THE IMPACT OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE TRIGGERS AND STUDENT

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE SCRIPTURAL STORY ON FOURTH GRADE

SUNDAY SCHOOL LEARNERS

by

Katrina L. Meekins

ELAINE GUERRIZZI, PhD, Faculty Mentor and Chair

REBECCA KOELLN, PhD, Committee Member

EDWARD TRIMMER, Ed.D, Committee Member

Feranda Williamson, Ph.D, Dean, School of Education

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Capella University

May 2014

UMI Number: 3625905

UMI

Dissertation Publishing

UMI 3625905

ProQuest®

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

Abstract

Sunday School is of the primary educational setting within the Protestant Christian church for teaching the faith and scriptural stories to children. Traditionally, the Sunday School classroom has utilized a schooling method curriculum that focuses on the logical and linguistic intelligences and seeks to impart scriptural knowledge through a story, an activity, and a craft or game. This study compares this traditional schooling method with that of a multiple intelligences triggered curriculum, especially the spiritual intelligence, curriculum for student engagement with the scriptural story. This study examines these two different curriculums within the fourth grade Sunday School classroom. Six classes were involved in the study; three participated in the traditional curriculum while three participated in the multiple intelligences triggered curriculum. Both curriculums reflected the same scriptural stories, which were taught over a six-week period of time. Following the six-week study, each class participated as a focus group to discuss the learners' experience during the study as well as their understandings of the scriptural stories. After the focus group, one student from each group was selected randomly to participate in an individual interview. Data from this study reflects the student engagement with the scriptural stories as well as the students' excitement about the activities within the curriculum. Activities and tasks within the curriculums illustrate the triggers for the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence. Conclusions from the data illustrate that the multiple intelligence triggers, especially the spiritual intelligence triggers, provide for greater student understandings of the scriptural stories.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to all those who have supported me through this journey, most especially my family who has believed in me from the beginning. I also dedicate this dissertation to Durema who was my editor and sounding board throughout the process.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences indicates that persons have multiple ways of gaining knowledge, processing information, and problem solving and that people use all these multiple intelligences though one or more may be a strength for that person. Gardner identifies eight intelligences: verbal-linguistic, mathematical-logical, body-kinesthetic, visual-spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical, and natural. Gardner claims there may be additional intelligences, but has yet to identify the additional intelligences, such as the spiritual intelligence, with certainty. Emmons (2000a) and Sisk (2008) are two researchers who differ with Gardner and believe there is evidence to support the spiritual intelligence.

Within the Protestant mainline denominations, Sunday School is the organized manner of spiritual and faith formation. Historically, within the United States, the Sunday School originated as an arena for teaching children who worked in the factories how to read and write (Boylan, 1988). As communities changed and children were being educated through the public system, the Sunday School became a place for conversion rather than the literacy education (Boylan, 1988). As a place for conversion, the Sunday School began to establish classes which were offered amidst the worship routine of the

1

congregation. The Sunday School thus provided an intentional plan of conversion contingent upon learning through engagement with the scriptural story and the tenets of the Christian faith.

Educational theories such as Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Jean Piaget's constructivism, and B. F. Skinner's behaviorism are reflected in curriculum and lesson plans for learning environments including the Sunday School. Each of these theories provides a different understanding of the learner as well as the role of the teacher. Teaching methods stemming from each theory are made available to the volunteer teachers in the Sunday School learning environment. Though the Sunday School teachers have a variety of teaching methods as their disposal, many teachers fall back to a traditional behaviorist method of schooling or banking, depositing information into the learners while they sit orderly, learn, and behave (Simmons, 2009). This one method of teaching tends to engage only a few students in the learning environment. The question becomes how to engage a majority of the students within the Sunday School setting while assisting them in activating the multiple intelligences for greater engagement, especially the spiritual intelligence. In order to activate the multiple intelligences within the learning environment, triggers have to be incorporated into the curriculum that will afford the students the opportunity for tapping into the intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence. Sisk (2002) points out that as the intelligences are triggered the intelligences are enhanced and developed. This understanding will provide a foundation for continued development of teaching methods and curriculum that will include triggers for all of the multiple intelligences.

Background of the Study

Christianity has historically taught whole families about the Christian faith including the children. Kim (2007) states that from "the inception of the church to the present, Christians have engaged in a comprehensive study to provide an accurate exposition of cognition, or the function of the mind, as it relates to faith formation" (p. 308). The Christian scriptures express how the early faith communities were to teach the foundations and the practices of the faith in the name of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19 (New Revised Standard Version) states "go therefore and make disciples of all nations".

This purposeful indoctrination of new believers served to initiate and socialize them in the Christian faith. This type of education was necessary because most persons entering the community were from other belief traditions, some of which were contradictory to Christian beliefs. Even though the new believers felt the connection to the Christian community and the desire to be part of it, they still needed education in the tenets of the faith to grow their discipleship.

As Christianity grew through the centuries so did the educational facets of the faith. Over the centuries Christians have been taught utilizing arts such as stained glass as well as sculpture and architecture. The beliefs of the church have also been taught through sermons and rituals which molded Christians into obedient members of the community. Engebretson (2004) explains that theories of education within the church have focused on the "functioning of individuals within society", therefore the education process "was scientific and practical rather than concerned with communicating salvific truth" (p. 268).

As the 1800s came to a close in the United States of America, Protestant churches began to offer ministries for children, called Sunday School, to learn the basic tenets of Christianity while developing their own faith. Sunday School offered an educational opportunity for children to learn scripture and the disciplines of the Protestant Christian faith as part of the routine schedule of Sunday morning. In spite of the early beginnings of Sunday School being led by the minister of the congregation (Seymour, 1982, p. 33) the classes of the nineteenth century were taught by volunteers (Boylan, 1988, p.7). As churches grew in size and classes were divided by age, volunteer teachers were enlisted to teach the classes. Many of these volunteer teachers taught the scriptural story as they had been taught and how the minister instructed them to teach.

Horace Bushnell (1876) was one of the first researchers to focus on the role of Christian Education and Sunday School in the church. In his pivotal work, *Christian Nurture*, he articulated an understanding of the role of teaching the tenets of the faith and the expectations of the educational environment within the Protestant church, including methods and theories of Christian Education and teaching in the Sunday School setting. He emphasized the innate spiritual nature of the student and the need for guidance from parents as well as teachers.

Historically, the Sunday School educational setting was typically organized around the schooling method (Boylan, 1988). As the educational environment of the time was reflective of the Sunday School being a primary educational source for children who worked six days a week with only Sunday available for education. The idea behind the Sunday School was to deposit information into the students and to teach them to read and

4

write through the use of the Bible. The American Sunday School evolved to provide spiritual and religious guidance to children through innovative methods. Innovative methods of education also bore witness to the changing theological understandings of children and their religious growth within the church (Seymour, 1982).

Theologically children were viewed as either depraved with original sin and in need of conversion or as innocents who needed to be guided against the depravity of humanity (Bunge, 2001). Scriptural learning was intended to be the point of access for spiritual understanding and faithful living. In spite of the theological perspective the students were expected to sit in their chairs, recite scripture, memorize verses, and behave properly and therefore would be faithful followers of Jesus. This philosophy of education stemmed from secular educational theory of the day, behaviorism. The focus of behaviorism was to change the actions of an individual as a response to a stimulus (Skinner, 1989). Teaching methods included scriptural memorization, right behavior, and a classroom setup with a desk for each child, a chalk board, and a chair for each learner. Right behavior was important in the classroom setting. John Wesley, the founder of United Methodism, believed children were to study by "strict rules of operation" within the educational setting (Bunge, 2001, p.290).

Just as scriptural knowledge has been taught in the Sunday School setting, helping learners develop a personal faith and relationship with God through community, spirituality, scriptural knowledge, and the practices of the faith has been equally as important. This process of helping students cultivate a relationship with God is called spiritual formation or faith formation. The purpose of Sunday School within the

Protestant Christian church, particularly within The United Methodist Church, is scriptural knowledge as well as spiritual formation. Therefore, providing means for the learner to be absorbed with the scriptural story is vital for both scriptural knowledge and faith formation (Foundation for Teaching and Learning, 1979 [FTL]).

In the twentieth century the educational theories of constructivism and social constructivism were developed. Constructivism focused on the student's knowledge building and development of personal meaning (Powell & Kalina, 2009, p. 241) as opposed to focusing on changing the student's behavior. Using the theory of constructivism, students develop knowledge based on what they currently know and apply it based on personal experience. Within the Sunday School setting constructivism has been expressed through practical application activities of the scriptures for the learner's life. Social constructivism's focus has been on how the community and social connections help a student build constructs. This theory relies on the community and social interactions for knowledge development as well as the student's interactions with the knowledge. Social constructivism is expressed through the Sunday School educational format of small group activities and games.

In the 1980s, Howard Gardner presented the Theory of Multiple Intelligences as part of a project for Harvard University. Gardner's theory provides a groundwork that allows the student to learn to process and acquire knowledge within a variety of intelligences noted as verbal/linguistic, body-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical/rhythmic, mathematical/logical, visual-spatial, and natural intelligences (Gardner, 2004, 2006). He explains that each person has the capacity to know and to

solve problems in each area but that various intelligences are stronger than others for each individual.

Despite the advent of more recent learning theories, the behaviorist or "schooling" teaching method has tended to be the primary method utilized to engage children in faith formation within the Sunday School setting since the late nineteenth century. The original intent of the schooling method was to impart knowledge to the students while providing a framework for a faithful church member who knows the scripture and the tenets of the faith. Yet, the schooling method did not provide the student with a depth of spirituality and engagement with the scriptural story. Pazmino (2010) states, "The exclusive reliance upon schooling models for the passing on of a living Christian faith have been insightfully critiqued after the 1960s by educational theorists and practitioners alike who long for vitality and renewal in the educational ministries of the Christian church" (p. 356).

Statement of the Problem

The Sunday School classroom is traditionally organized around the "schooling" method of teaching. This method typically arranges the children in chairs at tables or desks with the teacher depositing information into the students while they behave and learn. The students are expected to memorize scripture verses, learn the meaning of the scriptures, behave in the classroom, and to develop their own faith amidst the process (Harris, 1989). This method tends to draw upon the behaviorist educational theory by expecting a change in behavior specifically related to acting in a faith filled manner.

Pazmino (2010) states that the sole reliance on the schooling model has been criticized by educational theorists and practitioners who seek to promote strength within the churches' ministries. Therefore, seeking to organize the Sunday School classroom around other teaching methods such as the hands-on method, learning centers method, or the Montessori method would offer a different perspective in the classroom and would allow the students to build knowledge rather than receive the knowledge. Different teaching methods provide an avenue for the students to activate the multiple intelligences. When only one teaching method is utilized in the educational setting a minority of students are served. The Sunday School classroom traditionally only reflects one method of teaching, the behaviorist theory, which limits the knowledge building of the students. When the constructivist educational theory or the theory of multiple intelligences is the foundation for the teaching methods students are more apt to tap into the multiple intelligences and develop their own faith amidst the learning environment.

