior. When I saw some students line up for the first time, I was astonished to see them wear a uniform, and I concluded that they probably lack the opportunity to be spontaneous or wild. I watched them carefully, at the school yard during recess, at Mass, during lunch, on their way to and from school, during class, waiting for a sign of repressed aggression pressing through. Yet nothing happened. Counting my categories after analysis, I found that I had four times as many entries under "kkpos", (i.e. kid-kid, positive), indicating friendly, humorous, respectful, or helpful incidents, than under "kkneg", (i.e. kid-kid, negative), which meant some form of verbal or physical, non-playful aggression.

(#37) Mary walks by the teacher's desk and inadvertently pushes a container with pencils off it. (T)Jane laughs loud: "I think it's twice that's happened to you today." Anthony jumps up and helps.

(#38) It is time to change the seating arrangement. (T)Jane: "Who would kindly change from front to back?" The kids move their tables swiftly; they're polite, help each other with the tables and chairs, carrying, shifting. No one touches the other. J.S. bumps into Willie and says: "Oh, excuse me."

(#39) Larry turns half way around and puts his hand on Anthony's table. A. pushes it gently back. Larry puts it back, Anthony pushes it away. The third time Anthony says: "Larry please leave me alone, I don't like it." And Larry takes his hand off: "Okay, if you say so."

In their behavior towards me, the students expressed self-confidence, curiosity and respect, but above all a general friendliness. I came to look forward to it with delight as soon as I understood that it was not just a show. Larry was the first to involve me in a relationship; Anthony was next. On my second visit the teacher asked me to help arrange some items in the utility closet. Soon after, I found myself correcting student papers and introducing the class to Austria in an improvised geography lesson. The children invited me to read with them, sit with them at lunch, walk with them to recess. They quickly accepted that I was just THERE.

(#40) My writing notes is taken by the children as part of being in a classroom: they write - I write. They ask uncountable personal questions of me but seem to be absolutely uninterested in what I write.

(#41) Larry invites me to have lunch with him; Charles joins us. They laugh because I never had a Sloppy Joe before. Then they both go into a detailed serious description of the food to come.

(#42) From 2 PM on is science; I work with four boys on boat (part of the props for Easter Mass) outside the room. This is teamwork: they have their suggestions, I have mine, and together we agree on a way to proceed.

(#43) I work with Katie and Sue on paper lilies for their banner. Katie is impressed by my speed. Sue: "Well, she is much older than we are." Katie: "It still is fast." Sue: "You're right, she sure is." To me: "I hope you don't get mad because I said you are old."

(#44) Lunch: I talk with Jack about God and 1st graders vs. 6th graders. He says: "When I was in first grade I did not think as hard as now. And I'm sure when I'm in sixth grade I will think even better. see Larry does not think as hard as most of us. He has not a lot of friends. He wants us to do things that he should do. But he has to learn for himself or else he`ll always need somebody."

Work as Personal Responsibility

Here and Now

There were times when the benevolence of (T)Jane was less visible, when she turned to commands and teacher control to make a point. She explains these events so:

(#45) "I understand that education cannot exist in a vacuum, it has to be grounded in some form of spiritual reality. There has to be a professionalism, there has got to be for the children: yes we love you we care for you but we don't accept ..we are not babysitters, we are here for a different purpose to learn, scientifically, to learn all of the things that we can pick up through our senses but also to make you aware that your mind is much bigger than that...I don't want them to think they can do things, any thing they want just because it feels good and no consideration for others."

She makes it very clear that one of the reasons she has stayed with this school since the late sixties is because she believes in what this school offers: the opportunity to teach values in cooperation with the parents and to estab-

lish personal bonds with the students at a time when this is very much needed.

When she exercises control, she is not impolite but very firm.

> (#46) (T)Jane to Larry who had tried to escape a reading assignment: "Excuse me, put your marking pen away, take your pencil and start."
>
> (#47) To Keith who fiddles with his watch: "Do you remember what we discussed about your watch? Yes? Then put it away now and get with it."
>
> (#48) "Anthony, if you don't look up your five words you'll have a lot of homework."
>
> (#49) To a group of girls: "Girls, if you continue to have recess now do not expect to have recess later."

In all cases the students corrected their behavior. I had seen the students resolve problems with the teacher or among themselves in a rather democratic way. For a long time I was puzzled because I was sure there had to be less "mature" ways in which the children dealt with frustration or conflict. Two events provided the necessary insight.

Conflict

Usually I stayed with the teacher when the students went to their music lesson. especially at the beginning of my observations these breaks gave me an opportunity to chat with (T)Jane over a cup of coffee. One day I decided to accompany the students. What I observed was astonishing:

> (#50) This is hard to believe. These are the same students and they are not. Total chaos. A desperate music teacher shouting commands, shooting angry glances, students out of control, as if overstimulated, under some spell. No holds barred.

The music teacher clearly was insecure, tired, and evidently not too thrilled with her job. The children reacted immediately. This made me curious. I decided to skip another break with (T)Jane and stayed for Spanish instruction by again another teacher. She, too, was not too enthusiastic about her job. I had talked to her before and been given the impression that those "young" kids are too immature for a foreign language. Again, the children were restless and unconcentrated. I went over the notes from School A a number of times, eager to find out how (T)Jane keeps the lid on her students. But whatever I did, I ended up impressed by her gentleness, her compassion, and her respect for the children. And finally I realized that her occasional slips into authoritarian "if-then" discipline had one consistent response: the children simply tune out for a short time.

> (#51) Children read their Indian reports it takes a while and they get restless. (T)Jane tells them several times to pay attention to their friends. Here are some consequences: Mike slaps book open and shut; tries to get neighbor's attention; Keith plays under table, so does Sandra; J.S. rocks back and forth on chair; Larry whistles softly.
>
> (#52) Teacher has been explaining future assignments for about five minutes now. Kids get restless. She gets a bit impatient. Reaction: Anthony is back to sorting colors under his desk; Willie writes messages in the air; Tiny rocks back and forth; Frank looks intently at his watch.

Spirituality and Age

(T)Jane's reaction to my many questions, and especially to the pile of index cards with the statements about human

development and the nature of existence (see Appendix A), was characterized by equanimity, intellectual curiosity, and patience. Observing her in the classroom I saw a dedicated, experienced, and well prepared teacher. Such descriptions, however, did not seem to capture the essence of what her presence was about. The intensity of her focus on understanding, the acceptance she showed towards her students, the concentration she displayed were contagious. And on top of it all, she was simple, in her appearance as well as in her behavior as a whole: on the surface a very undramatic person.

Step by step she revealed to me the source of her attributes. In doing so, she interpreted spirituality for me in three very distinct ways. One, in the face of a modern, i.e. changing, world she looked at spirituality in the lives of her students with some resignation. Two, at the same time she insisted that what motivated her was a personal spiritual journey that was at the same time closely connected to the teachings of Christ and also individual, philosophical. Three, she showed me where concepts from transpersonal theory coincide with her Christian principles. The following observations and interview excerpts shall demonstrate these three points. On many occasions (T)Jane and I talked about the impact of the children's environment outside school on all aspects of their lives. Always I detected a certain sadness in her statements.

(#53) All of a sudden our conversation changes to my

idea of "seeding" spirituality. (T)Jane: "Yes, well, but you need the right environment. The children learn in school about spirituality but, frankly, they pick up their values much rather from home..about all we can do is try to plant the seed and hope that someday it does mature...when we fail it is not so much our fault...we have eight years to offer them here...I find that the ones who stay here and go on to [some higher education Catholic school] are the ones who probably have the happiest lives: who remain married and who have children as a means of happiness..."

(#54) (T)Jane tells me that within the past few years a great number of new people have moved into the Parish, some of them she does not even know because their interest in actively participating in their child's school education is small. "Most of them both parents work outside the home, and that hurts the children certainly. As Christian children I would like to see them more loving and caring for others but I think that's the reason why they're not so much [in this direction] because they still have to develop the loving and caring within, and it's hard when you don't have the example at home."

(#55) We went to the teachers' lounge. Our talk today centers around the yearly goal that the school sets for the teachers. Again, (T)Jane voices regret about the role of parents today. "We [the Catholic schools] exist to preach the message, to build community, and to serve; and when we reshuffled our emphasis - I can tell you- it's a lot EASIER to PREACH the commandments than to try to build the community and to provide the service (she chuckles and hesitates) whatever the service is that the community needs. Sometimes I feel that the term service has become perverted to servicing the parents, and to do what they want."

At first, (T)Jane seemed to be skeptical as to my claim that I wanted to learn from her. Once we had established some reasonable trust between us, she shared with me characteristics of her own spiritual journey.

(#56) "I am not a believer in a specific moral code. I believe...in the covenant: if you will be my God I will be your people...rather than: do you know your ten commandments or the rosary or did you go to Mass. As God he is perfectly capable of looking at my heart and know my intentions. And that's what I try to instill in my kids: I should have a covenant with God and it should come from my heart and not from what

somebody teaches me."

(#57) "I believe we were created good - there is good. As Catholics we have been especially bad about it: we've always had this false humility, if you ever brag about something that you've done you are said to be proud in the wrong way... well I don't believe in that... a lot of the mystics completely denied their physicalness. But look at the children: that's what they are all about, that's where I have to meet them... but I try to guide them towards other things, let's say kindness; we reflect on things of the spirit like having wisdom and love, and how we carry it in our little bags; but then we need to ask: can some of it go to other people, can we share?"

(#58) "The purpose of life should be to live in such a way as Christian people that we will spend everlasting life with the Lord in heaven and I hope that in my life I show that as my main purpose rather than money or position or prestige... I would say children look at me and cannot notice what my purpose in life is; ... but I notice sometimes when I speak to the older children it has gotten through... they say they understand my position now better: that happiness comes from within and Christ is our only true purpose in life."

One of the goals of my observations was to gain an understanding of how spirituality is interpreted in School A, how the written definition compared with the actual every day events, and how all that fit with transpersonal concepts. The last part, an exploration of possible congruence between the Catholic interpretation of spirituality and transpersonal psychology's claims produced some interesting results. With regard to the transpersonal notion of mind and body being one unit, (T)Jane answered with chuckles and insisted that might be true here in this world, never mind what was possible after death. When in one of our talks the subject of meditation came up she insisted that she does not meditate. But after a short pause she added:

(#59) I'm a little Catholic and to me meditation means

> I dwell on it (she laughs), I mean on the suffering or death of the Lord or you put yourself into God's presence. Now if this is what meditation is I do that and there can be a thousand people anywhere around and your experience of yourself is between you and the spiritual being."

It became evident that she has practiced this kind of "meditation" for many years. Neither the content of her exercise, i.e. a special subject, nor the circumstances, i.e. full concentration, nor the amount of practice, i.e. regular and over a long period of time, nor the outcome, i.e. serenity and intensity at the same time, present-centeredness and equanimity are much different from meditation experiences described in transpersonal literature.

In one of our talks we discussed the issue of different mindbody states. She had never heard the term so I explained the notion of ASC's to her. Again, her answers come very close to a transpersonal understanding of ASC's.

> (#60) "We are given both body and soul. We can exist on a spiritual and on a material level and I think that is what life is. My everlasting spirit or my part of me which is not subject to all of the desires of the body is to me far more important. You can be happy in a state of extreme poverty .. you can be in bliss when you're really in pain. Your mind or your intellect or your spiritual side of yourself is capable of all those things... so we are a totality and not made up of compartments."

(T)Jane interprets and lives spirituality to mean an extension of one's existence, one of our modes of existence, oriented towards a very real and personal God, a life long personal journey, a path. The individual's position on the path is expressed through the amount of love, compassion, respect and service for other human beings.

A Sense of Community

In Chapters I and II I discussed the basic differences between developmental models that follow such established theorists as Freud, Erikson, Piaget, or Skinner, and the transpersonal model of development, especially the theory of Ken Wilber. There it was stated that there might be a difference in how the various theories define certain concepts, i.e. spirituality. It was further stated that transpersonal psychology views the individual human being as ultimately being connected to all parts of creation. The definition of the particular community with which people in general identify themselves is of crucial importance for a discussion of this term from a transpersonal point of view.

In all the major themes that make up School A's spiritual landscape, a reference to the concept "community" is made. Community for the participants from School A means a special relationship between the classroom teacher and her students (see especially #6 and #8); it means that at specific times, i.e. during morning prayer, the teacher and the students formed a harmonious whole where external disciplinary measures were not needed; it means a feeling of purposeful togetherness of all students and adults of School A and the parishioners during the weekly Mass; it means the dedication of the teacher to be on her students' side (see especially #32 and #33); finally, community means that children treat each other with simple respect without being

constantly coerced by adults to do so (see especially ##37 - 39).

At a time in children's development where the emphasis usually is on ones's separateness, it is interesting to notice the emphasis on community and belonging in School A. The importance of this pattern with regard to transpersonal theory will be further discussed in Chapter VIII.

Summary

This chapter is a documentation of core themes of School A. Prayer and Mass are discussed in the context of rituals. The Church Year is seen as an influence on the learning context. It is suggested that the key to personal dignity in School A is an atmosphere of acceptance, love and compassion. Work is experienced as a personal responsibility here and now. In interactions between the classroom teacher and the students, conflict is not perceived as a problem. The teacher's personal spiritual journey is documented. It is pointed out that School A puts strong emphasis on community and belonging.

CHAPTER VI

SCHOOL B: ... SAVED BY GRACE ALONE

On the following pages I will document and analyze the core themes of School B's spiritual landscape. For a review of the process that led to these core themes, as well as for an explanation of the particular notation system used in this text, the reader may want to refer back to the beginning of Chapter V.

Introduction

School B's advertisements stress the "nondenominational" character of the institution. Indeed, faculty and staff are members of a variety of churches. A close inspection of the parent handbook, the books and other materials used in the classroom, interviews with teachers, but most convincingly direct classroom observations allow the conclusion that the philosophical base of this school resembles fundamentalist Protestantism.

The school buildings are relatively new and very functional. Classes are offered for Pre-K to 12th grade. Students in Pre-K to 6th grade have classes in a building separate from, but connected with, the building where classes for students in 7th grade to 12th grade are held. There

is a church on the school property. The school is located at the outskirts of the city in an almost rural, very peaceful setting. Both the campus and the church are in a phase of strong growth. A move to the center of the city is planned in the near future.

The present campus stretches over several levels that are connected through stairs or walkways. It is very spacious and attractive with its many trees and green plants between and around the buildings. Next to the building that houses the lower grades, but on a lower level is a recess area with wooden swings, slides and climbing devices. The whole campus as well as the inside of the buildings reflect some degree of affluence.

The principal for the elementary school, Mr. Adams[1], told me with pride during our first meeting about the qualifications of his faculty and the total education children receive in his school. It seemed important to him to let me know that School B is well prepared to deliver formal education on a high level in addition to religious education. Indeed, teaching certificates as well as certificates of appreciation hang prominently displayed on classroom walls. Students walking through the buildings, regardless of age, display very regulated behavior: they walk at a certain

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1. As in Chapter V, all names of persons and places are fictitious. Principal is abbreviated (P); the contact teacher is abbreviated (T)Sylvia.

restrained pace, greet every adult, hold doors open, and are unusually quiet.

The fourth grade classroom where I did most of my observations is a corner room in the smaller building on the north side. Two of the walls have a small window with curtains. The floor is covered with a relatively thin, light colored carpet. On it stand separate desks for the students. There are twenty-two children in this class, fifteen boys and seven girls, and all of them are white.

The fourth grade teacher is tall, mild mannered Sylvia. Upon entering the classroom with her for the first time, my attention was immediately drawn to the colorful items that decorate the walls. There are heavily decorated bulletin boards, Bible verses, children's drawings, charts indicating class rules, progress markers or classroom duties, and newspaper or magazine clippings. The room, though a bit crowded for the number of students, has an air of friendly busyness. It is light and colorful. Teacher desk, closets and shelves are located primarily alongside the back wall. In front of the students' tables is a lectern which the teacher uses for periods of direct instruction.

A report of the particular events observed in School B would be incomplete without an account of events that made a total participant out of the observer. I was totally unprepared for the faculty morning prayer meetings in the school hall of which I became a part virtually from the first day

of observations. It also needs to include a brief description of major characteristics of the books used by the students. The school uses a series of textbooks for all subjects especially prepared for this type of school, i.e. everything from language arts to math is geared towards a Christian education as outlined in the official handbook. This chapter therefore contains three major sections: reports of classroom observations and talks with the teacher and the principal, descriptions of instances when I had to switch from observer to total participant, and annotated excerpts from textbooks and other classroom material.

