

CHILDREN BEHIND BARS: WHO IS THEIR GOD? TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF
JUVENILES IN DETENTION

by

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Lord Jesus, for our sake you were condemned as a criminal...
Remember those who work in these institutions; keep them
humane and compassionate; and save them from becoming
brutal or callous. And since what we do for those in prison,
O Lord, we do for you, constrain us to improve their lot. All
this we ask for your mercy's sake. Amen

--- Book of Common Prayer, Episcopal Church USA¹

*“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it
treats its children.”*

---Nelson Mandela²

¹ *The Online Book of Common Prayer, According to the Use of the Episcopal Church* (NY: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979) (accessed June 20, 2013).

² Nelson Mandela, BrainyQuote.com (accessed July 19, 2013).

DECLARATION

student number: 3662-0467

I declare that *Children Behind Bars: Who Is Their God? Toward a Theology of Juveniles in Detention* is my own work and that all supportive sources that I have used or quoted have been duly indicated and acknowledged by means of complete credit and references.



Barbara Ann Barr

Nov. 3, 2013

Date

ABSTRACT

Children Behind Bars: Who is Their God? Toward a Theology of Juveniles in Detention

Children detained in juvenile detention centers in the United States are a unique population. They are neither incarcerated, nor are they free to live in society. Although some popular literature does exist on juvenile detention, such literature is minimal. Further, there are few research studies on this population in any field of inquiry. Indeed the entire subject of juvenile detention has been largely overlooked by research scientists, as well as theologians.

The focus of this empirical study is the theology and spirituality of children in a single juvenile detention center in New Jersey, US. Currently, there are no studies on this topic. This study begins to address that void and represents the first theological research of its kind on this population. The methodological approach of the thesis is multi-disciplinary. While the study addresses theology and spirituality as separate categories, it also integrates theology with research in psychology and clinical mental health.

The project itself consists of 200 individual, face-to-face interviews with male juvenile residents detained in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, New Jersey, US. An original questionnaire has been developed by the author as a research tool.

This empirical research adds to the academic literature on children in juvenile detention centers in the United States and recommends ways that staff may communicate with children to begin a theological dialogue. Further, this thesis offers a specific methodology and research tool to be duplicated for use in other juvenile detention centers toward working with children in a concrete, evidence-based, spiritual context.

This study also includes a chapter on the evolution of the author's spirituality and theology in the course of the project and attempts to locate the self of the researcher within the study.

Finally, this thesis presents an outline for a new hermeneutic in working with children in a juvenile detention setting. This new approach represents a practical step toward bridging an existing gap between a stated need for a new hermeneutic for working with children in theological literature and its inception.

Key words and terms: *advocacy/participatory worldview; Alcoholics Anonymous, autoethnography; biopsychosocial; clinical pastoral education; existentialism; hermeneutics; juvenile detention; narrative theology; narrative therapy; pastoral theology; postmodernism; practical theology, spirituality; participatory action research (PAR); and "wounded healer."*

{All key words and terms are defined in context within the body of the thesis as they occur. }

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved husband, Dr. David N. Cousins, who lovingly supported and encouraged me throughout this lengthy process. David's tireless patience and love in the face of my anxiety and self-doubt made it possible for me to continue my work toward its completion. I thank God for His precious gift of David as my daily companion in this life.

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CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction and Orientation to the Study

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Children and youth detained in juvenile detention centers in the United States are a unique population in society. They are neither incarcerated, nor are they free to live in society. In fact, their freedom to be in society has been temporarily denied, pending the adjudication of their legal charges through the Juvenile Justice court system.³

The focus of this research study is the specific issue of spirituality as it pertains to children in juvenile detention centers. The research itself consists of 200 individual, face-to-face interviews with male juvenile residents detained in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, New Jersey. Juvenile males in this study range in age from 13 to 19, the normal spectrum of ages based on annual *Admissions Records* data.⁴ The research sample size of 200 was selected since it accurately reflects the average annual admission rate at the Ocean County Detention Center.

An original questionnaire has been developed by the author as a research tool for each face-to-face interview. Entitled the Resident Questionnaire, it appears as Appendix B at the conclusion of the study.

The purpose of this empirical research study is to address the following questions:

- Who is the God of children locked in detention centers in the United States?

³ Kevin Ryan, Esq., Child Advocate, et al, State of New Jersey: Office of the Child Advocate Report: *Juvenile Detention Center Investigation*, Nov. 22, 2004, 1-2.

⁴ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, NJ, 2000-2010.

- Do children in detention centers believe in God?
- Do these children have a sense of religion or spirituality that can be measured?
- Do detained children differentiate between the terms “spirituality” and “religion”?
- Does a stay in juvenile detention have a measurable effect on a child’s spirituality or religion?
- Is there a working theology that might be postulated among children in detention centers in the United States?
- Is there a new hermeneutic that might be suggested for working with children in juvenile detention centers?

The first goal of this research study is to listen, to dialogue, and to understand what children in a specific juvenile detention center believe about traditional theological categories including God, prayer, faith, hope, spirituality, meaning and value in their lives. The second goal is to organize and codify the data results toward a theology of juveniles in detention.

Interviews with 200 individual male juveniles from the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center in Toms River, New Jersey have been completed for the research study. Since there are approximately 200 admissions to the Ocean County Detention Center each calendar year, the research sample size of 200 chosen for this study represents the average annual admission rate of children. Each face-to-face interview is conducted utilizing an original questionnaire developed with the assistance of the residents themselves.

This research study is also an attempt to do pastoral and spiritual work in a non-pastoral setting where the author is not a pastor or a religious figure. The study is an exploration of whether it is feasible to engage in spiritual dialogue with children in detention centers and what might be the results of such dialogue. It is also an exploration of what personnel in a

juvenile detention center might dialogue with children about their own spirituality, regardless of whether or not there are chaplain personnel on staff.

Finally, this research study is an introspective documentation of the author's own spiritual journey through the process of interviewing, interpreting, and documenting the results of 200 interviews with children in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center.

This empirical research study is also an exploration of how God may speak through these children, as well as this research vehicle, to encourage and to support spiritual growth within the author herself.

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 Background and status of juvenile detention in the United States

Generally, juvenile detention centers are county-supervised facilities located in each county of a particular state. Individual states then delineate the legal protocol for detaining children and youth in each county facility.⁵

Children housed in juvenile detention centers are also unique as they currently represent an ever-growing population of the mentally ill. In the United States, 66% of juvenile residents are admitted to detention centers with at least one pre-existing mental health diagnosis.⁶ There is also a current trend in the US to cut mental health funding for children and to rely increasingly on juvenile correction facilities and detention centers to address the mental health issues of North American youth.⁷ As reporter Solomon Moore declares in a

⁵ Sharon Lauchaire (press release), "JJC Academy Graduates 23 Juvenile Detention Officers," State of New Jersey, Office of the Attorney General, Juvenile Justice Commission, Feb. 25, 2005, 1.

⁶ Solomon Moore, "Mentally Ill Offenders Strain Juvenile System," *New York Times*, Aug. 9, 2009, A1.

⁷ *Ibid.*

recent *New York Times* article, "...jails and juvenile justice facilities are the new asylums....daddy can't be found and mommy's in jail."⁸

Temporary detainment of children in the United States is not unique in the world community. Indeed all countries who are member nations of the United Nations are required by law to preserve the rights of children denied their freedom when placed in detention centers.⁹ The United Nations has been actively involved in the international protection of detained children since 1985 and has issued legal guidelines and minimum standards for detained and incarcerated children.¹⁰ In the world community, there are considered to be 195 individual countries. The United Nations recognizes 192 countries, while Vatican City and Kosovo are excluded from the U.N. The United States recognizes 194 individual countries, with the exclusion of Taiwan.¹¹

In the United States, the well-being of detained children and youth has come under greater scrutiny since 1992, due to the national initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation¹² in creating the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI).¹³ The purpose of JDAI is to

⁸ Moore, A1.

⁹ United Nations, *Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules)*, G.A. Res. 40/33 40 U.N. GAOR Supp. No. 53 at 207, U.N. Doc. A/40/53, 1985.

¹⁰ United Nations, *Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty*, G.A. res. No. 45/13, annex 45 U.N. GOAR Supp., No. 49A at 205, U.N. Doc. A 45/49, 1990.

¹¹ Matthew Rosenberg, *The Handy Geography Answer Book* (Canton, MI: Visible Ink Press, 2009), 11-25; 105-117.

¹² "The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization, dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of UPS, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs." Annie E. Casey Foundation website (accessed May 4, 2011).

¹³ "The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) was designed to support the Casey Foundation's vision that all youth involved in the juvenile justice system have opportunities to develop into healthy, productive adults. JDAI focuses on the juvenile detention component of the juvenile justice system because youth are often unnecessarily or inappropriately detained at great expense, with long-lasting negative consequences for both public safety and youth development. Since its inception in 1992, JDAI has repeatedly demonstrated that jurisdictions can safely reduce reliance on secure detention. There are now approximately 100 JDAI sites in 24 states and the District of Columbia." Annie E. Casey Foundation website (accessed May 4, 2011).

¹³ Shawn C. Marsh, "Lens of Implicit Bias," *Juvenile and Family Justice Today*, summer 2009, 24.

address the efficiency, effectiveness, and humanity of juvenile detention in the United States.¹⁴ In this context, the more intrinsic needs of detained children are being investigated beyond the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, and safety. These needs include, but are not limited to education, recreation, physical health, mental health, and religious programming.

The specific category of spirituality is not addressed by the JDAI initiative, nor is spirituality a common program category in juvenile detention centers. Since spirituality is viewed by many as difficult to define as a separate field of inquiry, it is often dismissed.¹⁵ Spirituality is also considered by mental health professionals to be clinically irrelevant though some clinicians are beginning to see possible connections between the pain and confusion of mental illness and the category of spirituality.¹⁶

Not only is spirituality of central importance in the experience of children's lives, but it is also a flexible category conducive to viable research that may explore the inner life of children held in detention centers across the United States. Spirituality may indeed be the next wave of emphasis in juvenile detention centers in the United States since it is capable of addressing many mental health categories, for example, anxiety disorders and

¹⁵ Brian J. Zinnbauer, et al, Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 36, No. 4, Dec. 1997, 549-564.

¹⁶ John Swinton, *Spirituality and Mental Health Care: Rediscovering a 'Forgotten' Dimension* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2001), 7-13.

depression.¹⁷ Yet spirituality delves more deeply into the interior life, the soul of detained young people.¹⁸

In the field of mental health, clinical researchers have begun to develop assessment instruments that may one day measure an adult's spiritual and religious "level of functioning" as an integral part of an initial clinical assessment.¹⁹ Perhaps if more clinicians and clergy attempt evidence-based research on the topic of spirituality with children, the scientific community may begin to listen more attentively to a spiritual voice. This research study also serves as a prelude to the development of such a spiritual assessment tool to measure children's spiritual functioning.

1.2.2 Specific focus of empirical research project

As mentioned earlier in Chapter One, the focus of this research study is the issue of spirituality as it pertains to children in juvenile detention centers. The research itself consists of 200 individual, face-to-face interviews with male juvenile residents detained in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, New Jersey. Juvenile males in this study range in age from 13 to 19, the normal spectrum of ages based on annual *Admissions Records* data.²⁰ The research sample size of 200 was chosen since it accurately reflects the average annual admission rate at the Ocean County Detention Center.

An original questionnaire has been developed by the author as a research tool for each face-to-face interview. Entitled the Resident Questionnaire, this document may be found in Appendix B at the conclusion of the study. The children themselves also help in developing

¹⁷ William R. Gorsuch, ed., *Integrating Spirituality into Treatment: Resources for Practitioners* (Washington, D.C: American Psychological Assn., 1999), 47-64.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9-15.

¹⁹ W. Hathaway, S. Scott, and S. Garver, "Assessing Religious/Spiritual Functioning: A Neglected Domain in Clinical Practice?" *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, Vol. 35 (1), Feb. 2004, 97-104.

²⁰ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, NJ, 2000-2010.

the questionnaire. Each interview is approximately 10 to 25 minutes, based on the child's responses and where the conversation leads. Thus, the research methodology utilized in this study is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches.²¹ The researcher is an active participant in each interview, along with the child--not a detached observer. Yet the results of the data have been collected and interpreted in a quantitative manner as well.

It is a common practice in the United States for volunteer church groups to visit children in detention centers. Groups may represent different religions and/or denominations and conduct services that reflect the beliefs of that church. In New Jersey, county juvenile detention centers are required by state law to provide religious services for all juvenile residents once a week on a voluntary basis.²² For example, in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, 22 local churches representing the Roman Catholic and Protestant faiths rotate annually to bring services and religious programs to residents twice weekly. Residents may choose to attend, based on good behavior. Thus far, attempts to engage members of the Islamic faith have been unsuccessful, though several attempts have been made.

Since religious groups and juvenile detention residents interact frequently, popular literature does exist on the subject of religious groups sharing a message of faith in detention centers. This literature appears in vehicles including newspaper articles, magazine articles, and periodicals. For example, the Rev. Luis Barrios, an Episcopal priest and former juvenile delinquent and prison inmate, was interviewed by the *New York Times* for sharing his own story with other children and adults behind bars.²³ Similarly, the Rev. Tim Robinson shares

²¹ Matthew B. Miles and Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 2-6.

²² State of New Jersey, New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission, *Manual of Standards for Juvenile Detention Facilities 2011-2016*, 70.

²³ Samuel G. Freedman, "On Religion: Pursuing Theology from a Classroom to the Jailhouse," *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 2009, A13.

his life story by visiting every juvenile detention center and adult prison in the state of Ohio, US. He was recently the subject of a feature article in a monthly financial periodical.²⁴

However, there is a glaring absence of literature addressing what detained children believe spiritually, as well as what the spiritual implications of recording their responses might yield. There exists no literature that attempts to understand, interpret, and categorize the actual spiritual beliefs of detained children in a systematic way. This research study makes a beginning to address what children in a specific detention center in the United States believe spiritually and theologically.

1.2.3 Context of proposed research within existing literature

Literature written specifically on the population of children held in juvenile detention centers in the United States and globally is minimal. However, authors Mary Previte,²⁵ Edward Hume,²⁶ and Parichart Suwanbubha²⁷ do chronicle this population with dedication and a passion for change in the juvenile justice system.

1.2.3.1 Literature on juvenile detention

Inside the hidden and uncharted world of juvenile detention, authors Mary Previte and Edward Hume have written specifically about this population of children, but neither has done research on their spirituality. Richard Wahl and associates have done research on the relationship between suicidal ideation and spirituality among youth, and their methodology does include two case studies from an Arizona juvenile detention center.²⁸

²⁴ Wendy Panner, "Advisors share their time to create a more positive future for those in prison," *Community Viewpoint, Capital Analysts Financial Viewpoints*, February 2007, 1-4.

²⁵ Mary Previte, *Hungry Ghosts* (Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 9-15.

²⁶ Edward Hume, *No Matter How Loud I Shout: A Year in the Life of Juvenile Court* (NY: Touchstone, 1996), xii-xv.

²⁷ Parichart Suwanbubha, "Happy and Peaceful Life through Dialogue at the Youth Detention Center," paper presented 2007 at Mahidol University, Thailand, 2-11.

²⁸ Richard Wahl, et al, 712-13.

Hungry Ghosts: One Woman's Mission to Change Their World, by Mary Previte, is a first-person account of her recollections of a 20-year career as Administrator of the Camden County Juvenile Detention Center, Camden, New Jersey, US.²⁹ Considered the seminal work on juvenile detention in the United States, *Hungry Ghosts* is the first book on the subject of juvenile detention ever published in the United States. Her book is not only a memoir of her years as Administrator, but also a series of personal vignettes of residents, including their creative writings.³⁰ Though Previte's methodology is not research-based and offers no interpretation or classification of spiritual issues, the text does document the impact the children have had on her own life.³¹

A similar text that echoes themes addressed by Previte's *Hungry Ghosts* is the work of journalist Ed Hume in his book, *No Matter How Loud I Shout*.³² Hume was granted permission by the Los Angeles Juvenile Court system in 1994 to spend a year within the walls of the Juvenile Detention Center in Los Angeles County, Inglewood, California, US. He received the honor of writing the "first book to penetrate the wall of secrecy shielding our nation's juvenile courts..."³³ and asserts that the American system of juvenile detention neither protects the community from dangerous children, nor does it save or help the children detained. Hume offers little hope for juvenile justice in America and presents examples of the system's failures through vignettes of children and staff in the detention center.³⁴ Indeed his book exposes the juvenile justice and court system in the United States.

A more positive and programmatic approach to children in detention centers is proposed by Parichart Suwanbubbha in her paper entitled, "Happy and Peaceful Life through

²⁹ Previte, 9-15.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid, 10-11.

³² Hume, xii-xv.

³³ Hume, xii-xv.

³⁴ Ibid, 25-38.

Dialogue at the Youth Detention Center.”³⁵ Suwanbubbha suggests an alternative to the violence within juvenile detention centers that she has witnessed in Thailand. She advocates for dialogue as a therapeutic means to develop and transform lives of children in juvenile detention centers.³⁶

Apart from these three important texts, the existing literature on the specific topic of juvenile detention centers is nonexistent and in great need of further exploration and research. There exists a huge gap in research of any kind on this population of children as well, a field ripe for avid research students to explore juvenile detention. Specifically with respect to the field of spirituality within juvenile detention, this is yet another area in dire need of investigation and research that may lead to reform within the system of juvenile detention. This research study is an attempt to address this void in the literature and to make a beginning toward significant research in the field of spirituality within juvenile detention centers in the United States.

1.2.3.2 Literature on children’s spirituality

However, outside the walls of juvenile detention, there is a growing interest in the study of children’s spirituality, a topic that has begun to intrigue theologians, social scientists, mental health clinicians, and educators.³⁷ In her article from the *International Handbook of Education for Spirituality, Care, and Wellbeing*, Chris Boyatzis reports that the field of children’s spirituality is still in its infancy though interest has spiked since the year 2000.

³⁵ Suwanbubbha, 2-11.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Chris J. Boyatzis, “What Does Spirituality Look Like in a Child?” in *International Handbook of Education for Spirituality, Care, and Wellbeing*, eds. M. De Souza, et al (London: Springer Science and Media, 2009), 48-53.

She records that over half of all existing research on children's spirituality has been conducted within the last 10 years.³⁸

1.2.3.3 Theological approaches to children

With respect to theological approaches to children, there are several different and overlapping methodologies. Within postmodernist theology,³⁹ practical theology,⁴⁰ narrative theology⁴¹ and pastoral care,⁴² the most common denominator is the preferred vehicle of storytelling. Another common thread is the strong recommendation by the majority of writers for a radically different hermeneutic in working with children. Authors including Gerald Loughlin,⁴³ Charles Gerkin,⁴⁴ Ivy Beckwith,⁴⁵ Jerome Berryman,⁴⁶ and Donald Capps⁴⁷ make their case for a hermeneutic that moves beyond the stigma, indifference, and marginalization with which Christianity has treated children.

Bonnie Miller-McLemore has written extensively on the subject of spirituality and children in the context of the modern Christian family. She suggests that children have much to teach about spirituality and where it may occur.⁴⁸ Since Miller's text does not address the population of children in juvenile detention, her omission further highlights the gap in literature about spirituality in a juvenile detention setting. Miller's approach to children's

³⁸ Boyatzis, 48-53.

³⁹ Gary Phillips, "Religious Pluralism in a Postmodern World," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 2nd Ed., ed. David Dockery (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Books, 2001), 135-42.

⁴⁰ Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2008), 4-6.

⁴¹ Gary L. Comstock, "Two Types of Narrative Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 55, No. 4, (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), 687-717.

⁴² Daniel E. Grosseohme, *The Pastoral Care of Children* (NY: Haworth Press, 1999), 37-48.

⁴³ Gerald Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church, and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 62-67.

⁴⁴ Charles Gerkin, *An Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 21.

⁴⁵ Ivy Beckwith, *Postmodern Children's Ministry: Ministry to Children in the 21st Century Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 9-14.

⁴⁶ Jerome W. Berryman, *Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace* (Harrisburg PA: Morehouse, 2009), 5-11.

⁴⁷ Donald Capps, *The Child's Song: The Religious Abuse of Children* (Louisville KY: John Knox Press, 1995), 25-57.

⁴⁸ Bonnie Miller-McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 16.

spirituality raises the same issue that both Clark and Previte address: children and young people are not only important in this world; they have valuable wisdom to teach adults, if they choose to listen.

1.2.3.4 Narrative therapy with children

In addition to the several theological approaches to working with children, the field of narrative therapy⁴⁹ has become a major clinical strategy for the treatment of children. Similar to theological methodologies, storytelling is utilized as a primary vehicle for mental health clinicians working with children. In the regard, narrative therapy is responsible for bringing clinical work with children to the foreground.

1.2.3.5 Interdisciplinary children's literature

One of the most burgeoning areas of study within the field of children's spirituality is the interdisciplinary dialogue that has begun among spirituality, religion, social sciences, and clinical mental health.⁵⁰ Mental health professionals, psychiatrists, and psychologists have begun to consider human spirituality as an integral part of the human psyche. Many authors support the creation of an entirely new hermeneutic for working with children and decry previous marginalization of children, especially from a Christian perspective.⁵¹

More specifically, several researchers have begun to address the clinical relationship between children's spirituality and mental health. Professionals have broadened their scope to include spirituality as an integral part of children's mental health. Several authors now suggest that mental health professionals have an ethical obligation to include a child's spiritual beliefs in treatment plans and needs assessments.⁵² However, those professionals

⁴⁹ Michael White and D. Epston, *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (New York: Norton, 1990), 2-7.

⁵⁰ Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), 98-148.

⁵¹ Loughlin, 62-67.

⁵² Eugene Roehikepartain and Peter Benson, et al, eds., *Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 3-10.

who do see the connection between a child's mental health and spirituality have not completed any research-based study that includes the sample population of children in juvenile detention. Clearly, the possibility of such future inclusion of the detention population does exist.

Thus, it appears that literature in the field of children's spirituality has captured the interest of theologians, social scientists, and educators within a number of fields and academic disciplines. While specific research on the population of children in juvenile detention centers is extremely limited, growing enthusiasm and research about children may eventually include the hitherto marginalized population of juvenile detention.

1.2.3.6 Empirical research on children's spirituality

In her text, *Angels and Aliens: Teenagers, the Media, and the Supernatural*, Lynn Schofield Clark documents an empirical research study of teens and their experiences with the supernatural and mass media.⁵³ Clark does not include children in juvenile detention centers as part of her sample but does address their religious beliefs, especially in the context of Christian evangelicalism. She employs the medium of "pop culture" to dialogue with youth,⁵⁴ but does not develop a research tool to listen, record, and interpret what they believe spiritually. Clark's research also highlights the enormous gap in literature that exists within the field of children and spirituality in juvenile detention centers.

1.2.3.7 Essays on children's spirituality

Another central work on children and spirituality that addresses the specific population of troubled youth is *The On-going Journey: Awakening Spiritual Life in At-Risk Youth*. Robert Coles and psychologist David Elkind introduce and contribute to this collection of essays

⁵³ Lynn Schofield Clark, *From Angels to Aliens: Teenagers, The Media, and the Supernatural* (New York: International Publishers, 2003), 257.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

from four symposiums held at BoysTown, Nebraska from 1989 to 1993.⁵⁵ Although the methodology employed in this volume is not research-based, nor is the subject mainly about children in detention centers, the text offers stories of experience and insight working with troubled children from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Consistent with the work of Clark and Previte, the authors employ the central method of storytelling.

In the *Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, Eugene Roehikepartain and colleagues present a volume of essays that include significant contributions to non-western approaches to spirituality. Many of the contributors in this volume support the view that the spirituality of children has been historically marginalized by the scholarly community until recent interest within the last 10 years.⁵⁶ Though the work does not address the specific population of children in detention centers, this collection of essays by international authors highlights the ongoing marginalization of children's spirituality by mainstream social science and scholarly literature.⁵⁷

1.2.3.8 Clinical work in children's spirituality

There appears to be growing interest among clinicians in the mental health field to address the topic of children spirituality, but not specifically children in detention centers. In his text, *The Secret Spiritual World of Children*,⁵⁸ Tobin Hart, founder of the ChildSpirit Institute for research on children's spirituality, speaks as a clinician and observes that children's spiritual experiences are often dismissed as pathological while he believes that wisdom is not solely the gift of age.⁵⁹ Though Hart's sample does not include children in

⁵⁵ Robert Coles and David Elkind, et al, *The On-going Journey: Awakening Spiritual Life in At-Risk Youth* (Nebraska: BoysTown Press, 1995), 9-10.

⁵⁶ Boyatzis, 48-53.

⁵⁷ Eugene Roehikepartain and Peter Benson, et al, eds., *Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 3-10.

⁵⁸ Tobin Hart, *The Secret Spiritual World of Children* (Novato CA: New World Books, 2003), 3-8.

⁵⁹ Hart, 3-8.

juvenile detention centers, his research further highlights the gap in research in this area of children's spirituality.

Co-editor of the *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, Brendan Hyde presents a history of international research on children's spirituality in his text, *Children and Spirituality: Searching for Meaning and Connectedness*. Hyde documents five characteristics of children's spirituality.⁶⁰ While his work does not address children in detention centers, he does wrestle with how to converse with children on a spiritual plane. Hyde's work further illustrates the gap in literature within the field of children's spirituality, including its omission of the marginalized population of children in detention centers.

Furthermore, there are several clinical studies on the relationship between adolescent mental health issues and spirituality. For example, in an article entitled "Spirituality, Suicide, and the Juvenile Justice System," published in the *Southern Medical Journal*, Richard Wahl and colleagues propose that spirituality is often overlooked as a factor in the mental health of children and adolescents, especially those in crisis.⁶¹ The authors recommend that a spiritual assessment tool could be useful in assessing children in times of emotional crisis. They further suggest that clinicians have an ethical obligation to incorporate spirituality into a comprehensive, culturally competent plan of care.⁶²

⁶⁰ Brendan Hyde, *Children and Spirituality: Searching for Meaning and Connectedness* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2008), 5-11.

⁶¹ Richard Wahl, Sian Cotton, and Patricia Harrison-Monroe, "Spirituality, Adolescent Suicide, and the Juvenile Justice System," *Southern Medical Journal*, 101 (7), July 2008, 711-15.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶² "PubMed is a service of the US National Library of Medicine® that provides free access to Medline, a database of indexed citations and abstracts to medical, nursing, dental, veterinary, health care, and preclinical sciences journal articles includes additional selected life sciences journals not in MEDLINE; adds new citations Tuesday through Saturday; was developed by the National Center for Biotechnology Information as part of the Entrez retrieval system." US National Library of Medicine, website viewed 5/9/12.

⁶³ Alethea Desrosiers, Brian Kelley, and Lisa Miller, "Parent and peer relationships and relational spirituality in adolescents and young adults," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, Vol. 3 (1), 2011, 39-54.

Two articles listed on the public database of *PubMed*, which offers free access to articles in the life sciences and biomedics,⁶³ address the topic of spirituality, religion, and their role in the possible reduction of suicidal ideation. Though these articles do not address the specific population of children in detention centers, they support the hypothesis that an individual's involvement with either spirituality or religion may decrease the incidence of suicidal ideation and attempts.

In her dissertation, "Relational Spirituality in Adolescents," Alethea Desrosiers investigates the construct of relational spirituality.⁶⁴ As opposed to spirituality viewed as vertical and introspective, relational spirituality addresses youth and their network of relationships. Referenced in an article from the journal *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, her dissertation sample of 615 adolescents from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds is measured against traditional scales, including the Beck Depression Inventory and the Parental Transparency Scale.⁶⁵ Although children in juvenile detention centers are not included in her research sample, Desrosiers again highlights the gap in literature that exists in the field of children in juvenile detention centers.

Thus, it appears that research in the field of children's spirituality within juvenile detention is an area of inquiry, the surface of which has barely been scratched. As mentioned by several contributors to the *Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, the general field of children's spirituality has been historically marginalized by social scientists until only 10 years ago.⁶⁶ It is also possible that the specific population of children in juvenile detention centers may be among the children further

⁶⁵Desrosiers, 39-54.

⁶⁶Roehikepartain and Benson, et al, eds., 3-10.

marginalized from significant consideration, perhaps by a bias against working with children who may be deviant or pathological due to their criminal charges. Clearly, more research and study are indicated and required.

This research study represents a beginning in research and data collection within the population of children in juvenile detention centers in the United States.

1.3 THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM

1.3.1 The nature and context of the theological issue

How do children locked in a detention center cope with life behind bars? Do they have any spiritual life? Can it be talked about? Troubled children, especially those confined, are well defended psychologically.⁶⁷ How might these children be engaged in a respectful, relational way in order to find out the answers to these questions?

The Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center offers many programs to support creativity and freedom of expression among our juveniles. These programs are extracurricular to their daily education courses, required by New Jersey state law.⁶⁸ The Social Work Services Department sponsors these extracurricular programs, including creative writing, religious programming, pet therapy, Academy For the Fine Arts (choral, instruments, dance, and acting), meditation, female-specific programs, gang intervention groups, anger management, substance abuse groups, life skills, recreational computer games, t'ai chi, and yoga. Further information on these programs is available on the Ocean County Juvenile Services website: Oceancountyjuvenileservices.com.

⁶⁷ Ellen F. Wachtel, *Treating Troubled Children and Their Families* (NY: Guilford Press, 1994), 284-287.

⁶⁸ State of New Jersey, New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission, *Manual of Standards for Juvenile Detention Centers*, 2001-2016, 63-67.

In 2007, the pet therapy program was highlighted in the *Capital Analysts Financial Viewpoints* monthly newsletter in an article entitled, “Advisors Share Their Time to Create a More Positive Future for Those in Prison.”⁶⁹ Gerald Bowden, Administrator of the Ocean County Dept. of Juvenile Services, which encompasses the Juvenile Detention Center, states that when he attends monthly meetings of the NJJDA⁷⁰ (New Jersey Juvenile Detention Association), he is often told that the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center is the forerunner in New Jersey for social service programs.

Juveniles in the Ocean County Detention Center respond positively to these extracurricular programs and attend on a volunteer basis. Yet most of these programs for them are merely “something to do.” For example, church groups often give candy, and co-educational classes are opportunities to socialize. Children in our care seem bored with life. Yet where do these children live? Can their spiritual life, if any, be measured in a scientific, evidence-based way?

1.3.2 The theological category of spirituality

The specific topic of this research study is the theological category of spirituality. Although difficult to define and increasingly separate from any specific religious tradition, spirituality seems to concern life experience more than questions of doctrine.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Wendy Panner, “Advisors share their time to create a more positive future for those in prison,” *Community Viewpoint, Capital Analysts Financial Viewpoints*, February 2007, 1-4.

⁷⁰ “The New Jersey Juvenile Detention Association is established to enable personnel employed in juvenile detention facilities throughout the State of New Jersey to join together in mutual efforts to improve child caring standards; to strengthen programs; to secure adequate staff and facilities; to promote desirable personnel practices; to gain appropriate recognition of the importance of detention as a dynamic factor in the total correctional process; and to form a representative body capable of developing group opinion on professional matters and to speak with authority for the membership.” NJJDA Constitution (accessed April 7, 2011).

⁷¹ Philip Sheldrake, ed., *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 2005), 4-10.

1.3.2.1 Working definition of spirituality

The term *spirituality* as a theological category has several meanings and connotations that may add to its confusion and lack of clarity. For example, the definition of *spiritual* in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* suggests this possible confusion by using a tautology to define the term: "1/ of, relating to, consisting of, or affecting the spirit...."⁷² In fact, while an interest in religion and spirituality has increased in the last 20 years, reaching a consensus on what these terms actually mean has not made clear progress, and the two separate terms remain "fuzzy."⁷³ Before the 20th century, the categories of religion and spirituality were often used interchangeably.⁷⁴ However, modern intellectual and cultural forces have begun to differentiate between the "private" and "public" in modern life. Indeed the increase in the significance of the sciences, as well as the sophistication of modern biblical scholarship, has blocked an agreement on what these terms actually mean and how they might be differentiated.⁷⁵ However, the etymology of the word *spirituality* does reveal some further clarity concerning what the term does address. The classical root of the word *spirit* comes from the Latin *spiritus*, also meaning "breath."⁷⁶ In many ancient cultures, including Hebrew, the word *breath* is associated with soul, the source of life itself.⁷⁷

Robert C. Fuller suggests the following:

...Spirituality exists wherever we struggle with the issues of how our lives fit into the greater scheme of things...We encounter spiritual issues every time we wonder where the universe comes from, why we are here, or what happens when we die. We also become spiritual when we become moved by values such as beauty, love, or creativity that seem to reveal a meaning or power beyond our visible world. An idea

⁷² Frederick C. Mish, ed., et al, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Ed.* (Springfield MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2002), 1130.

⁷³ Brian J. Zinnbauer, et al, "Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 36, No. 4, Dec. 1997, 549-564.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 550-552.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 554-564.

⁷⁶ Paul Kurtz, ed., "The Breath of God: Identifying Spiritual Energy," *Skeptical Odysseys* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2001), 363.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 363-374.

or practice is 'spiritual' when it reveals our personal desire to establish a felt-relationship with the deepest meanings or powers governing life.⁷⁸

In a different light, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet distinguishes between religion and spirituality in the following way:

Spirituality I take to be concerned with those qualities of the human spirit--such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony, which bring happiness to both self and others. While ritual and prayer... are directly connected with religious faith, these inner qualities need not be.⁷⁹

As a separate theological discipline, spirituality has begun to emerge in the last 20 years as a new, interdisciplinary research field distinct from both systematic and moral theology.⁸⁰

Spirituality also appears to be distinct from the field of psychology, as well as pastoral counseling. However, spirituality is also related to both.⁸¹

The *New Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* discusses spirituality as a category of academic theology and divides the topic into three parts: 1/ historical spirituality; 2/ theological spirituality; and 3/ anthropological or hermeneutical spirituality.⁸² For the purpose of this research proposal, the term *spirituality* is referred to in the third sense: anthropological or hermeneutical spirituality, as follows:

The anthropological or hermeneutical approach is distinctively new in that it sees Christian spirituality...as a regional area within the broader field of spirituality which is neither necessarily religious or...Christian. It begins with the recognition that the capacity for the spiritual quest... can be realized in many ways within the traditions of the great world religions and in primal religions...It is oriented primarily toward research into what is actually experienced in the Christian search for God in its concrete and experiential reality and in the constructive work of reinterpreting that experience in and for the contemporary context.⁸³

⁷⁸ Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and Sacralization of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 60.

⁷⁹ Albert Wong, site manager, IThou.org (accessed April 7, 2011).

⁸⁰ Sheldrake, ed., 6-10.

⁸¹ Ibid, 6-10.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid, 7-8.

Thus, spirituality may be regarded as a theological vehicle that emphasizes individual experience as a basis for knowledge and the development of belief.

In William James' text, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, he develops a philosophical method called "radical empiricism," which he defines as an inductive process whereby an individual's concepts arise directly from his or her experiences.⁸⁴ Concepts are secondary and tentative, subject to revision based on revised data from new experiences.⁸⁵ James further champions the value and legitimacy of experience as a basis for knowledge. He does not contend that individual spiritual experience is constant, stable, or objective. Rather, James views objectivity as an inappropriate conceptual imposition on reality that should not detract from the truth of one's experience.⁸⁶

1.3.2.2 Spirituality and cognitive development

Since this research study addresses what detained children believe spiritually, the category of spirituality seems appropriate as a vehicle for study, especially because children base their beliefs more on experience than abstract thought.⁸⁷ In Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, he delineates four stages of thinking:

Sensorimotor (birth to age 2)
Preoperational (age 2- 8)
Concrete (age 7-14)
Formal operations (age 14 to young adult)⁸⁸

In the third stage of concrete thinking, he notes that the adolescents begin an ongoing transition around age 11 from experience-based, concrete thinking to a more formal stage of

⁸⁴ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (NY: Random House, 1901), 3-35.

⁸⁵ James R., "Big Book Theology: "We Agnostics and William James," *Stepstudy.org: 12-Step History and Practice*, May 21, 2008 (accessed April 13, 2011).

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ J.W. Santrock, *A Topical Approach to Life Span Development* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 221-223.

⁸⁸ Kathleen S. Berger, *The Developing Person through the Life Span* (New York: Macmillan, 2004), 34-45.

abstract thinking, which they reach as young adults.⁸⁹ Although the author has interviewed children and adolescents from ages 13 to 19, the majority of juvenile residents in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center fall between the ages of 14 and 16. For example, in 2010, of the 253 juvenile admissions, 71% were between the ages of 14 and 16.⁹⁰ Thus, based on Piaget's theory, their responses to spiritual issues have been based more on experience than abstract thinking.

1.3.2.3 Tractability of spirituality

The category of spirituality also allows greater latitude to the interviewer. For example, the topic of spirituality does provide greater freedom within the United States government system, with a clear separation between church and state.⁹¹ Since juvenile detention centers are county government facilities, staff members are not free to dialogue with juvenile residents about their personal religious beliefs.⁹²

Spirituality may also be viewed as a broader, more amorphous category than religion.⁹³ When working with young people and children, it is helpful to allow them as much creativity as possible outside the boundaries of specific categories. For example, two questions included in the Resident Questionnaire utilized in this study are the following:

1/ "What makes you feel free?" and 2/ "What do you value?" These open-ended questions may be viewed as philosophical, spiritual, or religious. It appears that asking children about freedom and value seems to open a door to their spirituality. It also may be true that these children have responded to questions in this study from a depth that might not have been accessed from asking specifically religious questions.

⁸⁹ Berger, 34-45.

⁹⁰ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River NJ, US, 2010.

⁹¹ "Jefferson's Letter to the Danbury Baptists" (June 1998), *Library of Congress Information Bulletin* (accessed March 23, 2011).

⁹² *Policy and Procedures Manual*, Ocean County Department of Juvenile Services, Ocean County, New Jersey, March 1995, (revised Jan. 1, 2011), 3-8.

⁹³ Sheldrake, ed., 2-7.

1.3.2.4 Spirituality in Alcoholics Anonymous

The category of spirituality also has a personal foundation in this study. Spirituality assumed personal significance for the author when she entered recovery for alcoholism in the early 1980s. The term became a vehicle to express personal experiences of healing within the community of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA),⁹⁴ encouraging a new way to speak about faith, hope, and healing.

In AA, the term *spirituality* is often used in place of religion so that recovering alcoholics with no interest or background in religion might be free to explore “God as we understand Him.”⁹⁵ In this research study, children detained in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center have also responded to the invitation to explore “God as we understand Him”-- or Her. These children seem to have discovered a new way to talk about their own lives through the lens of spirituality.

1.3.3 The use of narrative theology in the study

The field of narrative theology was developed during the last half of the twentieth century by a group of theologians at Yale Divinity School including George Lindbeck, Hans Wilhelm Frei, and other Yale scholars influenced by Karl Barth and Thomas Aquinas.⁹⁶ Although a broad and somewhat controversial term, narrative theology is an approach to theology that emphasizes meaning in story.⁹⁷ The use of the term *story* may either pertain to God’s story throughout history, culminating in the story of Jesus Christ, or it may refer to

⁹⁴ Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is an international movement with a stated "primary purpose" of individuals within the AA fellowship remaining sober and "helping other alcoholics achieve sobriety." (AA Preamble). Founded in 1935 by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith, the fellowship claims to have 2 million members worldwide. aa.org (accessed April 12, 2011).

⁹⁵ *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1952), 34-38.

⁹⁶ Gary L. Comstock, "Two Types of Narrative Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 55, No. 4, (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), 687-717.

⁹⁷ Gerald Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church, and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), x-xi.

the stories of a people, an individual, or the narrative of an entire world.⁹⁸ Narrative theology was developed in a theological climate where the intellectual world had become increasingly concerned with issues of racism, nationalism, and the oppressed.⁹⁹

Narrative theology may also be viewed as a reaction against theological meaning derived solely from systematic theology as a conceptual framework. It emphasizes our relationship to God based more on our own story--our own experience--rather than from ideology or dogma.¹⁰⁰ Stanley Hauerwas suggests that "... to be a Christian is to be joined, to be put in connection with others so that our stories cannot be told without somehow also telling their stories. Through such telling and retelling we believe that God makes us part of God's story."¹⁰¹ Hauerwas believes that all narratives also need a community context in which their stories can be remembered and interpreted.¹⁰²

The use of story is also an important spiritual component in Alcoholics Anonymous. Often read at AA meetings is the following passage: "Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now."¹⁰³ By sharing personal narratives of suffering and rebirth, people involved in the process create and recreate their own memory. They also create a sense of hope for others.¹⁰⁴ In this research study, narrative theology is utilized as a foundational spiritual metaphor as children in the Ocean County Detention Center have been given the opportunity to tell their own stories.

⁹⁸ Comstock, 691-717.

⁹⁹ Stanley Hauerwas, "The Church as God's New Language," in *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation*, Garret Green, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 179-198.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 193-197.

¹⁰¹ Stanley Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1995), xiii.

¹⁰² Marc Galanter and Lee Ann Kaskutas, eds., *Research in Alcoholics Anonymous and Spirituality in Addiction Recovery*, American Society of Addictive Medicine (Totowa NJ: Humana Press, 2008), 198-200.

¹⁰³ *Alcoholics Anonymous* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1976), 58.

¹⁰⁴ Galanter and Kaskutas, eds., 198-200.

1.3.4 The use of narrative therapy and narrative medicine in the study

The field of narrative therapy is a distinct type of counseling and psychotherapy developed in the 1970s and 80s by Australian Michael White and his New Zealand colleague David Epston. Their theory purports that the identities of human beings are shaped by the accounts of their lives found in stories or narratives.¹⁰⁵ In clinical practice, narrative therapy supports clients in fully describing their life stories, as well as the possibilities associated with those stories. Narrative therapy holds that identity is chiefly shaped by these narratives or stories, whether uniquely personal or general to a particular culture. Within the therapeutic process, these self-reported narratives may be explored by the therapist and client and eventually retold in a healthier, more realistic manner.¹⁰⁶

Similarly, Lewis Mehl-Madrona has created a new field within the study of medicine that also focuses on storytelling as a vehicle for personal healing. Known as narrative medicine, this field links the actual healing outcome in treatment directly to the client's ability and investment in telling his or her own story.¹⁰⁷ Narrative medicine attempts to restore the power of the patient's own story in the healing process and stresses how conventional medicine tends to ignore the account of the patient. Mehl-Madrona proposes a reinvention of medicine that includes indigenous healing methods that have been effective through telling and listening to patient's stories.¹⁰⁸ In this research study, narrative therapy and narrative medicine inform and support the emphasis of this research project on the elements of story, experience, and the healing function of telling one's own story to another human being.

¹⁰⁵ Michael White and David Epston, *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (New York: Norton, 1990), 2-7.

¹⁰⁶ Michael White, *Map of Narrative Practice* (New York: Norton, 2007), 5-8.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis Mehl-Madrona and Thom Hartmann, *Narrative Medicine: The Use of History and Story in the Healing Process* (Washington: Big Bear & Co., 2007), 25-33.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

1.3.5 The context of pastoral theology in the study

1.3.5.1 Working definition of *pastoral theology*

While a student at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, in the 1970s and 80s, the author had the privilege of studying under Dr. Seward Hiltner, an American pioneer in the evolution of the field of pastoral theology as it became a central part of seminary theological education.¹⁰⁹ As he explains in his book *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, the discipline of pastoral theology is theology that deals with the shepherding function of the pastor. Hiltner defines the three functions of shepherding as “healing, sustaining, and guiding.”¹¹⁰ This specific branch of theology is concerned with the practical application of theology in a pastoral context. Hiltner asserts that the field of pastoral theology addresses what few other branches in theology do--the serious questions being raised inside and outside the church: the problems of everyday life.¹¹¹

In the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, children grapple daily with problems of everyday life. Often these children worry that they have no place to go when they are released from detention. In the *Admissions Records* of 2010, 21% of children admitted to the Detention Center had parents who were legally qualified as *homeless*,¹¹² a definition including those persons with no legal address through the post office, as well as those in

¹⁰⁹ Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (New York: Abingdon, 1958), 22-25.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 22-25.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 218-221.

¹¹² *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River NJ, 2010.

¹¹² “The McKinney-Vento Definition of “Homeless”: (A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence... and (B) includes children or youth who are sharing the housing of other persons...; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds...; are living in transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement...; (C) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned building, or similar settings....” State of New Jersey Dept. of Education website (accessed March 24, 2011).

¹¹³ *Social Work Services Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, NJ, 2000- 2010.

transitory housing, seasonal motels, and those receiving housing assistance provided by federal or state aid.¹¹³

In addition to where they might live, detained children worry about what will happen to them with respect to their juvenile charges and the court process. How do these children cope with the anxiety of being powerless in the face of the court process once they have been arrested and detained? For more serious charges including robbery, aggravated assault, attempted murder, murder, and sexual crimes, juveniles are detained at least six months before their cases are adjudicated.¹¹⁴ Once children are sentenced, they often develop new anxieties regarding where they will be sent next. Some children move on to the New Jersey prison for adolescents in Jamesburg, New Jersey.¹¹⁵

Still other residents are transferred to state-run programs for specific issues including behavior-based and substance abuse issues. Other children are returned to their homes and families. In this case, they return to the same environment of abuse or neglect from whence they have come. This cycle of family dysfunction adds significantly to the high rate of recidivism (annual recidivism rate: approximately 56%)¹¹⁶ in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center.

In 2010, 27% of children admitted to the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center had pre-existing, open cases with the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) in New Jersey, the state agency that oversees children in families with documented cases of abuse

¹¹³ *Admission Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River NJ, 2000-2010.

¹¹⁴ The New Jersey Training School at Jamesburg is the Juvenile Justice Commission's largest facility currently housing 300 male juveniles. It was opened in 1867 as a home for troubled youth. Residents range in age from 12- 20 (State of New Jersey, Juvenile Justice Commission website, accessed March 23, 2011).

¹¹⁵ *Admission Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River NJ, 2000-2010.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

and neglect.¹¹⁷ This cycle of family dysfunction adds significantly to the high rate of recidivism endemic in the *Admissions Records* of Ocean County Juvenile Detention.

Once children are admitted to the detention center, they must try and get along in their new surroundings. Some children are more vulnerable than others, either due to their size, their sexual orientation, the nature of their juvenile charges, or the fact that they cannot get along with others. Thus, children often struggle daily with how to protect themselves from other residents. In this context, Seward Hiltner's definition of pastoral theology as "healing, sustaining, and guiding"¹¹⁸ is germane as a way of addressing the problems of everyday life that children in detention centers face.

1.3.5.2 How pastoral theology informs the study

A unique way in which pastoral theology informs this research study is by involving the researcher in the dynamic of the spiritual relationship developed with each child interviewed. Yet what is the context of such a dynamic spiritual relationship between an adult and a child?

Bonnie Miller-McLemore has written extensively on the subject of spirituality and children in the context of the modern Christian family. She suggests that children have much to teach about spirituality and where it may occur. While spirituality is usually defined by adults within a rational and verbal framework,¹¹⁹ more may be discovered by meeting children on their own turfs. In a detention center, often a place of chaos and emotional turmoil, what may be learned by engaging children about spirituality from their own frame of reference? As she writes, "...children actually exemplify wisdom that somehow emerges in the chaos itself....children encourage us to reconsider ways in which spirituality for

¹¹⁷ State of New Jersey, Dept. of Children and Families website (accessed April 26, 2011).

¹¹⁸ Hiltner, 23.

¹¹⁹ Bonnie Miller-McLemore, "Feminism, Children, and Mothering: 3 Books and 3 Children Later," *Journal of Childhood and Religion*, Vol. 2 (1), Jan. 2011, 1-32.

children and adults takes shape in the midst of everyday rituals, practices, and habits that shape everyday life.”¹²⁰

In theological seminary education, students of pastoral theology are recommended to complete units of clinical pastoral education (CPE), usually in a hospital, mental hospital, or prison setting.¹²¹ The spiritual power of CPE lies in engaging students and their spiritual journeys to the educational process itself. Alternative settings including hospitals and prisons confront students with the overwhelming and largely unsolvable problems of everyday life, as Hiltner suggests.¹²² Within such alternative settings, CPE supervision groups are held daily so that students are confronted with their own spiritual issues as they deal daily with patients with their own set of issues.¹²³ It is the dynamic spiritual relationship developed between the shepherd and the sheep that is unique to the clinical work of CPE. It is this dynamic of spiritual work in a clinical setting that is also a central, guiding principal of this research project.

In CPE, students utilize the verbatim format to record conversations with patients or clients. These verbatims, written records of conversations between student and patient, highlight the student’s spiritual and clinical issues, as well as the patient’s issues.¹²⁴ Weekly verbatims are then used in the CPE supervision group to process specific spiritual issues

¹²⁰ Miller-McLemore, 1-32.

¹²¹ “The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. is a professional association committed to advancing experience-based theological education for seminarians, clergy and lay persons of diverse cultures, ethnic groups and faith traditions. We establish standards, certify supervisors and accredit programs and centers in varied settings. ACPE programs promote the integration of personal history, faith tradition and the behavioral sciences in the practice of spiritual care.” (The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. website (accessed April 23, 2011).

¹²² Hiltner, 22-26.

¹²³ Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. website (accessed April 26, 2011).

¹²⁴ acperesearch.net (accessed April 27, 2011).

facing each student chaplain.¹²⁵ In many ways, this group supervision process is an intense, relational form of professional therapy. As Anton Boisen, one of the founders of CPE suggests in his writings, students are trained to read people as “living human documents.”¹²⁶

The central research tool employed in this study is modeled after the spirit of the verbatim, that is, recording responses to specific questions in the language and idiom of the child interviewed. Although the author’s responses have not been recorded within each interview, spiritual issues of the author are examined and discussed in Chapter Six of this research study.

There is also research within the field of clinical pastoral education that attempts to begin a dialogue between persons of faith and persons of science, especially since many CPE settings are in hospitals. As such, instruments of research, data collection, and scientific validation have become more common within the spiritual community.¹²⁷ It is within this context of a dialogue between science and spirituality that this research study has been conducted.

1.3.6 The philosophy of hermeneutics in the study

1.3.6.1 Working definition of *hermeneutics*

Hermeneutics is defined as the branch of philosophy that addresses interpretation. Derived from the Greek god Hermes, “who bridged the ontological gap between the divine and the human, the visible and the invisible, dreams and waking, and the conscious and the unconscious, He is the god who crosses boundaries...He is the god of gaps.”¹²⁸ In Richard

¹²⁵ acperesearch.net (accessed April 27, 2011).

¹²⁶ Robert David Leas, *Anton Theophilus Boisen* (Colorado: Outskirts Press, 2009), 23 ff.

¹²⁷ Lindsay Carey and Christopher Nevell, “CPE and the Value of Empirical Research: Examples from Australian and New Zealand Data,” *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*, Vol. 12, issues 1 & 2, Sept. 2002, 53-65.

¹²⁸ Richard E. Palmer, “The Relevance of Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics to 36 Topics or Fields of Human Activity,” lecture delivered at Southern Illinois Univ., US, April 1, 1999, (accessed April 29, 2011).

Palmer's text *Hermeneutics*, he poses the question of the nature of truth and suggests that the actual place of truth may not exist in a particular text, or in any one specific interpretation of a text or an experience. Rather, there may not be any actual "once and for all" interpretation that stands as the "right interpretation."¹²⁹

In conversations with children in the Ocean County Detention Center, something healing and transformative occurs in listening to them. It is as if the conversation begins to exist in another dimension, a spiritual one. As a result of this personal conversation between adult and child, a "third thing," or a third interpretation of truth, sometimes occurs. Viewed through the lens of hermeneutics, a new truth emerges from the mutual interaction, a truth that stands as original and valid as a new experience of how God may enter human experience.

For example, pianist Murray Perahia is considered one of the principal interpreters of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Goldberg Variations*,¹³⁰ written for solo instrument in 1737. One might pose the following question: Does Perahia's interpretation "make" the music, or does Bach's music allow Perahia's interpretation to be great? Or is it a third person hearing the music that interprets Bach and Perahia? In the larger event of the *Goldberg Variations*, from whence does the truth emerge? What hermeneutic is more important, if any: the musical composition, the artist's interpretation, or the listener's interpretation? Or does a new understanding of truth emerge from the interaction of these several voices? And if so, does the new voice of truth hold as much validity as any prior voice?

In Palmer's understanding of hermeneutics, any interpretation, including biblical, becomes inclusive for the most marginalized voice. If the marginalized voice of children in

¹²⁹ Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Illinois: Northwestern Univ. Press), 1969, 10 ff.

¹³⁰ Bruce Duffie, "Interview with Murray Perahia," Radio station WNIB, recorded March 13, 1997, Chicago, IL; transcription placed on WNIB website 2010 (accessed March 8, 2011).

detention centers is considered,¹³¹ is it possible that their voices may have the power to change the hermeneutic? If so, children in detention centers have much to teach.

1.3.6.2 How the author's spiritual hermeneutic has been affected in the study

The author's exploration of the nature and location of truth in this research study has revealed how much the study had affected her own spirituality. Thus, Chapter Six documents the author's spiritual evolution in the course of this study. In this sense, the research study assumes an added dimension beyond the scope of the data collection and interpretation.

In this regard, this research study has become a reflection of spirituality at a personal level, in the tradition of Seward Hiltner in the field of pastoral theology.¹³² The question of healing itself is one of the fundamental issues the study addresses theologically. For example, how is the issue of healing related to the broader category of spirituality? Is it possible that the 200 children in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center may have experienced healing in the course of the interview process? Is it also possible that the author may have experienced healing in the course of the interview process?

Another theological question raised by the research study is the role of providence. Is there a mutual identification between the author and the children in the research sample? Chapter Six examines the level of spiritual and psychological integration of the author as an integral part of the research and interpretation process. In this sense, a qualitative aspect of the methodology utilized in this research study echoes the core of clinical pastoral

¹³¹ World childhood foundation.org (accessed April 20, 2011).

¹³² Hiltner, 200 ff.

education, as Hiltner envisioned this level of spiritual, psychological and personal integration in his own work in pastoral theology.¹³³

1.3.7 The nature and significance of spiritual healing in the study

A common theme within the fields of narrative therapy,¹³⁴ narrative theology,¹³⁵ and Alcoholics Anonymous¹³⁶ is a belief in the power of sharing personal stories in order to effect the healing process--whether that healing is physical, psychological, or emotional.

1.3.7.1 The function of listening in the process of healing

Social workers in a detention center setting are often asked to listen to a child who may be in emotional distress. Thus, listening is explored in this thesis as a spiritual category. The process of listening to children's pain often creates a change in their countenance. They may become less agitated and more composed. Sometimes children's emotions change. They may cry or appear to be close to tears. Often children seem to become more composed at the end of a conversation with a staff person. Thus, the spiritual nature and value of listening as directly connected to healing is explored as a theological category in Chapter Five.

One thing that listening does is to establish respect for the person speaking. It is a welcoming act that signals to the person that one is present, ready to give attention and thereby to "welcome the stranger."¹³⁷ Bonnie Miller-McLemore has written several books on the general subject of creating spiritual relationships with children. Based on her own

¹³³ Hiltner, 20ff.

¹³⁴ Michael White, *Map of Narrative Practice* (New York: Norton, 2007), 5-8.

¹³⁵ Gary L. Comstock, "Two Types of Narrative Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 55, No. 4, (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), 687-717.

¹³⁶ Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is an international movement with a stated "primary purpose" of individuals within the AA fellowship remaining sober and "helping other alcoholics achieve sobriety." (AA Preamble). Founded in 1935 by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith, the fellowship claims to have 2 million members worldwide. aa.org (accessed April 12, 2011).

¹³⁷ Lloyd Steffen, "The Listening Point," *The Christian Century*, Nov. 21-28, 1990, 1087-1088.

struggles to find spirituality within the context of family, children and professional life, she seeks to elevate children to persons of wisdom who can reveal a new spirituality through their own eyes.¹³⁸ In her book, *Let the Children Come: Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective*, Miller suggests that “...children need care that respects them as persons, regards them as capable of good and bad, and values them as gifts....”¹³⁹

Listening has also been acknowledged by the field of psychiatry as a crucial element in psychological healing if the listening occurs from depth and is accompanied by a healthy and genuine sense of empathy.¹⁴⁰ Listening has also been endorsed by the medical profession as a necessary skill often overlooked or completely forgotten in the healing process of physical illness.¹⁴¹

The function of listening is also a crucial element in narrative therapy¹⁴² and narrative medicine¹⁴³ as the doctor or therapist listens intently to the person telling his or her own story. Similarly in Alcoholics Anonymous,¹⁴⁴ listening is a critical element as people listen to others share their stories of pain and transformation.

Margaret Wheatley, who has studied corporate behavior in different countries around the world, tells the story of many women who testified at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Hearings in South Africa.¹⁴⁵ A result of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No. 34 of 1995, the TRC hearings were held in Cape Town, South

¹³⁸ Bonnie Miller-McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Care of Children as Spiritual Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 2-4.

¹³⁹ Miller-McLemore, *Let the Children Come: Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 164-165.

¹⁴⁰ S. W. Jackson, “The Listening Healer in the History of Psychological Healing,” *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 1992, 1623-1632.

¹⁴¹ Richard Druss, *Listening to Patients* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 3-7.

¹⁴² Comstock, 687-717.

¹⁴³ Mehl-Madrona and Hartmann, 25-33.

¹⁴⁴ *Alcoholics Anonymous* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1976), 58.

¹⁴⁵ Margaret J. Wheatley, “Listening as Healing,” *Shambhala Sun*, Dec. 2004, 3-4.

Africa to mark the end of apartheid.¹⁴⁶ The mission of the TRC was to allow witnesses of human atrocities in South Africa an opportunity to testify about their experiences toward a goal of reparation and possible rehabilitation.¹⁴⁷ Wheatley reports that in the process of telling the stories of their own atrocities, many of the women who testified claimed to be healed by the power of their own testimonies.¹⁴⁸ In this research study, the phenomenon of spiritual healing through the vehicle of listening is further explored as a theological category in Chapter Five.

1.3.7.2 The nature of forgiveness in the process of spiritual healing

Since forgiveness may occur in the context of one person confessing, or telling one's story to another, it is another context in which healing may occur. Often children in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center ask staff members if they (the children) might be forgiven for what they have done, either for something in their lives before detention, or often involving the alleged crime they had committed to place them in detention. Is it possible that staff members may function as vessels of God's forgiveness for these children?

Similarly, many times the content of a child's confession might bring to mind a similar personal experience in the listener's mind. Is it possible there is a healing connection between staff and these children? Are these children also acting as vessels of God's forgiveness? In what ways has healing occurred in the context of these 200 interviews? Can healing through forgiveness be measured?

¹⁴⁶ Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, "Survivors' Perceptions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Suggestions for the Final Report," Sept. 25, 2006, (accessed March 25, 2011).

¹⁴⁶ Jay A. Vora and Erika Vora, "The Effectiveness of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Perceptions of Xhosa, Afrikaner, and English South Africans." *Journal of Black Studies* 34.3, 2004, 301-322.

¹⁴⁷ Wheatley, 3-4.

There have been studies attempting to measure forgiveness in clinical trials.¹⁴⁹ For example, R.D. Enright is viewed as a pioneer in the field of scientific research on forgiveness. He and his students at the University of Wisconsin have devised scientific scales to measure forgiveness results using educational tests.¹⁵⁰ Enright has also applied these assessment tools to situations of global conflict.¹⁵¹ Children in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center may be candidates for healing through forgiveness, just as staff members may stand in need of the healing power of forgiveness from them. The theological categories of healing and forgiveness are explored in further depth in Chapters Five and Six.

1.4 EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.4.1 Practical value

As previously noted, there appears to be little written on the specific topic of what children in juvenile detention centers believe about spiritual things. There is no empirical study based on interviews with this population, the data from which has been interpreted and categorized in any theological way. As such, this research study begins to address this massive void with an empirical study of 200 male juveniles in a specific detention center.

The implications of this research study may be particularly useful to other students and professionals working in the field of juvenile detention and juvenile justice, in whatever setting or country they may find themselves. This study may also be of special interest to those interested in understanding and encouraging young people in a detention setting. This

¹⁴⁹ Radhi, Al-Mabuk, Robert Enright, and Paul Cardis, "Forgiveness Education with Parentally Love-deprived Late Adolescents," *Journal of Moral Education*, Vol. 24, 1995, 427-444.

¹⁵⁰ J.A. Knutson, R.D. Enright, and B. Garber, "Validating the Developmental Pathway of Forgiveness," *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 2008, #86, 193-199.

¹⁵¹ R.D. Enright, et al, "Waging Peace through Forgiveness in Belfast, Northern Ireland II: Educational Programs for Mental Health Improvement of Children," *Journal of Research in Education*, fall 2007, 63-78.

research study may also support detained children in expressing themselves to speak freely to another human being about things of a spiritual nature.

1.4.2 Originality of the study

At this point, no research-based project that attempts to categorize the spiritual beliefs of children in a juvenile detention setting exists. Further, there has not been any attempt to analyze such collected data and to categorize responses around a series of questions developed in a questionnaire. This research study offers an original questionnaire, the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) as a data collection instrument for the collection and interpretation of data. Finally, there is no research that offers practical suggestions to others in the field of juvenile detention and juvenile justice about how to encourage children to talk about spiritual matters in a secure setting.

A further significance of this research study is its inclusion of a chapter (Chapter Six) on the evolution of the author's spirituality and theology in the course of the project. In this regard, this study moves beyond the scope of data-driven research. It is a reflection on spirituality at a personal level, in the tradition of the ground-breaking work of Seward Hiltner in the field of pastoral theology.¹⁵²

1.4.3 Urgency of the study

The urgency of this research study is two-fold: 1/ the young age of the children and youth held in juvenile detention centers speaks directly to their formation as young adults; and 2/ in times of emotional pain, the author has observed that issues are often closer to the psychological and spiritual surface.

¹⁵² Hiltner, 215 ff.

Children in the Ocean County Detention Center often appear to be in acute emotional pain. The sources of this pain may include being separated from their families, guilt and fear concerning their juvenile charges, and anxiety about being with other juvenile residents in close proximity. Based on this research study, it appears that a spiritual intervention with these children, consisting of an interview and a research tool like the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) may make a difference in their lives at a time of personal crisis that may affect the rest of their lives.

1.4.3.1 The potential for spiritual formation and character development

How do children in detention centers have the opportunity to grow in character? There are a number of studies on adolescents and the tasks they face at certain ages, including Robert Havighurst's work on the concept of a "teachable moment." As he suggests in his text, *Human Development and Education*, "when the timing is right, the ability to learn a particular task will be possible...Unless the time is right, the learning will not occur...It implies personal engagement with issues and problems."¹⁵³

It seems critical that an opportunity to talk with children behind bars at a crucial time in their personal development is of the utmost urgency, with respect to the potential of their own character development, as well as the future trajectory of their own lives.

1.4.3.2 The potential for emotional pain as a touchstone for spiritual growth

From the author's experience as a hospital chaplain, she has observed that spiritual issues may emerge and appear closer to the surface when people are ill, in vulnerable circumstances, or fearful about their own mortality. It is also true from the author's experience that children in the Ocean County Detention Center tend to speak from an

¹⁵³ M. Lee Manning, "Havighurst's Developmental Tasks, Young Adolescents, and Adversity," *The Clearing House*, Nov. 1, 2002, 7-8.

emotional depth due to their circumstances, a depth that may disappear once they are feeling safer and released from detention. While in detention, children tend to be less defended psychologically and essentially less guarded spiritually.

The author has also noted that children in detention are often in a significant amount of emotional pain. They feel the loneliness of being separated from their family and friends. They may feel guilt and remorse over what they have done. These feelings are often close to the surface and may erupt as behavioral issues. This is also a spiritual opportunity to engage these children and to aid them in emotional and spiritual healing. Similar to the phenomenon of patients in a hospital setting being more open, children in a detention center may also be more vulnerable while they are detained before the normal defense mechanisms of their lives resurface once they are released to their homes and community environments.

1.4.4 Scientific relevance

At this time, no empirical research exists specifically on the topic of theological beliefs of children in a juvenile detention setting. This research study presents spiritual and statistical interpretation of collected data in Chapters Four and Five. In addition, recommendations are offered in Chapter Seven concerning how the outcomes and implications of the data may be applied in other juvenile detention centers.

1.4.5 Ethical considerations

In alignment with the University of South Africa's policy on Research Ethics, the ethical standards reflected therein have been applied to this study, especially the ethics related to "Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants."¹⁵⁴ Additionally, ethical issues regarding the author's use of selected tools of methodology, for example, ethnography, are

¹⁵⁴ *UNISA Policy on Research Ethics*, "Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants," 2007, 9-17.

addressed in Chapter Three, Section 3.2.7.1. Chapter Three also addresses ethical issues that pertain to the author's employment in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center in Section 3.3.4.

Furthermore, two separate Letters of Permission are included as Appendices A and C. The legal particulars associated with each letter are discussed below in Section 1.7 and Section 1.8. These letters from Gerald Bowden, Administrator of the Ocean County Department of Juvenile Services, not only authorize the author to conduct research with 200 male children in Ocean County Detention but also serve as blanket permission for the author to obviate the need for written permission from children and parents through the legal term, *in loco parentis*. A more detailed explanation of the term *in loco parentis* and its use in this study is found below in Section 1.4.7.

1.4.6 Originality of work and appropriate citations of all cited texts

Throughout this research study, credit has been given to any and all authors' works in detailed footnotes within each chapter, as well as a comprehensive list of references at the end of the thesis. All other written work may be assumed to be original to the author.

1.4.7 Informed and non-coerced consent

All children selected to participate in this research study have done so on a completely voluntary basis. In each of the 200 interviews, each child granted their individual verbal permission to participate and was informed about the nature of the research and the questions themselves by the author. Each participant was reassured that all answers to questions would remain anonymous, and no names of any kind would be revealed. Each child was told that the information gathered would be used solely for this research. The author clarified for each participant that information given would in no way have any effect

on the child's legal case, either positive or negative. Additionally, the author assured each participant that whether he completed the questionnaire or not would have no bearing, either positive or negative, on his relationship to staff while held in the juvenile detention center.