Purpose of the Study

Fourth grade students usually begin to claim a faith for themselves and to build upon the scriptural stories of their childhood. For many fourth grade students, the learning changes from just hearing the stories of faith to incorporating those stories into spiritual realities for themselves. According to Fowler's Faith Stages (1981), fourth graders are typically in the mythic-literal stage and moving into the synthetic-conventional stage. This means that students believe in justice for all and give human characteristics to the deity of the faith while they are shifting to the stage of conformity to the religious community and developing their own faith identity. Additionally, Piaget's

8

stages of development place fourth graders in the concrete operational stage moving into the formal operational stage (Ormond, 2008). This means that students are able to integrate different points of view and move into abstract reasoning.

Yet the Sunday School classrooms typically reflect teaching methods which may or may not encourage the learners to tap into the multiple intelligences. The purpose of the case study is to understand how the use of specific triggers in the fourth grade Sunday School classroom will impact scriptural engagement and faith formation. Understanding how the spiritual intelligence can impact the scriptural learning and faith formation of these children will allow for greater effect in the church's educational settings in regards to faith formation.

Research Questions

The Sunday School setting allows the student learners to not only engage the scriptures but to also integrate the scriptural story application into their life. Multiple Intelligences provide a groundwork for greater engagement as the student taps into a variety of intelligences while building knowledge and solving problems. In considering how multiple intelligence triggers, especially the spiritual intelligence trigger, affect learning the questions to be researched are:

RQ1: How do fourth grade learners engage a scriptural story when the curriculum reflects strategic triggers for the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence?

RQ2: In what way do the strategic triggers for the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, within the fourth grade Sunday school classroom impact student engagement with the scriptural story?

Theoretical Framework

Howard Gardner's (1995) Theory of Multiple Intelligences reflects an understanding of intelligence as being broader than just a linguistic and mathematical intelligence. He expresses that there are at least eight intelligences with additional intelligences being studied. Gardner is reviewing the existential intelligence in lieu of the spiritual intelligence; yet other theorists have affirmed the ninth intelligence to be the spiritual intelligence.

According to the theory of multiple intelligences, each learner has the ability to process and problem solve in each of the intelligences while having strengths and weaknesses within the individual intelligences (Temur, 2007). This means that as students may have strengths in one or more of the intelligences; the ability to process is present for each intelligence.

Researchers, such as Emmons (2000a, 2000b) and Sisk (2002, 2008), have expanded the theory of multiple intelligences to include the spiritual intelligence. Both believe that the theory is a foundation for knowing and processing information, however, Emmons (2000b) articulates that the theory is about mental capacities of the individual rather than a learning preference. Multiple Intelligences as mental abilities focus on problem solving and are goal oriented. For Emmons, goal orientation is also adaptive problem solving. Adaptive problem solving minimizes goal conflicts and enhances goal

attainment. Emmons further states that intelligences develop with age. As students grow in age their abilities to process and to know within the different intelligences grows.

Campbell's (1991) research indicates students developed and applied knowledge through the use of multiple intelligence triggers. Providing triggers for the intelligences allows for the students to tap into the processing and problem solving capacity of the intelligences, including the spiritual intelligence.

The theory of multiple intelligences understands intelligence in multiple terms such as visual intelligence and body-kinesthetic intelligence; spiritual intelligence is among those modes. As stated by Hyde (2004), the individual is made for spiritual intelligence and meant to gain intelligence through the spiritual aspect. Sisk (2002) identifies the spiritual intelligence as a deep self-awareness that focuses on the dimension of the self beyond the body, an oneness with that which is beyond the self, and the ability to solve problems of meaning and value. Sisk further states that in order to develop the spiritual intelligences one needs "to take time to see a vision of our lives, identify the goals and desires that we have and to create balance in our lives" (p.210). Emmons (2000b) supports the foundation of goal setting and expresses that goals are innate in religion with the primary goal being "intimacy with the divine" (p.4).

Tapping into the multiple intelligences through triggers, especially the spiritual intelligence, allows the students to stretch their abilities intelligently and to learn through the multiple intelligence triggers (Ozdemir, Guneysu & Tekkaya, 2006). As each learner has the ability to tap into each intelligence for the sake of processing and problem solving, knowing how to trigger the intelligences provides a foundation for curriculum

11

development and teaching methods. Sisk (2002) points out that to trigger or raise the spiritual intelligence one must place an "emphasis on the core values of community, connectedness and oneness of all, compassion, a sense of balance, responsibility and service" (p.212). Additionally, Sisk provides a guide for raising the spiritual intelligence that includes seven steps. These seven steps are: think about the goal and values, access one's inner sense of processing and visualize the goal, recognize one's connectedness to others, "take responsibility" for goals, let others be a part of the goal, "focus on love and compassion", and take advantage of coincidences (p. 212). This study will examine the student engagement when triggers are utilized for learners to tap into the spiritual intelligence.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this case study was to examine the triggers for the spiritual intelligence within the fourth grade Sunday School educational setting. The case study was conducted with six different fourth grade Sunday School classes at churches in the southeastern United States. Class selection was based on the criteria that the students involved in the classes were all fourth graders, the class was no smaller than 10 students and no larger than 30 students, and that the teacher was the primary teacher throughout the six week study.

Three Sunday School classes were asked to follow a curriculum utilizing triggers in which the multiple intelligences are activated and especially the spiritual intelligence for six-weeks and three classes followed a curriculum utilizing the traditional "schooling"

12

method of teaching for six weeks. Each class session was videotaped allowing for full observation of student participation.

The spiritual intelligence schemes were developed to reflect six different scriptural stories providing for triggers of all the multiple intelligences and especially the spiritual intelligence. Prior to the 6-week study the teachers utilizing the spiritual intelligence schemes were trained to understand the multiple intelligences and to utilize each intelligence including the spiritual intelligence within the education setting. Those teachers utilizing the "schooling" teaching method were also trained to use the method effectively.

The Sunday School classrooms were observed during the 6-week period using personal observation and/or videotaped observation. Observational data was collected regarding student engagement with the scriptural story and the teaching method used. After the 6-week study period, focus groups with the different classes were conducted and followed by individual interviews with a different learner from each class. The data from the observations as well as the focus groups was analyzed.

Significance of the Study

Howard Gardner's (1995) Theory of Multiple Intelligences reflects an understanding that individuals have the ability to know and process information through a variety of means such as body-kinesthetic, visual/spatial, musical/rhythmic, logical/mathematical, verbal/linguistic, interpersonal, natural, and intrapersonal. An additional intelligence that is recognized by scholars such as Emmons but not Gardner is the spiritual intelligence. This theory suggests that teaching strategies that trigger the

13

application of a number of the intelligences can lead to deeper learning. When spiritual intelligence triggers are employed students tap into the spiritual intelligence for greater spiritual learning and engagement with the scriptural story. It is then reasoned that if a Sunday School classroom utilizes a curriculum that activates the multiple intelligences around the scriptural story, the spiritual intelligence will be activated as well for deeper faith learning.

Spiritual intelligence and spirituality reflect different aspects of the human abilities. Spiritual intelligence reflects the capacity to process information and to solve problems. Adams and Hyde (2008) claim that spirituality is an inherent part of humanity and "spirituality is a natural human predisposition" (p. 59). Spirituality is also a personal process of searching for the sacred, the holy within life; while spiritual intelligence is an innate capacity in all humans. Spirituality is a broad term that involves seeking the sacred and the search for meaning. Spiritual intelligence "is thus a mechanism by which people can improve their overall quality of life" (Emmons, 2000a, p. 59).

Though the existence of the spiritual intelligence is debated, the significance of understanding how multiple intelligence triggers affect the spiritual learning and engagement with the scriptural story will shed light on the use of other intelligence triggers. New understandings of multiple intelligence triggers will also affect how curriculum is developed for both non-secular and secular educational settings.

Pazmino (2010) states, "A focus on information alone in formal education can be sterile, if not complemented by attention given to the formation of the hidden curriculum with opportunities for mentoring and in, Christian circles, intentional discipleship" (p.

14

363). Multiple Intelligences triggers, especially for the spiritual intelligence, will be reflected in the hidden curriculum as well as the apparent curriculum.

This case study examined spiritual intelligence triggers utilized within the fourth grade Sunday School classroom. The data from this study will provide a resource for visible and invisible curriculum development within the Sunday School educational setting as well as other secular educational settings.

Definition of Terms

Christian Education. Is the term used to designate the intentional and organized learning of the Christian faith within a mainline denomination.

Christian Educators. Those persons who lead, organize, and plan the educational aspects within Christian congregations. These persons can be either paid or volunteer, trained or not, or a member of the staff of the congregation or not.

Intelligence. Emmons (2000a) defines intelligence by stating, that "intelligence must reflect mental performance rather than just preferred ways of behaving" (p. 58). Additionally, he includes that intelligence "should define a set of abilities that are moderately intercorrelated with one another" as well as "develop with age and experience from childhood to adulthood" (p. 58). Mayer (2000) further states that intelligence "refers to a capacity or ability that primarily concerns performing valid abstract reasoning with coherent symbol systems" (p. 198).

Multiple Intelligences. Howard Gardner (2006) in *Multiple intelligences: New horizons*, indicates that multiple intelligences is the "biological capacity to process" (p. 6) beyond mathematical and linguist abilities alone.

15

Protestant church. A mainline denomination that is not of the Catholic faith.

Spiritual Intelligence. Emmons (2000a) defines spiritual intelligence as the "mechanism by which people can improve their overall quality of life" (p. 59). This mechanism is developed from an understanding that intelligence is "a set of tools to arrive at more productive, effective, happier, and ultimately more meaningful life" as well as an insight that spirituality "is a broader, more encompassing construct that has as its focus a search for the sacred" (p. 59). Spiritual intelligence is the intelligence that allows one to know and process information based in the innate understanding of a greater being and the spiritual connection to the world. Therefore, spiritual intelligence is broader than the sacred and is a tool for processing information.

Sunday School. The Sunday School was established originally "in the 1780s as a structure to educate working-class children in England" (Tye, 2000, p.33) and was exported to the United States as a method of educating children in the ways of the Christian life. The Sunday School is traditionally held on Sunday mornings and is led by a volunteer teacher who utilizes a curriculum chosen for a specific age group.

The United Methodist Church. A mainline denomination of the Protestant Christian faith.

Assumptions

Assumptions affect how the data will be interpreted and the expectations of the study. The assumptions are influenced by previous experience within the educational setting as well as prior research available.

Assumptions present in this case study are that there is a spiritual intelligence and that within the educational setting triggers may be employed to tap into the spiritual intelligence. Additionally, there is an assumption that spiritual intelligence triggers can be developed and activated within the educational setting.

Limitations

Limitations are influenced by the research available as well as the research setting. The limitations that affected the case study were the current research on the spiritual intelligence as well as the research currently available regarding the fourth grade Sunday School classroom setting. An additional limitation was the effectiveness of the volunteer teacher to utilize either the traditional "schooling" method of teaching or the spiritual intelligence triggers within the educational setting. Though both sets of teachers were trained to use the teaching methods to be used within the classroom setting, the data reflected of the teachers' ability to apply the curriculum.

Limitations were seen in the smallness of the research sample. As there were only six classes examined, the data reflected only what was gathered from sample. In addition, the focus groups and the individual interviews followed the six-week study and did not reflect follow-up after the class sessions. Students were asked to reflect on their experiences in the class sessions. An additional limitation was that the spiritual intelligence was not able to be isolated from the other multiple intelligences within the multiple intelligences triggered curriculum.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The theory of multiple intelligences reflects an understanding of intelligence beyond mathematical and linguistic knowledge. Multiple Intelligences is about knowing and processing information through modes such as body-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical-rhythmic, natural, verbal-linguistic, mathematical-logical, and visual/ spatial. Though Gardner has identified eight intelligences, a ninth intelligence, spiritual intelligence, has been identified by researchers such as Emmons (2000b) and Sisk (2002). In examining the triggers for multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, within the Sunday School classroom for fourth grade learners, one needs to understand the theory of multiple intelligences, the debate surrounding the spiritual intelligence, the Sunday School and Christian Education, and theology of children.

