

Summer 2012

If Not Here, Then Where?: An Investigation of Faith in the Public Speaking Classroom

Mary Anne Sunseri
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Sunseri, Mary Anne, "If Not Here, Then Where?: An Investigation of Faith in the Public Speaking Classroom" (2012). *Master's Theses*. 4215.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.2tna-j5tu>
https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/4215

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

IF NOT HERE, THEN WHERE?:
AN INVESTIGATION OF FAITH IN THE PUBLIC SPEAKING CLASSROOM

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Mary A. Sunseri

August 2012

©2012

Mary A. Sunseri

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

IF NOT HERE, THEN WHERE?:
AN INVESTIGATION OF FAITH IN THE PUBLIC SPEAKING CLASSROOM

By

Mary A. Sunseri

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2012

Dr. Deanna L. Fassett

Department of Communication Studies

Dr. Anne Marie Todd

Department of Communication Studies

Dr. Kathleen McConnell

Department of Communication Studies

ABSTRACT

IF NOT HERE, THEN WHERE?: AN INVESTIGATION OF FAITH IN THE PUBLIC SPEAKING CLASSROOM

By Mary A. Sunseri

Scholarly research suggests that faith and spirituality are relevant topics of conversation in colleges, but some argue that the separation of church and state inhibits the inclusion of discussions of faith and spirituality in the classrooms of secular education institutions. Such a disconnect might communicate that a person's spirituality and system of values have no place in the academic classroom or in an ethical circumstance. The purpose of this research was to enter into discussion with the instructors of undergraduate public speaking classes to discern whether and how they navigate communication about faith in their classrooms. It is crucial for scholars to take into account the positions and opinions of instructors before making any recommendations about how instructors should negotiate communication within their classes.

This autoethnographic study of a series of in-depth interviews with college public speaking instructors illuminates three themes associated with negotiating faith communication in the public speaking classroom: facilitation, neutrality, and engagement. Recommendations include encouraging instructors to reflect on their role in the classroom as well as the nature of the faiths that neither they nor their students can leave outside the classroom. This study concludes by addressing broader implications and questions for teachers, students, and researchers in ways that encourage the question: *how* should we talk about faith?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my advisor, Dr. Deanna L. Fassett: thank you so much for your patience and guidance. You supported me before I was ever a graduate student in the department, and you have always treated me as and mentored me into the scholar I hope to become.

To my committee members, Dr. Anne Marie Todd and Dr. Kathleen McConnell: my final defense is one of the most meaningful discussions I have ever had, and I am confident that I will be in a better position to publish my research for our colleagues to read and consider. I'm so pleased that I've had the opportunity to work with you in our meetings, in class, and in department activities.

To the research participants of this research: thank you so much for your time, your truth, and your vulnerability. I feel so blessed to be directly or indirectly working in the same field with each of you.

To Dana: you have a track record of mentoring graduate students and graduate teaching associates through the program, and I am so glad to be among that number. Thank you for all that you do.

To Laurina: we promised to write our theses and stand together on the commencement stage, and we did it. Thank you for hanging in there with me and for your meaningful research, and congratulations on your success.

To so many colleagues, professors, and friends who have offered me encouragement, tough questions, and honest responses: thank you for your perspective.

To my family, especially my mother and father: thank you for always supporting me in my education and life, for our honest discussions, and for keeping me going.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Religion and Spirituality	5
Higher Education and its Students.....	6
Vulnerability.....	11
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
McLaren and Ritual Performance.....	15
Cura Personalis	19
From Cura Personalis to Compartmentalization	23
In the Public Speaking Classroom.....	28
Research Questions.....	31
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	33
Autoethnography	35
Praxis and Self-reflexivity	41
Limitations	45
Interviews.....	47
Procedures.....	49
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	53
Facilitation: Faith Communication in the Classroom.....	55
Connection: “I want to show our divisions so we can also finally see how actually more connected we actually are.”	59
Culture: Validation and awareness.	62
Neutrality: Instructor Preaching, Privilege, and Genuineness	67
The nature of disclosure: Harm and potential.	67
Being genuine.....	74
Engagement: Bringing All of Oneself into the Classroom	78
CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS.....	83
Instructor Facilitation of Faith Communication.....	85
Dear Teachers.....	88

Dear Graduate Students, Graduate Teaching Associates, and Undergraduate Students.....	90
Dear Researchers	93
A Conclusion in Progress.....	97
References.....	100
APPENDIX A: IRB Approval to Conduct Research at San José State University	105
APPENDIX B: IRB Approval to Conduct Research at Santa Clara University.....	106
APPENDIX C: Agreement to Participate in Research.....	107
APPENDIX D: Interview Protocol	108

Chapter One: Introduction

One of my best friends is about to marry. Her wedding is in an unremarkable church, but it's not just a church to me. I circle the block before driving into the parking lot, otherwise known as the playground. Yellow circles and squares stretch out in patterns along the blacktop. There are the classrooms I inhabited during the second, third, and fourth grades. When I was in fourth grade, my classroom was closest to the church doors, so lining up to go to mass took no time at all.

I am comically confused regarding where to sit. It's unnatural for me to follow an usher. The inside of the church hasn't changed much. I take a knee and sign myself before sliding into the pew. My fingers trace along the shoulder of the pew. I used to play with it during Sunday morning mass. I flip open the book of hymns and readings. I never used to do that in this church; I picked up the habit in college, I think. The priest, now a monsignor, is not unlike the man I met when I was six years old. His hair is white now, but his thick Irish accent is still the same. This man taught me just as much as any of my classroom instructors while I attended this school.

I feel conflicted. My condition is not due to an issue with faith. I'm Italian Roman Catholic and have no trouble telling anyone who wants to know. Some of the things I have learned about the church have troubled me and my sense of feminism. I question the marriage ceremony itself and its symbolism and the words. I will never do that, I say. Not like this. I don't know why she chose to do it this way. I know she's Catholic as well, but-

And as she walks down the aisle with her father, I start to cry. I feel embarrassed, because I am sitting in a sea of colleagues in a large room that is not our office on campus. Where I feel confused, they seem disinterested or uncomfortable. What does that mean for me? Can I admit that maybe I *do* want this? My upbringing makes me want this. Should I fight it on principle? I learned about Catholicism. I never learned how to deal with the aspects of it with which I didn't agree. Why is it so complicated?

I constantly struggle with the concept and shape of my faith. Not every minute of every day, but rather, in unpredictable moments such as the one I described. I find myself wondering what and why I believe and how I find myself in these places of such tension. Tension is the best way I know how to describe it. Tension used to be an unpleasant word, sharp and short-lived at best. I am broadening my understanding of this word by exploring my relationship with two more ideologies: Catholicism and feminism. Catholicism, feminism, and tension play out in my everyday actions. I am constantly in flux among them, which makes it difficult to pin down which one is at play at any given time. It would be so much easier if I could straighten them out into a simple, predictable pattern, if I could point out which one is present in which specific action but not in this one, and they are certainly never working together at once because that must be some alternate universe option. It seems like chaos.

In the midst of my despair, I turn to Paaige K. Turner's (2002) work, wherein she uses theory, autoethnography, and confessional ethnography to study the tension that exists in her research as well as in her life. Instead of focusing solely on whether modernism or postmodernism is at play in her reflections regarding her birth story, she

pulls out the parts where the tension between the two terms shifts. Why do they shift? What was the meaning behind something she said or some ritual she performed? We risk more, she says, by ending the tension and instinctively choosing one side, “THE ANSWER,” over the other (p. 665). I can use her research as a tool to make sense of the tension present in my life. Although it may seem as though this tension is important only to me, I consider how my experience with Catholic schooling contributed (and, in a way, continues to contribute) to my understanding of Catholicism and feminism through ritual performance. This path or mounting struggle, though compiled of specific events that are unique to my experience, is a site or space of tension for anyone who holds and performs multiple shifting identities that may not always seem to get along with one another.

But I cannot be the only person who has ever struggled with the relationship between two or more identities, and I further doubt that I am the only one who has used scholarship to explore tension within and between identities. We are always performing the myriad of our identities, but when and where is it appropriate to investigate, question, and study these relationships? Does a person need to seek out insight in a specific spiritual location if it is a matter of faith?

Turner’s (2002) work also gives me a source of inspiration. I would not think to consider how research involving midwifery could demonstrate theory, practice, and reflection in the scholarly community. This research gives me hope that there is a place for studying faith and communication.

When I read Turner’s (2002) research as a graduate student, it wasn’t the first time I’d considered bringing faith into my academic writing. In the spring quarter of

2005, I made an appointment with my undergraduate thesis advisor. I was a 21 year old Catholic who had just begun to also identify as a feminist, and this recent change had a nasty effect with those 21 years of Catholicism. How could I possibly be both at the same time when so much about the Catholic Church seemed to go against what I was learning about feminism? My thesis advisor, who was ever resistant to giving easy answers to complicated problems, suggested that I might have found my undergraduate communication studies thesis topic. Suddenly, I had a place within scholarship to explore the tension within and between my identities and, in particular, around my 21 year-old-but-still-changing faith.

My own position of tension between faith and other parts of my life at such a transitional point in my life made me question if other college students face similar situations. And while I met positivity with my undergraduate thesis topic, I have met far more resistance in proposing to study the negotiation of faith in the classroom. Is there really no place to talk about faith in the classroom if I am not angrily musing about the patriarchy of the Catholic Church?

I propose to research the negotiation of faith as a relevant topic in the university classroom. To do so, I will first address why college is an appropriate location and age to study communication about faith by looking at the purpose of higher education and at the characteristics of college students. In doing so, I will define terms such as religion and spirituality and further discuss the controversy surrounding the inclusion of faith in the college classroom, particularly in the case of secular universities.

Religion and Spirituality

I make a conscious effort to speak in terms of spirituality instead of both spirituality and religion or just religion. My reason for doing so lies in the definitions I accept for both terms. Chickering, Dalton, and Stamm (2006) define religion as “the conceptual framework and the recognized institution within a society’s deep moral values and the rules governing what is defined as correct behavior for individuals are generally associated” (p. 37). This definition tends to work well alongside Freitas’ (2008) research when she asked college students to define religion. Students reflected about religion’s rules and restrictions and called attention to structures that others created long ago through oral and written tradition that continue to dictate their behaviors and beliefs.

Though spirituality tends to be trickier to define, I make the task easier by following suit and defining it by explaining its relationship to religion. Spirituality is “marked by a highly personal search for ultimate meaning, purpose, and values wherever they may be found” (Chickering et al., 2006, p. 38). The definition is quite broad only out of necessity. Again, Freitas’ (2008) students gave a wide range of answers to the question of spirituality. They included their own personal systems of spirituality that they characterized as being open-minded, ever-changing, and unscripted. For students who are considering their role in the universe, the concept of spirituality appears to be well-suited for their needs by allowing them to stretch and do their own searching. It is the all-encompassing nature of spirituality and faith that interests me, and since I will conduct research in universities that educate college-aged students, I feel it is fitting and logical to use wording that includes such general terms.

Higher Education and its Students

People are capable of shifting and changing throughout their lives, and college is a common and unique location for change. In the United States, many students who enter college are 18, a significant milestone in terms of social responsibility and maturity in society. College is an opportunity to learn more about where one has come from and what one might want to do with the rest of his or her life. College is a time to reflect on the past, analyze the present, and consider the future. It is not difficult to see higher education as a place to encourage and stimulate intellectual development, but Chickering et al. (2006) point out that colleges should also focus on the moral development of students. They further argue that colleges are withholding several elements that encourage civil responsibility and critical thinking for the world by primarily focusing on professional preparation. If education serves to encourage students to gain knowledge and understanding of the wider culture of the world, it also asks us to question our presence and participation in the world and to consider how to go about learning and living the answers.

The big picture, then, is that college prepares young adults for their new responsibilities. When I went to college, I left my parents' home in order to live on my own, to find a job, and to negotiate my schooling and social life with that job. I had the ability to join the army (I didn't), to consider a future career, to attend whatever church I wanted, and to vote. None of these topics are simple on their own, and the combination of all of them would be overwhelming for any person. Ideally, education isn't about filling students' minds with objective knowledge. Rather, college teaches students how

to negotiate our opinions, values, and desires in our daily lives, and by doing so, we can see how spirituality is present in every aspect of our lives (Chickering et al., 2006).

Not only is spirituality present in each individual, but religion and spiritual aspects are fundamental and influential in public discourse. People create cultures and codes for acceptable behavior based on common values.

All societies at all periods of history have developed systems of shared values and practices that guide personal morality and are grounded in traditions of belief in powers that transcend the individual, regardless of whether these are defined as God, gods, saints, the Buddha, Brahman, or the spirits of the natural world or of the ancestors (Chickering et al., 2006, p. 67).

Spirituality and faith have a greater impact than we might think if we consider the role of spirituality in the construction and maintenance of cultures. If this is the case, then it seems perfectly relevant to discuss faith as it is relevant to other topics in the college classroom.

So why don't we talk about faith and spirituality in the context of the (college) classroom? Barbour (2008) points out that even professors who teach religious studies classes are cautious about including their own religious convictions in their classes for fear that students will view them as "Sunday-school teachers or evangelists."

At public universities, professors must honor the separation of church and state. Students are to be taught about religion, not indoctrinated in a specific faith. And at public and private institutions alike, practitioners of religious studies have been anxious to prove that they can be as tough-minded and academically rigorous as their colleagues in any other discipline. That often means trying to be as detached, scientific, impersonal, or value-neutral as possible (Barbour, 2008, p. B24).

Even in the context of a religious class in an institution of higher learning, teachers feel as though their faith beliefs are irrelevant (or worse, illegitimate) in that setting.

“Something important is lost when a teacher is not able – because of external or internal constraints – to articulate a personal response to the religious issues at stake” (Barbour, 2008, p. B24).

Barbour (2008) notes that problems occur when calling attention to personal religious convictions would be appropriate in terms of facilitating critical thinking, such as a professor calling attention to how a spiritual belief might influence someone’s opinion on a political topic. Hence we enter the scene of a controversial issue. People throw around the statement “separation of church and state” as though it means the same thing to everyone instead of, as Barbour (2008) pointed out, that teachers shouldn’t indoctrinate students with one particular faith. To believe or teach that spirituality and all other aspects of life (including academics and politics) are not related to one another directly contradicts the concept of spirituality being present in all aspects of our daily lives. Parker (1987) calls attention to instances in which people have filed suit over the use of school textbooks that encourage the belief of a specific religion, school prayer, and even the Pledge of Allegiance and singing the National Anthem. However, he also argues that the people who do not want religious references in their schools are also the people who want to pass their faith onto their children without the interruption of spiritual education in their schools. Young adults will learn their faith outside of what they learn at school, and they will be able to function with both elements in their daily lives as they grow. Research supports the theory that frequent family communication about religion impacts college students’ self-identification as religious and choice of college at private religious colleges (Mullikin, 2006). Although this supports Parker’s (1987) argument in

that it focuses less on religious upbringing in school and more on the interaction of family and religion, it also lends support to the inclusion of faith communication in higher education. The students in that study chose to attend religious academic institutions to continue their education.

Donna Freitas (2008) pointed out a staggering new trend: college students are enthralled with religion and spirituality. The trend further illuminates a specific group of college-age people who identify as both non-religious and spiritual, but this group is quite small in high school-age people. Freitas studied this trend while calling attention to another trend: the increase in sexual activity of college students. She studied student spirituality and sexual behavior at four different types of schools: evangelical colleges, nonaffiliated private schools, Catholic schools, and public schools. She found that students at the evangelical colleges differed from the students at the three other institutions in terms of faith and what she refers to as “the hookup culture.” Students at evangelical colleges felt encouraged to talk about and even question their faith in relationship with sex and their lives. Faculty, staff, and other students promoted an atmosphere of safety and open discussion while requiring codes of behavior that would make other college students balk, such as strict visitation rules for couples, punishment for sexual activity, and following purity standards. By contrast, the students at spiritual colleges (students were more likely to identify as spiritual and non-religious, even at the Catholic colleges) often did not talk about sex or faith and didn’t perceive any connection even between the two topics.

What is so telling is that Freitas (2008) seems genuinely puzzled and concerned about what her findings mean in the greater context of communication regarding sex and faith in schools. At the institutions that promote their own orthodoxy, how stunning it is for us to consider that a scenario of open communication about faith and sex “however imperfect, is healthier for students struggling with questions about faith and sex than the alternative, which is not to engage a community holistically on such subjects, or even at all” (p. 213). The message for students in other institutions is that faith and sex don’t matter, particularly when students don’t know who they would talk to on campus even if they wanted to talk about it. They certainly might not consider their faith in the context of their assignments, their areas of study, or their futures. Is that separation of identity a concept that teachers in higher education want to encourage in their students? I don’t mean to answer for teachers. Rather, I think the way to address this question is to ask teachers about the role of faith in their classrooms.

The comparison between colleges of Freitas (2008) is something that inspired me to consider negotiations of faith in the classrooms of a Catholic university and a secular state university. It was not my desire to replicate her findings, but I did hope to further the discussion by including the voices and experiences of instructors. In doing so, I hoped to shed light on patterns that are consistent within either university (or both) that might inform instructors about the kind of classroom climates they facilitate and want to facilitate. This process forces a beam of light on teachers and their actions, and I also call attention to how my own behaviors affect others. And I didn’t have any reason to believe it would be easy.