Gerald Bowden, MSW/LCSW, Administrator of the Ocean County Department of Juvenile Services, Toms River, New Jersey, has granted the author specific permission to conduct this research. Mr. Bowden is also Administrator of the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, a facility under the Department of Juvenile Services. He has been fully apprised of this research study and may be contacted for verification purposes at 165 Sunset Ave., Toms River, NJ, US, 08753 (telephone: 732-288-7706). A Letter of Permission granting the author permission to conduct research, signed by Administrator Bowden, is included as Appendix A.

For the purpose of this research study, it is important to note that the legal guardians of children in county detention centers are the professional staff who care for the children. The legal term *in loco parentis* grants Administrators and staff of detention centers the legal right to act in the interest of a parent for children in their care.¹⁵⁵ The Latin phrase for "in the place of a parent" or "instead of a parent," *in loco parentis*, refers to the legal responsibility of a person or organization to assume some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent. Initially it allows institutions such as colleges and schools to act in the best interests of the students as they see fit, although not allowing what would be considered violations of the students' civil liberties.

Secondly, the authority of *in loco parentis* provides that a non-biological parent be given the legal rights and responsibilities of a biological parent.¹⁵⁶ In this regard, it is legally

¹⁵⁵ *Law.com*, Law Dictionary, Sept. 23, 2008 (accessed April 20, 2011).

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

appropriate for Administrator Bowden to grant the author blanket permission to conduct 200 interviews for this research study. It is further understood that all interviews are anonymous and to be used only in the context of this specific research project. A letter granting the author blanket permission through *in loco parentis* to conduct 200 interviews with children in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center is found in Appendix C.

1.4.8 Respect for and protection of participant rights

The Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) utilized in this research study and the manner in which it is administered to each participant have been specifically designed to be sensitive to the nature of the material. Each child has been approached with respect and compassion, and sufficient time was allotted for each interview to be relaxed and for each child to answer questions in a calm, informal, and safe environment. A private room for such interviews and conversations was utilized throughout the course of the 200 interviews.

The author is a licensed therapist (Licensed Clinical Alcohol and Drug Counselor—LCADC) through the State of New Jersey, US and possesses a Masters of Divinity (M. Div.) degree from Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, with a concentration in pastoral theology and pastoral care. The author has also served as a licensed Local Pastor for five years in the United Methodist Church, New Jersey, US and has served as a hospital chaplain through the clinical pastoral education program at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, US.

1.4.9 Respect for cultural differences

In the course of this research study, every male child detained in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center has been offered the opportunity to be interviewed for this study, with the following exceptions: 1/ children admitted while the author was on vacation or

leave; and 2/ children admitted and released in less than one day before an interview was possible. Therefore, this study includes male children from many different cultural and racial backgrounds.

Within the Research Questionnaire, the ethnicity of each child interviewed is recorded. Statistics on the cultural and racial backgrounds of the sample participants are also included in Chapter Four. The author has received specific training on cultural sensitivity and competency.¹⁵⁷

1.4.10 Integrity, transparency, and accountability

The author is fully accountable for all research conducted in this study. The methodology employed is transparent and available to anyone interested, including children, in viewing it. Research approaches and methodology have been discussed continuously with Gerald Bowden, Administrator of the Ocean County Dept. of Juvenile Services. A former Marist Brother in the Roman Catholic Church, Mr. Bowden shares with the author a sense of spiritual calling for the children in the Ocean County Detention Center.

1.4.11 Maximization of public interest and social justice

This research study is fully supportive of the interest of social justice, not only in the US, but also globally as this project may serve as a model to highlight this specific juvenile detention population. It is further possible that public interest may be great as a larger audience may come to understand who these children are through their own stories that reveal their hopes and dreams, as well as their spirituality and theology.

¹⁵⁷ State of New Jersey, Center for Business Education and Training, Ocean County Community College, Toms River NJ, US, "Celebrating Diversity," a 10-session training on cultural diversity, May 4, 5, 6, 2010.

1.5 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

1.5.1 Theological goals

- To add to the current academic literature on the specific population of children held in juvenile detention centers in the United States.
- To suggest ways in which staff and workers in detention centers may communicate with juveniles in order to begin a theological dialogue that does not violate the existing separation of church and state within government agencies in the US.
- To advance the case for utilizing the field of pastoral theology, specifically clinical pastoral education, in a juvenile detention setting, even if there are no specifically clergy personnel on staff.
- To offer a specific methodology and research tool that might be duplicated in other juvenile detention centers so that interested workers, volunteers, and staff may work with juveniles in a concrete, evidence-based spiritual context.

1.5.2 Feasibility and limitations of the study

This research study consists of 200 interviews with 200 individual children, ages 13-19, male gender only, in a single county juvenile detention center in Ocean County, New Jersey, US. As such, it is a realistic research sample that has been completed in a reasonable amount of time (approximately two and a half years).

Given there are approximately 200 juveniles admitted to the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center each year,¹⁵⁸ no limitations have been experienced in completing the 200 interviews required for the research sample. Additionally, the research sample size of 200 was selected since it does accurately reflect the annual admission rate of the Ocean County

¹⁵⁸ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River NJ, 2000- 2010.

Detention Center. The Resident Questionnaire devised and utilized in each individual interview requires approximately 10 to 25 minutes to administer to each participant.

The data interpretation and theological implications of this research study presented in Chapters Four, Five, and Seven suggest additional ways that staff in other detention facilities may apply or adapt this research tool, but all circumstances may not be equal in other detention centers for this kind of approach to work successfully. Yet it is the author's hope that her research conclusions are inclusive enough to be applied to other juvenile detention centers.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.6.1 Originality of research data collection instrument

The data collection instrument created is an original questionnaire developed by the author, with the help of the children interviewed. A similar technique of involving residents in the creative process was previously employed by the author, with positive results. In 1999, a Resident Levels program for the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center¹⁵⁹ was developed by the author. The creative approach involved children in a group process where they suggested possible rewards and incentives for good behavior within the levels program. These incentives became a part of the formal program adopted by the detention center. The levels program has been incorporated into the *Policies and Procedures Manual* of the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center.

The Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) contains 14 questions, a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions.¹⁶⁰ For example, the open-ended questions are helpful in

¹⁵⁹ *Policies and Procedures Manual*, Ocean County Dept. of Juvenile Services, Toms River, NJ, March 1995 (revised Jan. 1, 2011), 78-91.

¹⁶⁰ Metagora Paris21 website: "Open-ended vs. Closed Ended Questions" (accessed May 5, 2011).

allowing children to answer questions about spirituality in their own way with as much creativity as possible. Open-ended questions also allow for a depth to their answers that closed-ended questions might have stifled. Open-ended questions are often indicated when gathering more sensitive information,¹⁶¹ such as information concerning the spiritual beliefs of children. Two examples of open-ended questions included are as follows: 1/What makes you feel free? 2/ What do you value?

On the other hand, closed-ended questions allow raw data collection for analysis and categorization. For example, responses to the question, “Do you believe in God?” are quantified based on a sample of 200 children interviewed with clear percentage results. A combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions within the same single question is also utilized. For example, the question “Do you believe in God?” is paired with a second part, “Can you tell me about that?”

This combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions affords each participant the opportunity to answer in a comfortable way. This kind of combination question also allows the child to become more comfortable with a “yes” or “no” and then to answer the open-ended portion of a question as well. Children who are shy or less comfortable with questions are still willing to answer closed-ended questions. Additionally, many children do like to answer open-ended questions in their own way and seem to enjoy the time the process may take.

An additional part of the research methodology has been to involve the children themselves in the research task. In the course of the interviews, each child is asked by the author if he can think of any question that should be included in the questionnaire that was

¹⁶¹ Metagora Paris21 website: “Open-ended vs. Closed Ended Questions” (accessed May 5, 2011).

not. If the child does formulate a question, his answer to his own question is documented in the interview process and then included for the next child. In Chapter Three, the evolution and inclusion of questions directly from the children is explained in detail. Additionally, a complete list of questions submitted by participants is included in Chapter Four of the study.

1.6.2 Theory supporting data collection instrument

The Resident Questionnaire utilized as the data collection instrument is a modified form of the biopsychosocial therapeutic information tool.¹⁶² Specifics including the child's age, family background information, and ethnicity are included. In the actual interviews themselves, the questionnaire process begins with the open-ended statement, "Tell me about yourself," which encourages children to reveal themselves in their own words. Since this project involves children's spiritual beliefs, data about their religious background is also included.

The organization and selection of questions in the Resident Questionnaire flow from the first question: "Tell me about yourself." In this initial question of four parts, each participant is encouraged to begin to tell the story of his life in any way that he desires. Since storytelling is a foundational principle in this research study, it is appropriate that the first question asked allows each child to begin in his own way. In the field of narrative theology, for example, theologians note that people find meaning and purpose through shared stories.¹⁶³ Similarly, in the field of narrative therapy, individuals are treated therapeutically as they are encouraged to tell the story of their own lives. In the process of therapy and their

¹⁶² Francesc Borrell, Anthony Suchman, and Ronald Epstein, "The Biopsychosocial Model 25 Years Later: Principles, Practice, and Scientific Inquiry," *Annals of Family Medicine*, Vol. 2, 2004, 576-582.

¹⁶³ Laurie Nelson, "Narrative Theology and Storytelling in Christian Education with Children," *Christian Education Journal*, Vol. 2, 1990, 95-104. For more information on the field of narrative theology, see Chapter Two.

own healing process, they rework their stories in healthier ways. In both cases, however, the spiritual and emotional power of the story itself remains central to the healing process.¹⁶⁴

Thus, in the Resident Questionnaire developed by the author and the primary data collection instrument in the research study, it follows that the entire interview process begins with a four-part statement that encourages each participant in the sample to become the narrator of his own life.

The inclusion of basic background information follows a general clinical model found in the therapeutic tool known as the biopsychosocial (BPS) information tool.¹⁶⁵ The BPS model was originally theorized by George Engel, a psychiatrist from the University of Rochester, New York, US. Dr. Engel first referred to his model as the BPS in an article published in *Science*, where he urged the “need for a new medical model.”¹⁶⁶ Since the 1970s in the US, the BPS has been utilized by clinicians in the mental health field to gather basic pertinent information on any new client, including biological, psychological, and sociological factors.¹⁶⁷

This integrated BPS model stands in contrast with the more traditional reductionist/medical model¹⁶⁸ of medicine that relies on a mechanistic, materialistic view of the universe. In this view, all that exists in the world may be reduced to matter. Illness or pathology is viewed as something to be corrected or “fixed” in order to return the person to “normal.”¹⁶⁹ On the other hand, The BPS model has become a clinically technical term for the popular

¹⁶⁴ White, 5-8. For further explanation of narrative therapy, see Chapter Two.

¹⁶⁵ S. Nassir Chaemi, *The Rise and Fall of the Biopsychosocial Model: Reconciling Art and Science in Psychiatry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2010), 4-10.

¹⁶⁶ D. Pilgrim, “The Biopsychosocial Model in Anglo-American Psychiatry: Past, Present, and Future,” *Journal of Mental Health*, Vol. 11, Issue 6, Dec. 2002, 585-594.

¹⁶⁷ George L. Engel, “The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine,” *Science*, Vol. 196, 12-136.

¹⁶⁸ Swami Ajaya, *Psychotherapy East and West: A Unifying Paradigm* (Honesdale, PA: Himalayan Institute Press, 1983), 12-14.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 12-14; 12-23.

concept of the mind/body/spirit connection, which stresses the holistic treatment of the individual. For example, the BPS format includes the categories of religion and spirituality, now considered relevant for comprehensive assessment and treatment.¹⁷⁰

1.6.3 Factors affecting outcomes of data collection instrument

On average, annual admissions to the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center are approximately 200. In 2011, for example, juvenile admissions totaled 253.¹⁷¹ In 2009 in New Jersey, the Ocean County Prosecutor's office changed the admission criteria in New Jersey juvenile detention centers by not allowing children to be detained for 4th-degree charges.¹⁷² Hence, the number of admissions did decrease by 12% in 2011.¹⁷³

As mentioned earlier, the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) has already had some effect on the numbers of admissions to New Jersey juvenile detention centers since the purpose of the JDAI is to limit the number of children held in detention.¹⁷⁴ The JDAI philosophy and supporting research suggest that the trajectory of children's lives is forever changed if they spend only one day in a detention center.¹⁷⁵ To date, The Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center has been affected only slightly by the JDAI initiative, yet

¹⁷⁰ Pilgrim, 585-594.

¹⁷¹ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River NJ, 2010.

¹⁷² Ocean County Prosecutor's Office, Toms River NJ website (accessed April 21, 2011). Juvenile charges may vary from 1st degree to 4th degree, as in the adult court system, depending upon the severity of the crime. For example, robbery may be in any degree; the 4th degree would carry the lesser weight for sentencing, possible jail time, and possible fines.

¹⁷³ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River NJ, 2011.

¹⁷⁴ "The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) was designed to support the Casey Foundation's vision that all youth involved in the juvenile justice system have opportunities to develop into healthy, productive adults. JDAI focuses on the juvenile detention component of the juvenile justice system because youth are often unnecessarily or inappropriately detained at great expense, with long-lasting negative consequences for both public safety and youth development. Since its inception in 1992, JDAI has repeatedly demonstrated that jurisdictions can safely reduce reliance on secure detention. There are now approximately 100 JDAI sites in 24 states and the District of Columbia." Annie E. Casey Foundation website (accessed May 4, 2011).

¹⁷⁵ "Locking Up Fewer Children," *New York Times* editorial, Aug. 14, 2009.

the numbers of juveniles admitted to juvenile detention centers may continue to decrease if JDAI becomes mandatory through the Administrative Office of the Courts in New Jersey.¹⁷⁶

However, for the purpose of this research sample of 200 juveniles, no paucity in the number of juveniles admitted in the last five years was encountered.

1.6.4 Delimitations of data collection instrument and research study

1.6.4.1 Exclusion of female juveniles as research subjects

Since there is a relatively small percentage of female residents admitted to the Ocean County Detention Center on an annual basis (7% in 2011),¹⁷⁷ the author decided to exclude female residents from the research sample since females often perceive questions differently from male residents and also tend to respond more emotionally to the same question. Thus, to include females in this research proposal would require either a separate data collection instrument or a differential way to interpret the data with respect to males and females.

However, a research study specifically on female residents in a juvenile detention center would be a most revealing and intriguing project for further research.

1.6.4.2 Study does not address juvenile delinquency and its causes

This research study does not specifically address or research the topic of juvenile delinquency and its causes. In 2011, 97% of the admission charges for juveniles admitted to the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center were under the general category of “juvenile delinquency.”¹⁷⁸ The other 3% of admitting charges were under the general category of

¹⁷⁶ The Administrative Office of the Courts is the administrative arm of the judicial branch in each state in the United States. The AOC provides statewide support services for the courts, including legal, information, technology, and research (Administrative Office of the Courts website, accessed March 23, 2011).

¹⁷⁷ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River NJ, 2011.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

“domestic violations,” including, runaway children, truancy from school, physical and sexual abuse, and child neglect.¹⁷⁹

Juvenile residents often do evidence their behavioral and mental health issues in their presentation, but this aspect of their behavior is not addressed in this study, nor is the author an expert on juvenile delinquency. However, the Ocean County Detention *Admissions Records* clearly support a common cause of juvenile delinquency, namely, the lack of a father figure in the home.¹⁸⁰ Approximately 65% of juvenile admissions in 2011 reveal the absence of either a biological father or father figure in the child’s life.¹⁸¹

1.6.4.3 Study does not address causes of juvenile drug and alcohol abuse

Although 73% of juveniles admitted to the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center in 2011 evidence abuse or dependence issues with alcohol and other drugs on the admissions screening tool,¹⁸² this research study does not attempt to address or interpret these statistics. In addition, there is no question on the data collection tool that addresses juvenile drug and alcohol use. Although there are texts that address the specific relationship between addiction issues and spirituality,¹⁸³ this research study does not attempt to correlate the responses of children interviewed with any spiritual cause and effect measurement or to categorize their substance abuse/dependence patterns with any data on adolescent patterns of drug usage. However, this topic would surely be a fascinating research project for another student.

¹⁷⁹ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River NJ, 2011.

¹⁸⁰ M. Stern, J. Northman, & M. Van Slyck, “Father Absence and Adolescent Behavior Problems,” *Adolescence*, Vol. 14, 1994, 301-312.

¹⁸¹ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River NJ, 2011.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Gerald G. May, *Addiction and Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing of Addictions* (NY: HarperCollins), 1988, 13-25.

1.6.4.4 Study does not compare research results with any other juvenile detention center in New Jersey or in any other state

This research study does not attempt to compare the results of any research data with any other juvenile detention center in New Jersey or in the United States. The Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center has historically adopted a rehabilitative approach toward incarcerated children, rather than a more “correctional” approach, common in other juvenile detention centers in New Jersey.¹⁸⁴ Whereas the ratio of staff to children for custody and social service staff by the State of New Jersey is one staff to every eight children,¹⁸⁵ the Ocean County Social Work department has four full-time social workers who work with approximately 20-25 children on a daily basis while other detention centers may have one or two full-time social workers who manage 60 to 90 children.¹⁸⁶

It is conceivable that since the Ocean County Detention Center does have fewer children than other New Jersey detention centers¹⁸⁷ and a greater number of staff, this ratio discrepancy may be a limitation of this research study toward becoming a model of use in other detention centers. It is also possible that other centers in New Jersey or in the United States might not have the staff, the resources, or the philosophical inclination to work with incarcerated children in the manner that the Administration follows in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center.

¹⁸⁴ *Policy and Procedures Manual*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River NJ, March 1995 (revised Jan. 1, 2011), 1-23.

¹⁸⁵ State of New Jersey, Juvenile Justice Commission website, “Standards of Care for Detained Juveniles” (accessed April 23, 2011).

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ The Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, NJ has a 35-bed legal capacity but is required under New Jersey State law to accept all children legally remanded by the Ocean County Family Court. When admissions exceed 35, additional mattresses are placed on cell floors to accommodate overflow (*Policy and Procedure Manual*, Ocean County Juvenile Services, Toms River NJ, March 1995 (revised Jan. 1, 2011), 2-6.

1.7 LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

A Letter of Permission granting the author specific permission to conduct research with 200 individual male residents of the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center is included at the conclusion of the thesis as Appendix A.

1.8 LETTER OF BLANKET PERMISSION

A Letter of Blanket Permission to interview 200 male residents of the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center under the jurisdiction of the legal phrase, *in loco parentis*, is included at the conclusion of the thesis as Appendix C. This second letter from Administrator Bowden certifies that no further individual permission from participants or their parents is required for this research study, given the unique legal status that protects children detained in juvenile detention centers throughout the United States.

1.9 CONCLUSION

In summary, the purpose of this research study is to address the following:

- Who is the God of children locked in detention centers in the United States?
- Do children in detention centers believe in God?
- Do these children have a sense of religion or spirituality that can be measured?
- Do detained children differentiate between the terms “spirituality” and “religion”?
- Does juvenile detention have a measurable effect on a child’s spirituality and/or religion?
- Is there a working theology that might be postulated among children in detention centers in the US?
- Is there a new hermeneutic that might be suggested for working with children in juvenile detention centers?

Interviews with 200 juveniles detained in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center in Toms River, New Jersey, US have been completed for this research study. The sample size of 200 was selected since it accurately reflects the number of annual admissions to the Ocean County Detention Center. Each face-to-face interview is conducted personally by the author utilizing the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B), developed with the assistance of the participants themselves.

Finally, this research study is an introspective documentation of the author's own spiritual journey through the process of interviewing, interpreting, and documenting the results of 200 interviews with children in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center.

This study is also an exploration of how God may speak through these children, as well as this research vehicle, to encourage and to support spiritual growth within the one conducting the research.

Chapter Two presents an overview of the literature in the field of children's spirituality. Since there is little written in the specific field of children in juvenile detention and their theology, Chapter Two also includes an additional literature review in the fields of theology, narrative therapy and children's mental health, as well as interdisciplinary approaches to children's spirituality.

CHAPTER TWO:

Review of the Literature

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of the literature available in the field of children's spirituality. Since there is little written on the population central to this research study, namely, children in juvenile detention centers, this chapter includes additional literature in the following categories: 1/ literature specific to children in juvenile detention centers; 2/ theological approaches to working with children; 3/ narrative therapy and children's mental health; and 4/ interdisciplinary approaches to children's spirituality.

Each selection of literature included is reviewed with general reference to the categories suggested by Boote and Beile in their Literature Review Scoring Rubric¹⁸⁸ and includes a summary of the work, methodology, critique, comparison with similar texts, and appreciation.

2.2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.2.1 Literature specific to children in juvenile detention centers

Literature written specifically on the population of children held in juvenile detention centers in the United States and globally is extremely minimal. However, authors Mary

¹⁸⁸ D.N. Boote and P. Beile, "Scholars before Researchers: On the Centrality of the Dissertation Literature Review in Research Preparation," *Educational Researcher*, 34(6), 2005, 8.

Previte,¹⁸⁹ Edward Hume,¹⁹⁰ and Parichart Suwanbubba¹⁹¹ do chronicle this population with dedication and a passion for change in the juvenile justice system.

2.2.1.1 Mary Previte: *Hungry Ghosts*

Hungry Ghosts: One Woman's Mission to Change Their World,¹⁹² by Mary Previte, is a first-person account of her recollections of a 20-year career as Administrator of the Camden County Juvenile Detention Center, Camden, New Jersey, US. The book is not a scholarly work, nor does it employ a research model to gather data. Rather, it is written in the form of a personal memoir about the children that Previte remembers. Born in China, she was detained in a Japanese concentration camp for three years during World War II and relates her memories from the camp to her experiences at the Camden County Juvenile Detention Center.¹⁹³

Previte writes about a specific juvenile detention center in the United State and implies a Christian perspective, though not articulated or referenced as a specific theme. Prior to her detention in the Japanese camp, she was involved in Christian missionary work when her family was in China. Her grandfather, James Hudson Taylor, is the founder of the China Inland Mission and is still remembered as a leader in the Christian Evangelical Movement of the 20th century.¹⁹⁴

In her text, *Hungry Ghosts*,¹⁹⁵ Previte utilizes the vehicles of narration and storytelling to present her material. She recalls specific children and relates a personal vignette about each

¹⁸⁹ Mary Previte, *Hungry Ghosts: One Woman's Mission to Change Their World* (Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 9-15.

¹⁹⁰ Edward Hume, *No Matter How Loud I Shout: A Year in the Life of Juvenile Court* (NY: Touchstone, 1996), xii-xv.

¹⁹¹ Parichart Suwanbubba, "Happy and Peaceful Life through Dialogue at the Youth Detention Center," paper presented 2007 at Mahidol University, Thailand, 2-11.

¹⁹² Previte, 9-15.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 15-29.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

child, including her own involvement in their lives while they were in detention. Her approach in this volume also highlights her commitment to listening to children as she recreates special moments in their young lives from her own memory.

Though *Hungry Ghosts* is not a scholarly work, it chronicles an important piece of history in juvenile justice and juvenile detention in the United States when many centers for children were little more than “snakepits.” Previte’s book is accepted as the first book on juvenile detention published in the United States.¹⁹⁶ There does not appear to be any more extensive text on the face of juvenile detention in the United States than Previte’s *Hungry Ghosts*.

The practical significance of *Hungry Ghosts* among the literature about juvenile detention is central for any student of the juvenile justice system or juvenile detention. Since Previte’s book is not scholarly or research-based, it highlights the fact that there is little written from an academic or research point of view about juvenile detention. As significant as her text is in the field of juvenile detention, she does not collect data about the children in the Camden Juvenile Detention Center, nor does she interpret any themes in her narratives to suggest possible methods to change how children in detention centers are treated. Thus, Previte’s work serves to underscore the need for academic scholars to begin research in the field of juvenile detention, research that could indeed further her own cause of changing the face of juvenile detention.¹⁹⁷

Previte’s use of the first-person narrative style is a creative method of revealing the humanity of the storyteller and the participants alike. Though use of a confessional style is not generally associated with scholarly work, Previte’s book employs a personal tone that

¹⁹⁶ Previte, 7.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 11-14.

adds to the power of her own reflections on the children she knew and loved in the Camden County Juvenile Detention Center. Her literary style of self-disclosure offers a potential model for researchers in the field of children's work, a field where qualitative interviews within the research conducted are central to its methodology and conclusions.

Previte also records her own preparation in life for her eventual position as Administrator of Camden Juvenile Detention.¹⁹⁸ She sees the thread of providence in her own life from years in a concentration camp to Administrator in Camden Detention.¹⁹⁹ Previte also discusses how she was personally wounded by her work with some of the children in Camden, whose lives were indelibly written on her own soul.²⁰⁰ In this regard, she echoes the spiritual work of Henri Nouwen in *The Wounded Healer*²⁰¹ as she discusses the mutuality of healing that took place for herself and many of the children she grew to love in Camden County Juvenile Detention.²⁰²

Many staff who work at the Ocean County Detention Center talk about "planting the seed" with residents, but not often seeing the seed come to fruition. Previte's work explores a similar theme as she hopes that someone will care enough to listen to these children.²⁰³ It is her belief that most people have memories of at least one person in their lives that changed them.²⁰⁴ She hopes that she might have done that for some children in the Camden County Juvenile Detention Center.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁸ Previte, 15-29.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 30-35.

²⁰¹ Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (New York: Macmillan), 1979, 25-37.

²⁰² Previte, 36-51.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 47-51.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 13.

2.2.1.2. Edward Hume: *No Matter How Loud I Shout*

A similar text that echoes themes addressed by Previte's *Hungry Ghosts* is the work of journalist Edward Hume in his book, *No Matter How Loud I Shout*.²⁰⁶ Hume was granted permission by the Los Angeles Juvenile Court system in 1994 to spend a year within the walls of the juvenile detention center in Los Angeles County, Inglewood, California, US. He received the honor of writing the "first book to penetrate the wall of secrecy shielding our nation's juvenile courts..."²⁰⁷ and asserts that the American system of juvenile detention neither protects the community from dangerous children, nor does it save or help the children detained.²⁰⁸ Hume offers little hope for juvenile justice in America and presents examples of the system's failures through vignettes of children and staff in the detention center.²⁰⁹ Indeed his book exposes the juvenile justice court system in the United States.

Unlike Previte, Hume does not reminisce about children he met in the Los Angeles Detention Center, nor does he identify personally with these children. Hume is not interested in reforming juvenile detention like Previte but writes as a journalist exposing the public to the hidden process of juvenile justice, or the lack thereof. Yet both Previte and Hume are appalled by the inhumane and unjust treatment of children in the juvenile justice system. In different ways, they both shine light on a dark corner of the justice system that controls children.

However, Hume is less hopeful about changing the system of juvenile care than Previte. His writing appears more fatalistic, and he agrees with Judge Judith Sheindlin, Supervising Judge, Manhattan Family Court, who voices her own opinion in the *New York Times* on Dec. 30, 1994: "I think by age 15 there is a small number of kids who, for whatever

²⁰⁶ Hume, xii-xv.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 351-354.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 25-38.

deprivation they have suffered, are cooked, as my grandmother would have said. They are gone. Whatever you do is not going to make a difference...pare down the money and spend it on the thriving kids.”²¹⁰

Although there are serious injustices within the New Jersey juvenile justice system, Judge Sheindlin’s remarks lack compassion and vision in working with damaged children. Further, since Hume’s book is not interested in reform, but merely exposing injustices within the juvenile justice system, his text also highlights the absence of literature on the specific subject of compassionate reform within detention centers, as well as more creative ways of interacting with these children.²¹¹ Clearly Hume’s book is not about spirituality. Yet it is an important work on the subject of juvenile detention and the injustices within the juvenile system.

As a journalist, Hume might have taken his evidence in a more positive direction by suggesting possibilities for reform. Such reform might include engaging damaged children in a dialogue that has the potential to change their lives. A specific investigation of the nature of spirituality and its possible effects on the lives of children in detention could become a significant part of such a life-changing dialogue.

2.2.1.3 Parichart Suwanbubbha: “Happy and Peaceful Life through Dialogue at the Youth Detention Center”

A more positive and programmatic approach to children in detention centers is proposed by Parichart Suwanbubbha in her paper entitled, “Happy and Peaceful Life through Dialogue at the Youth Detention Center.”²¹² Suwanbubbha suggests an alternative to the violence within juvenile detention centers that she has witnessed in Thailand. She advocates

²¹⁰Hume, xii-xv. {Judge Sheindlin’s remarks are quoted here by Hume from an op-ed editorial by Sheindlin on Dec. 20, 1994 that appeared in the *New York Times*.}

²¹¹ Ibid, 9-11.

²¹² Parichart Suwanbubbha, “Happy and Peaceful Life through Dialogue at the Youth Detention Center,” paper presented 2007 at Mahidol University, Thailand, 2-11.

for dialogue as a therapeutic means to develop and transform the lives of children in juvenile detention.²¹³

From a Buddhist perspective, Suwanbubbha suggests ways to reduce violence against children in detention centers in Thailand by employing a dialogical technique between children and staff, as well as between the children themselves.²¹⁴ She documents that children in Thailand-based detention centers encounter violence from the very staff hired to protect them. She urges that children also learn about violence while in detention and become less likely to be rehabilitated when they are released.²¹⁵ Through clinically supervised dialogue and respectful conversation, Suwanbubbha believes that not only can the level of violence be reduced, but children may also be able to regain self-respect and inner peace.²¹⁶ She further explains the stages of dialogue and suggests that allowing children to tell their own stories is an important stage in healing.²¹⁷

Similar to Previte, Suwanbubbha advocates for allowing children in detention centers to tell their own stories.²¹⁸ Though she does not include actual stories of children as Previte does, both women advocate the central use of narrative as a way to dialogue effectively with children. Both women are also rooted in their own spiritual backgrounds, Previte as a Christian²¹⁹ and Suwanbubbha from her Buddhist heritage.²²⁰ However, journalist Hume claims no religious platform at all.

Analogous to both Previte and Humes, Suwanbubbha's approach documents the need for reform within juvenile detention. She further adds a global dimension to the literature. More

²¹³ Suwanbubbha, 2-11.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 3-5.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 3-7.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 2-6.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 4-7.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 4-11.

²¹⁹ Previte, 7-9.

²²⁰ Suwanbubbha, 1-2.

constructive in her approach than Hume, Suwanbubbha offers a concrete and positive plan to reduce violence against children in detention centers.²²¹ Yet she reveals less personal involvement than Previte, whose personal and professional mission is to reform juvenile detention in the United States. Perhaps Suwanbubbha may lay claim to the same legacy in her own country of Thailand.

In summary, the existing literature on the specific topic of juvenile detention centers is minimal and in great need of further exploration and research. There exists a huge gap in research of any kind on this population of children as well, a field ripe for avid research students to explore juvenile detention. Specifically with respect to the field of theology within juvenile detention, this appears to be yet another area in need of investigation and research that may lead to reform within the system of juvenile detention. This research study is an attempt to address this void in the literature and to make a beginning toward significant research in the fields of theology and spirituality within juvenile detention centers in the United States.

2.2.2 Theological approaches to working with children

Several distinct fields of inquiry pertaining to theology and children are covered in the following section. As the literature reveals, many different approaches to children's work are popular in the literature, most of which are rooted in the Christian tradition, specifically Reformed Protestantism. Narrative and story continue to be the most common vehicles for working with children among Christian theologians and pastoral caregivers.

²²¹ Suwanbubbha, 4-7.

2.2.2.1 Postmodern theology and children

Postmodernism thought in theology ushered in a period in world history extending from the 1960s to the present, where the general public has become increasingly skeptical about the existence of absolute truths, of any single body of trustworthy knowledge, and of the truth of any cultural or theological narrative that defines reality as a whole.²²² This rejection of any one primary truth has led to the embrace of many truths, or pluralism.²²³ Theological texts of this period reflect a new hermeneutic based on postmodernism that attempts to relocate and redefine truth in different contexts, both culturally and theologically.²²⁴

Common themes that emerge in literature about children in this postmodern genre stress the need to reconfigure how adults relate to children and to recognize the ambivalence endemic in working with children, especially in the Christian church.²²⁵ Though the major vehicle for expressing postmodernism in children's work is narrative theology,²²⁶ another emerging theme is the necessity for creating a new hermeneutic to communicate with children. This new hermeneutic involves cultural relevance, as well as inviting families into the church. Rather than program that places the responsibility of children on church staff, this new hermeneutic envisions families becoming partners in communication with their own children.²²⁷

²²² Gary Phillips, "Religious Pluralism in a Postmodern World," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement, 2nd Ed.*, ed. David Dockery (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Books, 2001), 135-142.

²²³ Ibid, 135-42.

²²⁴ Ibid, 135-38.

²²⁵ Ibid, 137-38.

²²⁶ Gerald Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church, and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), x-xi.

²²⁷ Ibid.

In this regard, Don Browning proposes a new hermeneutic for families which he calls “a mutuality of ethic of equal regard.”²²⁸ He suggests a “love ethic”²²⁹ that supports shared authority between both parents in the family and implies that this equality of power might be extended to children as well.²³⁰ Browning clearly envisions the family as a vehicle for greater equality and shared responsibility. However, while he does focus on changing power shifts between spouses in regard to their children, Browning stops short of developing his implication that children might become an integral part of that equality. Yet he does clearly point in the direction of beginning a dialogue with and about children becoming more equal within family power dynamics.²³¹

In his text, *Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace*,²³² Jerome Berryman takes a postmodern approach to investigating how children have been treated in religious thought throughout history. He contends that children know God in their own unique way and must be respected, even revered, for their unique knowledge. What they need to learn from adults is how to identify, talk about and wonder about their spiritual experiences.²³³ According to Berryman, most Christian theologians have underestimated children’s ability to speak about theological matters. His book is an attempt to document historically how children have been marginalized in order to correct that mistake.²³⁴

Berryman suggests what the unspoken, *de facto* theology toward children is: “ambivalence,

²²⁸ Don S. Browning, “Children, Mothers, and Fathers in the Post-modern Family,’ in *Pastoral Care and Social Conflict*, eds. Pam Courture and Rodney Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 71-85.

²²⁹ Don and Carol Browning, “The Church and the Family in Crisis,” *Christian Century*, Aug. 7-14, 1991, 746-749.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ Don S. Browning, 73-77.

²³² Jerome W. Berryman, *Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace* (Harrisburg PA: Morehouse, 2009), 5-11.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 5-7.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-11.

ambiguity, indifference, and grace.”²³⁵ He suggests a redefined hermeneutic in a formal theological doctrine of children that begins with children as the wisdom-givers.²³⁶

In similar fashion, Ivy Beckwith writes about cultural relevancy in her text, *Postmodern Children’s Ministry: Ministry to Children in the 21st Century Church*.²³⁷ She confesses that she spent a great deal of time researching postmodernism and concludes that the field is not necessarily an enemy of the Christian church. Rather, it could be used as a transforming hermeneutic in working with children.²³⁸ Beckwith proposes creative forms of children’s ministry that focus on bringing families into the church. By encouraging families to become part of the church, she hopes that they will become more responsible for the spiritual education of their children. However, she protests a common curriculum approach that supports parents who drop their children off for vacation Bible school but prefer the beach themselves.²³⁹

Although Beckwith approaches postmodernism from a different angle than Berryman, both authors stress the discrimination against children as participants in the Christian church. Berryman’s approach is more historical and systematic as he develops a working theology of children.²⁴⁰ Beckwith’s approach is more practical as she advocates ministry with children in more inclusive, culturally relevant ways and moves toward a new practical theology for children.²⁴¹

While both authors make a valid point in stressing the necessity of working past ambivalence toward children, their central mistake lies in the assumption that children are

²³⁵ Berryman, 4-7.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ivy Beckwith, *Postmodern Children’s Ministry: Ministry to Children in the 21st Century Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 9-14.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Beckwith, 9-14.

²⁴⁰ Berryman, 5-25.

²⁴¹ Beckwith, 9-10.

infants in their capacity to think and talk about spirituality. On the contrary, treating children as spiritually mature by applying a different hermeneutic grants them the freedom and autonomy to share what they think and feel. In other words, ambivalence and ambiguity, as Berryman suggests,²⁴² are not necessary. To treat children as they are often treated in Sunday school, summer camps, and vacation Bible schools fosters a patronization that pre-empts the possibility of deeper communication. When adults approach children with a sense of implied superiority, they assume that children are less evolved and continue to foster marginalization and implicit discrimination.

Working with children is much like working with creatures of a different species. Normal rules of engagement often do not apply. As Beckwith²⁴³ and Berryman²⁴⁴ both imply, preconceived notions with children do not work. The theological task becomes meeting children where they are. Listening to what they have to say may require ears that can translate their language and symbols into a new and exciting hermeneutic of language and expression.

German author Herman Hesse approaches postmodernism quite differently in his novel, *The Glass Bead Game*.²⁴⁵ Written by Hesse during the rise of Nazi Germany, his novel concerns the main character of a young boy educated in an exclusive private school somewhere in Europe. While the child learns how to live and play the glass bead game, the actual rules of the game are elusive and mysterious. As a postmodern writer who is also a theologian, Hesse takes a literary approach to children and theology.²⁴⁶ In *The Glass Bead Game*, he delineates the spiritual development of his main character through the innocence

²⁴² Berryman, 5-17.

²⁴³ Beckwith, 9-14.

²⁴⁴ Berryman, 5-25.

²⁴⁵ Hermann Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game* (NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1943), viii-23.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 9-23.

of childhood to the responsibilities and confusion of adulthood.²⁴⁷ As in his earlier novel *Siddhartha*,²⁴⁸ Hesse speaks of children from an eastern point of view, a refreshing contribution to the field of postmodernism dominated by a Christian perspective.

Hesse recalls his own childhood as he weaves the personal tapestry of his main character, Joseph Knech.²⁴⁹ In this regard, Hesse offers a different hermeneutic for relating to children, a more personal and less cognitive approach. By encouraging readers to become more introspective about their own childhoods, Hesse hopes that adults may reconnect with the child within themselves in order to inform and transform their communication with children.²⁵⁰

2.2.2.2 Narrative theology and children

The field of narrative theology was developed during the last half of the twentieth century by a group of theologians at Yale Divinity School including George Lindbeck, Hans Wilhelm Frei, and other Yale scholars influenced by Karl Barth and Thomas Aquinas.²⁵¹ Although a broad and controversial term, narrative theology emphasizes meaning in story.²⁵² The use of the term *story* may either pertain to God's story throughout history, culminating in the story of Jesus Christ, or it may refer to the stories of a people, an individual, or the narrative of an entire world.²⁵³ Narrative theology was developed in a theological climate

²⁴⁷ Hesse, viii-23.

²⁴⁸ Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha* (Berlin: S. Fisher, 1922), 3-17.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-34.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ Gary L. Comstock, "Two Types of Narrative Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 55, No. 4, (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), 687-717.

²⁵² Gerald Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church, and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), x-xi.

²⁵³ Comstock, 691-717.

where the intellectual world had become increasingly concerned with issues of racism, nationalism, and the plight of the oppressed.²⁵⁴

Narrative theology may also be viewed as a reaction against theological meaning derived solely from systematic theology as a conceptual framework. In this regard, it follows the postmodern tradition since it emphasizes humanity's relationship to God based on story and personal experience, rather than ideology or dogma.²⁵⁵ Stanley Hauerwas proposes that a crucial part of being a Christian is to share personal stories with other Christians. Through such narratives, Christians become a part of God's story.²⁵⁶ Hauerwas is confident that all such stories should be told and retold in community as a method of repetition and remembrance.²⁵⁷

In his text, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church, and Narrative Theology*, Gerald Loughlin proposes that narrative and memory are central to our understanding of human consciousness. Without memory, our human experience has no context for reflection and remains incoherent.²⁵⁸ Loughlin further suggests that Christian theology employs narrative and story to document the life of Jesus Christ. Thus, he maintains that narrative theology is an ideal vehicle for all ages, including children, to communicate the gospel message.²⁵⁹ While Loughlin's hermeneutic is suggestive of a different approach to working with children, he seems to apply his hermeneutic solely to the Christian gospel message. The potential power of narrative theology in working with children is in applying this new hermeneutic of story directly to the children's lives themselves. It does not seem necessary

²⁵⁴ Stanley Hauerwas, "The Church as God's New Language," in *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation*, Garret Green, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 179-198.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 99, 193-197.

²⁵⁶ Stanley Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1995), xiii.

²⁵⁷ Marc Galanter and Lee Ann Kaskutas, eds., "Research in Alcoholics Anonymous and Spirituality in Addiction Recovery," *American Society of Addictive Medicine* (Totowa NJ: Humana Press, 2008), 198-200.

²⁵⁸ Loughlin, 62-67.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 65-67.

to apply the Christian gospel as story like a broad brush stroke. Rather, the vehicle of story may be used with all children, even though their own religious background may not be Christian or may be nothing at all.

From a different perspective, Laurie Nelson considers an alternate approach to storytelling. She recommends applying Bruno Bettelheim's wisdom about fairy tales to children working through conflicts in their own lives or families.²⁶⁰ From his own work as a therapist with troubled children, Bettelheim believes that children may learn about themselves through the stories of characters in myth and fairy tales.²⁶¹ This vicarious learning becomes healing for the child and the family.²⁶²

In her article, "Narrative Theology and Storytelling in Christian Education with Children," Nelson offers specific guidelines for storytelling with children to encourage their own healing. Nelson speaks to Christian educators mainly in the context of traditional church and Sunday school settings.²⁶³ Unlike Loughlin, Nelson is concerned solely with teaching and helping children. Loughlin's hermeneutic is more inclusive beyond children, yet his understanding of the power of story seems limited to the Christian story.²⁶⁴ And while Nelson's audience is also the traditional church, her use of Bettelheim's fairy tale archetypes does suggest a multi-disciplinary approach to narrative theology that connects Christian education, theology, and psychology.²⁶⁵

In an alternate approach to narrative theology that utilizes the power of story in culture, American missionaries Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz document African oral tradition

²⁶⁰ Laurie Nelson, "Narrative Theology and Storytelling in Christian Education with Children," *Christian Education Journal*, Volume 2, 1990, 95-104.

²⁶¹ Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Random House, 1975), 3-11.

²⁶² *Ibid*, 3-11.

²⁶³ Nelson, 95-104.

²⁶⁴ Loughlin, 60-73.

²⁶⁵ Nelson, 95-100.

common to the people they serve in their book, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*.²⁶⁶ They propose a creative method of spreading the Christian gospel in parts of Africa by utilizing the oral traditions within the culture. Rather than using stories from other cultures, they propose theological truths endemic to the culture itself in order to tell the Christian story in more culturally relevant terms.²⁶⁷ Healey and Sybertz quote a Ugandan proverb, “One who sees something good must narrate it,” as the basis of their approach to narrative theology as gospel message.²⁶⁸ This work speaks directly to the core meaning of narrative theology as it was originally conceived in offering a radically different hermeneutic to preach the gospel for greater social and cultural relevance.²⁶⁹

Although these representative authors within the field of narrative theology approach their subject differently, Nelson,²⁷⁰ Loughlin,²⁷¹ Healey, and Sybertz all are rooted in the Christian tradition.²⁷² This raises a concern similar to the issue posed by postmodern Christian theologians: since the literature presupposes a Christian frame of reference, this method of working with children is restrictive and ultimately not helpful in children’s spirituality.²⁷³ Rather, a more inclusive approach to children’s theology is indicated since many children in the community or in juvenile detention settings are “unchurched.” It does not seem an appropriate goal in working with children and their spirituality to assume or to impose a specific frame of reference of any faith or creed upon them as subjects.

²⁶⁶ Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (New York: Maryknoll, 1999), 72-75.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 73-74.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 72-75.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 70-79.

²⁷⁰ Nelson, 95-104.

²⁷¹ Loughlin, 60-73.

²⁷² Healey and Sybertz, 70-79.

²⁷³ Gary Phillips, “Religious Pluralism in a Postmodern World,” in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 2nd Ed., ed. David Dockery (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Books, 2001), 135-42.

On the other hand, this hermeneutic of working with children implies a certain proselytization, which is not appropriate as a research goal and would color any research that purports to be open-minded and inclusive. In the spirit of Healey and Sybertz,²⁷⁴ a hermeneutic that is socially, theologically, and culturally relevant to a specific population is a more even-handed approach to working with children. It seems that the core of a new hermeneutic in narrative theology requires that the individual story itself become central, not necessarily part of a larger truth.

2.2.2.3 Children and practical theology

The field of practical theology addresses theology in practical settings of daily life. This field encompasses pastoral theology, or theology within a specific church setting, as well as advocacy and liberation theology, both of which address the concerns of marginalized groups within society, including children.²⁷⁵

In her book, *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood*, Joyce Ann Mercer considers the historical ambivalence within Christianity toward children. Similar to Loughlin,²⁷⁶ Mercer cites examples from church history that highlight both inclusion and exclusion of children. Her text attempts to build a child-affirming theology that teaches adults how to approach children in the context of practical theology.²⁷⁷ Mercer does not begin with a systematic approach but with specific practical situations working with children. She then uses inductive logic to theorize from these practical examples toward a theology implied in the case studies presented. Mercer names her way of doing practical

²⁷⁴ Healey and Sybertz, 70-79.

²⁷⁵ Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2008), 4-6.

²⁷⁶ Loughlin, 70-79.

²⁷⁷ Joyce Ann Mercer, *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood* (Atlanta: Chalice Press, 2005), 3-27.

theology as “starting small.”²⁷⁸ Her methodology echoes the work of Berryman²⁷⁹ and Beckwith,²⁸⁰ who decry both a theoretical and practical prejudice against children. Mercer writes from a postmodern perspective to build a more healing hermeneutic toward working with children in the Christian church community.²⁸¹

Similar to Mercer,²⁸² Miller-McLemore writes in the field of practical theology and children from a Christian focus.²⁸³ Miller writes on the subject of practical theology and children in the context of the modern Christian family. She suggests that children have much to teach us about spirituality and where it may occur. While theology is usually defined by adults as rational and verbal, “...children actually exemplify a wisdom that somehow emerges in the chaos itself....children encourage us to reconsider ways in which spirituality for children and adults takes shape in the midst of everyday rituals, practices, and habits that shape everyday life.”²⁸⁴

Miller-McLemore’s book offers an *apologia* of sorts for parents juggling the daily chaos of family, career, and spirituality. Her methodology includes stories about her own family, as well as those families she has known.²⁸⁵ Though Miller’s text is not a research study, her book traces the development of Christian theology about family from a historical perspective. In this regard, she establishes a platform of practical theology for herself and other parents who seek spiritual vindication for a lifestyle without much solitude.²⁸⁶ Miller’s

²⁷⁸ Mercer, 3-27.

²⁷⁹ Berryman, 5-25.

²⁸⁰ Beckwith, 9-14

²⁸¹ Mercer, 3-27.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Bonnie Miller-McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 16.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 16-21.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 3-10.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

text implies the same premise as Mercer:²⁸⁷ children need to be included, not excluded, from conversations about theology and spirituality.²⁸⁸

Different from the theoretical and historical approach of postmodernist Berryman,²⁸⁹ Mercer²⁹⁰ and Miller²⁹¹ begin with the practical and move to the theoretical. While Miller's work targets the possibilities of legitimate spirituality within the Christian family, Mercer concentrates more on the need to include children as legitimate participants in the Christian church community.²⁹² Yet both women advocate for the legitimate voice of children. While Miller defends herself as a Christian seeking spiritual depth within a busy schedule,²⁹³ Mercer is not concerned with family structure but with the legitimacy of children within the church. She attacks the ambivalence and mixed messages that children have received in church and seeks to rid Christian theology of marginalization toward children.²⁹⁴

It appears that within the field of practical theology, practitioners communicate with children most often through the vehicle of Christianity. However, liberation theologians including Gustavo Gutierrez²⁹⁵ and Leonardo Boff²⁹⁶ contend that a new hermeneutic must be broad enough to include all people, and all children—regardless of their specific religious affiliation, or lack thereof.²⁹⁷ Narrative theologians Healey and Sybertz²⁹⁸ advocate that a new hermeneutic for working with children must be socially, theologically, and culturally

²⁸⁷ Mercer, 3-27.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-27.

²⁸⁹ Berryman, 5-25.

²⁹⁰ Mercer, 3-27.

²⁹¹ Miller-McLemore, 16-21.

²⁹² Mercer, 3-27.

²⁹³ Miller-McLemore, 16-21.

²⁹⁴ Mercer, 3-27.

²⁹⁵ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (NY: Orbis, 1973), 27-34.

²⁹⁶ Leonardo Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (NY: Orbis, 1987), 11-19.

²⁹⁷ Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology; Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Religious Movement in Latin America and Beyond* (Phil: Temple Univ. Press, 1987), 9-29.

²⁹⁸ Healey and Sybertz, 70-79.

relevant to the specific population. Once again, the individual story itself must become central, not simply part of a larger truth.

2.2.2.4 Pastoral care with children

Pastoral care is considered a category of pastoral theology wherein the pastor of a church offers care and counseling to church participants.²⁹⁹ Pastoral theology itself is considered a function of practical theology and usually applies to the functions of ministers within a church, which may include sacramental theology, care and counseling, ethics, and homiletics.³⁰⁰

With specific reference to children, pastoral care is usually understood as offering care to human beings under the age of 18 years. In his book, *The Pastoral Care of Children*, Daniel Grosseohme highlights the difficulty that Christian laypersons and clergy alike have relating to children, as well as their confusion in talking to children at all. From a Christian perspective, he defines pastoral care as “the attempt to help others through words, acts, and relationships to experience as fully as possible the reality of God’s presence in their lives.”³⁰¹ Grosseohme suggests methods of pastoral care for children who are ill. He offers ways to pray with children, effective rituals for children, and talking to children about God.³⁰²

As a pastoral caregiver, Grosseohme joins the chorus of voices within postmodernism like Berryman,³⁰³ narrative theology including Berryman,³⁰⁴ and practical theology like Mercer,³⁰⁵ who decry the indifference and ambivalence with which children have been

²⁹⁹ Osmer, 2-10.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Daniel E. Grosseohme, *The Pastoral Care of Children* (NY: Haworth Press, 1999), 37-48.

³⁰² Ibid, 40-45.

³⁰³ Jerome Berryman, 5-11.

³⁰⁴ Loughlin, 62-67.

³⁰⁵ Mercer, 3-27.

treated as participants in God's world. This historical and ongoing marginalization of children occurs repeatedly as a theme in the literature of these fields of theological inquiry.³⁰⁶ The discipline of pastoral care seems to be no exception.

Donald Capps adopts a more aggressive and therapeutic approach to pastoral care with children in his book, *The Child's Song: The Religious Abuse of Children*. Capps traces a pattern of emotional abuse toward children in Christian history. He documents how the Bible and religious authority figures have abused children, especially emotionally, and offers his book as a source of healing for those who have been harmed.³⁰⁷ Capps believes that the source of abuse toward children is often the pastoral caregiver. He suggests ways that pastors can live their lives to avoid hurting the children they care for. For example, Capps suggests that pastors and caregivers become more introspective and thus more responsible for their own spiritual and emotional issues to prevent them from inflicting their unresolved issues on the children they serve.³⁰⁸ Capps strongly urges pastors not to inflict hurt on unsuspecting children through the ministries they practice.³⁰⁹

Capps supports Grosseohme's³¹⁰ contention that pastoral caregivers have difficulty relating to children and are often ambivalent. Yet he transcends Grosseohme's boundary of mere marginalization and begins a dialogue with pastoral psychologists about child abuse and its causes.³¹¹ By encouraging pastors and caregivers to take responsibility for their own emotional and spiritual issues—whether in the form of therapy or deeper self-reflection--Capps demonstrates a growing trend toward interdisciplinary dialogue within the larger field

³⁰⁶ Gary Phillips, "Religious Pluralism in a Postmodern World," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement, 2nd Ed.*, ed. David Dockery (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Books, 2001), 135-42.

³⁰⁷ Donald Capps, *The Child's Song: The Religious Abuse of Children* (Louisville KY: John Knox Press, 1995), 25-57.

³⁰⁸ Ibid, 25-30.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Grosseohme, 40-45.

³¹¹ Capps, 25-57.

of children's studies. He further echoes the work of Seward Hiltner in pastoral theology, a field that holistically synthesizes pastoral psychology, clinical mental health, and practical theology.³¹² Capps reiterates Hiltner's advocacy for pastors to undergo clinical pastoral education (CPE) in seminary training as a way to begin a form of professional therapy before they begin to work with parishioners and patients.³¹³

An alternative approach to pastoral care with children that further invites the possibility of interdisciplinary dialogue is the linguistic work of Timothy Allen.³¹⁴ As a pastoral counselor, Allen portrays how different people, especially children, use different language to talk about God. In his article, "God Talk and Myth: Turning Chaos into Comfort," he presents a group of pastoral care encounters and offers practical ways to talk to children, as well as methods to interpret children's unique ways of talking about God.³¹⁵ In this regard, Allen sounds a familiar chord as he joins other postmodern professionals in practical theology and pastoral care like Berryman, who support the need for a new hermeneutic in working with children.³¹⁶ Given Allen's background as a linguist, it is noteworthy that he does not emphasize the specific use of storytelling in his approach to children's work. Similarly, Capps does not espouse the use of narrative or storytelling as his primary methodology in children's work.³¹⁷ It is refreshing that primary figures in the field of

³¹² Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1958), 2-26.

³¹³ The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. is a professional association committed to advancing experience-based theological education for seminarians, clergy and lay persons of diverse cultures, ethnic groups and faith traditions. We establish standards, certify supervisors and accredit programs and centers in varied settings. ACPE programs promote the integration of personal history, faith tradition and the behavioral sciences in the practice of spiritual care" (The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. website, accessed April 23, 2011.)

³¹⁴ Timothy Allen, "God Talk and Myth: Turning Chaos into Comfort," *Journal of Pastoral Care*, 46 (4), 1992, 240-47.

³¹⁵ Allen, 240-43.

³¹⁶ Berryman, 5-25.

³¹⁷ Capps, 25-30.

pastoral care and practical theology are creative enough to obviate traditional resources and to devise their own hermeneutical approach to working with children.

In different ways, authors Grossoehme,³¹⁸ Allen,³¹⁹ and Capps³²⁰ plead their case for a fresh hermeneutic in working with children that prevents further marginalization, indifference, and abuse. Their texts echo a similar refrain: adults find relating to children difficult, confusing, and may often communicate with children in less than helpful ways. It appears that many adults find children to be an altogether different species. This refrain supports a strong case toward the need for greater research in all areas of children's work so that adults may discover more healing ways to communicate with children.

A fourth text in the field of pastoral care is Charles Gerkin's, *An Introduction to Pastoral Care*. Speaking from a postmodern platform that recommends story and narrative, Gerkin suggests that pastoral care in the 21st century needs to reflect a theology for a postmodern world community.³²¹ He proposes that "... a more holistic understanding of ministry grounded in a narrative hermeneutical approach to pastoral care theory requires that we lay a broader ancestral claim than simply the Wisdom tradition."³²² Similar to Berryman³²³ and Loughlin³²⁴ in the narrative theological tradition, Gerkin believes that the metaphor of pastoral care must acknowledge and include multiple origins of culture, truth, and religious myth.³²⁵ His text attempts to translate the field of pastoral care from traditional psychotherapeutic models into a more dynamic vision of pastoral theology. Though his book

³¹⁸ Grossoehme, 40-45.

³¹⁹ Allen, 240-47.

³²⁰ Capps, 25-30.

³²¹ Charles Gerkin, *An Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 21.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Berryman, Jerome, 5-11.

³²⁴ Loughlin, 62-67.

³²⁵ Gerkin, 21 ff.

is more about the stages of life, especially the elder stages,³²⁶ Gerkin does offer a fresh hermeneutic that may be applied to working with children. He believes that pastoral care must begin with people telling their own stories and espouses the vehicle of narrative theology as a springboard for holistic and relevant pastoral care.³²⁷

Gerkin breaks new ground in suggesting that pastoral care is too often cloaked in psychological paradigms. He suggests that the field needs maturation in its own right, away from its dependency on psychology and toward more integrated models of pastoral theology.³²⁸ In this regard, he echoes the work of Loughlin³²⁹ and American missionaries Healey and Sybertz,³³⁰ who urge the creation of a new hermeneutic for a postmodern world.

Although Gerkin's text is not primarily about children, his paradigm is relevant for children's work in his emphasis on story and narrative.³³¹ He begins with the richness of human experience as the basis for quality pastoral care in the 21st century. As opposed to clinicians like Capps,³³² Gerkin does not necessarily support an interdisciplinary approach to pastoral care. Rather, he envisions the field maturing in its own right to create models of care that are less secular and more rooted in a theological frame of reference.³³³

In summary, with respect to theological approaches to children, there are several different and overlapping methodologies. Within postmodernist theology, practical theology, narrative theology and pastoral care, the most common denominator seems to be the preferred vehicle of storytelling. However, this narrative approach is not utilized or even supported by significant figures within these overlapping fields.

³²⁶ Gerkin, 21-26.

³²⁷ Ibid, 21ff.

³²⁸ Ibid, 21-26.

³²⁹ Loughlin, 62ff.

³³⁰ Healey and Sybertz, 70-79.

³³¹ Gerkin, 21ff.

³³² Capps, 25-30.

³³³ Gerkin, 21ff.

Another common thread is the recommendation by the majority of writers for a radically different hermeneutic in working with children. Authors including Gerald Loughlin, Charles Gerkin, Ivy Beckwith, Jerome Berryman, and Donald Capps make their case for a hermeneutic that moves beyond the stigma, indifference, abuse, and marginalization of children. A final thread of commonality appears to be that these several theological approaches to working with children are rooted in the Christian tradition. Yet the imperative of a new hermeneutic does imply that cultural and religious boundaries be re-examined and ultimately stretched beyond the scope of Christianity.

2.2.3 Narrative therapy and children's mental health

Similar to narrative theology³³⁴ and postmodernism,³³⁵ narrative therapy is another approach to working with children in clinical settings that utilizes storytelling. The field of narrative therapy is a distinct type of counseling and psychotherapy developed in the 1970s and 80s by Australian Michael White and his New Zealand colleague David Epston.³³⁶ Their theory purports that the identities of human beings are shaped by the accounts of their lives found in stories or narratives.³³⁷ In clinical practice, a narrative therapist supports clients in fully describing their life stories, as well as the possibilities associated with those stories. Narrative therapy holds that identity is chiefly shaped by these narratives or stories, whether uniquely personal or general to a particular culture. Within the therapeutic process, these self-reported narratives may be explored by the therapist and client and eventually retold in a healthier, more realistic manner.³³⁸

³³⁴ Nelson, 95-104.

³³⁵ Beckwith, 9-14.

³³⁶ Michael White and D. Epston, *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (New York: Norton, 1990), 2-7.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ Michael White, *Map of Narrative Practice* (New York: Norton, 2007), 5-8.

2.2.3.1 Narrative medicine

Similarly, Lewis Mehl-Madrona has created a new field within the study of medicine that also focuses on storytelling as a vehicle for personal healing.³³⁹ Known as narrative medicine, this field links the actual healing outcome in treatment directly to the client's ability and investment in telling his or her own story.³⁴⁰ Narrative medicine attempts to restore the power of the patient's own story in the healing process and stresses how conventional medicine tends to ignore the account of the patient. Mehl-Madrona proposes a reinvention of medicine that includes indigenous healing methods that have been effective through being fully present with patients and listening to their stories.³⁴¹

Though narrative therapy is not an interdisciplinary approach to working with children, it may be viewed as a transitional vehicle in the postmodern tradition that also embraces the popular vehicle of storytelling.³⁴² The narrative approach continues to be the most common method of working with children across interdisciplinary lines. In clinical therapy, the term *postmodern* was first applied to clinical work in the 1980s.³⁴³ In the spirit of postmodern thought, narrative therapy hypothesizes that there is no one, single way to approach treatment for every individual. In other words, the location of truth in psychotherapy becomes relative, and many paths of healing may exist for the same client.³⁴⁴

2.2.3.2 Clinical research in narrative therapy

In their compendium of actual clinical transcripts in *Narrative Therapies with Children and Adolescents*, Craig Smith and David Nyland support the postmodern assumption that

³³⁹ Lewis Mehl-Madrona and Thom Hartmann, *Narrative Medicine: The Use of History and Story in the Healing Process* (Washington: Big Bear & Co., 2007), 25-33.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid, 30-32.

³⁴² Ibid, 30 ff.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Lynne E. Angus and John McLeod, eds., *The Handbook of Narrative and Psychotherapy: Practice, Theory, and Research* (CA: Sage, 2004), 52-57.

“no one person or clinical approach has the answer.”³⁴⁵ In this text, many clinicians offer their clinical wisdom and cite the limitations of verbal therapy when working with children. They suggest a new hermeneutic that distinguishes the field of narrative therapy from traditional forms of psychotherapy with children.³⁴⁶ This group of clinicians believes that traditional forms of therapy assume that the objectivity of the clinician will guide the therapeutic process. However, narrative therapy explores the hypothesis that the client’s perspective, or the client’s version of the story, contributes to the “truth” of the entire hermeneutic and has the power to change the healing outcome of the therapy itself.³⁴⁷

The suppositions of narrative therapy are similar to postmodern theologians like Berryman³⁴⁸ and Loughlin,³⁴⁹ as well as pastoral care clinicians like Capps,³⁵⁰ who envision the possibility of dialogue between the disciplines of psychotherapy and theology. However, narrative therapists are generally not eager to dialogue with theologians and often see any discussion of theology in the therapeutic process as less than scientific and prejudicial.³⁵¹ This is an unfortunate bias within the field of mental health counseling in general, and this research study is one attempt to begin interdisciplinary dialogue between theology, spirituality, psychology, and pastoral care.

2.2.3.3 Clinical praxis with narrative therapy

Narrative therapy has also become an alternative clinical model to more traditional forms of family systems therapy that stress cognition. In their text, *Playful Approaches to Serious Problems, Narrative Therapy with Children and Their Families*, David Epston, Jennifer

³⁴⁵ Craig Smith and David Nyland, eds., *Narrative Therapies with Children and Adolescents* (NY: Guilford Press, 1997). 23.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, 23 ff.

³⁴⁷ Ibid, 2-26.

³⁴⁸ Jerome Berryman, 5-11.

³⁴⁹ Loughlin, 62-67.

³⁵⁰ Capps, 25-32.

³⁵¹ Smith and Nyland, eds., 23-25.

Freeman and Dean Lobovits devise a new hermeneutic to address children and family systems issues in the clinical process.³⁵² These clinicians posit that through the therapeutic medium of play, adults are invited to enter the child's world and to begin to see a problem within the family unit from the child's point of view. Since the issue may be difficult, even grim, play allows the situation to become lighter by engaging the child's imagination. As parents begin to see the situation through the eyes of the child, healing may begin for parents and child as humor and play become therapeutic tools.³⁵³

Similar to the clinical work of Smith and Nyland,³⁵⁴ for individual clients, this text on narrative therapy and play further espouses a postmodern hermeneutic for family therapy. By allowing the child to become central to the story, the hermeneutic of the family dynamic is changed, not only in favor of the child, but also through the child's invitation to enter his or her private world of play.³⁵⁵

Narrative therapy continues to break new ground within the therapeutic community by its application to specific mental disorders. For example, the clinical team of Lynn Focht and William Beardsley has devised a therapeutic procedure for working with families having one or more members diagnosed with Affective Disorder (AD), "...a mental disorder characterized by a consistent, pervasive alteration in mood and affecting thoughts, emotions, and behaviors."³⁵⁶ In their clinical work, they have observed that adults or children with AD become silent about their symptomology and generally refuse to talk to other family

³⁵² David Epston, Jennifer Freeman, and Dean Lobovits, *Playful Approaches to Serious Problems: Narrative Therapy with Children and Their Families* (NY: WW Norton, 1997), 3-10.

³⁵³ Ibid, 265 ff.

³⁵⁴ Smith and Nyland, eds., 2-26.

³⁵⁵ Epston, et al, 265 ff.

³⁵⁶ *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Ed.*, (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2000), 345.

members. Through the medium of dialogue, clinicians can help families talk to each other about the illness and how it affects each member in the family system.³⁵⁷

In their article, “Speech after Long Silence: The Use of Narrative Therapy in a Preventive Intervention for Children of Parents with Affective Disorder,” Focht and Beardsley present their own successful case studies where families begin to heal as those afflicted with AD share their own stories.³⁵⁸ Similar to the juvenile detention work of Suwanbubha in Thailand,³⁵⁹ dialogue is utilized by narrative family therapists as a vehicle toward healing and reducing violence within the family system.³⁶⁰

In summary, the field of narrative therapy has become a major clinical strategy for the treatment of children as individuals, as well as members of their family systems. Storytelling is utilized as a primary vehicle for treatment as clinicians begin to validate their own therapeutic experiences while witnessing the healing power of narrative. The postmodern tenet that not only do individual stories matter, but they also change the hermeneutic of the healing process, is rooted in the methodology of clinical work with children and their families. In this regard, narrative therapy is responsible for bringing work with children from the background to the foreground. Within clinical mental health, children have become much less marginalized and more respected as a population within society worthy of support and treatment.

³⁵⁷ Lynn Focht and William Beardsley, “Speech after Long Silence: The Use of Narrative Therapy in a Preventive Intervention for Children of Parents with Affective Disorder,” *Family Process*, Vol. 35, Issue 4, 407-422.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ Suwanbubha, 2-11.

³⁶⁰ Focht and Beardsley, 407-422.