The theory of multiple intelligences and the arguments for or against the spiritual intelligence is well represented through the literature. Yet research utilizing multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, within the Christian Education and Sunday School setting is lacking. However, the research relating to the secular learning environments provides data for relating to the Sunday School setting.

Multiple Intelligences

The theory of multiple intelligences was first expounded by Howard Gardner in the 1980s. In *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (2004) and *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons* (2006), Gardner reflects upon the theory of multiple intelligences as an understanding of intelligence based on knowing and processing information through problem solving. Gardner understands intelligences as processing information and problem solving in a variety of manners therefore intelligences are different from learning styles which focus on the different preferences for how to learn. Campbell (1991) demonstrates an improvement in student participation and understanding when the classroom is organized through a curriculum built upon the multiple intelligences. This perspective is expanded by Ozdemir, Guneysu and Tekkaya (2006), who illustrate that utilizing a multiple intelligence framework for learning encourages students to expand their knowledge in their own strengths. They indicate that multiple intelligences theory can allow teachers and students to be matched up in their intelligence strengths as well as allowing for diversity of intelligences within the learning environment.

As Ozdemir, Guneysu and Tekkaya (2006) discuss matching intelligence strengths with instructor strengths, Mettetal, Harper and Jordan (1997) further express that curriculum needs to be designed in order to utilize the theory of multiple intelligences and allow for a focus on each of the intelligences within the curriculum. Curriculum designed to utilize the theory of multiple intelligences is not limited to the secular educational settings. Riegel, Fricke and Macha's (2010) research illustrates that

19

the body-kinesthetic intelligence can be triggered within the arena of Christian Education by relating religious learning in terms of experience, touch, sight, and exploration.

Spiritual Intelligence

The literature on the utilization of the theory of multiple intelligences within the Sunday School classroom and Christian Education is lacking; yet the literature surrounding the spiritual intelligence focuses on the debate of the existence of the intelligence. Gardner (2000) has indicated that the spiritual intelligence does not meet his criteria as an intelligence and gives credence to an existential intelligence that focuses on the intelligences through a knowledge beyond oneself. Kwilecki (2000) supports Gardner's understanding of the existential intelligence versus the spiritual intelligence. She expresses that the spiritual intelligence is individual religion and therefore, not empirically discernible as an intelligence. Kwilecki explores this understanding of the individual religion through the life story of Gladys Day. Kwilecki explains that Gladys Day grew in her spiritual understanding throughout life and utilized this understanding in her individual problem solving. Additionally, McCoog (2010) supports the existential intelligence by expressing that the intelligence is reflected in introspection, "a firm understanding" of personal beliefs and a preference to "interpret new ideas from their beliefs and their life experiences" (p.127).

The arguments for the existence of the spiritual intelligence are reflected by researchers seeking to define and to identify the spiritual intelligence. Emmons (2000b) argues that the spiritual intelligence is "the adaptive use of spiritual information to facilitate everyday problem solving and goal attainment" (p. 59). His definition is further

developed by Sisk (2002) who expresses the definition of spiritual intelligence as "a deep self-awareness in which one becomes more and more aware of the dimensions of self, not simply as a body, but as a mind-body and spirit" (p.209). Both Emmons and Sisk state that the spiritual intelligence reflects process and problem solving capabilities through meaning and value that is connected through transcendence. Mayer (2000) joins the conversation regarding spiritual intelligence with an understanding that spiritual intelligence is the "capacity or ability that primarily concerns performing valid abstract reasoning with coherent symbol systems" (p.48). Mayer goes on to state that the two areas of spiritual intelligences that relate to the abstract reasoning are sanctification, which "involves joining everyday activities with a sense of the sacred" and coping, which "involves using sacred meanings to find purposes in setbacks and challenges, and to assist one in moving forward in life" (p. 53).

Though Gardner does not support the spiritual intelligence, he does express in his theory that intelligence is biological. Hyde (2004) draws upon this understanding to express that spiritual intelligence is holistic and humans are created spiritually through brain development; therefore, he articulates that spiritual intelligence is a possibility and can lead to greater development of problem solving skills when utilized (p. 40).

In spite of the research regarding the spiritual intelligence and the arguments for or against the existence, the research is lacking authority from within the Christian Education setting. As the majority of the research reflects parochial settings, the findings are presumed to be relevant in the Christian Education and Sunday School setting as well.

Christian Education

Christian Education is the foundational term for education within the religious structure of the church that focuses on the foundational process of spiritual growth and development. A working definition of Christian Education is that it is "the development of Christian faith and discipleship" (FTL, 1979, p. 4). Christian Education has been a part of the life of the Christian communities since the earliest Christian communities. Christian education has evolved over the centuries from the sole preparation of proselytes for the profession of faith and incorporation into the community of faith to the community of faith answering a need in the secular community to that of helping students gain scriptural understanding and to live a faithful life.

In the 1700s the Christian community of faith established itself as the educator of the poor and downtrodden through the education of the children of the factories and the streets of England (Boylan, 1988). These Sunday Schools were created to provide a foundational education of reading and writing to these children through the use of the Bible as the text book. When the Puritans came to America the Sunday School traveled the ocean as well. In America, the Puritans who drew upon a theological perspective that God chooses those for salvation and therefore chose to only educate those of the elect, i.e. the Puritans.

The expansion of America saw an expansion of Christian Education and Sunday School (Seymour, 1982). As denominations and churches were established in the frontier west Christian Education became a valuable tool for conversion more so than for fundamental education of reading and writing. Christian Education was about the

business of growing faithful followers of Jesus Christ and teaching scriptural understandings. This shift was seen in the creation of curriculums, publishing houses to provide the curriculums, and the establishment of organizations for the purpose of expanding the role of Christian Education in the life of the faith community.

The definition of Christian Education allows for diversity in expression and function. Mainline Protestant denominations tend to offer Christian Education in the manner of Sunday School, Bible Studies, and spiritual development opportunities throughout the congregational life, thus creating an educational atmosphere (Groome, 1980). This education atmosphere reflects a theological understanding of faith development within the life of the congregation. This educational atmosphere is different from parochial settings where the secular education is directed by church doctrine and theology. The Christian Education setting provides primarily for the spiritual and faith formation outside of the secular educational designs but within the boundaries of extracurricular times.

 According to Engebretson (2004), the spiritual journey is a lifelong journey (p. 270). For many children within the Christian Protestant church this lifelong journey is manifested through Sunday School. Larsson (2010) expresses that Christian Education "belongs to the very heart of a church" (p. 519) and that the people participating should be "obedient learners" (p. 529).

As the father of Christian Education research, Horace Bushnell (1876) presented Christian Education in terms of parenting, expressing the role of the family as pivotal for faith formation. Bushnell's focus on the family was foundational in that the family home

was the center for faith during the late 1800s. As the role of the Sunday School changed from teaching literacy to children in the late 1800s to a focus on conversion of children to the Christian faith, the Sunday School became much more of an educational center for faith for the whole family.

Christian Education and Sunday School utilize different learning theories as part of the teaching methods. Learning theories such as cognitivism, constructivism, behaviorism, and the theory of multiple intelligences are employed in the traditional Sunday School classroom through activities, student expectations, and teaching methods.

The foundations of the traditional Sunday School educational theories are most reflected in the schooling method. Students are expected to behave in a particular manner in relationship to faith while expressing their faith in terms of change and action. Paulo Freire refers to this method as banking education (Groome, 1980, p. 7). Information is deposited into the student and behavior change is supposed to happen. Therefore, the expectations of faith formation and Christian Education reflect a particular perspective and are limited to the boundaries of that perspective.

Research in the area of Christian Education has been varied with much inference from the secular educational research. One pivotal researcher is James W. Fowler (1981) who has focused on faith development stages. Fowler extrapolates his stages from a foundation built by Jean Piaget. He understands that faith development begins with infancy and with how children are introduced to faith and is developed not just on age but also on an understanding of the relationship of the world to a higher power. Fowler's

faith development stages reflect a foundation of knowledge that is still being examined in relationship to Christian Education and an understanding of spirituality.

As the center of faith formation and education shifted to a role of the Protestant Church Sunday School, focus also shifted to understanding spirituality. Spirituality is "a natural human predisposition – something that people are born with and that continually seeks expression in life" that is about becoming "one with Other" and is to be "understood to be an outward expression of this sense of unity" (Hyde, 2008, p. 33-34). Additionally, spirituality is about "how an individual lives and practices transcendent beliefs at its most basic and generic form" (Frederick, 2008, p.553). Love (2002) goes on to explain that faith development, hence spirituality development, "is a process of meaning-making, which is the process of making sense out of the activities of life, seeking patterns, order, coherence, and relation between and among the disparate elements of human living" (p. 358). This process of education is also a passing on of knowledge while formation is about changing the learner (Pazmino, 2010) that should not be accidental but should be an intentional plan "of inviting persons into relationship with God, self, others, and creation" (Matthaei, 2004, p. 57).

Theology of Children

As Christian Education is a broad understanding for all educational aspects of the church, a focus on children has emerged over the decades as a priority. Children from birth through high school are examined to understand educational needs as well as their spiritual insights. The theological understanding of children has consistently reflected children as either depraved through original sin or innocents who must be saved from the

depravity of humanity. Chrysostom believed in the complete innocence of infants and children though they belong to humanity which is prone to sinfulness. Luther who believed that infants were capable of faith in God and that infant baptism provided for salvation but that one must continue the education to live faithfully. Calvin on the other hand believed in the total depravity of children and the fallen nature of humanity. Only through baptism can an infant have full remission of all sin but it was not absolutely necessary for salvation in Christ. Edwards believed children were both sinners and innocents. He felt children were not immune to the original sin of Adam but that they were fully capable of faith in Christ (Bunge, 2001).

Historically in the United States these views of children as "innocent or spiritually wise" (Bunge, 2006, p. 552) or as sinful have influenced the teaching methods within the Christian Education and Sunday School setting. When viewed as innocent, the teaching and instructive responsibilities are removed from the adults relating to the children, but when children are viewed as sinful, children are seen as in need of an adult relationship of instruction and teaching. Additionally, the definition of children has changed historically, demonstrating that children are seen as different from adults instead of a smaller version of the adult. As children are different from adults, the adult involvement in teaching spirituality affects their faith formation (Zhao, 2011). The adult leadership in relationship to children's spiritual formation gauges how the connection between children and the development of the spiritual intelligence is linked to Christian Education as well as the educational memories which are carried into adulthood.

Theologically children are viewed as "models of faith for adults, sources of revelation, and representatives of Jesus; and therefore adults are to listen to children and learn from them" (Bunge, 2008, p. 353). This perspective illustrates that children have the capacity to practice theology, though this practice of knowing God and what the world says about God is different for children than from adults. Buttner (2007) expresses that the practice of theology with children is an oral communication more so than a written communication and must therefore be articulated in a verbal manner. Additionally, children illustrate theological concepts through their play and worship (Cram, 1996, Miller-McLemore, 2009). Children are theologically capable and spiritually connected through their development.