Vulnerability

It's not easy. It isn't easy for me to write this thesis and talk about spirituality in general or my own specifically. And it is not easy for either students or teachers to engage in discussions about spirituality and faith in the classroom. hooks (2003) identifies the Dalai Lama as a great teacher and someone whom many people respect and "like." "But often, when we meet a teacher who plunges us into deep and profound mystery, we don't like it. It's not easy, and it's not easy to be such a teacher" (p. 159). It's difficult to make ourselves so vulnerable in the context of our students or for students to do the same among their peers and teachers. But just because the task is difficult and discomforting does not mean we shouldn't endeavor to do it. The result of shying away from acknowledging the spiritual aspect of our lives in the classroom makes the task all the more difficult for those same people outside of the classroom (Glazer, 1999). "It is students' grappling with a personal understanding of these concepts, however, that will determine if they will use the knowledge and skills they have acquired through an undergraduate education for the betterment of the individual, their communities, and larger society" (Chickering et al., 2006, p. 2).

In this study, I asked instructors (including myself) to make themselves more vulnerable than they already are by treating themselves and their students as holistic and spiritual people within the context of their classes. There is no manual for how to approach the topic of spirituality in the classroom, and there shouldn't be, because every teacher is different, every student is different, and every situation is unique, potentially jarring, and probably unpredictable. For these reasons, I gathered stories from public

speaking instructors from a Catholic university and a secular state university and began to answer how public speaking instructors at each institution navigate communication about faith and spirituality in their classrooms. These stories are not models. Rather, I hope that our stories set the ground for more personal questions for each teacher and student who reflects on his or her spiritual self in the context of daily life.

Chapter 2 reviews literature on communication in religious academic institutions as well as on the meaning and purpose of higher education. I include scholarly research within the communication studies field on how and why we separate our spiritual lives from other aspects of our daily lives, including our academic lives. Finally, I review the rhetoric of several public speaking textbooks.

Chapter 3 expands on the method I have chosen for this study—autoethnographic analysis of in-depth interview data—to answer my research questions.

Chapter 4 reports my findings from the data I collected in participant interviews. I illuminate categories as the patterns emerge from the stories of my research participants. I also knit autoethnographic data throughout this chapter.

Chapter 5 reveals discussion and implications for further research based on the themes in chapter 4. I use this section to discuss the findings in the context of how researchers, teachers, and students can find meaning and relevance as well as how they can ask questions and reflect on questions of faith in the communication classroom.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

"So they can't talk about religion in the classroom, but they can talk about philosophy? That's stupid."

I'm confused, for a variety of reasons. Most of it is my own damn fault. In January of 2010 I carry around Chickering et al.'s (2006) *Encouraging Authenticity and Spirituality in Higher Education* wherever I go, and I pull it out in the hope that I'll use that 3 minutes in between ordering and receiving my mocha to get from page 2 to page 3 (I succeed, but only just). I bring it to get the bagel I shouldn't be eating (but it's really good, in spite of or maybe because of this), despite the fact that it's a clunky book in addition to my clunky self and clunky bag. When the person behind the register asks what the book is, I have to look at the binding to make sure I get the order of words correct.

"What's that mean?"

Well that's an annoying question. It's a great question, but it requires an answer, and I am not particularly skilled at thinking on the fly, much less describing the book of which I've read all of maybe 20 pages.

So I talk briefly about how we're all trying to make our way through the universe, and how we're trying to engage discussion about it in the classroom. I have just recently underlined a passage that convinces me that university is *precisely* the place to have such discussions. The authors frame the purpose of higher education as a place for teachers and students to engage in critical and analytic thought and questioning the universe as well as our place within that universe (Chickering et al., 2006). How can discussions

involving spirituality not be relevant in the classroom? My impression is that my conversation partner does not agree. And I know I didn't mention religion, but I understand the almost automatic substitution of "spirituality." I'm wondering where I went wrong in my description to get such a response.

I also don't understand what point he's trying to make. Is he saying we should talk about religion within the context of the classroom? Or does he think that educators who talk about the universe (philosophy, apparently) are trying to pull a fast one on their students or deans by changing the name to something that seems more appropriate for an academic setting?

This conversation is one of many in which I have engaged over the past couple of years as I pondered my own spirituality and its interaction with my academic self. Some of these conversations have even take place within the communication studies community, in both formal and informal situations. In exploring whether or not religion/spirituality/philosophy is appropriate for discussion or instruction in an educational setting, I will start by focusing on the communication in institutions that directly connect education and religion. McLaren's (1993) observations about a Catholic junior high school in Canada provide insight about the pedagogy of faith alongside other subjects. I look specifically at the relationship between rituals and what/how they can communicate faith. Next, I will identify how scholars have explored the origins of religious universities and how those institutions still reflect concentration and understanding of education as a way of preparing individuals to become responsible, ethical, and critical members of society (Feldner, 2006; Kirby et al., 2006). If, as

members of universities, we agree that these are the aims of our own institutions (regardless of whether or not they self-identify with a particular faith), and we hope to foster within our students the values of community action, equality, intellectual discourse, democracy, and social justice, is it irrelevant to acknowledge and encourage the inclusion, consideration, and exploration of faith and spirituality in our classes? This question leads into a discussion of how we discuss spirituality and higher education, including pedagogy, in communication studies.

McLaren and Ritual Performance

Some people participate in the relationship between religion and education at an early age. My parents wanted to provide me with a high quality of education, and they felt they were doing so by enrolling me in private Catholic schools from age six to age twenty-one. It is important to consider how communities structure institutions that self-identify with a specific faith or religion. In *Schooling as a Ritual Performance: Towards a Political Economy of Educational Symbols and Gestures*, Peter McLaren (1993) followed through on an invitation to act as an ethnographer researching pedagogy in a Catholic school in Canada. As a result of his research, he focused on the influence of culture and performance on schooling. Schooling is no longer a passive commodity that exists; now schooling is something that acts. Students receive schooling and teachers school the students. McLaren discusses the culture of education and reflects on the role of ritual and performance in that culture. It is vitally important to shed light on these systems of rituals in the context of schools in order to make sense of them.

McLaren (1993) was careful to point out that rituals are not simply symbols of conformity. To believe so would be to overlook the complex nature of how we use rituals in everyday life. He focused on the rituals within schooling to bring about reflection and action on the part of the educators. The rituals they perform in front of their students influence their lives, just as my teachers did with me. I make and remake the performance of teacher in front of my students. Teachers in my Catholic schooling made and remade the performance of Catholicism and faith, but they also directly or indirectly contributed to my understanding and performance of feminism and how that matters in the world. While this might not have been their intent, McLaren explained that these rituals are “symbolic processes that do not cleave into neat theoretical categories but which overlap and tincture one another with nuances of meaning” (p. 7). I make and remake Catholicism, feminism, graduate student, and other identities every day, sometimes at the same time, because they are not isolated or opposite concepts. In doing so, I am also constantly enacting these concepts as they exist in our world.

McLaren (1993) also focused this language of rituals on teaching Catholicism within the context of his research site. He explained that we learn gestures with specific meanings and often go on to perform these gestures without separating out the meaning. It is as though the meaning is inherent and permanent regardless of who the social actor is and what meaning he or she attaches to it. “Even the most idiosyncratic thoughts and gestures are rarely of one’s own making but rather belong to the culture” (p. 181). When I touch my forehead, then a spot on my chest, and then both of my shoulders, this performance is meaningful to me. If I made the gesture out of order, it would not mean

the same thing to me or to another person who would otherwise recognize the symbolism. Similarly, I did not know the gesture when I was five years old. I watched as people modeled the behavior in church and practiced it in my classes with other students, and soon afterward, I began performing the ritual as well. That is what good Catholics are supposed to do. It is also, in this case, what good students are supposed to do.

When speaking about ritual performance, I find that I cannot separate the body from the theory. I must address it directly, and I find it appropriate to do so while using Judith Butler's (1988) concept of performativity. She draws a connection between Austin's (1968) concept of performative utterances to ethnography. While Austin describes performative utterances as those including speech acts, Butler expands the theory by including gestures and other symbolic signs in the construction of reality. Butler rolls all of these theorists together, from Austin's performative utterances and de Beauvoir's (1993) concept of woman as a historical situation and not natural fact, to Foucault's (1978) regulative discourses to analyze the construction of gender and comes up with the theory that "gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity, instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (p. 519). Butler (2007) aptly troubles gender in her book. One way she does this is by looking specifically at how the body performs gender as well as how we gender the body. We move our bodies in particular ways to reflect gender, and in this way, gender plays out *on* our bodies. These "acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence of identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured

and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means” (p. 185). Fabrication, in this sense, does not imply any level of truthfulness or accuracy. The performances that I learn about and engage in are always fabrications and reflections. They are actions and movements in which I might not otherwise engage. But now I engage in them because I attach a deeper meaning.

My performance of these rituals can empower or restrict me at any given time. My actions create and recreate meaning, for myself as well as for others. I further complicate this idea of performativity by adding the tension of having two seemingly conflicting identities at once. Am I only ever performing both identities, or do I change roles in ways that I and others can clearly and predictably follow without question or doubt? Or are these identities trapped in and on my body at all times? Am I always making a statement, voluntarily or involuntarily? Institutions in general and those who engage in pedagogy (and this could be anyone) should take care as they teach me how to use my body as political (and spiritual) action.

Butler (1998) chose to study the performativity of gender as a cultural process rather than an individual product. In doing so, she also opens the door for us to identify and analyze our assumptions. How do we construct and maintain cultural conventions? What is our role, and how do our actions contribute to a process that we overwhelmingly see as a natural, perhaps everlasting product? Conversations about who we are as people and as a society, and discussions about what we should do with that knowledge, are lacking if they do not take into consideration the underlying and otherwise invisible hand

of the assumptions we have that we base in faith. We need to focus on how to have those conversations in higher education.

Cura Personalis

In order to study communication regarding faith in academic institutions, I consider it necessary to narrow the scope by addressing universities, and in doing so, I look at two specific kinds of universities: Catholic and state (secular) universities. In order to study communication and spirituality in their public speaking classrooms, I first want to provide information regarding their senses of organization and specifically their conceptualizations of the purpose of higher education.

Some of the earliest institutions of higher education in the United States are non-secular universities, and a good number of them are Jesuit universities. Santa Clara University (originally Santa Clara College), in Santa Clara, California, was originally Mission Santa Clara de Asis in 1777 before it also became an academic institution for higher education in 1851 (Pugh, 2006). Jesuits set up Catholic schools such as Santa Clara in order to offer “quality faith-based education for immigrant Catholics” (Feldner, 2006, p. 68). These Jesuits taught at and maintained academic institutions in the hopes of teaching students about Jesuit spirituality. “The 450-year tradition of Jesuit education has come to mean commitment to high intellectual and ethical standards, personal concern for every student, and the ability to ‘find God in all things,’ particularly in the poor and oppressed” (Kirby et al., 2006, p. 88). This principle explores the idea of recognizing the person as a whole being with moral and spiritual thoughts and identities. Jesuit education demonstrates the Ignatian principle of helping by concentrating on

“reflection, social justice, finding God in all things, and *cura personalis* (care for the whole person)” (Feldner, 2006, p. 69).

Jesuit universities have gone through many changes, one of the most dramatic being that people who identify as non-members of the Society of Jesus also maintain these institutions. However, the Jesuit tradition is still a prominent part of education. Santa Clara University’s mission statement clearly reflects the importance of engaging students with Ignatian principles.

As an academic community, we expand the boundaries of knowledge and insight through teaching, research, artistic expression, and other forms of scholarship. It is primarily through discovering, communicating, and applying knowledge that we exercise our institutional responsibility as a voice of reason and conscience in society (University Mission Statement, 1998).

Education serves a purpose that is more than just the simple passing along of knowledge. Jesuit education understands education as a process of preparing the individual to participate responsibly in the world.

Are we requesting too much by asking faculty and staff in these institutions to interact with students and with each other in ways that reflect and include spirituality? Studies involving Jesuit universities, for example, have often focused on how faculty and staff members reflect upon their involvement in this unique setting. Feldner (2006) looked at how employees felt and assigned meaning to the mission building efforts of their individual institutions. Organization members felt compelled to go above and beyond their job descriptions. To bring the Jesuit tradition into everyday activities and settings, people often felt overwhelmed by unrealistic expectations. At the same time, organization members questioned their institutions’ methods of carrying out their own

mission statements. In one example, one member cited frustration regarding the lack of a maternity leave policy in her university. This seemed like an aspect that was contrary to the mission statement, a distinct disconnect between policy and enactment. Leaders of the institutions clearly face a difficult task. “As they actively promote the institution’s religious mission, they find themselves in a place where the demands become more than they can provide in terms of living out mission in all aspects of university life” (p. 80). While challenges are understandable, a lack of following through in practice can lead to confusion on the part of community members, as it did with several of the organization members in the study.

Another challenge that Jesuit university faculty face is negotiating the secular with the spiritual in their university. Kirby et al. (2006) studied how they as faculty members understood the conflicting discourses of spiritual values and secular practices within a Jesuit university. The researchers explore tensions that come up as a result of participating and carrying themselves within the organization with which they identify.

Our narratives, interviews, and conversations revealed how we have sometimes felt “pressed” to negotiate our relationship to larger organizational norms and values when discourses of spiritual values and secular practice compete. In these moments, we negotiate our identities as we decide what we can and cannot accept from the organization and how much we want to push ourselves to imbue Jesuit values (p. 91).

The researchers shed light on an organization that calls them to negotiate their lives a specific way while occasionally falling short of doing the same. The words “pressed” and “compete” stand out as forceful terms, ones that convey a sort of unnatural conflict. Organization members are in a position of self-exploration and have the ability to

construct a personal plan for negotiation, since Jesuit values and academic norms do not seem to easily complement each other.

Both of these studies identify disconnects between words and deeds in their institutions while reflecting upon how to connect the two in the daily lives of organization members. While I do not presume that the lack of a successful negotiation of a university's values and actions causes the same disconnect in its employees (and vice versa), the fact that people brought it up in their personal reflections about their own interactions and efforts to make meaning shows that there at least might be a connection. It is certainly worthwhile to look at these institutions to see if and how faculty and staff are making efforts to follow through on mission statements.

But what of the institutions who do not identify themselves as religious? Do educators in secular academic institutions motivate their students less in areas such as personal achievement, generation of knowledge, critical and analytical thinking, and social justice? Are the students in these institutions less spiritual? Do they lack the motivation to explore the roles of their multiple identities, particularly faith identities? Is it unnecessary for them to critically reflect and explore the complexities in the way that their faith interacts with the way they view the world and their role in it?

These are difficult, broad questions to assign to secular universities, and though I won't presume to answer them in the focus of this research, I can narrow the focus of these questions by looking at the previous mission statement of a Catholic university as well as looking at a state university's mission statement. San José State University's mission statement calls on its faculty and staff to "enrich the lives of its students, to

transmit knowledge to its students along with the necessary skills for applying it in the service of our society, and to expand the base of knowledge through research and scholarship” (SJSU’s Mission, n.d.). Student goals include developing skills in critical inquiry and communication, learning multicultural and global perspectives in the context of diverse economic and ethnic backgrounds, and demonstrating the relationship between responsible citizenship and ethical choices.

What do the mission statements from Santa Clara University, a Catholic private university, and San José State University, a secular state university, tell us about the priorities and about the communication within their classes? Santa Clara University’s mission statement acknowledges that what we know of as knowledge has its limitations, and it is through the education of the university that students learn how to take those analytic skills into the world as a way of consciously bettering society. San José State University’s mission statement addresses knowledge as something that faculty and staff “transmit” to students so that students can apply these skills to society. By mission statements alone, we can imagine that these universities appeal to different kinds of students with different goals for attending college. Neither mission statement specifically addresses the role of faith or spirituality, so it is crucial to gain insight about the classrooms of Catholic and secular universities to see how faith interacts with other relevant topics in accordance with each university’s mission.

From Cura Personalis to Compartmentalization

These questions surface a delicate balance as well as several issues involving the idea of the separation of church and state. Faculty feel the necessity to compartmentalize

their identities as though one identity has no impact on another, or at the very least, any of their identities does not influence their identities as teachers (Barbour, 2008; Palmer, 2007). In some ways, this can be a welcome relief. It might be a personal subject that I do not want to bring up, perhaps because I find it difficult to defend in a setting that allows questions or challenges. Our society also tends to assign a negative connotation to the inclusion of spiritual topics to a political discussion, if it acknowledges those topics at all (Kurtz, 2009; Lessl, 2009; Phair, 2010; Ward, 2004). Worse still, people engaging in political discussions occasionally seem “keenly interested in muting religious voices” (Kurtz, 2009, p. 112). In the context of communication studies, Lessl (2009) argues that “we have tended to close off broader questions about religious communication that, if actively considered, would result in a more vigorous engagement between religious communication scholarship and the larger discipline” (p. 320). The irony of this concept is that society also continues to maintain the relationship between organized religion and government. While the United States does not have an official state religion, Friedenber (2002) points out that “mainstream faiths have, for example, been almost uniformly supportive of our recent war on terrorism” (p. 35). He gives a thorough description of the scene and indicates the religious rhetoric of President George W. Bush’s first major address after the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2005, in front of Washington’s National Cathedral. In these instances, we replace the guise of non-religion during normal operating hours with an inclusive religion (as long as that religion includes God). It’s not unlike the person who lives his or her life to the fullest until that life takes a turn

for the worst, and the person finds religion because the world seems to be going to hell. What does that teach us about the role of religion in our lives?

If we only consider spirituality when we're trying to "put politics aside" (such as during a major crisis), when is it appropriate to include spirituality in scholarly discussions? We might see the discussion of a political topic as one of academic argumentation, but to then include Biblical teachings suddenly and disdainfully turns our scholarly discussion into a sermonic diatribe. Baurain (2007) argues that this perceived connection between organized religion and indoctrination seems more overt and unpleasant until we consider that all teaching is changing and, to some extent, indoctrination.