2.2.4 Interdisciplinary approaches to children's spirituality

As a field of inquiry, children's spirituality is relatively new and embraces a wide range of authors and approaches to working with children. In her article from the *International Handbook of Education for Spirituality, Care, and Wellbeing*, Chris Boyatzis reports that the field of children's spirituality is still in its infancy though interest has spiked since the year 2000.³⁶¹ She relates that over half of all existing research on children's spirituality has been conducted within the last 10 years.³⁶² While no empirical work, apart from this research study, has been completed on the specific population of children in detention and their spirituality, outside the walls of juvenile detention there is a growing interest in the interdisciplinary study of children's spirituality, a topic that has begun to intrigue social scientists, mental health clinicians, and theologians alike.³⁶³

2.2.4.1 Lynn Schofield Clark: *From Angels to Aliens*

A unique approach to nonclinical, interdisciplinary work in children's spirituality is the work of Lynn Schofield Clark in her text, *From Angels to Aliens: Teenagers, the Media, and the Supernatural*. Clark combines the social sciences with religion and spirituality.³⁶⁴ Her book is an empirical research study of teens and their experiences with the supernatural and mass media. Though Clark skims the topic of spirituality, her research does focus on adolescent religious beliefs, especially in the context of Christian evangelicalism. Yet she specifically excludes "...juveniles who were living in juvenile detention centers or other locations emphasizing reform from or punishment of what might be considered deviant

³⁶¹ Chris J. Boyatzis, "What Does Spirituality Look Like in a Child?" in *International Handbook of Education for Spirituality, Care, and Wellbeing*, edited by Souza, et al (London: Springer Science and Media, 2009), 48-53.

³⁶² Ibid, 48-53.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Lynn Schofield Clark, *From Angels to Aliens: Teenagers, the Media, and the Supernatural* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 257.

behaviors....”³⁶⁵ Clark’s research concerns how the media affects adolescent religious beliefs, specifically in relation to the supernatural, a central category of her research.³⁶⁶ She summarizes her research findings on adolescents by separating them into the following groups: 1/ the Intrigued; 2/ the Experimenters; 3/ the Traditionalists; 4/ the Resisters; and 5/ the Mysticals.³⁶⁷

Clark’s work represents data-driven, research methodology from a qualitative perspective. Yet the interviews conducted by her research team are not presented in the text itself.³⁶⁸ It might have been helpful to include the actual questions utilized by her team so that future researchers might benefit from her categories. In selecting the supernatural beliefs of teens as her central focus, Clark seems to have an agenda to examine the polarizing tendencies of evangelical Christianity, which taints the objectivity of her research project. She explores the darker side of the supernatural and implies that Christian evangelicalism has created the dark side of teen supernatural obsession from within its own polarized theology.³⁶⁹

However, Clark has done groundbreaking research on the connection between religion, the supernatural, and the media in the adolescent population. Since children and young people are so immersed in media—from television to the internet and social networking—her topic is not only timely but crucial reading for those who work with children and adolescents.³⁷⁰

Clark’s book on children, religion, and the media seems to stand alone. Though her work on children’s spirituality seems more tangential to her interest in Christian evangelicalism

³⁶⁵Clark, 257.

³⁶⁶Ibid, 230-238.

³⁶⁷Ibid, 225-27.

³⁶⁸ Ibid, 225 ff.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid, 225 ff.

and the dark side of the supernatural, she does enter the secret world of children's beliefs with respect and devotion. In this regard, she makes a strong beginning toward reversing the indifference, ambiguity, and marginalization decried by several proponents of the same agenda in the fields of postmodernism, narrative theology, and pastoral care.³⁷¹

2.2.4.2 Robert Coles as clinician and theologian

Interdisciplinary dialogue between the fields of mental health and spirituality has begun to engage clinicians outside the confines of religion and theology. Mental health professionals, psychiatrists, and psychologists are more open to dialogue as they consider spirituality an integral part of the human psyche. This probe into the spiritual world is no more apparent than in children's mental health studies.

In the work of psychiatrist Robert Coles, for example, he employs the term *spirituality* more frequently than the term *theology*.³⁷² He introduces the category of spirituality in order to invite a more holistic approach to his own clinical research. Coles addresses the issue of children's spirituality in his work, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, the third volume in his trilogy entitled "The Inner Lives of Children."³⁷³ He weaves together 30 years of clinical experience working with children in the United States and around the world and employs methods from storytelling, drawing and painting to recording unscripted interviews. In working with the Hopi Indians, for example, he is challenged to find ways of communicating beyond words. He employs this open-ended statement in various forms: "Tell me who you are."³⁷⁴ Coles explores the difference between spirituality and religion and suggests that "...the emphasis in this book is not so much on children as students or

³⁷¹ Clark, 257.

³⁷² Robert Coles and David Elkind, et al, *The On-going Journey: Awakening Spiritual Life in At-Risk Youth* (Nebraska: BoysTown Press, 1995), 9-10.

³⁷³ Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), 98-148.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 308.

practitioners of this or that religion, but on children as soulful in ways they reveal themselves: young human beings, profane as can be one minute, but the next, spiritual.”³⁷⁵

Coles does not pretend to be a theologian. He is a social scientist and political activist for disenfranchised children, including those with disabilities, children of war, homeless children, and children scarred from racial profiling and discrimination.³⁷⁶ Coles listens to what children of different faiths have to say about their spirituality. In this regard, he breaks new ground by embracing a cultural hermeneutic wider than any specific religion.³⁷⁷ His spiritual work with children is global in breadth, comprehensive, balanced, and transcends the traditional parameters of research limited to cognitive approaches and interviews. Rather, his work represents a creative way of meeting children where they are and interacting with them in ways that invite their spirituality.³⁷⁸

However, given the comprehensive scope of his research, it is significant that Coles omits the entire area of children’s spirituality within juvenile detention centers.³⁷⁹ His oversight again illustrates the massive gap in the literature on this specific population of children. Even prominent researchers like Coles who consider themselves social and political activists for children continue to leave this population unidentified and unexplored. Yet Coles’ work illustrates creative ways to engage in spiritual research with children. His creative methods with children raise the bar with respect to future research in children’s spirituality.³⁸⁰

Coles’ attempt to discern and document the difference between religion and spirituality is a significant contribution to the field of children’s spirituality. While some authors begin

³⁷⁵Coles, 98-130.

³⁷⁶Ibid, 305-311.

³⁷⁷ Ibid, 98-130.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Ibid, 2-311.

³⁸⁰ Ibid, 98-148.

from religion, like Clark³⁸¹ and Suwanbubbha,³⁸² the category of spirituality requires more discernment and definition. The study of children's spirituality in its own right is a field rich in textures and contours of meanings. As a clinician himself, Coles offers more tangible differentiation and foundation for discernment between religion and spirituality.³⁸³ Viewing spirituality from a clinical perspective, as William James does in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*,³⁸⁴ Coles opens a wider door into the psyche of children. In his interdisciplinary approach to children's spirituality, Coles transcends the boundary of postmodernists and practical theologians who seem limited to the Christian tradition.³⁸⁵

A second text by Robert Coles that integrates psychiatry and children's spirituality is his work with David Elkind in *The On-going Journey: Awakening Spiritual Life in At-Risk Youth*. Coles and psychologist Elkind contribute to this collection of essays from four symposiums held at BoysTown, Nebraska from 1989 to 1993.³⁸⁶ The essays represent a spectrum of experience and wisdom from different cultures and perspectives including American Indian, African-America, and Hispanic-Latino. The topics cover a broad range from cultural sensitivity and pastoral practice to how at-risk youth's mental health may be connected to their capacity for moral decisions and actions.³⁸⁷

For example, Nsenga Warfield-Coppock's essay entitled, *Approaches to Resiliency: An African-Centered Perspective*, suggests that the spirituality of African youth is rooted in the

³⁸¹ Clark, 9-225.

³⁸² Suwanbubbha, 2-11.

³⁸³ Coles, 305 ff.

³⁸⁴ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Random House, 1901), 5-23.

³⁸⁵ Coles, 305-311.

³⁸⁶ Robert Coles and David Elkind, et al, *The On-going Journey: Awakening Spiritual Life in At-Risk Youth* (Nebraska: BoysTown Press, 1995), 9-10.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

ritual and story of their own culture.³⁸⁸ In order to support youth in their spiritual journey, attention must be given to their cultural roots. She shares examples of proverbs that might be helpful in empowering African youth in their own spiritual journeys.³⁸⁹ Although Warfield's work is not specifically Christian, her theme echoes the work of American missionaries Healy and Sybertz, who stress the importance of a culturally relevant hermeneutic when spreading the Christian gospel in other cultures.³⁹⁰ Also similar to the approach of narrative theologians like Loughlin,³⁹¹ Warfield uses the power of story and narrative to teach children about their own spirituality. She also supports Capps' hypothesis in *The Child's Song: The Religious Abuse of Children*.³⁹² As Capps explains how pastoral care can become abusive to children, Warfield believes that doing religious work with children in a context that violates their own culture is tantamount to emotional child abuse.³⁹³

This volume of essays also includes theoretical and practical ways to educate at-risk children and youth. In her essay, "Effective Strategies for Working with At-Risk Youth," Lorraine Monroe speaks personally from her own experiences teaching children in schools and other educational settings.³⁹⁴ Monroe does not stress culture and story. Rather, she shares practical strategies of working with children that she has found helpful. Thus, this

³⁸⁸ Nsenga Warfield-Coppock, "Approaches to Resiliency: An African Perspective," in *The On-going Journey: Awakening Spiritual Life in At-risk Youth*, edited by Robert Coles and David Elkind (Nebraska: BoysTown Press, 1995), 101-123.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Healey and Sybertz, 72-75.

³⁹¹ Loughlin, 62-67.

³⁹² Donald Capps, *The Child's Song: The Religious Abuse of Children* (Louisville KY: John Knox Press, 1995), 25-57.

³⁹³ Warfield-Coppock, 101-123.

³⁹⁴ Lorraine Monroe, "Effective Strategies for Working with At-risk Youth," in *The On-going Journey: Awakening Spiritual life of At-risk Youth*, edited by Coles and Elkind (Nebraska: BoysTown Press, 1995), 155-170.

volume of essays includes an interdisciplinary approach to educating troubled children about spirituality within the context of their own unique religious and cultural settings.³⁹⁵

Although the methodology employed in this volume of essays edited by Coles and Elkind³⁹⁶ is not research-based, nor is the subject about children in juvenile detention centers, the text offers stories of experience and insight working with troubled children from different cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds. Similar to Previte's³⁹⁷ work, Coles and Elkind employ the central method of storytelling, the most common vehicle for working with children. However, it is noteworthy that the population of troubled children in juvenile detention centers is not addressed in this comprehensive volume.³⁹⁸ This oversight continues to highlight the huge gap in research and literature available on this population.

2.2.4.3 James Fowler: *Stages of Faith*

The work of psychologist James Fowler in his book, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, approaches clinical research with adults and children from a perspective similar to Coles.³⁹⁹ Both researchers move beyond the category of religion into a wider probe of the human personality. Though Fowler's book does not focus solely on children, he does explore the question of faith, "a person's way of seeing him or herself in relation to others against a background of shared meaning and purpose."⁴⁰⁰ His methodology is to avoid the "religious trappings" of faith in order to engage his subject in a more explorative, psychological journey into the person's mind and soul.⁴⁰¹ In choosing to avoid the religious connotations of faith, Fowler enters the more

³⁹⁵ Monroe, 155-170.

³⁹⁶ Ibid, 155-170.

³⁹⁷ Previte, 7-135.

³⁹⁸ Monroe, 155-70.

³⁹⁹ James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 4-6.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, 302-320.

ambiguous waters of spirituality as he pursues a creative approach to the question of meaning in life at any age.⁴⁰²

Fowler employs a research model consisting of 359 interviews with individuals from the ages of 3 ½ to 85. He includes actual transcripts of his interviews and describes those interviews with children as “short.”⁴⁰³ Though Fowler does not expect the level of self-reflection that adults have, his assumption about children’s lack of ability to self-reflect is unfortunate. Indeed children may not have the same capacity for self-reflection as adults, yet his hypothesis about children seems to reflect the same kind of marginalization decried in many texts on children’s spirituality.⁴⁰⁴ For example, the work of Berryman,⁴⁰⁵ Loughlin,⁴⁰⁶ and Gerkin⁴⁰⁷ in the fields of postmodernism and pastoral care speak directly to this prejudice against children as they champion a new hermeneutic for children’s work.

Fowler’s work on faith may also illustrate a basic inability to understand how children talk about faith. As pastoral counselor and linguist Timothy Allen suggests, children talk about “God stuff” with different symbols and language.⁴⁰⁸ In his article, “God Talk and Myth: Turning Chaos into Comfort,” Allen offers practical ways to talk to children, as well as methods to interpret children’s unique ways of talking about God.⁴⁰⁹ Written nearly 20 years ago, Fowler’s text is a forerunner in the field of psychology and spirituality. However, his underlying assumptions about working with children may require a different way of seeing and hearing that respects children as active and equal participants in God’s world.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰² Fowler, 302-320.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, 125-199.

⁴⁰⁵ Jerome Berryman, 5-11.

⁴⁰⁶ Loughlin, 62 ff.

⁴⁰⁷ Gerkin, 21-27.

⁴⁰⁸ Timothy Allen, “God Talk and Myth: Turning Chaos into Comfort,” *Journal of Pastoral Care*, 46 (4), 1992, 240-247.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, 240-243.

⁴¹⁰ Fowler, 302-320.

2.2.4.4 Tobin Hart: *The Secret Spiritual Life of Children*

Another text that employs an interdisciplinary, research approach to children's spirituality and psychology is *The Secret Spiritual World of Children*, by Tobin Hart.⁴¹¹ Founder of the ChildSpirit Institute for research on children's spirituality, Hart presents five years of clinical interviews with children, families, and adults on their spirituality. In this volume, Hart speaks as a mental health clinician and observes that children's spiritual experiences are often dismissed as pathological or untrustworthy.⁴¹² However, he believes that wisdom is not exclusive to age but exists within children as well, though it may take different forms.⁴¹³ He researches the history of mystical experiences from antiquity to the present in order to demonstrate that children have volumes to say about the spirit world.⁴¹⁴

Since the majority of texts in the fields of postmodernism, pastoral theology, narrative theology, and pastoral care are rooted in the Christian tradition,⁴¹⁵ Hart's work is refreshing in its inclusion of eastern approaches to spirituality. His methodology embraces a more inclusive hermeneutic for the world's non-Christian residents.⁴¹⁶ Referring to the "big self" and the "small self," he explains the eastern understanding of ego, especially as it applies to childhood ego development.⁴¹⁷ Like Coles, Hart integrates a clinical and psychological understanding of children while exploring their capacity for spirituality and mysticism.⁴¹⁸

Similar to both Coles⁴¹⁹ and Fowler,⁴²⁰ Hart's research methodology supports eclectic questions to encourage a wider range of responses. Like Fowler, he attempts to circumvent

⁴¹¹ Tobin Hart, *The Secret Spiritual World of Children* (Novato CA: New World Books, 2003), 3-8.

⁴¹² *Ibid*, 25-32.

⁴¹³ *Ibid*, 3-8.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*, 25-32.

⁴¹⁵ See the works of Berryman, Capps, Loughlin, Beckwith, Nelson, and Miller-McLemore referenced earlier in Chapter Two.

⁴¹⁶ Hart, 25-28.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid*, 22-25.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid*, 25-32.

⁴¹⁹ Coles, 302-320.

religious categories to delve more deeply into the spiritual psyche of children. Hart suggests that "...while children may not be able to articulate a moment of wonder or a religious concept, their presence—their mode of being in the world—may be distinctly spiritual."⁴²¹ He further suggests that children's experiences of spirituality are viewed by adults and researchers as equal to "God talk."⁴²²

Yet what may lie outside this boundary of specific "God talk" may lead to a deeper revelation of children's spirituality that only they can disclose. In this regard, Clark⁴²³ might have benefited from Hart's research philosophy. His methodology might have allowed Clark to transcend the boundaries of religious categories to delve more deeply into the souls of children.

It is noteworthy that the works cited by Fowler, Hart, and Coles do not include any research on the specific population of children in juvenile detention centers. This omission in the interdisciplinary work of children's spirituality and mental health further highlights the massive gap in research in this area, as well as the need for specific research not only on the population of children in detention centers, but also on the specific topic of their spiritual beliefs. This research study is an attempt to begin empirical research on this marginalized population of children in detention centers, with specific attention to their theological and spiritual beliefs.

2.2.4.5 Handbook of Spiritual Development

One of the most comprehensive volumes on a wide range of interdisciplinary topics on children's spirituality is the *Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and*

⁴²⁰ Fowler, 305-311.

⁴²¹ Tobin Hart, "The Mystical Child: Glimpsing the Spiritual World of Children," *Encounter Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, 17 (2), Summer 2004, 33-41.

⁴²² *Ibid*, 33.

⁴²³ Clark, 9-125.

Adolescence.⁴²⁴ This international collection of essays strikes a familiar chord, the ongoing marginalization of this field by mainstream social science and scholarly literature.⁴²⁵ The text's premise is that interdisciplinary work on children's spirituality seems to lack a foundational theory. Although many fields of study are currently represented in children's work--from theology, psychology, medicine, and anthropology—scholars and researchers work from within their own discipline, an approach that lacks integration. This text offers such integration by presenting a comprehensive view of the current scientific knowledge in several distinct areas of inquiry and also points toward future dialogue and integration.⁴²⁶

In her essay, “Non-Western Approaches to Spiritual Development among Infants and Young Children: A Case Study from West Africa,” anthropologist Alma Gottlieb presents a case study from the Ivory Coast that examines the Beng belief that babies are reincarnated ancestors.⁴²⁷ She discusses their belief that the younger the child or baby, the keener the memory.⁴²⁸ Gottlieb integrates spirituality, religion, and anthropology by suggesting a non-western and non-Christian approach to children's spirituality.⁴²⁹

From a different perspective, neurologists Andrew and Stephanie Newberg consider the neurological connection between spirituality and brain development in their essay, “A Neuropsychological Perspective on Spiritual Development.”⁴³⁰ Their research suggests that human interest in religion and spirituality may be connected to biology and psychology.

⁴²⁴ Eugene Roehikepartain and Peter Benson, et al, eds., *Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 3-10.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid*, 123-55.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid*.

⁴²⁷ Alma Gottlieb, “Non-Western Approaches to Spiritual Development among Infants and Young Children: A Case Study from West Africa,” in *Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, edited by Eugene Roehikepartain and Peter Benson (CA: Sage, 2006), 110-127.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid*, 110-15.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid*.

⁴³⁰ Andrew and Stephanie Newberg, “A Neuropsychological Perspective on Spiritual Development,” in *Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, edited by Eugene Roehikepartain and Peter Benson (CA: Sage, 2006), 137-154.

They contend that as humans develop spiritually, their brain functions also develop in tandem, like mirrors of their spiritual processes.⁴³¹ The Newbergs offer medical research to support their claims, among the most cutting edge data in the field of medicine and children's spirituality.⁴³²

Given the vast scope of this work, it is noteworthy that the *Handbook* does not include any contribution on the specific population of children in juvenile detention centers.⁴³³ However, the essays do include significant contributions on non-western approaches to spirituality and support the view that the spirituality of children has been historically marginalized by the scholarly community until its explosion in the last 10 years. This collection of essays also represents some of the most promising interdisciplinary research and praxis within the field of children's spirituality to date.⁴³⁴

2.2.5 Clinical tools to measure children's spirituality

Within a more specialized area of clinical mental health and children's spirituality, there is growing interest in the development of clinical tools that measure spirituality in children.⁴³⁵ This clinical interest includes a proposed assessment of children's spirituality to aid in the treatment of specific mental health issues.⁴³⁶ Different from the work of Coles⁴³⁷ and Fowler,⁴³⁸ these social scientists are not motivated to document children's spiritual beliefs through research. Rather, they seek to document a child's spiritual history, as well as to assess the child's capacity for spirituality. Indeed this approach does offer a new

⁴³¹ Andrew and Stephanie Newberg, 137-142.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 137-154.

⁴³³ Roehikepartain and Benson, eds., 25-189.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁵ Richard Wahl, Sian Cotton, and Patricia Harrison-Monroe, "Spirituality, Adolescent Suicide, and the Juvenile Justice System," *Southern Medical Journal*, 101 (7), July 2008, 711-715.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁷ Coles, 302-320.

⁴³⁸ Fowler, 305-311.

hermeneutic for working with children and may serve to become an interdisciplinary tool for professionals in theology, mental health, and the social sciences.⁴³⁹

2.2.5.1 The Wahl group

In an article from the *Southern Medical Journal*, Richard Wahl and his colleagues propose that spirituality is often overlooked as a factor in the mental health of children and adolescents, especially those in crisis. This team of doctors recommends that a spiritual assessment tool could be useful in assessing children in times of emotional crisis. They further suggest that clinicians have an ethical obligation to incorporate spirituality into a holistic, multi-faceted, culturally competent plan of care.⁴⁴⁰ Wahl and his colleagues recommend taking a “clinical spiritual history” when assessing children. They further document that a high percentage of children and adolescents present with elevated rates of suicidal ideation and mental health history when admitted to juvenile detention centers.⁴⁴¹

In developing a customized, spiritual assessment tool for use within a specific agency or medical practice, the Wahl group offers the following sample questions: 1/ Do you practice a religion? 2/ Do you believe in God or a Higher Power? 3/ What things are most important to you? 4/ Describe the worst moment in your life and how you coped with it.⁴⁴² Though much of their work is theoretical and propositional, their methodology does include two clinical vignettes of adolescents who present with suicidal ideation in a juvenile detention center in Arizona.⁴⁴³

Although Wahl’s article is not research-based beyond the two clinical vignettes included, its approach is unique in raising the issue of spirituality as a key component in assessing and

⁴³⁹ Wahl, et al, 711-715.

⁴⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴²Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Ibid, 712.

treating children.⁴⁴⁴ Wahl and associates are also correct that spirituality is overlooked as a source of not only clinical information but also a more comprehensive treatment for children. Though their small sample group highlights children in juvenile detention centers, such a clinical tool could be useful for children in all clinical settings.

This article further supports the growing observation that children's spirituality is becoming less marginalized by social scientists.⁴⁴⁵ It is also noteworthy that the Wahl group selected children in juvenile detention centers for their initial sample. They have significantly added to the growing body of literature on this population in a creative and challenging way.

2.2.5.2 Catherine White and the Casey Foundation

A second article focuses on the spirituality and mental health of children in a high-risk situation similar to juvenile detention, but not as critical. In an article prepared for Casey Family Programs, Catherine White and her colleagues pose the following question, "What is the mental health of children receiving foster care services in the State of Washington?"⁴⁴⁶ This team of researchers conducts interviews with children in foster care and asks them to share their spiritual beliefs.⁴⁴⁷

In White's research, children placed out of their homes in the care of the state are also asked what activities they participated in that they considered to be spiritual. The results: 1/ 94.6 % believe in God, a Creator, or a Higher Power; 2/ 25% participate in spiritual activities twice weekly; and 3/ 82.5% participate in daily spiritual activities that help them cope with life. The most common spiritual activities: being alive, praying, sharing problems

⁴⁴⁴ Wahl, et al, 711-715.

⁴⁴⁵ Boyatzis, 48-53.

⁴⁴⁶ Catherine White, et al, "Mental Health, Ethnicity, Sexuality, and Spirituality among Youth in Foster Care" (Seattle: Casey Family Programs, 2007), 1-7.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid, 1-7.

with someone, journaling, and doing something relaxing.⁴⁴⁸ Sample questions used in White's study also allow children greater freedom to respond with their own understanding of spirituality. For example, participants define their spirituality as "being alive," "journaling" and "doing something relaxing."⁴⁴⁹

The data collected by White and her colleagues exemplifies a growing trend by social scientists in mental health to measure children's spiritual beliefs.⁴⁵⁰ Similar to the work of Wahl and his associates,⁴⁵¹ White's methodology employs the category of spirituality, as opposed to religion. Both Wahl and White echo the intention of Fowler,⁴⁵² Coles,⁴⁵³ and Hart⁴⁵⁴ in their choice of the term *spirituality* over the more traditional category of religion. Perhaps social scientists and the medical community find in the category of spirituality a greater freedom from the bias associated with religion. In any case, the field of spirituality has invited more open dialogue among several disciplines that heretofore have not mingled well.⁴⁵⁵

2.2.5.3 Spirituality and suicide prevention

On the other hand, two articles from the public database *PubMed*⁴⁵⁶ do connect religion with spirituality and document their role in suicide and its prevention. Both articles support the hypothesis that an individual's involvement with either spirituality or religion may decrease the incidence of suicidal ideation and future suicide attempts.

⁴⁴⁸ White, et al, 1-4.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Boyatzis, 48-53.

⁴⁵¹ Wahl, et al, 711-715.

⁴⁵² Fowler, 305-311.

⁴⁵³ Coles, 302-323.

⁴⁵⁴ Hart, 25-32.

⁴⁵⁵ Boyatzis, 48-53.

⁴⁵⁶ "PubMed is a service of the US National Library of Medicine® that provides free access to Medline, the NLM® database of indexed citations and abstracts to medical, nursing, dental, veterinary, health care, and preclinical sciences journal articles includes additional selected life sciences journals not in MEDLINE; adds new citations Tuesday through Saturday; was developed by the National Center for Biotechnology Information as part of the Entrez retrieval system." (US National Library of Medicine website (accessed May 5, 2012).

In the first article, “Explaining the relation between religiousness and reduced suicidal behavior,” Robins and Fiske survey 454 undergraduate students at West Virginia University and conclude that: 1/ involvement in private religious rituals is not as helpful in reducing rates of suicidal ideation as being involved in public forms of religion; and 2/ student’s social supports are more significant in reducing suicidal ideation than their specific religious beliefs. Their research suggests that college emphasis on social support activities appears to be the strongest factor in reducing rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.⁴⁵⁷

The significance of this article lies in the fact that social scientists have begun to cross a traditional boundary to attempt research in the fields of religion and spirituality together.⁴⁵⁸ It is further significant that the research conclusions do not support the hypothesis that a young adult’s involvement with private forms of spirituality and religion may decrease their future suicidal ideation or attempts. Rather, this research study indicates that social support systems may hold a greater key to understanding how to reduce suicidal ideation in young people.⁴⁵⁹ Their data suggests an alternative to literature in the fields of religion, theology, and the social sciences that generally supports the role of religion and spirituality in the lives of adults and children.⁴⁶⁰

Since the Robins and Fiske research sample is composed of college-age students from 18 to 23, this age group is not generally considered within the category of children. It is possible that the difference in the sample age may have contributed to some difference in the data results.⁴⁶¹ For example, children may be able to express their spiritual side more freely than young adults, who are dealing with different emotional issues and mental capacities.

⁴⁵⁷ A. Robins, and A. Fiske, “Explaining the relation between religiousness and reduced suicidal behavior: social support rather than specific beliefs,” *PubMed*, Aug; 39(4), 2009, 386-395.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 392-395.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 386-88.

College students are facing the realities of extended puberty, the exploration of their own sexuality, and their first foray into the world of ideas. They may also have begun to develop belief systems more indicative of adults than children.

Perhaps if Robins and Fiske had distinguished between the fields of religion and spirituality in their research approach, they might have been more open to the possibilities of the more fluid and inclusive category of spirituality.⁴⁶² For example, their own description of “social supports” does include the possibility of spirituality since whatever defines meaning for an individual may also be considered spiritual. It is also true that the practice of attending religious services may be considered a social support, as well as a “public religious practice.” Thus, their research conclusions seem to negate the significance of private forms of devotion, worship, and spirituality in favor of practices that encourage human connection and socialization.⁴⁶³

In this regard, Robins and Fiske resonate with the research conclusions of Alethea Desrosiers in her doctoral work at Columbia University.⁴⁶⁴ Desrosiers investigates the construct of “relational spirituality.” As opposed to spirituality as a vertical, introspective model, relational spirituality addresses youth and their network of relationships. In other words, relational spirituality would include Robins and Fiske’s category of “social supports.”⁴⁶⁵

Referenced in an article from *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, Desrosiers’s dissertation sample of 615 adolescents from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds is measured against traditional scales, including the Beck Depression Inventory and the

⁴⁶² Coles, 302-323.

⁴⁶³ Robins and Fiske, 386-95.

⁴⁶⁴ Alethea Desrosiers, Brien Kelley and Lisa Miller, “Parent and peer relationships and relational spirituality in adolescents and young adults,” *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, Vol. 3 (1), 2011, 39-54.

⁴⁶⁵ Robins and Fiske, 386-95.

Parental Transparency Scale.⁴⁶⁶ She concludes that common psychopathology in children and adolescents may be better understood through the lens of relational spirituality, which explores the social aspects of adolescent behavior and may offer greater clues about their spiritual world.⁴⁶⁷ Desrosiers parallels Robins and Fiske by concluding that relational, or horizontal spirituality, may have a positive effect on reducing suicidal ideation and attempts in college-age youth whereas private, or vertical spirituality, may not produce the same reduction in future suicidal ideation.⁴⁶⁸

In a second article from *PubMed*, “Spirituality, religion and suicidal behavior in a nationally representative sample,” psychiatrists from Dalhousie University, Canada, contend that the relationship between religion, spirituality, and mental illness is understudied and misunderstood.⁴⁶⁹ In their survey, the sample of which is not clearly defined or presented, they conclude that “religious attendance is associated with decreased suicide attempts in the general population, and those with a mental illness, independent of the effects of social supports.”⁴⁷⁰ Since attendance at public religious services may be viewed as a social support, Rasic and his team of doctors resonate with Desrosiers’s categories of horizontal and vertical spirituality.⁴⁷¹ In fact, all three research studies seem to agree that if religion and spirituality are outwardly directed, as opposed to inwardly and privately directed, there may be a reduction in suicidal ideation or behavior.

Though these separate research studies do not address the specific population of children or adolescents in juvenile detention centers, they do explore the relationship between

⁴⁶⁶Robins and Fiske, 39-54.

⁴⁶⁷Ibid, 386-395.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ D.T. Rasic, et al, “Spirituality, religion and suicidal behavior in a nationally representative sample,” *PubMed*, Apr, 114 (1-3), 2009, 32-40.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid, 35-40.

⁴⁷¹ Desrosiers, et al, 39-54.

religion, spirituality, and mental health. They also continue to highlight the void in empirical research that exists within the field of children's spirituality as it applies to juvenile detention.

In summary, the interdisciplinary work within the fields of spirituality, mental health, and the social sciences is on the cutting edge of research and ground-breaking thought in children's spirituality. It appears that the term *spirituality* has been generally adopted by the social sciences. Professionals in the fields of mental health, psychiatry, and psychology utilize the term *spirituality* as a way to circumvent the traditional category of religion in favor of a more fluid approach that allows for the spiritual psyche of children to be explored with greater freedom. Additionally, many authors support the creation of an entirely new hermeneutic for working with children and decry previous marginalization of children, especially from a Christian perspective.

Still other authors and researchers look toward the development of a standardized clinical instrument to assess spirituality in children's mental health. While little of this new research includes the population of children in juvenile detention centers, this growing interest in children's spirituality may include juvenile detention children in future. This current research study is a beginning toward such inclusion.

2.2.6 Children's spirituality in education

Literature in children's spirituality has also permeated academic disciplines beyond the clinical and theological to include education. Within private and public sectors, educators have begun to consider the category of spirituality more seriously as a curriculum issue for further investigation.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷² Gareth B. Matthews, *Dialogues with Children* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984), 3-10.

2.2.6.1 Gareth Matthews: *Dialogues with Children*

In his text, *Dialogues with Children*, philosopher and educator Gareth Matthews chronicles a year of his life working with a group of eight children in a public grammar school in Edinburgh, Scotland. He develops a methodology of conversation that encourages adults to engage children on equal footing, both in wisdom and in their ability to dialogue on philosophical subjects. Though he does not employ the specific category of spirituality, his choice of research topics is within the range of spiritual topics.⁴⁷³ Matthews shares the results of his interviews with this small sample of children under the following headings: “Happiness,” “Stories,” “Desire,” “the Future,” and “Cheese.”⁴⁷⁴

It is noteworthy that Matthews includes the category of “stories” in his own research, once again utilizing the most popular approach with children, namely, narrative and storytelling.⁴⁷⁵ Matthews also exemplifies an interdisciplinary approach to children by blending his own fields of philosophy and education with spirituality. Though his research sample does not include children in juvenile detention centers, his goal to elevate children to a place of equal philosophical footing with adults is encouraging in children’s work that suffers from marginalization and indifference.⁴⁷⁶ Matthews is not a theologian and does not approach his research from a religious perspective. However, postmodern theologians including Berryman⁴⁷⁷ and Loughlin⁴⁷⁸ would support his approach to working with children, an approach that respects children for their unique abilities and wisdom.

⁴⁷³ Matthews, 3-10.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid, ix-xiii.

⁴⁷⁵ Loughlin, 62-67.

⁴⁷⁶ Matthews, 3-10.

⁴⁷⁷ Jerome Berryman, 5-11.

⁴⁷⁸ Loughlin, 65-66.

2.2.6.2 Works of Brendan Hyde

Similarly, researchers in the field of private, or religious education, have begun to encourage greater dialogue with other academic disciplines, as well as to decry the previous lack of such dialogue.⁴⁷⁹ In his text, *Children and Spirituality: Searching for Meaning and Connectedness*, Brendan Hyde documents a history of international research on children's spirituality. Co-editor of the *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, Hyde combines the fields of religion, spirituality, and education. He lists five characteristics of children's spirituality⁴⁸⁰ and cites growing interdisciplinary interest in this relatively new field of inquiry. He posits that this field now encompasses the disciplines of medicine, psychology, neuroscience, education, and theology. Hyde's stated purpose in writing the book is to offer a guide and resource text for parents, teachers, and other professions who work with children.⁴⁸¹

Hyde's methodology is a series of vignettes to suggest what he terms "clues" about the spirituality of children. His sample is drawn from children attending Catholic schools in Australia, and he addresses those who work with children in a variety of fields and capacities.⁴⁸² Hyde further specifies how vast and multi-faceted the field of children's spirituality has become. Although he does offer guidelines for working with children on a spiritual level, his conclusions are a bit too general. Specific populations of children do require different approaches, as well as different skill sets. Hyde also speaks from a specific reference point of Roman Catholicism, which he tends to gloss over while presenting his research as more ecumenical and interdisciplinary. Though making a crucial point that this

⁴⁷⁹ Brendan Hyde, *Children and Spirituality: Searching for Meaning and Connectedness* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2008), 5-11.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid, 6-8.

⁴⁸² Ibid, 18.

fledgling field has now gone interdisciplinary, Hyde's own research remains specifically Roman Catholic. Similar to Clark's work on evangelical Christianity, adolescents and the media,⁴⁸³ Hyde writes about religious education values and spirituality but is not as transparent as Clark.

Taking a different approach in an article from the *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, Brendan Hyde suggests a framework of hermeneutic phenomenology that investigates children's dreams in an educational setting.⁴⁸⁴ He explores how dreams may be used as tools to explore the nature of children's spirituality and discusses the case of a 10-year-old child and his response to a dream of an Australian Aborigine.⁴⁸⁵ Though Hyde does not include children in juvenile detention, his hermeneutic does create a window of understanding into the spiritual lives of children.

In his article, "Beyond Logic—entering the realm of mystery: hermeneutic phenomenology as a tool for reflecting on children's spirituality," Hyde does not display his Roman Catholicism as centrally as in *Children and Spirituality*.⁴⁸⁶ Rather, he seems more concerned with exploring the fascinating world of children's dreams as they pertain to their spirituality in a classroom setting. Since dream work has been generally considered within the mental health domain, Hyde does transcend his field of religious education to begin a dialogue with the social sciences, as well as clinical mental health.⁴⁸⁷

Hyde's suggested hermeneutic of using dream work as an entrée into children's spirituality echoes the approach of narrative theologian Nelson,⁴⁸⁸ who suggests applying

⁴⁸³ Clark, 9-180.

⁴⁸⁴ Brendan Hyde, "Beyond logic—entering the realm of mystery: hermeneutic phenomenology as a tool for reflecting on children's spirituality," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, Vol. 10 (1), 31-44.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid, 31-36.

⁴⁸⁷ Hyde, 31-44.

⁴⁸⁸ Nelson, 95-104.

the fairy tale archetypes of Bruno Bettelheim⁴⁸⁹ to children in crisis. As a Christian educator, Nelson believes that fairy tale characters allow children to heal vicariously from wounding personal or family issues. Both Hyde and Nelson invite an interdisciplinary approach to their work with children by supporting a dialogue between mental health, education, and theology.⁴⁹⁰

2.2.6.3 Shellie Levine: “Children’s Cognition”

Shellie Levine of Australian Catholic University advocates for the development of more accurate education tools to measure a child’s cognitive ability in the area of spirituality.⁴⁹¹ In her article, “Children’s Cognition as the Foundation of Spirituality,” she argues that cognition, as traditionally defined in reference to children, is an insufficient means of assessing their capacity for spirituality. Levine proposes an alternative assessment tool that redefines categories for childhood cognition tasks.⁴⁹² Similar to the research of Wahl⁴⁹³ and associates in the fields of mental health and spirituality, she sees the connection between spirituality and educational testing for children.⁴⁹⁴ It is unfortunate that her work suggests that cognition in any form should be considered a criterion for measuring a child’s capacity for spirituality. The term *cognition* itself implies thinking, whereas spirituality is not necessarily limited to the capacity to think but may also include a child’s ability to dream, to feel, and to express him or herself, regardless of the degree of measurable cognitive ability.

2.2.6.4 Ann Trousdale: “Black and White Fire”

A third example of private education and spirituality is by Ann Trousdale. In her article, “Black and White Fire: The Interplay of Stories, Imagination, and Children’s Spirituality,”

⁴⁸⁹ Bettelheim, 3-11.

⁴⁹⁰ Hyde, 31-44.

⁴⁹¹ Shellie Levine, “Children’s Cognition as the Foundation of Spirituality,” *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality*, Vol. 4, Issue 2, 1999, 121-140.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Wahl, et al, 711-715.

⁴⁹⁴ Levine, 121-40.

she suggests that storytelling and narrative are central techniques in fostering children's spiritual growth.⁴⁹⁵ Trousdale explores the history of story and suggests that its power lies in engaging the present and offering answers to questions of human existence.⁴⁹⁶ Similar to authors in the fields of theology and mental health, Trousdale espouses the vehicle of storytelling as entrée into the world of children's spirituality.⁴⁹⁷

In summary, the discipline of education, both public and private, seems to be widening its scope to consider spirituality as a relevant curriculum topic for children. Educators chronicle their research with storytelling, dreams, and philosophical topics including "happiness" and "desire." They are concerned with the connection between spirituality and cognition, topics hitherto considered only by mental health, philosophy, or education separately. Similar to other fields within the larger scope of children's spirituality, the area of education has begun a conversation to encourage interdisciplinary thought and praxis.

However, educators like Hyde⁴⁹⁸ and Levine⁴⁹⁹ do rely heavily on the cognitive ability of students in any discussion of spirituality. Since education is often identified with a student's cognitive ability, it is understandable that educators would prioritize the role of cognition. Yet a cognitive approach to topics like spirituality is limiting both to teachers and students alike. Educators might do well to expand their understanding of education to embrace the more "right-brain" categories of feeling, imagination, and creativity.⁵⁰⁰ Within those categories may also lie a deeper truth about children's spirituality.

⁴⁹⁵Ann Trousdale, "Black and White Fire: The Interplay of Stories, Imagination, and Children's Spirituality," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, Vol. 9 (2), 2004, 178-188.

⁴⁹⁶Ibid, 175-188.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Hyde, 31-44.

⁴⁹⁹ Levine, 121-140.

⁵⁰⁰ Jill Bolte Taylor, *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey* (NY:Viking, 2006), 110-137.

Finally, it appears that the majority of private educational research about children's spirituality is Roman Catholic.⁵⁰¹ And while the majority of postmodern and practical theology represents the Protestant Reformed faith,⁵⁰² there remains a need for a more ecumenical and inclusive approach to children's spirituality. Such a new hermeneutic requires inclusiveness that envisions connections, not distinctions and separations.

2.3 CONCLUSION

As evidenced by the myriad of sources cited and discussed in Chapter Two, there is no scarcity of literature in the area of children's spirituality in general. However, the existing literature and research on the specific topic of children's spirituality within juvenile detention centers is woefully lacking. Such a paucity in research clearly supports the goals of this research study, the first of its kind in the field of children's spirituality to address the population of children in juvenile detention centers. Yet there is a great wealth of literature on children's spirituality presented in Chapter Two that does address children's spirituality in a variety of settings and disciplines.

For example, inside the hidden and uncharted world of juvenile detention, authors Previte⁵⁰³ and Hume⁵⁰⁴ have written specifically about this population of children, but neither has done research on their spirituality. Wahl and his associates have completed research on the relationship between suicidal ideation and spirituality among youth, and

⁵⁰¹ Wahl, et al, 711-715.

⁵⁰² Gary Phillips, "Religious Pluralism in a Postmodern World," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 2nd Ed., edited by David Dockery (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Books, 2001), 135-42

⁵⁰³ Previte, 9-29.

⁵⁰⁴ Hume, xii-xv.

their methodology does include two case studies from an Arizona juvenile detention center.⁵⁰⁵

However, outside the walls of juvenile detention, there is a growing interest in the study of children's spirituality.⁵⁰⁶ In her article from the *International Handbook of Education for Spirituality, Care, and Wellbeing*, Boyatzis reports that the field of children's spirituality is still in its infancy though interest has spiked since the year 2000.⁵⁰⁷

With respect to theological approaches to children, there are several different and overlapping methodologies. Within postmodernist theology, practical theology, narrative theology and pastoral care, the most common denominator is the preferred vehicle of storytelling.⁵⁰⁸ Another common thread is the strong recommendation by the majority of writers for a radically different hermeneutic in working with children. Authors including Loughlin,⁵⁰⁹ Gerkin,⁵¹⁰ Beckwith,⁵¹¹ Berryman,⁵¹² and Capps⁵¹³ make their case for a hermeneutic that moves beyond the stigma, indifference, and marginalization with which Christianity has treated children.

A final thread of commonality among theological approaches to working with children is their roots in the Christian tradition. Since many Christian authors advocate for a new hermeneutic in working with children, it seems that this hermeneutical imperative implies that cultural and religious boundaries need to be re-examined and ultimately stretched beyond the confines of the Christian faith.⁵¹⁴

⁵⁰⁵ Wahl, et.al, 712-13.

⁵⁰⁶ Boyatzis, 48-53.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Comstock, 687-717.

⁵⁰⁹ Loughlin, 62-67.

⁵¹⁰ Gerkin, 21-32.

⁵¹¹ Beckwith, 9-14.

⁵¹² Berryman, 5-11.

⁵¹³ Capps, 25-57.

⁵¹⁴ Healey and Sybertz, 72-75.

In addition to the several theological approaches to working with children, the field of narrative therapy has become a major clinical strategy for the treatment of children. Similar to theological methodologies, storytelling is utilized as the primary vehicle for mental health clinicians working with children.⁵¹⁵

One of the most burgeoning areas of study within the field of children's spirituality is the interdisciplinary dialogue that has begun among spirituality, religion, social sciences, and clinical mental health.⁵¹⁶ Mental health professionals, psychiatrists, and psychologists have begun to consider human spirituality as an integral part of the human psyche. Many authors support the creation of an entirely new hermeneutic for working with children and decry previous marginalization of children, especially from a Christian perspective.⁵¹⁷

More specifically, several researchers have begun to address the clinical relationship between children's spirituality and mental health. Professionals have broadened their scope to include spirituality as an integral part of children's mental health.⁵¹⁸

Literature in children's spirituality now embraces academic disciplines well beyond the clinical and theological. Educators in the private and public sectors have begun to consider the category of spirituality as a curriculum issue for further investigation.⁵¹⁹ Though educators who have joined the conversation about children's spirituality are predominantly Roman Catholic, they have begun a dialogue with educators who specialize in children's issues including curriculum, cognition, and the relevance of spirituality in a child's educational development.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁵ Focht and Beardsley, 407-422.

⁵¹⁶ Coles and Elkind, et al, 9-25.

⁵¹⁷ Capps, 25-53.

⁵¹⁸ Hyde, 31-44.

⁵¹⁹ Matthews, 3-10.

⁵²⁰ Ibid, 3-7.

Thus, it appears that literature in the field of children's spirituality has captured the interest of theologians, social scientists, and educators within a number of fields and academic disciplines. As evidenced by the numerous sources cited and discussed in this chapter, there is no scarcity of literature in the area of children's spirituality in general. However, the existing literature on the specific topic of children's spirituality within juvenile detention centers is woefully lacking. What children in detention believe about God, prayer, and spirituality in general has been completely overlooked by theologians and academia to this point.

Even widely published scholars and researchers in the field of children's spirituality like Robert Coles⁵²¹ and Lynn Schofield Clark virtually ignore the population of children in juvenile detention. Indeed Clark goes so far as to exclude children in detention as "deviant."⁵²² Clark's conscious omission of the detention population merely adds to the marginalization and prejudice that already exist toward children in juvenile detention centers.

Such a massive gap in academic literature and research in the field of juvenile detention spirituality clearly supports the necessity for this research study, the first study of its kind that addresses what children in detention believe about God, prayer, spirituality, and theology. This study is a beginning toward the kind of attention and research that children in detention require. From this research study forward, perhaps such academic and theological attention will begin to erode the unfortunate marginalization that these children have sustained, and continue to endure, in society.

⁵²¹ Coles, 98-130.

⁵²² Clark, 25.

Chapter Three presents the research methodology employed in this study, including an in-depth analysis of what methods have been employed, as well as how these methods support the goals of the research.

CHAPTER THREE:

Research Methodology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a description and analysis of the research methodology employed in this research study. The focus of this study is the issue of spirituality as it pertains to children in a specific juvenile detention center. The research study itself consists of 200 individual, face-to-face interviews with male juvenile residents detained in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, New Jersey, US. Juvenile males in this study range in age from 13 to 19, the normal spectrum of ages based on annual Admission Records data.⁵²³ The author is the sole researcher in this study and has conducted all 200 interviews.

An original questionnaire, the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) has been developed as a research tool for each face-to-face interview. The children themselves also have assisted in developing the questionnaire, the process of which is delineated in a later section of this chapter.

The research methodology utilized in this study is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research⁵²⁴ approaches, specifically a qualitative-dominant mixed methods

⁵²³ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, NJ, 2000-2010.

⁵²⁴ Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd Ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 2-6.

approach.⁵²⁵ This methodology is appropriate for the data collection method chosen, namely, 200 face-to-face individual interviews utilizing a questionnaire. A qualitative-dominant approach allows for an exploration of possible conclusions from the collected data while also including the possibility of interpreting the data numerically.

Finally, this research study is an introspective documentation of the author's own spiritual journey through the process of interviewing, interpreting, and documenting the results of the 200 interviews. In the methodological tradition of ethnography, specifically autoethnography,⁵²⁶ this study attempts to locate the self of the author within the context of the research. In this regard, it is an exploration of how God may speak through these children, as well as through this research vehicle, to encourage and support spiritual growth, not only within the participants, but also within the author herself.

3.2 RESEARCH METHOD, TRADITION, AND DESIGN

3.2.1 Qualitative-dominant mixed methods approach

The research methodology employed in this research study is a qualitative-dominant mixed methods approach.⁵²⁷ Qualitative-dominant mixed methods research “relies on a qualitative constructivist... critical view of the research process while concurrently recognizing that the addition of quantitative data and approaches are likely to benefit most research projects.”⁵²⁸ Thus, this research strategy is an example of a mixed methods

⁵²⁵ R.B. Johnson, A.J. Orwuegbuzie, and L. Turner, “Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research,” *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, April 2007, 1, 112-133.

⁵²⁶ F. Ngunjiri, K. Hernandez, and H. Chang, “Living Autoethnography: Connecting life and Research,” *Journal of Research and Practice*, Vol. 6, #1, article E1, 2010, 1-10.

⁵²⁷ J. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (London: Sage, 2003), 3-7.

⁵²⁸ Johnson, et al, 124.

approach, which considers “knowledge (theory and practice) by considering multiple viewpoints, perspectives, and positions.”⁵²⁹

Qualitative-dominant research is multi-methodological, as well as hermeneutical in that it approaches collected data by interpreting it in its natural setting in order to understand the meaning that people bring to data.⁵³⁰ In this regard, case studies, personal experience, life stories, and introspective interviewing are used as research tools.⁵³¹ The qualitative-dominant approach in this empirical research study supports a world view in which reality is complex and changeable. In this way, the chosen methodology may also utilize surveys and closed-ended questions as quantitative, supportive research tools and strategies.⁵³²

Both qualitative and quantitative strategies are employed in this research study by utilizing an original questionnaire that combines open-ended and closed-ended questions and statements. For example, Question 9 in the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) combines an open-ended question with a closed-ended question: “Do you have hope for the future? Can you tell me about that?”

Defined in 1959 by Campbell and Fiske, mixed methods research, including qualitative-dominant, is distinguished by employing multiple methods of research as part of a more comprehensive validation process. Since most researchers view the differences between qualitative and quantitative as complementary rather than adversarial,⁵³³ a multiple research methodology further ensures that “the explained variance is the result of the underlying phenomenon or trait and not of the method itself. The convergence of findings from two or

⁵²⁹ Johnson, et al, 113-14.

⁵³⁰ N. K. Denzin and Y. Lincoln, “Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research,” *Handbook of Qualitative research, 2nd Ed.* (CA: Sage, 2000), 1-29.

⁵³¹ R.M. Thomas, *Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods in Theses and Dissertations* (CA: Sage, 2003), 3-5.

⁵³² *Ibid*, 4-8.

⁵³³ *Ibid*, 3-5.

more methods supports the belief that research results are valid and not a methodological artifact.”⁵³⁴

3.2.1.1 Development of Resident Questionnaire

A central component of the methodology utilized in this research study is an original questionnaire, set in the context of individual interviews for each participant. The Resident Questionnaire begins with a four-part statement, “Tell me about yourself.” The organization and selection of questions in the questionnaire flow from the first question: “Tell me about yourself.” In this initial question of four parts, each participant is encouraged to begin to tell the story of his life in any way that he desires. Since storytelling is a foundational principle in this research study, it is appropriate that the first question asked allows each child to begin in his own way. In the field of narrative theology, for example, theologians note that people find meaning and purpose through shared stories.⁵³⁵ Similarly, in the field of narrative therapy, individuals are treated therapeutically as they are encouraged to tell the story of their own lives. In the process of therapy and their own healing process, they rework their stories in healthier ways. In both cases, however, the spiritual and emotional power of the story itself remains central to the healing process.⁵³⁶

Thus, in the Resident Questionnaire developed by the author and the primary data collection instrument in the research study, it follows that the entire interview process begins with a four-part statement that encourages each participant in the sample to become the narrator of his own life.

⁵³⁴ D.T. Campell and D.W. Fiske, “Convergent and discriminant validation by the multi-trait, multi-method matrix,” *Psychological Bulletin*, 56, 81-105, 1959.

⁵³⁵ Laurie Nelson, “Narrative Theology and Storytelling in Christian Education with Children,” *Christian Education Journal*, Vol. 2, 1990, 95-104. For more information on the field of narrative theology, see Chapter Two.

⁵³⁶ White, 5-8. For further explanation of narrative therapy, see Chapter Two.

The ensuing questions in the Resident Questionnaire are arranged around a guiding principal introduced by Robert Coles in his own work with at-risk youth. He makes a distinction between the terms spirituality and theology in order to encourage a more holistic and open approach to working with children.⁵³⁷ He suggests that his approach with children is “not so much on children as students or practitioners of this or that religion, but on children as soulful in ways they reveal themselves: young human beings, profane as can be one minute, but the next spiritual.”⁵³⁸

Thus, Questions that author has chosen for the Resident Questionnaire flow from an opening statement that invites participants to reveal who they are. The questionnaire then evolves through a series of questions designed to encourage freedom, creativity and openness as children share their own understanding of spirituality. As the questionnaire progresses, specific theological questions are included once participants feel more comfortable with more general questions about their spiritual beliefs.

Open-ended questions are predominant in the questionnaire; yet there are also closed-ended questions toward the numerical collection of data. In this regard, quantitative methodology is also employed.⁵³⁹ In the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B), some questions are either open-ended or closed-ended. For example, Question 2, “What makes you feel free?” is an example of an open-ended question while Question 4, “Do you believe in God, a Higher Power, or anything spiritual?” is an example of the use of a closed-ended question. Such closed-ended questions are included to allow for the quantification of data. Additionally, Question 5, “Do you pray? Can you tell me about that?” combines a closed-

⁵³⁷ Coles and Elkind, et al, 9-10.

⁵³⁸ Coles, 98-130.

⁵³⁹ Creswell, 3.

ended with an open-ended question. Such a combination allows for both qualitative and quantitative data to be collected from the same, single question.

3.2.1.2 Sample participants share life stories

Participants in this research study are encouraged to share their life stories and personal experiences through the nature of the questions and statements selected for the Resident Questionnaire. Results of the 200 interviews are quantified as well to reveal specific percentages of responses for each question. For example, participants are asked a question about whether they pray or not, a numerical result that can be measured and quantified. In the second part of the question on prayer, participants are asked to share their experiences with prayer, a qualitative use of the interview process. The data collection from all interviews is undertaken by the author without the aid of a statistician.

3.2.1.3 Completion of 200 individual interviews

When the 200 interviews are completed, the author personally tallies responses in each category of the questionnaire, logs all responses to each question separately, and supplies percentages for each question, based on the research sample of 200 participants. Since each participant often answers each question with more than one response, some percentages are skewed and do not accurately reflect the original sample of 200. Nevertheless, the percentages for each question do offer an insight into the most popular categories of responses given for each question in the Resident Questionnaire.

3.2.2 Phenomenology as philosophical context

The philosophical context of the research study may best be described as phenomenological, defined as “identifying phenomena by how they are perceived by the

actors in a situation.”⁵⁴⁰ A phenomenological approach gathers in-depth information from participants through inductive, qualitative methods including, in-depth interviews and then represents the data from the perspective of the research participants themselves.

This research approach of phenomenology also presupposes an inductive methodology, as opposed to a deductive method. For example, this study is not predicated on any prior acceptance of a certain truth in the field of spirituality or children’s spirituality. Rather, it is an exploration of the topic of spirituality where alternative conclusions may be drawn from gathered data, where original theory may be developed, and where relationships may be examined among unrelated pieces of data. Following this approach of induction, concepts are developed from patterns that repeat within the data. Further, the general perspective of the study is holistic, allowing for multiple and multi-layered realities to exist.⁵⁴¹

Another use of induction in this research study is the fact that this approach to research requires the author to utilize the vehicle of storytelling. That is, the author/researcher becomes willing to follow the lead of the story told by the participants and also must be willing to follow where the story may lead. Indeed the inductive researcher also becomes willing to participate in the story.⁵⁴² In this study, the author encourages her own participation by making herself a part of the process of storytelling. While the author does not tell her own story as the children do, she reflects upon her own story as part of her own spiritual journey through the thesis process. A comprehensive presentation of the author’s spiritual journey through the study is chronicled in Chapter Six.

Phenomenology is also concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the research participant(s). Phenomenological research overlaps with other qualitative

⁵⁴⁰ Creswell, 227.

⁵⁴¹ E. DePoy, *Introduction to Research: Understanding and Applying Multiple Strategies* (St. Louis: Mosby, 1999), 8ff.

⁵⁴² H. Wolcott, *Transforming Qualitative Data* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage), 17.

approaches including ethnography and hermeneutics,⁵⁴³ discussed later in this chapter. In this study on the specific topic of how juveniles in a detention center define and articulate their own spirituality, the research proceeds from a phenomenological frame of reference. It attempts to describe the essence of the children's experiences. The subject of spirituality, as described by the participants in the study, is the research focus. Spirituality is the specific phenomenon being studied and reported on by the research participants.⁵⁴⁴ Spirituality is also being reported on by the author, who also participates in the study and thus becomes a part of the shared truth created by the study. In this sense, the researcher is one of the actors in the phenomenological study. This approach presupposes a naturalistic framework that focuses on understanding and interpreting human experience within the context in which that experience occurs.⁵⁴⁵

3.2.3 Hermeneutics as philosophical context

In addition to the philosophical category of phenomenology, this research study also supports the philosophy of hermeneutics, defined as the branch of philosophy that addresses interpretation, as delineated in Richard Palmer's text *Hermeneutics*.⁵⁴⁶ Similar to phenomenology, a hermeneutical approach to research does not begin with an *a priori* understanding or acceptance of the nature of truth. Rather, hermeneutics allows for the evolution and creation of truth from all participants in the study.⁵⁴⁷ A hermeneutical approach clearly includes the researcher among the actors in the study and supports the

⁵⁴³ Lester, S., *An Introduction to Phenomenological Research* (Taunton, UK: Stan Lester Developments, 1999), 2-5.

⁵⁴⁴ Creswell, 223ff.

⁵⁴⁵ DePoy, 7-9.

⁵⁴⁶ Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Illinois: Northwestern Univ. Press), 1969, 10 ff.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

researcher in contributing to the overall truth of the research data and outcome.⁵⁴⁸ For example, this study proceeds from the foundation of a series of questions posed initially. These questions are explored in the course of the study itself while no initial assumptions or hypotheses are presented.

Hermeneutics as a subcategory within the field of philosophy, is derived from the Greek god Hermes, who translated truth, dreams, and the invisible between humanity and the divine.⁵⁴⁹ In Palmer's text *Hermeneutics*, he discusses the nature of truth. Palmer emphasizes that truth does not lie in a particular text, or in any single interpretation of a text. Indeed he announces that there is no "right" interpretation or truth. Truth becomes relative to situation, person, and experience.⁵⁵⁰

In conversations with children in the Ocean County Detention Center, something healing and transformative occurs in listening to them. The conversation assumes a new dimension in the realm of the spirit. As a result of this personal conversation between researcher and participant, a third and different experience of truth may emerge. Viewed through the lens of hermeneutics,⁵⁵¹ a new truth is created about how God enters human experience through the interaction of two individuals.

For example, as aforementioned in Chapter One, pianist Murray Perahia is considered one of the principal interpreters of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Goldberg Variations*,⁵⁵² written for solo instrument in 1737. However, is Perahia's interpretation of Bach greater than Bach's music in hermeneutical significance, or is Bach's music the springboard for

⁵⁴⁸ Richard E. Palmer, "The Relevance of Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics to 36 Topics or Fields of Human Activity," lecture delivered at Southern Illinois Univ., US, April 1, 1999, (accessed April 29, 2011).

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Palmer, 10 ff.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Bruce Duffie, "Interview with Murray Perahia," Radio station WNIB, recorded March 13, 1997, Chicago, IL; transcription placed on WNIB website 2010 (March 8, 2011).

Perahia's genius? Or is it the listener hearing the music that creates a new truth? Or perhaps a new truth emerges from the dialogue of these several voices. Thus, the philosophical foundation of this research project is both phenomenological and hermeneutical in theory.

3.2.4 Advocacy/participatory worldview

The practical foundation of this research study predominantly reflects the advocacy/participatory worldview, one of the four worldviews proposed by Creswell: 1/ postpositivism (quantitative); 2/ social constructivism (qualitative); 3/ advocacy/participatory (mixed); and 4/ pragmatism (mixed).⁵⁵³

The advocacy/participatory model moves beyond social constructivism in attempting to help marginalized people. For example, the sample population chosen for this research study is the population of children held within a juvenile detention center in Ocean County, New Jersey, US. The world view supported by the advocacy/participatory model also contains an implicit or explicit agenda for political reform of a given system, as well as the potential reform of the research participants themselves.⁵⁵⁴ An advantage of the advocacy/participatory model is that it includes the possibility of experiential knowledge and affirms the value of practical knowledge as a methodology.⁵⁵⁵ This model supports the belief that participation in research, both by the participants as well as the author, creates a more holistic research outcome.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵³ Creswell, 6-10.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Heron and Reason, "A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm," *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3 (3), 1999, 274-294.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid, 2-6.

3.2.4.1 Spirituality within the advocacy/participatory model

Since this research study is on the specific topic of spirituality, the subject itself implies a spiritual dimension to the research process. In this context, the advocacy/participatory worldview allows for such a spiritual dimension. This worldview further allows the researcher to participate in the research in order to heal a somewhat artificial split between researcher and participants. Healing is a term often associated with spiritual phenomenon and suggests that something that is not whole may become whole in the process.⁵⁵⁷ Thus, a participatory approach to research as utilized in this study is a more holistic sense of including the body as well as the text toward a more healing inclusiveness.⁵⁵⁸

3.2.4.2 Advocacy/participatory model and political reform

Since the sample population utilized within this study is drawn from children in a juvenile detention setting, the advocacy/ participative approach more appropriately describes this marginalized and disempowered population. It is also true that the advocacy/participatory method provides a potential voice for this disenfranchised sample and hopes to improve their lot in the process.⁵⁵⁹ In this sense, this approach moves beyond the limitations of the social constructivist approach in its attempt to help the marginalized population and to include an actual agenda for political reform, rather than simply studying this population in a more objective manner, which is the essence of social constructivism.⁵⁶⁰

This study accumulates data on children in a detention center that includes their life stories and personal experiences. Further, one of the goals of the research study is to make this research available to others working in the fields of juvenile justice and juvenile

⁵⁵⁷ P. Reason, "Reflections on Sacred Experience and Sacred Science," *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 2 (3), 273-283.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid, 12.

⁵⁵⁹ Kemmis and Wilkinson, "Participatory action research and the study of practice," *Action Research in Practice* (NY: Routledge, 1998), 7-8.

⁵⁶⁰ M. Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research* (CA: Sage, 1998), 3-10.

detention. Thus, the implicit political agenda herein is to highlight this marginalized, somewhat invisible population of children to increase their visibility and to improve their lot. In Chapter Seven, specific recommendations are offered toward improving the quality of juvenile detention by including the category of spirituality in programming. Hopefully, such improvement may be accomplished by encouraging other detention centers to begin a spiritual dialogue with their own juvenile residents.

3.2.5 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Similar to the advocacy/participatory worldview is the participatory action research model, also utilized in this study. Known as PAR and originally developed by Kurt Lewin, this approach may be summarized as follows: “We’re all in this together.”⁵⁶¹ The primary tenets of PAR include a commitment to investigate an issue or a problem through induction; a desire to engage in both self and collective reflection to gain clarity; a joint decision to engage in individual and/or collective action toward a solution that benefits the research participants; and a desire to build alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementing, and dissemination of the research process.⁵⁶²

In this research study, there is a clear intention to develop and foster the relationship between the author/researcher and the participants. Indeed the hermeneutic of this study rests upon the meaning created by this interaction and relationship.

3.2.6 Emancipatory research model

A corollary to the advocacy/participatory worldview and the PAR research model is the emancipatory research model. In this approach, the central aim of the research is to

⁵⁶¹ Kemmis and Wilkinson, 7-8.

⁵⁶² Ibid, 2ff.

empower the research participants and consciously to cultivate an interdependence of theory, praxis, and experience. This type of research is most effective when the researcher and participant are fully present with each other in a relationship of reciprocal and open inquiry.⁵⁶³ Since a central motivation of this study is to encourage the author to connect with each participant, this proposed connection serves to foster a reciprocal and open relationship toward the evolution of their individual and collective spirituality.⁵⁶⁴

In addition to encouraging a conscious relationship between the researcher and each participant, emancipatory research addresses the question of “locating the self” within the research. In other words, who is the researcher within the research project, and what is his or her role in the developing hermeneutic of the methodology?⁵⁶⁵ In order to explore further the location of the self within the research context, the additional research tools of ethnography and auto-ethnography are employed to support the author’s intention to locate herself within the research project.

3.2.7 Ethnography as research tool

Ethnography may be defined as a qualitative strategy of collecting data on an intact cultural group in a natural setting.⁵⁶⁶ When using an ethnographic research approach, the question of place becomes more central. The researcher asks the question, “Where will I conduct my research?”⁵⁶⁷ In this research study, the function of place is central to the hermeneutic. The research context is a specific juvenile detention center where children are referred to as “residents” since they reside in the detention center until they are released.

⁵⁶³ C. Truman, D. Mertins, and B. Humphries, *Research and Inequality* (London: Univ. College of London, 2000), 5-11.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 5-8.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 13 ff.

⁵⁶⁶ Creswell, 227.

⁵⁶⁷ H.T. Wolcott, *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing* (Lanham MD: Alta Mira Press, 1999), 13-24.

Further, the author is employed in the juvenile detention center full-time. Though she does not live with the residents on a full-time basis, she spends 40 hours per week among the children, including mealtimes.

3.2.7.1 Ethical issues raised by ethnography

The fact that the author is employed by the facility where her research is conducted does raise certain ethical concerns. For example, the author is viewed as an authority figure by the children in the detention center. When each child in the study is approached and asked to participate, the author clarifies for the child that all answers to the questionnaire will be kept confidential and anonymous. The author further explains the nature of the research and why it is being done. Each child is allowed and encouraged to ask questions about participating in the study. In this regard, the author makes it clear to each participant that any information given will in no way have an effect, either positive or negative, on the child's legal case. Administrative personnel, including the author, are often viewed as having power and influence in the court process. Since this is a common misconception that children have in detention, the author is aware of her ethical responsibility to clarify this myth for each participant.

An additional ethical issue that concerns the author being employed by the facility is the fact that children may believe that their participation in the study would result in receiving special treatment. To address this ethical concern, the author clarifies for each participant that he would not receive any favors or special treatment for participating in the study. Further, she explains that if the child refuses to participate, no negative repercussions will ensue. These ethical issues that might have presented a conflict of interest have been discussed on an on-going basis with the author's supervisor Gerald Bowden, who is also the Administrator of the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center.

3.2.7.2 How ethnography affects thesis style

Indeed ethnography allows the research methodology to move beyond the scope of the advocacy/participatory model to immerse the researcher in the “where” of the research. As Bronislaw Malinowski suggests in his seminal work on ethnography, “It is good for the ethnographer sometimes to set aside camera, notebook and pencil and to join in himself in what is going on.”⁵⁶⁸ A further advantage of employing ethnographic principles in this study is to allow for a more informal, eclectic style that embraces non-academic language to reflect the usage of the participants themselves.⁵⁶⁹ Ethnography also employs the vehicle of story and storytelling, a key metaphor and practical tool in this study.