Summary

The literature for this case study represents several disciplinary areas such as learning theory, faith formation, and Christian Education. Learning theories such as cognitivism, constructivism, and behaviorism are foundational to understanding the traditional Sunday School curriculum. The theory of multiple intelligences provides the framework for establishing multiple intelligence triggers, especially spiritual intelligence triggers. The literature review illustrates the capacity of children to learn and understand as well as experience intelligence spiritually.

The area of Christian Education reflects an understanding of religious education within the church. As the education of the church focuses primarily on the education of children, understanding children as theologically capable is important. Children reflect theologically as well as communicate theologically, though their communication tends to

be orally rather than in written form. Equally important is the capacity of children to process theologically; children have a strong sense of spirituality, a sense of the "Other". This sense of spirituality allows children to experience spiritual development as well as cognitive development in a harmonized manner. As Pazmino (2010) expresses, the spirituality of the child ties knowledge learning and faith formation together.

Learning is reflected in a variety of learning theories such as cognitivism, constructivism, and behaviorism. Each of these learning theories has been reflected in the traditional Sunday School though these theories have been seen as limiting the classroom learning environment. According to Campbell (1991) the classroom learning and participation is enhanced by the use of the theory of multiple intelligences. Additionally, body-kinesthetic intelligence has been explored in the arena of Christian Education by Riegel, Fricke and Macha (2010).

In exploring multiple intelligences, the spiritual intelligence has been greatly debated. Gardner (2000) expresses the spiritual intelligence in terms of existential intelligence, but does not define a separate spiritual intelligence. Others, such as Emmons (2000b), define spiritual intelligence in terms of innate spirituality and faithfulness. As the debate around the spiritual intelligence continues, exploring the understanding of multiple intelligence triggers, especially the spiritual intelligence triggers, will allow for better understanding of spiritual and faith formational learning.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Fourth grade students experience a transition from a faith that belongs to others to the incorporation of scriptural stories into personal spiritual realities. The Sunday School setting allows the student learners to not only learn the scriptures but to integrate the scriptural story application into their life. Multiple intelligences provide for greater engagement as the learner taps into a variety of intelligences, including the spiritual intelligence, while building knowledge and solving problems. Therefore, the purpose of this case study is to understand how the use of specific triggers in the fourth grade Sunday School classroom will impact scriptural engagement and faith formation. The study answers the research questions: How do fourth grade learners engage a scriptural story when the curriculum reflects strategic triggers for the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, and in what way do the strategic triggers for the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, within the fourth grade Sunday School classroom impact student engagement with the scriptural story?

Research Design

The qualitative study is a case study of students in fourth grade Sunday School classes. This case study is a field study examining the actual classroom in action with

specific curriculum (Creswell, 2009). Six classrooms were utilized for the study with three classes utilizing a traditional curriculum designed around the schooling method and three utilizing a curriculum with multiple intelligence triggers, especially the spiritual intelligence. Sunday School classes will consist of only fourth grade students.

The participating Sunday School classes were expected to utilize the curriculum provided for an entire six-week period. During the six-week period the class was observed during each session via videotape as well as five of the six classes were observed in person. The observation was able to capture the actual behavior and the engagement of the students with the scriptural stories (Creswell, 2005).

Training was provided for the volunteer teachers of each class. Those who were teaching the traditional curriculum were trained to utilize the traditional curriculum to its fullest. Those teachers who were teaching the curriculum with multiple intelligence triggers were trained on multiple intelligences as well as how to utilize the curriculum to its fullest.

Following the six week curriculum, each Sunday School class participated in a focus group. These focus groups enabled data to be collected from the learners regarding the engagement of the scriptural story and faith formation during the six- week study. Focus groups provided a setting in which the interactions of the students were built upon the group dynamic, not just the individual (Creswell, 2005). The focus groups provided substantial data of the classroom experiences of the students. Additionally, individual students from each class were selected to participate in an interview. The interview

allowed for deeper exploration of scriptural engagement and the experience in the classroom.

Following the classroom sessions, the focus groups, and the interviews, all data collected was coded for major themes seen in the data rather than individual themes (Isman, Aksal, & Gazi, 2009). As themes are organized, minor themes were then noted. Once the data was coded it was analyzed for understandings and insights.

The qualitative case study was chosen in order to explore the implications of multiple intelligence triggers, especially the spiritual intelligence. The focus was on the engagement with the scriptural story through the use of multiple intelligence triggers or through the use of traditional curriculum (Creswell, 2009). Observations of the classroom setting provided a visual data of the multiple intelligence triggers in action, especially the spiritual intelligence. The focus groups and the individual interviews allowed for an exploration of the learners' reactions to the multiple intelligence triggers or the lack of triggers in the traditional school room method, and the scriptural engagement of the learners.

Setting of the Study

The Sunday School learning environment is a natural setting for education within the Protestant Christian church (Creswell, 2005). For the Christian Protestant church, the Sunday School setting is a time set aside for religious education of all ages. Sunday School classes provide a venue for scriptural engagement and faith formation through a pre-determined curriculum that is facilitated by volunteer teachers. For children, the Sunday School class creates an essential arena for faith formation and scriptural learning.

31

These classes are foundational and crucial for fourth graders because, at this age, students begin to transition from accepting the faith of adults in their lives to accepting and claiming the faith for themselves.

Though Sunday School is a voluntary learning environment, fourth grade students are eager to be present in the Sunday School educational setting. These students want to be connected with their friends yet still place a trust in the adult leadership and teaching.

Sunday School classes are primarily lead by volunteer teachers who agree to lead the class utilizing the pre-determined curriculum while sharing their own faith with the class. Often the volunteer teachers have no previous educational leadership background to draw upon.

Classrooms utilizing the traditional curriculum were arranged for the schooling method of instruction. This format includes chairs and tables age-appropriate to the children in the room, bulletin boards, a worship center or space for storytelling and scripture reading. Supplies in the educational space include, but are not limited to, paper, construction paper, scissors, glue or glue sticks, and other miscellaneous items to be utilized. Though each classroom was slightly different in the appearance of the chairs and tables and the volunteer teachers, they were alike in the elements present in the classroom.

The classroom in which the multiple intelligence trigger curriculum will be utilized will be arranged to highlight the triggers and scriptural learning experiences. As needed, tables, chairs, DVDs, musical instruments, candles, prayer rugs, sand, worship centers, and other resources for the multiple intelligence triggers were available for the

classroom. Traditional supplies such as glue, scissors, paper, construction paper, as well as other supplies needed for use with the multiple intelligence triggers, were accessible in the classroom.

Instruments

The case study examined multiple sources of data including observations of six different Sunday School classes utilizing either a traditional curriculum or a curriculum that included multiple intelligence triggers. The study also entailed focus groups consisting of each participating class and select students for individual interviews (Creswell, 2009). The instruments used in this case study will be observation, focus groups, and individual interviews.

Permission to provide the curriculum for a six week study and to observe the curriculum implemented was derived from the organizational structure of each church where the fourth grade Sunday School class was participating in the case study. For those congregations in which the leadership is a Senior Pastor and an Administrative Board, permission was sought from the Senior Pastor and the Children's Director/Minister was the key person for coordinating the class which participated in the study. Permission was also sought from the parents/ guardians of each child participating in the class for the purpose of study, observation, and videotaping the student, as well as from each child participating.

As this case study examined Sunday School classes utilizing a curriculum for six-weeks, there is a bias that the classrooms and the students were all be similar. Other biases of the study are that the triggers for the multiple intelligences would impact the

scriptural engagement and spiritual formation of the students as well as the existence of the spiritual intelligence. Within the setting there exists a bias that the volunteer teachers would follow the curriculum within the setting and the students would respond to the curriculum.

The findings should illustrate the ability to utilize multiple intelligences triggers, especially the spiritual intelligence, within a curriculum. These triggers should allow curriculum developers to create deeper opportunities for engagement within an educational setting. Furthermore, Sunday School classes will have the ability to tap into the spiritual intelligence for further faith formation and scriptural engagement.

The instruments for the qualitative case study were observation within the educational classroom setting by videotape and in person, focus groups, and individual interviews with students following the focus groups. The data from each instrument was examined for common themes as well as information from the students.

Observation Instrument Credibility

The observational instrument reflected the actual classroom experience. Observation was enabled through the use of video recording of the classroom experience. The recording allowed for the researcher to view the experience and for the observer to identify the themes reflected in the observation. Additionally, the credibility of the instrument was seen in the observational guide. The guide, created by the researcher, provided a framework for the observation as well as a manner in which to identify themes. The observational guide can be found in Appendix A.

Focus Groups Instrument Credibility

The focus groups instrument reflected the scriptural engagement of the students as well as the student reaction to the curriculum. The Focus Group Guide, created by the researcher, allowed for initial questions for consideration by the group as well as space to record the responses to the questions. Credibility for the focus group is in the notes taken during the focus groups on the Focus Group Guide as well as the students themselves. After each focus group event, the notes were be read back to the students. By reading the notes to the student, the students had the opportunity to affirm what has been recorded or to correct notes. The Focus Group Guide can be found in Appendix B.

Individual Interviews Instrument Credibility

The individual interviews instrument reflected the scriptural engagements of the individuals as well as the personal reactions to the curriculum. The Individual Interview Guide, created by the researcher, provided for beginning questions for the interview as well as space for the answers and reactions to be recorded. Credibility was established through these notes taken on the Guide. At the end of each individual interview, the notes were read back to the student for their affirmation or correction. The Individual Interview Guide can be found in Appendix C.

<div align="center">

Data Collection Procedures

</div>

The data collected reflected the student engagement with the scriptural story through either the traditional classroom learning environment or the use of multiple intelligence triggers, especially the spiritual intelligence triggers, within the learning environment. The data was collected through observation, focus group interviews, and individual interviews with students. Each avenue for data collection was extrapolated for

information regarding the curriculum utilized within the Sunday School classes, scriptural engagement, and faith development.

In collecting data through observation, three Sunday School classes utilized a traditional Sunday School curriculum and three Sunday school classes utilized a curriculum with multiple intelligence triggers, especially the spiritual intelligence trigger. The observation time was the length of the curriculum, six-weeks. Within these classes the sessions was observed through videotape for each session. Additionally there was an observer in at least one session in five of the six classes. These observations focused on the curriculum deployment within the classroom, the student engagement experience through the curriculum, as well as the scriptural engagements of the learners. Notes were taken reflecting these areas of observation both from the videotaped sessions as well as the personal observational experience.

Data was collected through focus groups following the classroom curriculum experience. Each participating Sunday School class functioned as a focus group. The goal of the focus groups was to extrapolate student scriptural engagement as well as student experiences with the curriculum. During each focus group conversation notes were taken on the student responses to preset questions, a protocol for the focus group interactions (Creswell, 2009). From the answers to the questions, additional questions delved into for further clarification or deeper understanding. These questions were noted as well as the answers from the focus group.

Following the focus groups, an individual from each focus group was chosen for an individual interview. These individual interviews were designed to enable the student

learners to express for themselves their scriptural engagements as well as their experience with the classroom curriculum. The interviews delved into the individual's experience with the curriculum, how the curriculum was received, as well as the individual's faith development throughout the curriculum experience. For each individual interview a protocol was set for the interactions with the individual and the questions to be utilized and allowing space as needed for additional questions (Creswell, 2009). Notes were taken during the individual interviews in response to the preset questions. If any additional questions are needed, those questions were noted as well as the responses.