Core Themes of the Spiritual Landscape of School B

Strict Doctrine and the Bible

Every morning, the fourth grade students in School B go through a lengthy and amazingly upbeat ritual to start their day: When (T)Sylvia indicates that it is time to begin the day, a student picks up from one of the filing cabinets a small piece of wood that has three flags on it: The flag of the U.S., The State flag, and one with the traditional Christian colors yellow and white. The student leads the class in three different pledges: one to each of the political flags, one to the Bible. In between, they sing a song that sounds much like a cheerleader song, accompanied with much hand clapping and set to a happy melody.

(#1) It is only 8:45 in the morning and there are these children clapping their hands, and singing full of energy: "We are C-h-r-i-stians..." they spell and smile and tell in their song how happy they are because they can pledge allegiance to the Bible.

(#2) Soon after (T)Sylvia and I enter the classroom today, she switches the radio on. It is tuned to the local Christian radio station which plays soft Christian rock. The following pledges and songs by the students seem like a natural continuation.

Although each day has a particular schedule, the morning hours especially have an arbitrary, almost aimless quality at first sight. From before the morning bell rings until sometimes 10 A.M. activities alternate between prayers, Bible reading, discussions about moral issues, and writing in work books. All is done in a very casual manner, no loud noises, more like friendly chit-chat than serious work.

(#3) I look over my entries today and wonder why I had gotten increasingly restless during the early morning. I try to organize the observations and realize that I had expected a certain structure, but experienced a new kind of "order" that is foreign to me: At every step there was a look towards the organizing principle, the Bible. To me, they seemed to circle around the same thought for hours.

(#4) I think I detect the purpose of these morning hours: first the pledges, then the individual prayer, then the Bible study which is done with the help of a workbook, then more religious education but already as part of a "true" subject like language arts, etc., then maybe more prayer, then the first break at around 9:45. The schedule becomes more discernible when I read over my notes afterwards.

Once the puzzle of how the mornings were actually organized was solved in my mind, my observations became more detailed. The prayers in the morning and before the first break are always very intense. The students stand, many

with their heads bowed. There is little fidgeting. children and (T)Sylvia say personal requests.

> (#5) Larry: "Let's pray for Lance who is sick." Murmurs of "praise you Jesus, glory to God" fill the air. (T)Sylvia: "We pray for our guest [that's me]: that her work may be fruitful and that she may be touched by God's love and wisdom." The children add requests for health, for good exam scores, for friendship.
>
> (#6) They talk about everything to their God. Nothing is to little or to big. Today they have a lot on their minds. This has been going on for some five minutes now. (T)Sylvia: "We need to settle down, Lord. We ask you that we give our best, we give thanks for you are not a dead God." Kyle: "Please help me become more like you..." (T)Sylvia continues: "...so that the world may see we make a difference because we have Christ in our heart."

The official handbook's explanation about 'cultivating a strong relationship with a personal God' comes to life in these morning prayers. It is a God that is on the one hand shared with all other people who are willing to accept Him. But most of all it is a God to whom a person can speak in a very private manner. They do not need an official mediator to establish the connection. God speaks directly to them and they speak directly to Him.

After their prayers, (T)Sylvia usually assumes the role of discussion leader and preacher for the following formal religious education. students use a workbook that is organized around major topics that could be considered value education. The distinctive feature of the workbook is that every topic, such as "joy" or "self-control" or "honesty," is treated entirely from a Biblical perspective. No room is provided for discussion outside that context. Every unit is

used to deepen the children's realization of how everyday conduct needs to be in accordance with God's word as it stands in the Bible.

> (#7) The topic for this week is "Joy". (T)Sylvia lectures: "It is the feeling of deep delight inside ... a feeling to know Jesus is your savior. You could also say it is knowledge that causes extreme happiness or excitement."
>
> (#8) This is the third day for discussing joy. Talks have become oriented towards practical application. (T)Sylvia: "What if things are not going too well, if your report cards are bad, if you have problems, or if you are sad, what about joy then?" There are some loud thinking noises in the room (" hmmm... ahhh..."). Sandy: "Well, we still have Jesus, so we feel joy." Other students agree. (T)Sylvia: "Yes, joy has nothing to do with what's happening outside. We get joy from Christ within us - we are going to heaven."

The whole discussion on "joy" centers around the idea that as saved Christians nothing can disturb the inner world of the individual. Support for this notion is found in appropriate Bible verses. The workbook provides some references to Psalms, a favorite source of supportive quotes for teachers and students.

> (#9) Ben asks (T)Sylvia if he could look up the quoted Psalms. He does it with enormous efficiency. I saw yesterday how two boys and a girl read in their Bible before class started. The Bible is used like any other book, and the students seem to know their way around in it.
>
> (#10) (T)Sylvia makes the connection from metaphors in poetry ("They are like picture words") to the poetry of the Proverbs and Psalms: "They help you get a picture in your mind, something you can relate to yourself." They now search for metaphors that are appropriate for the discussed topic. They find - and shout out in excitement because they understand the concept: "A cheerful heart is good medicine ... a crushed spirit dries up bones." The children themselves explain the meaning of these Bible excerpts.

The last day of discussion about "joy" deals with the purpose of the students' lives. What emerges is the idea that nothing in their lives would make sense if there were not a very specific purpose in their existence: to imitate Jesus and to eventually be reunited with him.

> (#11) (T)Sylvia: "How many in this fourth grade have problems?" Lots of hands go up. Several children groan and say: "Money ... we always need more ...school is hard ...you know growing up is not that easy either..." (T)Sylvia: "Well, and who is the one answer to all these problems?" students in one strong voice: "Jesus." (T)Sylvia: "So we can have joy with all our problems. If you don't know why you're here - that would be sad. But we can have joy, can be confident in what the Bible says: we are safe."

Another topic that shows how Christ as example has an uplifting quality, and how one's faith in Him provides guidance in everyday events was "self-control."

> (#12) (T)Sylvia: "What you study in the Bible... how does it help you?" Different students: "In soccer I was punished for something and I felt like hitting back but I did not... I do chores around the house even if I don't like it... I get angry often and want to be wild but that is not self-control..."

> (#13) (T)Sylvia tends to talk at length about her personal life as example for the various discussion issues: "If someone does something to you, how do you respond at first?" Mary: "I feel like I want to get even with them." (T)Sylvia: "Sure, that's our nature. I see this with my little grandchildren ...those traits come early in life ... we have to train them soon."

It is interesting to see how the teacher does not hesitate to warn the children of the dangers of following adult guidance to closely. This attitude, the desire to make her students independent thinkers, even if her concept of independence means total compliance with Biblical teaching, is surely the main reason why the general climate in

this classroom is generally one of equal partners.

> (#14) (T)Sylvia: "Guys don't watch your parents because we [adults] blow it all the time. Our real example is Jesus. He was perfect. We can grow and change. We do need to begin and practice. We make mistakes, analyze it, what can I do to change and make it better. You know when I make mistakes I suffer ... (Tom interrupts her: "Then you sin!") ...I do not want to suffer.
>
> (#15) (T)Sylvia: "If your mom calls you jerks, that's not self-control, and I'm sure she is working on changing herself."

I noticed with puzzlement that the ordinarily composed and calm children become very restless whenever the talk touches on their parents. They take every opportunity to non-verbally act out examples the teacher gives for parental "misbehavior." On later visits it started to become clear to me that the students' attention starts to wander whenever examples for certain behavior or rules left the realm of their very personal experience. They tolerate, even enjoy, the teacher's personal stories; they start to loose interest when she introduces her grandchildren; they turn off or become extremely restless when adult examples continue.

> (16) (T)Sylvia seems on a roll about self-control today, and she just can't stop talking about how grown ups need to learn self-control, too. "Is behavior the only thing where we need self-control?" Amy: "No. IT can also be with money, like an allowance, or with things." Joe: "Yeah, like how many Nintendos one has." (T)Sylvia continues the list, explaining how 'moms accumulate all these clothes and shoes, and how dads buy larger and larger cars, and airplanes.' While she talks I see kids roll their eyes as if this is talk they've heard before. Marsha disgusted: "Who cares!"

At first, these type of reactions striked me as odd. They do not fit with the otherwise exemplary behavior and

the general air of non-aggression. Over time I came to understand that to criticize material possessions makes them uncomfortable. Most of them come from well-to-do families. I fact, the collection of fancy games, including portable video games, walkmans, etc. that can be seen during recess inside and outside the building is impressive. In the whole context of believing that "good things" are okay or else one would not have them, prospering is okay, wealth is okay, as long as one keeps 'one's heart clean,' it is understandable that the children had not much use for their teacher's criticism.

In their discussion about "honesty", I notice how self-discipline is closely linked to the concept of an eternally observing God, one that at any moment can intervene, speak to us, correct us, guide us.

> (#17) Now the children are totally caught up in (T)Sylvia's personal story about when she lied once and how God spoke to her in unmistakable terms. "The heavenly father , His eyes are everywhere, they are watching us. Not to put us in fear but to let us know he loves us. So he can speak to us and say you need to go make it right, so he can help us grow. So he is just like your parents."

Early on it became obvious that the overall guiding principle in this fourth grade classroom is a strict interpretation of the Bible which is seen as the inspired, therefore true, word of God. This is especially noticeable during periods of formal religious education. However, it is not less obvious in such subjects as language arts, science, and social studies. Truly the only subject area

that is different in this respect is math. Yet, word problems could contain religious content. This permeation of academic content with Biblical doctrine serves two main purposes: to present knowledge about such diverse topics as astronomy, taxes, or Native Americans from a Christian perspective, and to continuously teach and minister to these children.

> (#18) Two students are on the blackboard in front and compete with each other on math problem. In the meantime, Amy and Joan have a private conversation going instead of working on the math problems. (T)Sylvia gently gets their attention, then says: "There are rules. You break them, you suffer consequences. So stay within rule, stay in control."

> (#19) This week in science they talk about the planets. Jerry reads from the science textbook: "There is no orbit of planets that gives us the seven day week. That was given to us directly by God to help us remember that He is the creator of all the marvels of the Universe. God created our world in only six days, and on the seventh day He rested."

An unusually emotional (T)Sylvia walks her students through the distinction between astronomy and astrology. Bible verses are quoted, especially as sources to show that 'God warns us against believing in astrology.' During another visit they discuss the concept of "taxes." The argument that it is right to pay taxes is twofold, as supported by the Bible and to promote lawful behavior:

> (#20) We should pay taxes, (T)Sylvia suggests because "Jesus says we should give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. But also, because it's the law of the land and we want to keep laws."

(T)Sylvia likes to explain and, in her own words, "to minister to these young children so that they might choose

the right way." She made it very clear to me that she does not consider her personal belief to be the model. Rather, she sees her mission in guiding students towards personally accepting Jesus into their lives. In doing so, issues that could lead to discussions about human rights in general, prejudice and ways to handle it, etc., or any topic that does not have straight forward answers, are dealt with in the same manner: what is the divine example for required behavior? In an effort to instill this example onto the children, an exploration of the implications of human action gets lost. The closest (T)Sylvia ever came to an explanation of human behavior without immediately quoting the Bible is demonstrated in the following entry.

> (#21) Now the discussion centers around Native Americans and how their land was "wrongfully taken, but the Indians also refused to cooperate." ((T)Sylvia) Jerry: "Why don't people judge Indians as they do us?" (T)Sylvia: "Because there are people who are prejudiced against Blacks, Indians, other religions, or who are <u>others.</u> We have to realize that <u>all</u> men are created equal. ... I think if we look at people as human beings not at color, but all as God's people, that's the way Jesus does it. If we come to him and ask, all he looks at is our heart, inside we are all the same. God sees us so, and that's how we should see people."

I note with interest that this topic starts an interesting dispute between several students. It centers around the idea that maybe some people might not "deserve" this positive attitude, and the fact that "other religions" are "stupid."

> (#22) The children start off on this discussion about other religions; "But some people give sacrifices to Satan or Buddha..." "Yes and some to the Pope or the Saints..." "Boy, Satanism is stupid!" "Yes, Carla, but everybody sins!" "So what!" "So you need to love

them anyhow even if it sounds stupid." "If you want to be an example..."

At one of my visits, the children read in their monthly Christian newsletter about "Earth Day." When I first saw the headline I thought that meant these children also learn about environmental protection, etc. I soon learned that the article was a rather strong argument against the environmentalist movement. The ensuing discussion, or better: lecture by (T)Sylvia, culminated as follows:

> (#23) (T)Sylvia reads from the newsletter: "There is a true danger in worshiping "mother earth." Ignoring God makes the idea of protecting the earth a foolish one. Sin is a much bigger problem than pollution." Now she elaborates on this thought, and how sin is pollution, and selfishness. "Only God has the power to clean it up completely. And He will do that someday - with fire." I am stunned.

Self Discipline

> (#24) From the parent/student handbook, one of the seventeen spiritual goals: "The student will gain a Biblical perspective of authority as it pertains to the home, the school, the local church, and government."
>
> (#25) From the parent/student handbook, on student behavior and discipline: "One of the most important lessons education should teach is self-discipline. It is the training that develops self-control, character, orderliness and efficiency. It is the key to good conduct and proper consideration of other people."

On the surface, the environment I observed in this school seems astonishingly conflict free. During all the time I spent there, I never observed an actual fight between students. After some visits, I noted some instances of non-verbal aggression, mostly punches in the air and similar body language. My first assessment was that these children

solve their problems by talking them out, by using a non-violent measure of conflict resolution. I was content with this idea until I started rereading my observations. In the light of a lengthy analysis I am now certain that my first impression and notes were simply wrong. What actually happens is this: The correct behavior is strictly enforced by the adults in the school; the students usually follow the rules; but in fact I rarely had an opportunity to witness the kind of "self-control" about which the handbook speaks and plenty of opportunity to observe how the students are trained to acknowledge adult authority.

When I had finished sorting the observations in School B, I noticed that I did not have a category that referred to teacher - student aggression, excessive teacher demands, or lots of if - then disciplinary measures. What is so very intriguing is the strategy used by (T)Sylvia: she uses her great humor and her self confidence to enforce the rules. In the most kind manner she tells them again and again what they did wrong, why it is wrong, and what will have to change. If one left out the rather hidden agenda of disciplining, even containing the children and training them to be obedient, all one could see is the truthfully benevolent way in which (T)Sylvia treats her students. The stated goal is to help the children become self-disciplined. The lived example in this classroom shows that the ultimate framework for behavior is to be worthy of God's love by obeying adult regulations. What (T)Sylvia actually does is modeling

negotiation strategies and positive encouragement.

Within this theoretical context I saw four distinct patterns emerge. In some instances the children actually exhibit self-disciplining behavior. Other times, (T)Sylvia negotiates solutions in a manner that expresses a certain equality between herself and her students. Frequently disciplinary measures are initiated by the teacher in her quiet, almost neutral way, but adult control as the true disciplinarian is clearly noticeable. And, finally, there are times when the students become truly impatient with their teacher, and the line between impatience and aggressive becomes very thin.

The Students as Self-Disciplinarians. There are two distinct ways in which the students show attempts to enforce discipline themselves. In both cases discipline means following rules. First, children turn to other children without reference to the teacher.

> (#26) Math. Some students work together and talk quietly about the problems. When the small group next to the window starts to laugh and seemingly talk about non-work related issues, the other students around them go: "Shh! Shh!" Seems to me they are constantly monitoring each other.
>
> (#27) Brian wipes the blackboard and wiggles his lower body. Some girls as well as boys say quietly, sort of annoyed: "Cool out, Brian ...stop that nonsense ... hey go on with your job ..."
>
> (#28) Harry to two girls who make noise with paper: "Could you please be just a bit more quiet." He says it in a very soft voice. The girls change pace, he smiles and, sort of making fun of himself, says "Thank you" and also "You're welcome."

