St. Stephen's College

To See Who I Am:
An Arts-Based Research Project
On the Identity Formation of a Spiritual Care Practitioner

By

Wenda Salomons

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Wenda Salomons
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Abstract

Research on the identity formation of spiritual care practitioners has been based primarily in the field of Christian theology, using Biblical models and sources. In our increasingly secular-humanist, multi-faith society, alternate approaches to research in this area are needed. The aim of this research paper was to explore how art making paired with reflective writing might function as a pathway to identity formation in spiritual care practitioners. Using an arts-based research methodology and methods, the author engaged the primary research question stated as: How might visual art practice in(form) the identity formation of a spiritual care practitioner? Employing a set of metaphorical statements as catalysts for visual explorations, the author created a mantle and a series of ceramic bowls. She engaged literature from religious and cultural sources and reflected upon the process of making the objects. She identified emerging themes related to her personal and professional identities and integrated her findings with her own spiritual care practice. Results are presented in written and visual formats and suggest a viable, alternative approach to research in this area.

Keywords: Arts-based research, chaplaincy, spiritual care, identity.

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4. Instructions for living a life:

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it.

—Mary Oliver, from "Sometimes" in *Red Bird*.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The compassionate provision of pastoral or spiritual care does not begin with an assessment of another's needs. On the contrary, it begins with an awareness of who we are as carers and what we bring to a particular encounter.
—Ewan Kelly, *Personhood and Presence*

Spiritual care practitioners are dependent on self-knowledge. As one of a few helping professions that draw deeply on self to provide care, self-knowledge and self-understanding underpin practical skills for serving as a spiritual care practitioner. Person to person, spirit to spirit connections with others is critical to providing good spiritual care, and yet, somewhat surprisingly, ways of knowing oneself and increasing one's understanding of one's own weaknesses and strengths in this context have not been researched or disseminated well.

In the related field of theology, research on self and identity has tended to focus on Biblical models of ministry, identity in relation to God, and a sense of calling. This focus has left a gap for those spiritual care practitioners who do not identify as Christian or do not align their care work with a traditional model of ministry. In our increasingly secular humanist, multi-faith world, a broader exploration is needed. Research emphases on spiritual care within healthcare environments have largely focused on practical areas such as the development of tools for spiritual care assessment, the challenges of integration into interdisciplinary teams, and the defense of inclusion of spiritual care in holistic health care provision. In general, researchers in this area have neglected opportunities to examine the critical role of self and identity-formation in spiritual care

provision. Increased focus in this area of study is paramount for spiritual care practitioners as it underlies all they do.

These gaps and avoidances may be due in part to the somewhat intangible nature of spiritual practice and expression. Engaging with the mystery of the human spirit alongside the human mind and body produces monologues and dialogues that are not easily replicable in research. They are rooted in an individual's intrapersonal, interpersonal, and suprapersonal experience of life. Nevertheless, lack of replicability does not negate the need for individual's voices and stories to be articulated and shared in community, particularly in the research community. My aim with this study is to provide one example of how the self-knowledge of a spiritual care practitioner may be increased and her professional identity informed through the use of a reflective, visual art practice. In addition, I hope that this one example may provide inspiration for others to consider and utilize arts-based research as a way to know oneself and the life we experience. My primary research question is, "How might reflective, visual art practice in(form) the identity of a spiritual care practitioner?"

Key Terms

As I move forward with this paper, I recognize the need to clarify some of the terminology I am using. The term "spiritual care practitioner" is the current nomenclature used in Canada to describe a person who "seeks to improve the quality of life for individuals and groups experiencing spiritual, moral and existential distress related to changes in health, maturation, ability, and life circumstances."[1] This role has been

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[1] "Scope of Practice," Canadian Association of Spiritual Care, accessed June 6, 2017, https://www.spiritualcare.ca/profession/scope-of-practice/.

alternately or historically identified as "chaplain," "spiritual care specialist," "pastoral care provider," and occasionally "clergy" or "priest." However, even though there has been an adoption of new language on some fronts, on others the term "chaplain" remains firmly ensconced, such as at my own workplace. Therefore, I use both "chaplain" and "spiritual care practitioner" throughout the paper, choosing one over the other where it seems most appropriate for grammatical structure and flow. The meaning of the term remains the same regardless of which word is used and that is, as someone who provides spiritual and emotional care to a client.