Once the data was collected from each stage of the research, the data was coded according to major and minor themes. These themes were identified initially in each segment of data. When the themes had been identified in each segment, the data was examined as a whole to identify additional major themes or minor themes within the data.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was three-fold considering that the data collection was through observation, focus groups, and individual interviews (Creswell, 2009). The three different data collection processes were analyzed separately then were analyzed as a whole.

The observational data was analyzed through the notes taken during the personal classroom observations as well as the notes from the videotaped classroom observations. These notes reflected the engagement of the learners with the scriptural story, the observations of the students within the Sunday School setting and other actions during the curriculum execution. These notes were initially coded for primary themes then were coded for secondary themes.

37

The focus groups data was analyzed from the notes taken during the focus group conversations. These notes reflected the student engagement with the scriptural stories utilized in the curriculum.

The individual interviews data was analyzed from the notes taken during the interviews. The notes reflected the student engagement with the stories in the six-week session, and faith formation.

Once the data was coded separately, the data was combined to reflect the primary themes and secondary themes. The coded notes were examined for additional themes that may be apparent when considering the data as a whole. Each theme was evaluated for understandings apparent while considering the research questions specifically.

Being that credibility refers to the trustworthiness of the data, reliance on the triangulation of the data through observations, focus groups, and individual interviews to illustrate the trustworthiness is vital (Creswell, 2009). Collecting data from students who have participated in the curriculum study through the focus groups and the individual interviews allowed for the data to reflect consistent themes as well as authentic reactions to the curriculum. The students who participate in the traditional curriculum discussion were reflective of the scriptural stories and the engagement with those stories in a manner that demonstrates their experience with the curriculum; while the students participating with the multiple intelligence triggers discussion were reflective of the scriptural stories and the engagement with those stories to demonstrate their experiences at all three data collection opportunities.

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues relating to the research and data collection center on student involvement and protection of the learners as well as the teachers within the classroom setting. Primary ethical concern is to do no harm to the students, the teachers, or the learning environment. In order to do no harm ethical practices must be established from the beginning of the research, this includes and is not limited to respect for all persons involved (Evans & Combs, 2008).

Informed consent was obtained from the churches in which the study will be taking place (Evans & Combs, 2008). The church authorities, as they are the gatekeepers for the church and its mission, understood the full scope of the research of those who participated, what spaces were required for the research, and what technological resources, such as video recorder, were to be utilized (Creswell, 2005, 2009).

The teachers who were leading the classes understood the full scope of the research and what technological resources, such as video recorder, were utilized in the classroom. Additionally, the teachers understood the curriculum would be provided and training was provided to allow for full understanding and use of the curriculum. Teachers' identities were protected. While the teachers' leadership was kept confidential, anonymity was not able to be maintained due to the study taking place in a church, a public location. All efforts were made to keep the teachers' responses in the classroom confidential. Teachers felt comfortable with the observer in the classroom setting as well as the video recorder.

Parental or guardian consent was given for the students participating in the study. Parents/ Guardians understood the full scope of the research including that the students were to be videotaped in the classroom during the six-week study and observed in the classroom setting. Parents/ Guardians also understood the scope of a focus group and individual interviews of selected learners. Furthermore, parents/guardians understood that notes were taken during all stages of the research and these notes as well as the responses of the students videotaped will be kept confidential, though by the nature of the study setting being a church Sunday School, anonymity was not be able to be maintained.

The students, even though they were fourth graders, needed to provide consent for themselves (Evans & Combs, 2008). This meant making sure the students understood the full scope of the research in age-appropriate terms. Students also needed to understand the meaning of a focus group. Additionally, students needed to feel comfortable speaking frankly in the focus groups as well as the individual interviews. Students felt comfortable with the observer in the classroom as well as the video recorder. All efforts were made to maintain confidentiality of learners' responses to the curriculum, focus groups, and individual interviews, though due to the nature of the research setting anonymity was not be able to be maintained (Creswell, 2005).

The notes and data collected through the video recording were kept confidential and secure during the study and beyond. These notes and video recordings were secured at all times and all efforts of identifying the students, especially those who participate in the individual interviews, and teachers without using their names will be made throughout the data collection and the reporting the data.

CHAPTER 4. DATA COLLECTI ON AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

Protestant Christian Sunday School classes have historically focused on teaching the scriptural stories and the tenets of the faith through the schooling method. This method of education has tapped into the intellectual strengths of those students who are intellectually strong in logic and linguistics, while other students with other intellectual strengths struggle to engage with the lesson each week. This study focused on comparing the engagement of fourth grade Sunday School students within classrooms in which a traditional curriculum was utilized and classrooms in which a curriculum that triggers the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, was utilized.

The data collected from this comparison in the form of observation, as well as the focus groups and individual interview data is discussed in this chapter. All six classes were videotaped the entire six-weeks for observation with five of the six classes being observed in person by the researcher for one session. Following the six-week class period, each class served as a focus group for discussion related to the curriculum and the Sunday School time during the study. The Focus Group Guide (Appendix B) was utilized to direct the focus group conversations. An individual interview with a student randomly selected from the group immediately followed the focus group discussion. The

Individual Interview Guide (Appendix C) was utilized to direct this conversation. This data is conveyed by themes that emerged during the data collection and the analysis will be in response to the research questions. The research questions to be answered are:

RQ1: How do fourth grade learners engage a scriptural story when the curriculum reflects strategic triggers for the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence?

RQ2: In what way do the strategic triggers for the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, within the fourth grade Sunday school classroom impact student engagement with the scriptural story?

Demographics of Study

The research data was collected from six different fourth grade Sunday School classes in Protestant Christian congregations across the Southeastern United States over a six-week period. These six congregations were of The United Methodist Church and had at least ten students on roll for the class. Each class met on Sunday morning for approximately forty-five minutes. Each classroom was, generally, set up with a worksheet/craft area of tables and chairs and a story time area for students to sit in a circle on the floor or in chairs. Only one class did not have a story area separate from the craft/worksheet table area, which was due to classroom design limitations.

Three of the classes utilized a traditional curriculum published by Cokesbury, the United Methodist denominational publisher. This curriculum emphasized worksheets, a weekly video and scriptural story, and a craft within the designated Sunday School time. The other three classes utilized a curriculum written by the researcher designed to trigger

the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence; the curriculum emphasized a word search worksheet, an activity, the scriptural story and discussion, prayer time employing traditional prayer poses, meditation using ancient texts, individual reinterpretation of the story and recognition of the cross at the worship center by either bowing before the cross or kneeling to pray as students enter and depart from the classroom. All six classes employed the same six scripture stories during the six-week study period. The scripture stories utilized in the curriculum were:

Session 1:   2 Samuel 6:1-19   David brings the Ark of the Covenant to
                      Jerusalem and celebrates.

Session 2:   1 Kings 6; 8   Solomon builds the Temple for the Lord and prays.

Session 3:   1 Kings 16:29-30; 17:1-7   The Prophet Elijah hides by the brook
                      after speaking of a drought to the king.

Session 4:   1 Kings 18:20-39   The Prophet Elijah calls upon God to bring fire
                      down upon the Baal prophets.

Session 5:   2 Kings 4:1-7   The Prophet Elisha tells the widow to pour oil into
                      jars and sell the oil to pay her debts.

Session 6:   2 Kings 22:1-23:23   The writings of the law are found in the
                      rubble of the temple and King Josiah calls upon the people to
                      believe and practice the law.

Data

The data collected from the focus groups and the individual interviews primarily focused on the student memory of the scriptural stories, the activities or tasks that were

most enjoyed by the students, and the particular aspects of the lessons the students thought helped them learn. The data collected from the observations focused on the student engagement with the curriculum and scripture story as seen in the participation, focus, and excitement with the different aspects of the lessons.

Focus Groups and Individual Interviews

Memory of the Scriptural Stories

As all six Sunday School classes utilized the same six scriptural stories, memory of these stories reflected an engagement with the stories. As shown in the table below, each focus group remembered several of the same scriptural stories, yet there were stories remembered that were not included in the curriculum. As illustrated in Table 1, the students within both curriculums remembered the same general stories from the curriculum. Though the scriptural stories were remembered, those students participating in the traditional curriculum remembered more stories not encompassed in the prescribed curriculum.

Table 1
Stories Remembered

Class	Curriculum	Stories Remembered	Stories not included in curriculum
1	Traditional	When God called Samuel, *David taking the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and King David Dancing, Hannah dropping off Samuel at the Temple	When God called Samuel, and Hannah Dropping off Samuel at the Temple
2	Traditional	*Mother who owed money and two sons, *Solomon and the Temple, *King at 8 tearing clothes, *Prophet Elijah calling for fire against the Baal prophets, *Prophet Elijah hiding and falcons bring food, people demanding a king, two friends and a bad king, Isaiah building temple seven years obey God	People demanding king, Isaiah and temple obey God for seven years
3	Traditional	*King with the army, Hannah and Samuel, *Elijah and Baal Prophets, *Temple and Solomon, Jesus teaching about paralyzed man, *Elisha and the ravens, *widow and sons	Hannah and Samuel, and Jesus teaching about paralyzed man
4	Multiple	*Elisha and the jars of oil, *Baal and Elijah, *Temple	David and Goliath

44

	Intelligences	being built, *Ark of the Covenant, David and Goliath, David tore his clothes, *Temple with note of what done wrong	
5	Multiple Intelligences	*Josiah King and the book of the law in the Temple, *Lord's Ark, *Temple inside was gold and Ark of the Covenant inside Temple, *Elijah, sons sold if not pay and the woman fills the jars with oil,* Elijah to the river and the ravens feed	
6	Multiple Intelligences	*Ark of the covenant, *Elijah and the ravens,* Elijah and the Baal prophets, *Solomon and the temple, God calling Eli, and *the woman with the oil and the sons	God calling Eli

*indicates one of the six scriptural story from curriculum

In addition to the memory of the scriptural stories, of interest was the detail in which the students remembered the stories. Within the traditional curriculum classes, the students remembered the names of the stories but were unable to provide detail of the characters and the actions for those stories. On the contrary, the students who participated in the multiple intelligences curriculum remembered greater detail reflecting the characters and the actions of the scriptural story.

Helpful Tasks and Activities

Tasks and activities which are enjoyable also help with learning. When asked which activities were enjoyable, the students in both curriculums indicated the crafts and games were fun and that they found them helpful for learning the scriptural story. Relating directly to the multiple intelligences triggered curriculum, the students also found the prayer and meditation time, and the reinterpretation of the scriptural story enjoyable. The time for reinterpretation was particularly indicated as an activity which helped the students engaged with the scriptural story. In expressing the stories which were covered, the students were able to recall the parts in which they played as well as the foundational elements of the story. An example of students enjoying the activity and learning the scriptural story was the class which remembered the 2 Kings: 4:1-7 of the

widow needing to pay her debts so she would not lose her sons. The activity related to the story was making oil pots from clay which helped the students' recall of the story.