3.2.7.3 Autoethnography as research tool

Within the field of ethnography exists a subcategory of research known as autoethnography, also germane to the present study. Similar to the emancipatory research approach, autoethnography advances the discussion of locating the self within the research. Utilized as a qualitative method, this tool attempts to gather data about the author/researcher and the research setting in order to understand the connection between self and others within that context.⁵⁷⁰

The term *autoethnography* was originally coined by Hayano in 1979 to refer to anthropological studies by individuals of their own culture.⁵⁷¹ This field moves beyond the advocacy/participatory model by extending the connection between self and others. Rather

⁵⁶⁸ B. Malinowski, “Argonauts of the Western Pacific,” *Studies in Economics and Political Science*, no. 64 (London: Routledge, 1922), 33.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 60-62.

⁵⁷⁰ Ngunjiri et al, 1-10.

⁵⁷¹ D.Hayano, “Auto-ethnography: paradigms, problems, and prospects,” *Human Organization*, 1979, 113-120.

than viewing the self in isolation or as primary, autoethnography explores how the collection of data and its context have influenced the self as researcher.⁵⁷²

Since autoethnography allows the researcher to explore his or her own experience and emotions, it may be viewed as a research tool that attempts to integrate art and science.⁵⁷³

Ruth Behar explains autoethnography as an effort “...to map an intermediate space we can’t quite define yet, a borderland between person and intellect, analysis and subjectivity, ethnography and autobiography, art and life.”⁵⁷⁴

Within the field of autoethnography, researchers have begun to use the first person as a way of documenting themselves as full participants within their own research, as well as to free themselves from the traditional conventions of writing to honor the authentic voice of the researcher.⁵⁷⁵ Particularly female researchers like Claire Smith find it more holistic to pursue autoethnography in their academic work. By employing the first person in their writing and by including themselves as participants in their own research, some female research scientists have documented a greater sense of emotional fulfillment in the process of their academic work.⁵⁷⁶

In this research study, the author does not employ the first person in the narrative. However, her objective is similar to Smith: to become fully immersed in the research project as one of the participants, as well as to record her own process within the journey of the project itself.⁵⁷⁷ Such documentation echoes Behar’s earlier comment that this personal approach to a research project attempts to “map an intermediate space we can’t quite define

⁵⁷² Hayano, 113-120.

⁵⁷³ Ngunjiri et al, 25.

⁵⁷⁴ Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart* (Boston: Beacon, 1997), 174.

⁵⁷⁵ K. Gergen and M. Gergen, eds., *Social Construction: A Reader* (CA: Sage, 2003), 65-73.

⁵⁷⁶ C.Smith, “Epistemological Intimacy: a move to autoethnography,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 4 (2), 2005 (accessed May 23, 2012).

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

yet, a borderland... between art and life.⁵⁷⁸ Since the topic of this study is spirituality, the use of autoethnography as a research tool supports such full participation and self-reflection.

Indeed the topic of spirituality invokes a sense of mystery, ambiguity, and a journey into the unknown. When applied to this research context, spirituality itself beckons to the researcher and to the participants alike to enter into the mystery without knowing where it will lead and without knowing what truths may be discovered along the way.

3.3 RESEARCH SETTING AND CONTEXT

As mentioned earlier in Chapter One, adolescents and teens confined in juvenile detention centers in the United States are unique within society. These youths are not exactly considered incarcerated since juvenile detention centers merely detain but do not imprison. However, they are in a secure setting where they are not free to live in the community or in their own homes. Indeed their freedom has been temporarily denied, pending the outcome of their legal charges through the juvenile justice court system.⁵⁷⁹ Generally, juvenile detention centers are located in each county of a given state and supervised under the auspices and financial support of county government.⁵⁸⁰

3.3.1 Impact of Casey Foundation on juvenile detention

In the United States, the well-being of detained children and youth has come under greater scrutiny since 1992, due to the national initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation⁵⁸¹ in creating the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI).⁵⁸² The

⁵⁷⁸ Behar, 174.

⁵⁷⁹ Kevin Ryan, Esq., Child Advocate, *et. al.*, State of New Jersey: Office of the Child Advocate Report: *Juvenile Detention Center Investigation*, Nov. 22, 2004, 1-2.

⁵⁸⁰ Sharon Lauchaire (press release), "JJC Academy Graduates 23 Juvenile Detention Officers," State of New Jersey, Office of the Attorney General, Juvenile Justice Commission, Feb. 25, 2005, 1.

⁵⁸¹ For more information on the Annie E. Casey Foundation, please refer to footnote #11 in Chapter One.

purpose of JDAI is to address the efficiency, effectiveness, and humanity of juvenile detention in the United States.⁵⁸³ In this context, the more intrinsic needs of detained children are being investigated beyond the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, and safety. These needs include, but are not limited to education, recreation, physical health, mental health, and religious programming. However, the Casey Foundation does not consider spirituality to be among the priority needs of children in juvenile detention.

3.3.2 Setting of research: Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center

The Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, located in Toms River, New Jersey, US is the specific setting of this research study. The detention center is a 35-bed facility for children and adolescents from the ages of 11 through 21. The median age is 16, with an average stay of 30 days.⁵⁸⁴ This spectrum of age and length of stay varies, depending upon the child's criminal charges, whether the child is under the protection of the laws of juvenile probation, and whether the child is deemed eligible to be transferred to the Ocean County Children's Shelter or to the electronic monitoring program.⁵⁸⁵ The detention center admits both male and female children, in the approximate ratio of 1 female to 20 males. Average daily population in the detention center is approximately 30 children, with an average annual admission of 200 children.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸³For a detailed summary of the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, also known as JDAI, please refer to footnote #12 in Chapter One.

⁵⁸⁴*Manual of Policies and Procedures*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, 2001, 20-22.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 23-26.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid*.

The Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center offers many programs to support creativity and freedom of expression among our juveniles. These programs are extracurricular to their daily education courses, required by New Jersey State law.⁵⁸⁷ The Social Work Services Dept. sponsors these extracurricular programs, including creative writing, religious programming, pet therapy, Academy For the Fine Arts (choral, instruments, dance, and acting), meditation, female-specific programs, gang intervention groups, anger management, substance abuse groups, life skills, recreational computer games, t'ai chi, and yoga. Further information on these programs is available on the Ocean County Juvenile Services website: oceancountyjuvenileservices.com.

3.3.3 Research sample and data sources

The research sample in this study consists of 200 individual interviews with 200 children, ages 13-19, male gender only, in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center. As such, it is a realistic research sample that has been completed in a reasonable amount of time (approximately two and a half years), from 2007 to 2010. The research sample size of 200 was chosen by the author since it reflects the average annual admission number for the Ocean County Detention Center.

Each face-to-face interview is conducted utilizing an original questionnaire, the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B), developed with the assistance of the participants themselves. All interviews are conducted personally by the author. Each interview is approximately 20 minutes in length. The actual interview time is somewhat dependent upon how engaged the participant is in the interview process, as well as what develops between the participant and the author in the course of each interview. The methodology utilized is hypothesis-

⁵⁸⁷ State of New Jersey, New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission, *Manual of Standards for Juvenile Detention Centers*, 2001-2016, 63-67.

generating, where a series of initial questions are posed by the researcher and explored in the process of the data collection phase of the study.

On average, annual admissions to the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center are approximately 200. In 2011, for example, juvenile admissions totaled 253.⁵⁸⁸ In 2009 in New Jersey, the Office of the Ocean County Prosecutor, Juvenile Offenses, changed the admission criteria in New Jersey juvenile detention centers by not allowing children to be detained for 4th-degree charges.⁵⁸⁹ In 2009, admissions did decrease by 12%.⁵⁹⁰

As mentioned earlier, the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) has already had some effect on the numbers of admissions to New Jersey juvenile detention centers since the purpose of the JDAI is to limit the number of children held in detention. The JDAI philosophy and supporting research suggest that the trajectory of children's lives is forever changed if they spend only one day in a detention center.⁵⁹¹ To date, the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center has been affected only slightly by the JDAI initiative, yet the numbers of juveniles admitted to juvenile detention centers may continue to decrease if JDAI becomes mandatory through the Administrative Office of the Courts in New Jersey.⁵⁹²

Since there are approximately 200 juveniles admitted to the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center each year,⁵⁹³ no limitations were experienced in completing the 200 interviews for the sample. The research sample size of 200 was selected by the author since it reflect the average number of annual admissions to the Ocean County Detention Center.

⁵⁸⁸ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River NJ, 2009.

⁵⁸⁹ Ocean County Prosecutor's Office, Toms River NJ website (April 21, 2011). Juvenile charges may vary from 1st degree to 4th degree, as in the adult court system, depending upon the severity of the crime. For example, robbery may be in any degree; the 4th degree would carry the lesser weight for sentencing, possible jail time, and possible fines.

⁵⁹⁰ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River NJ, 2011.

⁵⁹¹ "Locking Up Fewer Children" *New York Times.com* editorial, Aug. 14, 2009 (accessed May 23, 2012).

⁵⁹² The Administrative Office of the Courts is the administrative arm of the Judicial branch in each state in the United States. The AOC provides statewide support services for the courts, including legal, information, technology, and research (Administrative Office of the Courts website (March 23, 2011).

⁵⁹³ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River NJ, 2000- 2010.

Given the author's duties as a department head within the facility, 200 interviews were completed over a two and a half-year time frame. Thus, many potential participants are not included in the research sample during this period due to the author's work load, vacations, sick time, and legal holidays. Additionally, many residents are admitted and discharged quickly enough that the author is not able to schedule an interview before some residents are released.

3.3.4 Ethical considerations for research sample selection

Selection of participants is done solely by the author in a uniform process, rather than random in design. The author has acquired verbal permission from each participant, in addition to blanket permission from the Administrator of the Dept. of Juvenile Services to conduct 200 interviews. Two separate Letters of Permission are attached as "Letter of Permission to Conduct Research" (Appendix A) and Blanket Letter of Permission to Conduct Research" (Appendix C). If a child agrees to participate, the author conducts the interview as soon as possible. Once all current residents are interviewed, the author then continues to gain verbal permission of each newly admitted resident from that point onward in the same manner.

All children selected to participate in this study have done so on a completely voluntary basis. In each of the 200 interviews, each child verbally grants his permission to participate and is informed of the nature of the research and the questions themselves. Each child is reassured that all answers to questions would remain anonymous, and no names of any kind will be revealed. Although the questionnaire itself does have an entry line for the child's name, only initials are used on this line to identify each participant. Each child is assured that the information gathered will be used solely for this research project.

The author further clarifies for each male participant that any information given will in no way have any effect on the child's legal case, either positive or negative. Each participant is also reassured that whether he completes the questionnaire or not will have no bearing, either positive or negative, on his relationship to staff or to the author.

In accordance with the University of South Africa's policy on Research Ethics, the ethical standards reflected therein have been applied to this study, especially the ethics related to "Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants."⁵⁹⁴

3.3.4.1 Permission to conduct research

As mentioned earlier in Chapter One, Gerald Bowden, MSW/LCSW, Administrator of the Ocean County Department of Juvenile Services, Toms River, New Jersey, has granted the author permission to conduct this research. Administrator Bowden may be contacted for verification purposes at 165 Sunset Ave., Toms River, NJ, US, 08753 (telephone: 732-288-7706). Two letters of permission signed by Mr. Bowden are included at the end of the thesis as Appendix A and Appendix C.

3.3.4.2 Permission through *in loco parentis*

For the purpose of this research study, it is noteworthy that the legal guardians of children in county detention centers are the professional staff who care for the children. The legal term *in loco parentis* grants administrators and staff of detention centers the legal right to act in the interest of a parent for children in their care.⁵⁹⁵ The Latin phrase for "in the place of a parent" or "instead of a parent," *in loco parentis*, refers to the legal responsibility of a person or organization to assume some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent. Initially it allows institutions such as colleges and schools to act in the best interests of students without violating student civil liberties. Secondly, this doctrine provides that a non-

⁵⁹⁴ UNISA Policy on Research Ethics, "Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants," 2007,9-17.

⁵⁹⁵ Law.com, Law Dictionary, Sept. 23, 2008 (accessed April 20, 2011).

biological parent may be given the legal rights and responsibilities of a biological parent.⁵⁹⁶

In this context, it is legally appropriate for Administrator Bowden to grant the author permission to conduct the proposed interviews for this research project. It is further understood that all interviews are completely anonymous and to be used only in the context of this research project.

3.3.4.3 Qualifications of the author/researcher

The Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) utilized in this research study and the manner in which it is administered has been specifically designed to be sensitive to the nature of the material. Each child has been approached with respect and compassion. Sufficient time is allotted for each interview to be relaxed and for each child to answer questions in a calm, informal, and safe environment. Additionally, the author has utilized a private room for the 200 interviews.

As mentioned previously in Chapter One, the author is a licensed therapist (LCADC) through the State of New Jersey, US and possesses a Masters of Divinity (M. Div.) degree from Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey. She has also served as a licensed Local Pastor in the United Methodist Church, New Jersey, US. As part of her seminary training, the author has completed five units of clinical pastoral education through the CPE program at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Within the Resident Questionnaire, the ethnicity of each child is recorded. Statistics on children's cultural and racial backgrounds are also included in Chapter Four. Additionally, the author has received specific training on cultural sensitivity and competency.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁶ *Law.com*, Law Dictionary, Sept. 23, 2008 (accessed April 20, 2011).

⁵⁹⁷ State of New Jersey, Center for Business Education and Training, Ocean County Community College, Toms River NJ, US, "Celebrating Diversity," a 10-session training on cultural diversity, May 4, 5, 6, 2010.

The author is fully accountable for all research conducted in this project. The methodology employed is transparent and available to anyone interested in reviewing it, including the children themselves. Research approaches and methodology have been discussed continuously with Gerald Bowden, Administrator of the Ocean County Dept. of Juvenile Services. A former Marist Brother in the Roman Catholic Church, Mr. Bowden shares with the author a sense of spiritual calling toward the children in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center.

This research study is fully supportive of the interest of social justice, not only in the US, but also globally as this study may serve as a model to highlight this specific population of children in juvenile detention centers. It is further possible that public interest may be great as a larger audience may come to understand who children in juvenile detention centers are through their own stories that reveal their character, their beliefs, and their spirituality.

3.4 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

3.4.1 Use of biopsychosocial therapeutic information tool

The original questionnaire developed by the author for data collection is a modified form of the biopsychosocial (BPS) therapeutic information tool.⁵⁹⁸ A copy of the Resident Questionnaire may be found at the end of the thesis as Appendix B. The inclusion of basic background information follows a general clinical model found in the therapeutic tool known as the biopsychosocial (BPS) information tool.⁵⁹⁹ The BPS model was originally theorized by George Engel, a psychiatrist from the University of Rochester, New York, US. Dr. Engel first referred to his model as the BPS in an article published in *Science*, where he

⁵⁹⁸ Francesc Borrell, Anthony Suchman, & Ronald Epstein, "The Biopsychosocial Model 25 Years Later: Principles, Practice, and Scientific Inquiry," *Annals of Family Medicine*, Vol. 2, 2004, 576-582.

⁵⁹⁹ S. Nassir Chaemi, *The Rise and Fall of the Biopsychosocial Model: Reconciling Art and Science in Psychiatry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2010), 4-10.

urged the “need for a new medical model.”⁶⁰⁰ Since the 1970s in the US, the BPS has been utilized by clinicians in the mental health field to gather basic pertinent information on any new client, including biological, psychological, and sociological factors.⁶⁰¹ This integration model stands in contrast with the more traditional reductionist/ medical model⁶⁰² of medicine that relies on a mechanistic, materialistic view of the universe. In this view, all that exists in the world may be reduced to matter. Illness or pathology is viewed as something to be corrected or “fixed” in order to return the person to “normal.”⁶⁰³

Contrary to the reductionist model, the BPS model has become a clinical term for the current mind/body/spirit connection, which stresses the holistic treatment of the individual.⁶⁰⁴ For example, the BPS format includes the categories of religion and spirituality, considered relevant and necessary for comprehensive assessment and treatment.⁶⁰⁵ Specific information including the participant’s age, sex, and ethnicity are also included.

3.4.2 Adoption of verbatim model from clinical pastoral education (CPE)

In addition to the BPS model utilized in the questionnaire, the author adopts the spiritual intent of the verbatim model utilized in clinical pastoral education (CPE). In theological seminary education, students of practical and pastoral theology are encouraged to complete units of CPE, usually in a hospital, mental hospital, or prison setting.⁶⁰⁶ Though there is no

⁶⁰⁰ D. Pilgrim, “The Biopsychosocial Model in Anglo-American Psychiatry: Past, Present, and Future,” *Journal of Mental Health*, Vol. 11 (6), Dec. 2002, 585-594.

⁶⁰¹ George L. Engel, “The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine,” *Science*, Vol. 196, 12-136.

⁶⁰² Swami Ajaya, *Psychotherapy East and West: A Unifying Paradigm* (Honesdale, PA: Himalayan Institute Press, 1983), 12-14.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid*, 12-23.

⁶⁰⁴ Pilgrim, 585-594.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶⁰⁶ The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. is a professional association committed to advancing experience-based theological education for seminarians, clergy and lay persons of diverse

general requirement for the number of CPE units to be completed, a specific course might require an internship that fulfills one unit of CPE credit. In the course of her own studies at Princeton, the author completed five units of CPE, two units in medical hospitals and three units in a psychiatric hospital.

The spiritual power of CPE lies in engaging the student in his or her spiritual journey and connecting that introspection to the educational process itself. This connection is accomplished through the written tool of the verbatim, a blended clinical and pastoral tool that records the student's words and is used as a reflection tool for the student's professional and theological issues. The verbatim was utilized generally by Seward Hiltner in his seminal work in the field of pastoral theology and specifically in theological seminaries as CPE became a part of seminary education.⁶⁰⁷ As Hiltner envisioned it, the dynamic relationship developed between the shepherd and the sheep becomes a unique clinical and spiritual aspect of CPE.⁶⁰⁸ Similarly, it is the spiritual dynamic fostered between the author and the participants that is a central, guiding principal in this project.

3.4.3 Development of Resident Questionnaire

3.4.3.1 Use of open-ended and closed-ended questions

The Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) developed by the author contains 14 parts, a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions and statements.⁶⁰⁹ For example, the open-ended questions are helpful in allowing children to answer questions about spirituality in their own way with as much creativity as possible. Open-ended questions also allow for a

cultures, ethnic groups and faith traditions. We establish standards, certify supervisors and accredit programs and centers in varied settings. ACPE programs promote the integration of personal history, faith tradition and the behavioral sciences in the practice of spiritual care" (The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. website, accessed April 23, 2011.)

⁶⁰⁷ Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), 22-26.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 22-30.

⁶⁰⁹ Metagora Paris21 website: "Open-ended vs. Closed-Ended Questions" (May 5, 2011).

depth to their answers that closed-ended questions might have stifled. Additionally, open-ended questions are sometimes more appropriate for gathering more sensitive information,⁶¹⁰ such as the spiritual beliefs of children.

On the other hand, closed-ended questions allow for numerical data collection toward analysis and categorization. For example, responses to the question, “Do you believe in God?” are quantified based on a sample of 200 children interviewed with clear percentage results. A combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions within the same question is also utilized. As an example, the question, “Do you believe in God?” is paired with a second part: “Can you tell me about that?”

This combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions affords participants some comfort in offering a “yes” or “no” answer while also inviting them to move into the open-ended part of the question. Children who are shy or less comfortable with questions are still willing to answer closed-ended questions, while many participants seem to enjoy answering open-ended questions. They also seem to enjoy the extra time the process affords them, time that allows more attention from a caring adult.

3.4.3.2 Involving participants in the research task

An additional part of the data collection process is to involve the children themselves in the research task. In the course of the interviews, the author asks each participant if he can think of any question that should be included in the questionnaire that is not included. If the child does formulate a question, the answer to his own question is documented and then included as a question for the next child.

A similar technique of involving residents in the creative process was previously employed by the author, with positive results. In 1999, a resident levels program for the

⁶¹⁰ Metagora Paris21 website: “Open-ended vs. Closed-Ended Questions” (May 5, 2011).

Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center⁶¹¹ was developed by the author. The creative approach involved children in a group process where they suggested possible rewards and incentives for good behavior within the levels program. These incentives became a part of a formal, behavior-based program adopted by the detention center. The levels program has also been incorporated into the *Policies and Procedures Manual* of the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center.⁶¹²

However, this method of adding more questions as each child suggested did become problematic. Since this method initially involved modifying the questionnaire each time a child suggested a new question, the author decided that all newly formulated questions by the participants would be entered into in a separate section of the data collection and would not be included in the original questionnaire itself. A complete list of questions generated by the participants in the sample is included in Chapter Four.

3.4.3.3 Methodology of interview process

In each interview, the process begins with the author asking each child his name (initials only are recorded), age, sex, and ethnicity. The process then proceeds to Question 1, a four-part question that opens with the statement, “Tell me about yourself.” For each response offered by the child, the author records his response manually in front of the child. If the participant questions what is being written, the author explains that she is recording the child’s responses. The author further clarifies that since the participant’s answers are so important to her work, she needs to record them in their own words. This technique supports the participants in believing in the worth of their own involvement in the research.

⁶¹¹ *Policies and Procedures Manual*, Ocean County Dept. of Juvenile Services, Toms River, NJ, March 1995 (revised Jan. 1, 2011), 78-91.

⁶¹² *Ibid.*

For each successive question in the Resident Questionnaire, the author continues to record the participant's responses within the interview itself. As soon as possible after the interview, the author transfers the child's answers from the hard copy of the questionnaire to an individual computer file (Word document) created specifically for each child's interview.

3.4.4 Rationale for individual questions

3.4.4.1 Question 1: Basic information

The first statement, "Tell me about yourself," is divided into four sub-categories, each of which is designed to encourage children to reveal themselves gradually. This opening statement is developed by the author in order to invite participants to begin to tell the story of their own lives. The organization and flow of the questions in the Resident Questionnaire follow from the first question/statement: "Tell me about yourself." In this first question, each participant is encouraged to tell the story of his life. Since storytelling is a primary vehicle utilized in this research study, the opening question is formulated around the importance of story in each child's life.⁶¹³

Included within Question 1 are the following four subcategories:

- A. Personal background information
- B. Family/relationships
- C. Significant life events
- D. Religious background

These four categories are also traditionally included as basic information in the BPS format, though there is no one, acceptable format for the BPS used by all clinicians.⁶¹⁴ Modifications in the format are common and depend somewhat on the school of therapy and worldview that the clinician may espouse. In this case, the author attempts to include questions to create a holistic portrait of each child without the invasiveness of asking

⁶¹³ Nelson, 95-104.

⁶¹⁴ Pilgrim, 585-594.

probing questions that might embarrass or offend. In this regard, the author embraces a qualitative method of inductive reasoning wherein the researcher becomes willing to follow where the child leads. The research itself thus becomes a process of open-ended exploration for both author and participant.

In each of the four categories within Question 1, the author uses the written questionnaire as a springboard for discussion by referring to the next category or question, and then speaking directly to the child. For example, statements and questions including the following are presented to each participant on the subject of personal background information: “Tell me about your background. Where do you live? Did you always live there? What kind of house do you live in?” Based on what the child says, the author continues to ask questions if the participant seems interested in answering with more information.

In the second category of family relationships, the author inquires about the child’s family, who lives in the home, and what the family relationships are like. The author asks each child which relationship in the family is most important.

In the third category of significant life events, the author employs an open-ended question like, “As you look back on your life so far, what things stand out the most?” This question gives the author a glimpse into how the child views his own life thus far, without asking any direct or invasive questions.

In the fourth category, the author inquires about the child’s religious background by asking, “Were you raised in a church? What kind of church was it? Did you like it? Did you get anything out of it? Would you say that was important to you at the time? Are you still involved in any church now?” For each of these four categories within Question 1, a

combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions and statements are used to dialogue with each child.

Thus, in Question 1 of the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B), the author draws from her use of the biopsychosocial model from her professional work as a psychotherapist in Catholic Charities, a private counseling agency sponsored by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Trenton, New Jersey, US. The author also draws from her professional experience at Catholic Charities working with children and families to discover what clinical techniques work best when gathering personal information. In her work at the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center for the last 14 years, the author has also utilized her own experience working with detained children and learning what techniques seem to work best with children who are guarded, frightened, and well-defended psychologically.

In Question 1, the author also echoes the work of Robert Coles, who often began his own clinical work with at-risk children by beginning with this statement: “Tell me who you are.”⁶¹⁵ This inviting statement sets the stage for participants to tell their own stories in their own ways with a freedom that encourages openness and authenticity.

3.4.4.2 Questions 2 and 3: What do participants cherish?

In Questions 2 and 3 of the Resident Questionnaire, the author’s intention is to begin to probe what participants cherish. Not overtly spiritual questions, nonetheless these two questions offer a glimpse into the child’s private world without being invasive. These two questions are intentionally posed in non-traditional religious language to offer each child an alternative way to talk about important things.

In this regard, the author draws from her experience as a pastor working with children and young adults, who often find religious language too adult or simply irrelevant. The

⁶¹⁵ Coles and Elkind, et al, 9-10.

author also draws from Robert Coles' understanding from his own work with children. As he mentions in his own work, it is unimportant whether children believe in a specific religion or not. Rather, what is important is *how* children are encouraged to share their souls.⁶¹⁶

In her work in the Ocean County Detention Center, the author also learned that many children feel a sense of guilt about their criminal charges. As a result, they are reluctant to use traditional religious categories. Perhaps such language reminds them of their own guilt and may cause them to shut down emotionally.

3.4.4.3 Questions 4 and 5: Responses to traditional religious topics

In Questions 4 and 5 of the Resident Questionnaire, the author's intent is to move further into participants' understanding of more traditional religious topics. Question 4 uses language both traditional and non-traditional. For example, inquiring about their belief in God is a traditional inquiry. Yet the term *higher power* is adapted from the recovery movement, specifically from the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.⁶¹⁷ The use of the term *higher power* is specifically relevant to children in detention since the majority of children enter detention with an obvious or latent drug/alcohol problem. Since many of the children have experienced hospitalization or counseling for drugs and alcohol, they are acquainted with the meaning of *higher power* and associate it with a positive and creative way of talking about God.

In Question 4, the last phrase, "...or anything spiritual," is included to offer participants the opportunity to try on alternative language that might have meaning beyond traditional

⁶¹⁶ Coles, 98-130.

⁶¹⁷ Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is an international movement with a stated "primary purpose" of individuals within the AA fellowship remaining sober and "helping other alcoholics achieve sobriety." (AA Preamble). Founded in 1935 by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith, the fellowship claims to have 2 million members worldwide. aa.org (accessed April 12, 2011).

religious usage. Since the category of spirituality has begun to permeate culture, this phrase, “or anything spiritual,” is included to see if children do identify with this term.

Question 5 combines an open-ended and a closed-ended question for quantitative results, as well as an exploration of participant acquaintance with prayer. The author draws from her own experience as a pastor and includes this question as a further exploration into the spiritual psyche of children in a detention setting.

3.4.4.4 Questions 6, 7, and 8: Life in juvenile detention

Questions 6, 7, and 8 of the Resident Questionnaire address a specific aspect of the life of children in a detention setting. The author explores the impact and significance of detention itself on participants. The evolution of Question 6 begins with the author’s fascination about children in detention coping with the stress of being behind bars on a daily basis. Often children go for weeks without knowing what direction their court cases might take. The stress on the children often evidences in behavior issues, mental health issues, and aggression. Since the central focus of this research study is what children believe spiritually, the author explores whether or not participants in the study rely on any spiritual or religious practices to help them cope with their stressors.

Similarly, Question 7 addresses how programs in the Ocean County Detention Center may or may not support participants in coping with their unique life stressors. Question 8 is motivated by a similar desire by the author to understand if children are affected by their detention experience in a way that is life-changing, or not.

3.4.4.5 Questions 9 and 10: Hope and faith

Questions 9 and 10 of the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) address traditional categories of hope and faith among children in detention. Question 9 is included to explore whether children in detention understand what hope is and if hope is a relevant category in

their lives. Question 10 is similarly included to see if participants understand what faith is, and if they have any faith. In Questions 9 and 10, the author is frequently asked by participants to define the terms *faith* and *hope* more than in any other question (see Chapter Four for further details).

3.4.4.6 Question 11: Probing participant spirituality

Question 11 is included to delve further into the spiritual lives of children in detention. The term *abnormal* is included in this question to give participants a way of talking about experiences that they might deem “weird” but nonetheless may include as spiritual or supernatural. An open-ended question is chosen once again to encourage them to tell their stories in their own words. Question 11 yields the most creative and “no holes barred” responses of all 14 questions in the Resident Questionnaire.

3.4.4.7 Question 12: Feedback on the interview process

Question 12 is included as a method for gathering data about the questionnaire itself, the interview process as a whole, and feedback about the author’s participation in the interview process. This question is also included psychologically to offer the participants some measure of ownership and control by encouraging them to comment on the process in which they have participated.

3.4.4.8 Question 13: Involving participants in the research process

Question 13 is included as a method to involve the children directly in the research process. This question also serves to support participants in having some ownership of the research process and to give voice to their own questions, rather than allowing the author full creative license. As stated above, the approach in Question 13 proved to be more troublesome than intended. However, similar to Question 11, this question yields creative responses from the children themselves that offer a deeper glimpse into their spiritual

psyches than the author could have predicted. A complete list of questions generated by participants in the research sample is included in Chapter Four.

3.4.4.9 Question 14: Encouraging a reciprocal relationship

Finally, Question 14 of the Resident Questionnaire is included to encourage a reciprocal relationship between the author and the participants. In the process of these 14 questions, children are asked to reveal quite personal information, which places them in a vulnerable position, especially in relation to the author. By granting them the opportunity and freedom to ask the author questions, she attempts to shift the power dynamic within the interview itself to a more equal footing.⁶¹⁸ For this last question, the author draws from her experience as a psychotherapist working with mandated clients, mostly adults, who often feel disempowered by a court process that undermines their freedom and dignity by mandating them into therapy.

3.5 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER IN THE STUDY

This research study includes the component of an introspective documentation of the author's own spiritual journey through the process of interviewing 200 children in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center. This study is also an exploration of how God may speak through these children, as well as this research vehicle, to encourage and to support spiritual growth within the author herself.

In this project, spirituality is the specific phenomenon being studied and reported on by the research participants.⁶¹⁹ However, it is also being reported on by the author, who is a spiritual participant in the study and thus becomes a part of the shared truth created by the

⁶¹⁸ K. Bhopal, "Gender, race, and power in the research process," *Research and Inequality* (London: UCL Press, 2000), 23-27.

⁶¹⁹ Creswell, 223 ff.

study. The hermeneutic of the study does not begin with an *a priori* understanding of truth but allows for the author and the participants to share in the creation of truth. Thus, a central aim of this research study is to allow the author to participate fully in the research along with each participant toward an evolution of their individual and mutual spirituality. Chapter Six presents the author's spiritual journey in the course of the project.

Indeed the topic of spirituality invokes a sense of mystery, ambiguity, and a journey into the unknown. When applied to a research context as in the present study, spirituality itself beckons to the author and participants alike to enter into the mystery without knowing where it will lead and without knowing what truth or truths may be discovered along the way.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In summary, the focus of this study is the specific issue of spirituality as it pertains to children in juvenile detention centers. The research project consists of 200 individual, face-to-face interviews with male juvenile residents detained in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, New Jersey, US. Juvenile males in this study range in age from 13 to 19, the normal spectrum of ages based on annual *Admission Records* data.⁶²⁰

An original questionnaire, entitled the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B), has been developed as a research tool for each face-to-face interview. The participants themselves also helped in developing the questionnaire. The questionnaire itself contains 14 questions and statements that include both open-ended and closed-ended segments.

⁶²⁰ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, NJ, 2000-2010.

The research methodology employed in this empirical study is a qualitative-dominant mixed methods approach,⁶²¹ a methodology that “relies on a qualitative constructivist... critical view of the research process while concurrently recognizing that the addition of quantitative data and approaches are likely to benefit most research projects.”⁶²²

The philosophical context of the research study is phenomenological, defined as “identifying phenomena by how they are perceived by the actors in a situation.”⁶²³ In this regard, the concept of the truth is located elsewhere, rather than being imposed on the study as an absolute from the beginning.

In addition to the philosophical category of phenomenology, this research study also supports the philosophy of hermeneutics, defined as the branch of philosophy that addresses interpretation. Similar to phenomenology, a hermeneutical approach includes the researcher among the actors in the study and supports her in contributing to the overall truth of the research data and outcome.

The practical foundation of the study is the advocacy/participatory model, one of the four dominant worldviews proposed by Creswell.⁶²⁴ This model moves beyond a merely social constructivist view by attempting to help marginalized people. The world view of the advocacy/participatory model also contains an agenda for political reform of the system, as well as the projected reform of the participants within the research itself.⁶²⁵

In order to develop and to explore the relationship between the author and each participant, the additional tools of ethnography and autoethnography are employed to identify the location of the self of the author within the research.

⁶²¹ Johnson, et al, 112-133.

⁶²² Ibid.

⁶²³ Creswell, 3-7.

⁶²⁴ Ibid, 6-10.

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

Chapter Four presents the empirical research results gathered from the 200 individual interviews, based on the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B). Raw data from each of the 14 questions is discussed and analyzed in depth. Visual aids including graphs, tables, charts, and illustrations are included to highlight the collected data for each question. Additionally, percentages for the highest response categories of each question are included as well.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Presentation and Analysis of Empirical Data

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the collected data from 200 individual interviews that the author personally has completed with male residents, ages 13-19, detained in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center. The empirical research has been conducted over a period of two and a half years, from 2007-2010.

The data collection instrument is an original questionnaire, the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B), developed by the author and consists of 14 questions. Illustrations including figures and tables support and highlight the collected data for each question. Since many children respond with more than one answer for most questions, the total number of responses for each question exceeds 200.

For each question, the five highest numerical responses are presented. Examples and trends represented in categories below the top five responses are also included. In-depth analysis of the data for each question is then presented, including suggested implications for the participants' responses. Collected data beyond the five highest categories is presented in more general terms to indicate the wide spectrum of participant responses for each question. Individual stories of children's responses are also included as a part of each question.

Furthermore, a complete list of all responses to each question is included at the end of each section, formatted in illustrations, tables, and figures. A list of all illustrations, tables, and figures may be found in the Table of Contents.

An additional and in-depth, theological analysis of the data for each question is presented in Chapter Five, including comparative analysis of the data in this study with data from other existing studies on children, their theology and their spiritual practices.

4.2 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The following sections present each of the 14 questions in the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) with an interpretation of collected data. Each question is discussed and analyzed separately based on data from 200 interviews with participants in the sample.

4.2.1 Line 1: Name, age, sex, and ethnicity

The first line in the Resident Questionnaire provides for the participant's name, age, sex, and ethnicity. Since information gathered by the author remains anonymous, only initials are recorded in the name space for each child. As illustrated in Figure 1 below, 62% of all participants in the sample range in age from 16-17. The median age is 16.5. Percentages of male children in each age group also appear in Figure 1 below.

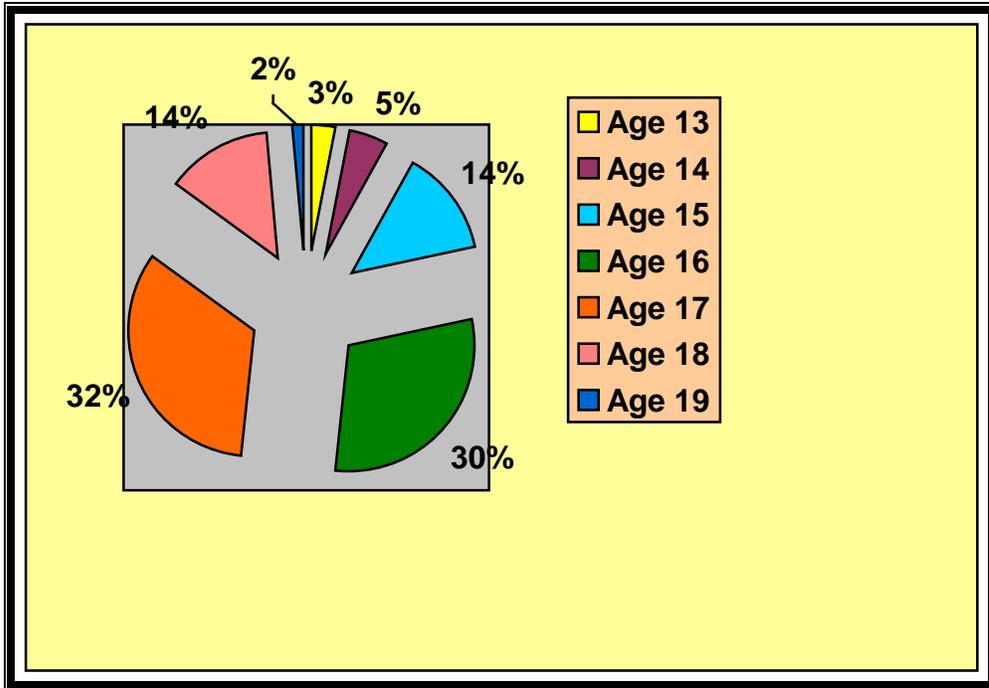


Figure 1-- Percentages of male children in sample, ages 13-19

Since only male children are included in the sample, the last entry in the first line of the questionnaire pertains to the participant's ethnicity, presented in Figure 2 below. The legend for the ethnic abbreviations utilized in Figure 2 is as follows:

- AA—African/American
- H—Hispanic
- C—Caucasian
- AA/C—African American/Caucasian
- H/C—Hispanic/Caucasian
- C/AI—Caucasian/Asian
- AA/H—African American/Hispanic
- AA/H/C—African American/ Hispanic/Caucasian
- M—Mexican

As illustrated in Figure 2, the majority of participants (56%) in the sample are Caucasian, followed by the next largest category, African American (13%). The Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center admits only male and female children from Ocean County, New Jersey. Ocean County is a composite of rural, urban, and suburban areas and includes the two

densely populated cities of Lakewood and Toms River. Lakewood contains a high concentration of illegal immigrants from South America and Mexico. Lakewood is also the center of illegal gang activity in Ocean County, as well as home to one of the largest Hasidic Jewish population in the US, second only to New York City.⁶²⁶ By contrast, southern Ocean County is mostly Caucasian and rural.⁶²⁷ Thus, children admitted to the detention center in Ocean County represent a cross section of cultures, nationalities and creeds.

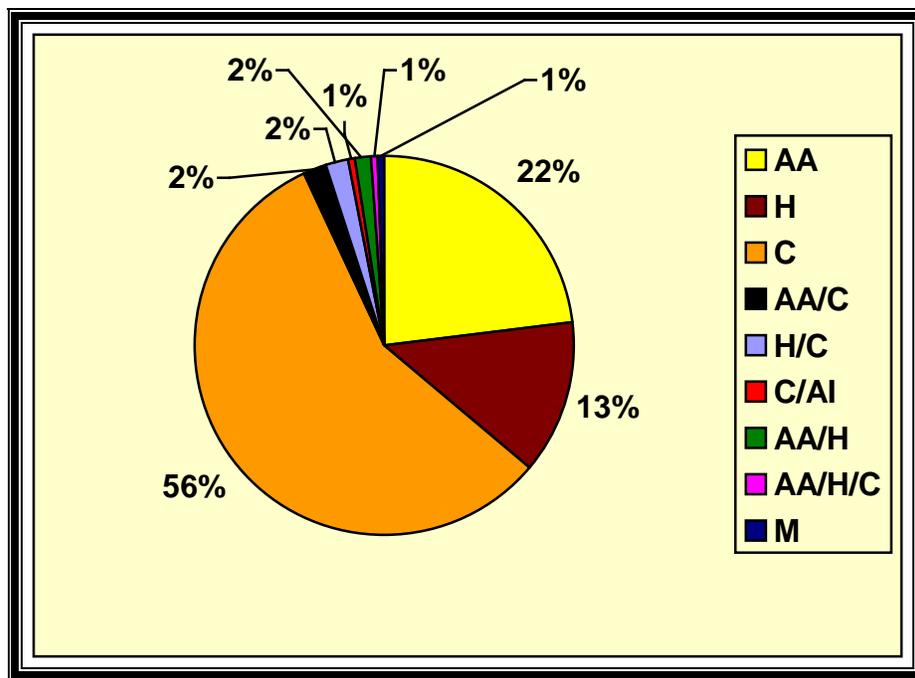


Figure 2– Ethnicity of 200 male children in sample

4.2.2 Question 1: Tell me about yourself

Question 1 contains five parts, designed to collect general information about each child, based on a modified biopsychsocial (BPS) format.⁶²⁸ Open-ended questions and statements

⁶²⁶ Oceancountynj.org (accessed June 21, 2013).

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

⁶²⁸ Francesc Borrell, Anthony Suchman, & Ronald Epstein, “The BioPsychoSocial Model 25 Years Later: Principles, Practice, & Scientific Inquiry,” *Annals of Family Medicine*, Vol. 2, 2004, 576-582.

are utilized to invite participants to respond in their own ways.⁶²⁹ The first section of Question 1 is an open-ended statement, “Tell me about yourself.” This section begins with four sample responses from the collected data to illustrate the spectrum of responses offered by participants for this statement (Illustration 1 below).

“I’ve been incarcerated 4 ½ years of my life already. Being locked up changed my thinking about some of the stuff I do, but I still want to do it anyway. I like skateboarding, fishing, GUNS, cigarettes, & street fighting. I’m not scared of anything. I’m usually laid back and mellow. I was diagnosed with ADHD but stopped taking my medication.”

–D, age 17, Caucasian

“Well, I like to spend time with my mom. I told you about my mom—she’s really my cousin, but she adopted me when I was little. My parents are in jail—I told you that. I like to cook sometimes—my mom taught me some stuff. I like when we eat as a family, even though it’s just the two of us.”

–S, age 13, Caucasian

“I answer more dumb questions in here. I’m from Peru, and I’m tired of comin’ here. I’ve been here so many times. And you people never really help me.”

–C, age 16, Hispanic

“I’m wholesome, free-hearted, careful. I’m generous, nice. I like to make people laugh. I’m up, a jolly kinda guy.”

–S, age 17, African/American

Illustration 1-- Sample responses for Question 1: Tell me about yourself

Since most residents respond with more than one description of themselves, the total number of responses exceeds 200. The five most common responses are indicated in Table 1 below.

⁶²⁹ Elizabeth Badger and Brenda Thomas, “Open-ended Questions in Reading,” *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation* (e-journal), 1992 (accessed June 20, 2011).

Athletic	Nice/good person/caring	Interested in the Arts	Hang out with friends	Funny/joke around/have fun
119	34	34	33	24

Table 1—Question 1: Tell me about yourself

The data for Question 1 appears in Figure 3 below, with percentages for the five highest categories.

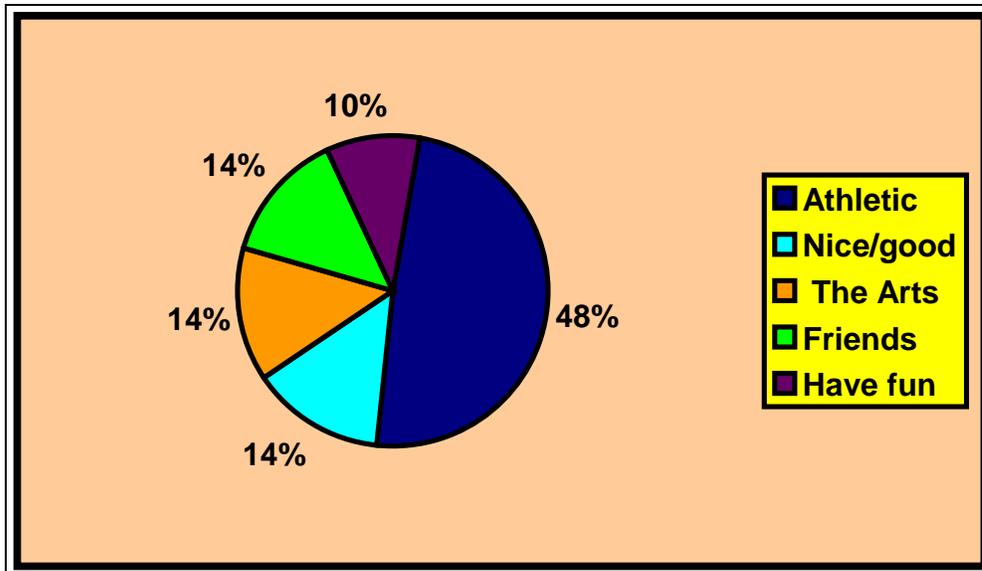


Figure 3-- Question 1: Tell me about yourself

4.2.2.1 Most popular response: “Athletic”

The most popular category that males in juvenile detention, ages 13-19, use to describe themselves is “athletic” (45%). In the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, athletics are a central part of the daily schedule and represent the most popular aspect of the overall program. This requirement addresses the need for children to release tension through daily physical activity. Studies also indicate that exercise actually changes brain chemistry, thus altering mood and actual perception of reality.⁶³⁰

Although children in Ocean County Detention enjoy the athletic program, the vast majority of male residents exhibit below-average athletic ability. This low level of ability

⁶³⁰ Laura Blue, “Is Exercise the Best Drug for Depression?” *Time*, June 19, 2010 (accessed March 25, 2012).

may reflect a lack of parental interest in the children. It may also speak to the fact that the majority of children admitted to the Ocean County Detention Center evidence drug and/or alcohol issues. In fact, approximately 10 percent of annual intakes are admitted to the detention center under the influence of a substance. In some cases, these children are taken to a hospital to be medically cleared before they are admitted to the detention center. The medical effects of long-term substance abuse observed in the Ocean County Detention Center do indicate that children have less energy and desire more sedentary lifestyles. They are also less physically healthy and have less physical stamina than children admitted who do not use or abuse drugs and alcohol.

A third reason why children admitted to the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center may be below average in athletic ability is that many of these children have already dropped out of school and are not involved in any formal athletic program.

Thus, it is possible that the most popular response to Question 1 may be more of a psychological projection regarding their perceived self-image. Many male children admitted to the detention center have confided to the author that they hope to play sports professionally in the future and also believe themselves talented enough to do so.

However, the response of the participants in this study may also be a relatively normal reflection of what male children in the US strive to be. In this regard, the collected data may indicate that children in juvenile detention centers reflect a normalcy that is found in American society in general for this age group of male children.⁶³¹

⁶³¹ Scott Ganz and Kevin Hassett, "Little League, Huge Effect," *The American*, May/June 2008 (accessed June 20, 2013).

4.2.2.2 Second and third highest responses: “Nice, good person”; “Interested in the arts”

The second highest response category for Question 1 is an even score for two responses: 1/ children who described themselves as “nice, good” (13%); and 2/ children interested in the arts (13%). It may be theorized that, in the first response, participants who find themselves caught up in the juvenile justice system, particularly those who wind up housed in a juvenile detention center, may desire to see themselves as good and nice since they are aware that they are not perceived by others as being very good. Such a relatively high response for this answer may also indicate that children in juvenile detention are not emotionally connected with the nature of their criminal charges, a form of psychological denial.

It is also possible that participants may not see themselves through the lens of their criminal charges. Rather, these children may identify more strongly with their lives before and after juvenile detention. Viewing their lives in such a compartmentalized way could be a coping strategy for being in detention. It might represent a healthy coping strategy for not defining oneself around a single, unfortunate part of one’s life. Since the author does not probe sample participants further, these possible interpretations remain speculative.

The second even score for Question 1 is the number of participants interested in the arts (13%). This category includes music, writing, painting, and drawing. Some respond with a specific interest in rap music, a popular form of musical expression for young males. Research also indicates that “Gangsta Rap” offers males a way to rage against the problems within society.⁶³² Many participants state that their artistic interests represent a therapeutic way to express their internal emotions, turmoil, and desires. It is common among children

⁶³² Robert Regoli, John Hewitt, & Matt DeLisi, *Delinquency in Society, 8th Edition* (MA: Jones and Bartlett, 2010), 24-28.

admitted to the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center that a significant number excel in artistic pursuits. Research indicates that troubled, delinquent children can be natural actors who find a voice and an alternate persona within a dramatic role or musical instrument.⁶³³

Many detention centers, including Ocean County, offer artistic programs due to their evidence-based success rate in changing juvenile behavior for the better.⁶³⁴ For example, one of the more popular programs in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center is the Academy for the Fine Arts. Developed by the author, the Academy is staffed by volunteers from the community who offer their time on Sunday afternoons to share their artistic expertise with the children. Classes include musical instrument lessons, choral and solo singing lessons, and acting lessons.⁶³⁵

4.2.2.3 Fourth highest response: “Hangin’ with friends”

The next highest response to Question 1 is “hangin’ with friends” (12%). This response may represent a relatively normal response for male children, both within and without juvenile detention. Generally, a sense of community is considered a healthy and crucial part of growing up unless that community is a local gang.⁶³⁶ With respect to the answers to this question, both answers are relevant. Since the questionnaire utilized in this study does not include a specific question about participant gang involvement, it is mere speculation about the percentage of children with healthy friends and those whose community is gang-related. From the annual admission data from the Ocean County Detention Center, the percentage of

⁶³³ Amy Brown, “Program Turns Troubled Kids on to the Arts,” *The Florida Bar New* online, June 15, 2002 (accessed May 20, 2012).

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁵ Ocean County Juvenile Services website (accessed June 21, 2012).

⁶³⁶ Regoli, et al, 24-28.

self-proclaimed gang members is low (2%), whereas the actual number admitted who are gang members is closer to 5-10%.⁶³⁷

4.2.2.4 Fifth highest response: “I like to have fun/joke around”

The fifth highest category of response for Question 1, with 9% of total responses, is “I like to have fun/joke around.” This response is a relatively normal and healthy response for male children in a detention setting, a response which may be viewed both in positive and negative ways. For example, many children in Ocean County Detention use humor, jokes, and pranks as ways to seek attention, often negative attention. Yet residents also use humor as a way to relieve the stress of their current life circumstances. The author has also been told by children in the detention center that they use humor to mask their feelings. Residents often try to make others laugh with them, or at them, to avoid crying about who and where they are.

4.2.2.5 Examples of individual responses: “I want to speak to my lawyer”

Of the 200 participants in the sample, all but one child willingly answers Question 1. The one exception is a child, age 13, who does not wish to proceed with the interview until he speaks to his lawyer. After the author reaches out to the lawyer with no success, she does not continue with the interview. The author consults Administrator Bowden, who states that as long as all research with participants remains anonymous and is only used for this project, each participant is protected under the *in loco parentis* (“instead of a parent”) legal rubric.⁶³⁸ Mr. Bowden further states that if a child does not wish to participate, that is his protected right. Thus, the author does not pursue the interview with this participant any further. {For further explanation of the legal rights of participants in this research, as well as how

⁶³⁷ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, NJ, 2000-2010.

⁶³⁸ See Chapter One for further discussion of the legal implications of the term *in loco parentis*.

permission has been granted to the author, please refer to Section 3.3.4 in Chapter Three, entitled, “Ethical considerations for research sample selection.”}

Additional, individual responses indicate a wide spectrum of responses, both unique in character and indicative of the issues and self-images that children in the Ocean County Detention Center possess. For example, 19 participants respond by describing themselves as “computer geeks.” Another 13 participants say that their anger problems define them, while 12 children describe themselves as “smart.” Another 10 children say they are quiet and like to be alone. Three participants describe themselves as “good-looking,” and two children admit that they are “addicted to running the streets.”

In the Ocean County Detention Center, children do have daily access to computers, and residents may participate in a weekly anger management group. Therefore, it seems that the detention center does already address some of the needs of its children with more individual responses to the Resident Questionnaire.

Some of the more poignant, singular responses include a child who says that his mother’s illness consumes him. He explains that her cancer is all he can think about. Another participant shares that he is very disappointed in himself, while another child admits that kids always make fun of him.

Thus, while the five highest response categories for Question 1 appear to be positive, many participants do report individually--perhaps from a deeper level--their pain, their emotional conflicts, and their unresolved issues. It is possible that participants who respond in the top five categories are perhaps somewhat less forthcoming about themselves. However, even if this is the case, it is noteworthy that the 200 children in the research

sample do answer with as many duplicate responses as they do. A complete list of all responses for Question 1 appears below in Illustration 2.

Illustration 2—Complete list of responses to Question 1: Tell me about yourself

Computer geek 19	Honest 2
Girlfriend 5	Build things 5
Likes school 11	TV 4
Anger problem 13	Like to cook/Chef 3
In trouble a lot 12	Loving 1
Hang w/friends/chill out 33	Like communicate 1
Athletics/baseball/basketball/martial arts/biking 119	Poetry 2
Nice person/caring/good person 34	Dad abusive 1
Fun/ funny, joke around 24	Twin 1
Bad childhood 4	Good time 4
Does stupid stuff/ makes mistakes 21	Bad accident 1
Smart 12	Want out of here 1
Potential 1	Good looking 3
Leader 1	Kicked out of school 2
Normal kid 8	Puerto Rican 2
Boring life 2	Like church 1
Like guns 1	Miss my family 1
Street fighter 1	Half black/half white 1
Mental health disorders 2	Tattoos 2
Drugs/alcohol/cigarettes 15	Tired of coming here/Don't like being here 5
Music/arts /writing 34	Lost/confused 1
Not confident 1	Addicted to streets /Run the streets 2
Disappointed in myself 1	Movie star/acting 1
Raised good/good family 5	Like reality 1
The Struggle 1	Mature 2
Love dogs/animals 3	Out of house 2
Outgoing 10	Quiet/ Be alone 10
Adopted 1	Not told what to do 2
Want to go to college 1	Like girls 8
Don't know/don't know what to say/too hard 14	Like jewelry 2
Outspoken 2	Nice clothes/fashion 8
Had jobs 3	Cars 7
Need someone to talk to 1	Spend time w/mom/ love mom 3
Read 6	Parents in jail 1
Peer Mediation 1	Dad alcoholic 1
Optimist 1	We're rich 2
Being outside 4	I'm a dad 5
Laid back/mellow 9	Lots of responsibility 1
Consumed by mom's illness 1	Fishing 5
Dad doesn't live with us 1	Born in Greece 1
Didn't do interview; wanted to consult lawyer 1	Spiritual Revolution 1
Trying to make it 2	Depressed 1
Want to be gangster 1	Graphics designer 1
Health problems 1	Wholesome 1
Raised religious 2	Careful 1
Like money 2	Hold things in 1
Like to work hard 3	Agnostic 1
Doctor 1	Take walks 1
Puzzles 1	Camping 1
Didn't speak English 1	Kids make fun of me 1

4.2.3 Question 1-A: Personal background information

In the next section, Question 1-A, the author asks each participant where he was born, raised, and where he lives currently. A traditional category in the biopsychosocial (BPS), this category allows the researcher, or clinician, to gather basic information about the individual being interviewed.⁶³⁹ Question 1-A is an open-ended question/statement that allows each participant the opportunity to craft his response individually. Again, some children answer in more than one category to describe themselves, making the total number of responses over 200. Responses for the 200 participants interviewed fall into the following six categories and are highlighted in Table 2 below, followed by percentages for each category in Figure 4 below.

Born & live in NJ	Born in another state; moved to NJ	Born in foreign country; moved to NJ	Back & forth in states; settled in NJ	Described themselves as homeless in NJ	Foster care or residential programs in NJ
135	34	14	14	3	4

Table 2—Question 1-A: Personal background information

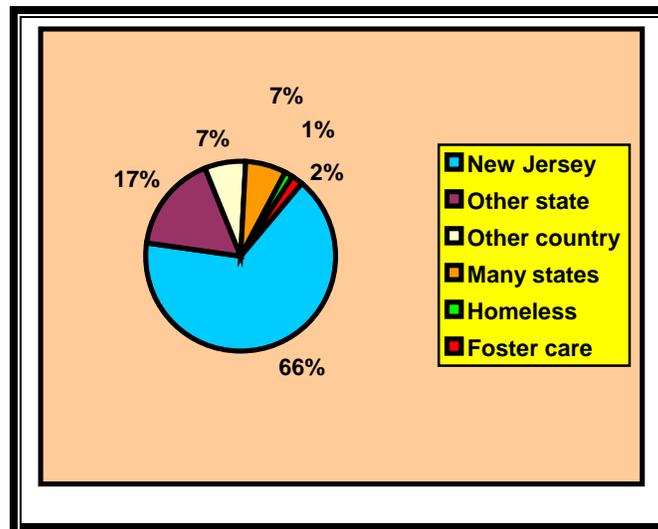


Figure 4—Question 1-A: Personal background information

⁶³⁹ Borrell et al, 576-582.

4.2.3.1 Most popular response: “Born and raised in New Jersey”

The data from Question 1-A reveals that the vast majority of participants (66%) are born and raised in New Jersey. This statistic indicates that most children admitted to the Ocean County Detention Center have minimal exposure to travel, both within and without the US.

4.2.3.2 Second highest response: “Born in another state/moved to New Jersey”

Of the 200 sample participants, 34 (17%) report that they were born in other states but eventually move to New Jersey. Participant responses represent 13 states in the US. The highest number of children are born in New York (9), followed by Florida (5) and Virginia (5). All three states are on the east coast of the US.

4.2.3.3 Third and fourth highest responses: “Foreign country/back and forth to NJ”

The next two categories are a tie score, with 14 participants (7%) responding that they were born in foreign countries and then move to New Jersey. Countries represented include Lithuania, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru, Greece, and Ecuador. Lithuania and Mexico are the most popular foreign countries, with two children from each country. Another 14 participants (7%) report that they moved around the US but finally settle in New Jersey.

4.2.3.4 Fifth highest response: “Placed in foster care or NJ residential program”

It is surprising to the author that only four participants (2%) indicate that they have been in foster homes and/or in residential programs sponsored by the State of New Jersey. These children are placed out of the home due to lack of parental guidance, abuse, or neglect, or because of the child’s emotional or behavioral problems. Since approximately 25% of annual admissions to the Ocean County Detention Center are children placed either in foster care by the State of New Jersey or placed outside their home in a juvenile residential

placement,⁶⁴⁰ the statistic reported in this study indicates a much lower number, the difference between 25% and 2%.

It may be that participants in this study do not want to disclose that they have been placed out of their home due to embarrassment or shame. It is also possible that this study simply represents a skewed statistic, in direct contrast with the annual statistics documented by the detention center.

4.2.3.5 Sixth highest response: “Homeless”

Only three participants (1%) describe themselves as “homeless.” A growing number of residents admitted to the Ocean County Detention Center annually report that they have no current address upon admission. The term *homeless* is also changing in the State of New Jersey and may be reflected in the data. For example, families who collect Medicaid, government-assisted welfare, may live in motels or hotels that have addresses, but they are still considered transients and thus, homeless.⁶⁴¹

It is possible that participants may not understand the ramifications of the term *homeless* since the author does not explain in greater detail, beyond the common understanding of the word itself. Thus, a greater number of participants may be actually homeless beyond the number reported in this question.

4.2.3.6 Examples of individual responses: “No idea where I was born”

A single, poignant response to Question 1-A that is not in reference to a geographical place of birth or present location comes from a 16-year-old participant, who responds that he has no idea where he was born. This child responds with little emotion but is also flippant. His response is indicative of the fact that some children admitted to detention in Ocean County do seem already lost in the world at such a young age.

⁶⁴⁰ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, NJ, 2000-2010.

⁶²⁹ For a definition of “homelessness” in New Jersey, please refer to footnote # 112, Chapter One.

A complete list of all responses to Question 1-A appears in Illustration 3 below.

Born & raised in NJ 135	Born Lithuania; moved to NJ 2
Born in another state; moved to NJ 34	Born California; moved to NJ 2
Born foreign country; moved to NJ 14	Born Florida; moved to NJ 5
Don't know; can't remember 2	Born Dominican Rep.; moved to NJ 1
Born NJ; moved to other states; back 14	Born S. Carolina; moved to NJ 4
Homeless in NJ 3	Born Mexico; moved to NJ 2
Foster care or State programs 4	Born Peru; moved to NJ 1
Born NJ; moved to NY; back to NJ 4	No idea where born 1
Born Virginia; moved to NJ 5	Born N. Carolina; moved to NJ 2
Born Pennsylvania; moved to NJ 2	Born Georgia; moved to NJ 3
Born Maryland; moved to NJ 1	Born Connecticut; moved to NJ 1
Born Puerto Rico; moved to NJ 6	Born Greece; moved to NJ 1
Born Texas; moved to NJ 2	Born NY; moved to NJ 9
Born Washington DC; moved to NJ 1	Born Ecuador; moved to NJ 1

Illustration 3—Complete responses to Question 1-A: Personal background information

4.2.4 Question 1-B: Family/relationships

In Question 1-B, the author asks an open-ended question/statement about where each child lives, with whom, and their significant family relationships. The six highest numerical categories--two are tied--are found below in Table 3.

Lives with biological parents; has siblings	Lives with mother; parents divorced; has siblings	Lives with mother; father left; has siblings	Lives with mother & stepfather; visits father; has siblings	Lives with mother; father deceased; has siblings	Lives with mother; father in prison; has siblings
103	11	11	9	8	7

Table 3—Question 1-B: Family/relationships

The legend for abbreviations in Figure 5 below is as follows:

- Bio parents-- child lives with both biological parents.
- M; divorced—child lives with mother; parents divorced.
- Mom; d left—child lives with mother; father left family.
- Mom/stepd—child lives with mother and stepfather.
- Mom; d dead—child lives with mother; father deceased.
- Mom; d jail—child lives with mother; father in prison.

Figure 5 below illustrates percentages of the same data from Question 1-B.

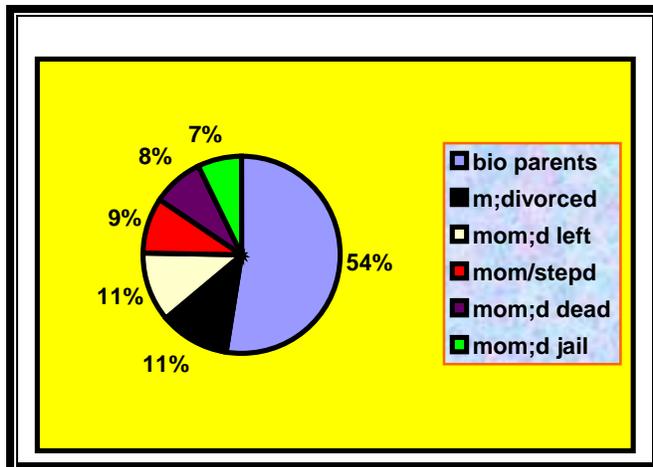


Figure 5—Question 1-B: Family/relationships

4.2.4.1 Most popular response: “Lives with biological parents; has siblings”

The collected data from Question 1-B reveals that 103 participants (54%) report living with both biological parents and siblings. This statistic is in direct contradiction to research indicating that the majority of juvenile delinquents, including those detained in juvenile detention centers, live predominantly with their mothers and lack father figures in their lives.⁶⁴² This response may indicate that parental trends among children involved in the juvenile justice system are changing.

On the other hand, this very different statistic in the present study may represent a pattern in Ocean County not seen in the rest of the US. It is also possible that self-reporting on the part of participants in this study may lead to some misrepresentation of the facts. Since the author accepts what participants report as their truth, it is difficult to assess where the differential may lie. It may also be possible that additional research indicating a very different portrait of children living without father figures in the home may have been gathered from means other than self-reporting questionnaires.

⁶⁴² Solomon Moore, “Mentally Ill Offenders Strain Juvenile System,” *New York Times*, Aug. 9, 2009, A1.

4.2.4.2 Five next highest responses: “Living with mom”

However, data from the next five categories for Question 1-B does support research that many juvenile delinquents, including those in detention, come from homes where the mother is the head of the household and the father is absent.⁶⁴³

In these next five categories, participant responses include fathers who desert the family, parents who divorce, fathers who are deceased, mothers remarried to stepfathers, and fathers in prison. The last category, children living with mothers while fathers are in prison, is an unfortunate but accurate statistic for the Ocean County Detention Center. Children in the detention center often emulate the actions and life choices of their fathers, including their imprisonment. However, children’s seeming admiration of their fathers’ negative choices may also be a psychological defense mechanism, rather than a genuine desire to be like their fathers.

In summary, the highest response for Question 1-B does contradict existing research that juveniles in the justice system, including detention, come from homes with no fathers. However, the next five response categories in this study do support the hypothesis that juveniles in detention do come from homes with no father figure.

A complete list of all responses to Question 1-B follows below in Illustration 4.

⁶⁴³ Moore, A1.