The key argument here is that because of the very nature of education, teachers possess priorities, beliefs, and passions, and in living these out they call their students to the same priorities, beliefs, and passions—not as automatons whom they can brainwash, but as human beings who will choose what to believe and how to find their own way in the world. No matter what beliefs a teacher holds, then, the inevitability of transformative pedagogy is best acknowledged and pursued within a strong value of respect for persons (p. 209).

It is a challenge, I think, for us as a society to see education as any form of indoctrination, but it is doing so that sheds light on our fears and how to understand and shape the culture of education. Do we cease to use the rituals to which McLaren (1993) called attention? Glazer (1999) indicates that it is often the case in schools, particularly public schools, that we completely and purposefully leave out topics that generate fear in teachers and parents. He argues that this fear of fear guides us to completely ignore the spiritual identity and its relationship to self-knowledge and wholeness. Palmer (2007)

goes further to address how such a break in individual wholeness can dehumanize teachers in order to distance themselves from their students.

While Glazer (1993) calls attention to fear and fracturing in cases such as school and prayer, bell hooks (2003) uses her experience to demonstrate how academia frowns upon the inclusion of spirituality in the scholarly community. She talks about her own indoctrination as a student and teacher.

I was trained to keep all discussions of religion and spirituality out of the classroom. When I made the long journey to Stanford University from Virginia Street Baptist church, where my soul had first been touched by the mystical dimensions of Christian faith, I knew that Stanford was not a place there would be any discussion of divine spirit (p. 175).

The move from one geographic place to another can be dramatic in its own right, but hooks describes her move as one where she moved from spirituality being an integral aspect of life and learning to no discussion of spirituality at all. She further calls attention to the overall reaction she observed when spirituality and faith were visible. “Most of my teaching experience has been in climates that are totally, utterly, and completely hostile to spirituality. Where colleagues laugh at you if they think that you have some notion of spiritual life” (p. 162). In her experiences, there was no negotiation of faith in the communication of her classes. In my own graduate seminars, this has often been the case as well. The colleague who shifted uncomfortably when the rest of the class attacked the Catholic Church in general and married individuals specifically, who frowned as our professor argued that he didn’t understand why he should care about my paper because he’s not Catholic, is the same colleague who drew in her breath and told me how proud she was that I would pursue my research regardless of the reaction I was

already starting to receive. “I wanted to. I just couldn’t do it,” she said. The hostility and occasional laughing behind people’s backs is something that happens in academia as well.

Instead of complaining further about the hostility in the academy regarding spirituality in education, hooks (2003) focuses on the fracturing that this hostility promotes in academia and thus in society. The problem with this separation (or denial of the spiritual, at any rate) is that we divide ourselves not only in academia but also from the rest of our lives.

Perhaps one of the most intense political struggles we face—and greatest spiritual struggle—in seeking to transform society in the effort to maintain integrity of being.... We bear witness not just with our intellectual work but with ourselves, our lives. Surely the crisis of these times demands that we give our all.... All of the work we do, no matter how brilliant or revolutionary in thought or action, loses power and meaning if we lack integrity of being (p. 164).

If we as a society are unable to separate our politics (our democracy and our way of life) from spirituality, how can we justify compartmentalizing the very identities that make us who we are? How can we, as teachers who prepare the next generation, perform and change our students in meaningful ways that do not school them into compartmentalizing themselves? And how can we encourage them to be critical and analytical thinkers in all areas of their lives if we (purposefully or not) leave out so significant a portion of a person’s sense of identity and purpose in the world?

It is impossible to fully segregate our identities, particularly those of teachers and people, and we cannot segregate our identities in front of our students (Baurain, 2007).

We also do ourselves as individuals a disservice by not acknowledging or questioning the influence of our faiths on our values, morals, and systems of knowledge and knowing.

Human beings bring to their communication – their listening, studying, thinking, knowing, and all other symbolic action – various assumptions, many of which cannot be factually proven. We human beings simply live by faith in things, persons, and gods. Accepting such a religious human ‘nature,’ theism proposes as a matter of faith that there is one major source *of* meaning even in the midst of competing claims *about* meaning (Schultze, 2005, p. 15).

Schultze asks us to consider the relationship between faith and knowledge, and he points out that in this postmodern age of subjectivity and intersectionality, we are thrusting ourselves backward in theory and practice and research by trying to separate spirituality and its effects from everything else. The result is that we see ourselves as fractured individuals, which is bad enough, but we also teach the next generation to do the same.

In the Public Speaking Classroom

A class that deals very much with democratic and analytic speaking and listening is the public speaking course. Some universities make the public speaking course a general requirement across majors and colleges. And in some cases, graduate programs such as mine offer graduate students opportunities to teach undergraduate classes. In my case, I became a graduate teaching associate and taught several sections of public speaking.

When I first started teaching, I didn’t think much about faith and spirituality, but in reflecting back on my experience, I wonder if it was a topic that we just didn’t consider. I don’t recall it as a topic of discussion in my orientation. Similarly, as I flip through Hendrix’s (2000) *The Teaching Assistant’s Guide to the Basic Course*, I note that

the author frequently calls attention to the struggles of teaching assistants of color or those for whom English is not their first language, but she doesn't spend much time on issues of communication and faith. However, she does call on teaching assistants to acknowledge their "culturally embedded view of the world" and adds that students are people who identify with diverse cultures, values, and beliefs (p. 21). Beyond that, she does not expand on how to negotiate conversations about those cultures.

What do public speaking textbooks say about the topic and inclusion of faith, how do they address it, and in what context do they discuss it? Each textbook for the public speaking course is different, and yet they each touch on spirituality in some way, often in the context of audience analysis. Coopman and Lull (2012) discuss cultural diversity and cultural norms. They add that the audience for a public speaking event "will likely include a range of cultural differences based on age, gender, ethnicity, disabilities, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status level" (p. 52). They also address religion in terms of how to avoid ethnocentrism, or the belief that your worldview is right or better than everyone else's worldview. "When communicators think ethnocentrically, they avoid questioning societal and cultural practices that promote discrimination against people based on their ethnic background, religious beliefs, socioeconomic status, disability, sex, and other demographic categories" (p. 32). Most public speaking texts acknowledge that religious affiliation is a very sensitive issue (Jaffe, 2010; Osborn, S., Osborn, M., & Osborn, R., 2008). Jaffe (2010) identifies religion as "a particularly sensitive topic because of deep emotions religious issues can evoke" (p. 94). She briefly notes that the people in the audience might be religious or not, and that an effective

public speaker tries to be aware of the audience's religions in connection with a particular speech topic. Fraleigh and Tuman (2009) use two pages to discuss religious orientation alongside topics such as educational background, age, sexual orientation, and gender composition. "Thus, like any other demographic characteristic, religious orientation does not preordain (pardon the pun) an audience's reaction to a given message, yet it can still exert great influence. Presenters who craft their speeches accordingly stand a better chance of connecting to their listeners" (p. 134). Sprague, Stuart, and Bodary (2010) note that the nature of your audience's religion might be relevant in the case of a speech about euthanasia, but that religion "might have no bearing whatsoever" with another speech topic (though they are careful to not give an example) (p. 93). Grice and Skinner (2011) point out that audience members might value religion more strongly than the speaker, and they recommend that speakers learn more about the religious beliefs of the audience if religious beliefs affect the topic. S. A. Beebe and S. J. Beebe (2010) present a similar message while also addressing the role of religion as it applies to ethics. Lastly, Fujishin (2003) notes that at this time in the United States, speakers must address people from multiple ethnicities. "To adopt and develop a spirit of cultural awareness and sensitivity is necessary and desirable if you are to be an effective speaker" (p. 62). While there is no direct mention of faith and spirituality as cultures, the idea is the same as it was in the other public speaking textbooks: the audience members represent a great sea of cultural diversity, and you as the speaker should do your best to be culturally sensitive. Based on these textbooks, it might not be a huge surprise if conversations about faith and spirituality don't emerge in the public speaking classroom. There's certainly no script.

Instructors and students interacting in class and creating speeches and lessons plans do not feel the need to limit their communication and interactions to the content of the required textbook. My focus is on how public speaking teachers negotiate communication about faith and spirituality as relevant topics within the context of their classes.

Research Questions

As teachers, regardless of whether or not we identify as educators in religious institutions, we have the capacity to influence our students in many ways (McLaren, 1993). We influence them just as much when we attempt to compartmentalize our identities, especially in the case of how faith influences other areas of our lives and the development of the very morals and values we focus on with our students. We can and should demonstrate, question, criticize, and explore the relationship between faiths and other aspects of our lives with our students in our classrooms.

This literature review contains relevant research that identifies the fracturing of whole people into compartmentalized lives, where feelings and spirituality are acceptable in private life but have no place in professional settings (Palmer, 2007). Before we can make the logical leap into action prior to the fracture taking place, we need to understand what faith communication looks like in the context of the public speaking classroom. Specifically, I looked at faith and communication in Catholic university public speaking classes and secular state university public speaking classes. I conducted research to answer the following two questions: First, how do instructors at Santa Clara University navigate communication about faith in their public speaking classrooms? Second, how

do instructors at San José State University navigate communication about faith in their public speaking classrooms?

By answering these questions, I hope to add to our discussion about the role of communication about faith and spirituality in academia as well as in our lives. Prior research explains the reasons behind the compartmentalization of ourselves and our education, and my research addresses the possibilities and potentially adds strength to the theory that educating the whole person and including spirituality as a relevant topic of communication is more meaningful than education that continues the culture of compartmentalization. In order to answer my research questions about this communication phenomenon, I examined this through autoethnographic analysis of in-depth interviews, and I explain this process and rationale in chapter 3.

Chapter Three: Methodology

I'm trying to remember how it happened. I don't remember having expectations about this instructor, except that he sounded fairly cool. But after the second class meeting, I learned something else about him: while he completely supports qualitative research methods, he doesn't consider autoethnography to be a way of legitimately investigating a communication phenomenon. His partner occasionally dabbles in autoethnography, and sometimes he likes it and it's very emotional, but overall he's not a fan and almost outright discourages our use of it in class. He assigns an autobiography assignment to "flush out" our autoethnographic tendencies.

It's not that I haven't met some resistance to autoethnography. But such blatant dislike, mixed with what seems to me to be a serious lack of logic, is almost overwhelming. I can reason with anyone about how autoethnography can be a valuable way of answering a question about how we communicate. I'm at a loss for how to have this conversation with someone, let alone one of my professors, who conflates autobiography with autoethnography. I also don't quite know what to do with a person who supports qualitative research methods and argues that sample size has no place in this kind of research but that a sample size of one person is completely unacceptable. I'm in a tough spot. The instructor encourages us to draft methodologies in this workshop, and I don't know what he'll do or say when he has to read about my first thesis idea of studying performances of Catholic feminism.

So when he tells the class what he doesn't like about my assignment (the autobiography assignment that is just that: an autobiography and *not* autoethnographic

writing), and how my interest in studying Catholic feminism doesn't interest him because he's not Catholic and he's not a woman, I'm stunned. I'm stunned for several reasons, but I'm mostly stunned that he went there at all, right in the middle of class with all students present. He just hits my paper and no one else's. How did I get to be so special? He jokes a little that surely I'd like to provide a defense or response (though he gives me no room to do either). And in fact, that's the last thing I want to do. I'd rather leave the room, and for the first time in my educational history, I leave the room for half an hour. I have grown to appreciate instances where I need to reflect on the meaning and use of autoethnographic writing, but in this instance, I see no room for my perspective. I feel silenced because someone doesn't want to understand what autoethnography is or what it does, and because I'm addressing a topic he doesn't find interesting or worthy of study, he gives me the impression that there's no room for me or for the tension I want to investigate. It feels invalidating on several levels, and I want to say that I don't see how this teaching moment furthers our class discussion (or my progress as a graduate student). I can talk about the values and complications of autoethnography with someone concerned with sample size or who just doesn't know what autoethnography is. How do I have this discussion with someone whose ideas regarding autoethnography come from left field? At the time, all I can do is focus on his dislike of autoethnography. It doesn't occur to me until later to reflect on why he thinks it's irrelevant for me to research (or for him to read) anything about faith-based identities.

It is not my intention to defend autoethnography at this moment. And to use my frustration as a reason to stay out of a discussion about autoethnography is not productive

for anyone, particularly for those who want to learn more about what autoethnography is and what we as scholars can do with it. Therefore, I will begin by addressing autoethnography, what it is and how we can use it to study communication phenomena, and how I perceive it in the context of my research on negotiating faith in the classroom.

And so it is that I am able to use my research to study the theory behind my actions, and to shed light upon otherwise invisible yet still powerful concepts. Specifically, I will openly acknowledge and investigate my accountability and connection to the negotiation and inclusion of faith in the classroom. In this chapter, I will define autoethnography and explain how I will answer my research questions. I will specifically address the importance of self-reflexivity and highlight the limitations of such a methodology. Finally, I will explain how I approached in-depth interviewing autoethnographically to answer the research questions I pose about this communication phenomenon, and I will explain how I invited these interviewees to participate in this research.

Autoethnography

When I reflect back on my undergraduate thesis, I feel a little bit of embarrassment but also a swell of accomplishment. I am still fascinated that something that I questioned, got angry about, and felt in my daily life was worthy of study within the context of the scholarly community. My experiences mattered, not necessarily because they happened to me, but because they happened in someone's life and created a space for reflection and discussion. They also shed light on the concept that I embody theory through my everyday actions.

If other people's experiences and actions demonstrate theory in action, my own experience and actions hold that ability as well. My actions and experiences are just as meaningful and add a degree of openness with which I might not always be completely comfortable, particularly if my admissions cast me in anything but a positive light. But my undergraduate thesis wasn't about my being seen in a positive light, and the same goes for this research. Rather, an autoethnographer studies culture through his or her own experiences and actions. In doing so, an autoethnographer demonstrates how he or she "is both product and producer of culture, how the author's very (in)actions create and sustain complex social phenomena, including how s/he understands identity, power, and culture" (Fassett & Warren, 2007, p. 47). I can use my experiences and actions to demonstrate how theory is present in seemingly unremarkable moments in time.

My present thesis advisor (before she became my advisor) introduced me to autoethnography in one of my first graduate seminars. I found the concept to be very interesting, and when I processed the very bud of my thesis a year later (an idea not entirely dissimilar from how it stands now), it seemed like a natural way to study my topic. I passionately (and nervously) included my interest in autoethnography when I asked my professor to be my advisor, and when she agreed, she sent me several autoethnographies to study. While I found all of them to be interesting, there was one that stood out to me.

Paaige K. Turner's (2002) article was one of the last ones that my advisor gave me to read. I have no interest in midwifery. I don't even know if I want to have children. But I knew that it was important for me to see how different scholars write

autoethnographies, so I settled in to read. Turner starts by talking about the scholar acknowledging his or her voice within the research and writing. Interesting enough. Sticky-pad that for later reference. She goes on to assert that qualitative research values and, by its very nature, needs multivocality. “Thus, the goal of qualitative research should not be the elimination of our modernist selves but rather the continued articulation of how they guide our research, interpretations, and lives” (p. 654). Sticky-pad. There’s been a lot of humming in our department (and within our communication studies communities) about the validity of certain types of research and ways of studying communication phenomena. Are you a quantitative scholar or qualitative scholar? You have to be one or the other. As a new graduate student, with roots in communication studies as well as in psychology, I find it difficult to choose one over the other. I digress.

Turner (2002) then explains that she will use confessional ethnography and autoethnography to explore the relationship (tensions) of modernity and postmodernity. I’m still a little fresh at these concepts, but I appreciate such a concise statement and assume I’ll pick up what she’s putting down very soon. And I do. Soon, Turner writes down a sea of text, some in italics and others in standard font. Action leads to reflection, which leads to theory, which leads to questions, which leads to more action, more questions, more reflection. She questions everything in a manner that is intimate and academic. She examines instances and her actions and words that directly contradict how she identifies herself as a scholar. I can certainly relate to that experience. Are you one person academically and another person non-academically? Is that possible?

I am taken aback by such honesty and explanations. I have no interest in midwifery. I don't even know if I want to have children. But this article has spoken to me about questions I ask myself daily as I continue my studies. I can see how she struggles with the tension between her actions and ideas and between these two seemingly opposite concepts. And what I am most fascinated with is that Turner does not choose one over the other. She does not try to squash her modernist words and actions and call them wrong or reflect on how to make changes for the future. Rather, she studies the communication phenomenon of this tension through her actions and words, watches and investigates how she can act and speak so differently in these different situations, and calls attention to the way that she shifts between these two concepts. She resists the pull to find the one true ANSWER. I can see myself doing something similar. I want to do what she does. I want to call attention to the nature of tension between identities in our lives without trying to locate THE ANSWER, and I want to encourage people to try it as well, to withhold judgment or a rush to come to the conclusion and instead to consider the shifting tensions.

I still have no interest in midwifery. And I still don't know if I want to have children. But I do know that Turner's (2002) article would not have been nearly as influential for me if she had not included herself in her research. It was her experience, her ability to weave action with theory and reflection, that shed light upon the tension that I also want to study. I liken this autoethnography to what Goodall (2000) calls the "new" ethnography, particularly when he indicates that new ethnographies are "creative narratives shaped out of a writer's personal experiences within a culture and addressed to

academic and public audiences” (p. 9). Researchers who write more traditional ethnographies study a communication phenomenon through others. Through autoethnography, I study myself “in a context of others” and eliminate the distance between myself, my interpretations, and other people (p. 22).