Observations

In observing the classrooms through videotape and personal observation, engagement with the curriculum and the scripture stories was visible in a variety of manners. The students were observed participating in the classroom environment and participating with the curriculum. The traditional classrooms generally had the same set up with an area for the students to have a circle for story time, either sitting on the floor or in chairs, and an area for worksheets and crafts at tables and chairs. The multiple intelligences curriculum classrooms were set up similarly with a crafts and worksheet area at tables, an area for prayer, storytelling, and meditation at a circle or floor area, and resources for reinterpretation such as blocks, fabric, paper and markers, and other items. Observation of the students' participation in the lessons indicated there was engagement with the scriptural story; yet, the engagement was limited during the traditional curriculum and was continued throughout the lesson for those participating in the multiple intelligences curriculum. Indicators of engagement were focus, participation, and excitement about the activity.

Focus

Within the traditional curriculum classroom, focus was observed when the students were working on the worksheets at the beginning of the class, particularly when the class worked together to accomplish the worksheets. Along with the worksheets the students were observed focusing on the scriptural story while reading the story aloud.

When each student took a turn reading several verses aloud, the students maintained focus on the story.

In the multiple intelligences curriculum classes, the students were observed focusing on the scriptural lesson in different manners. The students focused on what was happening and on the scriptural story while working on a banner for the lesson, while working on creating an oil lamp, while working on the word search and deciphering the story from the words in the search, in the discussion of the story and the reading/telling of the story. Interestingly, the students were observed focusing during the meditation time. For each multiple intelligence curriculum class the scripture story was re-read or paraphrased prior to the meditation time. The students were asked to spend a minute or two in meditation of the scripture story. This time for the students was focused and quiet. The students tended to be intentionally focused during this time.

Excitement

During the observation of the students in the classes, there were times when it was obvious the students were excited about a particular aspect of the lesson and were therefore engaged in the scriptural story. Table 2 indicates the activities or tasks in which the students were excited.

Table 2
Activities in Which Students Were Excited

Class	Curriculum	
1	Traditional	Dancing/singing, "love to pray", Pictionary game, game, coloring project
2	Traditional	Snack, Pictionary game, popcorn came, find the scripture activity, Pictionary game
3	Traditional	Game, game, bean bags
4	Multiple Intelligences	Reinterpretation, reinterpretation, playing with Legos, banner making
5	Multiple Intelligences	Acting out story/reinterpretation, dancing to music, reinterpretation, snack, bean bags
6	Multiple Intelligences	Acting out the story/reinterpretation, meditation, prayer positions

Interestingly, in one of the traditional classes a student indicated that she loved to pray out loud and was excited to volunteer to pray in class. Within the traditional classrooms, when there was a game the students were excited to participate. Rarely were the students excited to read the scripture story or watch the video. When the students were provided an opportunity to interact with the scriptural story in an active manner, the students became excited. On the other hand, within the multiple intelligences curriculum, the students were excited to participate in more aspects of the lesson such as the banner, meditation, and reinterpreting the story. Within the reinterpretation of the scripture story, the students were given the opportunity to discover the scripture through drawing a particular aspect of the story, acting out the story, expressing the scripture story through music or other manner. The students were more excited to be able to provide their understanding of the story than any other aspect of the lesson.

Participation and Non-participation

Participation, or involvement, in the different aspects of the lesson was an indicator the students were engaged with the scriptural story. Within both curriculums students participated in the scriptural story yet the opportunities for involvement were different. There were also times of non-participation that indicated the students' lack of engagement with the scriptural story.

The traditional curriculum students participated from the beginning of class by working on the worksheets from the curriculum. As the students did not all arrived together but trickled in, they were encouraged to begin the worksheets while other students arrived and before the story time. Next the students became involved with the

48

scriptural story through the reading of the story around the circle during the story time and did generally participate in the craft/game time after the story.

The multiple intelligences triggered curriculum provided opportunities for students to participate with the scriptural story as well. The students immediately became involved in the lesson for the day upon entering the room and taking a moment or two for prayer before the cross. This entry process required the students to slow down and begin to focus on the experience of the classroom and the scriptural story of the day. This process allowed the spiritual intelligence to be triggered and to remain activated throughout the class time. Therefore the students were more involved with the scriptural story throughout the lesson including the meditation and prayer time.

Observation of the lessons also indicated that the students did have points where they did not participate throughout the lesson. For the traditional classroom students this point tended to be the reading of the scripture aloud and watching the video. Even though the students needed to read along as the scripture was read, students not involved in the reading would need to be prompted to find their place when it was their turn to read.

Interestingly, the students in the multiple intelligences classrooms did have points of non-participation yet, these points varied by student within the classroom. Where some students did not participate during the story telling, others found the meditation time or the word search difficult in which to engage. Overall, in the multiple intelligences triggered curriculum, students participated with the scripture story from the initial activity and word search, throughout the story time and discussion, the meditation time and prayer time, and the reinterpretation of the story. One activity that provided the students

49

with the opportunity to engage the scriptural story was the reinterpretation of the story. In two of the three classes, the students selected a variety of manners to retell the scripture story. Some of these manners were acting out an aspect of the story or dressing up and illustrating an act of one particular person from the story, or drawing out a feature of the story such as the temple that Solomon built or drawing the fire that was brought upon the Baal prophets, or creating a song that reflected the story particularly the story of David bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. The third class reenacted the scripture story through mime each week as a class. This particular class was made up of mostly boys who enjoyed the acting out of the story. When asked what helped engage the scripture story the boys indicated the acting out of the story.

Analysis of Data

Answering the research questions provides a manner in which to analyze the data presented. The foundation of the study is to examine the student engagement with the scriptural story within the two different curriculums and to evaluate the engagement with the triggered multiple intelligences, primarily with the spiritual intelligence.

RQ1: How do fourth grade learners engage a scriptural story when the curriculum reflects strategic triggers for the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence?

The strategic triggers for the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence impacted student engagement with the scriptural story throughout the six-week study. In each class utilizing the multiple intelligences triggered curriculum the students began the lesson time with honoring the cross at the worship center by bowing

or kneeling for a short prayer as they entered the classroom. This honoring of the cross provided a means for changing the perception of the classroom to that of a sacred space. These students entered the classroom in a focused manner and continued to experience the lesson with an anticipation of the scriptural story. This entry into the classroom allowed the students to experience the lesson and the classroom as differently from "school" and the schooling method of learning and teaching to an experience of the sacred.

When students entered the classroom after having paid honor to the cross, the assumption was that the spiritual intelligence was activated. For these students the classroom represented an opportunity for exploring the scriptural story and the students participated more fully with the different aspects of the lesson. Within one classroom, as the students entered the room and began to work on the word search, they immediately began to ask questions about the word search and why the particular words were on the search. These students continued to participate with the scriptural story throughout the lesson.

Students participated with the scriptural story through the reading of the story and the craft activities within the traditional curriculum classrooms. These students did not immediately begin to participate and engage the scriptural story; the participation began later in the lesson within the schooling method. Participation was most evident within the multiple intelligence triggered curriculum. The data indicates that when students were provided with different intelligence opportunities to participate with the scriptural story, they were more likely to be engaged with the scriptural story. The students in the

51

traditional curriculum classes were only provided logic and linguistically centered

opportunities for participation with the scriptural story. Within these opportunities those

students who struggle with these intellectual strengths were distracted easily or chose not

to participate. As an example, in one class during the video experience, a student chose to

remove himself from the circle in order to see the screen. While outside the circle he

focused on the walls, other students, and his jacket. It was obvious he was not engaged in

or focusing on the video. Additionally, when the students were reading aloud in this

class, this particular student was not reading along in his Bible and needed the teacher to

point out where he was to read. Yet, when the class moved back to the tables for a craft

activity, this particular student did participate in the activity. Within another class, several

students did not find reading the scriptural story engaging and chose to talk with each

other and to make paper airplanes out of their worksheets.

Students who experienced the multiple intelligence triggers began to participate

with the scripture story from the beginning and continued to participate with the story

throughout the lesson. For example, one of the multiple intelligence curriculum classes,

one student entered the classroom after honoring the cross and immediately began to

work on the word search. Throughout the rest of the lesson the student was engaged and

participating with the scripture story of Elijah and the Baal prophet including

reinterpreting the story through drawing a picture representing the fire and the prophets

calling on Baal for fire.

Evidence indicates that the students who participated in the multiple intelligence

trigger curriculum were more focused throughout the lesson and were able to engage the

scripture story more fully. As shown in the data section, the participation of the students began as they entered the classroom with taking time to honor the cross and continued throughout the lesson. Within the curriculum the students participated in all the different aspects of the lesson and especially those areas in which they had an intelligence strength. Within one particular class, the students trickled into the classroom at the beginning of the lesson. As the students stopped at the worship center the classroom noise reduced slightly. Once a student joined the table where the other learners were working on the word search, the students pointed out what words were already found and they included what was already known of the scriptural story. Each student was excited to be present and to participate in the lesson and therefore, was more engaged with the scriptural story.

RQ2: In what way do the strategic triggers for the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, within the fourth grade Sunday school classroom impact student engagement with the scriptural story?

Strategic multiple intelligences triggered, especially the spiritual intelligence, within the Sunday School class impacted the student engagement with the scriptural story through the actual participation and the experience with the scriptural story throughout the lesson. As seen by the student participation in the class, those students who experienced the spiritual intelligence trigger at the beginning of the class as well as throughout the lesson, were more likely to participate in the lesson and to be more engaged with the scriptural story. The spiritual intelligence was triggered with the initial experience of honoring the cross as the students entered the classroom. Again, during the

lesson, the spiritual intelligence was triggered through the act of meditation, engaging in the historical prayer poses, and in praying the ancient texts of the Psalms within the lesson. Each of these triggers was included to provide the avenue and the connection with the spiritual intelligence and therefore providing the students with greater engagement with the scriptural story. The students who participated in the traditional curriculum did not have the opportunity for the spiritual intelligence to be triggered within the lesson; the lessons were focused primarily on the reading of the scriptural story and a craft activity. These students struggled to participate and to engage with the scriptural story within the lesson. When the students identify the space as sacred and different through the initiation of the spiritual intelligence, the students' engagement with the scriptural story was seen in the learning and participation. When the spiritual intelligence was triggered upon entering the Sunday School classroom, the spiritual intelligence was active and the students processed and created through the spiritual intelligence.

In a like manner, as the multiple intelligences were triggered in the Sunday School lessons, the students were able to engage and connect to the material in a manner that befitted their intelligence strengths. When students in the traditional curriculum lesson were unable to engage due to their intelligence strength not being triggered, then the engagement with the scriptural story was limited. Additionally, when a student was unable to engage the scriptural story in the traditional curriculum classroom, there were no other intelligences triggered therefore the students were likely to not engage with the scriptural story at all. Though the focus groups were able to identify the majority of the scriptural stories utilized in the study, as seen in Table 1, only those students who

participated in the multiple intelligence triggered curriculum were able to provide details of the story. The learners' details of the stories illustrate the student engagement and participation with the story and therefore their knowledge of the scriptural story.

Summary

Protestant Christian Sunday School has historically utilized the schooling method of teaching, depositing information into a student through a story time and craft/activity time. While this method has been foundational in the curriculum, students who are not intellectually strong in logic and linguistics struggle to engage with the scriptural story. This study focused on the student engagement with the scriptural story in the fourth grade Sunday School classroom when a traditional curriculum is employed and when a multiple intelligences triggered curriculum is employed. As the scripture stories were the same for all classes over a six-week period, the memory of the stories was reflective of the engagement of the students as well as the participation and excitement in the different aspects of the lesson.