Mom& stepdad; sees bio dad; siblings 9
 Mom drugs; dad deceased; siblings 1
 Mom deceased; dad won't take; lives w/ stepdad; siblings 1
 Mom/dad raised; Dad alcoholic
 Mom/stepdad raised; siblings 1
 Mom dad; siblings 2
 Mom/dad both in prison; aunt is guardian/siblings 2
 Mom/dad divorced; live w/ dad; siblings 3
 Dad deceased; live w/ mom & siblings 8
 Live with mom; no contact w/ dad; siblings 5
 Mom left dad—drugs/abuse; don't see dad; siblings 5
 Mom & dad did drugs; dad dead; foster care; only child 1
 Mom drinks; dad in prison; foster care & grandparents; siblings 2
 Mom dead; dad in prison; foster care & grandparents; siblings 2
 Adopted; live w/ adopted parents 5
 Mom does drugs; never knew dad; family friend guardian; siblings 1
 Mom & dad divorced; live with biological dad & stepmom; siblings 1
 Live with biological mom and dad; siblings 51
 Mom in jail ;never knew dad; adopted by family friend; siblings 1
 Mom & dad divorced; live w/mom & visit dad; sibs 5
 Grandmother raised; dad died; never knew mom; siblings 1
 Mom & dad divorced; back & forth between the two; sibs 4
 Mom & dad divorced; dad dead; sibs 1
 Live w/ mom; dad in jail; sibs 7
 Mom does drugs; dad dead; foster care; no sibs 1
 Live w/ mom & stepdad; dad in prison; sibs 1
 Dad dead; adopted; mom doesn't want me 1
 Live w/ grandmother; courts took me away from parents 3
 Mom & dad divorced; live on my own 2
 Adopted; only child; doesn't know parents 1
 Mom dead; dad remarried; live on my own 1
 Live w/ grandparents;; mom & dad out of country 1
 Live w/dad; mom left; only child 2
 Live w/ mom; never knew dad; sibs 3
 Mom & dad abused me; foster care; mom & dad in jail 1
 Live w/ dad; mom does drugs; sibs 1
 Mom does drugs; dad in jail; foster care 1
 Live w/ dad; mom in mental hospital 1
 Live w/ mom; dad left; sibs 11
 Mom dead; dad ran away; sibs 1

Illustration 4-- Question 1-B: Family/relationships

4.2.5 Question 1-C: Significant life events

In the next section, Question 1-C, the author asks participants to reflect on their lives and to share any memories that immediately come to mind, either positive or negative. Each child is reassured that negative memories are fine and acceptable. Once again, an open-ended question/ statement is utilized to allow each participant to tell his story in his own way. Since many participants respond with more than one memory, the total number of responses exceeds 200.

The five highest response categories for Question 1-C are listed in Table 4 below.

First time in juvenile detention	Nothing recalled	Family member died	Good family times	First time I used drugs
28	27	18	16	14

Table 4—Question 1-C: Significant life events

Figure 6 below presents the five highest categories for Question 1-C in graph format.

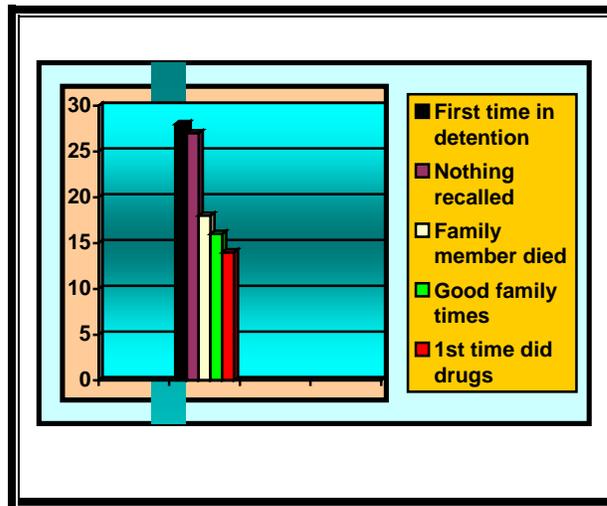


Figure 6—Question 1-C: Significant life events

4.2.5.1 Highest response: “First time in detention”

The highest response in this category, “first time in detention,” is not a clear, percentage majority, as in Questions 1, 1-A and 1-B. Indeed no response is a clear majority for Question 1-C. Yet the highest score does support the research of the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI), namely, the belief that the detention or incarceration of a child for a single day may actually change the trajectory of his or her life.⁶⁴⁴ The data from this question

⁶⁴⁴ The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) was designed to support the Casey Foundation’s vision that all youth involved in the juvenile justice system have opportunities to develop into healthy, productive adults. JDAI focuses on the juvenile detention component of the juvenile justice system because youth are often unnecessarily or inappropriately detained at great expense, with long-lasting negative consequences for both public safety and youth development. Since its inception in 1992, JDAI has repeatedly demonstrated that jurisdictions can safely reduce reliance on secure detention. There are now approximately 100 JDAI sites in 24 states and the District of Columbia.” Annie E. Casey Foundation website (accessed May 4, 2011).

indicates that children do experience being in juvenile detention as an outstanding and memorable event in their young lives.

4.2.5.2 Second highest response: “Nothing recalled”

The second highest response for Question 1-C is that nothing particular is recalled by participants. This response may indicate that the question itself may be too sensitive for some participants. The results may indicate that participants need to protect themselves from being too vulnerable. It might also be theorized that children in the research sample do not have adequate experience in being asked about their lives in a self-reflective way.

4.2.5.3 Two categories of family memories

The next two highest categories in Question 1-C indicate that many participants recall memories of a family member dying, as well as happier family times. These responses further indicate that family is very important to children in juvenile detention, a topic explored in greater detail in Question 3 of the Resident Questionnaire below.

4.2.5.4 Fifth highest response: “First time I did drugs”

The fifth highest response for Question 1-C, the “first time I used drugs,” reflects a common trend in the Ocean County Detention Center admission data that over 70% of annual admissions indicate an underlying substance abuse problem or an overt criminal charge related to substance use/abuse.⁶⁴⁵ Through the court system, children have the opportunity to attend alcohol and drug treatment centers, both in-patient and out-patient. Many children are admitted to the detention center under the influence of drugs or alcohol and may be transported to a hospital for further assessment and detoxification. Still other children have no intention of stopping their drug and alcohol use and often brag about their exploits with substances. From the participant responses to this question, it is difficult to

⁶⁴⁵ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, NJ, 2000-2010.

determine what motivation children may have. Yet it is clear that drugs and alcohol play a significant role in their young lives.

4.2.5.5 Traumatic events: “I found my mother dead”

Based on the total number of responses for Question 1-C, 64.5% of participants in the sample either have witnessed or have participated in a traumatic life event. For example, one 14-year-old reports that he was the one who found his mother dead after she overdosed on drugs. Another 16-year-old offers that he remembers his brother immersing him in boiling water in order to burn him. Three participants report that they have witnessed another person being shot. Another five participants state that they experience life as very hard and that each day is a “nightmare.” It is noteworthy that five participants actually use the same language in describing their daily life as a nightmare.

Based on admission data from the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, this statistic of 64.5% does reflect and support approximate, annual admission data completed on each child in reference to traumatic life events.⁶⁴⁶ Since children are not labeled with a mental health diagnosis like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) until they are age 18,⁶⁴⁷ they may not receive treatment for trauma while in detention or in the community. Traumatic events similar to those reported in this study may thus go undiagnosed and unaddressed. However, it is possible that greater public awareness of what children in a single detention center in Ocean County have endured may further the cause of this population to highlight such emotional and spiritual needs.

A complete list of all responses for Question 1-C appears in Illustration 5 below.

⁶⁴⁶ *Admissions Records, 2000-2010.*

⁶⁴⁷ William Krill, *Gentling: A Practical Guide to Treating PTSD* (MI: Loving Healing Press, 2009), 5-15.

None 27	Brother put me in hot water 1
Foster care 7	Happy times with friends 7
Found mom when she overdosed 2	Vacations 8
Grandmother died 1	Family member died 18
Sent to Jamesburg 2	Lived in a different country 3
First time in detention 28	Parent in jail 4
Police came to home 1	Traveling 3
First time I got arrested 12	Family fun times 16
My cousin died 1	When I was innocent 1
Did drugs 14	When I had surgery 1
Stole a car 1	School awards 1
Learned to read 1	Going to church 1
Everything in my life 1	Hard life/each day a nightmare 5
Almost drowned 1	Shot someone 1
Family funerals 1	Birth in our family 2
Mom had a baby 1	Family secret 1
Watched someone die 3	Listening to old songs 2
Moved 14	Joining a gang 2
Playing basketball 3	Friend died 1
Learned karate 1	Graduated high school 1
Mom and dad fighting 2	Being adopted 1
Being with mom or dad 6	Liking girls 1
Christmas 1	Bad accident 5
Birth of my own son 2	Went on medication 2
Our home got raided 1	My first bicycle 3
Going to Yellowstone 1	Ran away from home 1
First drank alcohol 1	Going fishing 4
Watched someone get shot 3	High school was state champs 1
Family member sick 6	Parents got divorced 7
Got a home run in baseball 1	Dad abusing me 3
Fractured my skull 1	Sports 5
My girlfriend 2	Witnessed 9/11 attacks 1

Illustration 5—Question 1-C: Significant life events

4.2.6 Question 1-D: Religious background

In Question 1-D, the author asks participants about their religious background, including what that experience means to them, if anything, and if they attend church currently. In each interview, the author begins with a general question about the child's religious background, which often leads to a conversational exchange based on what the participant says. If a child is forthcoming and seems interested in answering the question beyond its scope, the author continues to ask further open-ended questions, allowing each participant to describe his religious background in his own words. Residents often respond with more than one category to describe themselves. The five highest responses are recorded in Table 5 below.

Roman Catholic	Not religious/not important	Christian	Baptist (Christian)	Don't know what kind I am
81	58	47	36	7

Table 5—Question 1-D: Religious background

Figure 7 below illustrates the data for Question 1-D in percentages.

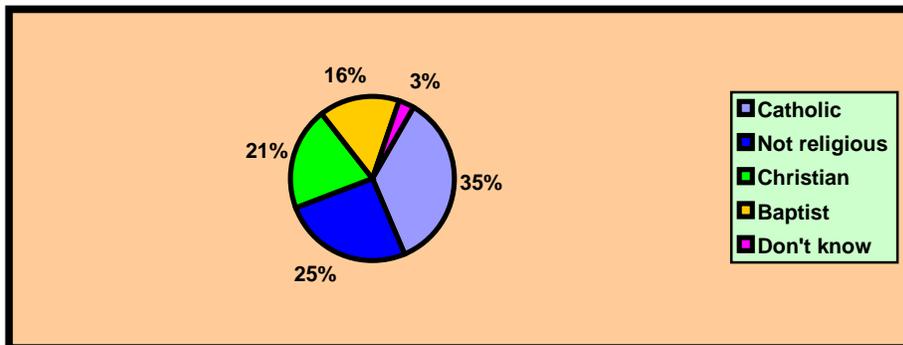


Figure 7— Question 1-D: Religious background

4.2.6.1 Highest response: “Roman Catholic”

Results for Question 1-D indicate that 72% of participants claim Christianity as their religious background. The highest number of responses, “Roman Catholic,” accurately reflects the annual percentage of residents admitted to the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center who state their religious affiliation as Roman Catholic.⁶⁴⁸ Additionally, the top five responses for this question do accurately reflect annual statistics regarding residents who state their religion.⁶⁴⁹ It is noteworthy that 25% of the participants report that they are not religious.

However, a complete list of all responses to Question 1-D (Illustration 6 below) includes non-Christian religions, as well as alternative spiritual practices, including shamanism. Given that the author’s intent in this study includes encouraging inclusiveness about

⁶⁴⁸ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, NJ, 2000-2010.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

spirituality, the participants' responses to Question 1-D do indicate that children do reflect their own spirituality well beyond traditional categories.

4.2.6.2 Significance of Islam

It is noteworthy that only six participants state that they embrace the religion of Islam. While the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center is geographically close to a town where the Muslim community is large, it is noteworthy that the facility's annual admissions records do not reflect a high Muslim population among the children admitted. It may be speculated that in American culture, there continues to be a stigma associated with Islam, in light of the September 11 attacks on New York City in 2001.

Thus, children admitted to the detention center may not be forthcoming if they are Muslim. It is also common for children in detention to be affiliated with Islam through common prison religions,⁶⁵⁰ not considered authorized religions in detention centers. Thus, Muslim children may be reluctant to disclose their religious affiliation, especially if their affiliation with prison religions is their only link to Islam.

4.2.6.3 Examples of individual responses: "I visited a shaman"

It is noteworthy that 71% of sample participants not only state that religion is important to them, but also want to talk further about its significance in their lives. Two participants state that they visited a shaman and practiced Reiki.⁶⁵¹ These spiritual practices among children in detention might indicate a popular trend in American culture that might be characterized as the influence of the New Age movement.⁶⁵²

Three participants report being of the Jewish faith, a surprising statistic since the city of Lakewood in Ocean County hosts the second largest populations of Hasidic Jews in the US.

⁶⁵⁰ Kathy Shaidle, "Prison Islam in American Jails Troubles Experts," *Politics*, 2/20/09, 2-3.

⁶⁵¹ Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and Sacralization of Modernity*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 3-26.

⁶⁵² Ibid.

However, the Hasidic Jewish community generally contains problems within their culture privately and rarely seek help.⁶⁵³ If their children do get in trouble with the police, it is rare that they are admitted to the Ocean County Detention Center.

Illustration 6 below is a complete list of all responses for Question 1-D.

Roman Catholic 81	Christian Protestant 1
Protestant parent 1	Christian Presbyterian 1
Read Bible 6	Russian Orthodox 1
Christian Baptist; grandma 1	Clergy in family 5
Jehovah's Witness 5	Christian, Episcopal 2
Muslim 6	Christian, Episcopal on own 1
Christian "Born again" 4	Christian, Lutheran 1
Christian Baptist 36	Reiki, Shaman on own 1
Christian mom & grandmom 2	Spiritual 1
Christian 47	Not religious/ not important to me
Jewish 3	58
Christian Pentecostal 1	Christian Bible camp 1
Christian Methodist 3	Hindu; parents 1
Greek Orthodox 3	Hindu on own 1
Atheist 2	Seventh- Day Adventists; parents 1
Roman Catholic on my own 1	Reiki, Shamanism 1
Don't know what kind 7	Spiritual 1
Christian, Episcopal on own 1	Lutheran 1

Illustration 6—Question 1-D: Religious background

4.2.7 Question 2: What makes you feel free?

In Question 2, the author asks participants an open-ended question, "What makes you feel free?" The intent of this question is to offer participants another way to describe their spirituality. The author encourages participants to associate their personal sense of freedom with what actually makes them feel free. In this way, they are offered an alternative way to probe their inner sense of spirituality through the metaphor of personal freedom. The five highest categories are recorded below in Table 6.

Not being locked up	Being with my family	Doing what I want	Playing sports	I don't know
66	35	24	20	16

Table 6—Question 2: What makes you feel free?

⁶⁵³ Sharon Otterman and Ray Rivera, "Ultra-Orthodox Shun Their Own for Reporting Child Abuse," *New York Times*, May 9, 2012 (accessed June 2, 2013).

Figure 8 below records the data from Question 2 with percentages.

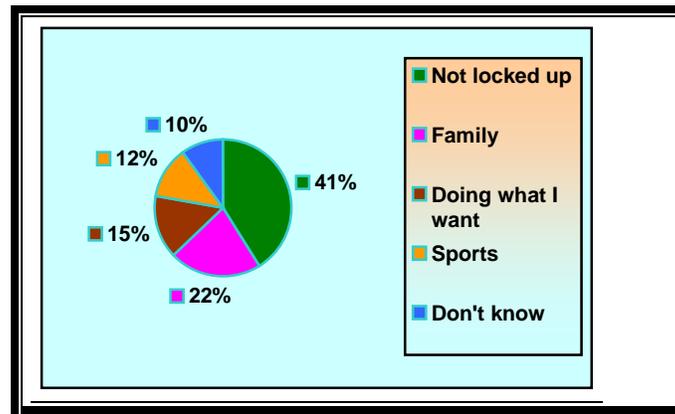


Figure 8—Question 2: What makes you feel free?

4.2.7.1 Most popular response: “Not being locked up”

The highest response for Question 2 is that participants state that freedom for them is not being locked up in detention. One child tells the author that this question is “...a funny question to ask a kid who is locked up!” The high number of responses in this category may indicate that participants associate a sense of personal freedom with a more concrete understanding of the term, rather than philosophical or spiritual. It is noteworthy that the data for this question does support Piaget’s work with early childhood development, in which he charts cognitive development from early childhood through adolescence.⁶⁵⁴ Although the author attempts to gain more philosophical responses from participants, this first category confirms Piaget’s theory that children’s thinking is often more concrete in early adolescence before they develop greater skill with abstract thought.⁶⁵⁵

4.2.7.2 Second highest category: “Being with family”

The second highest category for Question 2 indicates a recurring theme throughout the research, namely, the important role that family plays in the lives of children in the Ocean

⁶⁵⁴ Kathleen S. Berger, *The Developing Person through the Life Span* (New York: Macmillan, 2004), 34-45.

⁶⁵⁵ For more information on the relevance of Piaget’s work to this study, see Chapter One.

County Detention Center. In this question, 35 participants state that being with their family actually makes them feel free. It is an interesting correlation that children behind bars would equate a sense of personal freedom with their family.

4.2.7.3 Examples of individual responses: “I don’t feel free”

Beyond the five highest response categories, individual participants offer responses from a wide range. For example, seven participants respond that they do not feel free at any time, either at home or in detention. Another 14 respond that drinking and drugs make them feel free. One 15-year-old child offers that being in love makes him feel free, while another 16-year-old says that “death” makes him feel free.

This latter response about death echoes a somewhat common refrain among children in the Ocean County Detention Center, a fascination with death. It is difficult to discern whether this fascination is morbid, an adolescent curiosity, or perhaps a reflection of the level of violence that this population of children lives with on a daily basis. This kind of focus on death may also indicate a baseline level of depression or *malaise* that children in the detention center feel about life in general. This preoccupation with death may also accurately reflect a growing number of mental health admissions to detention that Ocean County has witnessed in the last five years.⁶⁵⁶

A complete list of all responses for Question 2 appears below in Illustration 7.

⁶⁵⁶ *Admission Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, 2000-2010.

<p>Not being locked up 66 Alive, not dead 3 Out of foster care 2 Just to have my life 2 Being happy 7 Being in love 1 Don't know 16 Being home 13 Don't feel free 7 Relaxing 1 Girlfriend 9 Doing drugs & drinking 14 Off probation 3 Being with family 35 Music 5 Nature 3 Doing what I want 24 Nothing 2 Death 1 Nothing to worry about 10 Sports 20 Looking out my window every day 1 Working 4 Being outside 14 No police 1 Being on my own 8 When the pain goes away 1 When I dream 1</p>	<p>LIFE! 1 Girls 1 Having fun 2 Staying up late 1 Being on stage 1 Having people listen to me 1 I ALWAYS FEEL FREE 2 NOT being with family 1 Computers/ chat rooms 2 Being with my own kids 1 Being on my meds 1 Not being told what to do 6 Writing 2 Money 1 Video games 2 Driving 1 Working on/driving cars 2 Being near water 2 MY FREEDOM 3 Being like everybody else 2 Chance to start over 1 Express myself in my own way 3 Having options 1 Being by myself 6 Church, prayer, Bible 2 Funny question to ask a kid who's locked up 1 When I'm not in trouble 1 When I'm not in danger 1 Drawing 1</p>
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Illustration 7—Question 2: What makes you feel free?

4.2.8 Question 3: What is important to you? What do you value?

In Question 3, the author selects an open-ended question to ask about personal values.

Once again, many children in the sample of 200 respond with more than one answer.

The five highest responses appear below in Table 7 below.

Family	Friends	My mom	Myself/my life	My girlfriend
128	51	38	35	20

Table 7—Question 3: What is important to you? What do you value?

Figure 9 below illustrates responses to Question 3 with percentages.

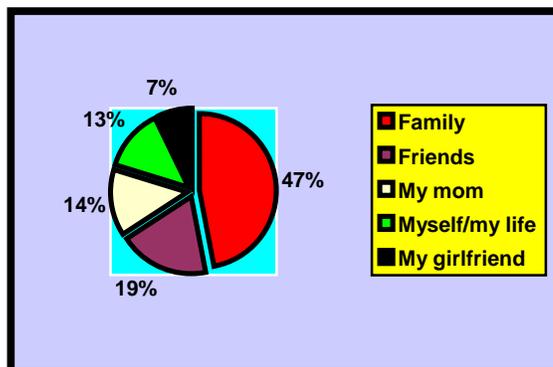


Figure 9— Question 3: What is important to you? What do you value?

4.2.8.1 Highest response: “Family”

The five highest responses for Question 3 are as follows: “family,” “friends,” “myself/my life,” “my mom,” and “my girlfriend.” For 64% of participants, “family” is the immediate response. Indeed the response of “family” becomes so repetitive and automatic that the author begins to ask each child why he chooses that response. By way of summary, their answers essentially state that family is the only thing you have when you get in trouble or when you get locked up. Participants report that friends come and go, but they can betray you when you need them the most.

However, there is an irony in this question, with respect to the children’s responses: nearly 40% of children admitted to the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center do not have family actively involved in their lives. Weekend visits for parents and guardians are not well attended. Thus, it seems that the highest response to Question 3 may be somewhat based on fantasy or wishful thinking. Perhaps children who have little or no family dream about such an ideal family where people love one another and take care of each other. Yet it may also be true that since these children are behind bars, this reality does heighten the importance of the small amount of family that they do have.

4.2.8.2 Examples of individual responses: “Having enough money to eat”

Responses for Question 3 represent a wide spectrum from more concrete to more abstract, self-reflective responses. For example, one 18-year-old responds that having enough money to eat is most important to him. He continues that he often does not eat because he lives on the streets and has to find food where he can. This young man’s response represents a growing trend within the Ocean County Detention Center that more

children are admitted annually with no legal address. Thus they are considered “homeless.”⁶⁵⁷

Another child, who has been admitted to the detention center at least 10 times in his 15 years, reports that the “struggle” is most important to him. Since the author is unfamiliar with this term, she inquires further. He explains that the “struggle” is a reference to the “black man’s struggle in the white man’s world.” He states that this struggle is the foundation of his life, and he vows to continue to fight for his people. The author then asks other children in the detention center about this term, and they report that the “struggle” is a term used mostly by gang members to discuss racial issues between blacks and whites.

A complete list of responses to Question 3 follows below in Illustration 8.

Don't know 11	Being a father 4
Family 128	Trust 2
Home 1	Pets 4
Mom 38	My future 1
Dad 3	Honesty/ Truth 4
Money 16	Sports 3
My pride 1	Trying to be good 4
My memories 2	Nothing 2
Friends 51	My hair 1
Girlfriend 20	The Struggle 1
Myself/ My life 35	Being a Muslim 1
God 4	My computer 1
My freedom 10	Cars 2
Nature 1	Keep our house 1
Things I've worked for 1	Enough money to eat 1
Power 3	Selling drugs 1
Respect 6	Being in control 1
What others think 1	My health 2
My intelligence 4	Success 2
My education 8	My church 2
Career 3	Music 1
Being a good person 1	What others think 1
Possessions 4	My intelligence 4

**Illustration 8—Question 3: What is important to you?
What do you value?**

⁶⁵⁷ For more information on the definition of *homeless* and how it affects children in the Ocean County Detention Center, see earlier in this chapter, Question 1-A: Personal background information.

4.2.9 Do you believe in God, a higher power, or anything spiritual?

In Question 4, the author asks each participant whether he believes in God, a higher power, or anything spiritual. A closed-ended question is chosen, but the question is inclusive enough to be answered with more than one word.

Since the term *higher power* is a common term in American culture to discuss a “power greater than ourselves,” this term is included as an additional and alternative way that children might talk about God. It is also common for children who have received treatment for drug or alcohol problems to learn the term *higher power* as part of their recovery process since the term itself has its origins in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.⁶⁵⁸ The term *spiritual* is included to see if children might connect this word with another way of talking about God. In some cases, participants respond with more than one answer, so that the total number of responses exceeds 200.

The six highest responses (tie among 2 categories) appear below in Table 8.

Yes, I believe in God	I believe in Jesus	No, I don't believe /not really	I don't know/I'm not sure	I believe in a Higher Power	There's something out there
125	27	21	17	10	10

Table 8—Question 4: Do you believe in God, a higher power, or anything spiritual?

The data for Question 4 is illustrated in graph form in Figure 10 below.

⁶⁵⁸ Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is an international movement with a stated "primary purpose" of individuals within the AA fellowship remaining sober and "helping other alcoholics achieve sobriety." (AA Preamble). Founded in 1935 by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith, the fellowship claims to have 2 million members worldwide. aa.org (accessed April 12, 2011).

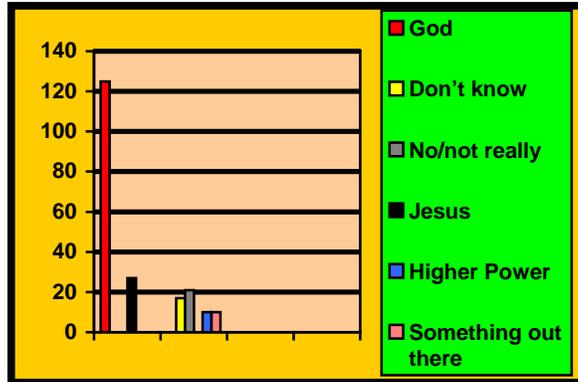


Figure 10—Question 4: Do you believe in God, a higher power, or anything spiritual?

4.2.9.1 Highest response: “I believe in God”

The highest response to Question 4 indicates that 62% of all participants do believe in God. This statistic may be surprising to those with no knowledge of juvenile detention, who may view juvenile delinquents as lacking any interest in God. However, the author has come to believe that children in the Ocean County Detention Center do have a high interest in God, a belief supported by the participant responses in Question 4.

4.2.9.2 Second highest response: “I don’t know”

The next four categories for Question 4 represent smaller numbers, except for #2, “I don’t know” (13%). In many of the questions in the Resident Questionnaire, the answer “I don’t know” appears as one of the highest responses. In childhood colloquialism, “I don’t know” may serve as a defense mechanism to avoid feeling vulnerable. Yet this answer may be truthful. Recent developments in research on the brain reveal that in this age group, 13-19, brains are not fully developed. Thus, in some cases, they cannot devise answers to specific questions, particularly if the question refers to their feelings.

4.2.9.3 Examples of individual responses: “God is a little guy named Bob”

Total responses to Question 4 represent a wide spectrum, from traditional answers about God

and Jesus to responses, including “You are your own god” and “Religion is the opiate of the people.” The response by one 16-year-old that “You are your own god” is an example of the intelligence and sophistication of some children admitted to the detention center. This child discusses the nature of the idea of god with the author on an intellectual level and further inquires of the author whether she agrees with him or has a different idea. This young man may also have been blocking any deeper revelation about himself with such a cerebral response. Yet his response also represents the ability of some residents to dialogue with adults on topics that otherwise might not be considered relevant or important to children in a detention setting.

Another example of the ability to converse on sophisticated and unexpected topics comes from a participant, age 17, who offers that “Religion is the opiate of the people.”⁶⁵⁹ Though he quotes from Marx incorrectly, this young man shows that he has heard of this quote and uses it properly in conversation with the author. In this case, the author asks him if this line expresses what he actually believes himself, and he responds that he doesn’t really know, that he just wants to see the author’s reaction to him using a quote from Karl Marx.

Yet another participant, age 15, with mental health issues, responds to this question by saying that he does not really believe in God, but he does believe in “right and wrong.” He shares with the author that there is a “little guy named Bob” who lives in his head and sometimes tells him to do bad things. This child continues by saying that he sometimes listens to Bob but sometimes knows that it is better not to. This participant is an example of the type of mental health child who is more prominent in juvenile detention currently than in the last 10 years. As fascinating as this child’s response is, the author does not think that he is being sarcastic or flippant. Rather, she believes that he is actually revealing the thought process he deals with in his daily life.

⁶⁵⁹ Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (Wiltshire: Red Wood Burn Ltd, 1843), 224.

A complete list of responses for Question 4 follows in Illustration 9 below.

<p>I believe in God 125 God saves us 1 The Bible 9 Higher power 10 Higher Power Mom 2 Higher Power Dad 1 Heaven and Hell 3 10 Commandments 2 Jesus 27 Saw White light 1 Something out there 10 No/ Not really 21 Fate/Destiny 4 Spirituality 1 Being enlightened 1 Doesn't mean much to me 6 Forgiveness 2 God as Spirit 2 One spiritual Being 2 Don't know—not sure 17 I have felt God's presence 1 Karma 2</p>	<p>Opiate of the People 1 Believe in Allah 2 I question God's ways 3 I don't understand much 3 I believe in God and the Devil 1 Sometimes I believe a little bit 4 Sacraments 1 Luck 1 Law of Attraction 1 Conscience 1 Little guy named Bob 1 Kindness 1 Serenity 1 You are your own god 2 Unconditional love 1 Agnostic 1 I want to believe 1 5% prison religion 2 Hindu god Ganesh 1 No supreme Being 1 Coincidences 1</p>
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Illustration 9—Question 4: Do you believe in God, a higher power, or anything spiritual?

4.2.10 Question 5: Do you pray? Can you tell me about that?

In Question 5, the author combines an open-ended question with a closed-ended question in order to give each child an opportunity to answer comfortably. Given the question probes the child's interior life more deeply than previous questions, the author attempts to be particularly respectful and sensitive. For example, if the child only wants to answer the question with "yes" or "no," that is acceptable. However, if he wishes to offer more, the opportunity is presented through the nature of the question.

The five highest responses to Question 5 appear in Table 9 below.

Yes	Sometimes	When I wake up and go to sleep	I pray every night or day	No/not really
87	39	25	23	56

Table 9—Question 5: Do you pray? Can you tell me about that?

Collected data for Question 5 appears in Figure 11 below with percentages.

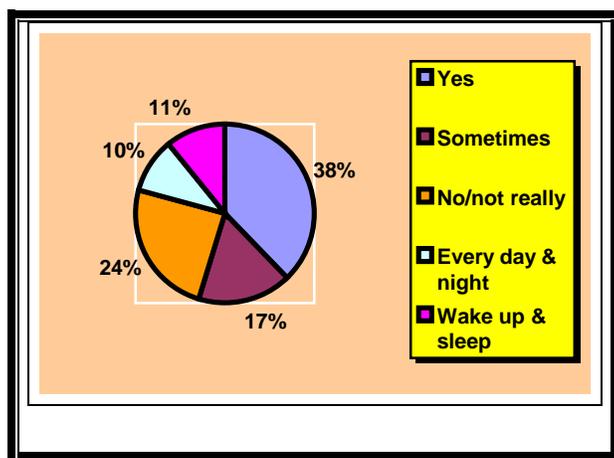


Figure 11—Question 5: Do you pray?
Can you tell me about that?

4.2.10.1 Most popular response: “Yes, I do pray”

The data for Question 5 indicates that 76% of participants respond that they do pray. Apart from 24% of the sample who claim they do not pray, this response of 76% indicates that children in the Ocean County Detention Center have some religious background or have learned about prayer from someone in their lives. The four highest response categories include those participants who pray sometimes, who pray every day and night, and those who pray when they wake up in the morning and when they go to sleep at night. The fact that the vast majority of participants are forthcoming about their prayer life also suggests that this category of inquiry is an active part of their conscious lives.

Responses range from the basic and concrete to statements indicating that children are wrestling with mature questions about the nature of prayer. Some participants speak about asking God for forgiveness, and others thank God for a new day. Four children reply that they pray regularly to deceased parents or grandparents. Still others state that they believe dead people hold special power in heaven to help them on earth.

4.2.10.2 Examples of individual responses: “I pray to Allah”

Two participants share that they pray to Allah, the term for God in Islam. Another young man says that he prays to a Hindu god. Still other participants pray for specific outcomes in concrete terms. For example, one child says that he prays not to get caught when he continues to commit crimes in the community under the influence of drugs. He admits that he shoplifts, engages in carjacking, and steals in order to live on the streets. Another child says that he asks God to get him out of the detention center.

Four participants admit that they pray to be forgiven for what they have done. One participant, age 18, begins to cry in the interview and asks the author if she feels that he could be forgiven by God for participating in the murder of another person. The author takes the opportunity to talk about forgiveness and to assure the young man that God surely will forgive him if he is sorry for what he has done. It is difficult to predict what affects children in detention. Seeds are planted, but God alone grows the tree.

Thus, it does appear that the nature of Question 5, a combination of a closed and open-ended question on a personal subject like prayer is appropriate for children ages 13-19. This question also reveals that children in juvenile detention are willing to talk about their prayer life with an adult and actually have a prayer life to discuss.

A complete list of all responses for Question 5 appears below in Illustration 10.

<p>Sometimes 39 For family members 16 To get out of JD 8 Yes 87 Wake up or go to sleep 25 Pray every day or night 23 To God 2 To Jesus 2 To mom 1 Doesn't mean that much to me 3 No/ not really 56 I talk to God 2 I pray to someone who has died 4 Before meals 11 On my knees 1 Ask for forgiveness 4 Rosary 1 Lord's Prayer 1 Ask God questions 1 Once in a while 5</p>	<p>To Allah 2 Started praying in JD 3 Paganism, pray to trees 1 Never did anything for me 4 Needed someone to talk to 4 Pray when I'm in trouble 17 Pray to Ganesh, Hindu god 1 5% prison religion; they won't let me have prayer rug 1 Prayed not to get caught 1 Pray all the time 5 After Recovery from drugs 1 Meditation 1 Now I lay me down to sleep 1 Thank God for another day 1 Bible says pray without ceasing 1 Confused about it 1 Used to pray 4 After coming to JD 4 Pray to Higher Power 1 Before go to court 7</p>
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Illustration 10-- Question 5: Do you pray? Can you tell me about that?

4.2.11 Question 6: How do you cope with the stress of being in detention?

In Question 6, the author asks each participant how he handles the stress of being in detention. An open-ended question is chosen. The intent of Question 6 is to elicit responses from participants about their coping skills. More specifically, this question is intended to probe whether their coping mechanisms might reflect the importance of their spiritual life in detention. Nine responses are recorded below in Table 10 since the five highest categories include several tie scores.

Recreation	Reading	Don't stress much	Nothing helps	Try not to think	Keep to myself/talk to myself	Sleep	Write and receive letters	Think about getting out
47	27	21	21	22	22	22	17	17

Table 10—Question 6: How do you cope with the stress of being in detention?

The collected data from Question 6 appears with percentages in Figure 12 below.

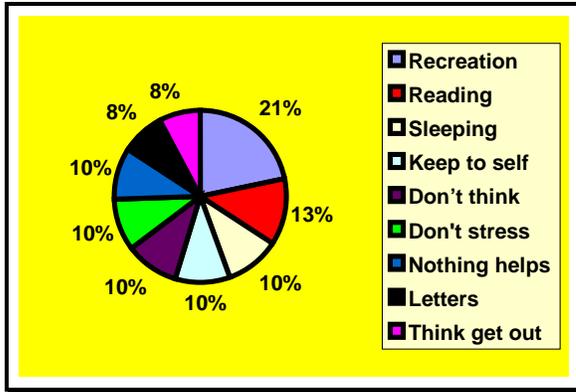


Figure 12—Question 6: How do you cope with the stress of being in detention?

4.2.11.1 Most popular response: “Recreation”

The highest response category is “recreation” (21%), followed by “reading” (13%). Evidence indicates that exercise does change brain chemistry and may change an individual’s mood and thoughts.⁶⁶⁰ Thus, exercise is a healthy coping device that may aid children in coping with their feelings, as well as allowing them to expend pent-up energy. In the Ocean County Detention Center, the recreation program is the most popular program among residents, who enjoy weight-lifting, pool, ping pong and other computer-based games.

4.2.11.2 Next highest responses

The next four responses for handling stress include “reading,” “sleeping,” “not thinking,” and “writing letters.” Children in the detention center have borrowing privileges for the detention library and may retrieve two news books every week. Most children look forward to their library period twice weekly. Children are also allowed to write five letters weekly to whomever they wish, and the facility pays for postage and paper. Letter writing is a popular activity for children in detention, both in writing and receiving daily mail.

Thus, the data for Question 6 seems to reflect and support the activities offered in detention to help residents with their stress levels. However, in 10% of the responses,

⁶⁶⁰ Laura Blue, “Is Exercise the Best Drug for Depression?” *Time.com*, June 19, 12 (accessed March 25, 2011).

participants state that nothing helps them cope with the stress of being in detention. This response seems to indicate that a high percentage of children admitted to detention in Ocean County have few, if any, mechanism or coping skills to help them cope with the stress of being in detention.

4.2.11.3 Examples of individual responses: “Let go of desire”

Some participants respond with more introspection. For example, one child speaks of the importance of “letting go of desire.” The author asks him what he means, and he replies that he began to study Buddhism while he was in a state program. He offers that the concept of “letting go” helps him to cope with some of his compulsive thoughts and recurring anxieties.

Another participant offers that “breathing into Enlightenment” is a coping technique that helps him. This child says that he learned about the concept of enlightenment from a drug and alcohol program he had been placed in when he was released from detention last year. Some responses also reflect unhealthy ways that children cope with stress in detention: self-mutilation and banging their heads against a wall.

One participant says that he “cuts” to relieve his stress. “Cutting” is a form of self-mutilation employed by children and adults as a method of relieving stress.⁶⁶¹ “Cutting” refers to using sharp instruments including paper clips, pens, or pencils to cut the skin repeatedly. Patients who admit to cutting and other forms of self-mutilation state that after they cut themselves, they report feeling calmer and more alive. This practice is experienced as more life-affirming than prior feelings of emptiness and hopelessness.⁶⁶² In juvenile detention, children often steal items like plastic knives or toothbrushes. These instruments are then used by children to cut their arms or legs when staff cannot observe them. This

⁶⁶¹ E.D. Klonsky, “The functions of deliberate self-injury: a review of the evidence,” *Clinical Psychology Review*, 27 (2), 2007, 226-239.

⁶⁶² Ibid.

surreptitious practice often occurs in children's cells after they go to bed or during shift changes when staff may be less attentive.

Six participants reveal that they bang their heads against walls in order to relieve stress. Head banging is an additional form of self-harm or self-mutilation practiced by children and some adults to relieve stress.⁶⁶³ Unfortunately, head banging is not uncommon in the Ocean County Detention Center. When this behavior occurs, the child is often placed in a restraint chair, where he or she is unable to move arms or legs. If this does not calm the child, an emergency screener is summoned from a local hospital. In some cases, the clinician may order the child placed in a psychiatric hospital. Approximately 20 times a year, children in detention are admitted to psychiatric hospitals. After treatment, they are returned to detention until their criminal charges have been adjudicated. Residents often see a trip to a psychiatric hospital as a respite from detention and become quite skillful at arranging such furloughs.

A complete list of all responses for Question 6 is found below in Illustration 11.

⁶⁶³ Klonsky, 226-250.

Recreation/work out 47 Phone calls 16 Talk to people here 10 Pray 8 Read Bible 2 Write & receive letters 17 Don't stress much 21 Think about positive things 8 Family & friend visits 9 Angry a lot 2 Reading 27 Music 4 Groups come in on Sundays for music 1 Don't cope well/ Nothing really helps 21 Meds help 3 Tai chi class 2 Meditation & Breathing 6 The Footprints story—Jesus is carrying me 1 Listen to my lawyer 1 Think about getting out of here 17 Think about friends & family 8 Sleep 22 Positive self-talk when I get down 3	I keep it all inside 3 Try to make people laugh 6 Breathe & picture enlightenment 1 Let go of desire 1 Cry 4 Calm myself down 3 Try to ignore people 1 Try to get in more trouble—why not? 4 Gang talk 1 Keep to myself/Talk to myself 22 Face it—go with the flow 7 Try to think my anger through 1 Think about hurting myself 1 Try to stay out of trouble 6 Make the best of it 2 Creative writing class 2 School here 2 I cut to relieve stress 1 Hit walls /Bang head against the wall 6 Ask for a time out/cool down 2 Watch TV 8 I try not to think about stuff 22
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Illustration 11– Question 6: How do you cope with the stress of being in detention?

4.2.12 Question 7: What activities in detention, if any, help you to cope?

As in Question 6, the author employs an open-ended question in order to ask participants if any specific activities offered in the Ocean County Detention Center help them to cope with their stressors. Question 7 is included in order to understand whether any programs offered in the Ocean County Detention Center do help to reduce stress. This question also is an attempt to understand if spiritual activities might be among the stress-reducing activities. Similar to the responses in Question 6, the highest response is again “recreation.” However, in Question 7, the next highest category is “nothing at all.”

Similar to the responses in Question 6, the highest response is again “recreation.” The five highest responses are recorded in Table 11 below.

Recreation	Nothing	Phone calls	Library	Visits with friends/family
115	40	23	22	14

Table 11—Question 7: What activities in detention help you to cope?

The five highest responses for Question 7 are presented in Figure 13 below with percentages.

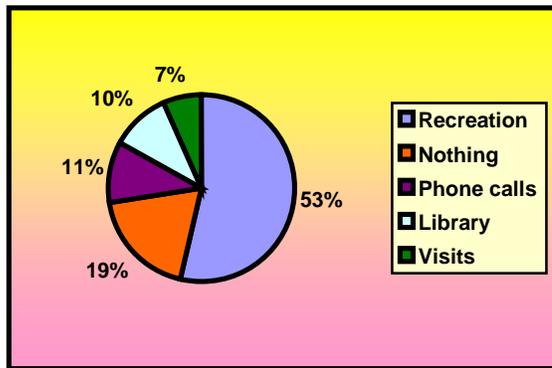


Figure 13—Question 7: What activities in detention help you to cope?

4.2.12.1 Most popular response: “Recreation”

At the Ocean County Detention Center, the workout/weight room is the most popular program. The data for Question 7 indicates that 53% of participants find recreation the best program for stress reduction in the detention center. Since the next highest category with 19% is “nothing,” it may be theorized that there is still a need in detention to offer programs that do address children’s stress levels more effectively.

However, it is noteworthy that in Question 6, 10% of participants respond that nothing helps them cope with the stress of being in detention. In Question 7, this statistic jumps from 10% to 19%, nearly doubled, for a very similar question. It may be that the nature of Question 6 is more general in asking participants what helps them to cope with stress, whereas Question 7 asks the specific question of what programs offered actually help reduce their stress levels. This higher statistic in Question 7 may also be a way that participants see a way to be negative about the programs offered in detention.

Since the author’s motivation for including Question 7 is to understand whether participants in the research sample utilize any spiritual techniques to help them cope with the stress of being in detention, from the collected data for Question 7, this is not the case.

However, recreation may serve a spiritual function for some residents who do not articulate its meaning as specifically spiritual. On the other hand, in Section 4.2.12.3 below, several participants do respond with spiritual coping mechanisms.

4.2.12.2 Next highest responses

The next three categories for Question 7 include “phone calls,” “library,” and “visits with family and friends.” As in Question 6, visits to the detention library appear to be a positive coping device for children in detention. And although some participants respond in Question 6 that weekly phone calls and visits are helpful in handling stress, in Question 7, these two categories produce higher response numbers. Once again, the differential in numbers between Question 6 and 7 may have more to do with the specific nature of Question 7 that offers participants a way to comment specifically on the programs in detention.

4.2.12.3 Examples of individual responses: “Praying helps me”

Some participants do actually respond to Question 7 with spiritual coping devices. For example, one child, age 16, offers that praying helps him to eliminate some of his stress in detention. Nine participants respond that the t'ai chi program offered in detention by the author helps them to cope with their stress levels. Two participants state that the pet therapy program in detention does help them to relax when they are able to be around the dogs. Another seven participants report that what helps them to cope is when they listen to other kids talk and tell their stories. This response on the part of seven participants does support the author's contention in Chapters One and Two of this study: giving children in detention the opportunity to tell their own stories is a central part of the working methodology in this study that may hopefully lead to a level of healing within the children themselves.

Thus, in several individual responses, participants do report that spiritual coping mechanisms of various types do help them to cope with the stress of being in detention. Since the Ocean County Detention Center does offer activities including t'ai chi, pet therapy, meditation, and ample opportunity to talk with other residents, it seems that the facility is offering some program activities to support residents in dealing with their many stressors while in detention.

A complete list of all responses for Question 7 follows below in Illustration 12.

Recreation program/working out 115 Phone calls 23 Nothing really 40 Tai chi 9 Visits with friends/family 14 Library program 22 Writing/ receiving letters 13 Meditation group 1 CD players/music program 2 Solitary activities 5 Sleeping 6 School program & art/ music classes 10 Meals 4	Pet Therapy program 2 Not stressed out 1 Church group program 7 Anger Management class 1 When we go outside 4 Medication 1 Creative Writing class 1 Wii Computer game program 1 TV time 4 Hearing other kids talk & tell their stories 7 Pray 1
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Illustration 12—Question 7: What activities in detention help you to cope?

4.2.13 Question 8: Has detention caused you to change any of your religious or spiritual beliefs?

Question 8 is included to explore whether participants believe that being in detention has affected their religious or spiritual beliefs. Since data from Question 1-C above, “Significant life events,” indicates that 14% of participants do recall the first time they were placed in juvenile detention as their most significant life memory, Question 8 probes the possible correlation between their spiritual and religious beliefs and being in detention. The six highest responses (two tie scores) are recorded in Table 12 below.

No/not really	Yes	Start doing the right thing	Don't do bad things	I'm closer to God	I pray more	I'm ashamed of my actions
113	73	12	12	11	6	6

Table 12—Question 8: Has detention caused you to change any of your religious or spiritual beliefs?

The six highest categories in Question 8 appear in Figure 14.

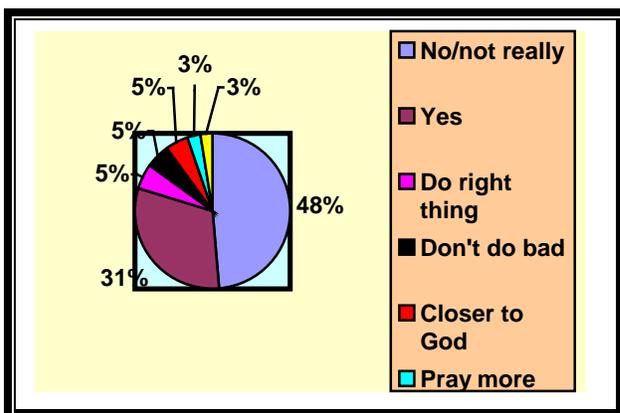


Figure 14—Question 8: Has detention caused you to change any of your religious or spiritual beliefs?

4.2.13.1 Most popular response: “No/ not really”

The highest response category for this question is “no/ not really” (48%). Since this is not an open-ended question, participants could answer with a “yes” or “no.” In this category, 31% of participants do answer “yes,” with no further explanation. It may have been more effective for Question 8 if the author chose a combination of an open-ended and a closed-ended question. A second part might have elicited more information since this combination question is utilized effectively in previous questions. Yet over 50% of participants do offer more information to clarify their initial responses. Furthermore, 52%

of participants admit that being in detention has caused them to change their beliefs in some way, as indicated in Figure 14 above.

4.2.13.2 Next highest responses

Included in the six highest responses are 5% of residents who say that being in juvenile detention brought them closer to God; 3% report that they pray more; and 3% reveal that they have become more ashamed of their actions. The 48% of participants who respond that detention has not changed their beliefs seem proud of that fact and indicate that nothing would cause them to change their beliefs.

The fact that 52% of participants do admit that their basic beliefs were altered by being in juvenile detention suggests that this question could be used as an opening for staff to explore further with children the spiritual or religious impact that being in detention is having in their young lives. Furthermore, this 52% supports data collected for Question 1-C: Significant life events above, wherein 28 participants state that their most significant life event to date is being locked up in juvenile detention. While none of the participants report that they had religious conversion experiences while in detention, 5% of participants do state that they have become closer to God.

4.2.13.3 Examples of individual responses: “I became a Christian”

Additional individual responses to Question 8 indicate that participants generally do acknowledge that their stay in detention has caused them to change their spiritual or religious beliefs, some in a positive direction and some in a negative direction.

On the positive side, one participant, age 15, states that he became a Christian in detention. Another young man, age 14, offers that he learned about the religion of Islam in detention. Two participants admit that they grew up a little more while in detention, while another two children state that they realize drugs and violence will not get them anywhere.

On the other hand, one participant states that detention is not a good place and that being locked up has made him into a worse person than he was before he was admitted. Two participants reveal that that they are more angry and “more bad” as individuals as a result of being in detention. And finally, one child responds that he does not really think he has any religious or spiritual beliefs in the first place.

Thus, it appears by participant responses that Question 8 is a question that participants find easy to reflect upon. Their varied responses also seem to indicate that children in juvenile detention do ponder how their time in detention has affected their young lives. A complete list of all responses for Question 8 follows below in Illustration 13.

No/ not really 113 Not sure 4 Everything happens for a reason 2 I don't really know what you're asking 4 I guess I don't learn 1 I don't think I really have any 1 Reminded me of what I knew 1 I don't want to answer that 1 I don't know 3 God just tells us to let go 1 Yes 73 Never know what you have until you lose it 2 Everything happens for a reason 2 Starting to see the light 2 Lost faith in my friends 1 Feel stronger 1 Pray more 6 Made me think of consequential thinking and Fate 4 More enlightened from church & Bible in JD 2 Closer to God 11 Start doing the right thing 12 Read the Bible more 3	Drugs & violence don't get you anywhere 2 Grow up a little 2 I have a lot to learn 2 Didn't think I'd get caught 4 Never too late to change 2 Will start going to church 1 Being in JD created my beliefs about God 1 Be a better person 5 Don't do bad things 12 Learned about Islam in here 1 Don't do drugs 3 I think about things more 3 This isn't a good place—it changes you 1 I became a Christian 1 I'm more bad now/more angry now 2 Ashamed of my actions 6 God tries to teach us stuff 1 See my parents differently 2 Beliefs about life 4 I understand the Spiritual Revolution better 1
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Illustration 13—Question 8: Has detention caused you to change any of your religious or spiritual beliefs?

4.2.14 Question 9: Do you have hope for the future? Can you tell me about that?

In Question 9, the author asks each participant whether or not he has hope for his future. This question is a combination of an open-ended and a closed-ended question. Since this question is about hope, it seems appropriate to offer children an alternative in their

responses if the category of hope is perhaps unfamiliar to them. Question 9 is included by the author since it represents a more traditional category of religious and spiritual exploration. Additionally, the author is interested in whether or not children in detention can talk about hope as something important to them and to their future.

The five highest responses to Question 9 appear in Table 13 below.

Hope to get a good job	Hope to make something of my life	Hope to finish school	Hope to get out of detention	Hope to go to college/trade school
49	31	30	28	26

Table 13—Question 9: Do you have hope for the future?

Figure 15 below presents the data for Question 9 with percentages.

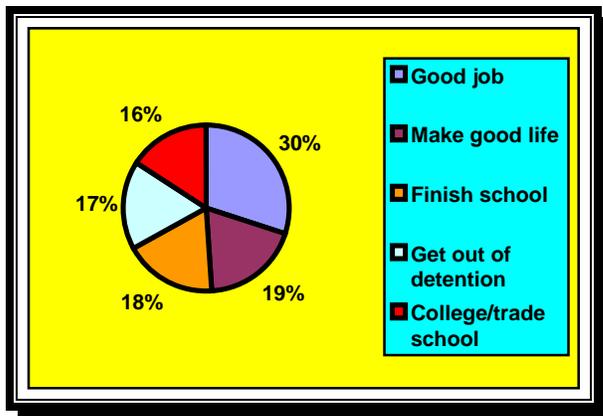


Figure 15-- Question 9: Do you have hope for the future?

4.2.14.1 Most popular response: “I hope to get a good job”

The highest number of responses (30%) indicates that participants hope for a good job. This response again highlights a recurring theme in the research that participants in the study respond to several questions in the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) with concrete examples, rather than more philosophical or theological answers. However, as Piaget’s research with children suggests (see Chapter One) the age group in this study (13-19) would be more likely to respond with concrete examples.

On the other hand, the fact that the highest response concerns hope for a good job indicates that participants in the study are actually motivated in this positive direction. Most children admitted to the detention center do not have jobs due to their criminal record, their drug use, or their general lack of motivation.

4.2.14.2 Next highest responses

The next four highest categories include 19% of participants hoping to make something of their lives, another 18% hoping to finish school, and an additional 17% hoping to get out of detention. The fifth highest response for Question 9 is a desire to attend either trade school or college (16%). Each of these four categories continues to reflect participants who answer concretely on the general subject of hope for their lives. In all four categories, participants do respond with positive hopes for their futures.

However, their desires to finish school and go on to further education may reflect their hopes, but not necessarily their future reality. Few children admitted to detention in Ocean County actually do finish high school, and fewer still go on to any advanced level of education. Perhaps the most poignant response of participants who desire to make something of their lives may indeed echo a deeper understanding of what hope is, though perhaps not realized in their lives due to circumstances already in motion.

4.2.14.3 Examples of individual responses: “No hope for the world”

Although Question 9 may have been too mature for ages 13-19, some participants do offer responses reflective of a more existential understanding of the nature of hope. For example, one child, age 15, responds that there is “no hope for the world.” Three additional children offer that they would like to have hope, but they do not. One response comes from three children, who hope to be alive in their future. It is not uncommon that children in

detention talk about whether they will die young. This may reflect the level of violence they live with in their neighborhoods and in their families.

Some participants respond individually with further examples of a more concrete understanding of the nature of hope. For example, three children say that they hope they can keep their friends after being released from detention. Another seven participants respond that they hope they would not be in other prisons in their life after being released from detention.

There are a few participants who respond with more existential answers, indicating a grasp of the category of hope beyond the concrete. For example, seven respondents say they believe that they can change and become better human beings. Another seven participants offer that “There’s always hope,” a haunting refrain for children so young.

Thus, the author’s intention in Question 9 to explore the traditional category of hope is not met with many overtly religious or spiritual responses by participants. The majority of responses indicate that participants answer in concrete terms about hope regarding employment, quality of life, and their future dreams and plans.

Indeed their responses are appropriate for their age group on the subject of hope, but few participants respond with little understanding about the metaphysical nature of hope. It is also noteworthy that in this question, many participants ask the author to define what hope is. Although the author does explain the meaning of the word and gives examples, even with these specific aids, most participants still return to a more concrete understanding of hope.

A complete list of all responses for Question 9 follows in Illustration 14 below.

<p>Yes I do 16 Not sure/don't know 19 Don't understand that 4 Yes-get out of JD 28 Hope to make something of my life 31 Hope to get good job 49 Finish school 30 Go to college/ trade school 26 Hope in my family 3 Hope for better future / better life 18 Hope for a nice family/ nice things 19 Hope to join military 8 Believe I can change/ be a better person 7 Hope for pro sports job 11 There's always hope 7</p>	<p>No hope/ not really 23 Rather be dead 1 I want to but don't 3 Very little 2 Too lazy 4 Hope not to be in other prisons 7 Hope I keep my friends 3 Learned my lesson 1 Make money/travel 3 Hope to stay away from drugs 2 No hope for the world 1 Hope to give back to others 2 Hope to go back home 6 Hope for a place to stay 3 Hope I'm alive 3</p>
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Illustration 14—Question 9: Do you have hope for the future?

4.2.15 Question 10: Do you have faith in something? Can you tell me about that?

In Question 10, the author asks participants if they have faith in anything and if the category of faith has relevance in their lives. Similar to Question 9, a combination of an open-ended and a closed-ended question is used. Also similar to Question 9, the author attempts to introduce another traditional category of religion and/or spirituality.

The five highest responses are recorded in Table 14 below.

Faith in myself	No/not really	Faith in God	Faith in my family	What is faith?
69	40	36	35	20

Table 14—Question 10: Do you have faith in something? Can you tell me about that?

Figure 16 below presents the five highest responses for Question 10.

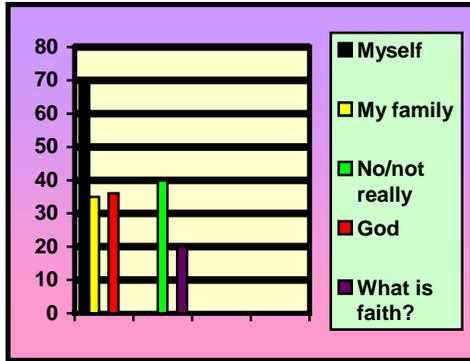


Figure 16—Question 10: Do you have faith in something?
Can you tell me about that?

4.2.15.1 Most popular response: “I have faith in myself”

The highest response to Question 10 with 69 responses is that “I have faith in myself.” This response may indicate a sense of self-reliance developed by children accustomed to taking care of themselves (see data for Question 1-B above). Thus, a sense of having faith in oneself may be a natural response to faith in this population. This response also indicates a positive sense of self-reliance that may make children in detention more resilient and better able to cope with the troubles of life at such a young age. This quality of self-reliance is one trait that the author has come to admire and respect in the children she has met in the Ocean County Detention Center.

4.2.15.2 Next three highest responses

The second highest response, “no, not really” (40) is followed by “faith in God” (36) and “faith in my family” (35). It is noteworthy that nearly 20% of participants express their faith in God specifically. It is interesting that the two responses, “faith in God” and “faith in my family” do reflect participant ability to be more abstract with respect to the category of faith, as opposed to largely concrete, as is the case in many of the responses for Question 9 on hope. This difference between participants’ understandings of the concepts of hope and faith may suggest that the term *faith* may have more familiar uses in the culture of youth than the

word *hope*. For example, faith may be more associated with religion and spirituality, and hope might be more connected to more concrete uses, as reflected in participant responses in Question 9.

The response, “faith in God” continues to highlight data conclusions in this study that participants in the sample do believe in God and consider God an important aspect of their young lives. Similarly, “faith in my family” highlights an ongoing theme in the data that participants in the research sample find their families one of the most important parts of their entire lives, regardless of whether their families are an integral part of their lives or not. More data on the significance of family may be found in Question 3 above.

4.2.15.3 Fifth highest response: “What is faith?”

The fifth highest response to Question 10, “what is faith?” presents an issue similar to Question 9, where participants frequently ask the author what the word *hope* means. Similarly in Question 10, 10% of participants say they do not understand the question about faith. In response, the author offers each child several examples of faith, including a concrete example of having faith that the phone would work if used. Another example pertains to having faith in a friend or faith in God.

4.2.15.4 Examples of individual responses: “I wish I had faith, but I don’t”

The data for Question 10 indicates that, similar to Question 9, the category of faith may have been too mature a topic for the majority of participants, ages 13-19. The data may also suggest that the author’s motivation to probe what children’s beliefs about faith and hope are might have been too ambitious for this population. Nonetheless, the responses do indicate that all participants are willing to engage with the author and to respond, if only to answer honestly that they do not understand the question.

However, many individual responses, in addition to two of the highest responses (“faith in God” and “faith in my family”) do indicate that participants do have a more philosophical ability to engage with the topic of faith. For example, one child, age 16, offers that he hopes that the future is better for himself and his family. Another child, age 15, says that he has faith in his ability to recover from his drug addiction while three participants say they have faith in the power of life itself to help them. Finally, two children admit that they wish they had faith in something, but they really do not.

Thus, similar the Question 9, participant responses for Question 10 span a wide spectrum from the concrete to more in-depth and abstract answers. All participants seem eager to engage with the author on this question, even if only to ask what the question means. Further, no participant dismisses the question as silly or “uncool.”

A complete list of responses for Question 10 follows below in Illustration 15.

Illustration 15—Question 10: Do you have faith in something? Can you tell me about that?

<p>Myself 69 My family 35 My mom 12 God 36 Jesus 4 In gangs 1 My friends 9 Higher power 1 Make something of my life 7 Stop selling drugs 1 My future 4 My ability to change 4 To get out of JD 4 Faith in sports 1 Getting through hard times 4 In people 6 MONEY 1</p>	<p>That everyone will be all right in the world 2 Faith in life 3 Faith in pro sports 1 To live with my family again 1 President Obama 1 That the future will be better 1 Faith in my recovery from drugs 1 My religion 4 My family will have a better place to live 1 Not sure/don't know 8 Not really/ No 40 What is faith? Don't understand what you're asking 20 I wish I did 2 In everything 5 In Allah 1</p>
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4.2.16 Question 11: Can you tell me about any spiritual, religious, or abnormal experience you've ever had?

In Question 11, the author asks each participant to relate any unusual, abnormal, spiritual, or religious experience he has ever had. Participants are also asked if anything has happened to them that they cannot explain. An open-ended question is used to encourage as wide a response margin as possible. The author's intention in this question is to continue to explore if children in a detention center might connect spiritual and religious experiences with any unusual experiences they might have had. Nine responses are selected since all nine represent quite different and unusual answers.

The nine highest categories are found below in Table 15, with three tie scores.

No/not really	Dreams that come true	Saw ghosts or demons	Yes, but can't remember	Premonitions or precognition of events	Saw things when drunk or on drugs	I'd rather not answer	Had accident; God saved me from death	Felt a Presence in the woods
101	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	4

Table 15—Question 11: Can you tell me about any spiritual, religious, or abnormal experience you've ever had?

In Figure 17 below, percentages appear for the highest-scoring categories only. The next eight categories differ from each other by single percentage points.

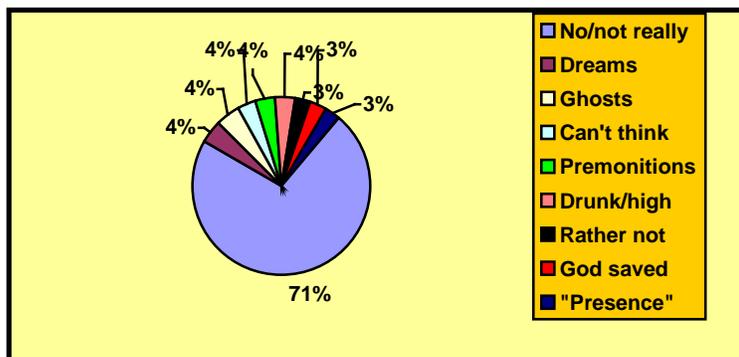


Figure 17—Question 11: Can you tell me about any spiritual, religious, or abnormal experience you've ever had?

4.2.16.1 Most popular response: “No/not really”

In Question 11, 71% of participants respond that they have no recollection of any experience of this kind. However, given the fact that the remaining 29% do respond with some type of experience that is important to them may indicate that there may be other reasons that so many participants could not recall any such experience. For example, if participants have never been asked such a question, they might be surprised to the point that nothing comes to mind that quickly. It is also possible that participants are reluctant to share unusual experiences with the author for fear of embarrassment.

4.2.16.2 Next highest responses

In 3% of the sample, participants state that they have dreams that eventually come true. Another 3% of the sample admits that they have seen ghosts or demons. Children who reveal they see ghosts or demons report seeing them mostly in their homes, and specifically in their bedrooms. Four participants report serious accidents, from which they walk away unharmed. All four children attribute their narrow escape from danger directly to God.

4.2.16.3 Examples of individual responses: “The Salvation Army”

One 13-year-old participant tells the story of his “spiritual experience,” as follows: When he and his family are temporarily homeless, they are given a place to stay by the Salvation Army. The child tells how kind the staff are to him, how much they give him to eat, and how they take him to the beach on trips. This child’s face lights up when he speaks about the kindness and care that the Salvation Army shows him and his family. This particular child has been abused, both sexually and physically, by his own father, who is now deceased. Yet despite these horrors in his young life, he is able to celebrate this one example of love in his life.

Another young man, age 16, tells the story of being high on drugs in a dangerous town in southern New Jersey, where gangs and drugs are prevalent. He says that as he walks along the

street, a nearby radio is playing the Christian song, “Jesus Walks,” a tune he knows. When he hears the song playing, he feels that it is a sign from God that he needs to stop using drugs. According to this young man, he does respond to this sign from God by reducing his drug use. He feels that God supports him in this more positive direction in his life.

Another participant, age 17, reveals that he is walking along the street when a voice comes into his head saying, “You know what you have to do.” He feels that this is a sign from God to turn himself into the police. He then goes ahead and does turn himself in and is admitted to juvenile detention. He continues by saying that “Everything happens for a reason.”

In conclusion, the data for Question 11 yields 29% of participants who respond with an experience that they deem either spiritual, religious, or abnormal. Results for this question far exceed the author’s expectations and reveal the most interesting and diverse responses of any question in the Resident Questionnaire. Many children tell the author that they have not shared this experience with anyone else. These participants confide that they believe that most people would not believe them, would laugh at them, or would think they are crazy. One of the nine categories reported concerns supernatural phenomena, including precognition, premonitions, dreams foretelling the future, and feeling a “presence.” Several children relate incidents of seeing deceased relatives or individuals that suddenly appear before them.

It is difficult to know whether these reported experiences are true, as well as what cultural media factors may have contributed to their stories. However, it does seem apparent that the participants in the study are in touch with a world beyond the physical and have many experiences that they cannot otherwise explain, except through means of the supernatural, the religious, the spiritual, and the strange.

In this kind of private interview venue, perhaps participants feel that they could share such

stories. Perhaps they sense in the author a mutual “craziness,” or at least acceptance, that allows them to trust. For example, a traditional church or religious setting may not encourage such fanciful stories. Yet there needs to be such a place to share stories of the peculiar. Indeed each child has a story to tell, and in the story may lie the healing.

Some children tell sad stories, filled with emotion. Others tell wild stories and wonder if the author believes the story. Question 11 also allows participants the opportunity to tell their own own stories in order to reconstruct the fragmented pieces of their lives.

A complete list of responses for Question 11 follows below in Illustration 16.