Autoethnography is a particularly insightful way to study communication when the topic holds the weight of much controversy (Warren, 2001; Lee, 2006; Foster, 2002; Cruz, 2006; Richards, 2008; Johnson, 2007; Alexander, 2004; Alexander & Warren, 2002). Warren (2001) explored white subjectivity by reflecting on his own actions, words, and feelings. He certainly could have conducted his research in some other manner, but by using autoethnography and modeling reflexivity, he narrated his way into his research and called attention to his relationship with white subjectivity. Such a move was risky: perhaps few people would so directly call attention to their own subjectivity. It makes you vulnerable. It tells people things you may not necessarily want them to know about you. Is it too personal? Would you tell your partner? Does this mean you're racist? Warren did not rise above his readers. Rather, he explored his white subjectivity as he considered *Star Wars* and school shootings. The writing regarding the school shootings is particularly powerful. To read an educator's horror at the concept alone, before moving on to express disgust that we as a society only pay attention when the Right People are involved or are victims, is powerful. There is nowhere for him to hide. In reading his involvement in white subjectivity, we take note that there are real people who participate in white subjectivity, and some of them happen to be teachers who are strategically outing themselves to make a difference in readers like myself.

Traditional ethnography is formulaic and relies on authoritative speakers and passive audiences (Goodall, 2000). Ethnographers make claims that readers could agree to or dismiss based on the information that the researcher used to create or support the claim. The “properly trained and institutionally credentialed ethnographer” creates reality based on his or her observations, details, and interpretations (Goodall, 2000, p. 11). Researchers who embrace autoethnography, as a postmodern conception for viewing and understanding communication, find that words such as truth and reality are very complicated terms. What a researcher saw and recorded is still important. But an autoethnographer also considers “where you are standing when you observe or participate in it, what you believe about it in the first place, and what you want to do with it—or who is paying you to do something with it—once you name it” (Goodall, 2000, p. 12). These researchers acknowledge their own subjectivity and role in their topic; they are not able to separate themselves from their research. Traditional ethnographers would consider this less-than-subtle inclusion to be irrelevant and less scholarly, for they seek and value objective truth. Postmodern researchers understand that they influence what they study and their own interpretations, and autoethnographers call attention to their role in their research for many reasons, but perhaps one of the strongest and most common reasons is that they consider all of that information to be relevant in a discourse about such a topic. In writing about a topic, I feel an obligation to research and write in such a manner that my “observations and evaluations of others be firmly rooted in a credible, self-reflexive ‘voice,’ which is to say a believable, compelling, self-examining narrator” (Goodall, 2000, p. 23). In calling attention to my voice and experiences, I am illuminating the

theory in which I participate and with which I interact in unpredictable moments. I can also see how I perform the relationship between theory and action.

Praxis and Self-reflexivity

When one of my colleagues became pregnant, my friend and I decided to call her unborn child Praxis. Our colleague, a passionate feminist scholar who has a better understanding of Paulo Freire and bell hooks than I will ever have, was amused and delighted. I have loved the concept of praxis before I even had a word for it, but I first came across it while reading Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* for my communication pedagogy graduate seminar. Freire (2000) writes at length about how to enter into humanizing situations and interactions. The way to engage in humanizing behavior is to balance true, critical reflection with action. The combination of both elements leads to conscious involvement. I respond favorably to the concept of praxis as the relationship between theory and practice. Responsible, ethical people should be able to put thoughtful reflection into their actions. A theoretical possibility only remains a possibility, and thus loses all potential value, if no one puts it into action. People who create thoughtful action are also reifying the theory and bring that theory into being. That action, and the people behind it, makes theory a reality.

Even when an autoethnographer sheds light on the relationship between theory and action through his or her experiences, there is no certainty that the audience will interpret it the way the autoethnographer planned it. Would that lack of a connection make the work meaningless? Would the reader focus solely on what s/he considers to be unnecessary autobiographical information that could further distance the reader from the

work? I think it makes autoethnography harder to write (and read) than one might expect. I wonder how difficult it was for Warren (2001) to write about his white subjectivity. Did he question whether or not he should color himself in the text of his article? Was he worried that people might read his work differently (if they decided to continue reading it at all) if they knew he was white? What did Tillman-Healy (1996) worry about when she wrote an autoethnography about her eating disorder? Would her colleagues look at her differently if they knew she had “invited bulimia to live with” her (p. 76)?

“Nothing makes professors more uncomfortable than talking about Christianity,” my colleague remarks. Kate is completely supportive of my research and identifies as a Christian. She finds resistance to my research to be both amusing and frustrating. But it’s the good kind of frustrating, the kind that I can turn into writing fuel, an academic version of “the pen is mightier than the sword.”

I still worry about including the passage regarding my rejection/humiliation/indignation at the hands of my professor. “I don’t see how you can leave it out,” our colleague Brooke adds in the same conversation. “You’re rattling some cages. This is whiteness too: why does your work need to be relevant to him? That’s a power play, Mary Anne.”

Worries about validity, about having to make everything I write relevant to everyone else in the world, fall away. The idea of a power play is something I can manage. Traditional ethnography assumes that there is some objective truth (Goodall,

2000). Truth and knowledge are simple, one-dimensional, and when there is proof, there is no room for dismissal. Race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, and ability might play roles, but they do nothing to change the interpretation of the truth.

Postmodernists challenge the idea that truth is separate from race, sexual orientation, and other such areas, because to neglect to address them is to have the privilege to be able to do so (Warren, 2001; Alexander & Warren, 2002). The concept that a researcher can go into an area, conduct a study on the residents, and create an evaluation called truth is one that favors traditional members of the academy (white, middle-class, male, and science-oriented) (Goodall, 2000). Postmodernists acknowledge that factors such as race, gender, and religion can (and often do) affect communication in ways that researchers can't often study using traditional methods. I can use autoethnography as a way to situate myself within my topic, but I also call to attention how these factors can influence my role in my research. I am, after all, a white heterosexual female in an institution of higher learning. I am a native to my area, I speak the "right" language, I am able-bodied, and I'm a Christian in a Christian nation. As I am reflecting on my narratives, I need to acknowledge that these factors color my interpretations and findings in ways I may not be able to properly understand or record. It will be incomplete. But that is the nature of knowledge and the much-sought-after truth that we create together.

In calling attention to the factors that can influence communication, I am shedding light on often invisible forces to which we would not even know to pay attention. This concept brings me back to the idea of the power play. Does my research need to be relevant to every other person within the field of communication studies in

order to be authentic or meaningful? Is there room for my voice? But more importantly, do I have an assumption that silences someone else? To speak is to commit political action. Did I speak in error by labeling myself as able-bodied, as white, as heterosexual, as educated? Do they add to my credibility? Should they add to my credibility?

I want to study the role of faith and spirituality in the classroom. I return to Kate's comment about Christianity and being uncomfortable. It's all well and good that I want to include relevant conversations (or room for these conversations) about faith, religion, and spirituality in the classroom. But am I totally comfortable with the idea? Perhaps not. My own struggles with faith and identity are not fully in the past. Do I worry that something might change by the end of this writing? I worry. I worry how people might evaluate my research and my identity as a teacher when I study the role of faith in the classroom. But I'm safe in a way, because I do reside in a self-identified Christian nation, where you see references to faith and religion in speeches, on currency, and in the national anthem. I want to explore that safety as well. It shouldn't be there, and it will remain there, hidden under unspoken words and gestures, until someone calls attention to it. To call attention to the way that we create knowledge is also to call attention to the way we privilege. "Knowledge is power relative to social justice, because knowledge guides and equips us to identify, name, question, and act against the unjust; consequently, we unsettle another layer of complicity" (Madison, 2005, p. 6). Researchers like Madison (2005), Warren (2001), Turner (2002), and Goodall (2000) call their colleagues to give voice to this privilege, and we can only do this when we engage in self-reflection. Such work characterizes critical ethnography, which is a way of

studying communication phenomena by necessarily including the role of positionality and privilege on our creation of knowledge. To do so is no easy feat, and there are several areas that researchers should consider with caution if they want to produce good autoethnography.

Limitations

If I am to study the communication phenomenon of faith and spirituality in the classroom autoethnographically, I must be knowledgeable of the limitations to autoethnography that other researchers rightly address. As annoyed as I felt after my seemingly one-sided exchange with my professor, I agree that autoethnography is an imperfect way to study communication. However, I address limitations as just that: limitations, not weaknesses. It is my responsibility to be aware of these limitations and to acknowledge the discourse surrounding this area of study. We need to talk about autoethnography. We need to talk about how it contributes to our understanding of communication phenomena. We also need to talk about and demonstrate good autoethnographic practices. To be frank: we need to talk about writing good autoethnography, and we need to talk about bad autoethnography and why it's bad autoethnography.

I must be clear that autoethnography does not in and of itself answer all of my questions. Rather, as Gingrich-Philbrook (2005) points out, autoethnography is not without its inherent and practical complexities and the occasional contradiction. And he is quick to point out that ineffective autoethnographies are not hard to find. Autoethnography, he argues, embodies “a demand to create knowledge (the epistemic)

and a demand to create art (the aesthetic). While we need not see these demands as diametrically opposed, neither need we see them as synonymous. In any event, we leave the relationship between them unconsidered at our peril” (p. 303). I strive to weave these two cords together and know that this will not be an easy project. Autoethnography might feel natural to me as I consider my personal experiences and the negotiation of faith in the classroom, but this project isn’t just about my personal reflections. Rather, I am focusing on how I demonstrate that theory through my actions. I am still including relevant reflections and descriptions, but I am doing so by purposefully and consciously calling attention to the theory underneath action and thought instead of expecting the reader to make the connection.

How will I know that I’m making my point when I include a narrative passage? How do I ensure that I keep everything relevant (and relevant to whom)? I must focus on the idea that I am writing to hold a conversation with the reader and that I am writing out of a desire to promote change and social justice as well as to make a difference in the lives of my readers (Goodall, 2000).

I also need to be careful that this study of faith in the classroom isn’t all about me. I’m not interested in writing an autobiography, and this project is not my diary. Autoethnographers specifically must take care that they do not focus too much on the inward (Goodall, 2000). It is easy for me to focus on my own lived experiences, but I want to focus on the communication phenomenon by conducting good autoethnography, and that means I must also focus on aspects of the phenomenon that are just as important, just as relevant and significant, but are not quite so inward.

By focusing too inward too often, an autoethnographer also runs the risk of othering the readers. There is more than one way to make the writing irrelevant. Another danger that Terry (2006) identifies for researchers who engage in autoethnography is the risk of othering the reader by putting forward the assumption that I have risen above the tension about which I am writing. This is not a recounting of a tale I have lived, passed, and want to share for the benefit of showing others how to do it too. I do not choose to use autoethnography because I think it is the best/only/true way to pursue my research. Rather, I embrace the way that autoethnography, by its nature and my use of it, encourages me to trouble assumed binaries. I appreciate that Turner (2002) refrained from getting into a discussion of modernism versus post-modernism in search for Truth. She acknowledged the tension as a way for understanding communication and changes in identity. I also want to struggle to stay in the tension by acknowledging my actions and reflecting upon them. I know that I am engaging in good autoethnography when I focus not on my experiences but on what my experiences demonstrate in regards to the communication phenomenon I want to study. One way that I have chosen to reflect on my actions is to engage in dialogic communication with other public speaking instructors about their experiences in the classroom.

Interviews

Through my desire to study the communication phenomenon of faith in the classroom, and in order to answer my research questions, I invited other educators in higher education to share their classroom experiences, their perceptions, and their positionalities. To do so, I conducted in-depth ethnographic interviews to include other

narratives and voices of educators, of whole people who have faith identities themselves, to add to the discourse. To invite other participants is also a way to acknowledge and respect their perspectives, perceptions, and experiences (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Ethnographic interviewing worked well with the structure and paradigmatic commitments of this project. I structured this project in such a way as to make room for informal interviewing, for allowing some structured spontaneity on the part of myself as well as on the interviewees. I had little idea of how interviewees would answer the questions, but I wanted to leave room for them to expand as they felt necessary. I wanted to leave room so that I could receive as much as their narratives as possible, and as Lindlof and Taylor (2002) point out, I wanted the room to ask questions. To do so, I began with rapport-building questions and included open-ended questions that invited the interviewees to respond freely and at length. It was in my best interest to do so, with respect to this project, and in doing so, I also demonstrated good listening and respect for each interviewee's perspective and experience.

I invited public speaking instructors from Santa Clara University (a Catholic university) and San José State University (a secular state university) to participate in this study. I sent emails to public speaking instructors at both of these institutions and invited them to participate in this research.

I observed Human Subjects Institutional Review Board procedures at all times and received IRB permission from both institutions. Please see Appendices A and B for IRB approval from both SJSU and SCU. I maintained confidentiality with respect to the research participants, who I asked to choose pseudonyms for themselves and chose for

them if they communicated any discomfort with choosing pseudonyms. I also provided copies of all signed informed consent letters, and I have provided a copy of my informed consent letter as Appendix C.

Procedures

I included data from the interviews of 15 research participants. Initially I sought to interview the same number of public speaking instructors at each university, and I hoped to interview at least six instructors at each institution. The initial design of the study was not feasible due to a significantly smaller pool of public speaking instructors at Santa Clara University, so I set about interviewing as many public speaking instructors as possible at each institution. Of the 15 research participants, two of the research participants taught at Santa Clara University, two other participants have taught at both Santa Clara and San José State University, and the final 11 participants taught at San José State University.

Before moving on to the interview procedures, it's necessary to consider some context for the universities, both of which require the public speaking course as a general education requirement for undergraduates. According to Santa Clara University's website (2011), in the fall 2011 quarter the undergraduate enrollment was 5,229 students. The institution is on the quarter system, and each quarter, the Communication Studies Department offers a handful of sections of the course. In any given quarter (except perhaps for the summer quarter), a few communication studies instructors teach these public speaking classes. I myself took one such public speaking class during my undergraduate studies.

The student population of San José State University, which is on the semester system, is far greater in number when compared to Santa Clara University: San José State University's Office of Institutional Research (n.d.) reported that 24,804 undergraduate students enrolled in classes in the fall 2011 semester. In either the fall or spring semesters, it's not unlikely for the Communication Studies Department to offer upwards of fifty sections of public speaking if the budget is willing. A mix of professors, lecturers, and graduate teaching associates (GTAs) teach these classes. It is fitting, then, that in the course of my research, my research participants represented each of these areas. Newton taught public speaking at SJSU but is currently a professor teaching communication studies classes such as public speaking at another California university. Seven of the research participants who taught at SJSU are lecturers, and the other five research participants identified as GTAs. In terms of experience, some research participants had been teaching for two semesters, whereas one participant, Nevada, has been teaching for over 20 years. Most instructors had been teaching around two to six years.

I began each interview by asking the participants how long they had been teaching the class, what they enjoyed about the class, and what challenges are present in teaching the class. I then asked the instructors to describe a time when faith or spirituality came up in the context of class. I asked the instructor to explain his or her spirituality, then asked if he or she discloses that spirituality to the students and asks the students about their own spirituality. I asked how issues of faith come up in the context of student speeches. I then asked more reflective questions, first by asking if the type of

university (Catholic or secular) makes a difference about whether spirituality is a relevant topic for discussion in the class. I asked the research participants for any advice they would give to public speaking instructors who struggle with the role of faith and spirituality in the classroom. I ended each interview by asking whether and how public speaking instructors should emphasize the role of faith and spirituality in the context of the class. Please see Appendix D for the complete interview protocol.

With the responses to these questions, the research participants and I addressed the following research questions:

- 1.) How do instructors at Santa Clara University navigate communication about faith in their public speaking classrooms?
- 2.) How do instructors at San José State University navigate communication about faith in their public speaking classrooms?

I could very well have attempted to answer these questions based on my own reflections and experiences as both student and instructor in these types of higher education institutions. However, in my decision to include interview data from research participants, I included the voices of other instructors and sought for themes through which to answer my research questions. In answering my questions, I was able to reflect upon initial conclusions about the role of faith and spirituality in the public speaking classroom and posed critical questions about those conclusions.

I coded my data according to the common themes that I saw emerging from the interviews. I organized my data by creating meaningful categories from repeated occurrences and connections in the interviews instead of starting with expected categories

and attempting to fill them with data from the interviews (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The stories, experiences, reflections, and anecdotes of research participants made up the data. I weaved my own voice with the voices of my participants through these themes.

Chapter Four: Findings

“Do *you* talk about faith in your classroom?”

I was on a lunch date. We talked about work and hobbies. I talk about my thesis to pretty much everybody in some fashion because it’s such a big part of how I move about the world at this period in my life. My conversation partner wasn’t trying to be rude. It makes complete sense that something I’m passionate enough to write a master’s thesis about is something that’s already part of my pedagogy. And yet, the question throws me off. I’m uncomfortable about the fact that I’m uncomfortable about it, that I might not be “practicing what I preach.” I’m not wholeheartedly putting my theory into my practice. I’m not a perfect model. But I also realize I’m not trying to be one, and whatever assumptions I had about my topic at the beginning of my research I am critically analyzing as a direct result of the interviews I’ve conducted. The research participants surfaced specific and general examples and reflections that pushed me beyond concentrating too closely on what I do or don’t do and I instead am able to focus on what faith communication could look like, for better or worse, in the public speaking classroom.

Sometimes I agreed with what my research participants said. When I didn’t, I wondered why. Was I being too quick to judge? Sometimes my research participants started an answer to an interview question with “I don’t think you’re going to like this, but...” and it left me wondering what their assumptions were about me because of who I am in the world because of my research. In my current research, I sought to answer two

research questions: RQ1: How do instructors at Santa Clara University navigate communication about faith in their public speaking classrooms? and RQ2: How do instructors at San José State University navigate communication about faith in their public speaking classrooms?