The other instance occurs when the teacher has to leave

the classroom and asks them to be quiet. These events always spurn lively discussions:

> (#29) Now the discussion among the students: "She told us to relax, what if she opens the door." Mona: "Be quiet, dudes, shh, shh." She sounds urgent. Some kids put feet on table but nobody leaves seat. The noise quiets down. Now the guys in the back talk quietly about shoe sizes.
>
> (#30) The racket was too much. (T)Sylvia tells them that she will give them some time to think about it, and that she will leave the room for that. As soon as she is out: Wanda: "Shhh...Shhh, hush, sit nice, smile, I'll be the 1,2,3, person.." One boy still talks loudly to an other one. Charles: "Shut up Joe!" Now it's really quiet.

Negotiating Equality. One of the recurring tasks of (T)Sylvia is to decide which student will read. I noticed on several occasions that many of her students try to establish a special, even preferential relationship with her. (T)Sylvia usually avoids the issue very diplomatically.

> (#31) Some odd suggestions float around like 'if you can read cross-eyed '; finally they vote and determine that those kids who ate pancakes this morning could read. Sounds democratic.

When it comes to dealing with minor infractions of discipline, (T)Sylvia is at her best in terms of negotiating the correct behavior gently.

> (#32) Sally is almost asleep with her head on the desk. (T)Sylvia in a friendly sing-song: "Yoo-hoo, Sally, we're out here, ... you can't take a nap. Show me that you are awake." Sally steps out of her seat and makes dance movements: "See! I'm awake." Teacher smiles: "Thanks."
>
> (#33) (T)Sylvia: "Excuse me: when I talk you don't talk; then when you talk I'll listen. That's a deal."
>
> (#34) Somebody reads the helpers for the day. Confusion over entry. children suggest various people.

> Possible chaos. (T)Sylvia very quietly: "Let me see ... I don't want my system messed up. Jerry, please come and help me figure out the sequence." Jerry and (T)Sylvia discuss quietly; rest of class is quiet. Within a couple of minutes she shows the student whose turn it is how it works.

When it comes to issues like when a test should be or what to do with some time at the end of day that is "left over", truly democratic voting takes place. When the issue concerns attention to the teacher or moral behavior, the children are said they have a choice but they are encouraged to "choose the right way."

> (#35) To a group of noisy students close to the door: "No, it is <u>your</u> choice: you can either pay attention to learning and ignore the other person, or you can pay attention to the distracter. It's your choice - but in any event this will be the homework. So you <u>want</u> to know it."

<u>Adult Rule Enforcement</u>. The tone between (T)Sylvia and her students is generally very pleasant. They like her and she likes them. This mutual feeling sets the mood. Consequently, even direct rule enforcement takes on a gentle streak. The most common way (T)Sylvia enforces rules is by addressing the child directly and announcing the way she will now "take care of the situation." This is done by subtracting money from their checkbook, stepping outside, or taking off time from future recess. Minutes can also be added to recess, and money can be added to the checkbook. The checkbook issue will be discussed more detailed later in this chapter.

> (#36) John gets off his chair. (T)Sylvia: "We'll let you deduct 35 cents out of your checkbook. You can do that at lunchtime."

(#37) Kelly has feet on chair, doesn't sit straight. "Kelly sit up straight, be quiet now. Also deduct 25 cents from your checkbook."

(#38) (T)Sylvia to the whole class: "You are having your private discussions, I just deducted five minutes from your recess."

(#39) Harry laughs, slaps the desk, forces himself to continue laughing. (T)Sylvia: "Harry please step outside the room." Harry: "Is this more detention?" (T)Sylvia: "No, Harry, just take care of it."

In all cases the result was a return to expected behavior without resentment. The teacher never makes a big deal out of such misbehavior. Often she calls on children who do not pay attention. When they do not know the answer she quickly moves to another student. The "delinquents" usually are embarrassed (academic achievement and competition ranks high here). They are made to realize what they need to do or want to do. Also, (T)Sylvia suggests at regular intervals to "breath deeply with your hands on the stomach, and relax." This happens especially towards the end of the day. The general idea expressed by such disciplinary measures is expressed in the following observation:

(#39) I think that's what she means: Here we work; disturbances will not be tolerated. (T)Sylvia tries to convey the impression that the other students have a right to quiet concentrated study time.

When Moralizing Leads to Impatience. (T)Sylvia's caring attitude towards her students made the many rules appear less restrictive than they actually are. Sure, there would be a certain restlessness towards the end of the day; there was an occasional confrontation, or better: "situation" that

had to be "taken care of." Rarely did I observe obvious student annoyance with the teacher. When it happened it was almost exclusively a consequence of prolonged moralizing, i.e. the children somehow seemed to express: 'Hey, give us a break, we are trying real hard to be good. No need to go on and on with this stuff.'

> (#40) The discussion about helping and why the children should help has been going on for at least 10 minutes. Sylvia snaps: "How about getting paid for a change."
>
> (#41) The students check their answers about "honesty" in the workbook. Tom reads his answer. (T)Sylvia: "That's too general." Tom angrily flips his page and says: "Well, that's all that I came up with; you already said everything anyway."

It is important to note at this point that these expressions of hostility are rare. Even between the children, aggression is low. I note in my observations of student/student interactions 75% positive incidents, i.e.

> (#42) Joseph struggles through a math example on the blackboard. Finally he is done. The whole class applauds and shouts encouragements.

...versus 25% verbal aggressive interactions, such as these:

> (#43) Andrea feels disturbed by Ken and shouts at him: "Shut up." Ken: "Why don't you, you idiot."

Ministry: Having the Right Way

The students are very clearly taught that the Christian way is the right way. They are made aware that it is appropriate to reach out to other people as examples of the right way and to practice it. The "right way" means having ac-

cepted Jesus as the personal savior following his example in all we do. Practicing this right way leads to a strong sense of direction and a feeling of optimism and self confidence. Faculty and principal are very verbal in expressing their optimism and self confidence. They speak of the excitement to teach here, the blessing that goes along with the education ministry, etc. The children often exclaim "Praise the Lord" when something makes them happy; they congratulate themselves by shouting loud "Yes! Yes!" And then there is (T)Sylvia who always sees a way of encouraging children to minister.

> (#44) (T)Sylvia closes her lecture: "When we know Jesus we have a purpose: we are here to tell other people about Jesus; we are the only hand and feet and mouth of Jesus [i.e. Jesus has only <u>us</u> to rely on regarding doing his will]. Help other people in need, help can be small like a smile or even just make someone feel alive."
>
> (#45) Christine suggests that some people say Blacks are "more in crime." (T)Sylvia: "There's a lot wrong with our society. There's where we as Christians come in."

At other times, the right way becomes visible by accenting the suspected opposite. These instances often contain stereotypical remarks, or turn into expressions of satisfied materialism.

> (#46) (T)Sylvia talks about her trip to Mexico and "the" Mexicans: how people live in boxes; how they drive like wild maniacs in old cars and bang into you, etc. Makes a short comment that there probably are "beautiful parts" but no mention of maybe different people.
>
> (#47) I have the two top buttons of my blouse open. Carla walks up to me and indicates she will "fix it." She closes one: "So! Now it does not look wrong any-

more."

(#48) Today is one of the two dress up-days of the week. The girls are to wear dresses or skirts; the boys wear long pants and a collared shirt tucked in. (T)Sylvia to me: "It's so the women show they are women, and the guys show that they can dress up. It helps the children just a bit more to be aware that there are some right ways of dressing."

The Spoken and the Written Word

Many of the informal talks between (T)Sylvia and me centered around the events in the classroom the days I observed. Those were opportunities for me to clarify my observations and bounce some of my impressions off her. When we sat down for our "formal" talk, i.e. commenting on the index cards I had brought with me (see Appendix A), two things happened: One, she sorted the cards slowly, quietly, commenting only on those that she put in her "Don't agree" pile; two, she elected afterwards to talk "a little bit about purpose of life and, of course, spirituality and religion."

I noted initially that (T)Sylvia seems concerned about sorting the index cards "correctly." This is not so much an expression of personal insecurity as the sincere attempt to reflect in the sorting the essence of the spiritual message as the school and she as a member define it. Her comments, therefore, are mostly statements as to how well a particular card fits with what the Bible says.

(#50) The card is # 9, and reads: "What I do affects all existence at all levels of consciousness." (T)Sylvia: "That sounds too much like power and surely humans are above matter, but we are not God. So I put

this on my 'No" pile."

Occasionally she surprised me by choosing cards for her "Agree" pile that, in my opinion, had clear transpersonal connotation, such as card #50 which reads: Humans can produce a variety of mindbody states.

I quickly learned that agreement with a statement did not necessarily mean she accepted it. In the above case, agreement with the fact that people can alter their mindbody states, i.e. experience ASC's, did by no means signify her condoning such alterations. In fact, statements that clearly expressed content from transpersonal theory, e.g. #s 13, 23, or 51, were rejected as "not being in accordance with the Bible."

Once we started talking about the purpose of life and spirituality, her attitude became clearly missionary. From the beginning she had expressed the hope that I would be inspired to truthfully see the good that's being done at School B. Among the main characteristics both she and the principal stressed was the distinction between religion and spirituality.

> (#51) (T)Sylvia: "Religion concerns manmade things, ideas that people put on us, like dress and behavior rules or how to appear pious." She tells stories of her own life. Then she gives as examples the "Jews and all their manmade rules" and later "the gurus: you hum or you meditate so many days or so many hours and those things are supposed to make you spiritual." She concludes: "Jesus' message is much simpler."

(T)Sylvia is convinced that true spirituality can be summed up in two rules and one resulting consequence:

(#52) "First, love God with all our heart and him only

> do we serve; and then: love each other. ... Just do those two things, and other things will take care of themselves. The meaning of life then is gonna be to just be in service of God, in service of other people."

She explains in detail how by following these rules it is very clear to her what her job is with regard to serving her students. It is important to her to make me understand that her service does not mean putting her personal ideas onto the children. Rather, she sees her job as pointing out to them how to use Jesus as an example for one's life.

When it comes to determining why she thinks her path is the right one, the answer is consistent with official school policy:

> (#53) (T)Sylvia: "Jesus is the difference. ...We know all the answers because of him, and we find them in the Bible. The Bible is God's word written to men."

The notion that at this point the option of <u>choosing</u> the right way has been replaced by doctrine, by the conviction that nothing but this way is the right one, is further confirmed by the following statement:

> (#54) "People are very self centered, especially kids. And we are supposed to <u>train</u> them [my emphasis]. They are getting harder to train, you have to have bigger gifts, bigger ideas." I ask: "With whom are you competing?" (T)Sylvia: "With the world system. There are too many distractions which make it difficult to get the truth to them."

(T)Sylvia's statements are in clear accordance with the written message as it appears in the parent/student handbook as well as in the materials used in the classroom. The official handbook is very elaborate and comments on almost any possible aspect of school life. These detailed descrip-

tion of rules is somewhat a contradiction to the statement that learning will take place "in an open and unforced context in the light of Jesus Christ." It is clear that this openness takes place only when the students obey the rules. Teachers have special authority over the students, they are their personal ministers. In the handbook, remarks are made about the "sinfulness of human nature," about the "damnation of the lost," and about "extra" activities, such as arts, foreign languages, or music, which are considered "gifts from God ... sources of joy." It is well worth mentioning that School B has an outstanding music program, and certainly fosters the arts and Spanish as a foreign language.

The stated goals are a) spiritual, e.g. Bible study, daily prayer, with the final goal: Christian moral decision making; b) intellectual, i.e. well qualified teachers stressing the basics; c) physical, with special attention to team spirit; and d) extra activities, such as the arts. There are 17 spiritual goals that can be summarized as follows: Goals 1 through 6 refer to proper understanding of biblical principals, such as the Holy Ghost, redemption, etc. Goals 7 through 9 concern the Bible as the infallible word of God and the command to live by it. Goal 10 has to do with self worth gained by defining oneself as member of the body of Christ. Support for the local church is encouraged in goals 11 and 12. Goal 13 demands that the student

accepts authority. The next two goals concern the missionary goal of the spiritual development. Goals 16 and 17 assert that Jesus will return sooner rather than later; therefore, it is imperative to have the right, i.e. Christian, morals.

Consistent with the observed teacher centered classroom approach is the expressed "discipline policy that is Biblical, firm, consistent, and impartial." It is amazing how (T)Sylvia softens the clearly authoritarian structure of the school by her personal attitude.

The students use a textbook series designed especially "to train them in the Christian way of life." Every book for every subject contains the appropriate subject matter plus a special Christian perspective of the topic. Thomas (1990) describes features of a Christian theory of human development. He notes that to conservative Christians

> ... the truth about any phenomenon is not discovered by humans through their own cleverness or the investigative techniques they devise. Rather, truth is revealed to mankind by God in messages sent through specially chosen people and [the Bible]. (p. 135)

Here are some selected samples from textbooks. One of the most astonishing facts that crystallizes after having read all books in sequence is that any topic, from planets to language to health, is seen as proof of the "orderliness" with which God created everything.

> (#55) With regard to the stellar system: "But God ... has placed each one [of the stars] in its proper place in the sky."

> (#56) With regard to different languages: "God's orderly plan for the world and for their lives" is mirrored in the orderly structure of the language. Different languages are a result of confusion and God's punishment.

These excerpts are not meant to indicate that the school is anti-science. Scientific results are accepted as long as there is no "better" explanation in the Bible. When science offers explanations for issues that are also described in the Bible, the Bible is considered to contain the truth.

> (#57) About the origin of the universe: "scientists cannot tell us about the beginning of life or the world because they were not there to observe. However, the believers can know because He has told us about it in His Word." The Bible is seen as the only reliable record of how creation happened, namely in seven days, and "we accept this record by faith."

This faith in the <u>authority</u> of those who became instruments of God's word finds its reflection in the message to the students. Divine authority is mirrored in the authority of teachers and other benevolent adults who are there to train the students in the <u>right</u> way. Obedience to God and obedience to adults take on a similar quality.

> (#58) In a section about keeping the body healthy, I read about the importance of needing the right food and enough exercise for spiritual growth. "Food" is seen as what one reads, sees, listens to and which leaves a "memory record" that can potentially poison. "Exercise" means to train oneself in doing good, reading the Bible, etc.; finally, spiritual "rest" is a quiet time with God.

What is missing in all these texts is a discussion of important social issues such as the role of minorities in this country or the Civil Rights movement, issues of gender

and socioeconomic class. The American Indian is described as having had 'many false religions which influenced their way of life.' This and the suggestion that the "white man" did not always 'sincerely try to teach the Indians in Christianity' made it impossible that the two people could understand each other.

The Observer Turns Participant

> (#59) I am sitting in my car. Eight hours and many pages earlier I found myself in a circle with the other teachers and the principal, holding hands, listening to their prayers that included me, wondering why I felt like running away and asking them for more at the same time.

Every morning around eight o'clock the principal comes into the building for the lower grades. He strolls towards a rather spacious part of the hallway in the back of the building, sometimes singing, sometimes just talking to children or teachers. Faculty members follow him, some already wait in the hallway. On my first visit, I searched for "my" teacher and found her with the others, already forming a circle. I assumed this was some sort of morning staff meeting to discuss the daily agenda. When (T)Sylvia waved to me to me join them, I did so. To my surprise, the assembled adults joined hands, closed their eyes, some started to sway back and forth while the principal began to pray.

> (#60) Mr. Adams, in a full, confident voice: "Lord Jesus, it is Monday and people say it's time to have the Monday blues. Well, Lord let me tell you, I mean those poor people. Sure we all like the weekend. But

> we're so excited to be here, Lord, we are absolutely ready to serve you, our pleasure, Lord, we are excited to walk this hallways and to minister to these wonderful children that you have sent to our doorsteps."

While he talks like that to his God, each member of the circle affirms his words with a personal gesture. There is constant murmuring going on: "Praise you Jesus, thank you Lord" etc. Then Mr. Adams encourages each teacher to pray for a personal cause. The petition range from prayers for personal guidance with a problem student, to asking for a miracle for an ill person, to even more private pleas for help. Mr. Adams affirms that God can "do it" and nobody seems to have any doubt that what they ask for will be granted in time. While I stand there trying to sort out my feelings about being part of such a prayer circle, "my" teacher starts to actually pray for me:

> (#61) (T)Sylvia: "I want to pray for Judith who will spend some time now with us. That the Lord may shine in her heart, that He may inspire her to see the good we do here, so that she may be touched by His grace. And for her work that it may proceed and be successful. We thank you Lord for having her choose our school so we can minister to her."