No/not really 101
 I'd rather not answer 4
 Salvation Army took us in when we had nowhere to go 1
 Sign from God in song "Jesus Walks" to get off drugs 1
 Had an accident & saw the white light 1
 Had accident & walked away; felt God had saved me 4
 Prayed to grandma for help when I was in trouble; worked out 1
 Dreams about God 2
 MySpace friend told me to tell my mom I was hurting after dad died; I did & felt better 1
 Mom's friend died after argument; next month mom got text message from dead friend 1
 Grandma died; saw her again as a spirit or presence 2
 My mom has feelings I shouldn't do something & she gets sick; she's usually right 1
 I dream things that haven't happened; then they happen 6
 Dreamed about the Jersey Devil in JD; worst nightmare of my life 1
 Brother saved me from being run over by bus by pulling me back @ last minute 1
 Dream about the same place & same house; don't know what they are 1
 Dream warned about being shot if I joined gang 1
 After dad died, went to a medium who contacted him on the other side 1
 Seeing my dad get shot right in front of me 1
 Got raped 1
 Man came in church who was possessed by the Devil 2
 I was arrested & punished for something I didn't do 2
 My father beat me every day after school 1
 Premonitions/precognition of things that happened 5
 Grandpa died; he appeared to me in my room a few months later 1
 Saw ghost or demon or presence 6
 Thinking deep thoughts; went into a trance where I saw everything clear 1
 Asked God to give me a 2nd chance in ct; worked out; I felt His actual presence 1
 My friends & I in the woods; we felt a presence— got scared. 4
 I've seen things when I'm high/drunken 5
 Felt energy from crystals in my body 1
 I think things & they happen 2
 Read the Bible when I was really down & the story I opened to was about me 1
 Saw a dead friend in my room; it made me feel better 1
 I get mad and black out; I think it's God telling me not to hurt anybody 1
 Praying & felt a devil trying to get to me; he went away when I opened my eyes 1
 Don't understand why there's so much trouble in the world 1
 Don't understand why God put us on the earth 1
 When my baby was born, I saw life differently; then it stopped 1
 Praying & felt a Power with me 3
 Grandma died; dad said I couldn't watch TV; he left & it came on; grandma? 1
 We moved into a house where the builder's wife died; I saw her in my room 1
 My mom died & I felt it, felt her presence 2
 When I write, a peace comes over me 1
 Door open & close; battery things go on & off by themselves 1
 I wish something like that would happen 2
 I've seen Aliens 1
 Walking around & praying; voice said "you know what you have to do." I turned myself in 1
 Saw dad after he died several times 1
 Very sick; coma but got well 1
 Saw dead family member & I couldn't accept it or believe it 3
 Meditating, saw Indian who told me to forgive, let go, and move on 1
 When I accepted Jesus as my Savior 1
 I helped my mom change 1
 Felt family member's presence/saw them after they died 2
 Bad experience praying for healing but people died 1
 Saw a *chupacabree* in the woods 1

Illustration 16—Question 11: Can you tell me about any religious, spiritual, or abnormal
 experience you've ever had?

4.2.17 Question 12: How would you describe this interview experience for yourself?

In Question 12, the author asks each participant to describe the experience of being interviewed in his own words. An open-ended question is used for this question. The author’s intention in asking this question is to allow each participant to have a sense of ownership and control within the interview process. Many questions in the Resident Questionnaire probe children for sensitive and personal information. Question 12 is an opportunity for participants to tell how they feel about the process. This question is also included as an evaluation tool for the data collection instrument and the interview process.

The five highest responses appear in Table 16 below.

Felt OK/normal	Good/ I got to talk about stuff & my feelings	I don't know/ I'm not sure	Good/ it took up some time	I felt relaxed, peaceful/it calmed me down
32	29	20	12	10

Table 16—Question 12: How would you describe this interview for yourself?

Collected data for Question 12 also appears in graph form in Figure 18 below.

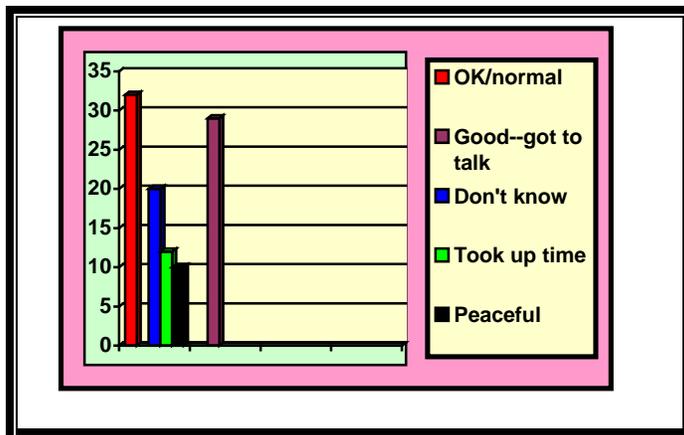


Figure 18—Question 12: How would you describe this interview for yourself?

4.2.17.1 Highest response: “Felt OK/normal”

The highest response category for Question 12 comes from 32 participants stating that the interview process feels “OK/normal” for them. In working with children in the detention center, the author has discovered that when a child states that something is OK, that statement may be taken as positive. If the child says that an adult is OK, that is an acceptance on the part of the child. Thus, the most popular response for Question 12 is that the interview process has been a positive experience for participants.

4.2.17.2 Next highest responses

The second highest category is from 29 residents that say the interview is good since they are able to talk about things. This response indicates that children may be looking for an outlet to talk about the kinds of questions raised in this interview. This response may also indicate that children appreciate the opportunity to talk to an adult more often, specifically in a context where they are asked questions. Perhaps the type of question may not be the most significant piece, just an opportunity to talk about their concerns.

Children in the Ocean County Detention Center do spend their days with teachers, security officers, staff, and social workers. Yet time with these adults is in a strict setting of rules and restrictions. It is possible that time spent with adults might be structured more positively to include time for a deeper level of conversation. For example, approximately 10 % of residents do have mental health therapists who visit them in detention and perform weekly therapy. Yet a child must qualify for such therapy by being diagnosed with a mental health issue. This process precludes the vast majority of children admitted to juvenile detention from having

the opportunity to receive treatment from a mental health therapist or professional.

The third highest category of 20 responses indicate that these participants do not know or are not sure of how they feel about the interview process. From her work in juvenile detention, the author has observed that this response of “I don’t know” is not unusual for children from ages 13-19, who often cannot answer questions that involve their feelings. For example, “I don’t know” is a way of protecting themselves by not revealing their emotions. This response is not necessarily negative but may indicate that the child is not comfortable putting his feelings into words, especially in the presence of an adult.

The fourth response of 12 children is that they feel that the interview is good since it takes up some time in their day. Given the children’s days in detention are filled with school, chores, meals, and extra-curricular activities, it is apparent to the author that many children still feel a general sense of boredom. Indeed, this is one reason that the author has undertaken this project, namely, to discover where children in detention “live” and what actually makes them tick.

And finally, the fifth highest response is from 10 children that say the interview process makes them feel calm and relaxed. Since the author’s agenda for Question 12 does not include any extant spiritual outcome, it appears that some children have an experience of calming nonetheless.

4.2.17.3 Examples of individual responses: “The same old thing”

One participant, age 15, responds that his interview is the “same old thing,” and that the author “really doesn’t listen to him either.” While this child is obviously angry, he does agree to answer all questions and to stay for the duration of the interview.

Another four participants respond that they are happy to help the author with her research, and therefore, the interview is a positive thing since they are helping out. Two additional participants report that they really don’t care about the interview; it seems pointless to them. Another child, age 14, says the interview is very good for him, and he especially likes the fact

that the author writes everything he says down on paper in front of him. And yet another three participants respond that they think the author asks a “lot of crazy questions.”

Thus, participant responses for Question 12 reveal a wide spectrum. The five highest responses are essentially positive while a smaller number of individual responses indicate that some participants do not have a positive experience in their interview.

A complete list of all responses for Question 12 appears in Illustration 17 below.

<p>Don't know/ not sure 20 Same old thing—you really didn't listen to me either 1 Good—got to talk about stuff/ my feelings 29 Helpful—made me realize I need to change 1 Good—people know you're not going to judge them 3 Good—took up some time 12 Felt relaxed /peaceful/ calmed me down 10 Happy I could help you 4 Good;— easy/safe to talk to you 6 Good; surprised something like this would happen in JD 6 Good—got to talk to someone who listened 9 Good –never thought about stuff like this before 5 Helpful—made me think about things 7 I like talking about this kind of thing 6 Gives us a chance to talk about things nobody asks us 2 Good—I don't usually talk to people 5 Good—you asked good questions 2 Good—you show me respect, I gave it back to you 1</p>	<p>Good—I like to talk about God 2 Interesting/Worthwhile 5 Spiritual/ religious experience 2 Kinda like therapy 1 Kinda weird 2 Seemed pointless to me 1 Really I don't care 1 Pretty short 1 Felt ok/normal 32 Deeper than I usually talk 4 Good—you're nice to talk to 6 I liked that you wrote it all down 1 Good—like an intervention 1 Lots of crazy questions 3 Exciting/fun 6 Helpful 7</p>
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Illustration 17—Question 12: How would you describe this interview for yourself?

4.2.18 Question 13: Is there any question you think should be added to the questionnaire?

In Question 13, the author asks each participant if he thinks that any question should be added to the questionnaire that is not included. As delineated in Chapter Three, the author's intent here is to include participants in the creative process of developing the questionnaire. Though the vast majority of participants (84%) do not offer any additional questions, five categories do emerge, as recorded in Table 17 below.

No/I can't think of anything	141
No/you covered it all	16
I can't think of any now, but if I do, I'll let you know	6
I don't know	2
What do you want to do with your life when you get out?	2

Table 17—Question 13: Is there any question that you think should be added to the questionnaire?

The highest five categories for Question 13 appear below with percentages in Figure 19 below.

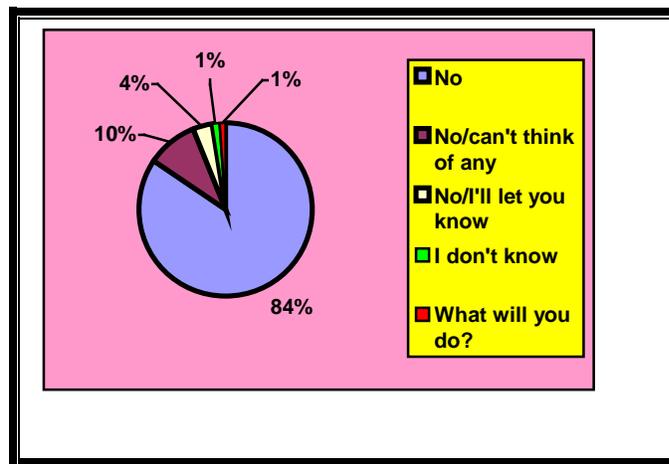


Figure 19—Question 13: Is there any question you think should be added to the questionnaire?

4.2.18.1 Four highest responses: Variations of “no”

Given the fact that such a high combined percentage of participants respond to Question 13 with variations of “no” may indicate that participants feel too much pressure to offer a question at the time of the interview. Their lack of response may be similar to the high percentage of lack of responses in Question 11. It is possible that the author expects too

much from participants to articulate a response that requires some creativity and thought in such a short time.

The fifth highest response, “What will you do when you get out of detention?” represents another example of a concrete response to a question that might have been answered in a variety of ways. Examples of additional concrete responses occur throughout the collected data, specifically and in greater numbers in Questions 9 and 10 on hope and faith. It is also possible that residents in a juvenile detention center may indeed be asking themselves the question, “What will you do when you get out of detention?”

4.2.18.2 Process of recording individual questions

However, as presented in the complete list of questions generated by participants (Illustration 19 below), some participants do respond with specific questions, often offering more than one question, but not in great enough numbers to form numerical categories. In other words, the participant questions do seem as varied and as unique as the children themselves. Thus, the author’s goal to include participants in the creative process does succeed in yielding a high number of individual responses.

However, these unique responses do not qualify in any of the top five percentage categories. It has been the author’s observation that the percentage categories for questions in the Resident Questionnaire do not tell the entire story. Rather, a more comprehensive portrait of responses may be found in the smaller details of their individual responses.

When a participant offers a question to be included, the author writes the question down in front of the child and then asks the child if he would mind answering his own question. If he agrees, the author then writes down his response. However, in some cases the child does suggest a question but does not want to answer his own question. The first section of

responses in Illustration 18 below represents individual questions offered by children who do not want to offer answers to their own question(s).

The vast majority of questions suggested by participants do include their own answers, indicated below by a “Q” and “A” format. The smaller group of questions without responses appears first below in Section A, followed by participants questions with their answers in Section B below. Sections A and B are found below in Illustration 18.

Section A

No/ I can't think of any. 141

I can't think of any now, but I'll let you know if I do. 6

NO—you asked everything/you covered it all. 16

I don't know. 2

Do residents like being in JD?

Has being in JD really helped anyone?

Why do you choose to do the things you do when you know they're wrong?

What do you think about God?

Section B

Q: How do your spiritual beliefs affect your daily life?

A: When I take the time to think, my belief will cause me to change my action.

Q: How do you feel about your time in JD?

A: It's hard being here; motivates you not to come back.

Q: Do you have a soul?

A: Yes, because I feel and see things that other people don't.

Q: Has anyone ever given you advice that helped you?

A: Yes—love the life you live.

Q: How do you plan to turn your life around when you get out of JD?

A: I want to keep my job. Stay away from the old crowd, take it day by day.

Q: What do you want to do with your life when you get out of here? 2

A: I want to get back to my life on the streets.

Q: Would you do what you did again if you knew you'd get caught?

A: Yes.

Q: Would you still take the same drugs you took?

A: NO, I'd try not to—it was too freaky.

Q: If you could change one thing you did wrong, what would it be?

A: I'd hide the stuff better so I wouldn't get caught.

Q: What was the crime you committed and why did you do it?

A: I stole stuff that wasn't mine, and I don't know why I did it.

Q: How could you change if you wanted to? Do you want to?

A: I'm not sure I really want to change.

Q: Do you think you're an angry person? What do you do about it?

A: I'd try to think it through before I punch anyone.

Q: Why do you do the same things over and over?

A: This is my first time here, so they have to prove their case against me.

Q: What do you want to be when you grow up?

A: I want to have a family, go to church, cook, have Thanksgiving Dinner.

Q: What could you have done to help the world?

A: I would be more respectful, stop smoking, stop polluting, do less damage.

Q: Do you regret anything you did in the past?

A: Yes & no—I do have regrets, but I feel I learned from my mistakes.

Q: Are you happy with your life?

A: Not this time, no I'm not.

Q: What do you think about the decisions of your life?

A: Not good, but they brought me good things at the time.

Q: Were you ever in a spot with no options?

A: Yes, last month when I came in here.

Q: Have you read the Bible?

A: No, but I should.

Q: What are you gonna do when you get out of here?

A: I'm gonna stay away from the people that bring me down.

Q: When you die, do you want to go to heaven or hell?

A: Neither, I'd like to stay neutral so I can stay with my family.

Q: What does true happiness mean to you?

A: To be free, have inner peace, understand your life, to have good health and a good family.

Q: What is your greatest memory from when you were a kid?

A: When I was a baby, my mom took me in a store and asked me to point to a number for a lottery ticket. I did, and she won!

Q: Where do you see yourself in 10 or 15 years?

A: Going to college, my own apartment, career, family.

Q: How has coming to JD affected your life?

A: It makes me think why I do the stuff I do. It makes me want to change, but it's not that easy.

Q: How do you cope with being in jail every day?

A: I try to stay positive & think about when I get out.

Q: If you could go back, what would you change?

A: I'd change all the stupid stuff I've done in my life.

Q: Do you think you'll be a better person after coming here?

A: Yes, it makes you see what happens when you don't keep your head straight.

Q: Do you believe in Heaven or Hell?

A: NO, I don't, but I think you go somewhere after you die—your spirit goes somewhere.

Illustration 18—Question 13: Is there any question you think should be added to the questionnaire?

4.2.18.3 Examples of individual questions: “Would you do it again? Yes.”

The variety of responses for Question 13 indicates that the participants take the offer to

suggest their own question seriously, though not in great numbers. The wide spectrum of responses also indicates that they do wrestle with significant issues in their own lives. Several responses concern the children's criminal charges and their own reflections on their charges. Still others reflect their wrestling with spiritual questions, including the existence of heaven and hell, as well as their hopes and dreams for the future.

Several participants offer questions and answers reflecting the fact that they plan to return to their former lives with no intention of changing. For example, one 15-year-old asks the question, "Would you do what you did again if you knew you'd get caught?" His response: "Yes."

Still other participants ask and answer their own questions about more spiritual and philosophical matters. For example, a 16-year-old asks himself, "When you die, do you want to go to Heaven or Hell?" His response: "Neither. I'd like to stay neutral so I can stay with my family."

Thus, the collected data for Question 13 indicates a wide spectrum of issues on the minds of participants in the sample, from questions of personal choices in life to more esoteric questions of spirituality and the afterlife. Given the fact that participants are asked to offer questions within the brief interview indicates that these questions seem uppermost in the minds of children in the Ocean County Detention Center.

Responses to Question 13 also indicate that the author's attempt to involve participants in the creative task of the project itself is moderately successful and does reveal significant and thought-provoking questions from the children themselves.

4.2.19 Question 14: Is there any question that you would like to ask me?

In Question 14, the author invites each participant to ask any question(s) he wishes.

Though children are not specifically told to ask only respectful questions, none of the participants do ask disrespectful or inappropriate questions. The author’s intention in this question is to allow participants to feel less vulnerable and more empowered by having the opportunity to ask the author any questions they wish. The six highest responses (3 ties) are recorded below in Table 18.

No/not really	No/thanks for asking	What is this research for again?	I don't know what to say	No/I don't really care	Do you believe in God?
107	13	10	3	3	3

Table 18—Question 14: Is there any question you would like to ask me?

Percentages for each category in Question 14 are recorded in Figure 20 below.

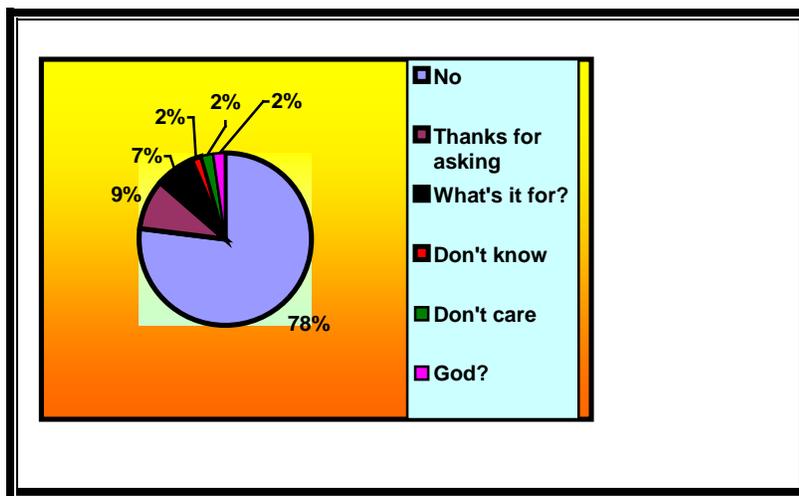


Figure 20—Question 14: Is there any question you would like to ask me?

4.2.19.1 Most popular response: “No”

78% of participants respond that they have no question they wish to ask the author. It could be that given the opportunity to ask an adult any question is perhaps overwhelming to the point of silencing the majority of participants. This sense of overwhelming participants

with the nature of a specific question has appeared in the data previously. For example, Questions 9, 10, 11, and 12 do seem to indicate the majority of participants reacting with this response.

Thus, the author's analysis of this phenomenon is that she may have overwhelmed the majority of residents with several questions in the Resident Questionnaire. In retrospect, the author ponders if some of the questions were worded differently, perhaps more participants would have responded with more substantive answers. On the other hand, the participants who do respond with individual answers, though low in numbers, do reveal that they could manage the depth and nature of the questions, actually with a great deal of interest and sophistication.

4.2.19.2 Next highest responses

The second response category, "No, but thanks for asking," also reflects that participants have nothing to ask the author. However, they express their thanks that she has asked them. A third response includes participants who ask to be reminded of what the author's research is being used for. While the author routinely explains the project to each participant at the outset of each interview, apparently some children need or want further clarification.

The next two responses indicate that participants do not know what the research is about, and after being told, do not really care. These responses may be indicative of a level of sarcasm in their reactions, or they may have reflected their own discomfort with being placed on the spot to ask the author a question.

The final top response category, participants who ask the author if she believes in God, is surprising since the other high responses indicate a level of detachment and lack of interest on the part of the majority of participants. However, since the entire questionnaire does

focus on spiritual questions, perhaps participants are eager to level the playing field, as it were, and to ask the author what her beliefs are.

4.2.19.3 Process of answering participant questions

When a participant does ask the author a question, she writes it down in front of the child and then sets aside pen and paper to answer the child's question. In some cases, her answer leads to further discussion between herself and the child. In other cases, this conversation leads the child to ask another question, or more than one. These multiple questions and responses are indicated by being grouped together below. However, these extended conversations are not recorded as part of the actual interview. In retrospect, such recordings might have been additional steps that the author might have included in her methodological approach.

A complete list of all responses to Question 14 follows below in Illustration 19. All questions with numbers following them represent the same question posed by more than one participant. The six highest response categories for the same question are presented in Table 17 and Figure 14 above.

Illustration 19—Question 14: Is there any question you would like to ask me?

No/ not really. 107

No —thanks anyway/thanks for asking. 13

No —I really don't care. 3

I don't know what to say. 3

No—can I go now?

Did you cry when your father died? 2

Did you have a good childhood?

Do you still think about those things?

What would it take for me to be a social worker here?

How long have you been working on this research?

Can my cousin come visit me since he's been in jail?

How did you decide to work here?

Do you like working here?

How did you decide to change your life?

Why did you want to be a social worker?

What kind of car do you drive?

What have you learned that you could share with me?

Are you religious?

How long have you worked here? I hope you stay in good health & don't retire too soon.

What is your job here? 2

Do you believe in God? 3

Have you had any experiences like the ones you asked me about?

What did you want to do with your life when you were younger?

Why can't Mr. Jim do his substance abuse group anymore?

What is this research for again? Do you like doing it? 10

Can you get me my blanket from home?

Do you have kids? 2

What do you think about God and this religion stuff?

Is this research helping people, or are you just interested in collecting information?

Do you know when I'm getting out of here?

Are you a religious person? 2

Do you like working here?

Do you get angry sometimes?

Do you like to pray?

Why did you come to work here?

Did you go to college?

What did you do before you came here?

Can I make a phone call?

Did you always live at home?

Can I call my lawyer?

Do you know how long I'll be here?

Does everybody answer these questions?

Do you believe in God?

Have you ever had any kinda stuff happen to you like I had?

What do you do here? You're a nice lady.

Do you know if the mail came today?

Do you write?

Do you know what's happening with my court case?

Do you like talking to us kids about this stuff?

Where is this stuff going?

You said your mom was from the South?

Is family important to you?

Have you had any weird religious or spiritual experiences like mine?

I think it's kinda cool that we were raised close to each other.

Where do you go to school?

What are the other kids' answers to Question 11?

How did you get to be so sweet?

What do you do with, like, a Higher power?

What do you believe in? 2

What do you see in me?

How long have you worked here?

Have you ever felt alone and wanted to make the right decision but couldn't?

Have you ever felt ashamed of the things you've done?

Did you have a rough time growing up?

Do you interview girls?

Why did you pick me today? 2

What kind of student are you again?

What field are you studying in?

Does working here make you feel like you're helping us?

Can I get a bigger size jump suit?

Can I call my mom?

What religion are you?

You seem like a nice lady. What do you do here again?

4.2.19.4 Examples of individual questions: "Have you ever felt ashamed?"

Several participants ask the author concrete questions, for example, asking for a phone call, asking when the interview would be over, or asking if a bigger uniform is available. This concrete level of response has appeared numerous times in previous questions throughout the Resident Questionnaire and does appear in Question 14 as well.

Examples of more in-depth questions that participants ask the author are also recorded. For example, one shy 15-year-old appears eager to answer each question in the Resident Questionnaire with sincerity. He asked the author his first question: "Have you ever felt

ashamed of the things you've done?" The author responds by saying that she has been ashamed at times in her life and shares a few examples. She goes on to say that most people are ashamed of some things in their lives, and this is a part of being human. This child continues to ask a second question: "Have you ever felt alone and wanted to make the right decision but couldn't?" Similarly, the author responds that she has been in that situation and shares personal details of her own life.

In conclusion, the author's attempt in Question 14 to empower participants to feel more of an equal with the author is accomplished with a small percentage of children who do ask questions. Even though Question 14 itself may have been intimidating to the majority of participants, those who do respond answer from an emotional depth that is surprising to the author, as well as deeply rewarding.

4.3 CONCLUSION

In summary, Chapter Four presents the collected data from 200 individual interviews that the author personally conducted with male residents, ages 13-19, detained in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center. The empirical research project was conducted over a period of two and a half years, from 2007-2010.

The data collection instrument utilized in this empirical research study is the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B), developed by the author, and consists of 14 questions. Since many children respond with more than one answer for most questions, the total number of responses for each question exceeds the sample size of 200.

A combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions and statements are employed by the author to allow children to respond in their own ways. Often a combination of open-ended

and closed-ended questions is employed within the same question. This combination is included to allow children greater freedom to respond in their own ways without the stress of answering more than they want to reveal. The number and variety of responses for this kind of combination question reveal that this method is, and can be, successful as an interview tool for children in detention. For each question, the five highest numerical responses have been presented and discussed.

Further, examples of individual responses in smaller percentage categories are included for each question. Each individual question includes a presentation of the collected data, in addition to in-depth analysis of responses by categories. This analysis includes suggested implications of the participants' responses. A complete list of all responses to each question has been included at the end of each section.

The majority of participants (56%) in the participant sample are Caucasian, followed by the next largest category, African American (13%). The median age of the participant is 16.5 years of age. Collected data also indicates that 66% of participants were born and raised in New Jersey, US, and 54% of the sample live at home with both biological parents and siblings. Regarding religious background, 35% of participants are Roman Catholic, a number that represents the highest category by percentage.

A brief summary of the data from the remaining 13 questions in the Resident Questionnaire indicates the following general results:

- 28% of participants report that being locked up in juvenile detention is the single, most important incident in their young lives to date.

- 33% of participants respond that what makes them feel most free is not being locked up in juvenile detention.

- The majority of participants report that the single thing they value above all else is family.
- The majority of participants state that they believe in God.
- The majority of participants state that they pray on a regular basis.
- The vast majority of participants report that recreation within juvenile detention is the most important activity for stress reduction offered to them.

- The majority of participants state that their basic beliefs about life have not changed since they have been in juvenile detention.

- 30% of participants respond to whether they have hope in their lives by stating that they hope for a good job. Smaller numbers hope for a better life and to finish school.

- 28% of participants respond to a question about faith by stating that they have the most faith in themselves. Smaller numbers have faith in their families, and some ask what faith is.

- The majority of participants respond to whether they have had any spiritual, unusual, or otherwise unexplained experiences in their lives by stating that they have not had any such experience. Smaller numbers report spiritual, religious, and otherwise unexplained phenomena.

- 16% of participants respond to the interview process by stating that they experience it as OK and normal. Smaller numbers report that the interview is good and peaceful while others report that it is not interesting or important to them at all.

- The vast majority of participants respond to being asked for an additional question to contribute to the process by stating that they cannot think of any. Smaller numbers do offer questions, and some offer two or three.

- The majority of residents respond to a question inviting them to ask the author any questions by stating that they have nothing to ask. Smaller numbers do ask the author questions.

An overview of the collected data suggests that participants in the research sample are quite

willing to engage in conversation about a variety of spiritual, social, religious, and emotional questions concerning their individual lives. Furthermore, the children seem genuinely interested and intrigued by the questions themselves, as well as by the interview process. Participants in the sample generally state their beliefs, their questions, and their misgivings with a high degree of personal honesty and candor.

Chapter Five presents an in-depth, theological analysis of the collected data presented in Chapter Four, based on the 14 questions in the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B). This theological analysis becomes the foundation for the introduction of a working theology of juveniles in detention. An outline toward a new hermeneutic for working with children in a juvenile detention setting is also introduced in Chapter Five. This new hermeneutic represents a practical step toward bridging an existing gap between the stated need for a new children's hermeneutic and its inception.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Toward a Theology of Juveniles in Detention

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five presents an in-depth, theological analysis of the collected data presented in Chapter Four, based on the 14 questions in the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B). This theological analysis becomes the foundation for a working theology of juveniles in detention. The material in this chapter presents inductive theological conclusions based on the participant responses and organizes the conclusions under specific theological categories. This theological analysis is a beginning toward a theology of children in juvenile detention and does not represent an exhaustive, systematic theological study.

Finally, this chapter presents an outline toward a new hermeneutic for working with children in a juvenile detention setting. This new approach represents a practical step toward bridging an existing gap between the stated need for a new children's hermeneutic and its inception. Authors who support a new hermeneutic include Jerome Berryman,⁶⁶⁴ Ivy Beckwith,⁶⁶⁵ Gerald Loughlin,⁶⁶⁶ and Don Browning.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁴ Jerome W. Berryman, *Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace* (Harrisburg PA: Morehouse, 2009), 5-11.

⁶⁶⁵ Ivy Beckwith, *Postmodern Children's Ministry: Ministry to Children in the 21st Century Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 9-14.

⁶⁶⁶ Gerald Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church, and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), x-xi.

⁶⁶⁷ Don S. Browning, "Children, Mothers, and Fathers in the Post-modern Family," in *Pastoral Care and Social Conflict*, eds. Pam Courture and Rodney Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 71-85.

5.2 THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF COLLECTED DATA

Since Question 1 in the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) addresses preliminary information on each child, this section includes responses for Question 2 through Question 14. Theological themes and implications are also included within sections for each successive question. In this section, only the results from the highest category for each question are considered when presenting theological themes. However, a brief summary of the five highest categories is presented as well, along with unique responses that may add to an inclusive, overall portrait of participant responses for each question.

5.2.1 Question 2: What makes you feel free?

In Question 2, children are encouraged to associate their sense of freedom with what makes them feel free. In this way, participants are offered an alternative way to probe their inner sense of spirituality through the metaphor of personal freedom.

Sixty-six children from the research sample of 200 respond that they feel most free when not locked in juvenile detention. The next highest categories are as follows: 1/ “being with family”; 2/ “doing what I want”; 3/ “playing sports”; and 4/ “I don’t know.” Seven participants respond that they do not feel free, and one child responds that he feels free “when the pain goes away.”

5.2.1.1 Freedom as philosophical construct

Freedom as a philosophical construct may also be viewed through theological and political lenses. Clearly the 200 participants in the research sample are interviewed while in juvenile detention. They are part of a political system where freedom, or the lack thereof, defines their daily existence. As one child responds to the author in Question 2, “It’s a funny question to ask a kid who’s locked up.” Freedom is on the minds of children in juvenile detention since their

freedom has been taken away.

5.2.1.2 Freedom from “something”

The concept of freedom may also connote freedom from something. That “something” may be internal or external. For example, in a political context, freedom is defined as “self-disposing in independence of others,”⁶⁶⁸ especially external foes.⁶⁶⁹ However, in the philosophy of stoicism freedom is more an exploration of one’s inner nature.⁶⁷⁰ When individuals turn away from the passions and pleasures of the world, they become more inclined to develop their souls. They enjoy the “freedom of impassibility” and focus on their true nature as children of God.⁶⁷¹

5.2.1.3 Freedom and existentialism

In Christian theology, freedom refers to “freedom in Christ,” a quality of life that is available to prisoners and free persons alike. Similar to stoicism, Christian freedom focuses on the interior person and the soul. Thus, Christianity and stoicism support an understanding of freedom that transcends external conditions of imprisonment.⁶⁷²

Based on the highest response category in Question 2, participants in the research sample do not feel free. They neither feel free from external pressures, nor do they feel free internally. The political and existential reality of their imprisonment dictates their daily reality. In this regard, the participants seem to reflect the essence of existentialism,⁶⁷³ where the individual has a sense of disorientation and confusion about a meaningless and absurd world.⁶⁷⁴

Soren Kierkegaard, a Christian existentialist, suggests that each person, not society or religion, is responsible for creating meaning in life and has a responsibility to live life with “authenticity.”⁶⁷⁵ Kierkegaard believes that truth must be ultimately subjective, not abstract

⁶⁶⁸ Gerhard Kittel, et al, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 224.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid, 224-25.

⁶⁷² Sinclair Ferguson, et al, *New Dictionary of Theology* (Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 264-65.

⁶⁷³ John MacQuarrie, *Existentialism*, (NY: Modern Library, 1972), 14-15.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

or objective. He states that subjective truth is the only authentic way that individuals must learn to relate to themselves. Kierkegaard continues that becoming aware of one's true self is the individual's true task in life, an inward task that introduces one to God.⁶⁷⁶ In this regard, his sense of personal freedom does not depend on externals, for example being imprisoned or not. Rather, freedom for Kierkegaard is an inward, spiritual exploration leading to a sense of personal authenticity that transcends any external or imposed reality.⁶⁷⁷

5.2.1.4 Toward a theology of freedom

Based on participant responses for Question 2, 41% respond with an external understanding of freedom in not being locked up. In other words, these children respond that freedom is from "something," as described above. However, a smaller number of participants report more intrinsic qualities of freedom. For example, they state that being with family members or doing what they please gives them a sense of personal freedom.

Such internal responses seem to echo Kierkegaard's thought that the individual must strive for his or her own truth on a subjective and intrinsic basis.⁶⁷⁸ In this regard, Kierkegaard remains opposed to any kind of authority and argues for individuals to question and to arrive at their own understanding of truth. His theology reflects a belief that God visits each person in a mysterious and hidden way.⁶⁷⁹

Considered one of the founders of existentialism, though he never uses the term himself, Kierkegaard believes in the centrality of individual experience as the basis for reality and for

⁶⁷⁵ Walter Lowrie, *Kierkegaard's Attack upon 'Christendom'* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), 14-17.

⁶⁷⁶ Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or, Part II*, Hong, transl. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 195-196.

⁶⁷⁷ Kierkegaard, *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, Hong, transl. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 143-145.

⁶⁷⁸ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 195-196.

⁶⁷⁹ Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Hong, transl. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 243.

life itself.⁶⁸⁰ He espouses that each person has the entire freedom to make choices, and that freedom leads to a sense of anxiety over making the right decision.⁶⁸¹

A smaller yet significant number of participants in the sample do respond in ways that clearly echo Kierkegaard's thought on the primacy of the individual. For example, seven participants respond that they never feel free, either in detention or in their lives at home. They appear to be in Kierkegaard's state of anxiety as they attempt to figure out what to do next. One child responds that "death" makes him feel free, a further example of a state of ongoing anxiety in the face of life itself.

In conclusion, the concept of freedom for participants in the sample covers a broad spectrum of ideas from an external sense of freedom to an experience of never being free, except in death. Participants in the sample seem to echo a desire to be free, to live life on an individual basis, and to be authentically themselves in whatever way they may choose to express their individuality.

In theological terms, then, participants identify with an existential view of life wherein they carry a degree of ongoing anxiety about their personal choices. It cannot be determined from the data for Question 2 whether they believe that their anxiety and lack of personal freedom may lead them to a personal experience with God, as Kierkegaard suggests.⁶⁸² Yet their overall view of life does reflect a sense of not being free.

5.2.2 Question 3: What is important to you? What do you value?

In Question 3, 128 participants in the sample respond that they value their family most highly, followed by "friends," "my mom," "myself," and "my girlfriend." In smaller

⁶⁸⁰ John MacQuarrie, *Existentialism* (New York: Modern Library, 1972), 18-21.

⁶⁸¹ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, Thomte trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 41-52.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*

numbers, participants report that they value their education, truth, selling drugs, personal pride, personal memories, and nothing at all.

5.2.2.1 Theological significance of family

The response “family” becomes so repetitive and automatic among participants that the author begins to ask each child why he chooses that response. By way of summary, their answers essentially state that family is the only thing you have when you get in trouble or get locked up. Participants report that friends may come and go; but they can betray you just when you need them the most.

However, there is an irony in the participant responses to Question 3: nearly 40% of children admitted to the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center annually do not have family actively involved in their lives. Weekend visits for parents and guardians are not well attended. Yet it may be true that since these children are behind bars, their confined reality does heighten the importance of whatever family they do have.

From a theological point of view, the importance of family reported in Question 3 does support the work of several authors in the field of practical theology, who emphasize the need to work with children in the context of the family, including Bonnie Miller-McLemore,⁶⁸³ Ivy Beckwith,⁶⁸⁴ and Don Browning.⁶⁸⁵ These authors suggest inviting families into the church. Rather than creating program that places the responsibility of

⁶⁸³ Bonnie Miller-McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 16.

⁶⁸⁴ Ivy Beckwith, *Postmodern Children's Ministry: Ministry to Children in the 21st Century Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 9-14.

⁶⁸⁵ Don S. Browning, “Children, Mothers, and Fathers in the Post-modern Family,” in *Pastoral Care and Social Conflict*, edited by Pam Courture and Rodney Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 71-85.

children on church staff, their approaches envision families becoming partners in communication with their own children.⁶⁸⁶

Ivy Beckwith also encourages the role of family when working with children.⁶⁸⁷ By encouraging families to become part of the church, she hopes that they will become more responsible for the spiritual education of their children.⁶⁸⁸

Similar to Beckwith, Bonnie Miller-McLemore writes about including children in family dynamics.⁶⁸⁹ She suggests that "...children actually exemplify a wisdom that somehow emerges in the chaos itself....children encourage us to reconsider ways in which spirituality for children and adults takes shape in the midst of everyday rituals, practices, and habits that shape everyday life."⁶⁹⁰

In this context of family, Don Browning proposes a new method for working with families that he calls "a mutuality of ethic of equal regard."⁶⁹¹ He suggests a "love ethic"⁶⁹² that supports shared authority between both parents in the family and implies that this equality of power might be extended to children as well.⁶⁹³ Browning clearly envisions the family as a vehicle for greater equality and shared responsibility. Yet while he does focus on changing power shifts between spouses and their children, Browning stops short of developing his implication that children might become an integral part of that equality.

⁶⁸⁶ Gary Phillips, "Religious Pluralism in a Postmodern World," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 2nd Ed., edited by David Dockery (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Books, 2001), 135-142.

⁶⁸⁷ Beckwith, 9-14.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁹ Miller-McLemore, 16.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid, 16-20.

⁶⁹¹ Don Browning, 71-85.

⁶⁹² Don and Carol Browning, "The Church and the Family in Crisis," *Christian Century*, Aug. 7-14, 1991, 746-749.

⁶⁹³ Ibid.

However, he does clearly point the way toward beginning a dialogue with children becoming more equal partners in family power dynamics.⁶⁹⁴

5.2.2.2 Theological dynamic of power

In the course of this research study, the author comes to understand that it is not only important to relate to children with respect. She discovers that there is an implied equality between adult and child, given that power issues are taken seriously, as Browning advocates.⁶⁹⁵ The author moves a step beyond respect and treats the child as an equal in each individual interview. If interviews with children are conducted by treating the child as an equal, the dynamic in the relationship between adult and child does effectively change the power dynamic, as Browning suggests in his own work on the family.⁶⁹⁶

The question of power between adults and children may be unarticulated as a theological issue. Yet it is always present, whether in the context of the family or in juvenile detention.⁶⁹⁷ Children view adults as authority figures having more power and influence than they possess. This perception of unequal power by children does affect how they interact with adults. In an interview process, the manner in which children respond to questions from an adult may also be affected by their perception of power issues in the relationship.⁶⁹⁸

The psychoanalytic work of Sandor Ferenczi⁶⁹⁹ emphasizes the crucial importance of establishing rapport with a child in an individual interview setting, where the unequal power dynamic between adult and child has the potential for transformation toward greater

⁶⁹⁴ Don Browning, 73-77.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁷ L. Atkinson and K. Backett-Milburn, "Beyond, on, or within: Questioning power dynamics and knowledge production in 'child-oriented' research methodology," *Childhood*, Feb. 2011, 8: 81-93.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁹ Sandor Ferenczi, "The confusion of tongues between adults and children: The language of tenderness and of passion," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 30 (4), 1949, 1-5.

equality. Ferenczi suggests that "...the overwhelming authority and power of adults renders children silent" unless action is taken to address the inequality.⁷⁰⁰

In theological terms, the importance of power in human relationships is paramount in the work of Martin Buber. In his text, *I and Thou*, Buber suggests that human life has meaning through relationships, and ultimately, our relationship with God, the "Eternal Thou."⁷⁰¹ He continues that human beings have two choices for each relationship they encounter: the "I/It relationship" or the "I/Thou relationship." The "I/Thou" relationship is a choice by the individual to experience the sacred, or God, in every human encounter, rather than a choice to treat another person as an "it."⁷⁰²

Similarly, psychologist Carl Rogers, who develops a person-centered approach to psychotherapy, also underscores the centrality of relationship.⁷⁰³ Rogers believes that the quality of relationship between therapist and client has a direct impact on the client's quality of healing and change within the therapeutic relationship.⁷⁰⁴ Though Rogers is not known primarily as a theologian, his work is considered within Christian theology because of his emphasis on the individual's potential for fulfillment through the power of relationship with a healing individual.⁷⁰⁵

Though Buber and Rogers do not write specifically in the context of family, their work does address the theological issue of power. Thus, in the context of family dynamics, the appropriately moral use of power becomes a theological imperative.

⁷⁰⁰ Ferenczi, 1-5.

⁷⁰¹ Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (NY: Scribner, 1923), 10-55.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, 23-27.

⁷⁰³ Carl Rogers, *Client-centered therapy: Its current practice, implications, and theory* (London: Constable, 1951), 60-67.

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁵ Alexander G. MacDougall, *A Theological Critique of Carl Rogers* (unpublished masters thesis Montreal; McGill Univ., 1972), 1-47.

5.2.2.3 Toward a theology of value

In conclusion, a major theological implication of the data from Question 3 indicates that participants in the research sample value family above all. Additionally, they value relationships, not only within the family, but also with significant others like friends, mothers, and themselves. This data on the significance of family and other relationships clearly supports many authors in the field of practical theology who suggest that working with children needs to be in the context of family. Thus, it appears that one way to bring the nature of God to children in detention is to create a sense of family and belonging for them, a journey that can begin while they are still in detention.

This sense of family may be created for children by a caring adult who spends time with them, whether that occurs in a research context or by offering a child positive attention and a listening ear. Similarly, detention center staff may choose to focus on contacting parents of detained children, especially those parents who do not visit. Indeed a goal that the author has pursued in Ocean County has been to reunite children with estranged family members.

An overview of individual responses for Question 3 further supports participant interest in relationships. For example, several children report that they value being respected. Still others value honesty and being taken seriously. These collective responses about value indicate that children in the Ocean County Detention Center desire to be a part of something greater than themselves. In theological terms, this sense of belonging might be expressed as a strong, yet undefined, desire to belong to the family of God. J. Todd Billings speaks of this desire for God as a desire for adoption into the family of God.⁷⁰⁶ Perhaps an unspoken

⁷⁰⁶ J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Michigan: Baker Academic Books, 2011), 2-10.

desire of participants in this study is a deeply felt wish to belong, ultimately to God, the One who will not abandon them in times of need.

5.2.3 Question 4: Do you believe in God, a higher power, or anything spiritual?

The collected data for Question 4 indicates that the highest category of response (125) is that the sample participants do believe in God. The next highest group (27) state that they believe in Jesus. Other responses include those who state that they do not believe in God (21), as well as others who say they do not know/ are not sure (17). Ten participants respond that they believe in a higher power while two report that they believe in Allah. Still other individual responses indicate that participants believe in a variety of spiritual phenomena.

5.2.3.1 Belief in God

The theological implication of the highest response category for Question 4 represents a somewhat traditionally religious response that may be surprising to readers who may view children in detention as beyond help, rehabilitation, or perhaps redemption. However, the data from this question indicates that not only do the vast majority of children in the research sample believe in God or Jesus Christ, but they are eager to share this belief with the author.

In a recent article from the *Daily Telegraph*,⁷⁰⁷ Martin Beckford quotes Justin Barrett, a researcher at Oxford University, who states that children have a predisposition to believe in a supreme being since they assume that everything in the world was created for a purpose.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁷ "The UK's 'other paper of record,' "BBC news, Jan. 19, 2004 (accessed April 24, 2013).

⁷⁰⁸ M. Beckford, "Children are born believers in God," *Daily Telegraph*, 24 Nov, 2008 (accessed April 24, 2013).

Barrett believes that children are “born believers” in God and do not simply acquire religious beliefs through some type of indoctrination, for example, the church.⁷⁰⁹

The highest category for Question 4 clearly supports Barrett’s research that children do believe in God. Indeed this control group of children in the Ocean County Detention Center clearly supports Barrett’s contention that children may well be “born believers.” The data from Question 4 also supports the need for some discussion about God as part of juvenile detention program activities.

In the Ocean County Detention Center, volunteer church groups do offer worship services twice weekly. These services consist of worship, Bible reading, prayer, and often personal testimony from the volunteers themselves. Although detention staff is not able to engage in formal religious discussions with residents, juvenile detention centers may still supply an apparently basic need of children by offering them the opportunity to attend religious services.

In Ocean County, the Social Services department supports any child who raises religious or spiritual issues with a social worker by continuing to explore the issue with the child individually. For example, prayer rugs are allowed for Muslim children, and residents of the Jewish faith are allowed to pray according to their custom. An additional, practical way that detention social workers may support children’s spirituality is to network with churches of different faiths to provide services to residents.

5.2.3.2 Belief in a higher power

Ten participants respond that they believe in a higher power, and three additional children offer that they consider their mothers and fathers to be their higher power. Since the term *higher power* is a common term in American culture to discuss a “power greater than

⁷⁰⁹ Beckford, (accessed April 24, 2013).

ourselves,” this term is included as an additional and alternative way that children might talk about God. It is also common for children who have received treatment for drug or alcohol problems to learn about a higher power as part of their recovery process. The term *higher power* has its origins in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.⁷¹⁰

5.2.3.3 Belief in “anything spiritual”

Ten participants respond that they believe that “something is out there” while other individuals report that they believe in kindness, the law of attraction and “conscience.”

For example, one child states that he doesn’t believe in God, but “there’s a little guy named Bob who lives in my head.” He says that “Bob” sometimes tells him to do bad things. This child continues by saying that he sometimes listens to Bob but sometimes knows that it is better not to. This participant exemplifies a growing group of admissions with mental health diagnoses, who may struggle to survive emotionally on a daily basis.

A single participant responds that “you are your own god.” This response is an example of the intelligence and sophistication of some children admitted to the detention center. This child discusses the nature of the idea of god with the author on an intellectual level and asks the author whether she agrees with him or has a different idea. This young man may also have been blocking any deeper revelation about himself with such a cerebral response. Yet his response also represents the ability of some residents to dialogue with adults on topics that otherwise might not be considered relevant or important to children in a detention setting.

⁷¹⁰ Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is an international movement with a stated "primary purpose" of individuals within the AA fellowship remaining sober and "helping other alcoholics achieve sobriety." (AA Preamble). Founded in 1935 by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith, the fellowship claims to have 2 million members worldwide. aa.org (accessed April 12, 2011).

5.2.3.4 No belief in God

Of the 200 participants in the sample, not all report that they believe in God. In 21 cases, children respond that they have no belief in God, and one child states that there is no God. Another six participants admit that the question of God does not mean much to them at all.

One participant declares to the author that “Religion is the opiate of the people.”⁷¹¹ Though he quotes from Karl Marx incorrectly, this young man shows that he has heard of this quote and uses it properly in conversation with the author. In this case, the author asks him if this line expresses what he actually believes himself, and he responds that he doesn’t really know, that he just wants to see the author’s reaction to him using a quote from Karl Marx.

5.2.3.5 Toward a theology of belief

In conclusion, the collected data from Question 4 reveals that the overwhelming majority of participants do believe in God, Jesus Christ, Allah, or a higher power. This data supports an independent research study by Justin Barrett in the UK that indicates that children are “born believers” in God.⁷¹²

However, collected data does not indicate that all 200 participants in the sample believe in God. A small number of respondents deny that they believe in anything at all. Some children admit that they believe in God “a little bit” while still others believe only in spiritual attributes like kindness and serenity.

Thus, it appears that participants in this study once again represent a wide spectrum of responses to Question 4. However, among the three questions examined from the Resident

⁷¹¹ Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (Wiltshire: Red Wood Burn Ltd, 1843), 224.

⁷¹² M. Beckford, “Children are born believers in God,” *Daily Telegraph*, 24 Nov, 2008 (accessed April 24, 2013).

Questionnaire (Appendix B) thus far, this question represents the highest number of participants who answer the question in the affirmative: “Yes, I do believe in God.”

5.2.4 Question 5: Do you pray? Can you tell me about that?

The data results from Question 5 indicate that 174 participants in the research sample respond that they do pray. These responses include children who pray every day, who pray sometimes, and who pray when they wake up and go to sleep. This response indicates that children in the Ocean County Detention Center have some religious background or have learned about prayer from someone in their lives. The fact that the overwhelming majority of participants are forthcoming about their prayer life also suggests that this category of inquiry is an active part of their conscious lives.

5.2.4.1 Patterns of prayer

Responses for Question 5 range from basic and concrete to statements indicating that children are wrestling with mature questions about the nature of prayer. For example, seven participants state in concrete terms that they pray before they go to court while another eight admit that they pray to God to get out of juvenile detention.

Still other participants struggle with a deeper sense of prayer. Some wonder if they dare to ask God for forgiveness, and four children report that they pray because they badly need someone to talk to. Another five participants, using the same language in separate interviews, respond that they “pray all the time.”

Four respondents reply that they pray regularly to deceased parents or grandparents. Some children state that they believe that dead people hold special power in heaven to help them here on earth.

The vast majority of collected data for Question 5 also supports the research conclusions of Vivienne Mountain, whose study on the prayer life of children in Australia concludes that children view prayer as an important part of their lives.⁷¹³ Mountain claims that children in her research sample learn about prayer from a community of faith or from eclectic sources outside the church. She further concludes that most children practice prayer in a private or individual way.⁷¹⁴ Mountain summarizes her findings by stating that prayer appears to be a positive activity for children.⁷¹⁵ Given the fact that Mountain's research sample represents children from public and private schools in Australia, it is noteworthy that the results of this present study, conducted in an American juvenile detention center, are so similar to Mountain's conclusions.

5.2.4.2 Not everyone prays

Not all participants in the sample respond affirmatively to Question 5 on prayer. A total of 56 children say they do not pray while another four children admit that prayer never did anything for them.

One participant offers that he does not pray since he finds the practice of meditation much more helpful. The author explores this response with the child, who explains that he learned how to meditate in a drug program he attended last year. He says that when he does get anxious or angry, he has learned to control his breathing by focusing on the present within his mind. He asks the author if she has tried meditation, and she shares that she does meditate as well.

⁷¹³ Vivienne Mountain, "Investigating the Meaning and Function of Prayer in Selected Primary Schools in Melbourne, Australia," unpublished doctoral thesis, 2004, Australian Catholic University, 1-6.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

5.2.4.3 Toward a theology of prayer

In conclusion, the theological implication of the overwhelming majority of data from Question 5 suggests that participants in the research sample believe in the existence of God as someone to whom they can pray. Since prayer is generally understood as communication or conversation with God,⁷¹⁶ data from Question 5 implies that participants are interested in reaching out and communicating with God, as well as developing a relationship with God.⁷¹⁷ Collected data from Question 5 also supports the independent research of Australian Vivienne Mountain, who concludes that children generally view prayer as a significant part of their lives.⁷¹⁸

Given the fact that this research supports the research of Mountain's international study with school children suggests a strong reason to offer children in juvenile detention the opportunity to pray. A further suggestion is that social workers and security staff may also employ prayer with residents who are in crisis or emotionally distraught. For example, the author has often prayed with children privately after a traumatic event. The author has found that praying with a child often resolves emotional and behavior crises and brings a sense of peace to the child.

5.2.5 Question 6: How do you cope with the stress of being in detention?

The intention of Question 6 is to elicit responses from participants about their coping skills. More specifically, this question is intended to probe whether their coping mechanisms might reflect the importance of their spiritual life in detention. The highest response category for participants is "recreation," followed by "reading," "trying not to think,"

⁷¹⁶ Ferguson, et al, 526.

⁷¹⁷ Angel Manuel Rodriguez, "Prayer: a theological reflection," *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors*, online Dec., 2006 (accessed February 23, 2012).

⁷¹⁸ Mountain, 1-6.

“talking to myself,” and “sleeping.” However, a small number of participants say they do not have any stress while another small percentage report that nothing helps them cope with their stress while in detention.

5.2.5.1 Recreation and stress

Although “recreation” is the highest response category for Question 6, this response only applies to 47 of the 200 participants. This low response for the highest category indicates that stress levels among the research sample are high, with few effective outlets for stress. Nevertheless, the recreation program in Ocean County Detention is the most popular program among residents.

Evidence indicates that exercise does change brain chemistry and may change an individual’s mood and thoughts.⁷¹⁹ Thus, exercise is a healthy coping device that may aid children in coping with their feelings, as well as allowing them to expend pent-up energy.

5.2.5.2 A theology of stress

A psychological definition of stress suggests that the stress response is based somewhat on the degree of anxiety that an individual carries for various reasons. Such anxiety may be located within the self, or it may be caused by external stressors.⁷²⁰ Research also indicates that day-to-day stressors that continue are more harmful to the health of an individual than acute stressors, including death or extreme loss.⁷²¹

The phenomenon of stress may be viewed theologically as a form of existential anxiety, reflecting a lack of faith or hope for the future.⁷²² Existential angst, anxiety, or dread is a category common to those who view despair as complicit with anxiety.⁷²³ In this context,

⁷¹⁹ Laura Blue, “Is Exercise the Best Drug for Depression?” *Time*, June 19, 2010.

⁷²⁰ S. Cohen, et al, “Psychological Stress and Disease,” *JAMA* 298 (14), 1685-1687, 2007.

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*

⁷²² W. Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1956), 12-15.

⁷²³ *Ibid.*

responses to Question 6 indicate that the vast majority of participants in the research sample carry an ongoing amount of stress that does not alleviate, except with exercise and reading. Theologically speaking, the responses to this question seem to parallel the responses to Question 2 on the nature of freedom. The common denominator in both cases is that children in the research sample do not feel free. They also feel great stress, anxiety, dread, and despair.

One practical way to support children in juvenile detention who feel stress, as well as anxiety and despair, is to ensure that a detention center has a quality recreation program. A more traditional way to address stress in children is through clinical therapy, which may include talking through issues of stress and/or medication monitoring.⁷²⁴

5.2.5.3 Meditation as spiritual coping

Another documented and successful method for addressing stress in juvenile detention is the spiritual practice of meditation. From a spiritual perspective, meditation may be defined as a “training of the mind to induce a mode of consciousness either to realize some benefit or as an end in itself.”⁷²⁵ For example, Christian meditation is a specific form of meditation that begins with contemplative prayer as preparation for the mind and spirit to receive Christ.⁷²⁶

The practice of meditation has been successfully implemented in Central Juvenile Hall in East Los Angeles, California US since 1993.⁷²⁷ As a result, Administration in the juvenile detention center reports a decreased level of anger among residents, as well as fewer assaults and gang activity.⁷²⁸ Though Johns Hopkins researcher David Altschuler is skeptical and

⁷²⁴ Michael Neill, “The Ultimate Psychotherapy,” *The Huffington Post*, 4/8/13 (accessed April 28, 2013).

⁷²⁵ Alan Watts, *Eastern Wisdom: Zen in the West and Meditations* (Alan Watts Foundation, 2009), 1-4.

⁷²⁶ John Main, *Christian Meditation: The Gethsemane Talks* (Montreal: Benedictine Priory, 1977), 27ff.

⁷²⁷ Janet Kinoshian, “Soul Searching,” *LA Times*, June 2, 1998, 1-11.

⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*

claims that giving children attention is more important than the activity itself,⁷²⁹ statistics of reduced internal violence within the juvenile center indicate that the reduction came after meditation techniques were taught consistently to the residents.⁷³⁰

In the Ocean County Detention Center, meditation is offered as a formal class outside of the education curriculum for interested children. Residents have reported to the author that this practice helps them feel less stressed and does calm their minds. When the author has conducted meditation classes with residents, she has consistently noticed that the majority of the class is able to relax enough to fall asleep by the end of the meditation.

5.2.5.4 Healthy and unhealthy responses to stress

Responses to Question 6 represent a wide spectrum of responses from positive coping mechanisms to negative coping skills. However, some participants do respond with some spiritual introspection. For example, one child speaks of the importance of “letting go of desire.” He offers that he learned a little about Buddhism while in a state program last year and reports that the concept of “letting go” helps him with some of his compulsive thoughts. Another participant offers that “breathing into enlightenment” helps him to cope. This child tells the story of being in a drug program and learning about the concept of enlightenment to help him relax. He explains that this practice helps him breathe more deeply, and he has learned that deep breathing can make him feel calmer.

On the other hand, six participants admit that they bang their heads against walls in detention to relieve stress while one child admits that he “cuts” to relieve stress. “Cutting” is unfortunately a common form of negative stress relief in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center. This form of self-harm is common among children who learn that cutting

⁷²⁹ Kinoshian, 10-11.

⁷³⁰ Ibid.

themselves with a sharp object often relieves the stress they are feeling. Children also cut themselves as a way of feeling alive since, for whatever reasons, their emotions are so dulled that they feel dead inside.⁷³¹

5.2.5.5 Toward a theology of stress

In conclusion, the data for Question 6 indicates that participants in the research sample have various ways to cope with the stress of being in detention. Recreation and reading are among the most popular and positive coping mechanisms utilized. Although some respondents do have more spiritual ways to cope with stress, the percentage is small.

Participants carry a great deal of ongoing stress, theologically similar to their responses in Question 2, where the majority of children report that they simply do not feel free. They appear to be in Kierkegaard's state of anxiety as they attempt to figure out how to cope with life on a daily basis.⁷³² One child responds that "death" makes him feel free, a further example of a state of ongoing anxiety in the face of life itself.

5.2.6 Question 7: What activities in detention, if any, help you to cope?

In Question 7, 115 participants respond that recreation helps them to cope while in juvenile detention. Another 40 participants say that nothing helps them cope with stress levels. An additional 59 children state that phone calls, family visits, and reading helps them with stress.

Similar to responses for Question 6, recreation is the highest response to stress reduction for participants in the sample. However, the percentage of responses for recreation in Question 7 is nearly three times the number for Question 6, perhaps because this question is

⁷³¹ E.D. Klonsky, "The functions of deliberate self-injury: a review of the evidence," *Clinical Psychology Review* 27 (2), 2007, 226-239.

⁷³² Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 41-52.

specific to juvenile detention activities, rather than general coping methods they may employ in detention.

5.2.6.1 Holistic Body Theology

Exercise is known to help children and adults with depression since the natural endorphins in the human body change and grow as the body exerts itself through exercise.⁷³³ In a research study conducted by Konopack and McAuley, conclusions indicate that individuals in the sample who exercise their bodies consistently report a higher quality of life and connection to their personal spirituality than subjects who do not exercise consistently.⁷³⁴

The connection between spirituality and exercise has become more mainstream in recent years and has now emerged as a theological category.⁷³⁵ Founded by Laura Cavanaugh, Holistic Body Theology is a form of theology that “refers to body image and sexuality...and more holistic than what we look like but who we are as human beings and what we do in the world with our bodies.”⁷³⁶ Cavanaugh further stresses the importance of physical exercise for overall spiritual well-being.⁷³⁷ Based on the participant responses for Question 7, it does appear that children in the sample do make a connection between physical exercise and a greater sense of well-being since they report that exercise does help them cope with their level of stress while in juvenile detention.

5.2.6.2 Toward a theology of play

In theological terms, exercise and recreation fall under the general category of play. In Jurgen Moltmann’s text, *The Theology of Play*, he begins by posing this question: “Is there

⁷³³J. Konopack and E. McAuley, “Efficacy-mediated effects of spirituality and physical activity in quality of life: A path analysis,” *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 10:57, 2012, 1-6.

⁷³⁴ Ibid, 2-4.

⁷³⁵ Laura Cavanaugh, bodytheologyblog.wordpress (accessed 4/13/13).

⁷³⁶ Ibid.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

really such a thing as freedom in the midst of slavery, joy in the midst of suffering, and praising God in the groaning of his creatures?”⁷³⁸ Moltmann’s response is to affirm play as the foundation for God’s creativity in the world. Rather than viewing play as purposeless and libertine, Moltmann urges humanity to embrace play at the darkest times in human experience as a way of co-creating with God.⁷³⁹

Based on the responses to Question 7, participants do make the connection between recreation, exercise, and a greater sense of well-being. It is imperative that children in detention be given ample opportunities for play. Such opportunities may allow them to reconnect with a spirit of creativity and renewal at a dark and confined time in their young lives. Moreover, research conducted by David Dobbs indicates that children are not only creative but actually brilliant at play and creativity. Children explore freely and with great enthusiasm and develop psychologically when given opportunities and extended time for creative play.⁷⁴⁰

Thus, the data from Question 7 does correlate, not only with Moltmann’s larger view of play, but also with Dobbs’ research that children in juvenile detention need to be provided with lengthy times of recreation and play, not only to support them physically and psychologically, but also to connect or reconnect, with God as the foundation of creativity itself.

5.2.7 Question 8: Has detention caused you to change any of your religious or spiritual beliefs?

The two highest responses for Question 8 are that 113 participants report that being in detention has not changed their religious or spiritual beliefs. However, the next highest

⁷³⁸ Jurgen Moltmann, et al, *The Theology of Play* (NY: Harper & Row, 1972), 4-7.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid*, 12-25.

⁷⁴⁰ David Dobbs, “Mind: Playing for all Kinds of Possibilities,” *New York Times*, April 22, 2013, D-7.

category consists of 73 participants responding that their beliefs have changed based on their stay in the Ocean County Detention Center.

5.2.7.1 What do participants believe?

Question 8 is included to explore whether participants believe that being in detention has affected their religious or spiritual beliefs. Data from Question 1-C, “Significant Life Events,” in the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) indicates that 14% of participants do recall the first time they were in juvenile detention as their most significant life memory. Question 8 probes the possible correlation between their spiritual and religious beliefs and being in juvenile detention. However, since no specific category of belief is referenced in Question 8, it is difficult to conclude if the sample participants are referring to a general sense of belief or to their spiritual or theological beliefs.

Included in the six highest responses are 5% of residents who say that being in juvenile detention brought them closer to God; 3% report that they pray more; and 3% reveal that they have become more ashamed of their actions. The 48% of participants who respond that detention did not change their beliefs seem proud of that fact and indicate that nothing would cause them to change their beliefs.

One participant believes that being in detention has changed him for the worse since it “isn’t a good place.” Another two children admit that they have become more angry and “more bad” after being in detention.

It is noteworthy that participants do not experience any difficulty with the word *belief*, nor does any child ask the author what a belief is. This implies that children in the Ocean County Detention Center do understand the concept of belief, do possess beliefs, and appear willing to share the nature of their beliefs with an adult. As referenced earlier, according to a study conducted by Justin Barrett in the UK, “...children are naturally inclined to believe

in gods of one kind or another.”⁷⁴¹ They tend to see things in nature designed in purposeful ways that move beyond merely what their parents or other adults may teach them.⁷⁴²

5.2.7.2 Toward a theology of belief

In summary, the results of the two highest response categories for Question 8 do support Barrett’s independent research that children are natural believers in “Gods of one kind or another.”⁷⁴³ The data for Question 8 also indicates that children in the Ocean County Detention Center do possess a set of beliefs, some of which change and some of which do not, during the course of their stay in detention. In practical terms, the fact that 52% of participants do admit that their basic beliefs have been altered by detention indicates the need for further exploration. The topic of children’s beliefs in a detention setting might be used as an opening for staff to dialogue further with residents about the spiritual or religious impact that juvenile detention has in their young lives.

5.2.8 Question 9: Do you have hope for the future? Can you tell me about that?

In Question 9, the author is interested in whether or not children in detention can talk about hope as something important to them and to their future.

5.2.8.1 A concrete sense of hope

The highest number of responses for Question 9 indicates that participants in the sample hope in concrete terms for a good job, followed by participants hoping to make something of their lives. The next highest category hopes to finish school, with another group hoping to get out of juvenile detention. The fifth highest response for Question 9 is a desire to go on to

⁷⁴¹ Justin Barrett, “Out of the Mouths of Babes,” *The Guardian*, Nov. 25, 2008 (accessed May 20, 2012).

⁷⁴² *Ibid.*

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*

trade school or college. The vast majority of participants answer in concrete terms about hope regarding employment, quality of life, and future plans.

It is also noteworthy that in Question 9, many participants ask the author to define what hope is. However, with specific examples of the nature of hope given by the author, most participants still choose to return to a concrete understanding of hope.

5.2.8.2 An existential sense of hope

However, some participants do offer responses reflective of a more existential understanding of the nature of hope, based on a core anxiety about the future and its myriad of overwhelming choices.⁷⁴⁴ For example, one child offers that there is “no hope for the world.” Three participants admit that they do very much want to have hope, but they do not. One response comes from three children, who hope they are “alive.” Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for children in the Ocean County Detention Center to talk about dying at a young age. This acquaintance with death may indicate a reflection of the level of violence they live with in their neighborhoods and in their families.

Yet this awareness of an early death may also be connected to their lack of hope. It is also possible that the accepted level of violence and death that many children in detention are familiar with may also explain why participants do not identify with hope as a spiritual or metaphysical category.

5.2.8.3 Jurgen Moltmann’s theology of hope

In Jurgen Moltmann’s *Theology of Hope*, he presents an eschatological metaphor of hope based on the promise of life through resurrection in Jesus Christ.⁷⁴⁵ Moltmann claims that hope can strengthen faith and can help the believer to live a life of love that creates a

⁷⁴⁴ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 41-52.

⁷⁴⁵ Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (SCM: London, 1967), 32-35.

“passion for the possible.”⁷⁴⁶ He continues that existential philosophers including Jean-Paul Sartre⁷⁴⁷ and Ernst Bloch,⁷⁴⁸ both of the atheist persuasion, do include hope as an integral and crucial part of their belief systems. Though not Christian, Sartre and Bloch have strong hope for the future. Indeed their atheism is a promise of freedom and hope for a more liberated future. Moltmann urges that both the atheist and the Christian approach need not be mutually exclusive. Rather, they seek the same outcome: hope for a better future.⁷⁴⁹

In the context of Moltmann’s understanding that hope is a human vision for a better future,⁷⁵⁰ the majority of responses for Question 9 indicate that participants do have a strong sense of hope for the future. Their responses further indicate that they have thought about long-term goals in their lives beyond being in detention.