"Identity" is another term that could perhaps use some clarification. For the purposes of this research, "identity" will refer to the professional identity of a chaplain/spiritual care practitioner. I take as my model Paul Ricoeur's *ipse/idem* definition of identity, which I will explore further in the literature review that follows. Stated here, in a simple form, Ricoeur's definition of identity suggests that identity has two states: static as well as dynamic. It is both a solid, firm thing as well as something that is in perpetual movement. Identity is not to be confused with "self" or "personhood" which I consider ontological terms associated with being. In the context of this paper, identity refers to the role I play as a spiritual care practitioner. Of course, I acknowledge an inherent dichotomy at play in this reference since my professional identity is rooted in my personal identity, that is, in my self.

Additionally, the parenthetical term "in(form)" captures not only the transfer of information *(inform)* but also the process of forming and shaping that may occur during that transfer *(form)*. The parenthetical compound structure aims to capture the idea that, with the receipt of new information, there is the potential for change. Finally, the term

"visual art" is used to refer to art forms that are primarily visual in nature, such as paintings, drawings, sculpture, photography, prints, mixed media work, and film, etc.

Why this? Why now?

The seeds for this research project came from two spheres in my life: spiritual care and visual art. I work from both paradigms and experience them as regularly overlapping. One significant overlap is the use of reflection in practice. As a reflective chaplain, I have used a variety of reflective techniques as a means to greater knowledge and understanding about myself and about my work experiences. Theological reflection is a substantial component of the training that was required of me to become a spiritual care practitioner. I most closely align myself with the approach to theological reflection of Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer. One iteration of their approach is to reflect upon oneself and one's professional identity within the context of a spiritual care visit with a client. During reflection, the reflector pays attention to images that arise. In the version I learned during my training, a suggestion was also made to use an "I am" statement as a way to deepen reflection and invite imagery to emerge. For example, I might be reflecting on a visit with a very tired and overwhelmed person. According to Killen and de Beer, the reflective process would engender a remembrance of feelings in me from which images would arise.[2] In this example, after contemplating my interactions with the client and her responses to my actions, I might consider that "I am a cup of refreshment" for her. From this image, I would reflect upon my tradition (Christian) and think about Biblical and secular accounts of cups and cup-bringers. I might consider stories that use the word "cup" either as metaphor or as fact. I would ruminate on what

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[2] Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1994), 21.

these stories/words might indicate about my identity as "a cup." I might write these ruminations down in a reflective writing piece. I would look for truths that resonated with my feelings about the visit and attempt to be open to new learnings and understandings about what a cup is, how a cup functions, and so on, thereby adding to my understanding of my role and identity in this scenario. When initial reflections are completed, I would add this reflection, this new insight, to my understanding of identity and role as a spiritual care practitioner. To me, this has been and continues to be an invaluable way to grow and understand self and identity as a chaplain.

I have also employed reflection in my visual art practice. In fact, reflection is a critical component to my art making and my experience of the world that moves me to make art. My art practice is steeped in reflection and I know well, from many years of making art that this practice teaches me things about the world and myself that are not available to me through other means of inquiry. The arts have the ability to investigate life at its most mysterious, to explore and examine ideas without the need for one particular answer. Rather, these explorations, in a very democratic way, suggest one part of an answer or a contribution to an answer, one piece of the puzzle. I have been stunned repeatedly through my own practice, at revelations that have emerged from my work, resonating with my own experience of life as well as resonating with the truths of others' experiences. It is possible to reduce this sense of resonance to simple engagement and response to aesthetic elements such as colour, form, composition, and shape. This narrow focus may help describe something of what happens when we experience visual art, but the actual process of making art elicits something else from us as we use our bodies, and not just our intellects, to examine life. Artists draw on bodily interactions, intuition, play,

emotion, and the non-verbal, to discover, examine, and reveal what is present. Art as a way of researching life presents a different answer to a question than does science. Art offers alternate, contributive, and valuable additions to scientific ways of knowing.