There is a lot of common ground between the two institutions based on the nature of the course. Students sign up for the public speaking course, typically a general education (GE) requirement, with certain assumptions. These assumptions often lead them to be terrified of giving speeches, and these instructors enjoy working with the students as they build confidence and learn the roles in which they can (and already do) use and evaluate public speaking in society. Adam, an instructor at SJSU, speaks of the building of confidence and understanding as a transformation: “They learn so much about themselves, and many times it's about overcoming a fear they've had for a long time, and sometimes they make good strides and that's transformative, but sometimes some people overcome it and their whole life trajectory changed.” As a college instructor, I identify with that desire to provide a setting wherein students learn about themselves and about their role in the world and gain the confidence to make their voices heard.

The consistency and common ground throughout the interviews led me to identify three themes across both universities while also paying attention to the specific nature of the two research questions. The three themes that emerged and that answer the research questions are (a) facilitation, (b) neutrality, and (c) engagement.

Facilitation: Faith Communication in the Classroom

A consistent theme across the majority of the interviews, regardless of whether the institution was Catholic or secular, was the frequency of faith coming up in class, typically in connection with a related topic, such as abortion. One way in which faith or spirituality came up is as the speech topic itself. Kate from SJSU heard informative speeches about Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity. Oftentimes, however, students addressed faith or spirituality in the context of something else, such as culture, values, or family. Adam from SJSU and Sarah from SCU pointed out that they have heard many speeches about abortion that included a religious perspective, and more often than not these speeches were not effective because the speaker demonstrated an ethnocentric and/or angry perspective. Pauline from SJSU explained that students will use their religious background to support their arguments, and she is prepared for this scenario and encourages them to seek other evidence because of how likely it is that not everyone shares that belief. She commented that students understood and appreciated this need to bring in more research as a way to validate and strengthen their speeches.

Both Sarah and Jonathan discussed instances when communication around faith came up in the context of their public speaking classes at SCU. Newton, notably, did not recall any examples and considered that fact to be of significance. In considering how she facilitated faith in the public speaking classroom, Sarah focused the attention of each class on audience analysis and audience adaptation, what constitutes evidence, and effective persuasive technique. Western culture characterizes public speaking as being audience-centric (Coopman & Lull, 2012). If you don't

educate/inform/persuade/motivate your audience, you haven't fulfilled the purpose of your speech. The speaker has the extra responsibility of reaching out to the audience to the best of his or her ability, because only when doing so does he or she have a hope of satisfying the purpose of the speech. Therefore, as Sarah implies, it is important to know who is in the audience, to acknowledge differences, and demonstrate respect to other people and to their cultures. Her preference of facilitating discussions of topics that involve faith is to restate the topic in terms of ethics.

But mostly, I change the topic to "what is the ethical issue that you're trying to get at?" because I feel very comfortable talking about ethics in ways that are not specific to faith in the sense that I don't want to limit it. I wouldn't say that I discourage talk about faith, but I do tend to reframe it into a topic that more closely fits whatever it is we're supposed to talk about.

Sarah also uses reframing to make the discussion more inclusive to the other members of the class. She focuses on the function of that inclusion of faith and encourages students to focus on the ethical dimensions of a topic and its effects on people in the audience. She encourages her students by saying, "This is really a question about ethics. This is really a question of institutional power. This is really a question about whatever.' Because for them it's a question of faith, but it's not for everybody else in the class."

As she recommended the reframing method of facilitating discussions that include faith in the classroom, Sarah was adamant about supporting the students as they learned and performed these lessons. She noted that focusing on audience analysis was probably something the students had never had to do before coming to college. She emphasized the importance of not silencing students or invalidating their perspectives or values.

They're going to be learning what it's like to talk to different kinds of people, so you have to help students understand that they have a right to their beliefs but that

doesn't make them correct or the only beliefs. So when you're helping them do that. I affirm before I reframe. "I'm so glad you brought that up. That's an excellent question. You know, that's really a great point; it gets at whatever." And then I reframe it in terms of whatever the issue is that we're talking about, what constitutes evidence, what's effective persuasion.

Sarah worked to reframe the issue in a way that didn't invalidate the student's perspective or belief and used course concepts to be more inclusive to other students in the classroom. She (and Brooke) demonstrated and produced this inclusiveness by using religious examples without naming "Christianity" or "church" first:

When I do use examples, I'll say "well for one thing, you might want to speak out in your..." I never start with church. I always say "synagogue, mosque, or church" or "mosque, synagogue, or church." I always make church last. I make them hunt for it. There's a lot of research about the primacy effect so I always say mosque or synagogue. I'm trying to normalize the idea that I assume that not most of you go to a church, but I don't think it's because you're sleeping in on Sunday. I think it's because you may have a very different expression of your faith.

Sarah worked to be mindful about how she included examples and perspectives in her class. She saw herself as embracing the complexity using strategies such as reframing and using inclusive language.

By contrast, Jonathan facilitated faith communication in the classroom in a way that is more deliberate and structured. He gave his public speaking students an in-class assignment that also had a dimension of spirituality. "Because faith is a very loaded topic, usually toward the end of every quarter, I will bring up specific topics in an improvisational format, so they pick a topic, faith is usually one of them, and somebody will give an improv on what faith is, and it opens up a dialogue that people have different viewpoints." Not only did Jonathan include an in-class assignment that encouraged

students to discuss faith and perspective, but he also had an optional extra credit assignment that he described as being close to the mission of SCU:

I will always give extra credit that will come with me to a homeless shelter, City Teen. City Teen is a faith-based homeless shelter. For extra credit, they need to give a short speech on compassion, and they speak to the homeless people two minutes on compassion. So this gets them thinking about not only speaking, but speaking from their heart and using their own experiences, and then also thinking about social justice. There a tying of social justice and faith together.

The in-class improvisational assignment and the optional extra credit assignment are the ways in which Jonathan facilitated faith communication in the context of the public speaking classroom.

When I asked the research participants at SJSU to reflect upon instances of communication about faith in the public speaking classroom, most instructors considered the function that the communication served in the greater context of an assignment. Did the assignment, typically a small introductory engagement or even a more significant speech assignment, involve the student sharing his or her culture or identity? Did it serve as proof of a point in a persuasive speech? These research participants called attention to two functions of communication about faith in their classrooms: it was a matter of making a connection to the audience or even making connections within someone's life, and it was a way of sharing culture.

Connection: “I want to show our divisions so we can also finally see how actually more connected we actually are.” These instructors demonstrated that when students communicated about faith, they did so in the context of some greater topic. For example, Maria assigned a values speech as the first of the three main speech assignments for her public speaking course. She asked the students to concentrate on how they developed and demonstrated their values in the classroom as well as in their everyday lives. Several students in Maria’s classes disclosed their spiritualities in the context of this speech assignment. “If anything, it's just to get them to start talking about themselves in a structured way and making connections with their peers, what they're learning in their classroom with things outside of the university, things outside of education, and learning the structure of speeches and that process, too.” It seems to be important for these students to recognize not only what makes them unique, but also to focus on how their values are sometimes changing without their awareness.

As former college students themselves, in addition to working with current college students, these research participants recognized that their students were going through a time of transition, and students occasionally used speech assignments to take an individual stand. Though some students might still live with their families, for example, they still demonstrate an understanding that they are adults with responsibilities, and many communicate an understanding that they have new freedom to explore different beliefs and values. Adam addressed this process and identifies its complexities: “I just think that spirituality is a really important part of the classroom because so many people suffer from indoctrination and imbalance, and I feel like sometimes the only way to help

people heal is through spirituality, to understand that you are interconnected to everyone and everything that's around you." As someone who is very aware of power structures, Adam helped his students recognize systems of power and understand that they also have the power to make a difference, because they can choose their own values and the way they want to live their lives. Though students develop this understanding in unique ways, they are also discussing and learning in the context of other people who are going through the same process.

When students didn't directly name a specific religion, instructors were still able to recognize elements of spirituality within the context of classroom speeches and discussions. In fact, Kate's advice was to take the labels off so that we can engage in a greater discussion of what's important to us. When we do so, we may find that we have much more in common, especially in terms of what we value and what morals we hold.

But what I see as spirituality, I see spirituality coming through a lot of speeches, not in terms of labeling particular sects or particular religions, but in terms of encouraging us to take care of one another: donate blood, become an organ donor, pick up your trash, stop and help the person on the street, you know, reach out and touch someone, like just give them a positive message that day. I find a lot of that, and I think that that transcends a lot of the labeling of spirituality in terms of doing good will unto others regardless of who your respective deity is, and I see those messages of spirituality come through loud and clear in every single public speaking class more often than not, though I don't think the students themselves would label that as spirituality.

Kate called attention to communication about faith that is more indirect, yet it also encompasses all of the members of the community and focuses on the commonalities between us. So rarely do we focus on how we are often as similar as we are different. It is all too easy to get lost in the details without addressing commonalities as well. One

way to establish those commonalities is to recognize that, whether they label it or not, all people have beliefs and values.

For as much (or as little) as students call attention to the role of their faith and values in their lives, they also help public speaking instructors recognize how essential faith is in everyday situations. None of the research participants asked students to keep faith out of their speeches or outside the classroom. That said, students still struggle with the choice of whether or not to directly name faith or spirituality in front of their peers. I myself had an instance of discussing the speech topic of environmentalism with a student, and she chose to not discuss her spirituality in the speech, even though it was relevant to her and, thus, relevant to the topic. Brooke shared a similar experience:

I had a student demonstrate how to wrap the traditional Muslim women garb and she taught us how to wrap it around the body and connected it to her culture and to her region, but really it connects to religion but she was afraid to put that in, which is sad. Fear is an evil, evil thing. That's what leads to a lot of destruction. It's all that ignorance that creates all that prejudice and that creates all the bad things. If we're allowed to share things about ourselves in that way, I'm sure there will be great understanding. Don't get me wrong, I'm sure there will be conflict as well, which is what people are afraid of. But guess what, there's conflict no matter what. You're talking about a lot of things that are in conflict.

Brooke called attention to a need to have this type of communication as well as to a general dislike of conflict. Arguably, we learn to avoid conflict if at all possible: it's unpleasant, it implies activities such as fighting, yelling, and hurt feelings. But as Brooke points out, conflict is a natural component of everyday life when people interact with each other. As responsible people, we must learn how to handle conflict. One of the ways to understand conflict is to understand the role of culture in our lives.

Culture: Validation and awareness. Through the course of this research, many instructors called attention to the fact that SJSU is a great cultural hub. Our students are unique and span many races, ethnicities, sexualities, abilities, and faiths. It's important to know where these values and beliefs come from so students can realize that these values might change. They also might come to understand how other people develop differently based on their own cultures.

Many of the instructors who participated in this research acknowledged that students look to their instructors for appropriate behavior and content. I will explore this in the second theme of disclosure. Rebecca, for example, argued for the necessity of public speaking instructors to model for their students if the former expects the latter to be able to embody and satisfy the learning objectives. Public speaking instructors, for example, should model the techniques that they discuss with their students. Students learn not just from reading, discussing, and doing; in my experience, for example, it's been crucial for students to see exactly what we're discussing so they can use those techniques themselves.

Some of the instructors focused on validation while they discussed faith communication in the classroom. They often encouraged their students to pick speech topics with which they were familiar or had some lived experience, so it makes sense that students might explore personal information, and that means instructors must take great care when it comes to feedback and responses. Lori reflected back on her own college experience and how it impacted her relationships with her students when they asked about faith as a speech topic, and she offered the following advice to instructors:

I would tell them that it's a topic just like anything else, and we need to approach it in the same way, and what matters to these students is -- could be what brings them to higher education, and it could bring -- could be what brings them to their culmination of everything. And I have had teachers tell me what I believe wasn't the right thing to believe and that I should believe differently, and it was a huge detriment to me as a student. So I would tell these professors that there are always going to be topics we're not comfortable with, abortion, race, age, sexism, feminism, all these things.

Lori used her personal experience of invalidation as a way to help her validate the experiences of her students. She also acknowledged that instructors do not mindfully invalidate the opinions of their students, but the power structure between teacher and student is still there, whether or not the instructor is mindful of it. Lori also used an example of when she was uncomfortable about a speech topic that a student suggested:

I actually had a student that wanted to do a speech on worshipping Satan, which threw me off completely because it was unfamiliar territory for me, and I was very uncomfortable with it. I would have been more comfortable had they said they wanted to speak about a religion at a church. But I also didn't feel like I could tell him no, so I worked with him on developing a speech that would be appropriate, because he did view that as a religion. He'd viewed that as his belief in life.

Lori's experience exemplified how many of the instructors acted when they had students who wanted to present speeches on difficult topics. Instructors such as Brooke, Rebecca, and Adam explained how they encouraged and worked with students as they crafted their speeches. This acceptance is not always an easy task, but instructors feel the reward is worth avoiding the potential harm it might cause. Maria pointed out that the issue still came up, and regardless of what her students said, she respected the place from which they were coming:

I realized that for a lot of them, faith was one of their main values, and they talked about how faith helps them with almost every aspect of their life, but more specifically in college, and it was interesting because some of the assumptions

that they were making were -- some of them made me uncomfortable because they go against some of the things that I believe in, but, I mean, it's not my place to tell them otherwise because that's their belief, that's their faith.

Instructors such as Maria and Lori did more than validate the identities of their students.

By accepting these students for who they were and for the perspectives they brought, they also established a place for open dialogic communication in their classrooms. These students learned that the world is full of these different cultures and perspectives, and the college classroom might have been their first experience in greater context of a multicultural society. Such an experience has the potential to raise awareness for a group of people.

As Kate and I discussed faith and awareness in the classroom, she shared a recent persuasive speech in which a student encouraged his audience to learn about and respect the Islamic faith.

And that speech was born from an experience the student had at a shopping mall where someone came up to him out of the blue, and I don't know how this person or why this person chose my student, but he asked him if he believed in Jesus, and the student said "Yes," and then he asked him if he believed Jesus Christ was the son of God, and he said "No. In my religion, Jesus is a prophet," and then that created a longer discussion which culminated in the question, "If you're Muslim, why did you people commit the September 11 attacks?" and the whole room gasped at that, and the student was probably one of the only Muslims, if not the only Muslim, in the room.

Kate's reflection reminded me of a very similar persuasive speech that one of my students had given. It also reminded me of my own college experience. My orientation at Santa Clara University took place two days after the attacks on September 11, 2001. My peers and I felt shaken by current events as well as by this new step in our lives. Though we were supposed to spend an hour discussing a required orientation book, our

facilitator used that time for discussion about what was happening. One of my new peers expressed disbelief and concern. He said that people were already looking at him differently (and, he felt, suspiciously) because of his ethnicity. I remember feeling shocked and confused, and even when I see him today, I can't imagine how people could be suspicious of him for any reason, let alone for his (assumed) faith. Though it made little sense to me at the time, I continued to reflect on how our discussion about faith, fear, and awareness has changed me.

I tell my students that they never know what people will learn from each other's speeches, in much the same way that my discussion with my peers after the terrorist attacks changed me. As Adam pointed out, these students have so much to learn about the world and about each other. Some of the instructors in this research project were very aware of how students can engage this new world as critical thinkers.

We're very lucky to be in a university where literally the entire world is represented sometimes in a classroom, and with that said, that means that you can put your own body at harm if you're not willing to let go of your ethnocentrism. It's just a fact. And so it actually makes a conversation about religion easier to have because people are aware -- well, if they're not aware, they find out real quick, that there's other faiths in that room, there's other ways to see things, and if we're talking about audience adaption, if we're talking about making sure you're appealing and you're not being manipulative with your messages, you have to broaden your horizon.

Adam described an atmosphere that was a learning experience for both audience members and speakers. He insisted that speakers in his classroom had to be aware and respectful of the audience members, particularly when they wanted to succeed in the specific purpose of their speeches. This is one of many opportunities for each speaker to mindfully address a diverse audience. It is not often that we in society discuss how to

address diverse audiences. Persuasive and informative techniques require a speaker to know his or her audience before crafting any speech. With that knowledge, Lori was able to work with her student so that he could present his speech about worshipping Satan. Brooke explained a time when she tried to help a student on a persuasive speech about why he thought religion was terrible. The student didn't work with Brooke and presented his speech. Although his classmates later noted that he included some good points in his speech, they primarily expressed outrage at his tone, his perceived lack of effort in understanding their perspectives, and at how disrespectfully he'd addressed them. Therefore, it is unlikely that he considered how to address his diverse audience or succeeded in the purpose of his speech.

Adam knew that these lessons would aid his students once they left the classroom, though he clearly noted that the outside world *composes* this classroom as well. Therefore, there is no outside world. Kate also recognized and addressed the diversity of her students in her public speaking classroom:

If you teach in other areas of the country or even in other countries, you may see less diversity, but I think that it should be something that's discussed because you have to deal with those folks, right, and you don't do anybody any favors by being actively ignorant about it. So if you end up working for someone who is Buddhist and you happen to have heard an informational speech about the religion of Buddhism or Taoism, that might give you a little bit more understanding as to that person's particular faith and how they conduct their lives.

Kate offered a direct example of how a student might take the awareness he or she gains in the public speaking classroom to a setting outside of it. Her reflections remind me of my business friends who took seminars in intercultural communication so that they could more effectively communicate with their coworkers. The benefits of facilitating cultural

communication and faith communication have the potential to last well after the public speaking class ends. And particularly in the context of this research, the people who are considering these benefits are part of the classroom as well: they are the course instructors. These research participants reflected on their selves in the classroom and discussed neutrality and genuineness.

Neutrality: Instructor Preaching, Privilege, and Genuineness

In our interviews, the research participants and I directly addressed the role of the instructor in facilitation of the class. I asked the instructors about disclosure and faith communication, and through our discussions, the instructors surfaced issues of neutrality, teacher immediacy, and genuineness.