The data collected illustrated that when the multiple intelligences are triggered, especially the spiritual intelligence, the students focused on and were engaged with the scriptural story. Within the traditional curriculum classroom, the students were less engaged and involved with the scriptural story and therefore were less likely to remember the story in detail. Through memory of the scriptural stories, excitement with and participation in the different aspects of the lesson, the students taking part in the multiple intelligences triggered curriculum were more engaged with the stories.

CHAPTER 5. RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The theory of Multiple Intelligences provides a foundation for greater understanding of processing and problem solving. According to Howard Gardner (2006) each person is intelligent in a variety of areas such as verbal/linguistic, musical/ rhythmic, mathematical/logical, visual/spatial, body-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and natural and has strengths and weaknesses among the intelligences. For Gardner, intelligence is understood as processing information and solving problems. From this perspective one additional intelligence is debated, the spiritual intelligence.

This study compared two different Sunday School curriculums for the fourth grade Sunday School class, one utilizing the traditional schooling method and the other utilizing multiple intelligence triggers, especially the spiritual intelligence trigger. Campbell (1991) reflects improvement in student participation and understanding when the classroom is organized through a curriculum built upon the multiple intelligences. In examining the data collected, the findings illustrate that the students who participated with the multiple intelligence triggered curriculum had greater engagement with the scriptural story and the spiritual intelligence, and therefore opportunity for greater

understanding of the scriptural story. This chapter will reflect upon conclusions from the data and recommendations for future research as well as the implications of the study on the discipline of Christian Education.

Summary of Study

For the comparison of the two different curriculums within fourth grade Sunday School classrooms, three classrooms employed a traditional schooling method curriculum while three different classrooms employed a multiple intelligences triggered curriculum. Both curriculums utilized the same six scriptural stories over a six-week study. All six classrooms were videotaped for the six-week period of the study for observation, and the researcher observed one session in person for five of the six classes. Following the six-week study, each class functioned as a focus group for discussion relating to the curriculum and Sunday School. One student from each focus group was randomly selected for an individual interview. The data was gathered from the observations, focus group conversations, as well as, from individual interviews. Once the data was gathered, the analysis focused on the student memory of the scriptural stories, the student engagement with the scriptural story, and the excitement around the different aspects of the curriculum.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

The data collected and analyzed indicated that the students who participated in the multiple intelligence triggered curriculum were more engaged with the scriptural story and therefore, had the opportunity for greater understanding of the scriptural story. The multiple intelligence triggered curriculum provided the students with the opportunity for

the spiritual intelligence to be triggered at the beginning of the lesson and to be maintained throughout the lesson. Additionally, as the other intelligences were triggered, the students were able to engage with the scriptural story from within their intelligence strengths rather than only through the prescribed intelligences of the traditional curriculum. The traditional curriculum classes illustrated that when students do not initially connect with the scriptural story, they are not likely to be engaged throughout the lesson.

In reflecting on the first research question, how do fourth grade learners engage a scriptural story when the curriculum reflects strategic triggers for the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, the student engagement was seen in the participation, memory of the stories taught, and in the excitement for the activity. As the students participated in each aspect of the lesson, they were engaged with the scriptural story and had greater memory of the stories taught during the six-week study as well as visible excitement over the different activities as seen in the observation of the class times. The spiritual intelligence was primarily engaged in the multiple intelligences curriculum through the use of the worship center and the cross at the entry of the classroom, through meditation time, the different prayer poses, and the use of the ancient texts of the Psalms. While the scripture stories were all the same in all classrooms, those students in the multiple intelligences curriculum classrooms illustrated a greater memory of the stories utilized, and a greater engagement with the scriptural story from the outset of the lesson.

The students within the traditional curriculum classrooms did not indicate that the Sunday School classroom was any different from their classrooms in secular education throughout the week. One particular student who participated in the multiple intelligences curriculum said that he enjoyed the six-week study because he was not bored as he had been prior to the study. Furthermore, only one student from the traditional curriculum Sunday school classes indicated that Sunday School was fun, more fun than staying home on Sunday mornings.

The multiple intelligences triggered curriculum indicated that the spiritual intelligence could be triggered through the use of ancient texts and practices that created a sense of sacred and an avenue for which students were able to process and know. When students had the opportunity to establish a connection with the spiritual intelligence, the physical space of the classroom became part of the learning process. The opposite is also true: when students did not have the opportunity to establish a connection with the spiritual intelligence, the physical space of the classroom did not become part of the learning process. Moreover, when the students had the opportunity to experience the scriptural story through meditation and had intentional prayer time with the ancient texts, the spiritual intelligence was triggered and allowed the processing of the scriptural story to be experienced through all the multiple intelligences.

In reflecting on the second research question, in what way do the strategic triggers for the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, within the fourth grade Sunday School classroom impact student engagement with the scriptural story, the data indicated that when the students engaged with the scriptural story upon entering the

classroom they participated more throughout the lesson. When discussing the Sunday School lessons with the focus groups, the students who participated in the multiple intelligence trigger curriculum expressed that they engaged the most from the different opportunities for participating with the scriptural story. The students suggested that they engaged the most from the prayer poses, the activities related to the scriptural story, and from having the opportunity to reinterpret the scriptural story. Those students who participated in the traditional classroom indicated they engaged the most from the crafts and the games. Both indicated that when intelligences other than linguistic/verbal and mathematical/logical are triggered the students engaged more with the scriptural story and, hence, had greater opportunity for learning of the scriptural story.

Overall, when the multiple intelligences, including the spiritual intelligence, were triggered within a Sunday School curriculum, the students participated and focused on the scriptural story more fully. As both Emmons (2000a) and Sisk (2002) expressed spiritual intelligence reflected problem solving capabilities through meaning and value that was connected through transcendence. Students who participated in the multiple intelligences triggered curriculum, especially the spiritual intelligences triggered curriculum, were able to engage through a sense of sacredness of the everyday. This sacredness, as Mayer (2000) indicated, allowed the students to utilize the sacred "to find meaning" and "purpose" in the activities as they enjoin the scriptural story. When students focused on and participated with the scriptural story, they were then able to be excited about the activities involving the scriptural story learning and hence were able to think theologically through the spiritual intelligence. When the multiple intelligences,

especially the spiritual intelligence, were triggered amidst the Sunday School curriculum, students had greater engagement with the story.

<div align="center">**Recommendations for future research**</div>

Practical

With the data analyzed, the next steps are to consider how this information will be utilized in the local church as well as for those who write curriculum. For those who write curriculum, the findings indicate that curriculum needs to reflect the multiple intelligence triggers within the Sunday School classroom. When students engage the scriptural story throughout the lesson, there can be greater opportunity for learning the scriptural story. These engagements need to reflect a variety of intelligences that will allow students to participate with the scripture story where they have intelligence strengths. In as much as curriculum writers may not be able to rewrite the curriculum, the local church leaders should take heart of the results of this study and begin to implement multiple intelligence triggers into their current curriculums. Additionally, as local church leaders in the Sunday School setting may be apt to skip or eliminate sections of the curriculum because they do not like that section, it is important that all areas of the curriculum be given priority for execution. Some students may engage the scriptural story through those sections where other students may not; the more opportunities for student engagement the greater the opportunity for learning of the scriptural story.

In the classrooms where the students were asked to take a moment to honor the cross as they entered the classroom, the students immediately identified the space as sacred and special. For churches and classrooms where the space is utilized for more than

just Sunday School on Sundays this action allows the students to begin to reflect spiritually upon entering the educational space. Providing the opportunity for honoring the cross and for taking time to pray as the class time begins will enable the students to engage the spiritual intelligence. The spiritual intelligence was also seen as active when the students took time for meditation, prayed using the ancient prayer poses and praying the ancient texts as seen in the psalms. When students are provided the opportunities for prayer and meditation, they engage the spiritual intelligence as well as the scriptural story. Practically speaking, the leaders of the Sunday School can incorporate these aspects into their lessons without having to change curriculums. This will allow for the initiation of the spiritual intelligence in the setting no matter the curriculum.

Future Research

As research continues, the limitations of the study need to be addressed. As the students are volunteers and their attendance is subject to parental attendance, the consistency of student attendance was at times sporadic. Additionally, the videotaping of the classrooms was often a challenge. As videos are subject to human operations, there were times the videos were fuzzy, with no sound, and only showing a limited area of the classroom. Though the videos were very helpful there were challenges in the presentations.

With the limitations in mind, this research provided a foundation for further research in the area of multiple intelligences and spiritual intelligence. Future research could include the replication of this study with the same age group, as well as, with other age groupings. It would be fascinating to explore the area of multiple intelligence

triggered curriculum with both adolescents and adults, especially older adults. Moreover, multiple intelligences research should continue to reflect the spiritual arena as well as the secular arena. As it is inferred the Christian Educational setting and learning will be similar to that of the secular setting though the educational situation is very different from the secular. The classroom time for Sunday School is approximately forty-five minutes to an hour. With this limited time with the students the spiritual intelligence triggers need to be activated quickly and effectively for consistent scriptural engagement. The research should extend to how the impact of multiple intelligence triggers affect the student learning beyond the Sunday School classroom.

This research uncovered questions regarding the Sunday School educational setting that could lead to further research. Such questions are:

- Does the curriculum impact leader preparedness and engagement with the curriculum?

- Do snacks impact the student engagement with the Sunday School curriculum?

- How does the curriculum encourage more use of Bible reading within the Sunday School setting as well as at home?

- How does the Sunday School room set up and usage beyond the Sunday School class time impact student engagement with the curriculum?

- What is the motivation for participating in Sunday School?

All of these topics will provide a basis for the Sunday School classroom to be meeting the needs of the students as well as examining how the students spiritually educated.

63

Implications of Study

The implications of the research are in the writing of curriculum as well as in the continued research of multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, within the spiritual educational setting. As Sunday School curriculum is designed with an obvious purpose of spiritual education, the activities and the design of the curriculum may not always support this purpose. In understanding that when students engage with the scriptural story there is greater opportunity for spiritual understanding of the scriptural story, curriculum writers should utilize multiple intelligence triggers, especially the spiritual intelligence triggers, to organize and create the curriculum.

Moreover, the research provides groundwork for understanding the function of the spiritual intelligence and how to trigger the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, within the Sunday School curriculum. As the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, are triggered within the Sunday School curriculum, there will be greater engagement by the students. Through the spiritual intelligence trigger, the students are able to experience sacredness and connection to the innate spirituality of all humanity (Adams & Hyde, 2008). The implications of this study provide credence for a variety of curriculum designs that trigger the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, and for an understanding of the multiple intelligences within the Sunday School classroom.

The results of this study can impact the tenor of curriculum development in the future. As curriculum can be developed to trigger the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence, for the Sunday School educational setting, the focus on

triggering the multiple intelligences can also be a focus beyond the Sunday School educational setting. Moreover, the study illustrates that the spiritual intelligence can be triggered and that when the spiritual intelligence is triggered within a spiritual setting the students are more able to engage the scriptural story for greater understanding. Therefore, this study can impact change in curriculum development for the Sunday School educational setting for the elementary ages. Changes can be reflected in the curriculum for other religious educational settings such as Bible studies and mission opportunities. These study results can lay the foundations for greater understandings of the spiritual intelligence as well as the implications of multiple intelligence triggers within religious educational settings.