My research question, How might reflective, visual art practice in(form) the identity of a spiritual care practitioner? emerged from my passion for reflective spiritual care and visual art practices along with my drive to continue to know myself more fully in order to serve my clients better and maintain my own psychological and spiritual health. Additionally, I saw a gap in research on the formation of identity in the field of spiritual care that I would like to help bridge. It is for these reasons that I proposed my research project and set out to discover answers to my questions. In the chapters that follow, I engage the literature on identity from the fields of psychology, theology, and philosophy, after which I describe the methodology and methods used for the research itself. Following these chapters, I describe the research processes and findings, and reflect on my experiences. The paper concludes with a meta-reflection and suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two

Engaging the Literature

As I began to engage with research in the fields of theology and social sciences on matters of identity and identity formation, I encountered a variety of opinions. The discussion and research on identity in the field of psychology is robust and vast. As this research project was focused more on spiritual aspects of identity, I elected not to significantly engage the literature from the field of psychology. However, a cursory review of some primary sources suggested that studies of identity have moved from a Freudian focus on ego to a socially constructed concept. In the first chapter of *Handbook on Self and Identity*, editors Mark Leary and June Price Tangney describe a history of research on the concept of "self." They contend that research on self was not approached seriously until the 1950s-70s, when the emergence of a self-focused culture in the Western world demanded or at least inspired it.[3] Earlier work done by Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and George Herbert Mead informed this research, but getting a handle on what actually constitutes "self" was challenging.[4] This challenge continues, as terminology around the concept of self remains plentiful and confusing. I experienced this challenge myself as I endeavoured to define the concept of "identity" and related terms such as "self" and "being." However, the definition of self that these authors have settled on seems limited to me. They state that self is rooted in reflexive thinking and that self is

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[3] Mark R. Leary and June Price L Tangney, "The Self as an Organizing Construct in the Behavioural and Social Sciences," in *Handbook of Self and Identity*, 2nd ed., ed. Mark R. Leary and June Price Tangney (New York: Guilford Press, 2012), 3.

[4] Ibid., 4.

"the set of psychological mechanisms or processes that allows organisms *to think* [italics mine] consciously about themselves."[5] The problem with this definition is that, if we understand self be rooted in identity or at least be somewhat related to identity, then this definition omits both the spiritual and bodily aspects of self and identity. This definition echoes the Cartesian proposition *cogito ergo sum:* "I think, therefore I am." It is limiting and reductionist. While I can appreciate the authors' desire to advocate for clarity in research on self and identity, their perspective misses a large component of both self and identity.

On the concept of identity in the literature from psychology, I also engaged the work of Daphna Oyserman, Kristen Elmore, and George Smith. These scholars define identity as "the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is."[6] They claim that one has many identities and that these help create our self-concept[7] which itself is couched in our sense of self.[8] I appreciated the relationality presented here between self, self-concept, and identity. This resonated with my own sense of how identity is connected and rooted in self. Further to that, Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith propose that identity is flexible, dynamic, and constructed in context. They suggest that, "identity is highly malleable and situation-sensitive, so which aspect of identity comes to mind is a dynamic product of that which is

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[5] Leary and Tangney, 7.

[6] Daphna Oyserman, Kristen Elmore, and George Smith, "Self, Self-Concept, and Identity" in *Handbook of Self and Identity*, 2nd ed., ed. Mark R. Leary and June Price Tangney (New York: Guildford Press, 2012), 69.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 74.

chronically accessible and situationally cued."[9] They contend that we have multiple

identities, which are constantly being changed and adapted according to what we

encounter and experience. Again, there is much here that resonates with my own sense of

identity being somewhat relational and contextual. However, the authors also suggest that

"self and identity are mental constructs"[10] and despite their attempts to connect this idea

to semantic knowledge, I found myself encountering a definition that seemed restrictive

and reductive. Identity for me is shaped not only mentally, but also socially, bodily, and

spiritually.