It is interesting to note that I actually felt emotionally overwhelmed at that point. I was a total stranger to these people, yet they were willing to share what is a very intimate ceremony with me on my first visit. They conveyed a sincere and enthusiastic attitude that stood in stark contrast to the reserved intellectual curiosity with which I initially approached the situation. At the end of the first meeting I was invited to continue to share these morning

prayers. This put me into a dilemma: I had never been part of a prayer group, I felt uncomfortable holding hands and trying to remember what happened for later written reports, and at first it did not seem to be an important part of my observations. At the same time I knew that I should not exclude any opportunity for insider information, I also felt that by participating I would become more trustworthy to (T)Sylvia, and finally I decided that I could overcome the dilemma only if I accepted their invitation and became a total participant and truly experienced the lived world of this school.

These morning meetings serve a variety of purposes. Fellowship is one, the opportunity to find support for one's petition through other people. It gives clear example to the students that prayer is part of life. The way in which it is done, i.e. the circle, the holding of hands, the swaying, the murmurs of praise and other rituals, facilitates positive energy. Whenever I "surrendered" and unconditionally participated, I felt good, accepted, uplifted. When I stayed on the surface, listened and reflected, I felt uncomfortable, helpless, coerced. One either surrendered or one was left out totally. It was this realization that made me begin to ask questions about the similarities between such spiritual journeys and, e.g., meditation groups or other ways of facilitating ASC's. These reflections will be discussed more detailed in Chapter VIII.

Summary

Core themes of School B are documented in this chapter. The main issue, i.e. the overall reliance of the informants on a literal interpretation of the Bible, is put into context by describing the following patterns: Self-discipline in its various forms in School B; the meaning of having the right way for everyday encounters; a comparison of the spoken and the written word. A brief discussion of special occasions when the observer turned total participant concludes Chapter VI.

CHAPTER VII

SCHOOL C: ...SECULAR LEARNING VS. SPIRITUAL GROWTH

This chapter contains analysis and documentation of the core themes for School C. The reader may want to consult the beginning of Chapter V for a description of the actual process that lead to these core themes.

Introduction

The idea that closer relationships between different generations might be beneficial for all participants is realized by School C. Serving primarily children of the Jewish population in the city, the school is actually part of the Jewish Community Center. The Center consists of daytime facilities such as meeting halls, recreation rooms, communication facilities, and a pool, of apartments for the older Jewish population in need of more or less medical care, and the school. Although the different areas are clearly separate, they can all be accessed from one main lobby and connecting walkways. The interior of the Center as well as of the school is not too spacious but very functional.

When I first introduced my project to the principal,

Joe, and to my contact teacher, Hannah[1], I was astonished at how quickly I obtained permission to observe, but also that (P)Joe was absolutely convinced great things were happening in (T)Hannah's classroom. The school does not have a totally strict age grading system. The fourth grade in which I was to observe actually has three fifth graders in it, and at least three other students, considering their physical and mental age, are more likely third graders. They are in this class primarily because of their intellectual abilities.

> (#1) I am impressed by the emotional speech of (P)Joe this morning when we first met. He talks about a "dynamic" system, a chance for "growth and positive experiences." His idea is to be there for the student physically and psychologically as long as needed. He sees his job as being many things to his students: counselor, spiritual guide, friend, teacher.

For our first talk we sit on comfortable sofas in the main lobby. (P)Joe looks around constantly, keeps in touch with what's happening, who walks by, etc. He seems totally absorbed by his job. At the same time he explains to me very carefully the essential characteristics of the school as he sees them:

> (#2) I am told by (P)Joe that a couple of learning specialists and a developmental psychologist assist them all in accommodating individual differences. I note in astonishment that the term "special education" never is brought up. Every semester artists make special appearances in the school. Above all, the school would not be what it is if it were not for the generous support of the parents, who give their money

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1. As in the previous two chapters, all names of persons and places in this chapter are fictitious. In the text, the principal is (P)Joe; the contact teacher is (T)Hannah.

and their time.

School C prides itself in its individualized approach to placing children. The parent handbook states that "no one will be placed in a higher grade level until it is appropriate." Instruction is provided for kindergarten through fifth grade. After that, students continue their secular education either in Public Schools or in a private institution.

Most of my observations took place in (T)Hannah's classroom, although I was free to wander around freely, saw other classes in action, and accompanied the children to performances for the elderly and, on Fridays, for the Sabbath celebration in the hall.

The classroom is square with a relatively low ceiling. High on the East wall hang two strips of paper with the Hebrew alphabet. In the middle of the wall are two walk-in closets; their doors are covered with children's drawings of the state flag. To the right is a small white writing board. To the left are a file cabinet and a desk with an older model computer on it. In front of the closets is the teacher's desk with a large comfortable swiveling chair. Alongside the North wall, through which one enters the classroom, are shelves full with National Geographics and books for children and adults to read. In front of it is a relatively high counter with 2 sinks built in. The West wall has a connection to the adjacent classroom, a large blackboard with bulletin boards to the left and to the

right. On the left bulletin board is space for the "student of the week" mementos. The South wall has primarily windows and glass doors, and one shelf with books and a globe. At the time of my first visit, Hanukkah signs and multicolored paper chains hung from the ceiling.

There are twelve students in (T)Hannah's class. Eleven of them are white, one is black. Of the three fifth graders, two are girls. Of the other nine children, again two are girls. The children sit at individual desks facing West. At various intervals, the learning specialist or the developmental psychologist come into the room, work with individual students right there and then, or escort them outside to a different area of the school. Math instruction of the three fifth grade students is provided by a different teacher at the same time as regular math instruction for the rest of the class.

Core Themes of the Spiritual Landscape of School C

A Study in Contrasts

> (#3) (P)Joe's favorite phrase is: "Oh this is fantastic! I like the way ..." you raise your hand, you sit in your chair, you said that, you did this, etc. And with him the tone in the classroom, between the students and between (P)Joe and the students is quiet, humorous, polite, fun, intellectual, interesting.
>
> (#4) Today I note the following shouted commands by (T)Hannah: "One at a time! Excuse me! Just a minute! I want you to [listen, sit down, read, pay attention, etc.] NOW!" Every command is accompanied by her right hand slicing the air. More than three quarters of all interactions today had a clearly negative or aggressive

quality.

On the days that I visited School C, the time from about 8:30 in the morning to ten o'clock was devoted to some sort of religious education. (P)Joe instructs the children in Torah reading, Jewish history, the life cycle, and value issues in the Jewish tradition. In addition, every day except Fridays, the children received one hour of Hebrew instruction by yet another teacher. I soon came to anticipate ten o'clock and the appearance of (T)Hannah with apprehension because it meant the instant transformation of the twelve children in this classroom: calm turned to restlessness; boredom turned to hostility; and above all the constant potential for detrimental chaos.

A fitting metaphor for School C would be to think of it as resembling a Janus head, bearing two contrasting but not necessarily complementing images. It would be easy to simply dismiss the events after ten o'clock and report that from this point on no formal spiritual instruction takes place. The focus could then be on the morning hours and on (P)Joe's interaction with the students in the context of Torah reading, etc. There are, however, a number of factors that don't warrant such a move. The students spend most of their day at school with (T)Hannah. Although she repeatedly states that her task is to provide the secular part of education, and although she almost never refers in her teaching to the Jewish spiritual tradition, the events I observed need to be analyzed and put into the context of the

whole description exactly because they stand in such stark contrast to observed morning events. Such a difference points beyond mere coincidence or ordinary variation. Further, by analyzing and comparing all observations, a first assessment can be made of cross-situational transfer of attitudes. Questions as to the primary mechanisms underlying certain behaviors might be answered more decisively by looking at the two contrasting situations. Finally, this is not just an account of how successful the students in School C pursue the traditionally Jewish quest for meaning, but an attempt to describe the range of influences to which they are exposed, and how they deal with them.

A Comparison of Emerging Notation Categories

Before I proceed to a more detailed report of the various types of interactions I observed, some general remarks are in order. In the process of coding my field notes from School C, I developed a large number of descriptive categories, such as "tcon", indicating extreme teacher control, or "tkdef", denoting conflict between teacher and student and ending in teacher's defeat. It is interesting to take a closer look at the categories as they appeared after the initial coding, a stage in the research process when no attempt is made to select, merely to organize. To any outsider, these initial categorizations reveal clearly the different communication models to which the students are

exposed. I will document these patterns on the following pages.

Twenty-six categories emerged from the observations when (P)Joe taught the students. Only two categories refer to some sort of aggressive conflict, and that occurs between the students, mostly when they are unsupervised.

> (#5) (P)Joe has to leave the room for the fourth time this morning. David [the oldest of the fifth graders] to Abe who had been chatting and giggling: "Hey, stop that stupid laughing. I want to do my letter here." Abe replies immediately: "Shut up yourself!"

Of the remaining categories, about two thirds concern either positive interactions or some spiritual content.

> (#6) They write letters to the soldiers. (P)Joe encourages them to make it personal, "write about yourself." All the while he walks around and talks and there is lots of touching and attention; hair ruffled here, a pat on the shoulder there. When he roughs Abe up in jest, he then tickles and caresses his head quietly while he listens to an other student reading his rough draft.

> (#7) The students read about the difference between minhah, i.e. a custom, and halakhah, i.e. a law. Jeremy looks up the verses as directed by the book. (P)Joe: "We not only need to know what to do but also do it!!!. To know is not all. You need to DO it."

Another third of the categories has to do with disciplinary actions initiated by (P)Joe in a positive manner, i.e. solving the problem without resorting to aggression or humiliation.

> (#8) Marc shouts the answer out for the third time. (P)Joe gently: "Marc, Marc Levi, Marc Levi, you already owe me. I want you to think what you are doing." The next minute. Marc does it again. (P)Joe walks to him, kneels down, takes Marc's hands in his and implores him gently, quietly but firmly: "Marc, Marc, no, you are not going to do that, you need to work on it." The urgency and concern in (P)Joe's voice seems to

penetrate, and slowly Marc calms down.

I had the opportunity to briefly observe five other people in interaction with the students. Sarah, the Hebrew teacher, used about the same style as did (P)Joe. Of the twelve categories emerging from these entries, all but one have to do with positive conflict solutions and task related issues.

> (#9) The children call their principal by his first name, and now they surprise me again. Sarah is "Sarah" to them. They are about to sing that Hebrew song again when an argument ensues about the lyrics. Two students really get at each other. Sarah suggests: "Hey, what about instead of arguing we listen to it again? We'll have a test on it on Tuesday and you know how we teachers enjoy giving tests."

Brief instances of verbal aggression by students loose their edge when seen in context. The two learning specialists usually appear together. Their main task is to tutor specific children somewhere else. Whenever they appear, the student who is supposed to go with them does so without protest but often with a lot of distressed nonverbal signs.

> (#10) The two specialists come in to take Arthur away. I still do not know what's really wrong with him. He seems a bit slow in math and sometimes he gets angry and stubborn. They put their hands on his shoulder from behind, and this gesture somewhat bothers me. (P)Joe: "Please take the angel." Psychologist now with hands behind her back, stiffly: "Hi Arthur." Arthur stares and walks in silence, his body held like a prisoner, resigned.

As mentioned before, the three students who are considered fifth graders receive math instruction mostly from another teacher in the classroom. The recorded observations show a businesslike attitude with an even mix between ag-

gressive and neutral moves by the teacher and by the students. Ruth, the most verbal of the students, regularly initiates a power struggle between herself and the teacher but usually quickly gives in. The math teacher is always in control.

> (#11) The math teacher accelerates the pace. Ruth: "Do you <u>have</u> to speed like that? It really does not make any sense the way you rush us." Her tone is unfriendly, she speaks fast and firm but at the same time she sends one of these looks that I know now. It means 'how far do you let me go this time.' The teacher looks at her hard and long and says very calmly and dangerously quiet: "Don't try me again, Ruth. I am in charge and you know it."

Finally, there is Elizabeth, the dancer who began her residency at the time of my visits. Her style quickly changed from open enthusiasm to defensiveness, to a structured approach that clearly was not her preferred one. For reasons which will become more clear later the students did not accommodate the openness of Elizabeth's approach.

Originally, I established twenty-six categories from observations involving (T)Hannah and her students. Three of them referred to cooperative student behavior.

> (#12) Charles is very patient when Arthur pushes his chair back and bumps in his desk several times. He only says quietly: "Arthur, why do you do that?" Arthur looks slightly embarrassed: "I don't know. Sorry."

Four others contain positive teacher /student encounters, such as polite negotiations or some friendly verbal or nonverbal gesture.

> (#13) An instance of long needed peace. How much tension everybody had to endure already today. This is greatly appreciated. Andy rocks back and

forth. (T)Hannah puts her hand softly on his shoulder and he stops. Julie signals she needs help, and she gets it right now. John complains that he is tired. (T)Hannah: "I am sorry to hear that. Try to go back to work, though, for these few minutes."

The rest involves two major areas: extreme teacher control in its various facets and consequences, and a number of ways in which conflicts were solved other than in a negotiating manner.

(#14) (T)Hannah calls Arthur to read the answer to problem #1. Arthur annoyed: "I want to do 25." (T)Hannah: "Arthur, what did I tell you to do!" Arthur hisses and his face distorts in anger: "All right."

(#15) All at a sudden Julie becomes agitated. It would be her turn to read but the student next to her gets called. She pushes her chair back in total anger and shouts: "It's my turn!! It's my turn!!." (T)Hannah: "Just a minute! She asked and I gave her permission and that's it."

It is of particular interest to note how completely dedicated (P)Joe as well as (T)Hannah are to fulfill what each sees as their particular obligation, i.e (P)Joe provides gentle, loving spiritual guidance, and (T)Hannah tries to prepare her students intellectually as thoroughly as possible for the anticipated switch to less protected and less individualized educational environments. (P)Joe has only an hour and a half each morning to pursue his goal, and these times are often cut short by a parent who needs to talk to him or another teacher who needs support or a crisis somewhere in the building that demands his attention. Yet he is consistently calm and enthusiastic. (T)Hannah is painfully aware that she has to teach content in much less

time than ordinary schools would allocate for the same amount. This is a fact of great concern to her and might, at least partially, explain why she and her students often appear quite rushed. Considering the pressure that (T)Hannah experiences herself to be under explains somewhat why during her class time spiritual issues are never mentioned as part of the teaching. The closest she ever comes to expressing a connection between the spiritual education of the children and her teaching is occasionally in talking with me. She makes remarks about the Jewish tradition of having high intellectual standards, and how studying can be looked at as a form of spirituality.

Aggression, Boredom, and Control

Before my first observation, (T)Hannah mentioned that many of her students suffer from ADD, i.e. Attention Deficit Disorder, and that I would quite easily spot those children during my visits. I added current literature about ADD to my readings in preparation for my first visit. I remembered that ADD is often treated chemically, i.e. the "afflicted" children are prescribed drugs. I also read again about the controversy regarding a proper diagnosis of ADD. (T)Hannah mentioned that those students who have ADD are often quite aggressive or out of control,and that it is difficult to manage such situations.

Despite these discussions and my advanced reading, I was not prepared for the level of aggression I ob-

served. I mentioned in the preceding section how the children's behavior changed when (T)Hannah entered the classroom. At first I was caught up in the idea that had been presented to me: I saw that the students cannot concentrate for a long time, that they get impatient and their behavior deteriorates, and that it is extremely difficult to settle the ensuing conflicts. After some time, however, I started to ask a different question, and suddenly a different pattern emerged. The question was: Why do the children with ADD, which meant almost the whole class of twelve with two or three exceptions, not display their "deficient" behavior with (P)Joe or even with Sarah?

From now on it became quite clear that regardless of the potential "deficit" of the students, the observed aggression had a different source. I reanalyzed the data and came to the conclusion that there are two main factors for aggression in (T)Hannah's classroom: boredom and struggle for power and control. Both of them are closely interwoven in this classroom; both can be considered rather detrimental to healthy psychological development, and it certainly does not leave room for spiritual issues. On the following pages I will illustrate how boredom and control struggles create hostility and aggression.

The twelve students in (T)Hannah's classroom are rather bright. The pace of instruction is fast, and in

many areas such as geography, history or even language arts they display knowledge that is quite exceptional. It was therefore especially astonishing to notice that there were almost no established classroom procedures for such tasks as distributing paper, collecting finished work, or lining up.