The nature of disclosure: harm and potential. The instructors at SCU discussed the importance of refraining from “preaching at” their students, so that concept seemed especially significant for them. Most of the time, the concept of not “preaching at” students was in combination with teachers calling attention to their own political or spiritual identities, beliefs, and values. If Sarah’s students asked her about her values and beliefs, she tended “to talk about [her] political views and talk more in terms of ethics than [she does] in terms of religion” because she felt more comfortable discussing topics in terms of ethics than she did in terms of faith or spirituality. She recommended that public speaking instructors “err on the side of being quiet about [their] religion explicitly” because “it’s just too easy for it to become read by [their] students as enforcing whatever [their] beliefs are.”

Jonathan agreed that having an instructor “preach at” students about his or her personal values puts students in an uncomfortable position. How will the instructor evaluate me if I don’t share that belief? Can I trust that the instructor won’t pick on me and will assess me fairly? Should I err on the side of not bringing up my faith if I know it will displease my instructor? These questions all call attention to and complicate the relationship between teacher and student.

Both Jonathan and Sarah indicated that neutrality is difficult to achieve or display as an instructor. And, as Sarah pointed out, that’s not necessarily a bad thing. After all, instructors are people too, with passions and values and lives. Should they have to pretend that none of these things exist? Perhaps not, but Sarah pointed out that it’s important to explore the complexity of such disclosure:

I also don't pretend to be neutral about my own views. I believe in God, I'm not Catholic, and I'm very strongly pro-choice, pro-gay marriage, not just liberal but progressive agenda. I'm very open with that. I'm like "you can disagree with me and that's fine," but I know that there is nonetheless a stifling effect that comes from the fact that they know my ideology. I still think that's better than me pretending that I don't have an ideology, because it's not going to work. I can't maintain it. I'm way too snarky a person, and I'm way too overtly feminist, so it's not possible. And since I can't hide and pretend to be neutral, then I'd rather be clear about it and say "you have a right to all of your beliefs, and so do I. I encourage you to respectfully disagree with me or with your classmates."

Sarah called attention to a stifling effect that her disclosure could have on her students (or on potential students who heard about her from former students). She later acknowledged that it was likely that other students didn’t take her classes because she did not try to hide her personality from her students. She understood why these other students might not have trusted her ability to assess them fairly, even though she thought it wouldn’t be a problem.

While Sarah discussed how she strategically disclosed her personality and values, Jonathan discussed pressure that he'd felt on campus at SCU. Instructors would probably be less likely to discuss topics such as spirituality if it conflicts with the atmosphere of the institution.

Prior to coming here, I always thought this institution was really proactive about helping students explore their own spirituality and their faith, but what I've noticed is that it's very hands-off. It's hard to engage with any colleagues about faith, and I find, not in a negative way, but the Jesuits are definitely noted scholars, and they usually shy away from any spiritual discussions in a classroom.

Instead of mirroring Sarah's recommendation, Jonathan focused on the pedagogical value of creating meaningful, holistic assignments.

Both Jonathan and Sarah reflected on the influence and privilege of the instructor in the classroom with respect to the topic of faith in the classroom. Both agreed that it is important for the instructor to not "preach" or *appear* to be "preaching at" the students. "Preaching at" students was not a term that emerged from the interviews with SJSU instructors, but one commonality across the interviews from both universities was the concern about power dynamics and perception of unfairness. One of the major topics of discussion in my own GTA training was teacher immediacy and disclosure. Should I tell my students that I am a student as well? Will they see me as less credible as a result? These decisions could impact the class for the entirety of the semester. It was for these reasons that I asked my participants about their own ideas about faith as well as whether they disclose their faith to their students. In answering these questions, the instructors addressed two areas: the effects of disclosure and being genuine with students.

I directly asked each participant about whether or not they disclosed their personal faith. Some instructors gave a short answer, while others offered an explanation. Still others reflected on whether or not they had mindfully disclosed and what the effects might be. When discussing the question of disclosing faith identities with students, several research participants spoke about the role of the instructor in setting the tone of the class. None of the research participants said they would disclose his or her faith if the students did not ask. Many of these instructors went on to explain their positions. Both Isabelle and Adam called attention to the power dynamic in the room. Adam pointed out that instructors have to be very mindful about all of their disclosures, whether or not they are voluntary:

You have to be -- you have to have a very clear idea of what you want to get out of conversations about spirituality; otherwise, you can be divisive just to be divisive, you can be divisive and be hurtful, and maybe even worse, you can be divisive and really ruin a student's life, maybe not so much in that space, but we have a lot of power, and I wouldn't want anyone to tell me -- have horror stories of these religious clashes with their teacher whether they get a good grade or not.

This danger seems to be the flipside of the coin in terms of validating the faiths and perspectives of students. Perhaps the idea here is that the students could perceive an instructor's disclosure of faith as a warning, particularly if the student considers that religion to be intolerant of others.

In fact, several instructors identified their spirituality and possible conceptions about it as a reason to not disclose to their students. They were concerned about how students would react to such a disclosure, how uncomfortable it would make them, and how it might affect their grades. Isabelle was very clear about the connection between her spirituality and her fears about how her students would internalize that disclosure: "If

I disclose something about myself that contradicts their beliefs, they might feel uncomfortable or they might feel like their grade will be affected or it might silence them, and I wouldn't want to do that.” Kate also voiced concerns about how her disclosure would affect the overall atmosphere of the class. She worried about how her disclosure might silence or put extra pressure on her students: “I don't want them to worry that I wouldn't be accepting of another person's religion should they choose to disclose it, and I also don't want them to feel like they have to disclose their religion in order to be -- in order to have their spirituality accepted, you know.” Kate’s reflection on the possible harm of disclosing her faith to her students demonstrates a difficult line for an instructor to walk. On the one hand, these instructors want their students to feel encouraged to apply their perspectives and beliefs to the course. But on the other hand, attempting to model this connection by disclosing his or her own faith might have the opposite effect.

Most of these research participants, including Pauline, were not willing to take that risk distancing students because they value and want to maintain open working relationships with their students. “I just want them to feel open enough to approach me. So I don't openly state what religion I am.” These conversations with instructors remind me of our conversations about awareness and learning more about the diversity around us. Certainly, the world around us is full of power structures, and the same is true for classrooms. These instructors were very mindful about the power they have over students, and they are careful about their disclosures.

Veronica felt that disclosing her faith could cause harm to classroom interactions for many of the reasons other instructors addressed. She thought that students would react negatively to her faith, perhaps due to any preconceptions they held:

I find that every once in a while they'll ask me questions to try to get to know me, and I tend to steer away from that one just because for some reason a lot of times when people hear agnostic, they think that you would hate religion, or all of a sudden they can't talk about religion in the classroom because they think that I'm agnostic and therefore I have a bias against religion, because that's where a lot of people tend to come from.

Veronica called attention to many of the fears that other instructors have of disclosing their faith to their students, but in her case, she explained that her students might think she has a hatred of religion in general. As Veronica continued to reflect, however, she remembered a time when she wrote a note on a student's speech outline and recommended a book that was relevant to his speech. She admitted that the book, *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins, might have "outed" her to her student. However, this could also be an example of how mindfully disclosing to students could have potential benefits.

Veronica's example of not disclosing to her students but also of doing so with one particular student displays how complicated this situation can be. Of all the things to tell one's students, no one suggests that faith is one to disclose lightly, if at all. However, a couple of the research participants reflected on how it might be beneficial for students to hear in the context of the public speaking class. In Brooke's experience, addressing spirituality in general has opened the door for several students to add to the discussion with their own perspectives and beliefs: "My students who have very different faiths will start talking about how 'I believe this and this is what I celebrate on this day.'" It becomes

very beautiful, and the good part about it is that it's very informal. It's just part of your life. It's part of how you live." Ideally, Brooke's students felt comfortable enough to share their perspectives with her and with each other, though whether or not they would have done so without any disclosure from her is uncertain. The participants, especially Lori, thought it was well worth considering in their own interactions with their students. Throughout her interview, Lori communicated a desire to tell students that this was their space as much as hers. What is unique about Lori's interview was that she reflected on *why* she hadn't disclosed her faith with her students:

I definitely am going to think more about the way that I do things because as I'm going through this and thinking in my head, "Why haven't I brought it up? Am I uncomfortable with it and I haven't recognized that? Is it because I've struggled with my faith as a person?" And because I've struggled with my faith and I haven't really decided what I am and who I am with religion, maybe I've been uncomfortable talking about it in terms of myself, and because of that I haven't offered it up to students. But I think that wouldn't be any different than if a teacher was struggling with their identity as a male or a female or their sexuality. I think that that stuff I have to maybe just let go at the door and I have to create an atmosphere where students can talk about that who want to talk about that. And I learn more from my students than I ever thought I could. So enlightenment is a great thing, and if I open doors for them to do that, then it's much better than closing them. So I would never want to feel like -- have a student feel as though they couldn't ask me to talk about that. So I think I will be more transparent in the future with topics and saying these are all things that are okay, because if we don't tell them it's okay, they might think it's not and will never bring it up.

In our conversation, Lori heavily considered how mindful disclosure might open doors for her students in the context of the classroom.

Up until this point, the discussion about instructor disclosure of faith to students has consisted of a verbal statement or statements. It's a matter of judgment on the part of the instructor. Veronica called attention to physical symbols of faith and spirituality.

What is the effect of an overt display of faith on the body of the instructor on the students?

I would like to know more about how people address religion on their bodies as teachers because I've never had to deal with that going into this semester. For example, Ash Wednesday, unless I actually put something on my forehead, nobody would be able to distinguish me, but if I was Muslim or another faith that actually wears the attire to public settings, then I think it would be a bit more difficult, and I think the class would treat me a bit differently and probably not talk about some things.

Veronica brought up a very interesting question. It made me mindful of the religious symbols I wear as necklaces (as did Brooke and Nevada's students did) as well as of the cross of ashes I wore to my interview with Veronica. Would I have worn the cross of ashes to my own public speaking classes? Mindful disclosure can be verbal or physical. And while the research participants discussed some of the harmful and potential benefits of disclosing faith, they also demonstrated the importance of being genuine with their students.

Being genuine. The instructors in this research project who chose not to disclose their faith identities to their students had given the idea careful thought and used their judgment. However, several instructors also discussed the importance of being genuine with their students. Instructors are still individual people with their own thoughts, opinions, and beliefs. The same holds true for our students.

The research participants in this study remarked that any sort of disclosure with students was something that instructors should very carefully consider. Earlier, Sarah commented on how she's unable to hide many things about herself, such as her personality, so she doesn't make the attempt. She does make an exception about

disclosing her faith. Veronica addressed the idea of investigating one's lack of comfort as well as considering the reasonable expectation of what will come up in the course of the class: "I would say there's ways to tactfully move away from that subject if you're uncomfortable disclosing your religion in class, and I think part of being a public speaking instructor, you have to be aware of values and areas that people would want to discuss in the classroom, so you should keep that in mind if you're going to go into the profession." Veronica's message of instructors doing what works best for them was something that echoes through many of the interviews and in the passages in this section. Brooke said something similar: "I think whatever's right for you as a teacher is right for you. I'd never tell anyone what's wrong or right for them. I do think you should never indoctrinate, never push your beliefs upon a student ever. In my experience, more often than not, students appreciate you sharing that rather than judging you for it. 'This is what I do.'" Brooke also addressed the possible response of what good can come out of being genuine with your students, while Rebecca pointed out what could happen if you are *not* genuine with your students.

In her interview, Rebecca was very clear about how important it is for her to be true to herself and true to her faith: "They'll ask me, you know, 'What are you?' and I'll answer that, and as I say, I won't deny Christ, I won't deny my faith, and to me, if you're evading that question, if you're doing that, they can't put their trust in you. How can you expect them to disclose if you're not?" Rebecca's response touches on two areas of importance: first, it was important to her personal faith that she not hide or deny her beliefs, particularly when someone else directly asked her about it; second, she addressed

the building and maintenance of trust with her students. If she wouldn't answer questions about her life, how could she expect her students to reciprocate? Whether or not the lack of trust might affect how students view the instructor in terms of fairness is another matter that might be relevant.

A couple of the research participants considered the nature of being genuine with students in connection with other aspects of their identity. Isabelle considered several other factors, such as her appearance, and how these choices communicate her identity to her students.

“I know that I expose a lot of myself and who I am just by being there and saying what I say and using the words I choose and dressing the way I dress and looking the way I look and how I present myself. So I am who I am in the world in that classroom, and I can't escape from it, nor should I. So maybe inadvertently I do, but not -- I'm not there for an agenda.”

Isabelle took a stand in her classroom because she wouldn't put on a fabricated image in front of her students. She talked about her conscious choices but pointed out that she did not have an agenda. Adam, however, called attention to two things in his teaching: that he did indeed have a mission for teaching and a goal to reach, and that he didn't have a choice about what to show or not show his students:

I don't like to -- I do have an agenda in the classroom, but I don't like to make -- but I'm very careful because of how I look and because of my sexual orientation. I want to present ideas and have difficult dialogues every class period, and so I do bring my faith into it in terms of when I'm dealing with people who are zealous about their religion, or people who want to cover faith-based topics or topics that have to do with morality and have ethics in it. I always push them to not think in terms of religion but in terms of spirituality.

Adam was very clear about mindfully including both spirituality and his own faith in the classroom as part of his overall pedagogy. In asking his students to consider the nature of

spirituality and, specifically, the faiths of the members of the audience, he demonstrated good audience analysis and critical thinking skills for his students to learn.

Adam was also careful to echo the theme of this section: he did what worked for him and recommended that other instructors do what works for them. He acknowledged that his pedagogy probably would not work in quite the same way for other instructors because of the kind of communication scholar he is:

So for me, yes, I'm going to do it, but I don't know if everyone should do it because again, that's my paradigm. I have to do it. It's just the way I operate in the world. So I don't know if I want to take someone who maybe who doesn't believe in anything at all and tell them "You've got to hit spirituality," because that person is going to suffer because he or she is trying to change people's minds.

Adam pointed out the danger of addressing spirituality if the instructor does not feel comfortable doing so. Whether it's because he or she is uncertain about faith or about how to address it in the class, those are valid concerns. Pushing forward could cause more harm than any potential benefits and is worth consideration.

So how should instructors proceed if they are considering addressing spirituality with students? Most instructors in this study encouraged great caution and thoughtfulness, and they sometimes offered general advice. The instructors in the passages here advocated doing what works best and feels right for each instructor. Carmen recommended taking this issue outside of the instructor's head and putting it directly in the classroom: "I really strive to be as real with my students as possible, so I think it's a matter of having an open conversation and asking them how comfortable are we with this subject, especially considering that the main goal is to keep a classroom climate that's supportive of one another." Carmen also set the tone of the course by

inviting students to weigh in on the issue involving their entire class. This course was less about the instructor and more about the learning and skills of the students.

Throughout the course of our interviews, the research participants addressed issues of disclosure and the importance of being genuine with students. When instructors addressed “being real” with their students, they acknowledged that their individual selves with all of their unique identities were in the room. They were perhaps indirectly modeling the performance of identity in front of their students. These instructors acknowledged that they are teaching more than just public speaking to their students, and throughout our interviews, another theme emerged along this vein of discussion: the concept of engaged pedagogy.

Engagement: Bringing All of Oneself into the Classroom

Nearly every instructor, in the course of this research, reflected on the idea that students are learning more than effective public speaking techniques in the classroom. It was difficult for these instructors to not see their students as complex human beings. A room of 25 students might not seem too complicated on the first day of class, but by the end of the class, each student has made a different impression on me based on the information he or she has shared during our time together. You need only ask what students have gotten out of the course to hear a plethora of responses about effective public speaking, interpersonal communication, building confidence, critical thinking, organization and writing, and audience analysis. They may even be working through things that they don't readily tell their teachers. Jonathan from SCU called attention to the idea that students are in the process of transformation in college: they are whole

people, but they are often unsure of what they believe or want to do for their lives and need guidance. It's possible that students work out issues such as awareness and respect for peers as a result of their classes as well.

Many research participants stressed the importance of acknowledging the multi-dimensional nature of the course and of their students. They encourage their students to bring all of themselves into the classroom. Brooke, for example, delighted in the idea that "it was like a whole other part of your self is allowed to be in the classroom. So you don't feel divided. It's a very unifying thing to bring in your whole self." Isabelle agreed and stressed the importance of letting the students be who they are and explore their perspectives. "I believe students aren't isolated entities. They are who they are in the classroom just like instructors are."

One thing that Isabelle specifically stressed was being true to oneself in the classroom. As educators, it's not uncommon for us to talk about our academic selves at school and our non-academic selves outside of school. We understand the tension between these multiple identities because we are not multiple people: we embody "both, and" instead of "either, or." Kate expressed that she simply can't separate two parts of her identity because her faith led her to be an instructor:

I feel like I've been called to teach, and I feel like I've been called to teach by God. I feel that this is exactly in line with my spirituality, with my particular religion. I don't know that I would overtly state that to students or to my boss even, but, you know, because I am helping people, I'm helping these students, I'm helping them in a variety of ways, that doesn't mean that I'm not being spiritual, just because I'm not saying -- I'm not quoting the Bible to them and I'm not saying "You have to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior," right? I'm helping them understand that they need to take care of themselves, and I'm encouraging them to be healthy, happy individuals, to help them reach out to other people, right, and just to try to make this world a better place. I'm trying to

get them to understand that they are the future, that it's not just tuition and books and responsibilities, but to really get them to visualize a better future for themselves, and that they themselves are empowered.

Kate talked about how her teaching and her faith intersect, and she was not the only research participant who felt that way. She also talked about involving the spirituality of everyone in the room, including the students, as a way address how to embody beliefs and participate appropriately.