More closely related to the particular topic of my research were the works of

theologians and philosophers. As with the psychological view of identity, theology's

view of identity is limited in scope. My general sense is that, where identity was explored

in theology, it is most closely aligned with the role of ministry, a sense of calling, and a

model in the person of Jesus. As well, there seems to be an assumption about identity

being defined by one's ecclesial relationship and one's interpretation of scripture. For

example, John Swinton's article on identity in chaplains explores the identity of the role

not the individual. He asks how the collective identity of chaplains relates to or integrates

with the healthcare environment,[11] as opposed to how the individual identity of chaplains

is formed and shaped.

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[9] Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith, 93.

[10] Ibid., 75.

[11] John Swinton, "A Question of Identity: What Does it Mean for Chaplains to Become Healthcare Professionals," *Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy*, 6, no. 2 (2003): 2, accessed May 23, 2017, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255577564_A_question_of_identity_What_does_it_mean_for_ch aplains_to_become_healthcare_professionals.

Dutch researcher Hetty Zock's 2008 article focuses on spiritual care practitioners' "split" identities and the loss of institutional relationships that have provided what she calls "theoretical" underpinnings to the work of spiritual care practitioners.[12] She suggests that this loss of connection to some kind of institution would leave practitioners unmoored and she bemoans the anticipated loss of identity rooted in this relationship. However, nine years on, this does not appear to be the case, at least not in my Canadian experience. While identity seems to be connected to practitioners' relationships with their faith communities, as is required by the Canadian Association of Spiritual Care,[13] it is not the only factor, and indeed for atheist or non-church-going practitioners, it doesn't appear to be a hurdle either.

For pastoral counselor Samuel Park, professional identity is seen as a social construct. In fact, Park suggests that the identity of a spiritual care practitioner is constructed in the relationships with those they serve.[14] From his research with over 20 practitioners, he purports that "pastoral identity is a social and relational construction mutually created by pastoral care partners through dynamic care-giving interactions within a specific cultural context." Initially, this statement posed a curious question for me: without a client, am I still a spiritual care practitioner? Upon further reflection, this seemed a simplistic view of the core of identity. I have found instead that there are

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[12] Hetty Zock, "The Split Professional Identity of the Chaplain as a Spiritual Caregiver in Contemporary Dutch Health Care: Are There Implications for the United States?" *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling,* 62, nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2008): 139, accessed May 23, 2017, http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/154230500806200113.

[13] The Canadian Association of Spiritual Care (CASC) requires its members "to be in good standing of recognized faith groups and endorsed by the authorities of their faith groups as spiritual and religious care providers." From "CASC Manual, Chapter 2: Education, Section VI: Faith Group Affiliation and Endorsement," accessed June 13, 2017, https://www.spiritualcare.ca/education/manual-2/.

[14] Samuel Park, "Pastoral Identity Constructed in Care-giving Relationships," *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 66, no. 2 (2012): 7, accessed June 9, 2017, http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/154230501206600206.

components of my chaplain identity that remain with me, independent of my relationships with clients. My professional identity is not dependent on my clients. It is certainly impacted and shaped by them, but it is not wholly dependent upon them. I echo Park's impassioned call for increased and rigourous research on the identity of spiritual care practitioners, and applaud his attempts to answer his call with this research project.

Scholar and spiritual care educator Wim Smeets has written at length on the role of the spiritual care practitioner. In his article on identity and spiritual care, he employs the work of philosopher Paul Ricoeur and anthropologist Clifford Geertz to support his theory that identity is constructed both at an individual level as well as socially. He states that "the stories people tell to describe themselves and their lives [are] shaped by stories they take over from worldview related traditions."[15] I appreciate his engagement with Ricoeur's theory of identity as being both static and dynamic simultaneously.[16] This resonates with my own sense of identity being rooted as well as flexible and capable of change. Although Smeets takes a rigorous approach to his research on identity, he utilizes a scientific method for research that, for me, leaves something wanting in the exploration of identity formation sources. While he affirms my sense that personal awareness is of significant import to the spiritual care relationship,[17] I disagree with his views on the goals of a spiritual care interaction. Our thoughts differ on who a spiritual care practitioner is and what they do.