5.2.8.4 Deepak Chopra’s example of hope

In Deepak Chopra’s book *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*,⁷⁵¹ he considers the nature of hope from a different perspective. Chopra relates statistics from World War II, where survivors are stranded at sea in lifeboats after their ships were sunk. He relates that the first to die are the younger men, while the older men with more survival experience have more hope that they can survive. The younger men lack such experience and believe they are trapped in a hopeless situation.⁷⁵²

If Chopra’s analogy about hope⁷⁵³ is applied to the highest responses for Question 9, it might be argued that children in juvenile detention centers possess a greater understanding of survival that may foster a greater sense of hope for their own future. Indeed their sense of

⁷⁴⁶ Moltmann, 32-35.

⁷⁴⁷ Jean-Paul Sarte and Benny Levy, *Hope Now: The 1980 Interviews* (Ill: Univ. of Chicago, 1986), 29-34.

⁷⁴⁸ Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (Mass: MIT Press, 1947), 21-35.

⁷⁴⁹ Moltmann, 32-38.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁵¹ Deepak Chopra, *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind* (NY: Random House, 1993), 35-42.

⁷⁵² Ibid, 37-38.

⁷⁵³ Ibid, 35-60.

hope does support and echo the existential thought of Sartre and Bloch, whose confessed atheism is nonetheless rooted in an urgent sense of hope for a better future.⁷⁵⁴

5.2.8.5 Toward a theology of hope

In conclusion, the results from Question 9 display the greatest majority of participants responding in concrete terms about their sense of hope, including hope for a good job, a better future, and educational goals. While a smaller percentage of participants do respond with a more introspective and abstract understanding of hope, their answers are not all positive, nor do they reflect a uniform belief in God as part of their hope.

In the context of Moltmann's understanding that hope is a human vision for a better future,⁷⁵⁵ the majority of responses for Question 9 indicate strongly that participants do have a strong sense of hope for the future.

Finally, Chopra's analogy about hope⁷⁵⁶ also mirrors the highest responses for Question 9. As he points out in his example of men stranded at sea during World War II, children in juvenile detention centers may possess a greater understanding of survival that could foster a greater sense of hope for their own future. Indeed their sense of hope also echoes the existential thought of Sartre and Bloch, whose atheism is nonetheless rooted in an urgent commitment to hope, grounded in their zeal for a better future.⁷⁵⁷

5.2.9 Question 10: Do you have faith in something? Can you tell me about that?

Similar to Question 9, the author's intent in Question 10 is to introduce another traditional category of religion and spirituality. The highest response is that "I have faith in myself." The second highest response, "no, not really," is followed by "faith in God," and "faith in

⁷⁵⁴ Sartre and Levy. 29-34.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid, 35-60.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid, 29-34.

my family.” It is noteworthy that nearly 20% of participants do express their faith in God specifically.

The fifth highest response to Question 10, “What is faith?” presents a similar issue to Question 9, where participants frequently ask the author what the word *hope* means. In Question 10, 10% of participants state they do not understand what faith is and ask the author to explain the word. In response, the author offers each child several examples of faith, including a concrete example that one can have faith that the phone would work, if used. Other examples given by the author pertain to having faith in a friend or in God.

5.2.9.1 William James and faith

In theological terms, faith may be viewed as a certain confidence or trust in a person, thing, or deity.⁷⁵⁸ Often faith is not based on proof, but on the belief of the person having the faith.⁷⁵⁹ In his work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James suggests that it is crucial to study religious experiences in human beings since the human mind is the closest thing to a “microscope of the mind”⁷⁶⁰ that allows us to make “over-beliefs.”⁷⁶¹ For James, “over-beliefs” are beliefs that cannot be proven but nonetheless support human beings in living fuller and better lives.”⁷⁶²

Responses for Question 10 indicate that participants do have a strong sense of faith, mainly in themselves, in God, and in their families. Their responses support James’ instruction that developing faith, while it cannot necessarily be proved, may help human beings to lead fuller and better lives. It seems that it might be helpful for children in detention to develop a strong faith in themselves. As mentioned earlier, although family is

⁷⁵⁸ Dictionary.com (accessed April 17, 2013).

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁰ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (Edinburg: Longmans, Green & Co., 1902), 315-333.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid.

⁷⁶² Ibid.

important to the children in the sample, it is also noted that nearly half of children admitted to the Ocean County Detention Center do not have family actively involved in their lives. The children wish this was true, above all else, but it is not true. Thus, to develop faith in themselves seems a healthy and realistic response for children in juvenile detention.

The participants' understanding of faith also seems to support the definition of faith as something that cannot be proved, or even demonstrated.⁷⁶³ Nevertheless, the children state that they have faith anyway. For example, children report that they have faith in their families, who do not come to visit them.

5.2.9.2 "I have no faith"

Forty participants admit that they have no faith at all. Two children admit that they have no faith but really wish that they did. In this regard, these responses may be connected with the small percentage of participants from Question 9 who indicate that they have no hope for themselves, for their own futures, or for the world itself.

In a clinical sense, these responses may reflect the percentage of children admitted to juvenile detention in Ocean County who are diagnosed with depression. Annually, this percentage varies but remains in the general area of 15-20 %.⁷⁶⁴

Apart from these two responses, the vast majority of participants do report having faith in something concrete like themselves and their family to a reported faith in God, Allah, and in people in general. One African American participant responds that he has faith in President Obama, the current president of the United States.

5.2.9.3 Toward a theology of faith

Thus, faith is a relevant theological category for the participants in this sample, both in theological ways and in more concrete ways. The majority of participants do report having

⁷⁶³ Dictionary.com (accessed April 17, 2013).

⁷⁶⁴ *Admission Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention, 2000-2010.

faith in something, including themselves, their families, and God. A small percentage of children admit that they do not understand the question while 40 children state that they have no faith in anything at all.

Furthermore, responses for Question 10 do seem to support the work of William James on the nature of faith. As James suggests, faith is belief in something that cannot be proven but nonetheless allows individuals to live richer and more meaningful lives.⁷⁶⁵ In this regard, participants in the sample do struggle with finding meaning and purpose in their lives. Though their individual paths to faith may not be traditionally religious, they strive to be truthful to themselves, as well as to find faith in something that keeps them grounded in their world of anxiety, disappointment, and sometimes even faith itself.

5.2.10 Question 11: Can you tell me about any spiritual, religious, or abnormal experience you've ever had?

The author's intention in Question 11 is to continue to explore if children in a detention center might connect spiritual and religious experiences with any unusual experiences they might have had in their lives.

5.2.10.1 Tales of the supernatural

The vast majority of participants respond that they have no recollection of any experience of this kind. The remaining 29% do respond with some type of experience that is important to them. In 3% of the sample, participants reveal that they have dreams that eventually come true. Another 3% admit to seeing ghosts or demons. Children who report seeing ghosts or demons state that they observe these figures mostly in their homes, specifically in their bedrooms. Four participants report serious accidents, from which they walk away unharmed. All four children separately attribute their narrow escape from danger directly to God.

⁷⁶⁵ James, 315-333.

It is difficult to know whether these reported experiences are true, as well as what cultural and media factors may contribute to their stories. Yet 29% of children in the sample do have a story to tell. In this kind of private interview venue, perhaps the children feel they can share such a story. It might also be true that a traditional church or religious setting may not encourage such fanciful stories. Yet there needs to be such an outlet for children to share stories of the peculiar. Indeed each child has a story to tell, and in the story may lie the healing. Some participants tell sad stories, filled with emotion. Still others relate stories and wonder if the author actually believes them.

While the majority of participants report no such experience for Question 11, the children who do respond report dreams, ghosts, premonitions, precognition, and the feeling of a presence they could not identify or explain. Though these responses do not represent traditional theological categories like faith, hope, and prayer, the nature and spectrum of responses indicate that there is a level of reality important to children in detention that may not be addressed by the traditional church.

Yet children may need an outlet to talk about such experiences, where an adult listens and takes the child seriously. Whether children are telling the truth about some experiences is not necessarily germane. What is significant is that children are sharing something that they want to say in their own way, without censorship or judgment.

Responses to Question 11 also indicate that participants are open to different worlds and other realities. For example, six participants report seeing ghosts or spirits. While traditional Judeo-Christian theology suggests that ghosts or “spirit beings” do exist in the form of angels, good and evil in nature, such traditional theology does not support that human beings

are haunted by spirits of the dead.⁷⁶⁶ Another six participants report dreams that foretell future events. Again, dreams that contain premonitions are documented in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.⁷⁶⁷ Whether or not participants in the sample are telling the truth, their categories of response are well founded in biblical theology.⁷⁶⁸

5.2.10.2 Experiences of the spirit

In addition to categories beyond the scope of mainstream theology like dreams and spirits, the theological implications of responses for Question 11 also raise the place of spirituality within the research. As mentioned in Chapter One, the central focus of the research is the theological category of spirituality. Although difficult to define and increasingly separate from any specific religious tradition, spirituality seems to concern life experience more than questions of doctrine.⁷⁶⁹

The term *spirituality* as a theological category has several meanings and connotations that may add to its confusion and lack of clarity. For example, the definition of spiritual in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* suggests this possible confusion by using a tautology to define the term itself: "1/ of, relating to, consisting of, or affecting the spirit...."⁷⁷⁰ However, the etymology of the word spirituality does reveal some further clarity concerning what the term does address. The classical root of the word spirit comes from the Latin *spiritus*, also meaning breath.⁷⁷¹ In many ancient cultures, including Hebrew, the word breath was associated with soul, the source of life itself.⁷⁷²

⁷⁶⁶ 2 Corinthians 11: 14-15.

⁷⁶⁷ Charles Souvay, *Interpretation of Dreams* (NY: Appleton, 1909), 25-57.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁹ Philip Sheldrake, ed., *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 2005), 4-10.

⁷⁷⁰ Frederick C. Mish, ed., et al, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Ed.* (Springfield MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2002), 1130.

⁷⁷¹ Paul Kurtz, ed., "The Breath of God: Identifying Spiritual Energy," *Skeptical Odysseys* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2001), 363.

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*, 363-374.

Robert Fuller suggests that "...spirituality exists wherever we struggle with the issues of how our lives fit into the greater scheme of things... We encounter spiritual issues every time we wonder where the universe comes from, why we are here, or what happens when we die. We also become spiritual when we become moved by values such as beauty, love, or creativity that seem to reveal a meaning or power beyond our visible world. An idea or practice is 'spiritual' when it reveals our personal desire to establish a felt-relationship with the deepest meanings or powers governing life."⁷⁷³

In William James' text, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, he develops a philosophical method called "radical empiricism," which he defines as an inductive process whereby an individual's concepts arise directly from his or her experiences. Concepts are secondary and tentative, subject to revision based on revised data from new experiences.⁷⁷⁴ James further champions the value and legitimacy of experience as a basis for knowledge. He does not contend that individual spiritual experience is constant, stable, or objective. Rather, James views objectivity as an inappropriate conceptual imposition on reality that does not detract from the truth of one's experience.⁷⁷⁵

William James also defines the science of *noetics* as "...states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority."⁷⁷⁶ It seems that the essence of noetics may also be applied to some participant responses in Question 11.

⁷⁷³ Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and Sacralization of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 60.

⁷⁷⁴ James R., "Big Book Theology: "We Agnostics and William James," *Stepstudy.org: 12-Step History and Practice*, May 21, 2008 (accessed April 13, 2011).

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁶ Cassandra Vieten, "What is Noetic Science?" *Huffington Post* (accessed Sept. 21, 2009).

Thus, spirituality may be regarded as a theological vehicle that emphasizes individual experience as a basis for knowledge and the development of belief. In Question 11, participants offer a wide spectrum of responses based on their own experiences. Whether some of their stories are true or not, it is possible that the children in the sample are trying to make sense of what they experience as a way of forming their own beliefs, as well as their own truths about life itself.⁷⁷⁷

5.2.10.3 Stories from beyond

In Question 11, participants tell tales of their experiences with worlds beyond ordinary human experience. For example, one child, age 14, reports that his mother's friend died after an argument between them. This child reports that one month later, his mother received a text message from her dead friend. Another child, age 16, tells of a dream he had wherein he was warned not to join a local gang, or he would be shot and killed. He admits that this dream stopped him from joining the gang.

Another participant, age 16, shares that he was very close to his father, who died of cancer. He tells the author that he visited a medium who did connect with his father on the "other side." A 14-year-old child reports that his grandfather died, and he was visited by his grandfather a few months later when he appeared to him in his own bedroom.

A 17-year-old tells the story of meditating and seeing an Indian in a vision, who advises him to "forgive, let go, and move on." He admits that after this vision, he became even more committed to meditation, which had only been a casual spiritual practice before this vision. This young man says that this vision was so real to him that it changed his life. He offers that it scared him enough that he began to think about his actions, rather than to dwell on what others in his life had done to him.

⁷⁷⁷ Heelas, 60-63.

However, not all stories tell of positive experiences. Some participants report tales of darkness and fear. For example, two children report that a man came into their church during a Sunday morning service. Both children report separately that the man in their church was possessed by the devil. The author probes both children individually for more information, and they tell a similar story of a “bad feeling” that seemed to be around and in the man, rather than telling about a man with horns or hooves.

A 14-year-old reports that while he is praying, he feels a terrifying presence of the devil trying to get inside him. He claims that when he opens his eyes, the feeling of terror goes away, and so does the devil. Another child, age 17, reports that he has seen aliens from another planet in a place in the wood where he goes and falls asleep sometimes. He tells the author that he knows it sounds crazy, but the fact that he has witnessed the alien more than once or twice makes him sure that the creature is really there, not just in his mind.

Finally, a 13-year-old tells about being five years old and sitting down at the dining room table for dinner. He mentions that he has never met his mother’s parents since they both died before he was born. This child says that while his mother is in the kitchen preparing dinner, he is waiting in the dining room and sees a man and a woman dancing together over the dining room table. They look so happy and both have blond hair. When he looks again, they disappear. When his mother comes back in the dining room with a platter of spaghetti, he tells her what he just saw. In shock, she drops the platter and tells him that her parents—his grandparents whom he has never met--were both blond and danced professionally as a team.

5.2.10.4 Are children superstitious?

The responses to Question 11 also raise another issue germane to interviewing children, namely, the extent to which children are suggestible in an interview setting. In Lynn Clark’s

research with adolescents,⁷⁷⁸ she chooses the term *superstitious* to explain children's interest in the supernatural and beyond. Clark's research concerns how the media affects adolescent religious beliefs, specifically in relation to the supernatural, a central category of her research.⁷⁷⁹

However, participant responses to Question 11 do not necessarily support Clark's supposition about children and superstition. As Clark indicates, it is no doubt true that children are affected by the media, especially television and computers. Yet there is something refreshing and honest about the responses to Question 11 in this study that may speak more to their level of suggestibility than to a more sinister implication of their interest in things unexplained, as Clark implies.⁷⁸⁰

A practical implication that follows from the responses to Question 11 and children's perceived level of suggestibility might be a program for mentoring children in detention centers and offering them guidance and structure for some of their spiritual experiences.

5.2.10.5 Toward a theology of the unexplained

In conclusion, the collected data from Question 11 is among the most intriguing in the entire study. Though the vast majority of participants do not report any incidents, the remaining 29% tell tales of the supernatural that range from seeing dead relatives to precognition dreams and visions that they cannot otherwise explain. In the majority of cases where children do offer their own stories, it appears that they believe that there is something "out there" that protects them from harm when they cannot protect themselves. They seem to be in touch with worlds beyond the five senses, as well as realities that transcend life on

⁷⁷⁸ Lynn Schofield Clark, *From Angels to Aliens* (NY: International, 2003), 225 ff.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 230-238.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

earth. However, not all participants tell stories of being protected. Some report terrible feelings of a negative presence that seeks to harm them.

Many stories deal with a more neutral experience of seeing dead relatives after they have gone, as well as knowing things about dead people in their lives without having ever met the individuals while they were alive.

Participant responses for Question 11 also support William James' belief that an individual's concepts or beliefs arise directly from his or her experiences. Beliefs are secondary and tentative, subject to revision based on revised data from new experiences.⁷⁸¹ James further champions experience as a basis for knowledge. He does not contend that individual spiritual experience is constant, stable, or objective. Rather, he views objectivity as an inappropriate conceptual imposition on reality that does not detract from the truth of one's experience.⁷⁸²

Many responses for Question 11 also echo James' definition of the science of noetics as "...states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority."⁷⁸³

5.2.11 Question 12: How would you describe this interview experience for yourself?

In Questions 12, the author's intention is to allow each participant to have a sense of ownership and control within the interview process. Since many questions in the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) probe children for sensitive and personal information, Question 12 is an opportunity for participants to tell how they feel about the process. This question is

⁷⁸¹ James R., "Big Book Theology: "We Agnostics and William James," *Stepstudy.org: 12-Step History and Practice*, May 21, 2008 (accessed April 13, 2011).

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*

⁷⁸³ Cassandra Vieten, "What is Noetic Science?" *Huffington Post* (accessed Sept. 21, 2009).

also an attempt to shift the power dynamics within the interview process, as well as to encourage the development of a mutual relationship between the author and each participant within the context of the interview process itself.

5.2.11.1 “The interview felt OK/normal”

The highest response category for Question 12 is the statement that the interview process feels “OK/normal.” In working with children in the detention center, the author has discovered that when a child states that something is OK, that statement may be taken as positive. If the child says that an adult is OK, that statement indicates acceptance of an adult by the child.

5.2.11.2 “I got to talk about things”

The second highest category is a response from 29 residents that the interview is good since they are allowed to talk about things. This second response category might indicate that children in detention are looking for an outlet to talk about the kinds of questions raised in the Resident Questionnaire. This response may also indicate that children appreciate the opportunity to talk to an adult more often, specifically in a context where they are asked questions. Perhaps the type of question posed may not be the most significant piece. Rather, the significance of this second response category supports offering children in detention more opportunities to talk about their concerns with a caring adult.

5.2.11.3 “It was kinda weird”

Not all responses for Question 12 are positive. For example, one 15-year-old participant responds that he really doesn’t care that much at all one way or the other about his interview. Another child, age 17, says that the interview seems pointless to him while two other children offer that the whole thing is “kinda weird.”

However, despite some less than positive comments about the interview itself, it is significant that participants have the opportunity to say exactly what they choose, in their own words, without the author judging them. Indeed this acceptance within limits of what children say is a crucial aspect of working with children in a tolerant and respectful way toward the development of relationship.

5.2.11.4 A desire for relationship

A theological implication of Question 12 appears to be the participants' desires for relationship. Research on the developing adolescent brain indicates that the single most important factor in developing healthy brains in adolescents is the relationships that they develop.⁷⁸⁴ More specifically, adolescents report that they want to spend more time with their parents,⁷⁸⁵ perhaps a paradoxical research conclusion since children and adolescents often treat their parents with as much distance as possible. Yet the author has also observed from working in juvenile detention that children with severe behavioral and mental health issues usually improve during the course of their stay in detention. This may be due to the fact that they are in an environment of structure, consistency, and constant attention from adults.

5.2.11.5 Toward a theology of relationship

In theological terms, the importance of human relationships is central to the work of Martin Buber. In his text, *I and Thou*, Buber maintains that life is given meaning through relationships. And one's relationship with God is the most significant relationship in life.⁷⁸⁶ He continues that human beings have two choices in any relationship: the "I/It" or

⁷⁸⁴ "Inside the Teenage Brain," *Frontline*, WGBH Educational Foundation (video), 2004.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁶ Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (NY: Scribner, 1923), 10-55.

the “I/Thou.” The latter is a choice to experience God in every relationship, rather than to treat another person as an “it.”⁷⁸⁷

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Carl Rogers, has developed a person-centered approach to psychotherapy that also highlights relationships.⁷⁸⁸ Rogers envisions the chemistry between therapist and client leading directly to the client’s healing.⁷⁸⁹ Though Rogers is a primarily a clinician, his work is often referenced in Christian theology due to his emphasis on the power of relationship as a method of personal healing.⁷⁹⁰

Thus, from the collected data for Question 12, the vast majority of participants report that the interview process itself is positive for them. They answer that the interview feels OK, that they get to talk about things on their minds, and that the process is calming. A handful of responses are more negative and indicate that participants do not get much from the interview. Yet even in these contrary responses lies the hope of developing a relationship between author and child that is supportive, respectful and caring.

5.2.12 Question 13: Is there any question you think should be added to the questionnaire?

In Question 13, the author’s intention is to include participants in the creative process of developing the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B). Her first goal in this question is to offer participants an opportunity to engage in the kind of imaginative play and creativity that Jurgen Moltmann urges in his text, *The Theology of Play*.⁷⁹¹ Moltmann suggests that play can be therapeutic and healing at some of the darkest times in human experience. He

⁷⁸⁷ Buber, 23-27.

⁷⁸⁸ Carl Rogers, *Client-centered therapy: Its current practice, implications, and theory* (London: Constable, 1951), 60-67.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁰ Alexander G. MacDougall, *A Theological Critique of Carl Rogers* (unpublished master’s thesis Montreal: McGill Univ., 1972), 1-47.

⁷⁹¹ Moltmann, et al, 4; 12-25.

recommends play as a basic and loving way to rediscover God's desire to create and recreate in the world.

A second goal of Question 13 is to continue the development of a caring and respectful relationship with each participant, as discussed in the theological analysis for Question 12. Though 84% of participants offer no additional questions to be included in the Resident Questionnaire, many children do respond with specific questions indicating their potential for creativity, as well as their attempt to trust the relationship that the author is offering.

As explained in Chapter Three of this study on methodology, the author's original intention was to include participant questions in the ongoing evolution of the Resident Questionnaire itself. However, since so many questions were submitted by participants, she decided not to change the questionnaire after each interview. Rather, she chose to ask each participant to answer his own question and to record all questions and answers in a separate section within the data for Question 13. A complete list of all questions submitted by participants may be found in Chapter Four of the thesis.

5.2.12.1 "Do you have a soul?" "Yes. I feel and see things."

The variety and individuality of participant responses for Question 13 indicates that the participants take the author's solicitation of their questions seriously. The wide spectrum of responses also indicates that they do wrestle with significant spiritual issues in their own lives. For example, one 17-year-old offers the question, age 15, "Are you happy with your life?" His answer to his own question: "No, at this time I'm not." Another child, age 15, asks his question this way: "When you die, do you want to go to heaven or hell?" His answer: "Neither. I'd like to stay neutral so I can stay with my family." Finally, one 18-year-old asks the question, "Do you have a soul?" He answers: "Yes. Because I feel and see things that other people don't."

5.2.12.2 “Would you do it again and get caught?” “Yes.”

Still other responses indicate an honesty that is both refreshing and sobering. For example, one 18-year old asks, “What do you want to do with your life when you get out of here?” His answer: “I want to get back to my life on the streets.” Another 15-year-old asks, “If you could change one thing you did wrong, what would it be?” He responds, “I would hide the stuff better so I wouldn’t get caught.” And finally, a 17-year-old asks, “Would you do what you did again if you knew you’d get caught? His answer: “Yes.”

5.2.12.3 Toward a theology of creativity

Theologically, the author’s intention in Question 13 is similar to Question 12. In both questions, the author attempts to foster a relationship with each child. She also desires to equalize the power dynamics in the relationship by offering the child an equal share in the creative process. Since the participants themselves are vulnerable within the interview process, the author also intends to make herself more vulnerable by sharing the creative process with each child.

In this regard, the author attempts to encourage an “I/Thou” relationship⁷⁹² with each participant, not only by sharing power with each child, but also by allowing equality within the creative process. Similar to the theological framework of Carl Rogers,⁷⁹³ the author hopes to foster a relationship between herself and each participant that might support the child’s potential for healing and change within the context of a brief, therapeutic encounter with a caring adult.

A final theological observation on the collected data for Question 13 is that these questions offered by participants in the sample offer yet another spiritual and psychological glimpse into the interior lives of these children. In this interview process, many reveal not

⁷⁹² Buber, 10-55.

⁷⁹³ Rogers, 15-32.

only their inner demons, but also their deep longing to be a better person than they perceive themselves to be. This extraordinary level of profound self-reflection on the part of these children is uncovered and documented in the course of these individual interviews in a detention setting.

5.2.13 Question 14: Is there any question that you would like to ask me?

In Question 14, the author invites each participant to ask any question(s) that he wishes. When a participant does ask the author a question, she writes it down in front of the child and then sets aside pen and paper to answer the child's question. In some cases, her answer leads to further discussion between herself and the child.

Only 22% of participants in the sample do respond to Question 14 by asking the author a question. However, as in Question 13, the wide spectrum of responses indicates a broad spectrum of issues on the children's minds. A number of participants raise concrete issues, including whether they can make a phone call or when the author thinks the child might be released from detention. However, an equal number of participants also raise spiritual questions while other children probe more personal areas of the author's life, including her own childhood.

5.2.13.1 "Have you ever felt ashamed?"

Some participants ask poignant questions of the author. For example, one 14-year-old asks, "Have you ever felt alone and wanted to make the right decision, but couldn't?" Another child, age 15, asks the author, "What do you see in me?" A 13-year-old asks this question: "Have you ever felt ashamed of the things you've done?" In each case, the author responds with candor about her own life, which sometimes leads to other questions from the same child. The author has found the level of trust and vulnerability displayed by many of

the participants for Question 14 to be far beyond what she hoped might be possible in this research.

5.2.13.2 “Can I go now?”

On the other hand, some participants ask questions of a concrete nature, as they have in many previous questions in the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B). For example, one 13-year old asks the author if his cousin can visit him on the weekend. Another child, age 16, asks what the research is all about and “where is all this stuff going?” A particularly incisive question comes from an 18-year-old who asks, “Is this research helping people, or are you just interested in collecting information?” In each case, the author responds to the child’s question and makes an attempt to match the level of honesty and trust that the participant invests in his own question.

A final response comes from a 16-year-old, who asks this: “Can I go now?”

5.2.13.3 Toward a theology of *namaste*

The theological import of Question 14 is similar to Questions 12 and 13. In all three questions, the author’s intention is to develop a relationship with each child in the course of the interview. The author also attempts to foster a more equal relationship with each participant by allowing each child an opportunity to share in the creative process. Question 14 also allows each child to experience the author’s respect for and value of him. She listens and records each response and explains that their responses will be incorporated into the research itself. Thus, in Question 14, as in Questions 12 and 13, the author envisions Martin Buber’s “I/Thou” relationship⁷⁹⁴ principle within the context of each interview.

An additional theological imperative for Questions 12, 13, and 14 is the author’s intention to engage each participant in the essence of relationship implied in the Hindu word

⁷⁹⁴ Buber, 10-55.

namaste.⁷⁹⁵ In Sanskrit, the word is a combination of “nama” + “te,” meaning “I bow to you.”⁷⁹⁶ The word *namaha* can also mean “na ma,” or “not mine.” This meaning of “not mine” has the spiritual significance of negating or reducing the ego in the presence of another person.⁷⁹⁷ It is the author’s conclusion that based on the number and depth of many of the participant responses for Question 14, a beginning toward the essence of the word *namaste* has been accomplished.

5.2.14 A working theology of juveniles in detention

In summary, based on a sample of 200 male participants from the ages of 13 to 19 in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, a review of the collected data for each of the 14 questions in the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) suggests the following working theology of children in juvenile detention.

5.2.14.1 Freedom

Responses from participants about freedom cover a broad spectrum from an external sense of freedom to an experience of never being free, except in death. Participants in the sample voice a desire to be free, to live life as individuals, and to be authentically themselves in whatever way they may choose to express their individuality.

In theological terms, participants identify with an existential view of life, wherein they carry a degree of ongoing anxiety about their personal choices. It cannot be determined from the data whether they believe that their anxiety and lack of personal freedom may lead them to a personal experience with God, as Kierkegaard suggests.⁷⁹⁸ Yet their overall view of life does reflect a sense of not being free.

⁷⁹⁵ Gautam Chatterjee, *Sacred Hindu Symbols* (Google Books, 2001), 47-48.

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁸ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 41-52.

5.2.14.2 Value and meaning

Participants in the sample value family above all. Additionally, they value relationships, not only within the family, but also with significant others like friends, mothers, and themselves. This data on the significance of family and other relationships clearly supports many authors in the field of practical theology who suggest that working with children needs to be in the context of the family.

Several participants report that they value being respected. Still others value honesty and being taken seriously. These collective responses about value indicate that children in the Ocean County Detention Center desire to be a part of something greater than themselves.

In theological terms, this sense of belonging might be expressed as a strong, yet undefined, desire to belong to the family of God. J. Todd Billings speaks of this desire for God as a desire for adoption into the family of God.⁷⁹⁹ Perhaps an unspoken desire of participants in this study is a deeply felt wish to belong, ultimately to God, the One who will not abandon them in times of personal need.

5.2.14.3 Belief in God

The overwhelming majority of participants do believe in God, Jesus Christ, Allah, or a higher power. This data supports an independent research study by Justin Barrett in the UK that indicates that children are “born believers” in God.⁸⁰⁰

However, collected data does not indicate that all 200 participants in the sample believe in God. A small number of respondents deny that they believe in anything at all. Some children admit that they believe in God “a little bit” while still others believe only in spiritual attributes like kindness and serenity.

⁷⁹⁹ J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Michigan: Baker Academic Books, 2011), 2-10.

⁸⁰⁰ M. Beckford, “Children are born believers in God,” *Daily Telegraph*, 24 Nov, 2008 (accessed April 24,2013).

Thus, it appears that participants in this study once again represent a wide spectrum of responses about their belief in God. However, among the total number of questions in the Resident Questionnaire thus far, their collective responses about God represent the highest number of participants who answer the question in the affirmative: “Yes, I do believe in God.”

5.2.14.4 Prayer

The overwhelming majority of participants believe in the existence of God as someone to whom they can pray. Since prayer is generally understood as communication or conversation with God,⁸⁰¹ participants are interested in reaching out and communicating with God, as well as developing a relationship with God.⁸⁰² Collected data also supports the independent research of Vivienne Mountain, who concludes that children generally view prayer as a significant part of their lives.⁸⁰³

However, not all participants believe in prayer. A total of 56 children say they do not pray while another four children admit that prayer never did anything for them.

5.2.14.5 Stress and recreation

Participants have various ways to cope with the stress of being in detention. Recreation and reading are among the most popular and positive coping mechanisms utilized. Although some respondents do have more spiritual ways to cope with stress, the percentage is small.

Furthermore, participants carry a great deal of ongoing stress, theologically similar to their responses about freedom: most do not feel free. They appear to be in Kierkegaard’s state of anxiety as they attempt to figure out how to cope with life on a daily basis.⁸⁰⁴ One

⁸⁰¹ Ferguson, et al, 526.

⁸⁰² Angel Manuel Rodriguez, “Prayer: a theological reflection,” *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors*, online Dec., 2006 (accessed February 23, 2012).

⁸⁰³ Mountain, 1-6.

⁸⁰⁴ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 41-52.

child responds that “death” makes him feel free, a further example of a state of ongoing anxiety in the face of life itself.

5.2.14.6 Recreation and play

In theological terms, exercise and recreation fall under the general category of play. In Jurgen Moltmann’s text, *The Theology of Play*, he begins by posing this question: “Is there really such a thing as freedom in the midst of slavery, joy in the midst of suffering, and praising God in the groaning of his creatures?”⁸⁰⁵ Moltmann’s response is a resounding “Yes!” Based on the collected data, participants support Moltmann’s hypothesis and do make the connection between recreation, exercise, and a greater sense of well-being.

5.2.14.7 Hope

The vast majority of participants respond in concrete terms about their sense of hope, including hope for a good job, a better future, and educational goals. While a smaller percentage of participants do respond with a more introspective and abstract understanding of hope, their answers are not all positive, nor do they reflect a uniform belief in God as part of their hope. In the context of Moltmann’s understanding that hope is a human vision for a better future,⁸⁰⁶ the majority of participants do have a strong sense of hope for the future.

Participant responses also support Deepak Chopra’s analogy about hope.⁸⁰⁷ Chopra cites a study of men stranded at sea during World War II. The study indicates that those who survived were older and had been through difficult times in life, whereas the younger men with little experience of survival did not survive. It is entirely plausible that participants in this research may possess a greater understanding of survival that could foster a greater sense of hope for their own future. Indeed their sense of hope also echoes the existential

⁸⁰⁵ Jurgen Moltmann, et al, *The Theology of Play* (NY: Harper & Row, 1972), 4.

⁸⁰⁶ Moltmann, et al, *The Theology of Play*, 1-4.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid, 35-60.

thought of Sartre and Bloch, whose atheism is nonetheless rooted in an urgent commitment to hope, grounded in their zeal for a better future.⁸⁰⁸

5.2.14.8 Faith

The majority of participants do report having faith in something, including themselves, their families, and God. A small percentage of children admit that they do not understand what faith is, while 40 children state that they have no faith at all.

Furthermore, responses about faith do support the work of William James on the nature of faith. As James suggests, faith is belief in something that cannot be proven but nonetheless allows individuals to live richer and more meaningful lives.⁸⁰⁹ In this regard, participants in the sample do struggle with finding meaning and purpose in their lives. Though their individual paths to faith may not be traditionally religious, they strive to be truthful to themselves, as well as to find faith in something that keeps them grounded in their world of anxiety, disappointment, and sometimes in faith itself.

5.2.14.9 Tales of the unexplained

Though the vast majority of participants do not report any religious, spiritual, or unexplained incidents, 29% tell tales of the supernatural that range from seeing dead relatives to precognition dreams and visions that they cannot otherwise explain. In the majority of cases where children do offer their own stories, it appears that they believe that there is something “out there” that protects them from harm when they cannot protect themselves. They seem to be in touch with worlds beyond the five senses, as well as realities that transcend life on earth.

However, not all participants tell stories of being protected. Some report terrible feelings of a negative presence that seeks to harm them. Many stories deal with a more neutral

⁸⁰⁸ Sartre and Levy. 29-34.

⁸⁰⁹ James, 315-333.

experience of seeing dead relatives after they have gone, as well as knowing things about dead people in their lives without having ever met the individuals involved.

Participant responses also support William James' belief that an individual's concepts or beliefs arise directly from his or her experiences. Beliefs are secondary and tentative, subject to revision based on revised data from new experiences.⁸¹⁰ Many responses also echo James' definition of the science of *noetics* as "...states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority."⁸¹¹

5.2.14.10 The interview process

The vast majority of participants report that the interview process itself is positive for them. They answer that the interview felt OK, that they got to talk about things on their minds, and that the process was calming. A handful of responses are more negative and indicate that participants do not get much from the interview. Yet even in these contrary responses lies the hope of developing a relationship between author and child that is respectful and caring.

5.2.14.11 Questions for Resident Questionnaire

The variety and individuality of participant responses when asked to offer additional questions for the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) indicate that the participants take the author's solicitation of their questions seriously. The wide spectrum of responses also indicates that they do wrestle with significant spiritual issues in their own lives.

⁸¹⁰ James R., "Big Book Theology: "We Agnostics and William James," *Stepstudy.org: 12-Step History and Practice*, May 21, 2008 (accessed April 13, 2011).

⁸¹¹ Cassandra Vieten, "What is Noetic Science?" *Huffington Post* (accessed Sept. 21, 2009).

5.2.14.12 Questions addressed to the author

Only 22% of participants in the sample do ask the author a question. However, the wide spectrum of their questions does indicate a number of issues on the children's minds. Some participants raise concrete issues, including whether they can make a phone call or when the author thinks the child might be released from detention. However, an equal number of participants also raise spiritual questions while other children probe more personal areas of the author's life, including her own childhood.

5.3 THEOLOGY FROM A CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE

What are the implications of doing theology from the child's point of view? For example, this research study has been conducted from the perspective of the children who participate in the research sample. Participants in this study are also given a creative voice in the research itself. Thus, the responses from the collected data do represent children's theology and spirituality from their own perspective.

The next section of Chapter Five considers the theological perspective of the child from a historical point of view. This section also posits that the task of theology may indeed be undertaken from the child's perspective. Further, the possibility of a new theological perspective from the child's point of view may become the point of departure for a new hermeneutic in the field of children's theology.

5.3.1 Support for a new hermeneutic

In Chapter Two, it is noted that many authors in the field of children's spirituality document the need for a new hermeneutic in working with children in the area of

spirituality.⁸¹² For example, Jerome Berryman contends that children know God in their own unique way and must be respected, even revered, for their unique knowledge. What they need to learn from adults is how to identify, to talk about and to wonder about their spiritual experiences.⁸¹³

According to Berryman, most Christian theologians have underestimated children's ability to speak about theological matters.⁸¹⁴ He suggests a redefined hermeneutic in a formal theological doctrine of children that begins with children as the wisdom-givers.⁸¹⁵ Similar to Berryman, Bonnie Miller-McLemore suggests that children have much to teach about spirituality and where it may occur.⁸¹⁶ While theology is usually defined by adults as rational and verbal, "...children actually exemplify a wisdom that somehow emerges in the chaos itself....children encourage us to reconsider ways in which spirituality for children and adults takes shape in the midst of everyday rituals, practices, and habits that shape everyday life."⁸¹⁷

While Berryman and Miller-McLemore move toward the need for developing a new hermeneutic in children's work, they seem to stop short of beginning the actual conversation with children about their own spirituality.⁸¹⁸ However, this empirical study is a practical beginning toward supporting children as they reveal their own theology.

⁸¹²Jerome W. Berryman, *Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace* (Harrisburg PA: Morehouse, 2009), 5-11.

⁸¹³ Ibid, 5-7.

⁸¹⁴Ibid, 5-11.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid.

⁸¹⁶ Bonnie Miller-McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 16-19.

⁸¹⁷ Miller-McLemore, 16-19.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid.

5.3.2 Working with children

Perhaps the practical aspect of working with children remains difficult for adults and theologians alike since children are indeed a distinct and challenging population. Additionally, working with children in juvenile detention only adds to the challenge. In her own work in juvenile detention, the author has pondered why children are considered to be so difficult and began asking other professionals as well. Responses from colleagues include the fact that children in general are unpredictable, but juvenile delinquents can be disrespectful and often inappropriate.

Children in detention often say things that adults have learned not to say as part of a normal socialization process. However, children in the juvenile justice system often have not been taught many social graces and do not understand or care what the import of their words may be. For example, a 14-year-old African American male offered the following comment to the author after being in detention for over two months: “Miss Barr, I’ve been without the company of the ladies for so long now, that even *you* are starting to look good to me!”

5.3.3 Further research on children’s theology

In an article from *Time* magazine, M. J. Stephey reports a research study from Seattle Children’s Research Institute based on a sample of 500 18-year-olds.⁸¹⁹ He concludes that 54% of his sample do admit to risky sexual behavior, drug addiction, and violent encounters with peers and adults.⁸²⁰ Given the fact that Stephey’s sample is not from juvenile detention merely supports the reality that children in detention are at least as difficult, if not more so, as children and young adults in a community setting.

⁸¹⁹ M.J Stephey, “Teens Behaving Badly? *Time* magazine (accessed Jan. 7, 2009).

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*

Thus, an issue working with children in the general population or a detention setting is that adults are afraid. Such fear may continue to foster a sense of marginalization and superiority that Berryman decries⁸²¹ and thereby may prevent any further movement toward a new hermeneutic for children.

Therefore, a further significance of this research study lies not only in the fact that it documents children's beliefs about theology and spirituality but that the research is also conducted in a juvenile detention center. It follows that if research in children's theology can be successfully conducted in a more difficult setting of a juvenile detention center, this study might serve as support for other researchers and practical theologians alike who desire to see a new hermeneutic for working with children come to fruition.

David Wiebe, who writes as a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, sadly moves in the opposite direction of a new approach for children's theology.⁸²² Although Wiebe acknowledges that his church has not come far in developing a theology of children,⁸²³ his remedy for the lack of children's theology is not to delineate the reasons to take children seriously. Rather, Wiebe strongly urges that the traditional path of children's psychological and spiritual development indicates the need for extreme caution when including children as participants in the development of theology.⁸²⁴ Wiebe writes a cautionary treatise with recommendations for how and when it is appropriate to respect children's spirituality.⁸²⁵

⁸²¹ Berryman, 5-9.

⁸²² David Weibe, "Toward a Theology of Children," *directionjournal.org*, spring 1993, Vol. 2 (1) 33-50.

⁸²³ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁴ Weibe, 33-50.

⁸²⁵ *Ibid.*

On the other hand, the data in this research study clearly indicates that children are not only capable, but are also eager to share their wisdom from the uniqueness of their own theological and spiritual perspectives.

5.3.4 The Child Theology Movement (CTM) as metaphor

Based on the foundational work of Berryman⁸²⁶ and Miller-McLemore,⁸²⁷ this research study attempts to move a step closer to a new hermeneutic for children by locating theological work with children directly within the child's frame of reference. As several authors, including Berryman,⁸²⁸ McLemore,⁸²⁹ Loughlin,⁸³⁰ and Beckwith,⁸³¹ urge the creation of a new hermeneutic for working with children, it seems fitting that doing theology from the child's point of view might be the starting point of such a new hermeneutic. To undertake the task of doing theology from the child's point of view does imply that the child becomes the center of the theological task.

The international movement known as the Child Theology Movement (CTM) is a practical example of a movement that is attempting to do theology from the child's point of view. CTM began in 2000 at an international conference known as Cutting Edge III.⁸³² The conference drew Christians involved with at-risk children globally and began to ask questions about the child's place in theology.⁸³³ The movement's central metaphor is taken from Jesus Christ's belief that the presence of a child may supply a central clue to the essential truth about his message.⁸³⁴ CTM followers report that children have historically

⁸²⁶ Berryman, 5-11.

⁸²⁷ Miller-McLemore, 16-19.

⁸²⁸ Berryman, 5-11.

⁸²⁹ Miller-McLemore, 16ff.

⁸³⁰ Loughlin, 70-79.

⁸³¹ Beckwith, 9-14.

⁸³² Child Theology Movement website (accessed 4/14/13).

⁸³³ Ibid.

⁸³⁴ Ibid.

been disturbing to theologians in general. As a result, children have rarely been given the opportunity to shape theology or theological trends.

The Child Theology Movement states that it works as a “conversation,” rather than dogma or doctrine, to develop a specific child-centered theological curriculum for seminaries.⁸³⁵ The larger goal of CTM is “to develop the whole of theology in the light of the child.”⁸³⁶

5.3.5 Narrative theology and children telling their own stories

An appropriate vehicle for doing theology from the perspective of the child exists within the field of narrative theology. Developed during the last half of the twentieth century by a group of theologians at Yale Divinity School including George Lindbeck, Hans Wilhelm Frei, and several other scholars influenced by Barth and Aquinas,⁸³⁷ narrative theology emphasizes meaning in story.⁸³⁸ The use of the term *story* may either refer salvation history as God’s story in Jesus Christ, or it may refer to the stories of a culture or an individual.⁸³⁹ Narrative theology was developed in a theological climate where the intellectual community had shifted its focus toward racism, nationalism, and oppression.⁸⁴⁰

Narrative theology may also be viewed as a reaction to systematic theology as a conceptual framework. In this context, narrative theology falls under the postmodern tradition, with its emphasis on the individual’s personal experience of God over deduction,

⁸³⁵ Keith J. White, “Insights into Child Theology through the Life and Work of Pandita Ramabai,” *Transformation*, 2007, Vol. 24 (2), 95.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁷ Gary L. Comstock, “Two Types of Narrative Theology,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 55, No. 4, (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), 687-717.

⁸³⁸ Gerald Loughlin, *Telling God’s Story: Bible, Church, and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), x-xi.

⁸³⁹ Comstock, 691-717.

⁸⁴⁰ Stanley Hauerwas, “The Church as God’s New Language,” in *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation*, Garret Green, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 179-198.

ideology or dogma.⁸⁴¹ As Hauerwas suggests, "... to be a Christian is to be joined, to be put in connection with others so that our stories cannot be told without somehow also telling their stories."⁸⁴² Hauerwas insists that stories need to be shared in community where they can be remembered and interpreted.⁸⁴³

In this research study, all 200 participants in the sample, except one child who asked to consult his lawyer, answer all 14 questions in the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) without hesitation or refusal to do so. In this regard, it appears that telling their own stories in their own words is important to the participants. In the individual interview process itself, the author listens carefully as part of setting the stage for the child to tell his own story. Thus, listening is a key theological element in the study that is directly connected to children revealing themselves in their own ways.

When children tell parts of their own life stories responding to questions, it appears significant from the present research that the adult must be present and attentive in the listening process. For example, if the author had not listened to hear the child's responses, no one would actually receive the stories that the children told.

In narrative theology, listening on the part of the adult becomes an essential part of the dynamic. In the course of the 200 interviews in this study, the author notes that as she listens to the child responding to each question, the very process of listening often creates a change in the child's countenance to indicate that he has become less agitated and more composed. Another aspect of listening within the context of narrative theology is to establish respect for

⁸⁴¹ Hauerwas, 179-198.

⁸⁴² Stanley Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1995), xiii.

⁸⁴³ Marc Galanter and Lee Ann Kaskutas, eds., "Research in Alcoholics Anonymous and Spirituality in Addiction Recovery," *American Society of Addictive Medicine* (Totowa NJ: Humana Press, 2008), 198-200.

the child speaking. It is a welcoming act that signals to the child that the author is present, ready to “welcome the stranger.”⁸⁴⁴

5.3.5.1 The function of listening in healing

Listening is acknowledged within the field of psychiatry as a vital part of healing, both psychologically and emotionally.⁸⁴⁵ Listening is also endorsed by medical doctors as an indispensable skill in the healing process of purely physical illness. Unfortunately, the listening component in healing is largely ignored by the medical profession.⁸⁴⁶

Margaret Wheatley has studied human behavior in a global context. She tells the story of women who testified at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Hearings in South Africa.⁸⁴⁷ The goal of the TRC was to support witnesses of human atrocities in South Africa in testifying about their experiences, hoping that some emotional healing might occur.⁸⁴⁸ Wheatley reports that many women who testified did actually claim to be healed by the power of their own testimonies.⁸⁴⁹

Utilizing the vehicle of narrative theology as a springboard for working with children, one might ask the question if it is relevant or not whether the children tell the truth or make up stories about their lives. In other words, is it significant that children may invent their answers to questions about theology and spirituality, or any other topic that might be suggested by the interviewer?

⁸⁴⁴ Lloyd Steffen, “The Listening Point,” *The Christian Century*, Nov. 21-28, 1990, 1087-1088.

⁸⁴⁵ S. W. Jackson, “The Listening Healer in the History of Psychological Healing,” *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 1992, 1623-1632.

⁸⁴⁶ Richard Druss, *Listening to Patients* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 3-7.

⁸³⁵ Wheatley, 3-4.

⁸³⁶ Vora and Vora, 301-322.

⁸³⁷ Wheatley, 3-4.

5.3.5.2 Research on interviewing children

Lamb, Hershkowitz, and Orbach have done significant research in the field of child forensics and conclude that it is impossible to tell whether a child is telling the truth or not in a structured interview.⁸⁵⁰ They suggest that it is necessary to try and encourage the child to tell his or her story as a way of uncovering the truth of the child.⁸⁵¹

However, based on the results of this research study, it does not seem relevant whether or not the participant is telling the truth. The point is that the child is telling the story in his own way, and an adult is listening. In this context, narrative theologians pose their own question about the nature of truth: Is truth an *a priori* assumption, or is the child allowed the freedom to create his or her own truth?⁸⁵² In this study, participants in the research sample have not only been allowed, but also have been supported in the freedom to create their own unique truths.

5.3.6 Toward a new hermeneutic in children's theology

In the previous section of Chapter Five, narrative theology is introduced as a vehicle whereby children might be supported in telling their own stories about their lives. In this research study, the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) is utilized as a research tool to encourage participants in the sample to share their stories. In this context, their individual stories become the basis of their own truth, whatever that truth is for them. Participants in this study actually create their own version of their story, their own hermeneutic.

⁸⁵⁰ M. Lamb, Y. Orbach, and I. Hershkowitz, "A structured forensic interview protocol improves the quality and informativeness of investigative interviews with children," *Child Abuse and Neglect*, Vol. 31(11-12), Dec. 2007, 1201-31.

⁸⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵² Comstock, 687-717.

5.3.6.1 Working definition of *hermeneutics*

As presented earlier in Chapter Three on methodology, *hermeneutics* may be defined as a subcategory of philosophy that concerns interpretation. In Greek philosophy, Hermes is the god of mediation between divinity and humanity. He translates the hidden into the visible, interprets dreams, and crosses boundaries.”⁸⁵³ In Richard Palmer’s text, *Hermeneutics*, he questions the nature of truth and suggests that truth may not exist in a particular text, or in any one specific interpretation of a text or an experience. Indeed he advocates that there may not be any single, “correct” interpretation at all.⁸⁵⁴ Thus, in Palmer’s understanding of hermeneutics, any interpretation, including the voice of a child, is a valid interpretation of a new truth.⁸⁵⁵

Furthermore, Palmer proposes that the nature of truth may also be understood as the interaction of one or more perspectives that creates yet another interpretation of the truth.⁸⁵⁶ In the 200 interviews conducted with children in the Ocean County Detention Center for this research, each conversation between the author and the participant begins to exist in another dimension, a spiritual one. Viewed through the lens of hermeneutics, a new truth emerges from the mutual interaction, a truth that stands as original and valid as a new experience of how God may enter human experience.

As mentioned earlier, pianist Murray Perahia is considered one of the principal interpreters of Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*.⁸⁵⁷ What is the greater truth? Is it Perahia’s interpretation or Bach’s original music? Or is it the listener’s experience of the

⁸⁵³ Richard E. Palmer, “The Relevance of Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics to 36 Topics or Fields of Human Activity,” lecture delivered at Southern Illinois Univ., US, April 1, 1999, (April 29, 2011).

⁸⁵⁴ Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Illinois: Northwestern Univ. Press), 1969, 10 ff.

⁸⁵⁵ Worldchildhood foundation .org (accessed April 20, 2011).

⁸⁵⁶ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 10 ff.

⁸⁵⁷ Bruce Duffie, “Interview with Murray Perahia,” Radio station WNIB, recorded March 13, 1997, Chicago, Illinois; transcription placed on WNIB website 2010 (accessed March 8, 2011).

music played by Perahia that becomes the dominant truth? Or is a new truth born from the conversation generated by these distinct voices?

5.3.6.2 Toward a hermeneutic of relationship

This section of Chapter Five introduces the possibility of a new hermeneutic in working with children that moves a step beyond children telling their own truths. This new approach moves toward a mutuality between child and adult. Such a mutuality emphasizes relationship as the key component in developing a new hermeneutic for working with children in theology and spirituality. Indeed this new hermeneutic may supply a missing dimension in working with children, namely, the hermeneutic of relationship. For example, based on the results of this research study, the relationship that the author attempts to develop with each child in the sample is an essential factor in the outcomes of the study. Further, the theology supporting the relationship between the author and each participant is also instrumental in the outcomes of the study.

In theological terms, this new hermeneutic embraces the significance of relationship as the foundation not only for a new truth, but also for a mutual healing between adult and child. This relational approach echoes Martin Buber's premise in his text, *I and Thou*, where he proposes that human life has meaning through relationships, and ultimately, our relationship with God, the "Eternal Thou."⁸⁵⁸

Similarly, psychologist Carl Rogers also highlights the centrality of the relationship within the context of human interaction.⁸⁵⁹ As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Rogers

⁸⁵⁸ Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (NY: Scribner, 1923), 10-55.

⁸⁵⁹ Carl Rogers, *Client-centered therapy: Its current practice, implications, and theory* (London: Constable, 1951), 60-67.

believes that the quality of relationship between therapist and client has a direct impact on the client's quality of healing and change within the therapeutic relationship.⁸⁶⁰

5.3.6.3 Commitment to personal growth

A further implication of this proposed hermeneutic for working with children is that the two individuals in the relationship, the adult and the child, are involved in a mutuality of personal growth that occurs for both parties. As Hermann Hesse states in his novel, *The Glass Bead Game*,⁸⁶¹ introspection and self-reflection on the part of the adult is crucial in connecting with children. Hesse urges that as adults remember their own childhoods, they grow more capable of empathy when working with children.⁸⁶²

The proposed hermeneutic in this study moves a step beyond Hesse. It suggests that, not only do adults need to connect with their own inner child in order to work with children, but adults need to connect with their "inner adult," their own process of spiritual growth. If there is no commitment to spiritual growth in adults actively engaged with children, it is questionable whether their work has spiritual integrity in its own right.

In his text, *The Child's Song: The Religious Abuse of Children*, Donald Capps exposes how the Bible and religious authority figures have emotionally abused children by not being accountable for their own personal and professional growth.⁸⁶³ Capps believes that the source of abuse toward children is often the pastoral caregiver him or herself. He strongly urges that pastors and caregivers become more introspective and thus more responsible for

⁸⁶⁰ Rogers, 60-67.

⁸⁶¹ Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game*, 2-25.

⁸⁶² Ibid.

⁸⁶³ Donald Capps, *The Child's Song: The Religious Abuse of Children* (Louisville KY: John Knox Press, 1995), 25-57.

their own spiritual and emotional issues to prevent them from inflicting their unresolved issues on the children they serve.⁸⁶⁴

5.3.6.4 CPE and personal growth

Similarly, in his foundational work in the field of pastoral theology, Seward Hiltner also recommends the process of clinical pastoral education (CPE)⁸⁶⁵ as a practical tool through which pastors and caregivers might take responsibility for their own growth and development. Hiltner believes that the spiritual power of CPE lies in connecting the adult to his or her spiritual journey, and then to the educational process itself.⁸⁶⁶

Within specific CPE settings including hospitals, prisons, and churches, supervision groups are held daily where students confront their own issues as they minister to patients with their own set of issues.⁸⁶⁷ In essence, this supervisory model is an intense form of individual and group therapy. As Anton Boisen, one of the founders of CPE suggests in his writings, students are trained to become responsible for their own inner, spiritual development. In the process of such self-reflection, students develop the skill of reading other human beings as “living human documents.”⁸⁶⁸

⁸⁶⁴ Capps, 25-57.

³⁵³ “The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. is a professional association committed to advancing experience-based theological education for seminarians, clergy and lay persons of diverse cultures, ethnic groups and faith traditions. We establish standards, certify supervisors and accredit programs and centers in varied settings. ACPE programs promote the integration of personal history, faith tradition and the behavioral sciences in the practice of spiritual care” (The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. website, accessed April 23, 2011.)

³⁵⁴ Hiltner, 22-26.

³⁵⁵ Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. website (accessed April 26, 2011).

³⁵⁶ Robert David Leas, *Anton Theophilus Boisen* (Colorado: Outskirts Press, 2009), 23 ff.

³⁵⁷ Hiltner, 10-56.

³⁵⁸ Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. website (accessed May 20, 2012).

³⁵⁹ Hiltner, 10-56.

Thus, the new hermeneutic for children proposed in this research study is partially based upon the pioneering work of Seward Hiltner⁸⁶⁹ in the field of clinical pastoral education.⁸⁷⁰ Hiltner understands the absolute necessity of pastors taking responsibility for their own issues as they minister to others.⁸⁷¹ The new hermeneutic proposed by the author attempts to continue Hiltner's legacy of adults engaging in their own spiritual journeys as key to working with children. Once again, the relationship is key for such a new hermeneutic to have practical and theological validity.

The next section of Chapter Five proposes that a new hermeneutic for working with children may be forged within the tradition of the field of practical theology, a discipline that historically values experience, as well as relationship, as authentic foundations for the articulation of theology.⁸⁷²

5.3.7 Practical theology as context for a new children's hermeneutic

Practical theology is defined as the practical application of theology to daily life.⁸⁷³ Practical theology also embraces several sub-fields including applied theology, homiletics, spiritual formation, pastoral theology, and liberation theology. The specific focus of liberation theology includes populations of the oppressed, including women, immigrants,

⁸⁶⁹ Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (MI: Eerdmans: 2008), 4.

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷¹ Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology: history, theory, action domains: manual for practical theology* (MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 1-8.

⁸⁷² Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1811), vi-x.

⁸⁷³ Osmer, 4.

and children.⁸⁷⁴ As a field of study, practical theology has historically been taught in a seminary setting as a pedagogical tool for clergy education.⁸⁷⁵

However, Don Browning⁸⁷⁶ and Robin Lovin⁸⁷⁷ have written extensively on their desire to see practical theology move beyond the confines of educating clergy in a seminary setting.⁸⁷⁸ Though they both agree that pastoral leadership is a critical task of practical theology, Browning and Lovin envision practical theology moving beyond merely sustaining and guiding pastoral leadership.⁸⁷⁹ Browning decries the relegation of practical theology to the position of the least prestigious of all theological disciplines. He urges a resurgence of the field in its own right.⁸⁸⁰

5.3.7.1 Don Browning and Robin Lovin

Browning cites Schleiermacher's *Brief Outline of Theological Study*⁸⁸¹ as the singular work that led to a theological denigration of practical theology to a discipline that simply applies the results of systematic theology to the daily operations of church life. He further proposes that Schleiermacher's text minimizes practical theology by marginalizing its significance to the education of clergy within seminary curricula.⁸⁸² As a result of this marginalization, Browning suggests that the field of practical theology has become separated from systematic theological foundations, a split that led to the field's domination by knowledge from the social sciences.⁸⁸³

⁸⁷⁴ Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology: history, theory, action domains: manual for practical theology* (MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 1-8.

⁸⁷⁵ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1811), vi-x.

⁸⁷⁶ Schleiermacher, 6-10.

⁸⁷⁷ Robin Lovin, "The Real Task of Practical Theology," *Christian Century*, Feb. 5-15, 1992, 125-128.

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 125-128.

⁸⁸⁰ Browning, x.

⁸⁸¹ Schleiermacher, vi-x.

⁸⁸² Don Browning, ed., *The Emerging Field of Practical Theology, Church, and World* (NY: Harper & Row, 1983), 11-23.

⁸⁸³ *Ibid.*

In his text, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals*, Browning introduces a model for practical theology that moves beyond the seminary door into the community.⁸⁸⁴ He goes back to basics and defines practical theology as “thinking about theology and its relation to practical action.”⁸⁸⁵ Browning discusses Karl Barth’s “theory to practice model” of doing theology, where only God’s Word (truth) through Scripture reveals what human beings should do practically.⁸⁸⁶ He suggests a revision to Barth’s model, which he calls his “practice to theory to practice model” and proposes that practical theology become a matter of interpretation, or hermeneutics.⁸⁸⁷

Browning also reiterates his belief that theology in general has always been prejudiced against the field of practical theology since it is not perceived as intellectual enough. He claims that some practical theologians are actually embarrassed to admit that they are in the field since such an admission invites intellectual humiliation.⁸⁸⁸

Similarly, in an article from the *Christian Century*, Robin Lovin writes that the current resurgence of interest in practical theology suggests a return to an earlier attempt within the field to develop a “...comprehensive understanding of the life of faith in contemporary society.”⁸⁸⁹ Similar to Browning, Lovin raises the question of whether the truths of the social sciences have begun to dominate the field of practical theology in an inappropriate and unintended way.⁸⁹⁰

For example, even though the fields of clinical psychology and psychotherapy have begun to embrace a more spiritual hermeneutic of the person, clinical work is still largely

⁸⁸⁴ Browning, ed, 11-23.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid, ed, x.

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid, 6-8.

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid, 11.

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid, 6-9.

⁸⁸⁹ Robin Lovin, “The Real Task of Practical Theology,” *Christian Century*, Feb. 5-15, 1992, 125-128.

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid.

within the cognitive behavioral model.⁸⁹¹ The premise of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is that changing maladaptive thinking leads to a change in the client's affect and overall behavior.⁸⁹² In the biopsychosocial model, both categories of spirituality and religion are now included as essential in attaining an accurate and holistic portrait of the client, whether adult or child. Yet while the social sciences do acknowledge the need for a more holistic client assessment,⁸⁹³ clinicians still rely predominantly on the intellect and the cognitive abilities of human beings, including children. The role of the client's experience, including any wisdom the individual may bring to the process of emotional healing, is largely dismissed as unreliable and in many cases, unhealthy.⁸⁹⁴

The new hermeneutic suggested in this research study proposes a practical way to connect, or reconnect, the value of human experience to the task of doing theology. Specifically, this hermeneutic proposes a new methodology for working with children that supports the life experience and wisdom of children as a foundation for doing practical theology. Additionally, this new approach also advocates the therapeutic and theological value of relationship. Since this approach is not suggested for a seminary educational setting, but a juvenile detention center, it supports Browning's vision that the field of practical theology needs to move into the larger community of the world.⁸⁹⁵

The hermeneutic suggested in this study also supports Browning's vision of practical theology as a revision of Barth's model, which he calls a "practice to theory to practice"

⁸⁹¹ R. Longmore and M. Worrell, "Do we need to challenge thoughts in cognitive behavioral therapy?" *Clinical Psychology Review* 27 (2), 173-87.

⁸⁹² S. Rachman, "The evolution of cognitive behaviour therapy," in D. Clark et al, *Science and Practice of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 1-26.

⁸⁹³ A. Hassett et al, "Nonpharmacologic treatment for Fibromyalgia: Patient Education, Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Relaxation Techniques, and Complementary and Alternative Medicine," *Rheumatic Disease Clinics of North America*, 35 (2), 393-407.

⁸⁹⁴ Rachman, 1-26.

⁸⁹⁵ Browning, 5-10.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid.

model. As such, this new model proposes that practical theology is essentially a matter of interpretation, or hermeneutics.⁸⁹⁶ By advocating a return to respecting experience as a foundation for theology, the author is suggesting that experience may be viewed as valid in its own right, apart from a dependence on the intellect and cognitive abilities.

Browning points out that there is an endemic prejudice against practical theology since the field is not considered intellectual enough. He cites a tradition within systematic theology that relegates human experience and the inductive method to lesser minds.⁸⁹⁷ However, the intellect as a cognitive function does not represent a complete hermeneutic of an individual, either adult or child. It is the purview of the mind within human beings that is associated with experience and wisdom.⁸⁹⁸ Practical theology supports an approach to life that values experience. Thus, this field of theology is primarily connected to the capacities of the mind, not exclusively, or even primarily, the intellect.⁸⁹⁹ Perhaps a new direction for the field of practical theology that Browning envisions is a move away from the limitations of the intellect and toward a more holistic view of the person, which embraces the mind.

5.3.7.2 Marilynne Robinson on “inwardness”

In her book, *Absence of Mind: The Dispelling of Inwardness from the Modern Myth of the Self*,⁹⁰⁰ Marilynne Robinson differentiates between the mind and the intellect and urges that everything in life cannot be reduced to the scientific method, cognition, and deduction. She proposes that the mind connects with human experience, whereas the intellect and the

⁸⁹⁶ Browning, 5-10.

⁸⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁸ Marilynne Robinson, *Absence of Mind: The Dispelling of Inwardness from the Modern Myth of the Self* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2010), 10-35.

⁸⁹⁹ Browning, 10-35.

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid.

brain merely deduce things.⁹⁰¹ Robinson suggests that human beings must embrace a sense of “inwardness” that may reconnect the human psyche with mind over intellect.⁹⁰²

Moving toward Browning’s vision of a new beginning for the field of practical theology, this study suggests a new hermeneutic that restores the place of human experience in the creation of theology. As Robinson suggests, “...we may gain our truest sense of the soul’s reality not from any argument, but from our experience of that haunting ‘I’ that wakes us up in the middle of the night wondering where time has gone.”⁹⁰³ Robinson further states that the most profound thinkers have been concerned with metaphysical questions. She reiterates that metaphysical questions, by nature, cannot be proved through the intellect but also cannot be dismissed in the process of competent, theological exploration.⁹⁰⁴ Robinson refers to the “the reality of lived experience,” as opposed to “parascientific reasoning.”⁹⁰⁵

This research study strives to suggest a new hermeneutic for working with children that moves within the field of practical theology to re-establish a respect for human experience, specifically in working with children. This model may indeed support the field of practical theology in moving ahead into mainstream theology by challenging an archaic argument that the intellectual approach to theology is the only relevant model.

5.4 CONCLUSION

In summary, Chapter Five presents a working theology of children in juvenile detention, based on the collected data from the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B), documented in

⁹⁰¹ Browning, 10-35.

⁹⁰² Robinson, 109-136.

⁹⁰³ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁵ Michael Dirda, “Marilynne Robinson’s ‘Absence of Mind,’” *Washington Post*, May 27, 2010 (accessed May 20, 2013).

Chapter Four. This chapter proposes inductive, theological conclusions based on participant responses and organizes these conclusions under specific theological categories.

Finally, this chapter presents an outline toward a new hermeneutic for working with children in a juvenile detention setting. This new hermeneutic represents a practical step toward bridging an existing gap between the stated need for a new children's hermeneutic and its inception. The basis of this new hermeneutic may be summarized as a theology of relationship, wherein the relationship between adult and child, from a spiritual and a healing perspective, becomes the basis for a hermeneutic for working with children, specifically, but not exclusively, in the context of a juvenile detention center.

This research study suggests that such a new hermeneutic for working with children would emerge within the field of practical theology to re-establish a respect for human experience. Indeed this proposed hermeneutic may support the field of practical theology in moving ahead into mainstream theology by challenging an archaic argument that the intellectual approach to theology is the only relevant model.

As Chapter Five has presented a new hermeneutic for working with children in the context of relationship, Chapter Six documents the spiritual journey of the author through the process of the study as she attempts to locate the self of the researcher within the context of the research itself. In this regard, Chapter Six posits a practical way of representing the other side of the relationship between adult and child, namely, the persona of the author herself.

CHAPTER SIX:

Locating the Self within the Research

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Six documents the author's spiritual journey in the process of completing this empirical study. Within the methodological traditions of autoethnography⁹⁰⁶ and participatory action research (PAR),⁹⁰⁷ the author attempts to locate the self of the researcher within the context of the research itself.⁹⁰⁸ In this approach, the possibility of becoming an integral part of the study as a full participant is explored.⁹⁰⁹ This chapter also chronicles the evolution of the author's theology through the course of researching and completing the thesis.

As the author presents her own hermeneutic, or story, she demonstrates in practical terms the new hermeneutic for working with children presented in Chapter Five. Given this new hermeneutic emphasizes both the centrality of relationship, as well as the value of experience, the author's story becomes essential to offering a practical example of what this new hermeneutic might look like in practical terms.