Many of the research participants spoke about how teachers and students are proceeding through the “human experience” or “human condition.” Adam pointed out that he understood the complexity of the identities of his students, and as part of his pedagogy, he challenged them to become aware of themselves and how they already brought their faith and so many other aspects of themselves into the classroom:

My thing is they're not empty cups I'm filling with water. They have a cup already. There's sometimes stuff in that cup already, so my goal as a teacher is to get them to disclose as much about their cups as possible. Is it tall, is it short, is it yellow, is it pink, is it see-through, did you paint on it? I want to know everything about you, and the reason is because I teach my classes in terms of not -- I teach my classes to try to get them to tell me what they want to say so then I can help them with how to say it better as opposed to "This is how you public speak." And so it comes out because it's such -- religion and faith and spirituality again is part of the human experience. It's part of the human condition, and it comes out like in everyday conversations. They don't even know that they're disclosing their spiritual background, partly because it's normalized, but partly because they don't think about it so integrated into who they are.

To Adam, talking about spirituality in the classroom was acknowledging its presence in the everyday lives and actions of students. Pauline also made similar comments about how discussions and related speech topics can also be a way to make room for minority identities in the classroom in a way that doesn't also alienate the students themselves: “I think it's important that as public speaking instructors, we're open to people that may not

practice mainstream faiths, or minorities, like I had some students that were Muslim, and just make sure that they have an equal platform to speak as well as the Christian.”

While research participants discussed how students bring their multiple identities into the classroom in various ways, Johanna stressed her desire to promote engaged pedagogy and provide a holistic experience for her students.

We have all these different dimensions of being human. We want to provide a holistic experience, because experiential learning, when you can learn as much of yourself as possible in learning, becomes more meaningful to you. You can, in your world view how the universe makes sense to you, if you can use as much of yourself in learning, it's much more useful. This doesn't only apply to religion. Other parts of your being should be incorporated in that learning, and not just activating one part of you. It's one part of who we are, and we should not ignore that, but we should incorporate all the other parts of being human.

In our interview, Johanna asserted that learning can be an individual process. Students must work to make what they are learning relevant to their everyday lives. We do that as instructors by pointing out how often people engage in public speaking, either as speakers or as audience members, and how we evaluate and offer feedback to others. But Johanna also called attention to the idea of college being a transformative time for college students, and she wants to invite those experiences of her students into the classroom.

I saw something, a statistic, that like ten percent of the students who go through four year college retain their faith. It's a major identity crisis for people. Why don't we talk about it? Spirituality is completely ignored. We have this social scientific view of looking at things. Other people are being irrational; it's a rationalistic view, as though that was the only part of being human, so we ignore all of the other dimensions of being human.

In engaging the presence of faith and spirituality in the classroom, Johanna encouraged other instructors and students to be better critical thinkers and to reflect on everyday actions and crises. She provided a place for her students to explore their identities and

difficulties through the work in the course, and in doing so, she continued to demonstrate validation and acceptance of who they were.

* * *

“Do *you* talk about faith in your classroom?”

I’m not as defensive as I used to be about this question. Conducting these interviews has led me to the working conclusion that there is no one way to facilitate faith communication in the classroom. I would also reframe my answer: that I do facilitate faith communication in the classroom, and I always am facilitating.

In this chapter, I have addressed my two research questions: RQ1: How do instructors at Santa Clara University navigate communication about faith in their public speaking classrooms? and RQ2: How do instructors at San José State University navigate communication about faith in their public speaking classrooms? In answering these questions, I analyzed three themes: (a) facilitation, (b) neutrality, and (c) engagement. I included the voices of my research participants, as well as my own voice, as necessary elements of the analysis in order to answer these research questions.

But the work is not yet complete. In the next chapter, I will address how the findings relate to the research questions, explore the implications for instructors, students, and researchers, and identify some ideas about future research before providing closure to this project.

Chapter Five: Implications

I have a favorite moment in teaching, and I look forward to it with every class. It's the moment when a student sees that a teacher, an authority figure, isn't telling him or her what to do or what's valid or important. I don't tell them their ideas are stupid or might not work. It's the moment when the students see that they maintain responsibility over their assignment, and I'm just there to point out other angles and options, to consider strategies to make the speech stronger, to help them coax it into the kind of effective organization we've discussed, and to assess the end result. Their eyes widen just slightly, and they stare for an extra second or feverishly scribble notes. It's the "yes, and" moment.

This leaves me with the pleasure of looking forward to speeches about physics concepts, the vastness of the universe, reincarnation, events in history, baking culture, nightmares and lucid dreaming, and the complex creation of sporting equipment. Perhaps it's because I haven't been teaching long, but I haven't heard the same topics over and over again. The speeches are as varied as the students themselves, and when students tell me how much they've enjoyed the class, I think it's a mixture of two concepts: their other classes "weren't fun" by their current standards, and they appreciated having responsibility and creative control in their assignments. They also see that they can have a personal connection to their topics, that their own life experiences and interests are relevant in the class. When I ask students to share one of the cultures with which they identify or ask them to describe a value they hold, it's not uncommon for a student to call attention to an object, such as a necklace, and explain how the object represents an aspect

of their spirituality. It might have more to do with the way they grew up rather than how they currently identify. Either way, students are able to use the class to examine the creation and form of their values and how they can affect other aspects of their lives.

I greatly suspect that the joy I get from teaching public speaking is not unique to me, even in the short period of time that I've taught the course; it has everything to do with the students. They are, after all, a reason for my employment. More significantly, they are the reason I've grown passionate about teaching. Each semester, students talk about what they've learned from each other, and I'm thankful that we've created a community and atmosphere promoting education, critical thinking, and support. But I know that I'm not done. I haven't "perfected" anything, and I often wonder what students and teachers and scholars might learn from my research.

I am not a model of how to facilitate communication about faith in the classroom. But this research has changed me in many ways and has given me different questions and concerns to address. Indeed, the purpose of this thesis was not to tell anyone how they should conduct their classrooms. I do hope to add to previous conversations as well as get some started, in much the same way that the interviews broached the topic. I find myself looking back on Turner's (2002) research and embracing the tension instead of settling on THE ANSWER. When the research participants discussed faith communication in their classrooms, they also addressed intellectual development, critical thinking, and the negotiation of opinions and values in ways that reflect the words of Chickering et al. (2006). I cannot think about the interviews without reflecting on the interviews that Freitas (2008) conducted with students. In this chapter, I will reflect on

the research questions and instructor facilitation of faith communication, discuss some possible implications of my research for teachers, students, and researchers, and add some closing thoughts.

Instructor Facilitation of Faith Communication

When I originally conceived of the research questions, I did not intend to compare universities or even hold either university as a sample for all universities. Santa Clara University does not represent all Catholic Jesuit universities, but it is still one Catholic Jesuit University. And San José State University does not represent the California State University (CSU) system any more than it represents all of the state universities throughout the country. It is, however, a secular state university. My purpose was not to directly compare one university to another, and to do so would oversimplify a complex situation and leave several significant factors unexamined. First, I focused on two universities, one Catholic and one secular. Second, though I set out to interview the same number of instructors at each institution, I interviewed four who shared experiences at SCU and 13 who shared experiences at SJSU. If my intention had been to have these individuals represent larger communities of instructors or even the schools themselves, I might have conducted my research in a different manner. I might have been more concerned with representation and generalizing the data. I also could have selected a random sample from the interviews I conducted. But as I expressed in the context of the data analysis, I am confident that the research participants are the public speaking instructors from whom students are going to take classes. They are real people who identify as public speaking instructors and teach the classes in which today's college

students enroll and learn, and I wanted to include all of their voices. Readers of this thesis are in a position to see how faith emerged in the classrooms of these instructors. I wanted to make a space for the voices of college instructors as they facilitated the communication of faith in the classroom, and in that sense, the number of research participants does not matter as much as the immense quality of their reflections.

It is because of the consistent patterns that emerged in all of the interviews that I made the choice to address three themes and include data from instructors at both institutions. The research participants addressed one (or both) of the following research questions: RQ1: How do instructors at Santa Clara University navigate communication about faith in their public speaking classrooms?; and RQ2: How do instructors at San José State University navigate communication about faith in their public speaking classrooms? In the responses to these questions, the research participants identified three themes (a) facilitation, (b) neutrality, and (c) engagement.

Instructors at SCU mentioned instances of faith coming up in the classroom, either as a planned activity led by the instructor or something that emerged as part of a topic. In the case of the latter situation, the instructor would respectfully reframe the issue as one that could be inclusive of everyone (and everyone's faiths) in the classroom. The research participants from SJSU were adamant about how communication about faith could address the complexity and dimensions of specific issues within the context of public speaking. Instructors and students could address faith as a way to call attention to difference as well to surface commonalities across cultures.

The instructors I spoke with were cautious about disclosing their own faith to their students because they did not want to make their students uncomfortable interacting with them. However, several instructors also voiced the importance of being genuine with the students, since that could also affect the teacher-student relationship.

Finally, several instructors addressed faith communication in the public speaking classroom as a necessary component for true, enriched pedagogy. Public speaking, they said, is about more than being able to deliver a speech in front of an audience. It can be a place where students transform, where they understand and start to participate as responsible members of society, and where they can spread awareness and change lives.

Each lived experience of a research participant adds a new facet and level of complexity to an already challenging communication phenomenon. But what I find most interesting are the paradoxes or commonalities between the two institutions. One instructor from each institution reflected on feeling able to discuss faith in the context of the classroom but that it would be unacceptable or inappropriate at the other institution. I was also intrigued at the shared concern for not offending students or putting them off by bringing attention to one's faith as the instructor. Somehow, disclosing faith can be a weakness in the context of our relationships with our students. Perhaps it has something to do with our perceived nature of faith and spirituality. It seems too personal, too unique, too vulnerable and too emotional. Sarah from SCU discussed why she no longer allows students to present speeches on abortion for a similar reason: "But no one ever gets a good grade on an abortion speech, because they're mad about something. They're mad at people are threatening abortion rights, or they're mad that people are protecting

abortion rights, but they're always mad, and they always take it personally.” Can we prevent our students from taking issues so personally? I don't think that's the question we should be asking. I know that we talk to our students about adapting to their audiences, establishing commonalities, and being respectful. To include faith seems like a challenge to these areas, but are students unable to rise to the challenge? I'm not so sure they aren't, and I'd like to pose that question and offer some suggestions to instructors, students, and researchers.

Dear Teachers

In a recent informative speech, a student compared two presidential candidates. She chose them because they seemed to be such political extremes, and though she followed my advice on how to improve the speech and be transparent about her choices, her tone during her presentation was very clear to the audience. She very much liked one candidate. And she thought the other was full of nonsense. At the end of her speech, she encouraged her audience to be critical thinkers and to reflect on their values as they considered how to vote. “If you value equality, vote for this candidate. If you value religion, vote for this other candidate.” How should her instructor respond to this situation? Should her instructor respond to her speech?

I winced at the back of the room. I knew her topic and had encouraged her to be as respectful as possible to both candidates, even though she demonstrated vast support for one candidate. Given the context and political dialogue, I had the sense that she was not alone in her feelings about the clincher of her speech. What I eventually did was mention that we'd talk about logical fallacies such as false dichotomies in the context of

the persuasive speech. But I hesitated to call attention to her speech specifically, because it was not in anyone's interest to invalidate how she felt about the issue. To be more specific might have seemed disapproving or unnecessarily argumentative (and maybe even too personal) to the student as well as to her peers, and that might have changed the classroom atmosphere in negative ways and harmfully changed their public speaking experience. Indeed, I very much agreed with her purpose of encouraging her audience to be critical thinkers and to do their research about political candidates. Though I made a note about it in her evaluation, I wonder what else I might have said in the class, and I wonder if my silence communicated more than I'd been meant.

It is our responsibility as instructors to call attention to and question the assumptions of our students. As Adam pointed out in his interview, students often come to college after heavily identifying with their families, and they have naturally built up their beliefs and morals based on their experiences:

Family and religion just have so much power over somebody, and a lot of what we need to do as teachers is not necessarily get them to change their minds but at least to be able to pull apart their two masks enough so they can at least see what's happening and then they can make decisions. Without that, though, they're just blindly going through life, and that's not critical thinking.

We are not in the business of telling students what to believe, nor should we be. But as people who truly want to educate our students about the world around them, it is our responsibility to call attention to these assumptions for what they are: assumptions.

I am also not telling public speaking instructors how to do their jobs or even to bring up faith in the classroom. What I am encouraging my colleagues to do is think about their faith and spirituality in the context of the classroom. We talk so little about

faith in the classroom, and I think it's time for us to consider why that is and whether it should remain that way. Whether or not we mindfully disclose, we do not leave our faith at the door, nor do we leave our privilege, ethnicity, age, or gender behind as we walk to the front of the room and facilitate a class. I am encouraging instructors to reflect upon their faith in the way that we ask our students to reflect. What are we afraid will happen? What then? What good could come from such a disclosure, or from such an assignment, or from such a discussion about how faith is part of culture? We could turn students off. We might silence them. We could demonstrate to them that teachers are truly whole people and that we recognize that students are whole people too. We could call attention to the fact that we embody the complex nature of having faith and other identities. We could show them that we are still in transformation. This makes us vulnerable. Perhaps everyone might learn from that sense of vulnerability. These are genuine concerns that we should not take or judge lightly, and I'm not asking you to disclose. I'm asking you to reflect on it, on why you do, how you already might be disclosing, and why you shouldn't. There is no cookie cutter model for this process, nor should there be. While I have structured this research in such a way to focus on the public speaking classroom, I challenge instructors who teach other communication studies courses to consider the applicability of these ideas in their pedagogy.

Dear Graduate Students, Graduate Teaching Associates, and Undergraduate Students

I did not want to write a master's thesis on Catholic feminism. Not when I started out in the graduate program, anyway. That had been my topic as an undergraduate, and I

had liked it well enough then, but I didn't really want to pursue it any further. I grudgingly accepted: I was clearly interested in the topics of identity formation and shifting, and rhetorical analysis. I wanted to promote understanding for people who hold conflicting identities. And the more I thought about it, the more I noticed that I was specifically including faith-based identities, and I wondered if I should focus on faith identities and communication. By this point, I'd been a graduate teaching associate for over a year, so I could recognize some of these concepts in the students in our classrooms. My thesis topic was a long time coming, and I needed a lot of support from my colleagues, my professors, my family, and my friends. I also need to support myself by allowing the topic to develop. It is in the context of my higher education that I have been able to apply what I have learned to my everyday life, to see how I embody communication phenomena every day.

I whole-heartedly recognize and appreciate the support that I have received as I continued my work, and I try to reflect that sense of acceptance and encouragement with my students as they prepare their assignments. I have also recognized that I did not always receive the support of my professors, but as time has passed, I have gained a sense of appreciation for having gone through the experience. Meeting resistance has been an invaluable experience. I stuttered, I burned, I complained, I learned, and I acted. My conviction is that much stronger, and my work more complete, as a result of interacting with people who did not agree with me.

I didn't much like it when professors or colleagues labeled me as "that Catholic feminism student," particularly when it felt like my opinion did not matter. I know that

it's woefully common for graduate students to feel a lack of validation regarding their research passions, among other areas. Your opinion matters. You're a scholar. Do not let the feeling of invalidation discourage you from what you really want to research. Consider that some of that feeling of rejection might actually be in reaction to someone encouraging you to take a different and potentially very fruitful direction. And know that you can't always please everyone. If you are interested in considering the intersection between faith and some other topic, do it. We've already started a great discussion, and I encourage you to add your voice.

As someone who was recently a GTA and who spoke to several GTAs in the process of this research, I know that graduate teaching associates are in a unique and especially vulnerable position. I remember worrying about how much to disclose to my students. What if they asked my age? Would they think me less qualified to teach if they knew I was a student as well? And then there's the question: *do you disclose your faith to your students?* I asked all the research participants this question. While the question was the same, I expected that the answers from GTAs would likely be different when compared to those of instructors who might be older, have more experience, and are more comfortable with classroom interactions. The questions are no less applicable. And in many instances, particularly in terms of disclosure to students, GTAs expressed many of the same concerns that other types of public speaking instructors addressed. So while I address students and instructors separately, I understand that in the case of GTAs, there is a merging of worlds that adds an extra level of tension, and the tension of being a GTA isn't unique to disclosing faith. I also recognize that by addressing both instructors and

students, I am also addressing present and future researchers, and I want to include an extra message in the spirit of encouraging future research.

Dear Researchers

As if mainstream news is bending to my will, I notice that the news program I'm watching is addressing faith. Well, faith and politics. I'm not sure if faith comes up so often in presidential elections, but it seems to be prominent in this current race for the 2012 presidential election.

On my current copy of *Time*, Jon Meacham (2012) authors the leading article, "Heaven on Earth: Christian Scholars Are Urging Believers to Set Their Sights Lower—From a Celestial Beyond to an Earthly Resurrection." My current issue of *The Christian Science Monitor* leads with McCauley's (2012) article: "Faith & Politics: Why Campaign 2012 Has Become an Intense Political Battle Over Whose Beliefs Matter in America." On the day of my prospectus defense, my thesis advisor hands me the recent issue of *Journal of Applied Communication Research*. Of course, it's a special issue addressing religion and spirituality. In this issue, Kline (2011) looks at the connection between spiritual identities and health care. McNamee (2011) studies faith-based organization communication and member identity. In the breadth of this research project, I have often cited articles from the *Journal of Communication and Religion*. Faith is a current issue, and most of the time we talk about it in terms of whether or not we should be talking about it. The argument seems to be moot. The question is not whether or not we should be talking about faith. The question for us now is: *how* should we talk about faith?