Summary

In conclusion, the comparison of the two different Sunday School curriculums sets the framework for understanding the multiple intelligences, especially the spiritual intelligence within the Sunday School classroom. The fourth grade students within the multiple intelligence triggered curriculum experience the scriptural story from the point of entry into the classroom to the point of exit. These students engage the scriptural story through the different tasks and activities that triggered the different intelligences. Engagement with the scriptural story provides chances for deepening the understanding of the scriptural story and therefore provides the students with the opportunities for spiritual growth during Sunday School.

REFERENCES

Adams, K, & Hyde B. (2008). Children's grief dreams and the theory of spiritual intelligence. *American Psychological Association,* 18(*1*), 58-67.

Boylan, A. (1988). *Sunday school: The formation of an American institution, 1790-1880.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Bunge, M. (Ed). (2001). *The child in Christian thought.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Bunge, M. (2006). The child, religion, and the academy: Developing robust theological and religious understandings of children and childhood. *Journal of Religion,* 86(*4*), 549-579.

Bunge, M. (2008). Biblical and theological perspectives on children, parents, and 'best practices' for faith formation: Resources for child, youth, and family ministry today. *Dialog: A Journal of Theology,* 47(*4*), 348-360.

Bushnell, H. (1876). *Christian nurture.* New York, NY: Charles Scribner & Company.

Buttner, G. (2007). How theologizing with children can work. *British Journal of Religious Education,* 29(*2*), 127-139.

Campbell, B. (1991). Multiple intelligences in the classroom. *Context Institute,* 12.

Cram, R. (1996). Knowing God: Children, play and paradox. *Religious Education,* 91(*1*), 55-73.

Creswell, J. (2005). *Educational Research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Emmons, R. (2000a). Spirituality and intelligence: Problems and prospects. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 10(*1*), 57-64.

Emmons, R. (2000b). Is spirituality an intelligences? Motivation, cognition, and the psychology of ultimate concern. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 10(*1*), 3-26.

Engebretson, K. (2004). Conversations about religious education. *Journal of Beliefs & Values,* 25(*3*), 267-281.

Evans, M. & Combs, L. (2008). When dealing with human subjects: Balancing ethical and practical matters in the field. *TechTrends,* 52(*6*), 30-35.

Foundations for Teaching & Learning in the United Methodist Church. (1979). Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources.

Fowler, J. (1981). *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*. San Francisco, CA: Harper.

Frederick, T. (2008). Discipleship and spirituality from a Christian perspective. *Pastoral Psychology*, 56, 553-560.

Gardner, H. (1995). Reflections on multiple intelligences. *Phi Delta Kappan,*77(*3*), 200-209.

Gardner, H. (2000). A case against spiritual intelligence. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion,*10(*1*)*,* 27-34.

Gardner, H. (2004). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences (10th Anniversary Edition)*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Gardner, H. (2006). *Multiple intelligences: New horizons (Completely Revised and Updated)*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Groome, T (1980). Christian religious education. San Francisco, CA. Harper & Row.

Harris, M. (1989). *Fashion me a people: Curriculum in the church*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

Hyde, B. (2004). The plausibility of spiritual intelligence: spiritual experience, problem solving and neural sites. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality,* 9(*1*), 39-52.

Hyde, B. (2008). I wonder what you think really, really matters? Spiritual questing and religious education. *Religious Education,*103(*1*), 32-47.

Isman, A., Aksal, F. & Gazi, Z. (2009). Teacher researchers: Technology and ethical considerations while conducting an action research. *H.U. Journal of Education*. 37, 84-95.

Kim, J. (2007). Cognition and faith formation: A reflection on the interrelationship of schema, thema, and faith. *Christian Education Journal,* 4(*2*), 308-321.

Kwilecki, S. (2000). Spiritual intelligence as a theory of individual religion: A case application. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 10(*1*), 35-46.

Larsson, R. (2010). Education: A forgotten dimension of church identity? *Religious Education*, 105(*5*), 519-535.

Love, P. (2002). Comparing spiritual development and cognitive development. *Journal of College Student Development.*, 43(*3*), 357-373.

Matthaei, S. (2004). Rethinking faith formation. *Religious Education,* 99(1), 56-70.

Mayer, J. (2000). Spiritual intelligence or spiritual consciousness*? Journal for the Psychology of Religion,* 10(*1*), 47-56.

McCoog, I. (2010). The existential learner. *The Clearing House*, 83,126-128.

Mettetal, G., Harper, S. & Jordan, C. (1997). Attitudes toward a multiple intelligence curriculum. *The Journal of Educational Research,* 91(*2*), 115-122.

Miller-McLemore, B. (2009). The royal road: Children, play and the religious life. *Pastoral Psychology*,58, 505-519.

Ormond, J. (2008). *Human learning (Fifth Edition).* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Ozdemir, P., Guneysu, S. & Tekkaya, C. (2006). Enhancing learning through multiple intelligences. *JBE*,40(2), 74-78.

Pazmino, R. (2010). Christian education is more than formation. *Christian Education Journal*,7(*2*), 356-365.

Powell, K. & Kalina, C. (2009). Cognitive and social constructivism: Developing tools for an effective classroom. *Education,*130(*2*), 241-250.

Riegel, U., Fricke, M. & Macha, K. (2010). Does the body matter? Effects of body-based learning in religious education. *Journal of Empirical Theology*. 23, 111-132.

Seymour, J. (1982). From Sunday school to church school continuities in protestant church education in the united states, 1860-1929. Lanham: University Press of America.

Simmons, L. (2009). Five resources on teaching methods. *The Religious Education Association,* 104(*1*), 95-98.

Sisk, D. (2002). Spiritual intelligence: The tenth intelligence that integrates all other intelligences. *Gifted Education International*,16, 208-213.

Sisk, D. (2008). Engaging the spiritual intelligence of gifted students to build global awareness in the classroom. *Roeper Review*, 30, 24-30.

Skinner, B. (1989). The origins of cognitive thought. *American Psychologist*, 44(*1*),13-18.

Temur, O. (2007). The effects of teaching activities prepared according to the multiple intelligence theory on mathematics achievements and permanence of information learned by 4th grade students. *International Journal of Environmental & Science Education*, 2(*4*), 86-91.

Tye, K. (2000). *Basics of Christian education*. Danvers, MA: Chalice Press.

Zhao, G. (2011). The modern construction of childhood: What does it do to the paradox of modernity? *Study of Philosophical Education*,30, 241-256.

APPENDIX A. OBSERVATIONAL GUIDE

Location _____   Session _____

Who is the observer? _____

Is the session being videotaped? _____   Is the observation happening in person? _____

Is the observation happening only through video tape? _____

The following questions are a guide for observing the students and the curriculum in the classroom or through video tape. Please answer each question in as much detail as possible.

1. How many students are participating in the session?

2. What is the scriptural topic of the session?

3. How are the students engaging with the scriptural story for the day?

4. Are the students engaging with the scriptural story?

5. What are the indicators that the students are engaging with the scriptural story?

6. As the students engage with the scriptural story for the day, are there specific tasks within the lesson that appear to engage them more than others?

7. How are the students responding to the scriptural story of the day?

8. Do the students react to a particular aspect of the session?

9. How is the teacher presenting the scriptural story?

10. How is the classroom set up for learning?

11. Is there a particular aspect of the classroom set up the students are drawn to or engaged with?

12. Does the teacher favor a particular aspect of the classroom set up?

13. Does the teacher favor a particular aspect of the lesson?

14. Do the students favor a particular aspect of the lesson?

15. Do the students favor a particular aspect of the classroom set up?

16. What other information about the reactions of the students to the curriculum or the classroom setting is needed for the observation?

APPENDIX B. FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Focus Group Identifier _____

Date _____

What is the setting for the focus group? _____

Is the teacher present for the focus group? _____

How many students participating? _____

The following questions are directed to the fourth grade students who have participated in the curriculum over the last six-weeks. The questions are phrased for the sake of the students. These questions are a beginning with the students. Please list any additional questions asked during the focus group discussion.

1. What were the Bible stories over the last six-weeks?

2. What story or stories did you like the best?

3. Was this the first time you heard these stories?

4. What did you learn from these stories?

5. Was there an activity or task that you enjoyed the most over the last six-weeks/

6. Was there something you really liked in the classroom?

7. Did you have a favorite thing in the classroom?

8. What did you learn from the Bible stories over the last six-weeks?

9. Which Bible story was your favorite?

10. Why was the Bible story your favorite?

11. What part of the lessons each week helped you learn the Bible story?

12. Why did that part of the lesson help you?

13. How did that part of the lesson help you?

14. What else would you like to tell me about the sessions over the last six-weeks?

APPENDIX C: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Individual Student Identifier _____

Date _____

What is the setting for the interview? _____

The following questions are directed to the individual fourth grader. The questions are phrased to be age appropriate. These questions are a beginning for the interview. Please indicate any additional questions asked during the interview. Additionally, please indicate the answers to each question in detail.

1. What was your favorite part of the lessons over the last six-weeks?

2. What Bible stories did you learn over the last six- weeks?

3. Did you know these stories before the lessons?

4. What did you enjoy about learning the stories?

5. What did you learn from these stories?

6. Was there an activity or task that you enjoyed the most over the last six-weeks?

7. Was there something you really liked in the classroom?

8. Did you have a favorite thing in the classroom?

9. What did you learn from the Bible stories over the last six-weeks?

10. Which Bible story was your favorite?

11. Why was the Bible story your favorite?

12. What part of the lessons each week helped you learn the Bible story?

13. Why did that part of the lesson help you?

14. How did that part of the lesson help you?

15. What else would you like to tell me about the sessions over the last six-weeks?

APPENDIX E. STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL WORK

Academic Honesty Policy

Capella University's Academic Honesty Policy (3.01.01) holds learners accountable for the integrity of work they submit, which includes but is not limited to discussion postings, assignments, comprehensive exams, and the dissertation or capstone project.

Established in the Policy are the expectations for original work, rationale for the policy, definition of terms that pertain to academic honesty and original work, and disciplinary consequences of academic dishonesty. Also stated in the Policy is the expectation that learners will follow APA rules for citing another person's ideas or works.

The following standards for original work and definition of *plagiarism* are discussed in the Policy:

> Learners are expected to be the sole authors of their work and to acknowledge the authorship of others' work through proper citation and reference. Use of another person's ideas, including another learner's, without proper reference or citation constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty and is prohibited conduct. (p. 1)

> Plagiarism is one example of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is presenting someone else's ideas or work as your own. Plagiarism also includes copying verbatim or rephrasing ideas without properly acknowledging the source by author, date, and publication medium. (p. 2)

Capella University's Research Misconduct Policy (3.03.06) holds learners accountable for research integrity. What constitutes research misconduct is discussed in the Policy:

> Research misconduct includes but is not limited to falsification, fabrication, plagiarism, misappropriation, or other practices that seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the academic community for proposing, conducting, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results. (p. 1)

Learners failing to abide by these policies are subject to consequences, including but not limited to dismissal or revocation of the degree.

Statement of Original Work and Signature

I have read, understood, and abided by Capella University's Academic Honesty Policy (3.01.01) and Research Misconduct Policy (3.03.06), including the Policy Statements, Rationale, and Definitions.

I attest that this dissertation or capstone project is my own work. Where I have used the ideas or words of others, I have paraphrased, summarized, or used direct quotes following the guidelines set forth in the APA *Publication Manual*.

Learner name
and date   Katrina Leigh Meekins , April 21, 2014 ID# 1208777

Mentor name
and school   Dr. Elaine Guerrazzi School of Education