In the new hermeneutic presented in Chapter Five, a central piece of the model is the mutuality of healing that may occur when adults respect and listen to the wisdom of

⁹⁰⁶ F. Ngunjiri, K. Hernandez, and H. Chang, "Living Autoethnography: Connecting life and Research," *Journal of Research and Practice*, Vol. 6, #1, article E1, 2010, 1-10.

⁹⁰⁷ Kemmis and Wilkinson, "Participatory action research and the study of practice," *Action Research in Practice* (NY: Routledge, 1998), 7-8.

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁹ D.Hayano, "Auto-ethnography: paradigms, problems, and prospects," *Human Organization*, 1979, 113-120.

children. In this chapter, the author articulates the process of her own spiritual healing in the course of the study.

6.2 AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: LOCATING THE SELF IN RESEARCH

Whether or not the author's role within research is defined or articulated, it is still present. Including the location of the self as a category and tool within the research process may begin to build a bridge toward a more equal relationship between adult researchers and the children they seek to understand.

Within academic research, tools already exist to address the task of locating the self. Specifically, these research tools include ethnography⁹¹⁰ and autoethnography.⁹¹¹ As previously introduced in Chapter Three on methodology, *ethnography* may be defined as a qualitative strategy of collecting data on an intact cultural group in a natural setting.⁹¹² When using an ethnographic research approach, the question of place becomes more central. The researcher asks the question, "Where will I conduct my research?"⁹¹³ Within the field of ethnography exists a subcategory of research known as autoethnography, which advances the discussion of the location of the self within the study.⁹¹⁴ Utilized as a qualitative method, autoethnography attempts to gather data about the researcher and the research context in order to understand the connection between self and others within that context.⁹¹⁵

⁹¹⁰ H.T. Wolcott, *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing* (Lanham MD: Alta Mira Press, 1999), 13-24.

⁹¹¹ Ngunjiri, et al, 1-10.

⁹¹² Creswell, 227.

⁹¹³ Wolcott, 13-24.

⁹¹⁴ Ngunjiri et al, 1-10.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid.

The term *autoethnography* was originally coined by David Hayano in 1979 to refer to anthropological studies by individuals of their own culture.⁹¹⁶ This field moves beyond the advocacy/participatory model by extending the connection between self and others. Rather than viewing the self in isolation or as primary, autoethnography explores how the collection of data and its context have influenced the self of the researcher.⁹¹⁷ Since autoethnography allows the researcher to explore his or her own experience and emotions, it may be viewed as a research tool that attempts to integrate art and science.⁹¹⁸ Ruth Behar explains autoethnography as an effort "...to map an intermediate space we can't quite define yet, a borderland between person and intellect, analysis and subjectivity, ethnography and autobiography, art and life."⁹¹⁹

Researchers who utilize autoethnography often employ the first person as a way of documenting themselves as full participants within their own research, as well as to free themselves from the traditional conventions of writing to honor the authentic voice of the researcher.⁹²⁰ By employing the first person in their writing and by including themselves as participants in their own research, some female research scientists have documented a greater sense of emotional fulfillment in the process of their academic work.⁹²¹

In this research study, the author chooses not to employ the first person in the narrative. However, her objective is similar to Smith: to become fully immersed in the research project as one of the participants, as well as to record her own process within the journey of the

⁹¹⁶ Hayano, 113-120.

⁹¹⁷ Ibid, 1-19.

⁹¹⁸ Ngunjiri et al, 25.

⁹¹⁹ R. Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart* (Boston: Beacon, 1997), 174.

⁹²⁰ K. Gergen and M. Gergen, eds., *Social Construction: A Reader* (CA: Sage, 2003), 65-73.

⁹²¹ C. Smith, "Epistemological Intimacy: a move to autoethnography," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 4 (2), 2005, 68-73.

project itself.⁹²² Such documentation echoes Behar's earlier comment that this personal approach to research attempts to "map an intermediate space we can't quite define yet, a borderland... between art and life."⁹²³

Since the topic of this study is spirituality, the use of autoethnography as a research tool supports such full participation and self-reflection. Indeed the topic of spirituality invokes a sense of mystery, ambiguity, and a journey into the unknown. When applied to this research context, spirituality itself beckons to the researcher and participants alike to enter into a larger mystery, without knowing where it will lead and without knowing what truths may be discovered along the way.

6.3 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

The philosophical and practical foundation of this research study predominantly reflects the advocacy/participatory worldview, one of the four worldviews proposed by Creswell.⁹²⁴ The advocacy/participatory model moves beyond social constructivism in attempting to help marginalized people. For example, the sample population chosen for this study is the population of children held within a single juvenile center in Ocean County, New Jersey, US. An advantage of the advocacy/participatory model is that it includes the possibility of experiential knowledge and affirms the value of practical knowledge as a methodology.⁹²⁵ This model supports the belief that participation in research, both by the participants as well as the researcher(s), creates a more holistic research outcome.⁹²⁶

⁹²² Smith, 68-73.

⁹²³ Behar, 174.

⁹²⁴ Creswell, 6-10.

⁹²⁵ Heron and Reason, "A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm," *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3 (3), 1999, 274-294.

⁹²⁶ *Ibid*, 2-6.

Similar to the advocacy/participatory worldview is the participatory action research model, also utilized in this study. Known as PAR and originally developed by Kurt Lewin, this approach may be summarized as follows: “We’re all in this together.”⁹²⁷ The primary tenets of PAR include a commitment to investigate an issue or a problem through induction; a desire to engage in both self and collective reflection to gain clarity; a joint decision to engage in individual and/or collective action toward a solution that benefits the research participants; and a desire to build alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementing, and dissemination of the research process.⁹²⁸

In this research study, there is a clear intention to develop and foster a relationship between the researcher and the participants, as well as to articulate the unique voice of the researcher. In this regard, the methodology espoused by the participatory action research model (PAR) also clearly supports the author’s attempt to locate and to define herself within the context of the research.

6.4 LOCATING THE SELF THROUGH TOOLS OF SELF-REFLECTION

In the course of this research study, the author began to ponder why she chose this research topic and what identification she might have with the children in her research sample. In clinical work, for example, it is crucial that the therapist become aware of his or her own issues in treating a client.⁹²⁹ Known as *transference* and *countertransference* in clinical parlance, transference refers to the issues a client might bring to bear on the

⁹²⁷ Kemmis and Wilkinson, 7-8.

⁹²⁸ Ibid, 2 ff.

⁹²⁹ Alun Jones, “Transference and Countertransference,” *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, Vol. 40, Issue 1, 2004, 13-15.

relationship with the therapist.⁹³⁰ Countertransference refers to the issues the therapist might project onto the client.⁹³¹ For clinical work to be therapeutic and ultimately healing, the issues of transference and countertransference must be understood and addressed by both client and therapist.⁹³² In the context and tradition of countertransference, the author believes that it is important to document her own journey as an integral part of the study.

As mentioned in Chapter Five of this thesis, the basis of the proposed new hermeneutic for working with children depends on whether adults are willing to become fully engaged as equals with children. The mutuality of the relationship between adult and child is crucial. Further, the adult's commitment to ongoing spiritual growth is also central to the hermeneutic. As Hermann Hesse suggests in his novel, *The Glass Bead Game*,⁹³³ self-reflection and introspection are crucial in connecting with children. Hesse believes that rediscovering the child within supports an adult's ability to understand and connect emotionally with children in a more authentic way.⁹³⁴ In this regard, the intention of locating the self within research is not so much about deflecting from the central subject of one's research as it is about being willing to learn and to grow from the process of being involved with the sample participants.

In addition to her background as a clinician, the author has participated in two additional types of personal and professional growth that have contributed to her commitment to ongoing spiritual growth. Indeed these two opportunities for self-reflection have affected, if not shaped, the author's commitment to a life of self-examination and spirituality. Thus, in the context of this study, the author's development of a new hermeneutic for working with

⁹³⁰ Jones, 14-18.

⁹³¹ Ibid.

⁹³² Ibid, 13-19.

⁹³³ Hermann Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game* (NY: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1943), viii-23.

⁹³⁴ Ibid.

children encourages adults to become willing to grow spiritually themselves. These two experiences of spiritual growth in the author's life have been her involvement with clinical pastoral education (CPE) and with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Both are presented in the following sections.

6.4.1 Clinical pastoral education (CPE) and spiritual growth

In his foundational work in the field of pastoral theology,⁹³⁵ Seward Hiltner recommends the process of clinical pastoral education (CPE)⁹³⁶ as a practical tool through which pastors and caregivers take responsibility for their own growth and development.⁹³⁷ In theological seminary education, students of pastoral theology are recommended to complete units of CPE, usually in a hospital, mental hospital, or prison setting.⁹³⁸ The spiritual power of CPE lies in engaging the student and his or her spiritual journey to the educational process itself. Alternative settings including hospitals and prisons confront students with the overwhelming and largely unsolvable problems of everyday life, as Hiltner suggests.⁹³⁹ Within such

⁹³⁵ Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (New York: Abingdon, 1958), 22-25.

⁹³⁶ "The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. is a professional association committed to advancing experience-based theological education for seminarians, clergy and lay persons of diverse cultures, ethnic groups and faith traditions. We establish standards, certify supervisors and accredit programs and centers in varied settings. ACPE programs promote the integration of personal history, faith tradition and the behavioral sciences in the practice of spiritual care" (The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. website, accessed April 23, 2011.)

⁹³⁷ Hiltner, 22-26.

⁹³⁸ Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. website (accessed April 26, 2011).

⁹³⁹ Hiltner, 22-26.

⁹⁴⁰ Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. website (accessed April 26, 2011).

⁹⁴¹ ACPE research.org (accessed April 27, 2011).

⁹⁴² Ibid.

⁹⁴³ Robert David Leas, *Anton Theophilus Boisen* (Colorado: Outskirts Press, 2009), 23 ff.

alternative settings, CPE supervision groups are held daily so that students confront their own spiritual issues as they interact with patients and their own set of issues.⁹⁴⁰

In CPE, students utilize the verbatim format to record conversations with patients or clients. These verbatims, written records of conversations between student and patient, highlight the student's spiritual and clinical issues.⁹⁴¹ Weekly verbatims are then used in the CPE supervision group to process specific spiritual issues facing each student chaplain.⁹⁴² In many ways, this group supervision process is an intense, relational form of professional therapy. As Anton Boisen, one of the founders of CPE suggests in his writings, students are trained to read people as "living human documents" as they become more adept at reading themselves in the process.⁹⁴³

In the course of her master's work at Princeton Theological Seminary, the author completed five units of CPE in the settings of two general hospitals and a state mental hospital. Though intense and often painful, she found this work not only spiritually exhilarating, but also the beginning of a life-long commitment toward her own professional and spiritual growth.

6.4.2 Alcoholics Anonymous as a tool for spiritual growth

In addition to CPE,⁹⁴⁴ the author's involvement in Alcoholics Anonymous⁹⁴⁵ for the last 30 years has offered an additional tool for spiritual growth. In AA, members are encouraged

⁹⁴⁰Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. website (accessed April 26, 2011).

⁹⁴¹ACPE research.org (accessed April 27, 2011).

⁹⁴²Ibid.

⁹⁴³Robert David Leas, *Anton Theophilus Boisen* (Colorado: Outskirts Press, 2009), 23 ff.

⁹⁴⁴Association for Clinical Pastoral Education website (accessed April 26, 2011).

⁹⁴⁵ Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is an international movement with a stated "primary purpose" of individuals within the AA fellowship remaining sober and "helping other alcoholics achieve sobriety." (AA website (accessed April 26, 2011).

to apply a series of 12 Steps⁹⁴⁶ to their lives in order to change personality characteristics toward continued sobriety. AA is described as a spiritual program, not based on any religion or creed, that encourages individuals suffering from alcoholism to lead normal and healthy lives through a lifelong process of spiritual growth and self-examination.⁹⁴⁷

In AA, members are encouraged to face personal demons, with the promise from other AA members that these demons can be overcome. Healing comes through one member telling his or her story to others in an environment of listening, respect, and compassion. It has been the author's experience that many fears and unresolved issues of personal pain have been addressed and largely healed within the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Thus, both CPE and AA support the author's belief in the reality of change within the personality, both theologically and psychologically. Both CPE and AA stress the spiritual growth possibilities within the human personality that produce results often desired through psychotherapy, but not always achieved. In this regard, these two experiences have led the author to believe that the possibility of ongoing spiritual growth is not only possible but essential to the holistic health of individuals who work with others in the healing professions.

6.5 EVOLUTION OF THE AUTHOR'S THEOLOGY

6.5.1 Researcher as theologian

The author's theology has been influenced by several sources, explored in this section.

⁹⁴⁵ Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is an international movement with a stated "primary purpose" of individuals within the AA fellowship remaining sober and "helping other alcoholics achieve sobriety." (AA Preamble). Founded in 1935 by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith, the fellowship claims to have 2 million members worldwide. aa.org (accessed April 12, 2011).

⁹⁴⁶ *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1952), 34-38.

⁹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 2-25.

Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey stands in the theological tradition of Christian liberalism. Though non-denominational, Princeton Seminary reflects a predominantly Presbyterian doctrine.⁹⁴⁸ The author was raised Presbyterian and was theologically comfortable at Princeton.

In the course of her studies at Princeton, she encountered Dr. Seward Hiltner, whose work in the field of pastoral theology, including clinical pastoral education, influenced the author's theology profoundly. Specifically, she understood more clearly the spiritual validity of doing theology from experience and induction, rather than from theory and abstraction. After graduation from Princeton, the author entered treatment for alcoholism in Princeton and was introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous. Once again, AA stresses human experience and pragmatism over theory and abstraction.⁹⁴⁹ Her commitment to AA over the next 30 years has been the single, most significant factor in the evolution of her theology from that point on.

From her work in CPE and in AA, the author made a theological connection with Henri Nouwen's metaphor of the "wounded healer"⁹⁵⁰ as a spiritual way of being in the world. Nouwen's practical application of the "wounded healer" offered the author a way to understand personal woundedness as a potentially healing gift in working with others.

Thus, these three theological influences were integral parts of the author's theology prior to beginning the task of this research. A common thread that may be noted among all three influences is a theology based on practical experience. In other words, the author had already developed a belief in doing theology, not only from practical experience, but also

⁹⁴⁸ Princeton Theological Seminary website, pts.com (accessed August 23, 2013).

⁹⁴⁹ *Alcoholics Anonymous, 3rd Edition* (NY: AA World Services, 1976), 26-28.

⁹⁵⁰ Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (NY: Doubleday, 1972), 3-31.

from making theology relevant to the problems of daily life. In the next sections of Chapter Six, these three major influences are explored.

6.5.2 Implicit theology of clinical pastoral education

CPE may be defined as “a supervised, experience-based, process-oriented method of learning in an interdisciplinary setting for the purpose of personal development and professional competence in pastoral care.”⁹⁵¹ In this regard, CPE emphasizes the centrality of practical experience as a touchstone for theological truth. As such, it espouses an inductive approach to theology that both begins with individual experience and moves to the theoretical.⁹⁵²

Seward Hiltner’s definition of pastoral theology and its connection to CPE make a similar connection: they both begin with the practical and utilize induction to reach theological conclusions. Hiltner explains that within the discipline of pastoral theology, knowledge gained from observation and reflection must become the basis for theological truth. Such empirical knowledge must also be placed in a theological, not a psychological context.⁹⁵³ In this regard, the author’s theology clearly parallels Hiltner’s sense of pastoral theology and its primary use of practical experience to arrive at theological truths. With respect to this thesis, the author specifically utilizes several aspects of CPE in her methodology, as delineated in Chapter Three.

⁹⁵¹ Mike Patrick, “Clinical Pastoral Education: A Valuable Tool for Ministry,” *faithvillage.com*, Feb. 11, 2012 (accessed July 24, 2013).

⁹⁵² Karl Popper and David Miller, “A proof of the improbability of inductive probability,” *Nature*, 302, 1983, 687-688.

⁹⁵³ Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (NY:Abingdon, 1958), 23.

6.5.3 Implicit theology of Alcoholics Anonymous

Since Alcoholics Anonymous has been such a central part of the author's life for the last 30 years, the theology of AA is also a fundamental aspect of the author's theology. Basically, AA reflects a theology of pragmatism and mysticism.⁹⁵⁴ Generally, AA encourages each individual to do whatever works to overcome the alcohol obsession and to lead a healthy life.

In this regard, AA reflects the pragmatism of John Dewey, though no formal connection between the two has ever been made. Dewey's belief in pragmatism states that philosophical and theological topics are best appreciated in light of their practical value as applied to life, rather than their theoretical value:⁹⁵⁵ "AA encourages its members to invent their own God. Systematic theology is an outside issue...However, theology also permeates the program, as does the belief that the escaping the bondage of self as a result of a 'religious experience' will deliver the alcoholic."⁹⁵⁶

In this connection, the author's theology does reflect a large dose of pragmatism. Raised in the tradition of liberal Christianity through the Presbyterian church, she did not have to invent God for herself in AA. However, the God of her understanding as a child did change when she was faced with a terminal disease like alcoholism. She encountered the reality that prayer and Bible study were not sufficient to support her with practical, spiritual tools required for effective and holistic recovery from alcoholism. She also needed the practical wisdom of AA in its theological unorthodoxy to achieve the beginnings of a shaky sobriety that became more durable as the months and years went along.

⁹⁵⁴ Orrin R. Onken, "Practical Mysticism and the Promise of Sobriety: James, Dewey, and theology in Alcoholics Anonymous," *Loris.org* (accessed July 23, 2013).

⁹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

However, just as AA supports a theology of pragmatism, it reflects just as strongly a sense of the mystical. Members are encouraged to seek a “spiritual experience,” or “spiritual awakening,” that will end their ordeal with alcohol. Indeed Carl Jung supports this need for a spiritual awakening within alcoholics if there is to be any hope for ongoing sobriety. Jung claims that without some form of spiritual experience, there is little hope for the active alcoholic.⁹⁵⁷ In AA, members are encouraged to undergo a spiritual surrender, to reduce attachment to worldly things, and to begin a process of self-appraisal and confession.⁹⁵⁸

Soren Kierkegaard’s metaphor of the “Knight of Faith” may be compared to AA’s practice of seeking a spiritual experience. In his pseudonymous work, *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard explains that the true calling of a noble knight is his ultimate return from the mystical realms of life to a concrete existence that concerns itself with the “simple action addressing the daily problems of life.”⁹⁵⁹ He concludes that the knight’s dedication to living life on a daily basis is the touchstone and practical fruit of any mystical or spiritual experience that he may undergo.⁹⁶⁰ In this regard, AA fully supports Kierkegaard’s understanding of the use of spiritual and mystical experience. Once members have had such life-changing experiences, their goal is to return to the mundane and to “make coffee,”⁹⁶¹ a common pastime for new AA members who learn how to live in the real world and to become responsible.

The author has experienced such a “spiritual awakening,” as AA’s founder Bill Wilson suggests.⁹⁶² After years of struggling with alcohol, she prayed for the obsession to be removed, *and it was*. As if from a different dimension, she received a gift of having her

⁹⁵⁷ *Alcoholics Anonymous, 3rd Edition* (NY: AA World Services, 1976), 26-28.

⁹⁵⁸ Onken (accessed July 23, 2013).

⁹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶⁰ Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (London: Penguin, 1985), Hong transl., 50.

⁹⁶¹ Onken (accessed July 23, 2013).

⁹⁶² *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 7-13.

obsession with alcohol removed. She no longer has the desire for alcohol, and this spiritual experience became the foundation of her long-term sobriety. As William James suggests, it is commonly agreed that spiritual experiences, though they may form the core of an individual's theology, are highly subjective and may be best evaluated by their fruits in a person's life.⁹⁶³ The author has been blessed by her spiritual experience in AA becoming a theological cornerstone in her life. Thus, the author's theology has been deeply affected by the theology of AA in its pragmatism, as well as its validation of the mystical dimension of life.

6.5.4 Theological implications of the “wounded healer”

In addition to CPE and AA, the author's theology has been influenced by the spiritual metaphor of the “wounded healer,” a paradigm shared by the fields of psychotherapy and theology as a way of locating the self through working with others toward their own healing.⁹⁶⁴ Psychotherapist Stephen Diamond suggests that clinicians in the mental health field enter psychotherapy as professionals in order to focus on their clients' demons, rather than their own.⁹⁶⁵ Diamond maintains that the unhealed wounds of the clinician intensify the healer's compassionate power to heal others.⁹⁶⁶

Psychoanalyst Carl Jung was the first in the field of psychotherapy to speak about the “wounded healer” archetype and to apply it to himself.⁹⁶⁷ Jung refers to the myth of Chiron, a centaur, who was the offspring of his sea-nymph mother's rape by the Greek god Kronos, disguised as a stallion. Chiron was wounded early in life by being rejected by both parents due to being half horse and half human, therefore considered hideous. In later life, he was

⁹⁶³ William James, *Pragmatism*, Bruce Kuklick, ed. (Indiana: Hackett, 1907), v-xiv.

⁹⁶⁴ Stephen Diamond, “Psychotherapists as Wounded Healers,” *Psychology Today*, Sept. 28, 2012, 2-7.

⁹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 2-7.

⁹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 1-3.

⁹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 2-7.

wounded in the knee by an arrow from Hercules, but his wound never healed. Since Chiron was immortal due to his lineage, the poison from the arrow could never kill him. He could only search for a cure to his suffering, while spending his life attending to the wounds of others.⁹⁶⁸

In the context of psychotherapy, Jung urges that "...a good half of every treatment that probes at all deeply consists in the doctor examining himself. It is his own hurt that gives a measure of his power to heal."⁹⁶⁹ Jung believes that the clinician's humanity, or woundedness, is both positive and negative. While unhealed wounds give the therapist the power to heal, the wounds also render him or her vulnerable to the issues of the client. Further, if the client's issues are similar to the therapist's, old wounds are raised that make the therapist more vulnerable as a professional and also require attention.⁹⁷⁰

Psychotherapist Alison Barr has done extensive research on Jung's theory of the "wounded healer" in a clinical setting.⁹⁷¹ She concludes that 73.9% of counselors and psychotherapists have experienced one or more wounding experiences that did lead them to their career choices.⁹⁷² Barr's research indicates further implications for the future of therapeutic work as professionals are trained to care for their own humanity while interacting with clients.⁹⁷³

⁹⁶⁸ Diamond, 2-7.

⁹⁶⁹ Anthony Stephens, *Jung* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), 110.

⁹⁷⁰ C.G. Jung, "Fundamental Questions of Psychotherapy," *The Practice of Psychotherapy* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1944), 239.

⁹⁷¹ Alison Barr, "An investigation into the extent to which psychological wounds inspire counselors and psychotherapists to become wounded healers, the significance of these wounds on their career choice, the causes of these wounds, and the overall significance of demographic factors," Master's dissertation, 2006.

⁹⁷² *Ibid.*

⁹⁷³ *Ibid.*

6.5.4.1 Theological significance of the “wounded healer”

Henri Nouwen develops the tradition of the “wounded healer” further as a theological metaphor. In his text, *The Wounded Healer*,⁹⁷⁴ Nouwen transcends a predominantly psychological framework and envisions the concept of personal woundedness in the context of pastoral theology.⁹⁷⁵ Similar to Carl Jung, Nouwen believes that the wounds of the caregiver supply the spiritual power necessary for working with others in the healing professions.⁹⁷⁶ However, rather than stressing the vulnerability of the therapist to the patient’s wounds, Nouwen portrays the healing dimension of allowing others to see the caregiver’s humanity. By allowing personal wounds to become visible, caregivers find a way of sharing their humanity with others and discover that their own brokenness, their own wounds, are the greatest spiritual gift they can offer to others.⁹⁷⁷

6.5.4.2 The author as “wounded healer”: a sea change

Beyond Jung’s understanding that the clinician’s wounds merely create the power to heal, the author resonates with Nouwen’s belief that the client’s wounds also have the power to heal the clinician, if that level of vulnerability is allowed.⁹⁷⁸ It is not so much the danger of being affected by the client’s wounds as it is a choice to be open to the possibility that the client’s wounds may have power to heal the clinician through a shared sense of humanity.

As Nouwen suggests his own understanding of the nature of healing, he offers that mutual healing between the minister and another human being occurs through the mutual recognition that pain can be shared.⁹⁷⁹ As he suggests, “...a Christian community is therefore a healing community not because wounds are cured and pains are alleviated, but

⁹⁷⁴ Nouwen, 3-31.

⁹⁷⁵ Yolanda Nolte, hts.org, vol. 66, no. 2, 2010, “The Paradox of being a wounded healer: Henri J.M. Nouwen’s contribution to Pastoral Theology” (accessed April 26, 2013).

⁹⁷⁶ Nouwen, 3-31.

⁹⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁹ Ibid, 3-31.

because wounds and pain become openings or occasions for a new vision. Mutual confession then becomes a mutual deepening of hope, and sharing weakness becomes a reminder...of the coming strength.”⁹⁸⁰

In the course of this research study, the author has repeatedly experienced the spiritual power of Nouwen’s interpretation of the “wounded healer.”⁹⁸¹ Throughout the two and a half years of completing her individual interviews with 200 children in the Ocean County Detention Center, the author shared her own humanity and vulnerability with the participants. Even when she did not verbalize anything about herself, the author was aware that her choice to be fully present with each child rendered her vulnerable to their pain, as well as to her own.

In the process of this mutuality of humanity between herself and each child in the research sample, the author realized that her own healing was becoming part of the larger spiritual process. Furthermore, the author’s understanding of the “wounded healer” has transcended a singular, more myopic focus on the nature of personal woundedness. Rather, her spiritual journey has evolved toward a mutuality of healing between client/counselor, minister/parishioner, or researcher/participant that embraces shared humanity as more important than the wounds themselves.

6.5.5 A new place to stand

In the course of this research study, the author has pondered whether her theology has undergone a basic transformation or has essentially remained the same. As mentioned in the previous section, there has been a definite change in her personal hermeneutic concerning the theological metaphor of the “wounded healer.” Furthermore, while the author’s feet

⁹⁸⁰ Nouwen, 3-31.

⁹⁸¹ Ibid.

continue to be planted firmly in the soil of practical theology, the collected data in this research has reinforced her commitment to practical theology as the most fruitful approach to doing theology.

For example, the author has adapted specific tools and techniques from CPE and AA in a research context. These techniques have proven to be transferrable to a research context outside the parameters of both CPE and AA. Further, these techniques also have been successfully adapted in this research context to yield concrete research in the relatively esoteric area of children's spirituality. Moreover, theological conclusions have been presented from an inductive point of view with as much scientific relevance as the deductive methodology of systematic theology.⁹⁸²

Thus, the author's commitment to the spiritual principles of CPE and AA has not only been reinforced but has discovered additional applications in the world of practical theology and research.

6.6 CONCLUSION

In summary, Chapter Six documents the author's spiritual journey in the process of completing this empirical study. Within the academic traditions of autoethnography⁹⁸³ and participatory action research (PAR),⁹⁸⁴ the author attempts to locate herself as researcher within the context of the research itself.⁹⁸⁵

As mentioned in Chapter Five, the basis of a new hermeneutic for children depends on whether or not the researcher is willing to become fully part of the research process. In this

⁹⁸² Popper and Miller, 687-688.

⁹⁸³ F. Ngunjiri, K. Hernandez, and H. Chang, "Living Autoethnography: Connecting life and Research," *Journal of Research and Practice*, Vol. 6, #1, article E1, 2010, 1-10.

⁹⁸⁴ Kemmis and Wilkinson, "Participatory action research and the study of practice," *Action Research in Practice* (NY: Routledge, 1998), 7-8.

⁹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

regard, the intention of locating the self within research is not so much about deflecting from the central subject of one's research as it is about being willing to learn and to grow from the process of being involved with the children themselves.

Additionally, the author has documented the nature of her own theology, both prior to and following the completion of this thesis. She has also commented on the ways in which her theology has either evolved, has remained the same, or has been affected by the process of the thesis itself.

Chapter Seven presents an overview of this research study. This final chapter reviews lessons learned in the course of the study, possibilities for further research, reflections on the overall research process, and theological conclusions of the study. The next chapter also includes detailed recommendations for the practical application of the collected data in juvenile detention centers.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Conclusions of the Study

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Seven presents a comprehensive overview of this research study. It includes an abstract of the collected data, as well as a summary of the theological conclusions. This chapter also discusses the unique and important contribution that the research study has made to the field of practical theology.

This final chapter includes specific and detailed recommendations for practical implementation of this research in other juvenile detention centers, as well as suggestions for continued research as future students interested in the fields of juvenile detention and practical theology continue to explore and document the unique population of children in juvenile detention centers.

7.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH STUDY

7.2.1 Summary of content

This research study highlights the spiritual and theological lives of children housed in a single juvenile detention center in Toms River, New Jersey, US. This population of children in juvenile detention is unique since they are neither incarcerated, nor are they free to live in

society. In fact, their freedom to be in society has been temporarily denied, pending the outcome of their legal charges through the juvenile court system.⁹⁸⁶

The focus of this research study is the spirituality of children in juvenile detention centers. The research itself consists of 200 individual, face-to-face interviews with male juvenile residents detained in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, New Jersey. Juvenile males in this study range in age from 13 to 19, the normal spectrum of ages based on annual *Admissions Records* data.⁹⁸⁷ The research sample size of 200 was selected since it accurately reflects the average annual admission rate at the Ocean County Detention Center.

Currently, there are no studies on the topic of what children in juvenile detention believe spiritually and theologically. This study begins to address this massive void and represents the first theological research of its kind on this population. It is a beginning toward the kind of positive attention and study that children in detention deserve. Since this population has been consistently overlooked and segregated by academics and theologians alike, this research study will begin to erode the unfortunate marginalization that these children have endured in society.

This research study adds significantly to the academic literature on children in juvenile detention centers in the United States and recommends ways that staff may communicate with children to begin a theological dialogue. Further, this study offers a specific methodology and research tool to be duplicated for use in other juvenile detention centers toward working with children in a concrete, evidence-based, spiritual context. This study

⁹⁸⁶ Kevin Ryan, Esq., Child Advocate, et al, State of New Jersey: Office of the Child Advocate Report: *Juvenile Detention Center Investigation*, Nov. 22, 2004, 1-2.

⁹⁸⁷ *Admissions Records*, Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, Toms River, NJ, 2000-2010.

also includes a chapter on the evolution of the author's spirituality and theology in the course of the project and attempts to locate the self of the researcher within the study.

Finally, this research study presents an outline for a new hermeneutic in working with children in a juvenile detention setting. This new approach represents a practical step toward bridging an existing gap between a stated need for a new hermeneutic for working with children in theological literature and its inception.

An original questionnaire has been developed by the author as a research tool for each face-to-face interview. Entitled the Resident Questionnaire, it appears as Appendix B at the conclusion of the study.

The stated purpose of this research study is to address the following questions:

- Who is the God of children locked in detention centers in the United States?
- Do children in detention centers believe in God?
- Do these children have a sense of religion or spirituality that can be measured?
- Do detained children differentiate between the terms "spirituality" and "religion"?
- Does a stay in juvenile detention have a measurable effect on a child's spirituality or religion?
- Is there a working theology that might be postulated among children in detention centers in the United States?
- Is there a new hermeneutic that might be suggested for working with children in juvenile detention centers?

The data pertaining to these questions is summarized in the following sections.

7.2.2 Summary of research findings

7.2.2.1 Theological conclusions of collected data

Based on the collected data from interviews with 200 participants in the research sample, the following theological conclusions are indicated. Utilizing an inductive methodology of

raw data to arrive at theological conclusions, this data is drawn from participant responses to the 14 questions in the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B), as follows:

- The vast majority of participants state that they believe in God.
- The vast majority of participants state that they pray on a regular basis. They report an active prayer life, with a variety of methods from daily prayer to morning and evening prayer, as well as concrete prayer to get them out of trouble.
- The majority of participants state that their basic beliefs about life have not changed since they have been in juvenile detention.
- 30% of participants respond to whether they have hope in their lives by stating that they hope for a good job. Smaller numbers hope for a better life and to finish school, with a few participants who do seem to understand an existential sense of hope and how it applies to their own future.
- 28% of participants respond to a question about faith by stating that they have the most faith in themselves. Smaller numbers have faith in their families, their friends, and God while some do not understand the concept and ask what faith is.
- The majority of participants respond to whether they have had any spiritual, unusual, or unexplained experiences in their lives by stating that they have not had such experiences. Smaller numbers do report many spiritual, religious, and unexplained phenomena. These stories involving the unexplained clearly indicate that participants have an active and creative sense of spirituality that transcends traditionally Christian categories, though the majority of participants do respond within the parameters of Christianity.
- The majority of participants respond to questions in the Resident Questionnaire with concrete, as opposed to abstract answers. As mentioned in Chapter One, with specific

reference to the work of Jean Piaget, this type of concrete response is normal for the age group of the sample (13-19). Indeed their responses may actually be slightly behind where their conceptual ability should be for their age. However, a smaller number of responses does reveal an ability for theological and philosophical sophistication, as well as a capacity to converse in abstractions.

■The general theological position of participants in the research sample reveals a belief in the supernatural, including psychic phenomena. In this regard, their collective theology speaks to a strong belief in some form of life after death, the existence of the soul, and some acceptance of a spirit nature within humans that can be accessed in this life.

■Finally, the general theology of participants highlights a strong sense of existentialism, as explored in greater detail in Chapter Five. This sense of existentialism reveals a high degree of anxiety, balanced by a solid sense of resiliency as they share their beliefs on hope and faith for their own lives.

In summary, an overview of the collected data suggests that participants in the research sample are quite willing to engage in conversation about a variety of spiritual, social, religious, and emotional questions concerning their individual lives. Furthermore, the children seem genuinely interested and intrigued by the questions themselves, as well as by the interview process. Participants in the sample generally state their beliefs, their questions, and their misgivings with a high degree of personal honesty and candor. Indeed they seem to value the quality of personal honesty, as well as the privilege of speaking their own minds.

7.2.2.2. Theological conclusions of the study

Additional theological conclusions of the study beyond the boundaries of the collected research include an outline toward a new hermeneutic for working with children in a juvenile detention setting. This new hermeneutic represents a practical step toward bridging

an existing gap between the articulated need for a new children's hermeneutic and its inception. The basis of this new hermeneutic may be summarized as a theology of relationship, wherein the relationship between adult and child, from a spiritual and a healing perspective, becomes the basis for a hermeneutic for working with children, specifically, but not exclusively, in the context of a juvenile detention center. For further explanation of this new hermeneutic and its practical application in children's spirituality and juvenile detention, please refer to Chapter Five.

This research study further suggests a hermeneutic for working with children that moves within the field of practical theology to re-establish a respect for human experience. Indeed this proposed hermeneutic may support the field of practical theology in moving ahead into mainstream theology by challenging an archaic argument that the intellectual approach to theology is the only relevant model.

This study has also attempted to move a step closer to a new hermeneutic for children by locating theological work with children directly within the child's frame of reference. With respect to a proposed new hermeneutic, it seems fitting that doing theology from the child's point of view might be the starting point of such a new hermeneutic. To undertake the task of doing theology from the child's point of view does imply that the child becomes the center of the theological task. The research focus of the study has been to begin to develop a theology of children in detention from the specific perspective of the child. Theological conclusions from the collected data have been presented in an inductive method that begins with the child's truth and suggests a working theology based on their collective responses.

7.3 CONTRIBUTION TO FIELD OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

In Chapter Two, a comprehensive review of the literature in the field of children's spirituality, specifically research on children in juvenile detention centers, is presented. The results of this literature review highlight the fact that very little research of any kind has been completed on this population. Indeed apart from this research study, no research exists on the spirituality or theology of children in juvenile detention.

Therefore, this research study makes a significant contribution to the field of practical theology since it is the first study of its kind that documents data results from a research study with 200 sample participants. The original Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) developed by the author is used to interview participants and to record their responses to 14 different questions ranging from personal information to their beliefs about God, prayer, and the supernatural.

As mentioned earlier in Chapters Two and Five, authors in the larger field of children's spirituality cite the need for a new hermeneutic in working with children but do not develop that hermeneutic in practical terms. However, in Chapter Five, the author presents a theoretical vision and a concrete application of what this new hermeneutic is, as well as suggestions for practical implementation specifically within the field of practical theology.

Currently, no research-based project that categorizes the spiritual beliefs of children in juvenile detention exists. Further, there has not been any attempt to analyze such collected data and to categorize responses around a series of questions developed in a questionnaire. This research study offers an original questionnaire, the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) as a data collection instrument for the collection and interpretation of data.

Finally, there is no research that offers practical suggestions to professionals in the field of juvenile detention and juvenile justice about how to encourage children to talk about spiritual matters in a secure setting. Additionally, this study delineates a myriad of recommendations for professionals in the field of juvenile justice and detention toward how to create and maintain programs that support additional aspects of children's spirituality, including art, music, religious counseling, and opportunities for quality time with children. Most of these recommendations are cost-free and utilize the expertise of community volunteers.

A further significance of this research study is its inclusion of a chapter (Chapter Six) on the evolution of the author's spirituality and theology in the course of the project. In this regard, this study moves beyond merely data-driven research. To include an entire chapter on the place of the author within the research is a reflection on spirituality at a personal level, in the tradition of the ground-breaking work of Seward Hiltner in the field of pastoral theology.⁹⁸⁸

7.4 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

7.4.1 Questions addressed and answered by the study

The initial goal of this research study has been to listen, to dialogue, and to understand what children in a specific juvenile detention center believe about traditional theological categories including God, prayer, faith, hope, spirituality, meaning and value in their lives. The second goal has been to organize and codify the data results toward a theology of juveniles in detention.

⁹⁸⁸ Hiltner, 215 ff.

The first research goal has been accomplished through the vehicle of 200 individual interviews with male children, ages 13-19, detained in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center in Toms River, New Jersey from 2007 to 2010. Each face-to-face interview was conducted utilizing an original questionnaire developed with the assistance of the sample participants themselves. The data from the 200 interviews is presented in Chapter Four of this study. The second research goal, the organization of data toward a theology of juveniles in detention, is presented in Chapter Five.

Thus, preliminary questions raised in Chapter One, summarized above in Section 7.2.1, have been addressed and answered in the course of the thesis. Specifically, participants in the research sample have responded about a God of their individual understanding, and the vast majority of children do believe in a traditional, Christian God. Based on the collected data, participants have responded that they can distinguish between spirituality and religion in their own lives, and their responses to questions about religion and spirituality have been measured in percentages in Chapter Four.

Furthermore, participants do report that being locked up in a juvenile detention center has had a profound effect on their lives. Based upon their candid, thoughtful, and plentiful responses to the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B), there is now a working theology of children in juvenile detention, based on the collected data in this research study. Finally, a new hermeneutic for working with children is presented in Chapter Five. This new hermeneutic is theologically rooted in the field of practical theology and attempts to restore the role of experience and the inductive method within the discipline of theology. No further research exists in the field of practical theology that addresses the questions of children's theology in a juvenile detention setting.

7.4.2. Lessons learned from the study

7.4.2.1 Insights gained from the study

The most significant insight gained in the course of this study is that children in a single juvenile detention center in the United States are capable of talking about their beliefs and experiences in the realms of spirituality, theology and religion with candor and depth. Indeed most participants in the research sample share an eagerness to talk to an adult about these matters. Moreover, the level of insight and wisdom offered by the participants on subjects including faith, hope, and the unexplained reveals yet another population of children whose spiritual wisdom is waiting to be discovered.

For example, the depth of spiritual wisdom documented in the study clearly supports the work of postmodern Christian theologian Jerome Berryman, who believes that Christian theologians have underestimated children's ability to talk about theological and spiritual matters. He contends that children know God in their own unique way and must be respected, even revered, for their unique knowledge. What they need to learn from adults is how to identify, talk about and wonder about their spiritual experiences.⁹⁸⁹

Similarly, Bonnie Miller-McLemore writes on the subject of practical theology and children in the context of the modern Christian family. She suggests that children have much to teach us about spirituality and where it may occur. While theology is usually defined by adults as rational and verbal, "...children actually exemplify a wisdom that somehow emerges in the chaos itself....children encourage us to reconsider ways in which spirituality for children and adults takes shape in the midst of everyday rituals, practices, and habits

⁹⁸⁹ Jerome W. Berryman, *Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace* (Harrisburg PA: Morehouse, 2009), 5-11.

that shape everyday life.”⁹⁹⁰ The wisdom of both Berryman and Miller are substantiated and validated by the collected data results of this empirical research.

A further insight gained in this study is the additional validation of the premise supported by several Christian theologians working with children: encouraging children to tell their own stories elicits a wisdom and spiritual depth that is difficult to imagine. For example, in his text, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church, and Narrative Theology*, Gerald Loughlin proposes that narrative and memory are central to our understanding of human consciousness.⁹⁹¹ The potential power of narrative theology in working with children is in applying this new hermeneutic of story directly to the children's lives themselves.

From a different perspective, Laurie Nelson considers an alternate approach to storytelling. She recommends applying Bruno Bettelheim's wisdom about fairy tales to children working through conflicts in their own lives or families.⁹⁹² This vicarious learning becomes healing for the child and the family.⁹⁹³ In her article, "Narrative Theology and Storytelling in Christian Education with Children," Nelson offers specific guidelines for storytelling with children to encourage their own healing.

In this study, the author has learned that encouraging children to tell their own stories without judgment has led to the depth and power of the collected data herein. In her initial development of the Resident Questionnaire, the author did wonder whether some of the questions were too sophisticated for a sample of children, ages 13 through 19, in a juvenile detention center. In the course of her interviews, she discovered that having the courage to

⁹⁹⁰Bonnie Miller-McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 16-21.

⁹⁹¹ Gerald Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church, and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), x-xi; 62-67.

⁹⁹² Laurie Nelson, "Narrative Theology and Storytelling in Christian Education with Children," *Christian Education Journal*, Volume 2, 1990, 95-104.

⁹⁹³ *Ibid*, 3-11.

ask the unfathomable questions, regardless of the responses received, begins to probe the depths of the child's psyche. Thus, daring to ask the deeper questions becomes the challenge for future research on the spirituality of children in detention. It is therefore highly recommended that staff working in juvenile detention centers offer children some outlet to begin sharing their experiences and beliefs on subjects relating to God, prayer, faith, spirituality, and the supernatural.

Another insight gained from the study pertains to the author's experience in completing the project itself. Embarking upon the challenge of writing and completing a doctoral thesis requires faith that it can be done, especially when obstacles of health and lack of confidence enter the larger picture. Dr. David Cousins, the author's husband, often reminds her of the metaphor of "hitting the wall" in an athletic event like long-distance running. When the pressure and the desire to drop out of the race seem the most intense, breaking through the wall will come--if the runner does not give up. This is also a lesson of faith that the author has gained in the process of completing this thesis.

7.4.2.2 Limitations encountered in the study

In the course of completing the research study, two major limitations were encountered. In retrospect, the sample size of 200 individual interviews was too large. If the sample had been smaller, more in-depth, comparative analysis and cross-reference work could have been accomplished. For example, categories of questions from the Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) could have been cross-referenced by age, religious background, cultural background, and trends for each question. Specifically, more detailed analysis of the collected data could have been done if the sample had been limited to approximately 50 participants.

Secondly, with reference to Chapter Four and the collected data, the format chosen by the author is too complex. While the author's inclusion of graphs, figures, charts and illustrations may enhance and clarify the physical representation of the collected data, this complex use of integrated forms for presentation led to unexpected problems of formatting and style that were beyond the author's level of expertise.

Finally, a methodological issue raised in Chapter Three concerns the author's intention in Question 13 of the Resident Questionnaire, "Is there any question you think should be added to the questionnaire?" As mentioned in Chapter Three, the author's approach initially led her to consider changing to Resident Questionnaire for each additional question. However, this issue did resolve itself by the author deciding to create a separate section for all questions contributed by participants. This section of all questions contributed by participants may be found in Chapter Four.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF COLLECTED DATA

Based on the collected research in this study, as well as the author's experience in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, the following recommendations are offered as practical ways to implement programming in juvenile detention centers that reflect the self-reported needs and desires of the 200 participants in this study.

7.5.1 Athletic programs

Athletic programs are excellent ways to help children and young people handle stress positively in a secure (locked) environment. Research in this study strongly indicates that

children also connect recreation with a sense of spirituality. Recreation allows children in juvenile detention to feel more alive, less depressed, and more creative.

Athletic equipment and supplies need not be expensive if there are limited funds available. Many activities can be done without equipment, including walking, running, team sports, and yoga. It is also not required that recreation staff be hired to run such programs. If funding is limited to hire recreation staff, custody and security staff may be trained to supervise recreation and often bring expertise from their own backgrounds.

Research in this study regarding the high interest that children have in recreation suggests that detention centers could benefit from having not only recreation periods, but also exercise equipment. Children in detention might be able to see themselves evolving into young men and women as they turn negative energy and depression into body-building. Many residents admitted to the Ocean County Detention Center are abusing drugs and alcohol. They have not participated in school sports due to their abuse of drugs and alcohol.

This trend of drug and alcohol use/abuse among children admitted to juvenile detention is surely not limited to the Ocean County Detention Center and reflects a national, if not global pattern among children and youth. Recreation programs are an evidence-based method of treatment for substance abuse since recreational activities actually change body and brain chemistry, as well as address the chemical and psychological depression such abuse may cause.⁹⁹⁴ Recreation can also offer children in detention opportunities to change their self-image from someone who is out of shape, sluggish, and unable to find acceptance in a mainstream school to a child with increased self-esteem and confidence. By utilizing recreation as a method to encourage self-esteem, recreation becomes a holistic way to

⁹⁹⁴ Laura Blue, "Is Exercise the Best Drug for Depression?" *Time.com*, June 19, 12 (accessed March 25, 2011).

support children in detention to explore their spirituality in a way that engages mind, body, and spirit.

7.5.2 Programs involving the arts

Although arts programs are often the first programs to be cut when funding is low, programs including drawing, creative writing, journaling, and painting do not require significant finances and do address a need that children in detention centers have for stress reduction. Similar to recreation programs, artistic programs also may function as outlets for pent-up hostility and aggression that might otherwise surface in behavior problems within detention. Such programs also support a natural ability that many children in juvenile detention evidence: an above-average artistic ability in the areas of drawing, painting, and creative writing. Similar to recreation programs, art programs also address the need of children in detention to improve their self-esteem by being involved in activities where they have the opportunity to excel.

7.5.2.1 Creative writing class

For example, the addition of a creative writing class offers children in detention an additional outlet for things on their minds that they might not feel comfortable talking about. The creative writing class in the Ocean County Detention Center has worked well for a number of years and has produced a quarterly journal of original writings, published in-house to protect the anonymity of children in detention. A selection of their creative writings has also been published on the website of the Ocean County Detention Center, another significant outlet for children, where parents and families may proudly view the work of their children.

7.5.2.2 Academy for the Fine Arts

Another program involving the arts that is fairly easy to develop and does not require additional staff or cost is a program called the Academy for the Fine Arts. Developed in the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center by the author, the Academy is taught by a group of community volunteers skilled in vocal music, instrumental music, dancing, or acting. For example, the Social Services Department of a detention center may contact volunteers from local community groups and churches to solicit their skills. Social Services then can schedule the volunteers to meet with children in the detention center on weekends. In Ocean County, a local church supplies volunteers in each of the aforementioned areas and offers their time to teach the children on Sunday afternoons.

This kind of program is not difficult to create since local volunteers seem eager to help children in juvenile detention. Of course, volunteers of any kind entering detention must be thoroughly screened and interviewed. In some cases, criminal background checks are advisable, though this would incur higher expenses for the program.

In the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center, the volunteer staff of the Academy for the Fine Arts presents an annual recital at Christmas. Volunteers give their time to create a choir from detention residents, who perform selections for their parents, other residents, and staff. This kind of recital is fairly easy to assemble when community or church volunteers freely give their time for rehearsals and decorations. The key here is for detention staff, usually Social Services, to connect with local churches and other volunteer organizations to create a weekend program for the creative arts. Additionally, since volunteers are utilized, no further costs are incurred by the detention center. Local food stores are usually quite willing to donate prepared foods for such an occasion as well.

7.5.2.3 Expansion of education curriculum with art class

Most county detention centers already have a full education curriculum required by a particular state, as in the Ocean County Detention Center. However, extra classes may be added outside the education schedule of the day. One of these additions might include an art class, where residents may expand their knowledge of art, arts and crafts, and their own creativity.

This kind of class might be led by a local retired art teacher. Or if the facility does have a small budget, an art teacher may be employed to teach an art class once weekly. As mentioned earlier, many children in detention display a high aptitude for artistic skill. When outlets for artistic expression are offered in detention, children respond positively and enjoy having their arts and crafts displayed around the facility for all to see.

7.5.3 Fun programs and private conversations

Programs that allow children to laugh and to have fun are necessary for their emotional well-being and do not require expensive or special materials. Such programs are helpful stress reducers as well. Promoting a sense of fun in detention is an additional way to help children connect with their spirituality, as well as to support their emotional wellbeing.

7.5.3.1 Opportunities to play

Based on the results of this research study, it is imperative that children in detention be given ample opportunities for play. Such opportunities may allow them to reconnect with a spirit of creativity and renewal at a dark and confined time in their young lives. Moreover, research conducted by David Dobbs indicates that children are not only creative but also

brilliant at play and creativity. Children explore freely and with great enthusiasm and develop psychologically when given opportunities and extended time for creative play.⁹⁹⁵

For the last 12 years, the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center has developed a pet therapy program in conjunction with local volunteers whose dogs have become certified through a dog training program. The Pet Therapy program in Ocean County is explained in further detail in Chapter One. Therapy dogs have become a common form of “play therapy” in hospitals, prisons, and in other formats where anxiety levels may be high.⁹⁹⁶

The development of a pet therapy program is not difficult and requires communication with local personnel or agencies that may already be supplying certified pets to other institutions. Children in the Ocean County Detention Center respond favorably to the therapy dogs that visit with them several times a week. The dogs and their companions add a sense of normalcy and familiarity to an environment that can be sensory deprived and sterile. And this kind of program is cost-free since volunteers give of their time and their animals graciously and freely.

In the Ocean County Detention Center, the Social Service Department has purchased used equipment that supplies our residents with the equipment to play the Wii computerized games that simulate sports like bowling, golf, tennis, and baseball. All that is required is a television screen to display the computer program and the start-up cost of the Wii equipment. This outlet for residents has proven highly successful in generating a sense of fun and team spirit as staff play alongside residents. In fact, it is the most popular fun program in the detention center, although it does require purchasing the initial equipment.

⁹⁹⁵ David Dobbs, “Mind: Playing for all Kinds of Possibilities,” *New York Times*, April 22, 2013, D-7.

⁹⁹⁶ Panner, 1-4.

Additional fun programs may include Bingo, a game of chance played with cards for each resident, where prizes are won when a player fills his or her card first. This game has been popular for over 20 years at the Ocean County Detention Center and provides hours of enjoyment for residents, who match wits with their fellows. Bingo allows children to focus on something other than their problems and offers actual prizes when they win.

Local markets and drug stores are willing to donate prizes like soap, shampoo, and scented products that are allowed within the juvenile detention center. Such products are appreciated by residents in the Ocean County Detention Center since they are largely scent-denied in detention. Additionally, parents of children in detention may not have the money to purchase special products for their children. Thus, when the children win at Bingo, the treat is all the more to be savored and enjoyed.

A final opportunity for fun lies in allowing residents to dress up for holidays, including Christmas, Halloween and Thanksgiving. Such dress-up opportunities give children locked in a detention center something to look forward to, where they get to be someone else for a few hours.

7.5.3.2 Private conversations

Based on the collected data in this study, children in juvenile detention have many issues on their minds and would greatly benefit from having someone to talk to. Since children in detention may be more troubled and burdened than most children, discussion groups or individual time with an adult works well in reducing behavior problems and does not require any additional staff.

The variety of questions included in the data collection instrument in this research study, as well as the healthy number and variety of participant responses, indicates that children in detention seek opportunities to talk. Collected data in this study indicates that they desire to

talk about a number of topics, including values, freedom, religion, and spirituality in ways not necessarily addressed by religious programming. Perhaps the type of question raised by an adult may not be the most significant piece. Rather, an opportunity for children to talk about what is on their minds is more crucial. This kind of discussion might be undertaken by social workers or by the custody staff themselves.

In the Ocean County Detention Center, some children have individual therapists from the community who do therapy in detention. Yet all children are afforded the opportunity to meet and talk confidentially with their assigned social worker. Since custody and security staff actually spend more time with the children than social workers do, it is often the security officer who is the closest confidant of children. Another advantage of utilizing custody staff in this confidential way is that no further costs are incurred if detention centers have no funding for social workers.

Since ongoing training is required by state law for all custody officers who supervise children in detention, custody staff may be trained in a number of specialized areas to work with detention children well beyond the task of simply keeping order. In the Ocean County Detention Center, Social Services and Custody share joint and cross-over trainings, where each discipline offers training to the other. With this practice of mutual respect for shared talents and skills, both Social Services and Custody benefit from such training as both disciplines have the opportunity for personal and professional growth.

7.5.3.3 Creating an intern program

An exceptionally effective and cost-free way to add to the number of staff available to offer detention children quality time is the creation of an ongoing internship program with local colleges and universities. This kind of program usually does involve at least one staff person in the detention center having a master's degree in a particular field, for example

social work or criminal justice. However, in some cases, colleges are willing to work with a staff person having a bachelor's degree.

For example, if the detention center wishes to develop an internship program in social work, an employee of the detention center reaches out to local colleges to begin that conversation. If an agreement is reached, the staff person in detention becomes the on-site supervisor of the student assigned to the detention center. The supervisor is responsible for training, observing, and writing reports to the college about the interns. In this regard, an internship program does require time to devote to interns. However, if such an intern program can be arranged, it is a source of teaching and learning for both students and staff alike. Additionally, the community connection that an internship program provides reduces the stigma associated with a juvenile detention center and opens the door to invite the community to participate in the lives of these children.

The Ocean County Detention Center has been a teaching institution for the last 20 years. The detention center has developed ongoing relationships with over 12 colleges and universities that regularly supply interns in the fields of social work, criminal justice, theology, psychology, sociology, education, and nursing. These interns are an invaluable addition to staff as they meet with juveniles for those private conversations that employees may not have the time to offer. Interns can also be trained to cover staffing areas as long as they are under the direct supervision of a staff person in authority. In short, the development of a quality internship program serves a detention center by adding valuable staff, as well as serving the college or university by offering quality supervision and practical training that students usually do not receive in an academic setting.

7.5.4 Religious programming

Based on the collected data in this research study, participants express a remarkable interest in religion, theology, and spirituality. Thus, it is suggested that detention centers offer religious programming for children. In the Ocean County Detention Center, weekly religious services are offered by volunteers from local churches. Such a program does require supervision from a staff member of the detention center. In Ocean County, this responsibility is assumed as a partnership between Social services and Custody. Local church groups may be asked to donate Bibles and other religious material free of charge.

Retired clergy in the area may yield an untapped resource that may be willing to volunteer weekly services in a detention center. Thus, religious programming is a category of high interest to juvenile residents and may be arranged and maintained with little cost.

As an additional benefit, if a religious program is developed, additional contacts from local churches may be made toward the development of a program similar to the Academy for the Fine Arts at the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center.

7.5.5 Use of prayer and meditation

Based on this research study, the category of prayer seems of crucial interest to children in detention. Although most detention centers in the United States are government facilities that require a separation of church and state, prayer still remains an activity to offer children in detention a way to encourage their spirituality. This spiritual topic could be addressed by volunteers from the community involved in religious programming activities in the detention center. Often custody and security staff may also be engaged to speak to children privately about prayer. As mentioned earlier in Chapter One, a significant percentage of employees in

the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center have chosen this field directly from a desire, even a sense of calling, to have a positive impact on the lives of these children behind bars.

A further suggestion is that social workers and security staff may also employ prayer with residents who are in crisis or emotionally distraught. For example, the author has often prayed with children privately after a traumatic event. The author has found that praying with a child often resolves emotional and behavior crises and brings a sense of peace to the child.

In addition to prayer, the practice of meditation has been successfully implemented in Central Juvenile Hall in East Los Angeles, California US since 1993.⁹⁹⁷ As a result, Administration in the juvenile detention center reports a decreased level of anger among residents, as well as fewer assaults and gang activity.⁹⁹⁸ Though Johns Hopkins researcher David Altschuler is skeptical and claims that giving children attention is more important than the activity itself,⁹⁹⁹ statistics of reduced internal violence within the juvenile center indicate that the reduction came after meditation techniques were taught consistently to the residents.¹⁰⁰⁰

As mentioned earlier in Chapter Five, the Ocean County Detention Center offers a voluntary class in meditation through the Social Services department. Residents have reported that meditation helps them feel less stressed and does calm their minds. It is recommended that staff in juvenile detention centers consider the possibility of a class in meditation for children. Such a class does not require special equipment, and there may be staff members who already practice meditation and would be eager to share this practice with residents.

⁹⁹⁷ Janet Kinoshian, "Soul Searching," *LA Times*, June 2, 1998, 1-11.

⁹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

7.5.6 Detention library programs

Based on the collected data in this research study, children in juvenile detention enjoy reading as a stress-reducing activity, as well as an activity that may promote a spiritual connection. In this regard, detention centers might be encouraged to institute their own library on the premises of the detention center itself. In the Ocean County Detention Center, children have weekly privileges in the library and may check out books to take back to their rooms. Community libraries and individuals are eager to donate books to detention centers free of charge.

An additional program component that local libraries may provide is a connection to outside speakers on a variety of topics. Local libraries in Ocean County sponsor programs where published authors speak at the library and offer free, autographed copies of their books. In connection with the Ocean County Library, the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center has partnered with the library to invite authors, poets, and former “reformed” gang members to speak to children in detention. In this way, juvenile detention shares in the wealth of a government-sponsored library program in order to educate children in detention on topics that they may not be exposed to in their communities, or even in their schools.

7.5.7 Use of Resident Questionnaire as behavior tool

The original Resident Questionnaire (Appendix B) developed and utilized in this research study might serve usefully as an additional behavior tool for staff in juvenile detention centers. Though the Ocean County Detention Center does employ an initial screening tool to identify issues of behavior and mental health in new admissions, the Resident Questionnaire, or a modified version, offers additional information at a deeper level since the types of questions addressed tend to probe more deeply into the child’s

psyche than questions in a more traditional use of the biopsychosocial (BPS). Utilizing the Resident Questionnaire for an additional screening tool would also yield valuable information about the child's emotional, spiritual, and theological life that would serve to create a more holistic portrait. More information on the BPS and its use as a screening tool with children may be found in Chapters One and Three.

7.5.8 Possibilities for further discussion

The fact that 52% of participants in this study do acknowledge that their basic belief systems have been altered by being in juvenile detention suggests that this traumatic event in their young lives requires further discussion and follow-up. For example, the topic of children being locked up might be used as an opening for social workers, custody staff, and interns to explore and to process with children this traumatic event in their young lives. This kind of sensitive topic might be pursued on an individual basis or in a group setting.

An additional topic for further discussion might be to pursue children's responses to questions about their experiences with the supernatural and the unexplained, reflective of data collected in this research study. A program or group could explore children's perceived level of suggestibility in experiences with the supernatural. Such a program could also be an opportunity to mentor children in detention centers by offering them guidance and structure for some of their spiritual experiences that they may not have shared with anyone else in their lives. This kind of discussion group might be integrated with an ongoing religious program. As an alternative, interns from local seminaries or colleges might be recruited to spend individual time with juveniles discussing their experiences with the supernatural.

7.6 FUTURE RESEARCH AS FOLLOW-UP TO STUDY

Since this research study is the first empirical research study of its kind on the theology of children in juvenile detention, it is clear that opportunities for further research are indeed plentiful, necessary, and urgent. Three recommendations for further research are presented below.

7.6.1 Female theology in juvenile detention

Since the research sample in this study considers only males in a juvenile detention center, a separate research project on the theology and spirituality of female children in juvenile detention centers is an appropriate and an important follow-up study. Females have been excluded from the research sample in this study since the ratio of male to female admissions annually is approximately 7 to 1. Additionally, females answer questions differently than males: females tend to respond with more in-depth answers and with a greater depth of emotion. Females also tell stories in greater detail and demand much more time in an individual interview.

However, it is just as crucial, as well as overlooked, that female children in detention centers be interviewed. It would be a fascinating project for other researchers intrigued by the hitherto uncharted world of theology and spirituality in juvenile detention.

7.6.2 Importance of further multi-disciplinary research

One of the unique and significant advances in this research study is the author's integration of clinical research from the fields of psychology, mental health, and the social sciences with theology and spirituality. Such integration allows for the study to be multi-layered and multi-dimensional. This level of research integration also supports a more

holistic outcome. It is highly recommended that future research in the fields of juvenile detention, spirituality, and theology be multi-disciplinary as well.

From the review of the literature presented in Chapter Two, it is clear that there is great interest in the field of children's spirituality in general, as well as in the multi-disciplinary possibilities of future conversations among theologians, social scientists, and mental health clinicians. This research study is a beginning toward such exciting, cross-disciplinary conversations.

7.6.3 Comparative studies of juvenile detention and community settings

A further recommendation for continued research in the field of children's theology and spirituality in a detention setting is for future research to compare data collected in a detention center to data collected in a community setting. Such settings might include private and public schools, church groups, or additional groups of children who are community-based.

Further comparative research within a secure setting like juvenile detention and a non-secure setting like a school or church would follow in the footsteps of the groundbreaking research of Lynn Schofield Clark,¹⁰⁰¹ as presented in Chapters One and Two. Although Clark intentionally avoids interviewing children in a detention setting,¹⁰⁰² her work in children's spirituality and the supernatural stands alone in the field of children's spirituality.

For example, it would be fascinating for another researcher to compare the results of this study with Clark's results since many of the spiritual categories herein overlap with research topics from her own research. Additional comparative research studies would also begin to

¹⁰⁰¹ Lynn Schofield Clark, *From Angels to Aliens: Teenagers, the Media, and the Supernatural* (New York: International Publishers, 2003), 25-34.

¹⁰⁰² Ibid.

erode the unfortunate marginalization and exclusion that children in detention centers have endured. It is an insult to children in detention to be labeled “deviant,” as Clark has labeled them,¹⁰⁰³ and thus to be excluded from further research on children’s spirituality due to this kind of prejudice.

7.7 EPILOGUE

In concluding this research study, the author has borrowed a term from the field of literature and story to offer a concluding epilogue. Encouraging children in a juvenile detention center to share their personal stories has been a profound journey of rich tapestry. It has been a privilege and an honor to be privy to such stories of wonder, horror, hope, and redemption. And who is it that has been redeemed? And who has been the recipient of healing? Indeed, this journey has been a story of mutual discovery, of mirrored healing, and of shared redemption.

The author hopes that this research study may open the door to juvenile detention toward a spiritual legacy of its nameless children who wait to be discovered, who long to be heard. These are the stories of children behind bars.

¹⁰⁰³ Clark, 25-34.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

**Ocean County Department of Juvenile Services
165 Sunset Avenue Toms River NJ 08753**

February 6, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

As Administrator of the Ocean County Department of Juvenile Services, I have granted permission to Barbara A. Barr, Director of Social Work Services, to conduct anonymous research with 200 male juveniles who are, or who may become residents of the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center in Toms River, New Jersey, US.

The legal term *in loco parentis* grants Administrators as well as staff the parental authority to act in the best interest of juveniles in our care. Therefore, no further individual permission from the parent of each juvenile or the juvenile himself is required, provided that the research remains entirely anonymous. Ms. Barr assures me that her research will be used solely for the purposes of her proposed doctoral degree in Practical Theology through the University of South Africa and that all research shall remain completely anonymous.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any concerns or questions.

Yours sincerely,



**Gerald Bowden, MSW/LCSW
Administrator
Ocean County Dept. of Juvenile Services
732-288-7706
gbowden@co.ocean.nj.us**

APPENDIX B

RESIDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Resident Questionnaire

Name: _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____ Ethnicity: _____

1. Tell me about yourself:

- A. Personal background information:
- B. Family/relationships:
- C. Significant life events:
- D. Religious background:

2. What makes you feel free?

3. What is important to you? What do you value?

4. Do you believe in God, a Higher Power, or anything spiritual?

5. Do you pray? Can you tell me about that?

6. How do you cope with the stress of being in detention? What are some things that help you to cope, if any?

7. What activities in detention, if any, help you to handle your life stressors?

8. Has detention caused you to change any of your religious or spiritual beliefs?

9. Do you have hope for the future? Can you tell me about that?

10. Do you have faith in something? Can you tell me about that?

11. Can you tell me about any spiritual, religious, or abnormal experience(s) you have had in your life?

12. How was this interview experience for you?

13. Is there any question you think should be added to this questionnaire?

14. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

APPENDIX C

BLANKET LETTER OF PERMISSION

**Ocean County Department of Juvenile Services
165 Sunset Avenue Toms River NJ 08753**

February 6, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

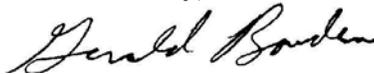
This Letter of Blanket Permission serves as the authority for Barbara A. Barr to conduct 200 individual interviews with males residents of the Ocean County Juvenile Detention Center in Toms River, New Jersey, US.

This blanket permission issued by myself as Administrator of the Ocean County Dept. of Juvenile Services is legal and stands in lieu of Ms. Barr acquiring individual, written permission from each participant in her research study. Such permission is granted in the United States through the Latin term, *in loco parentis*. This term grants the Administrator the direct and legal parental authority to act in the best interest of juveniles in his or her care.

Therefore, no further individual permission from the parent of each juvenile or the juvenile himself is required, provided that the research remains entirely anonymous. Ms. Barr assures me that her research will be used solely for the purposes of her proposed doctoral degree in Practical Theology through the University of South Africa and that all research shall remain completely anonymous.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any concerns or questions.

Yours sincerely,



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