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[15] Wim Smeets, "Identity and Spiritual Care," *Journal of Empirical Theology*, 25 (2012): 34, accessed May 16, 2017, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/157092512X635734.

[16] Ibid., 25.

[17] Ibid., 52.

In *The Spiritual Care Giver's Guide to Identity, Practice and Relationships,* editor Thomas St. James O'Connor and others identify key components of what it means to be a chaplain. They supply an insightful definition of identity which states that "who we are is greatly influenced by who we have been and who we are becoming."[18] This suggests connections to the past, present, and future in both a dynamic and static state. They include contributions from a range of contemporary scholars and practitioners in the field of spiritual care and their work seemed promising for my research project. In my review of the book, however, I did not encounter any writing that focused on initial or even continued formation of identity for spiritual care practitioners. The chapter by Peter VanKatwyk on the identity of student practitioners being developed in the context of encountering clients as "living human documents" seemed to be more about the student learning process than a piece on identity formation. Other seemingly relevant chapters explored the role of theological reflection in the practice of spiritual care providers, but did not provide much conversation about how identity is formed, only what contributes to it. For example, in chapter two, O'Connor et al. state that "in terms of identity, spiritual care providers find theological reflection at the heart of who they are."[19] While I affirm the essential quality of this process, I do not see the bridge between theological reflection and identity formation or growth presented here. The relationship between identity and theological reflection seemed to be a loose construct in their work.

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[18] Thomas St. James O'Connor, Elizabeth Meakes, and Colleen Lashmar, "Theological Reflection in Spiritual Care: Identity and Practice", in *The Spiritual Care Giver's Guide to Identity, Practice and Relationships: Transforming the Honeymoon in Spiritual Care and Therapy*, ed. Thomas St. James O'Connor, Elizabeth Meakes, and Colleen Lashmar, (Halifax, NS: CAPPESWONT (Southwestern Ontario Region of the Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education); Waterloo, ON: Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, 2008): 8.

[19] Ibid., 35.

Robert Kinast explores the impact of theological reflection on identity, practice, and relationships in the last chapter of the book. He identifies the primary characteristic of the professional identity of a spiritual care practitioner as "attentiveness to the presence of God in the concrete situation."[20] He suggests that theological reflection strengthens a practitioner's identity.[21] Although a fascinating treatise on the role that theological reflection might play in a practitioner's life, the writing does not contribute significantly to literature about the formation or ongoing changes to identity of a spiritual care practitioner.

In Ewan Kelly's guidebook for spiritual care practitioners, *Personhood and Presence*, I found a perspective that complemented my own sense of identity and self. As regards terminology, he astutely notes the complex task of attempting to define these terms[22] but makes attempts anyway. He identifies personhood as a particular component of identity, "the relational aspect of our *identity*."[23] He succinctly defines identity as "the embodiment of our sense of self"[24] and roots identity and personhood in both a personal sense of self as well as a communally held sense of self.[25] Like O'Connor and Kinast,

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[20] Robert L. Kinast, "Extending the Honeymoon: How Theological Reflection Contributes to Pastoral Identity, Practice, and Relationships," in *The Spiritual Care Giver's Guide to Identity, Practice and Relationships: Transforming the Honeymoon in Spiritual Care and Therapy*, ed. Thomas St. James O'Connor, Elizabeth Meakes, and Colleen Lashmar, (Halifax, NS: CAPPESWONT (Southwestern Ontario Region of the Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education); Waterloo, ON: Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, 2008): 270.

[21] Ibid., 271.

[22] Ewan Kelly, *Personhood and Presence: Self as a Resource for Spiritual and Pastoral Care* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 4.