> (#16) As soon as (T)Hannah enters the room the students have uncountable questions, the majority revolve around procedure. (T)Hannah needs to tell EACH child everything that he/she can do when they are finished with one particular work. Procedures are clearly not established. Also, assigning individual tasks seems to be a form of teacher control. More often than not that strategy backfires.
>
> (#17) The children can get paper or other supplies from the teacher. Yet it seems that sometimes on the spot decisions are made as to when this will happen. Julie dances around (T)Hannah; she is in need of a pencil. (T)Hannah ignores her and shouts: "Just a minute!" Julie's dance goes on for about two minutes. Finally she gets a pencil. She takes a look at it and screams: "But it is AS short as the old one!" Nobody pays attention to her and her face becomes red with anger.

Conflicts such as the one described in (#18) could end in a variety of ways. I observed at least five different outcomes: Either a teacher command, a mark on the board (- four marks mean notification of parents), aggression between teacher and students, aggression between students, or the defeat of the teacher.

It is noteworthy that there are about five times as many aggressive incidents directed by the students towards the teacher than the other way around.

> (#18) Abe's desk is moved up to the blackboard because he continues to talk out. Abe: "Great, now I can write on the blackboard ... and you think it bothers me."

(#19) Arthur is told that he will miss recess because he is not finished with his math. He shakes his head and stares at (T)Hannah in anger. She says: "You'll go to lunch but you'll come back to do more work." Arthur replies in a certain and most angry tone: "No I won't and you can't make me."

This irritated tone also characterizes a great number of encounters between students. A majority of these incidents occur when one child makes an effort to stay on task and another child makes a noise or otherwise annoys the others.

(#20) While David gets some explanation from (T)Hannah, Abe walks up and interrupts and wants to know something. (T)Hannah attends to him. David becomes impatient: "Ms. H., I'm talking to you ... (to Ben:) and you shut up."

(#21) Abe observes Andy who works on his math questions but also looks around a lot. Abe: "Stop cheating and looking at other people's work, Andy." Andy gives him a good long stare. His face turns slowly red in anger and frustration: "And you, Abe, you better shut up or else."

(T)Hannah goes to great lengths to keep her calm in the midst of all the aggression that fills her classroom every day. When she herself resorts to unconcealed aggression, it is usually shortlived.

(#22) Richard has been quite restless now for the last period. He groans, shouts answers, goofs off. (T)Hannah walks around to check on some students. Richard's pencil breaks and he shrieks loud in disgust. (T)Hannah who stands close to him grabs his arm tight but lets go of it within a few seconds. She throws her book on her table, walks swiftly to the blackboard and puts down a checkmark: "One word and you are out!" Richard throws his head on the desk.

The issue of who controls a particular situation is of significant consequence for the events in (T)Hannah's classroom. In her opinion she <u>has</u> to be in control because of

the perceived conflict between available time and amount of content to teach. Much of the verbal interaction between teacher and students that is not content related centers therefore around commands.

> (#23) They play a game in preparation for a social studies test the next day. The children are set up in two groups and can discuss the answers among them. This type of work is unusual and discussion is heated. Now the noise is very loud. Richard has removed himself from his group and sits in his chair trying to look well behaved. (T)Hannah: "This is too loud, the game is over, go back to your seats."

> (#24) Preparations for a play are under way. Five students want to have Three available parts. (T)Hannah: "The only way to do this is this way..." She explains how <u>she</u> could draw names. This creates excitement. (T)Hannah addresses in a loud commanding voice various children: "<u>Sit</u> down! Every time we do something you have to jump up. ... <u>If</u> you get picked <u>I</u> will tell you the role I selected for you. ... Now, now!! I am the director and I am waiting!"

Unfortunately the attempt to be in control often sets in motion a pattern of interaction that ends in the total defeat of (T)Hannah. These instances are probably the saddest among all observed events. That kind of defeat is usually accompanied by a deep sense of alienation: students, alienated from the one person with whom they spend so many hours of their lives, their teacher; the teacher, alienated from her students, thus almost invalidating her work. Each individual alienated from the other through mistrust and hurt.

> (#25) Andy and (T)Hannah have a dispute over whether she can look at his paper or not. She insists that she needs to make sure his work is correct. He refuses to let her look. They are deadlocked. (T)Hannah turns to one of the assistants: "Andy might need some help; maybe he lets you look." The assistant: "Let's stop

> playing that silly game." When she is also unsuccessful, she threatens: "You'll have no recess today." When Andy throws his pencil in disgust, he is told to go to (P)Joe's office. The assistant takes him out of the classroom with some physical force.
>
> (#26) When did Ruth begin to misbehave today? Seems that it started when she got told several times to "be quiet" or "stop it" when all she wanted was some simple explanation. When it happens again she hisses: "You ISSS unbelievable!" (T)Hannah: "Let's go right now, you are not cooperating at all." Ruth ignores her. Julie laughs; Abe and Charles grin; Ruth is in control. At the next interruption (T)Hannah tries to make her leave the classroom without success. She walks around the classroom. Already Abe and other children are ready to also pull something.

Especially this last incident might be considered just an example of a particularly difficult child. What is most astonishing, however, is the way this conflict eventually ended: (P)Joe came and was able to turn Ruth around in less than a minute.

There were times when (T)Hannah managed to escape the micro-managing mode. When she succeeded, friendly contact between her and the students was actually possible and was experienced by all, including myself, as a rare and welcome relief.

> (#27) Sharon who has reasons to be afraid of her personal safety these days is very agitated. Ruth has established herself as a confidante. She tries to calm Sharon. When Sharon starts to cry, Ruth alerts (T)Hannah who holds the girl close to herself and murmurs reassuring words to her. She pats her hair and her back. Slowly Sharon recovers and relaxes. She smiles at the teacher.

(P)Joe's World

Although the raw fieldnotes already are quite clear, I wanted to make another effort to test my assessment of the

reasons for the high incidents of aggression during regular class periods. I made a list of those students which were most often involved in such incidents. Although at some point or the other every student was part of it, some names popped up more often than others. They were Abe, Julie, Richard, Andy, and most of all Ruth. Next, I combed through my notes in search of other patterns that involve these children. Two conclusions seem possible. One, when left alone, in rare moments of very private encounters, the children really tried to solve their conflicts. Two, the same "ADD children" displayed the capacity for cooperative problem solving every time in the presence of (P)Joe. Here are three examples.

> (#28) David and Abe have a little tension going on in the back. Abe to David who is older than he is: "Would you hand me my book please?" David: "If you hand me mine." Abe picks up David's book: "Okay. now hand me mine." David and Abe exchange books. They are both pretty serious about this exchange but it is friendly.
>
> (#29) I can't believe this morning: Julie is the girl who either pouts, screams or shoots glances that are full of hate. (P)Joe just asked her if she would do the prayer singing in Hebrew! There is Julie, in front of everybody, small, fragile, serious, singing these prayers in that ancient language, flawlessly.
>
> (#30) (P)Joe: "This is a total democracy until I decide I want something (children giggle) and now I want Ruth to lead us [in the singing prayer]. Ruth calmly: "No." (P)Joe: "Thank you." Ruth: "Since when ..." (P)Joe: "Since .. oh ... fifteen seconds ago. (He sings) Ruth go ahead." She smiles, shakes her head and begins. While she struggles with some melodically and linguistically difficult passage, (P)Joe encourages her quietly: "Perfect, perfect, real good." And he means every word he says.

The Classroom as Jewish Micro Community

Smith (1958) elaborates so eloquently on the centrality of the quest for meaning in the Jewish spiritual tradition: meaning in God, meaning in creation, meaning in man, meaning in history, meaning in morality, meaning in justice, and meaning in suffering. Jacobs (1984) points out that "by studying the holy books we learn that there can be a sacred dimension to human life (p. 199)." And: "In the hierarchy of Jewish values it is study that occupies the topmost rank [and] inspire[s] compassion. (p.25)." This search for meaning as the most noble spiritual task is fostered intensively in children by concerned older, more experienced members of a community. Community action and community solidarity, the interest of the individual for all members of one's community, the moral obligation to support such members, and the study of and connection with Jewish communities in the homeland of the Jews, Israel, is therefore another major characteristic of the Jewish spiritual tradition. Even in the light of different practices or interpretations of religious issues, exemplified by the difference between Orthodox Jews and Reform Jews, this sense of community points beyond the boundaries of organized religion to a more general spiritual obligation.

During those times when (P)Joe interacted with the students of (T)Hannah's classroom, the importance of that

community feeling could be noticed on three different levels. One, children would take care of each other in need without question and clearly demonstrate belonging behavior. Second, they defined themselves very clearly as being a part of a larger community, that of the school, and they demonstrated understanding of their particular role within this community. Third, they expressed views and actions which show that they also see themselves as having ties with the community of Jews at large, and especially with other Jews in Israel. The following examples shall demonstrate my point.

I mentioned before that Sharon was in special need of caring. Her personal circumstances were such that she had good reasons to fear for her safety. (P)Joe solicited the class' help by appealing to that community spirit.

> (#31) (P)Joe discusses with the class how it makes them feel when they think they are not safe. He asks them what could be done to help out Sharon. Abe (of all kids!) suggests that they all could work together in shifts so that she has round the clock protection. "A buddy system!" student agrees. Now they discuss details. At the end, (P)Joe asks: "Now, how many people will be there to help her?" This is <u>not</u> a rhetorical question, he means it. All hands go up. There is a solemn quietness in the room.

The children actually keep their promise all the time that I spent there. They even shielded her to some extent from me. One morning I saw two children stand near the entrance looking intently as I walked towards the building from my car. When I asked them jokingly if they are my greeting committee, they just shook their heads and murmured

that they waited for Sharon. They did not want me around. Sharon herself never initiated any contact with me.

One of the great events in School C's life is "Super Sunday," a time when students collect money from their fellow students to support the school. This is the most visible demonstration of Tzedakah and a good example of the sense of community in this school as well as of the practical application of a Jewish spiritual tradition. The handbook describes it as follows:

> (#32) One of the important topics that will be discussed in all classes is "Tzedakah." This is difficult to translate because it is a very inclusive term. Usually it is explained as "charity," "righteousness," or "good deeds." Actually it is all of these, as we hope your child will learn. {It is} a life-long responsibility which when learned at an early age will assure commitment into adulthood. {It is} an integral part of the curriculum.

The way (P)Joe handles the Super Sunday obligation is by turning the whole issue, including the discussion of the amount to give, over to the students who work it out, with his help, in a very democratic way.

> (#33) They discuss the problem that some children might bring more than others, and that the most important thing is that everybody honestly brings what he/she can. Finally (P)Joe says: "Take a piece of paper and write down how much you think is a fair share for each person to bring." No names are put on. Then (P)Joe writes all amounts on the blackboard. They discuss the highest and the lowest amount. This takes time. Finally, after about 10 minutes, they agree on a particular sum. It is understood that one can bring more or less, but if on an average everybody brings the agreed sum, they will reach their class goal. As they are in charge of suggesting amounts to other classes (they are the fund raisers this year), the same discussion is repeated now for every grade. Democracy in progress.

My visits to School C took place under quite unusual circumstances. When I started the observations, American troops were starting to form Operation Desert Shield. By the time I left School C, the war with Iraq was in full swing and parts of Israel were under missile attacks. Subtle changes drove the point home that for no apparent reason Jews were again victimized: After the first televised threat to Israel, I found a police car monitoring the school grounds upon my arrival. TV monitors were set up in the lobby so that any unusual events could be noticed without delay. Staff, faculty and students talked a lot about the events "over there." The children seemed to be particularly nervous. Maybe the extreme circumstances of these weeks showed even more clearly how even a small group of students somewhere in the middle of the U.S. defines itself as part of the larger Jewish community.

> (#34) They discuss the purpose of good deeds, or "Tzedakah." The children, without prompting, extend the discussion rather quickly to the Jewish community at large. Here is their final list indicating how their small community is embedded in larger and larger communities: "Our school, our city community, all the new Jewish families coming to America from Eastern Europe, the refugees (Sharon: "Without our help all this would not be possible."), less fortunate Jews in the world, (Richard: "I think in pretty far away places." (P)Joe: "Yes, like in Ethiopia or Syria."), the homeland Israel, and the total Jewish federation all over the world.

The Judaism practiced in School C is definitely in the tradition of Reform Judaism. Consequently, there is not as much emphasis on the connection with Israel as one would expect, e.g. from Orthodox Jews. Still, the extraordinary

political circumstances leave no doubt that Israel is experienced even by these young children as part of the larger Jewish community.

(P)Joe: Words and Deeds

From the first moment I observed (P)Joe in communication with a student, I was deeply touched by his sincere gentleness. His body language is a fitting expression of his attitude towards his students. Curly soft hair emerges from under his kipah (little cap). He holds himself slightly bent forwards, relaxed and casual. When he talks his body hardly moves. Although he talks a lot and rather quickly, he always keeps his voice and his body quiet and calm. This calmness is contagious. Referring back to the incident described as #26, it was that attitude that turned Ruth around so quickly and that dissolved seemingly untamable chaos. This nonverbal behavior forms the context for the verbal communication. The emphasis is on (P)Joe gently insisting that his students understand the spiritual issues they discuss, and that they understand when and why they are encouraged to change certain behaviors. In my first interview with (P)Joe he elaborated on the idea that children can expect total support from him and his staff in developing their selves in a proper manner, and that gentleness is a must. His comments really began to make sense when I encountered a passage on the Jewish theory of human development (Hartman, 1990):

> [T]he potential for good contains within it the potential for evil. The rabbis firmly rejected fatalism and despair as well as passive optimism and complacent hope. Rabbinic activism is expressed in the belief that without conscious active input by human beings, the great potential for good may lead to the brutalization of the human spirit. ... The child, though not pure or innocent, is not culpable for his actions because immaturity precludes full awareness of the consequences of behavior. (p. 127)

Jacobs (1985) explains obligations Jewish parents have to their children. (P)Joe certainly defines his task in a similar manner:

> Parents are obliged to provide a happy home for their children so that the children can grow in health of mind and body. (p.216)

(P)Joe's "active adult input" in an effort to curb the influence of the yetzer hara, i.e. the bad inclination, takes on various forms. Here are a few samples.

> (#35) (P)Joe had to leave the classroom for the third time in about twenty minutes. Charles is the center of some noisy conversation. (P)Joe comes back and says politely: "Guys, I need it absolutely quiet in here for a few minutes." He indicates to Charles that he would like to talk to him personally. He bends down to be on Charles' level and in a friendly tone tells him: "Charles, this is an important meeting for me. I know that it's not particularly fair to you all that I leave so often. But I ask you to help me for five more minutes." Charles nods, and that's the end of his chatting.
>
> (#36) Andy had an incredible fit this morning when Abe did not let him play with the computer. His frustration is still there: He slams his book on the desk, and does not start on his work for several minutes. (P)Joe does not directly talk to him but stands close to him, puts his hand on his shoulder once in a while, and generally keeps his gentle tone. Slowly Andy is turned around. He raises his hand and starts to participate. (P)Joe praises him immediately, guides him through the assignment, even jokes with him.
>
> (#37) They rehearse for a peace rally. There is much giggling while the children line up. Richard reads his part but he can't keep a straight face. (P)Joe: "Does

this sound as if you're serious or silly?" It is a truly honest question. Richard makes some movements and twists his face in an effort to obtain control. In the meantime (P)Joe tells them: "Remember if we each keep our end of the agreement it will work just fine." It gets quieter by the minute, yet no harsh word has fallen.

(#38) They discuss the problem of being a prophet. (P)Joe: "Even in school, if we see something that's not right, we often don't tell anybody, why?" Ruth: "Because they think they get shunned because they tell on somebody." (P)Joe: "Yes, so sometimes it's hard to be a prophet. But we really don't have a choice. We need to be alert and not hide things."

(T)Hannah: Words

In the classroom, (T)Hannah appeared forceful. On a one-on-one basis, however, her behavior was hesitant. Most of our informal talks circled somehow around the problems as she perceived them in her classroom, the top one being the alleged ADD of most of the students, and the problem of finding the right dose of drugs to not make them too lethargic but still get their outbursts under control. I noticed on several occasions that, especially in the afternoon, some children appeared extremely drugged, their eyes sort of dull, their body limp, their manners almost retarded. After some time I realized that this coincided with the afternoon administration of a particular drug. I was and still am thoroughly concerned about these observations. When we sat down for the more formal talk about the index cards (see previous chapters), (T)Hannah appeared apprehensive. Although I encouraged her several times before and during the sorting process that my main interest is in her comments

while she sorts, I have stretches of five minutes and more on that particular tape with absolute silence. The few elaborations she gave still don't reveal much of her personal point of view.