We acknowledge many areas of identity in our research, and we associate most of them with privilege. We discuss issues such as race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and ability. What would happen if we discussed faith at the same time? I think we know that faith is a relevant topic. It's not just in the news all the time because of the presidential election. It's in the news because people value their faith, and particular people have a certain sense of privilege because their faith happens to align with those who are in positions of power. We need to follow the lead of the two journals I previously cited, and we need to recognize that faith is as relevant to our communication as nearly every other topic today. To ignore its role in our everyday communication is 1) to not recognize the privilege of not having to talk about faith, and 2) to be out of touch with the world around us, and that is not an ivory tower into which we want to shut ourselves. Not if we want to continue to discuss how studying communication is relevant and necessary and has consequences in our everyday lives. We risk losing touch with the very people who are trying to use their education to better their lives. Students will perhaps forever moan about a class not being relevant to them in the long run, but does that mean we should ignore their complaint? If we view education as a way to prepare ourselves and our students and future scholars for participation in a society where faith and spirituality exists, then we must acknowledge the role of faith within the context of that education.

My desire to study faith communication in the classroom came from several places. For one, I'm a public speaking instructor and was interested to see how my fellow educators felt about this issue and how they experienced faith communication in

their classrooms. I was also inspired by Freitas' (2008) research. I saw such importance in the way she talked to college students about their faith and behaviors in college, and I wondered what their own instructors would say of this research. While I am proud to present my research about faith communication and communication pedagogy, I know the research shouldn't end right here. By talking to students and their instructors, instructors and their students, we're talking to the right people.

It is for these reasons that I would be incredibly interested to learn what students feel about the concept of faith communication in the classroom. I want to address the fears and concerns that these instructors feel about disclosure and facilitating communication about faith in the classroom. What do students think about instructors who disclose their faith? How do these instructors disclose? Do students think that instructors can or should disclose, and would they themselves disclose their own faith?

Based on the conversations with the research participants, there is reason to believe that students are already unlikely to disclose their faith. Interestingly, both Jonathan and Sarah from SCU commented on how students are less likely to disclose their faith in front of their colleagues because it's not considered "cool" to identify oneself with a religion, particularly if the student identifies as Christian. Jonathan expanded on the trend of Christian students not taking a stand or declaring their faith, and he attached it to two trends: 1) domestic students seem to have difficulty declaring their faiths in a multicultural society, whereas with their parents, faith was a common part of the culture they shared with everyone around them; and 2) the recent scandals of pedophilia and cover-ups within the Christian church discourage students from publicly

identifying themselves as Christian. “One thing is maybe they don’t want to be put down for that, because there’s a negative stigma with Christianity. You hear stories in the media about pastors or priests or homosexuals and they do something really sinful, and practicing that religion, no one wants to be a part of that.”

In my own experience, students are likely to disclose that they came from Christian families; they seem more likely to identify as spiritual, though I don’t believe I’ve ever had a student identify as agnostic or atheist, and I have to wonder why that seems to be the case. Do students who feel pressure to not disclose their faith feel extra pressure from that particular identity, in much the same way that Veronica explained why she doesn’t disclose being agnostic? Could instructors disclosing their faith in meaningful ways in the context of class be a way for students to address the role of their faith in their everyday lives and connect with others, especially in the case of an instructor who identifies as agnostic or atheist? Could instructors facilitate a learning environment with open communication where students can learn about different faiths, particularly those that some perceive as hating religion and faith? The answer is not a clear-cut yes or no. Rather, we should focus on how instructors could facilitate communication about faith and how it affects students. This research should address different types of schools, such as state universities, private universities, and community colleges. We should embrace all students and consider how their voices add to our understanding and potentially unify a call to consider faith a relevant topic regardless of the kind of institution. We should also embrace the voices of the instructors of these

institutions and realize that these discussions might also change their relationships and identities, for better or worse.

A Conclusion in Progress

Though I officially interviewed 15 research participants for this project, I have had several unofficial conversations with people, including people who are not public speaking instructors, about the ideas I had or developed as a result of my research. Each teaching environment is unique. Colleagues within the same institution might never talk. Even if they do, they may choose to never talk about faith. It's a very personal topic. And in some cases, instructors might be afraid to talk about it for fear of others hearing about it and attaching a negative brand to them. We want to get along with our students and colleagues, arguably because the opposite can lead to difficult situations and the threat of unemployment. In some ways, I believed other people when they told me that this research was controversial, but in many ways I am still learning just how fortunate I am to have had such candid conversations about faith communication in the classroom with other public speaking instructors.

About halfway through my interviews, I had a scary thought that has not yet left me. Unlike the person who so unflinchingly declared her faith at the very beginning of this thesis, I admit I am in conflict. And during the course of my interviews, I considered my own spiritual privilege. Like Brooke, I occasionally wear religious symbols that feel as natural to me as the shoes on my feet. I make references to God and Heaven and church without really thinking about it, and none of my students ever calls me out on it. I

assume they're on the same page as I am: I assume they understand my meaning. And even if they didn't, I'm still their instructor.

Perhaps it was during my interview with Veronica, when I had an ash cross on my forehead.

I worried that I would use this research to tell people that they should mindfully facilitate faith in the classroom. Why wouldn't they? I'd never had a negative experience, though I don't mindfully disclose my beliefs.

And then I remember that I identify as Christian and that identifying as Christian isn't such a strange thing for a college instructor at my institution. I don't worry about what my students will think or if they will find me unapproachable. What if I considered myself as agnostic?

I can't take my spiritual privilege out of this equation, even if I can't quite pin it down into simple terms or clear-cut examples. I have to think about how I communicate my faith as much as anyone else, but I know that I don't worry about it very much at the moment. I know that other people are probably more concerned about how they communicate their faith and culture, and they worry about acceptance. I have the privilege to not worry so much about it. I also have nearly three years of teaching under my belt, so I have developed an attitude: just let the student who has a problem with that take it up with me.

The message I need to get across is the same one I thought about after my lunch date: I am not a model of facilitating faith communication in the classroom. Nor do I really want to be. But I want to learn from the voices present in this research project and

the complex issues they surface. I want what my father says when he reads my data analysis: a classroom where students can express themselves, practice being more effective speakers by our society's standards, and learn about their role in the world that we share. Imagine that.

And I'm not saying that creating such a classroom is easy. Nor is the idea particularly new in our field of study. I heard this theme consistently across each of the interviews with these research participants. But if we want to facilitate these productive and educational atmospheres in our classrooms, we must consider addressing the role of spirituality in ways that are perhaps not all that dissimilar from when we talk about issues such as politics, socioeconomics, race, ability, and gender. Perhaps if we start to engage in more communication about spirituality in the public speaking classroom, it will more regularly surface into other classes, into our conversations with friends, and back into politics in ways that have moved beyond the question "what's religion got to do with anything?" But as with many things, it needs to start in the classroom. Perhaps we should focus less on why the classroom isn't a place to talk about spirituality in our communication and identity, and instead consider how it could just possibly be the best place for which we could ask.

References

- Alexander, B. K. (2004). Passing, cultural performance, and individual agency: Performative reflections on black masculine identity. *Cultural Studies & Critical Methodologies*, 4, 377-404.
- Alexander, B. K. & Warren, J. T. (2002). The materiality of bodies: Critical reflections on pedagogy, politics and positionality. *Communication Quarterly*, 50, 328-343.
- Austin, J. L. (1968). *How to do things with words*. J.O. Urmson (Ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Barbour, J. D. (2008, 25 January). The place of personal faith in the classroom. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 54(20), B24.
- Baurain, B. (2007). Christian witness and respect for persons. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 6, 201-219.
- Beebe, S. A. Beebe, S. J. (2010). *Public speaking handbook (3rd ed.)*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Butler, J. (1988). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. *Theatre Journal*, 40, 519-531.
- Butler, J. (2007). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity (2nd ed.)*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Chickering, A. W., Dalton, J. C., & Stamm, L. (2006). *Encouraging authenticity and spirituality in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Coopman, S. J. & Lull, J. (2012). *Public speaking: The evolving art (2nd ed.)*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth.
- Cruz, M. R. (2006). Mis muertos están conmigo [my dead are with me]: An autoethnographic text on racialization, identity, and memory. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12, 589-595.
- de Beauvoir, Simone. (1993). *The second sex*. (H. M. Parshley, Trans.; 3rd ed). New York, NY: David Campbell Publishers (Original work published in 1949).
- Fassett, D. L. & Warren, J. T. (2007). *Critical communication pedagogy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Feldner, S. B. (2006). Living our mission: A study of university mission building. *Communication Studies*, 57, 67-85.

- Foucault, M. (1978). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. (Alan Sheridan, Trans.). New York, NY: Vintage Books (Original work published in 1975).
- Foster, E. (2002). Storm tracking: Scenes of marital disintegration. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 804-819.
- Fraleigh, D. M. Tuman, J. S. (2009). *Speak up! An illustrated guide to public speaking*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Freire, P. (2007). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.) (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Freitas, D. (2008). *Sex and the soul: Juggling sexuality, spirituality, romance, and religion on America's college campuses*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Friedenberg, R. V. (2002). Rhetoric, religion, and government at the turn of the 21st century. *Journal of Communication and Religion*, 25, 34-48.
- Fujishin, R. (2003). *The natural speaker* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Gingrich-Philbrook, C. (2005). Autoethnography's family values: Easy access to compulsory experiences. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 25, 297-314.
- Glazer, S. (1999). Introduction. In S. Glazer (Ed.), *The heart of learning: Spirituality in education* (pp. 1-5). New York, NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.
- Goodall, Jr. B. L. (2000). *Writing the new ethnography*. Lanham, MA: AltaMira Press.
- Grice, G. L., & Skinner, J. F. (2011). *Mastering public speaking: The handbook* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Hendrix, K. G. (2000). *The teaching assistant's guide to the basic course*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jaffe, C. (2010). *Public speaking: Concepts and skills for a diverse society* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth.
- Johnson, J. R. (2004). Universal instructional design and critical (communication) pedagogy: Strategies for voice, inclusion, and social justice/change. *Equity & Excellence in education*, 37, 145-153.

- Kirby, E. L., McBride, M. C., Shuler, S., Birkholt, M. J., Danielson, M. A., & Pawlowski, D. R. (2006). The Jesuit difference (?): Narratives of negotiating spiritual values and secular practices. *Communication Studies*, 57, 87-105.
- Kline, S. L. (2011, November). Communicating spirituality in healthcare: A case study on the role of identity in religious health testimonies. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 39, 334-351.
- Kurtz, J. B. (2009). "How is it that ye do not discern this time?": Public faith, moral conflict, and the recovery of rhetorical democracy. *Journal of Communication and Religion*, 32, 111-134.
- Lee, K. V. (2006). A fugue about grief. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12, 1154-1159.
- Lessl, T. M. (2009). The innate religiosity of public life: An a fortiori argument. *Journal of Communication and Religion*, 32, 319-346.
- Lindloff, T. R. & Taylor, B. C. (2002). *Qualitative communication research methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications
- Madison, D. S. (2005). *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- McCauley, M. B. (2012, 2 March). Faith and politics: Why campaign 2012 has become an intense political battle over whose beliefs matter in America. *The Christian Science Monitor*, 104(19), 26-29.
- McLaren, P. (1993). *Schooling as a ritual performance: Towards a political economy of educational symbols and gestures* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- McNamee, L. G. (2011, November). Faith-based organizational communication and its implications for member identity. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 39, 422-440.
- Meacham, J. (2012, 16 April). Heaven can't wait: Why rethinking the hereafter could make the world a better place. *Time*, 179(15), 30-36.
- Mullikin, P. L. (2006). Religious and spiritual identity: The impact of gender, family, peers, and media communication in post-adolescence. *Journal of Communication and Religion*, 29, 178-203.
- Osborn, S., Osborn, M., & Osborn, R. (2008). *Public speaking guidebook*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Palmer, P. J. (2007). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

- Parker, IV, T. F. (1987). An attorney's view of the Alabama textbook case. *Communication Education, 36*, 367-377.
- Phair, K. L. (2010). The Gospel according to: A theory of transformative discursive allegory. *Communication Studies, 61*, 104-117.
- Pugh, T. (2006). *History of Mission Santa Clara de Asis*. Retrieved April 24, 2009, from Santa Clara University, Mission Santa Clara de Asis Web site: <http://www.scu.edu/missionchurch/history/index.cfm>
- Richards, R. (2008). Writing the othered self: Autoethnography and the problem of objectification in writing about illness and disability. *Qualitative Health Research, 28*, 1717-1728.
- San José State University Office of Institutional Research. (n.d.). Student quick facts: Fall 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.oir.sjsu.edu/Students/QuickFacts/20114QuickFacts.cfm>
- Santa Clara University. (2011). SCU at a glance. Retrieved from http://www.scu.edu/about/at_a_glance.cfm
- Santa Clara University, Board of Trustees. (1998, February). *University Mission Statement*. Retrieved April 24, 2009, from The Jesuit Advantage's Web site: <http://www.scu.edu/jesuit/university-mission.cfm>
- Schultze, Q. J. (2005). The "God-problem" in communication studies. *Journal of Communication and Religion, 28*, 1-22.
- SJSU's Mission. (n.d.). Retrieved October 14th, 2011, from San José State University's About SJSU Web site: http://www.sjsu.edu/about_sjsu/mission/
- Sprague, J., Stuart, D., & Bodary, D. (2010). *The speaker's handbook* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth.
- Terry, D. P. (2006). Once blind, now seeing: Problematics of confessional performance. *Text and Performance Quarterly, 26*, 209-228.
- Tillmann-Healy, L. M. (1996). A secret life in the culture of thinness: Reflections on body, food and bulimia. In C. Ellis & A. P. Bochner (Eds.), *Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing* (pp. 76-108). Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Turner, P. K. (2002). Is childbirth with midwives natural? The gaze of the feminine and the pull of the masculine. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*, 652-669.

Ward, A. R. (2004). Problems and promise in pluralism. *Journal of Communication and Religion*, 27, 1-10.

Warren, J. T. (2001). Absence for whom? An autoethnography of white subjectivity. *Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies*, 1, 36-49.

APPENDIX A: IRB Approval to Conduct Research at San José State University



**SAN JOSÉ STATE
UNIVERSITY**

To: Mary Anne Sunseri

From: Pamela Stacks, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President
Graduate Studies and Research

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pamela Stacks".

Date: February 9, 2012

Division of Academic Affairs
Associate Vice President
Graduate Studies & Research
www.sjsu.edu/gradstudies

One Washington Square
San José, California 95192-0025
Voice: 408-924-2427
Fax: 408-924-2612

www.sjsu.edu

The Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board has approved your request to use human subjects in the study entitled:

“If not here, then where? An investigation of faith in the public speaking classroom”

This approval is contingent upon the subjects participating in your research project being appropriately protected from risk. This includes the protection of the confidentiality of the subjects' identity when they participate in your research project, and with regard to all data that may be collected from the subjects. The approval includes continued monitoring of your research by the Board to assure that the subjects are being adequately and properly protected from such risks. If at any time a subject becomes injured or complains of injury, you must notify Dr. Pamela Stacks, Ph.D. immediately. Injury includes but is not limited to bodily harm, psychological trauma, and release of potentially damaging personal information. This approval for the human subject's portion of your project is in effect for one year, and data collection beyond February 9, 2013 requires an extension request.

Please also be advised that all subjects need to be fully informed and aware that their participation in your research project is voluntary, and that he or she may withdraw from the project at any time. Further, a subject's participation, refusal to participate, or withdrawal will not affect any services that the subject is receiving or will receive at the institution in which the research is being conducted.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (408) 924-2427.

Protocol #S1202009

cc. Deanna Fassett 0112

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Channel Islands, Chico, Dominguez Hills,
East Bay, Fresno, Fullerton, Humboldt, Long Beach,
Los Angeles, Maritime Academy, Monterey Bay,
Northridge, Pomona, Sacramento, San Bernardino,
San Diego, San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,

APPENDIX B: IRB Approval to Conduct Research at Santa Clara University



February 01, 2012
Mary Sunseri
Communication
Santa Clara University
500 El Camino Real
Santa Clara, CA 95053

Subject: Approval for Research with Human Subjects Application 12-01-111

SCU FWA: 00002737

Review Type: **EXEMPT**

Reference: If Not Here, Then Where? An Investigation of Faith in the Public Speaking Classroom.

Dear Mary Sunseri

You received approval from the IRB at Santa Clara University on February 01, 2012, to conduct your research in the above referenced proposal. If there are any changes during the course of your project, please inform the Human Subjects Committee for further review. The faculty P.I. is also required to keep all signed consent forms for three years for auditing purposes.

Note: SCU policy requires those working on Human Subjects projects to complete the CITI Basic Human Subjects online training course. It is important to note that HSC approval requires all members of the research team to complete the CITI training. This is an OHRP - Federal Wide Assurance requirement. CITI training is valid for three years.

If you have any questions, please contact either myself at (408)-554-5591 or Pam Cuilla at (408)-554-4408.

Sincerely,

Esther Pham, Director
Office of Research Compliance & Integrity

Office of Research Compliance & Integrity
500 El Camino Real, Santa Clara, CA 95053
408 551-3000 FAX 408-554-2839

APPENDIX D: Interview Protocol

1. How long have you been teaching public speaking?
2. What do you enjoy most about teaching public speaking?
3. What are some challenges to teaching public speaking?
4. Describe a time when faith/spirituality came up in class.
5. How would you explain your faith/spirituality?
6. How do you disclose your faith/spirituality?
7. How do students signal or disclose their faith/spirituality?
8. How do issues of faith come up in the context of student speeches?
9. Do you feel that the kind of institution (Catholic or secular) has an impact on whether faith/spirituality is a relevant topic for discussion in class? How so?
10. What advice would you give to other public speaking instructors who struggle with the role of faith/spirituality in the classroom?
11. How might public speaking instructors place an emphasis on the role of faith and spirituality in the context of the class?