[23] Ibid., 3.

[24] Ibid., 4.

[25] Ibid.

Kelly advocates for a reflective practice as critical to spiritual care practice. Where he differs from them is where he provides a clear link between identity formation and reflective/reflexive practice. He states that "ongoing reflexivity can be arduous and painful at times, as well as creative and rewarding. It is the stuff of formation and reformation, shaping not just who we are but, more importantly, who we perceive we are."[26] He thoroughly explores the relationship between self and identity within the context of spiritual care provision. He provides concrete examples and case studies to richly illustrate his exploration of nine different aspects of identity associated with spiritual care provision. Kelly's book is useful, relevant, and on point as regards formation and growth of the professional identity of spiritual care practitioners.

Moving to literature from the field of philosophy, I encountered additional work that seemed to resonate with my own sense of how identity is shaped and formed. I looked at Martin Buber's *I and Thou* and Paul Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another*, both seminal philosophical works on the ideas of self, being, and identity.

As one can surmise from Buber's title, his short treatise is about relationships and the connection between oneself and another. He suggests that each person approaches another as either an "it" or a "thou/you." One's own sense of self and identity are defined in one's relationship with others. He states, "I require a You to become; becoming I, I say You. All actual life is encounter."[27] I appreciate his contributions here to the idea that identity is relationally constructed, although I disagree with the exclusivity of the exchange. It seems to me that while identity is partially constructed in our interpersonal and suprapersonal relationships, construction also happens on an intrapersonal level.

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[26] Kelly, 5.

[27] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* tr. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 62.

Although not articulated here, perhaps Buber would extend his theory to the ways we meet our inner selves as others, too, and in these meetings, become fully, relationally identified.

In *Oneself as Another,* philosopher Ricouer explores the ontology of self, using semantics as an exploratory means. Although his exploration is beyond the scope of this research project, he suggests some interesting ideas about the nature of self and its relationship to identity. Early in his book he sets up the argument that we are fundamentally incapable of being ourselves without being with others. He says that "there is no self alone at the start; the ascription to others is just as primitive as the ascription to oneself. I cannot speak meaningfully of my thoughts unless I am able at the same time to ascribe them potentially to someone else..."[28] I appreciate in particular his inclusion of the body as a primary characteristic of self.[29] His theory of identity is based on the Latin *idem/ipse*, where *idem* is defined as "identity as sameness" (in which sameness is connected to relationships with others), and *ipse*, which is defined as "identity as selfhood" (an independent sense of self).[30] This theory suggests that identity is composed of dynamic and changing components as well as static and solid components. This resonates with my own sense of how identity is both held interiorly and shaped exteriorly.

In thinking about identity within the context of my research project, it seemed relevant to explore the literature of metaphor, particularly the role of metaphors in

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[28] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38.

[29] Ibid., 33.

[30] Ibid., 116.

relationship to identity. In the influential work by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, metaphor is explored from the perspective of its ubiquitousness in our everyday lives. Although somewhat dated in their illustrations, the philosopher and linguist examine this grammatical construct and suggest that metaphor is everywhere, which provides bedrock for how we make meaning of life. Their definition of metaphor is simple and concise: "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another."[31] However, as they draw out the potential for metaphor to construct meaning, their examination reveals the complex role metaphor plays in Western society: "Metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness."[32] In this way, they suggest that the connections metaphors make between one thing and another not only illuminate the meaning of the two individual things, but also create additional meaning in the connecting spaces.

Expanding on the potential for metaphor to offer additional insight, Eugene Kennedy, editor of Joseph Campbell's *Thou Art That*, intuits that this offering is present in the etymology of the word itself. He writes,

> Metaphor comes from the Greek *meta,* a passing over, or a going from one place to another, and *phorein*, to move or to carry. Metaphors carry us from one place to another, they enable us to cross boundaries that would otherwise be closed to us. Spiritual truths that transcend time and space can only be borne in metaphorical vessels whose meaning is found in their connotations—that is, in the cloud of witnesses to the many sides of truth that they spontaneously evoke—not in their denotations, the hard, factual, unidimensional casings of their historical reference.[33]

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[31] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 5.