> (#39) Regarding intelligence tests: "Some people feel this is true [that IQ tests truly measure intelligence]. I don't know, so much of our system is based in it."
>
> (#40) I really don't know much about the different possibilities of consciousness to know exactly how does it effect others."
>
> (#41) About meditation or mystics: "I don't know .. some people say you can put a tape under the pillow and learn .. I don't know, I just don't know."

Only one time does (T)Hannah reveal anything about her own spiritual life, and it is embedded in a short excurse about "her" religion:

> (#42) "In our religion, in Judaism, we are taught to be more concerned with what goes on in this world, what we do in this world ... the idea is for us to do good in <u>this</u> world, not for the afterlife. ... I believe there is community among people, but I also believe that no two people are alike, so they are separate."
>
> (#43) "Spirituality is a very personal issue. I don't think the school has a particularly important role here. It's mostly the parents' job."

Overall, (T)Hannah seemed to know how to define herself within the context of her spiritual tradition but saw no possibility to apply principles of this tradition in her classroom teaching. Having experienced the possibilities for practicing such principles in the classroom when (P)Joe teaches, one would hope that (T)Hannah will find a way to perceive her situation as the secular teacher less as a stressful one-way street but as a rich playing field for

implementing Jewish spiritual principles in all areas of education, in accord with the stated goals of School C.

Summary

School C's core themes form the content of Chapter VII. The focus is on the contrast between the principal's instructional methods and personal attitudes as a spiritual leader, and the same issues as represented by the classroom teacher. In particular, incidents of aggression, boredom, and power struggles are investigated.

CHAPTER VIII

SPIRITUAL MODELS IN ACTION: A SYNTHESIS

Introduction

This study began with a number of research questions (see also Chapter I). 1. Are there educational environments that explicitely state that they promote "spirituality" in child development? 2. What are the characteristics of such environments? 3. What are child/adult interactions like in such environments? 4. How does their concept of spirituality compare with the concept of spirituality as used by transpersonal theorists? 5. Could it be that different traditional spiritual philosophies intend their practices to lead to the same end as transpersonal theory suggests, i.e. full development of consciousness resulting in the direct, intuitive, apprehension of relationship to and/or participation in that ultimate unity that is traditionally referred to as god, godhead, or ground of being (Wilber, 1975).

The answer to the first research question is simple: I found three different educational settings which states very clearly in their promotional literature as well as in their

parent-student handbooks specific spiritual goals for their students. These goals form an essential part of each school's curriculum.

Answers to research questions 2 and 3 are provided twofold in this study. First, Chapters V, VI, and VII focus on the detailed description of characteristics of these three settings. The nature of interactions between students and teachers as they arise out of the particular environmental context of each setting, and as recorded in the field notes, form the basis for extraction of core themes of the three spiritual landscapes. Following is a brief summary of the main issues as they concern the three schools.

In School A, the Catholic school, the influence on student/teacher interactions of rituals, such as prayer and Mass, is noted. Instruction clearly takes place within the context of the yearly church cycle as defined by major Catholic feasts. The general nature of interpersonal happenings is characterized by emphasis on personal dignity as a consequence of acceptance, love, and compassion. Consequently the teacher facilitates conflict solutions in a compassionate manner. Work is understood as an important part of a person's personal responsibilities that is best attended to with concentration on the here and now.

School B, the Christian school, has as its primary driving force a strict adherence to Christian doctrine and a literal interpretation of the Bible. With regard to discipline, the emphasis is on selfdiscipline, something that the

teacher actively discusses with her students every day. In the process of discussing and modeling selfdiscipline I observed many instances where the students acted as disciplinarians, not just for themselves but also for their classmates, and where, in the course of solving conflict, equality between teacher and students was negotiated. Selfdiscipline is also enforced simply by the way the teacher uses behavioral management techniques such as "time-out". The students are very open to this kind of rule enforcement. The only instances of student impatience with the "enforcer", i.e. teacher, occur when discussion of the conflict becomes seemingly endless moralizing. The general climate in School B, especially in the classroom I observed, is characterized by optimism and self assurance. This can be explained as a direct consequence of the students' and teachers' conception that they have the "right" way, a positive purpose in life through their particular relationship with God.

The main impression that arises from analysis of the field notes for School C, the Jewish school, is that this educational environment functions on two very distinct levels: One level is that of spiritual practice as exemplified by the principal in his interactions with the students, and the instances when the students actually become examples of typical Jewish community, such as during Friday Sabbath ceremonies. Another level is the educational practice of the regular classroom teacher. It excludes realization of

stated spiritual goals; rather, it often ends in conflict brought on by students' aggression or boredom, or attempts by the teacher to exercise control.

Answers to research questions 2 and 3 contain a second dimension which was not clear at the onset of this study but is now evident: A comparison of the concept of spirituality that forms the philosophical basis for the curricula used in the three settings and of spirituality as implicitly defined in transpersonal theory, i.e. answers to research question 4, and an investigation of the possible similarity between traditional spiritual goals and goals of transpersonal theory, i.e. answers to research question 5, need to also include elements of those parts of Chapters V through VII which seemingly concern only the second and third research question. Spiritual practice needs to be explained within the context of the underlying philosophical base, and vice versa. Analysis must be followed by synthesis.

The rest of this chapter, therefore, will contain detailed answers to the fourth and fifth research question in the light of the core themes of the individual spiritual landscapes of the three schools as documented in Chapters V, VI and VII. The focus is on critical commentary of related patterns, and on setting these findings in contextual relationship with transpersonal theory, i.e. on illuminating the findings of the previous chapters in the light of the theory.

Research Question #4: Definitions of Spirituality

The fourth research question asks how does the concept of spirituality as stated in the three educational environments compare with the concept of spirituality as used by transpersonal theorists? The following passages are comparisons between the theological - philosophical aspects that form the basis for stated spiritual goals in the three schools on the one hand and transpersonal theory on the other hand.

The Fallacies of Verbal Descriptions

> Simple shapes are inhuman. They fail to resonate with the way nature organizes itself or with the way human perception sees the world. ... [F]low wants to realize itself, regardless of the surrounding material (Gleick, 1987, p.116 and p.198).

> "Reality" is what we take to be true. What we take to be true is what we believe. What we believe is based upon our perceptions. What we perceive depends upon what we look for. What we look for depends upon what we perceive. What we perceive determines what we believe. What we believe determines what we take to be true. What we take to be true is our reality (Zukav, 1989, 1979, p.310).

In Chapters I and III, I briefly noted the ambiguity inherent in verbal descriptions of nonverbal experiences such as certain mystical states. Our language is a linear, orderly system of conceptual symbols. When we attempt to describe experiences such as spirituality, present-centeredness, realization of consciousness, or pure awareness, we do

so by using symbols. The symbols form the content of our descriptions, which can point to, but never replicate the actual experiences. The map is never the territory. In other words: In the process of using language for descriptions of spirituality, present-centeredness, or awareness, we create descriptions of these experiences that will always be, at best, one step removed from actual spirituality, present-centeredness, pure awareness.

An essential new question arises: Which content description, or which symbol system is most open, i.e. allows most clearly a move and eventual shift of an individual's perception to the realm that is described as pure awareness, pure spirituality, etc. Asked in a way so as to relate back to research question #4: Which of the religious philosophies and, with regard to the next research question, which of the spiritual practices observed in Schools A, B, and C[1] provide for a move of individual consciousness from the limited realm of symbols and the confinement of intellectualization, at the expense of intuition, to transcendence of the mind with the help of practice that might include the realm of language but certainly will transcend it and include other, nonverbal practice tools? For it is practice rather than thought or word alone which leads to "the integration of thought based on symbols into larger spectrums of awareness (Zukav, 1989, 1979; p.313)." This issue

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1. School A = the Catholic School; School B = the Christian School; School C = the Jewish School.

can be described differently. The symbols of intellectualization are characteristics of what the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1949) calls "analysis"; practice that goes beyond that level would be characterized by what Bergson calls "intuition," or direct apprehension of phenomena. A detailed discussion of Bergson's ideas and their applicability for education, spiritual and otherwise, will follow in the final chapter of this study.

Spirituality as Philosophical Concept

As mentioned previously, transpersonal theorists mention quite often that the path towards final unity with the Ground of Being is characterized by the need for transformations, for change of the individual and of individual conceptions. The nature of change is that it disturbs the status quo. Therefore, the average person resists change. Established spiritual traditions like those that form the basis for the observed schools all acknowledge 'change' as a necessary part of a spiritual developmental framework. The question is: how open are these systems, and are there limitations as to the kind of change that is acknowledged? For example, is change conditional along the way, are there rules for spiritual practice that act as limitations rather than access ramps for self-transcendence? These questions can be answered by pulling together information about the three schools and their philosophical bases.

Christianity and Judaism form the religious philosophical context of the stated spiritual goals of Schools A, B, and C. Neither Christianity nor Judaism is characterized by a single, decisive train of spiritual thought or by uniform guidelines for spiritual practice. The observed schools are therefore not representatives of the Christian point of view or the Jewish point of view. Rather, they are representatives of particular forms of those spiritual traditions.

While these distinctions need to be made to assure accuracy in the description, some more general statements are permissible. Christianity, in whatever form, defines humanness as consisting of material existence, i.e. as body, and of immaterial existence, i.e. as soul, and explains human development primarily as a development of the latter with special emphasis on moral maturity (Thomas, 1990). It is assumed that God's will is for humans to increasingly avoid 'sin', i.e. violations of God's laws. There is basic agreement that humans are inclined towards sinful behavior. Catholicism stresses the rite of penance as an opportunity to start fresh again. Protestants are more inclined to encourage a personal dialogue with God and the resolve to do better from now on. A major difference between Catholics and fundamentalist Protestants concerns the source of guidance. All Christians recognize the Bible as the word of God. Catholics tend towards a flexible relationship with the Bible. Contemporary interpretations

of the content are not only permitted but encouraged. Fundamentalist Christians hold the Bible to be the truly inspired word of God that has to be understood in a literal sense.

At the heart of Judaic philosophy is a complex conception of humankind and a commitment to continuous study and reevaluation of the word of God, not of Jesus (Smith, 1958; Jacobs, 1984). Humans are seen as vulnerable, resembling God, inclined to sin, personally free, and loved by God. Halakha, the Jewish legal system, has been strongly influenced by rabbinic teachings. The extraction of meaning from the word of God, the constant intellectual quest for a deeper and deeper understanding of God's word are a basic requirement of Jewish spirituality. It is suggested that children are influenced by the yetzer hara, the bad inclination, from which they shall be protected and guided away. Before adolescence, however, children are not held responsible for giving in to the yetzer hara for they presumably are not yet aware of consequences of their behavior.

Transpersonal developmental theory, as formulated by Ken Wilber (1980, 1989), acknowledges the existence of God, although it is not a God that warrants description in human terms. Transpersonal theory's core concept is that of unfolding consciousness. The emphasis is on a theoretical description of this process. Within this context, God, the Ultimate Truth, Consciousness As Such, the Ground Of Being, is beyond description while encompassing all descriptions. Wilber (1980, 1989) explains:

> Therefore this is not itself a state apart from other states; it is not an altered state; it is not a special state - it is rather the suchness of all states, the water that forms itself in each and every wave of experience, as all experience. IT cannot be seen, because it is everything which is seen; it cannot be heard, because it is hearing itself; it cannot be remembered because it only <u>is</u>. By the same token, this is the radically perfect integration of all prior levels - gross, subtle, and causal, which, now of themselves so, continue to arise moment to moment in an iridescent play of mutual interpenetration. (p.74)

What Wilber means to say is that the true essence of our spiritual origin contains, and is more than, our human conception of the nature of God. This idea is not different from Biblical descriptions of God. In conversation with Moses God described himself:

> [Moses asked:]"[I]f they ask me, 'What is his name?' what am I to tell them?" God replied, "I am who am." Then he added, "This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you." (Exodus 3, 13 -14)

At the beginning of John's Gospel, a similar reference is made:

> Through him all things came into being,
> and apart from him nothing came to be.
> (John 1, 3)

On the highest intellectual - philosophical plane, then, it looks as if Christianity, Judaism, and transpersonal theory talk about the same thing: life originates from something other than itself, and the path of evolution and development moves towards final unity with that origin. At this level, even a preliminary definition of spirituality could be the same for all: spirituality is the conscious development towards one's origin. A harmonious merging between Christian philosophy, Judaic philosophy, and trans-

personal psychology seems possible. Moreover, if the spiritual goal of the two major religions and of transpersonal theory is the same, education that explicitely pursues the realization of the spiritual path of, e.g., Christianity or Judaism, should be a good way to help young children along their personal path towards realization of consciousness.

Here, however, is the turning point: I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that intellectual analysis of a phenomenon needs to be complemented by practice that demonstrates practical applications of the theory, by lived experience. The issue becomes rather complex when the focus turns to the practical aspects of individual realization of spiritual development. It is the realization of spiritual goals through practice which, in my opinion, separates the three observed spiritual models from each other; it is the practice that separates them to various degrees from transpersonal psychology's developmental model. These differences form the core of answers to research question #5.

Research Question #5: Spiritual Practice

The fifth research question concerns the idea of possible similarity in spiritual goals in the light of different spiritual traditions. Could it be that different traditional spiritual philosophies intend their practices to lead to the same end as transpersonal theory suggests? A synthesis of the emerging core themes as presented in Chapters V through VII lead to a threefold answer. First, the practice

of prayer, common to all three spiritual traditions, will be compared to the practice of meditation, a major practice for self transcendence in the transpersonal tradition. Second, a distinction will be made between ordinary healthy psychological development and development beyond as exemplified by instances of control and equality in the three settings. Finally, existential authenticity and conceptualizations of the moral nature of humans will be discussed.

Prayer and Meditation as Spiritual Devices

Beyond the 'ordinary' states of consciousness, i.e. waking, dreaming and sleeping, there exist so called higher states of consciousness or altered states of consciousness, ASC. A subgroup of these ASC are states resulting from meditative practices, MSC. Daniel Goleman contributed an enlightening chapter about MSC to Tart's (1975) classic "Transpersonal Psychologies." He points out that the nature of MSC has traditionally been described within the framework of spiritual traditions only. The experiences of Christian mystics or the accounts from some Eastern religions form the basis for our knowledge of such states. Transpersonal theory attempts to translate such religious experiences into a psychological/developmental language. The rationale, as stated elsewhere in this chapter, is that the essence of such experiences is not separate from ordinary human development but part of it. Prayer and the preparation for

prayer resemble very clearly meditation exercises. Body and mind/soul are prepared for an encounter with God. The simple prayer state includes a lot of words: personal conversations with one's God. Christianity and Judaism encourage prayer in the presence of other people so as to strengthen the effect of the prayer. While Christians truly ask their God for specific things, the Jewish tradition sees prayer rather as service to us than to God: we need to worship; we need to better ourselves. In many ways even the simple kind of prayer I observed in the three schools contains ritualistic elements comparable to meditation practices.

In School A, students and teacher assumed a particular upright position with their hands folded; they faced towards the wooden cross on the wall; they introduced and ended their prayers with certain gestures and words.

In School B, prayer in the classroom looked just like in School A. Prayer among the teachers included standing in a circle, holding hands, closing eyes, occasional swaying of the group and affirming repetition of words of praise while others talked to God.

In School C, prayer was sung. It is acknowledged that words alone are not enough to truly move the heart of the one longing for unity with God. Melody becomes an integral part of prayer. The melodies have a certain repetitive character and are maybe most similar to the humming of a mantra in certain Eastern spiritual traditions.

Meditation practice should take place on a regular basis, under circumstances that allow for as little distraction as possible. The prayer sessions that I observed in all three schools fit those requirements. Previously I made the distinction between simple forms of prayer and more complex ones, characterized primarily by a shift from word to direct apprehension. It is clear that all the prayer sessions I observed in the various classrooms are examples of simple prayer forms. I would characterize the faculty prayer sessions in School B also as simple prayer. Indications of a more advanced type are given By (T)Jean in her talk with me (see # 59).

Control and Equality in Spiritual Practice

The practice of meditation usually enhances an individual's capacity to establish psychologically healthy relationships with others. The question of what constitutes "health" in a relationship is open for debate, and the outcome will always be influenced by the debaters' assumptions about the nature of psychological health. Within the current transpersonal model of development, in a psychologically healthy relationship each partner is accepted for what he/she is without conditions attached. Such self-less love, a love of the other person not for the purpose of self aggrandizement, is preparation for true intimacy. Carl Roger's model of unconditional love fits the essence of the

above definition. So far the most useful explanation of the practical significance of meditation training for such healthy relationships can be found in Pearl's (1990) essay about meditation and child rearing. I suggest that the proposed model retains its validity when applied to educational settings.

In his essay, Pearl suggests that most adults consider themselves in a conditional manner. Therefore adult relationships are often characterized by a craving for instances which emphasize the conditions that make us feel good, and by resistance to instances that makes us feel uncomfortable. If adults consider themselves and actions of their children in a conditional manner, children learn by example to set up such conditions of worth for themselves. Meditation practice which is practice in developing one's capacity for entering and maintaining relationships in an unconditional manner is a useful way to foster psychologically healthy development.

Spiritual development includes and negates, i.e. goes beyond, psychologically healthy development. Its goal is the direct apprehension of one's origin, of God. Transpersonal theory suggests that the God image that dominates traditional religious practice is the <u>image</u> of God, the symbol of God, and that the Ultimate Reality, the true Godhead, includes and negates, i.e. goes beyond, this symbol. Understanding this distinction is important for an assessment of the traditional religious practices with

regard to their usefulness in promoting healthy spiritual development versus conditions of worth.

In School A, the teacher was evidently well advanced on her personal spiritual journey (e.g. ## 56 - 59). Her "little meditations", as she called them, have progressed to a level where she has attained a sense of selflessness that manifests itself in her relationships with her students. There are rules in her classroom. However, children's offenses against those rules are not taken personally. There are instances when the students evidently show a lack of adherence to "Christian social and moral principles." Yet, they are not experienced by the teacher as reflecting negatively on her capacity as a spiritual leader. Problem situations are characterized by a search for solutions that benefit the class community. Personal dignity of the individual students is assured through unconditional acceptance by the teacher, through a love and compassion that goes beyond self-serving love. The content of the spiritual journey, i.e. the various Biblical stories, the rituals, Mass attendance, etc., appears at times like a contradiction to the personal openness of the teacher in School A. However, the message that is at the core of this small Catholic school is one of unconditional love. The humor that is cultivated is a good example of how not to take oneself too seriously. Respect is not seen as a function of age or power, but is displayed from teacher to students and vice versa. Work is not used to define a student's worth;

rather, work is taken as an opportunity to concentrate on the here and now. Every kind of work is of equal importance. The teacher in School A never used any particular subject or activity as reward for doing some other kind of work. Conflicts are not suppressed because they could reflect negatively on the teacher's capacity to stay in control. Rather, through unconditional acceptance the teacher models the possibility to solve interpersonal conflicts while remaining close to the other person.

Is all this entirely dependent on (T)Jean's personal spiritual disposition or is the system of Catholicism as realized in School A the fertile ground from which she draws her guidance? In more theoretical terms: Is the underlying spiritual system open enough to accommodate healthy spiritual development? The tentative conclusion I draw is that Catholicism in its finest form, and as exemplified in (T)Jean's classroom provides the necessary openness. The term "finest form" is certainly very subjective, and the statement needs to be qualified to explain its rationale. The above assessment cannot be generalized to the spiritual system of Catholicism as it manifests itself in the hierarchy of the official Church. However, there are movements within the Church, e.g. the socio-political Catholic movements in Latin America or certain Jesuit philosophers/theologians, which truly represent an open Catholicism as described above. The author is aware of the fact that this does not represent mainstream Catholicism.

On a theoretical level, the basis for practice, namely the Bible, can be interpreted and understood as a symbol system. Such understanding opens the door to a dialogue that allows for individual analysis and intuition, i.e. for refinement of theoretical conceptions of evolutionary and developmental paths, and for a practice that eventually leads the individual beyond rules and forms as established by the "translators" of spiritual content, i.e. representatives of the organized forms of spirituality, the various church leaders.

On a practical level, (T)Jean is realizing in her own life a spiritual path that allows her to extend to her students unconditional love which in turn enables her students to approach spiritual matters without fear of thinking or doing "wrong." She provides a climate of healthy spiritual growth. Instructional techniques are only as good as the teachers who use them. Similarly, the transcendence and extension of catholic theological principles and their elevation beyond the rigid borders of organized religion are directly related to (T)Jean's personal spirituality.

Love is talked about a whole lot in School B. Love for one another, love for those who are not yet saved, love for those less fortunate, love for God; but above all: do God's will. The spiritual model as it is lived in School B is very attractive from many points of view. There is an air of optimism among faculty and students that is quite unique. Most everything, from a physical illness to a cold

and rainy Monday morning, is easily put in a context where one can come to peace with it. The teacher is certainly the spiritual leader for the students, and within the School the principal is the spiritual leader of the adults. Everybody smiles a lot, the children are well behaved, smart, friendly, helpful. In many ways it would be easy to use a similar description of interpersonal relationships in School B as in School A. (T)Sylvia is a kind and gentle person who truly cares about her students. Under the surface, however, the differences between School B's spiritual practice and School A's, as well as transpersonal theory, are quite evident.

The student handbook, the teachers, and the principal talk about the importance of self-control or self-discipline. This is explained as a way of life where not one's own desires, anxieties, insecurities, notions of power, etc. rule one's behavior. Transpersonal theory also subscribes to this idea. The assertion is that a necessary step towards transcendence of self has to do with developing beyond cravings, be it hunger for fame, hunger for more of what feels good, hunger for less of what causes suffering, etc. These kinds of attachments or sources of resistance are said to stand in the way of true realization of consciousness.

What separates transpersonal theory clearly from the fundamentalist Christian theory, and transpersonal practice from the spiritual practice as seen in School B, has to do with conditions of worth. Self-control is actually a type

of discipline or containment based on adult control and rule enforcement. The rules are said to be God's will which leaves enough room for the assertion that adult rule enforcement has nothing to do with personal power but is exclusively done to minister God's word. God's love is not free. By obeying God's word as it is conveyed to children by adults, the child becomes worthy of God's love and the teacher's approval.

Whether the topic discussed in School B was joy or sharing or discipline or service, the ultimate question was always: what is the divine example for the required behavior in a particular situation? Overtly, such example leads to desirable behavior: sharing, taking care of others in need, and other loosely termed pro-social behaviors. In essence, however, such behavior is not free of conditions of worth. Even though God loves us unconditionally, we are only fully acceptable and worthy of God's love if we fulfill the conditions, i.e. obey the laws of the Bible. By holding the view that the Bible is the only truth and that its content has to be taken literally, this particular spiritual system closes itself to individual interpretation and sets itself up for a major fallacy, as seen from the transpersonal perspective: the symbol of God as represented by the manmade translation of the true God / Ultimate Consciousness / Ground of Being, the Bible, becomes the focus of the spiritual path. Consequently, it becomes important to be concerned with external issues such as the right life, the

right prayer, the right thoughts, etc. "Having the right way" can become just another craving.

In the context of discussing School B's spiritual training and practice, two other points need to be made. The preceding assessment is not intended to diminish the honest attempt of (T)Sylvia to instill in her students a sense of responsibility for others, a basic feeling of self-worth and purpose in life. Much of her value teaching pays off nicely: There is a climate of respect, school property is honored, charity is seen as a valuable personal characteristic, and the students have a basic sense of purposefulness which is reflected in a very self-assured, positive attitude. The other point is that just because transpersonal theory guides the individual to spiritual practices that provide a way out of conditions of worth, there certainly are individuals or groups within the wide spectrum of transpersonal psychology that miss the mark and remain preoccupied with formalism, with external issues, with form rather than ground. Indeed, transpersonal psychology has been attacked primarily by using such examples as arguments against it. It remains a fact, however, that the underlying theory is an open system that allows for unconditional spiritual development.

In Chapter VII, I described the interpersonal relationship patterns of School C, the Jewish school. In a way it was very useful for this investigation to observe both the principal and the secular teacher in interaction with the

same children. They represent two possible ways in which that particular spiritual practice can manifest itself. Judaism differs from Christianity very significantly with regard to the messianic doctrine. Where Christianity insists that Jesus is the divine Son of God, Judaism considers such assertion blasphemous. By taking away the figure of Jesus from the image of what God is about, Judaism also negates the idea of becoming personally saved through Christ, a core issue for fundamentalist Christians. Also, it does not acknowledge the redemption of the sinner through the death and consequent resurrection of Jesus, a core issue for Catholics. In fact, Judaism takes an interesting position when it comes to questions of heaven, hell, or the afterlife as such. Doing good deeds in this world is not seen as a preparation for the afterlife. Life in this world has its own worth. Yet, there is a promise of being in the presence of God after death. Descriptions of the quality of this presence are not dwelled upon at length because their speculative nature is acknowledged. With this rootedness in the here and now as the main challenge comes along an obligation towards continuous study of the Torah. Much more so than in Christianity the emphasis here is on intellectual analysis of the word of God and the various rabbinic interpretations. Extraction of meaning is a core concept of Judaism. It is the duty of the adults to instill in the young ones this thirst for meaning.

This attitude is clearly reflected in the interpersonal

relationships between (P)Joe and the students. He models for them enthusiastic curiosity in all types of knowledge, especially as it concerns spiritual issues. In the absence of a particular concern for doing right to be rewarded after death, this curiosity takes on an authentic quality. Thinking and talking about spiritual issues become a dialogue between teacher and students which is characterized by equality. Children's actions are not ways to please or anger the teacher. Rather, they flow logically from the context of the dialogue and thus also attain authentic quality.

The secular teacher that I observed in School C is convinced that spiritual issues cannot be reasonably incorporated in her present schedule. More importantly, however, interpersonal relationships between herself and her students are characterized by an overwhelming preoccupation with staying in control. (T)Hannah assumes that if she relinquished control in favor of cooperation between herself and her students, she would loose power and consequently would not be able to fulfill the instructional goals she has set for her class. The attempt to stay in control is diametrically opposed to the idea of non-craving. What happens in her classroom is a good example of the consequences: a constant tug of war between herself and her students regarding control. All facets of behavior become potential battlefields for that control struggle. Even if the teacher intended to devote some time to spiritual issues, it would

be rather a waste of time as long as the struggle for staying in control is in place the way it is now. In the students, the consequences of this battle are aggression, boredom, and inattentiveness. In the teacher, the consequences are exhaustion, despair, and resignation.

In its focus on the present as a worthwhile place to be, with plenty of challenges waiting, and in its promise of eventual unity with God, together with the emphasis on critical reflection of the content of spiritual development, Jewish spiritual theory and practice come close to principles of transpersonal theory and practice. The spiritual practice, in particular the kind of prayer/singing accompanied by swaying that I observed in School C, resembles the repetition of a mantra in many meditation practices. In the end, there is the obvious and the not so obvious: It is obvious that the times the students I observed in School C did not meet with the principal were a waste with regard to their spiritual development. It is not so obvious, however, that in fact the spiritual instruction that I did observe is not truly compatible with transpersonal ideas of spiritual practice.

One needs to remember that transpersonal theory includes the notion that the individual's potential goal of spiritual development is a personal relationship to and/or total unity with God, i.e. direct, intuitive, unaltered apprehension of Consciousness As Such. Judaism accommodates this idea by acknowledging the possibility of such a state.

The Jewish Kabbalah is a collection of teachings summarizing mystical experiences of a few chosen ones in the course of Jewish history. For the general population, occupation with the Kabbalah is neither desirable nor worthwhile. Reform Jews such as the principal and the teacher in School C acknowledge the existence of the Kabbalah but are not interested in exploring Jewish mysticism. In many ways, Judaism is better at rationalizing the existence of the immense number of rituals that accompany its spiritual practice than at dealing with the possibility of mystic bliss or direct apprehension of God by the ordinary believer. It is in this aspect of Judaism that it reveals its authoritarian structure most clearly. In School C, the principal was the "good" authoritarian leader, friendly, gentle, paternalistic; the teacher was the "bad" authoritarian leader, trying to retain control, dominant, and in the end defeated by the system she had set up.

Authenticity and the Moral Nature of Humans

A different but complementary way to describe various spiritual traditions and their practices is by way of identifying opportunities for authenticity and explanations of the moral nature of humans. This is also a useful way to demonstrate the fundamental differences between spiritual development as fostered in the three observed schools, and between those paths and transpersonal ideas.

Existentialism, although removed from explanations of spirituality or altered states of consciousness, resembles transpersonal psychology in its suggestion of the concept "authenticity' (Buber, 1958; De Chardin, 1965; Jones, 1969, 1971). To be authentic means to be aware of one's absolute freedom, the resulting responsibility for one's actions, and the choice one has to treat oneself and others either as objects, thus dehumanizing them, or as subjects, thus granting them dignity.

In general, the moral nature of humans can be perceived as being either good or bad or neutral.

The extent to which the individual spiritual traditions leave room for authenticity and for a positive conceptualization of the moral nature of humans has interesting implications for spiritual practice. In fact, it might be that the extent of such existential authenticity in teachers, administrators, and students in educational settings is one of the significant variables that distinguishes a truly transpersonal environment from a conventionally religious one.

Both Catholicism and fundamentalist Protestantism hold the view that humans are basically inclined to do bad rather than good; however, it is acknowledged that the individual has the capacity to <u>choose</u> good over bad. This notion, inherent in both spiritual traditions, takes on different dimensions in practice.

In <u>School A</u>, the Catholic school, the concept of free

choice and the idea that it makes sense to choose good over bad is taught to the students by example. Additionally, the teacher's emphasis is on creating understanding in her students that ultimately everybody is responsible for their choices, and that choices have consequences. No extreme pointing to the afterlife and possible punishment from God is necessary in that context. This is a good example of authenticity as interpreted by Christian existentialists such as Teilhard de Chardin (1965).

In School B, the students are also taught that they have a free choice as to their behavior. However, the idea is promoted that the all seeing, all knowing God keeps a watchful eye over everybody, that we have divine example for good behavior, and that choosing "wrong" over "right" is an offense that will surely not go unnoted. Humans, inclined to do morally bad things, need to be constantly reminded of the eternal consequences of their behavior. Thus, true existential authenticity is not possible.

Judaism perceives humans, especially children, as tempted by bad influences. Children need to be directly instructed in what is good so that, at the time of adolescence, they are prepared to take responsibility for their actions. In School C, this idea is dealt with in two different ways. The principal is truly the benevolent spiritual leader devoted to his students and the commitment to introduce them to the complexity of Judaic spirituality. His behavior shows characteristics of authenticity. The

teacher is the authoritarian leader who tries to stay in control so as to curb the evidently bad inclinations of her immature students with a firm hand. That this attitude is based on an inaccurate assessment of the real problem forms the saddening context for this observation, and excludes authenticity.

Transpersonal psychology sees humans as basically good. The notion that humans exist in a communicative exchange with their origin of existence, the idea that the process of creation is an ongoing, more and more harmonious dialogue between creator and creation until creation returns, transformed, to the creator, forms the context for transpersonal spiritual practices. The argument that all our decisions are essentially not justifiable through reference to an outside source, that they are essentially base-less, i.e. have their origin in us, is accepted and forms the basis for encouragement towards increased personal authenticity. None of these practices is characterized by the concept of a punishing, forgiving, or otherwise humanized God. As stated elsewhere in this chapter, God includes and negates those symbolizations of him/her/itself.

Summary

This chapter contains a major discussion of the findings in the light of the original five research questions. In the two main portions of the chapter, the philosophical roots of spirituality as well as practically applied spirit-

uality are discussed. Three related issues are presented: the similarity of prayer and meditation as spiritual devices; how control and equality influence spiritual practice; and how questions of personal authenticity are connected with conceptions of the moral nature of humans.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The final duty of a study such as this one is to provide its readers with a useful map which may guide them in their own search for this new territory called transpersonal human development.

The three educational settings documented in this study have different spiritual practices. These practices are influenced by the social/historical context of the schools' religious bases. At the heart of each religion, however, are clearly characteristics of transpersonal development. It is the objective of this chapter to briefly describe those underlying characteristics, to put them in relationship to transpersonal theory, and to show how they are realized in each setting. Finally, recommendations will be made as to implications of these findings for non-religious environments.

Three Meta-Themes

The attempt to form a meaningful synthesis of the core themes of the three educational settings resulted in the discovery of three basic dimensions which in a way unite the three settings and form the starting point for future discussions of implications transpersonal theory has for educational practice, regardless of the specific setting. These three dimensions concern the ideas of 1) community, 2) conditions for psychological health, and 3) the process of becoming one with the object of consciousness.

At the heart of the idea of what it means to belong to a community is the notion that community members belong together. Whatever the scope of a particular community, it always serves as a facilitator for transcending the feeling of individual separateness.

Generally, the idea of community is understood as spanning the arch from such a small number of people as make up families to including all human beings in this world.

This corresponds with traditional psychological descriptions of the development of the self. Before adolescence, development of the self is seen as being primarily a process of identity formation. One's own identity is contrasted with other identities from which one is distinguishable. After adolescence, development of self is conceptualized as an opportunity to reach out beyond the self to other people. Christianity and Judaism extend such definitions of community. They specifically describe communities of be-

lievers and nonbelievers, and include God and the believers' eventual reunion with God in their definitions of community. Transpersonal theory extends the concept even further. It includes all of existence and emphasizes the basic connectedness of all parts of existence with each other.

Definitions of what exactly constitutes psychological health will certainly vary according to the particular philosophical base of the person answering. In general, however, people would like to be accepted and/or loved without strings attached (Schultz, 1977). In psychological terms: we all desire to experience unconditional self-worth. Human existence is a story of relationships. The basis for any "healthy" relationship, be it between child and parent, student and teacher, between intimate partners or friends, is trust. Trust, in turn, is formed when people learn through repeated experience that their self-worth is not contingent on conditions they have to fulfill. Christianity and Judaism teach their followers that God loves them unconditionally. Yet, they need to work continuously on themselves to avoid sin, i.e. they must fulfill very specific conditions in order to be worthy of God's love. Transpersonal theory promotes the idea of unconditional worth and suggests ways to regard oneself and others unconditionally.

Trance, ecstasy, total immersion of the mind and the senses into an activity or a thought, the realization of one's oneness with the object of consciousness - these are

descriptions of a state of "mind" that one finds more likely in books of mystics than in descriptions of ordinary human development.

Within the spiritual traditions of Christianity and Judaism, the precondition for such experiences of oneness is said to be surrender. The ultimate example for Christians is Jesus' surrender to his God on the cross where he accepted God's will even though it meant death. In Judaism, people are essentially asked to be true to God by being true to themselves. This, in turn, can only be done if one is continuously engaged in a critical analysis of God's laws and how they apply to everyday life. Being true to oneself, then, means surrender to God's laws. In both traditions, dying to one's own self so that one can experience oneness with one's God is said to be the greatest and purest source of joy for believers. The difference between religiously defined surrender and transpersonally defined surrender lies in the notion of non-attachment: the joy that results from the feeling of oneness with the object of consciousness does not become a new object for which one craves.

The Three Core Topics in Action

School A: The Catholic Setting

Community in the classroom that I observed in School A means primarily the students and the teacher, to some extent all members of the school when they meet for Mass, and the

members of the parish. It was documented in previous chapters that the teacher of this class is well advanced on her personal spiritual path. This is also reflected in the way she occasionally introduces a wider framework for community to her students. At some point during my visits the class met a young Peace Corps volunteer who had just returned from a two year mission in Latin America. Discussions afterwards indicate a rudimentary understanding on the part of the students that all people on this earth form a community. During science and social study periods, the teacher sometimes drew parallels between the world of animals and plants and humans. Discovery of similarities was in the foreground. Finally, the celebration of "Earth Day" served as a good example for the teacher's attempt to instill in her students a feeling of responsibility for all of creation. Chapter V documents clearly that in her personal relationships with her students (T)Jane operates without establishing conditions of worth. The school system within which she teaches, however, has built in conditions. These include the grading system and the official disciplinary procedures which are in essence based on behavioristic principles and are supposedly uniform for all classes.

The teacher in School A revealed in our personal conversations that she has experiences of unity with her God that are difficult to describe with words. From her accounts it is evident that she is only loosely bound to the framework of authority that her church, her particular

belief and its organized parts provide. In the classroom she encourages her students to 'surrender' to task at hand, even if it is unpleasant. Many times I heard students talk to themselves quietly about 'just getting it over with and not fuss about it.'

School B: The Christian Setting

In School B community meant specifically the community of Christians. The children that I observed and with whom I talked, as well as the teachers and the principal, understand themselves primarily as Christians. It does not really matter to them to what other communities a person might belong. If you are not a Christian you certainly miss something important and are in need of being "saved." It is this sense of having to save other people, of wanting and needing to minister to others which is the basis for the other interpretation of community that is accepted in School B: all human beings form a community to which the community of Christians has a special obligation. Animals, inanimate things, the earth and everything on it are subordinate to human beings. The notion that an individual actually might be part of all existence, even the unknown, is categorically rejected as "unbiblical." Membership in a specific community serves more as a way of separation than unity. Identification with such specific communities to the exclusion of others contains the potential danger for corruption of the term's potential meaning by turning it into its opposite:

community as the boundary that denotes separateness rather than oneness.

One of the clearest examples of the fine line between conditional and unconditional self-worth stems also from School B. I mentioned in Chapter VI how the principal, the teachers, and the students so often express their joy about an issue. The observed classroom teacher discussed the concept of joy and made a point that joy is within, that it is independent from the outside, from what other people think. The principal expressed his "joy to serve" during morning prayer circles, and he meant it. These conceptualizations of joy resemble clearly the Buddhist concept of unconditional happiness which in turn is a result of what transpersonal theory calls non-attachment. I am convinced that these morning prayer circles can lead to a feeling of unconditional happiness. I also believe that the intense emotional experiences in these circles could become a source for craving in those members who become superficially attached to the experience. Superficial attachment, however, can certainly also happen to people who use some form of transpersonal practice, such as meditation.

In School B, the principal as well as the teachers and students pray every day to their God for help in surrendering to God's will. These daily exercises, especially the morning prayer circle, resemble meditation rituals. Participants come away from these exercises elated, refreshed, calm, focused on the here and now. On the surface, School B

seems to practice and provide for experiences of oneness with the object of consciousness. Yet, this practice is bound so strongly to a literal interpretation of a symbol of God, i.e. the Bible, that any reflection or critical thought about any issue can only happen within the guidelines that the symbol provides. Such exclusive attachment to the symbol of the object of consciousness limits the breadth and depth of experiences of oneness.

School C: The Jewish Setting

School C's idea of community is primarily shaped by the Jewishness of its members. Much stronger than in the Catholic or the Protestant school is here the feeling that the religious aspects of the school cannot be separated from the ethnic context, i.e. from the fact that students and teachers are not only members of the Jewish faith but also members of the ethnic community of Jews and thus intimately connected with Israel and the Jewish community all over the world. It would go far beyond the scope of this study to explore the psychology of Jewishness, the impact that history had on the shape of the community idea as it exists now for Jews all over the world. More so than in any of the other schools, however, I observed how students were encouraged to identify themselves not just with the small community that made up their classroom, their school, or even the community of the particular city. Rather, these students were instructed to understand themselves as members of the

world Jewish community where Israel functions as a kind of home base even for a small nine year old thousands of miles away.

With the principal, the students sang prayers, either during class time or during Sabbath celebrations in the community center hall, they lighted candles, and the had other rituals which gave them opportunities for experiencing unconditional self-worth. During class time with the regular teacher, there was never time enough to allow for anything but strict adherence to a very rigid, fast-paced pattern of teacher centered classroom learning. As Chapter VII documents clearly, the teacher defined herself in terms of the amount of control she had in the classroom. This in turn prevented her from engaging in unconditional relationships with her students and did not foster initiation of such relationships by the students.

The example of non-attached experiences of oneness with the object of consciousness that resembles closely certain transpersonal meditation practices is given in School C during the instances when the principal and the students sang prayers for half an hour or more at a time. The swaying with the music, the repetition of certain melody phrases, the harmony inherent in the melodies are all signs of harmony of the praying people with the content of the prayer. Garbage trucks came and went, students in adjacent rooms shouted, the telephone in the office across the hall rang - nothing distracted the otherwise attention deficit

disorder plagued singers/prayers.

Recommendations

It is the nature of transpersonal theory that its concepts, although certainly spiritual, can be expressed in more neutral terms and become useful for non-religious educational settings. Education of preadolescent children in the spirit of transpersonal theory should certainly include the three previously described core themes: community, unconditional self-worth, and experiences of oneness with the object of consciousness. In non-religious settings, these goals could be pursued in a variety of ways.

In accordance with transpersonal theory's rather wide concept of <u>community</u> the emphasis should be on teaching an ever expanding sense of community. The child should be guided in experiencing and understanding environmental and ecological issues by a curriculum that incorporates such expansion of the community concept. I suggest that using community to denote otherness instead of oneness lies at the heart of such societal problems as ethnocentrism, racism, intellectual arrogance, religious wars, and any form of political, social, or intellectual fanaticism. Expansion of the community concept through the study of the environment, the connectedness of humans with the rest of creation, the study of other cultures and languages would be a meaningful way to work against such societal problems.

Hand in hand with a widening of the scope of the commu-

nity concept in the various subjects taught should go a deemphasis on competition and grading. The transpersonal concept of community means focus on similarities instead of differences in the service of increased compassion. Competition as it is practiced in today's schools, and the strict adherence to a grading system that too often becomes the foreground of instruction and learning, is detrimental to the notions of cooperation and compassion. Teachers are needed who, even in traditional settings, are capable of using instructional techniques which facilitate the latter. The recommendation is for workshops for teachers where they can learn such techniques, including groups that help individuals to a better understanding of themselves. Teaching cooperation and compassion will only be as successful as the individual teachers and the degree to which they know ways of dealing with their own preoccupations with competition and grades. Eventually, teacher education at the university level will have to be reevaluated in the light of an extended definition of community.

Everything that applies to recommendations with regard to redefining community in a transpersonal sense applies equally to recommendations for facilitating unconditional self-worth. When the focus is taken off grades and competition with each other, students can more readily begin to experience themselves and their fellow class members on a more personal, existential level. Prerequisite is teachers that are not caught up in questions of authority, power, and

control. Teachers need to learn that even though they might have grown up under conditions of worth, they will loose neither authority, nor will events in the classroom get out of hand, if they make an effort to separate the child from the actions of the child, i.e. practice unconditional acceptance. Teachers willing to try this path need the support of the educational system which means reshaping of the teacher training system so as to accommodate such changes. Meditation related practices are very useful in practicing unconditional regard of self and others. The recommendation is for introducing future teachers to such practices for the purpose of self experience, and for introduction of age appropriate meditation practices in the classroom.

The experience of oneness with the object of consciousness is a notion that outside the major spiritual traditions and outside transpersonal theory is documented most clearly by artists, musicians, dancers, and every person who experiences total fusion with whatever is the object of concentration at the time. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) calls such experiences "flow." One of the characteristics of being in the flow means to experience unity, connectedness. Creative activities, then, can become the practical link between community experiences, unconditional feelings of worth, and a feeling of oneness and wholeness. It is suggested that schools refocus part of their funds and personal energies on the arts in education. Art education, music education, dance, dramatic performance, creative writing are some of

the tools for discovering flow, for becoming one with what one does, for ecstasy in the classroom. To facilitate such flow experiences, it would be advantageous if each school could facilitate a full artists in residence program where the artists and the teachers work together in the service of an education that treasures the whole child: body, mind, and spirit.

Summary

Conclusions in the form of three meta-themes are presented in this final chapter. These three themes are community, conditions for psychological health, and the process of becoming one with the object of consciousness. A general discussion is followed by examples from each research setting. The recommendations refer to practical applications of the three meta-themes in non-religious educational settings.

EPILOGUE

Throughout this study, every effort was made to portray the informants' reality as truthfully as possible. Yet, the nature of the process of creating "reality", as Zukav expresses so clearly in the passage quoted on page 152, implies that this study, too, presents only a partial reality. I am aware that the point of view presented here means the exclusion of other points of view. My urgent encouragement goes to those among the readers who perceive such a different point of view to undertake a similar study. Experiental, intuitive insights need to accompany theoretical analysis of any phenomenon. I am convinced that by continuing a dialogue between intuition and analysis, research into the complexity of human experiencing will become more meaningful.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PILE-SORT STATEMENTS

1. Childlike thinking should be abandoned by adults.
2. Abstract, formal, adult reasoning is the highest level of cognitive development.
3. The true display of intelligence is shown by humans who think in rational, adult ways.
4. Intelligence can be measured with IQ tests.
5. Intelligence is the optimal use of each possible mindbody state for a desired goal.
6. Intelligence is the ability to use our awake state optimally.
7. The mind is different from the body.
8. There is no need to explore different levels of consciousness.
9. What I do effects all existence at all levels of consciousness.
10. There are different states of consciousness.
11. Different states of consciousness are interesting curiosities but of little professional interest.
12. Only experiences in our usual state of consciousness are real.
13. Separate individuality is a narrow perception of our normal awake state of consciousness.
14. Selecting and using an appropriate state of consciousness is the highest level of cognitive development.
15. Humans can exist in various states of consciousness.

16. Reason and perception differ from one level of consciousness to an other.

17. A person exists within a material body.

18. A person exists in a specific place and at a particular time.

19. Each person is a separate individual.

20. The individual person is separate from other persons.

21. What I do affects directly other humans.

22. Humans exist in close relationship with all living matter.

23. What I do affects directly all existing matter.

24. Insight.

25. Prayer.

26. Prayer is a necessary expression of humans.

27. Special education students are best understood as physically or behaviorally impaired.

28. Some special education students may be best understood as existing in different mindbody states.

29. Problems of special education students are best improved by chemical intervention or behavioral conditioning.

30. There is only one true moral truth.

31. Moral development progresses from narrow self-interest to universal moral principles.

32. Moral development occurs through life experiences, especially significant others.

33. Experiences of time, space, and matter depend on the level of consciousness in which they are experienced.

34. Time, space, and matter are real.

35. A person's existence goes beyond the usual limits of body, time, and space.

36. "Rational" and "irrational" thinking are useful and valid ways of thinking.

37. Forms of thinking that are not rational are childlike.

38. Rational thinking is adult; it requires an awake state of consciousness.

39. Meditation.

40. Many people learn best in different mindbody states, such as relaxed imagery, etc.

41. Mystical experiences are not useful in everyday life.

42. Mystical experiences are unimportant.

43. Mystical experiences can be most important events in a person's life.

44. Dreams are reality.

45. Knowledge is comprised of rational thought.

46. All knowledge comes through sense perception and reason.

47. I and the universe are one.

48. Mind and body are one unit.

49. The best ways of teaching and learning are in the usual mindbody state.

50. Humans can produce a variety of mindbody states.

51. It is possible to learn moral principles through self-transcendence in different mindbody states.

52. An individual's personality is separate from other personalities.

53. Personality is learned through interaction with the environment from infancy on.

54. Personality is individual.

55. Personality is influenced by connections to other developmental processes, for example the process of the becoming universe.

56. Personality has roots in prenatal and perinatal development, possibly in sources beyond our usual time and space concept.

57. Individuality is a desirable goal of development.

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK

Student A

I like myself for my kindness for animals and because I invented the first backscratcher hairbrush.

I also like my poems and stories I write. I also like myself because I can express my feeling.

I also like myself for being smart.

Student B

God made me. He made talents for me. I try to use them. But I don't always follow His rules. But most of the time I do.

Student C

I can play sports very good. I like soccer and baseball the best. In soccer I play forward. And in baseball I play 1st and short stop. And I thank God for these talents. Sometimes I win trophies. I can run fast, too. I'm special. God made me special.

Student D

I like many things about me. I like my sense of humor. I like my kindness. I like my talent of art.

Student E

All about me! I am weird. I thin I'm different. I like to play outside. Most of all, I LIKE TO SHOP!!!. I like to have fun. I think I'm OK. I'm not like a movie star but I'm special. God was good to me, and I'm glad! God gave me a talent for drawing! [The paper this student handed in had some good cartoon like drawings inserted between the text.] I'm a good business kid, I think.

Student F

I like my ability to make up jokes. Although they are mostly horrible they're still jokes which I myself am proud of.

VITA

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