[32] Ibid., 193.

[33] Eugene Kennedy, foreword in *Thou Art That* by Joseph Campbell, (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2001), xvi.

In the content of the book that follows, Campbell explores metaphor and its relationship to myth. He addresses myth and metaphor in Christianity and other religious and cultural traditions, discusses the importance of symbology, and espouses a personal hermeneutic of tradition. I found his explorations of metaphor to be rather general in their relation to identity, and while I delighted in his discussions of the relationships between the artist and metaphor, I was challenged by his advocating for a more personal, individual understanding of the world, rather than a communal, social one. I missed the role of community in his approach to using metaphor to make meaning of life.

In thinking further about the relationship between identity and metaphor within this research context, I elected to consider the role of metaphor in Biblical writings. I identify as a Christian and this tradition supports and is a resource for my spiritual care practice. In looking at Biblical resources, I particularly noted the correlation between Jesus's metaphorical "I am" statements in the gospel of John and my own "I am" statement in my proposed research project. Looking at the work of theologians Leon Morris and David Ball helped me to think more about this correlation.

In keeping with his overall theme that the writer of John's gospel is setting Jesus up as the Messiah, Morris contends that the "I am" statements of Jesus in John's gospel were written to connect Jesus' identity to the God of the Old Testament, to deify him.[34] Although Morris restricts his definition of metaphor as a grammatical function in the text, to my mind, his work still reflects the ability of metaphor to connect one concept (Jesus' identity) to another (God's identity) and, thereby, create a third meaning (Jesus as God). As Morris explores the object-metaphors Jesus speaks in the gospel (e.g., I am the bread

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[34] Leon Morris, *Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 107.

of life), I found his interpretations to be historical and limited in scope. My sense is that these metaphors have the potential to speak beyond time and place.

In the book, *'I Am' in John's Gospel,* author David Ball uses a literary criticism approach to studying the text, as opposed to a historical-critical approach. This results in a very different exploration from Morris's as Ball sees relationships across literary constructs rather than historical ones. The results are, that in looking across Biblical texts, a richer sense of Jesus' identity is revealed. The "I am" object-metaphors are explored more thoroughly here, and in different biblical contexts rather than just the historical one for the people hearing John's gospel. I appreciated the richness of Ball's study and his suggestions for how metaphor can be meaningful within literary contexts, as well.

As my literature review draws to a close, I conclude that, while there has been some research in the area of identity formation and continued growth of a spiritual care practitioner, it has been scant. With Park, I advocate for a richer and more rigorous exploration of how identity is formed and informed. I plan with my research project to add to the literature and contribute to the research in this area. I next move to discussing how I will approach and execute my research.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Methods

Methodology

As I considered how my research project might integrate or dialogue with the larger field of research, I recognized the need to identify my research paradigm and personal stance. In contrast to how I understand a positivist research paradigm, I consider myself to reside in a more constructivist and interpretivist one. I am rooted in post-modern, feminist foundations from which I seek to listen to and amplify a multiplicity of voices through non-traditional research methods. Although I situate my research project within the field of qualitative research, I am electing to use a methodology that, arguably, has not always sat comfortably within this field of research. Let me explain further.

I understand the concept of methodology as a structure or a set of principles that help conduct research. More than that, a methodology connects the proposed research to what has already been said or written with regard to the kind of research and research questions proposed. By contrast, I understand methods to be the tools with which the research is conducted. As I considered the many options for possible methodologies and methods, it seemed imperative to me that the methodology selected be the most appropriate for the kind of question I was asking. Truthfully, my own interest in using my visual art practice to research my question was already rising in me and, like researcher Carolyn Jongeward, I felt that, "my artistic experience and long-standing interest in creativity"[35] was helping to shape and hone my research question and approach. As a

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[35] Carolyn Jongeward, "Visual Portraits: Integrating Artistic Process into Qualitative Research" in *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practices,* by Patricia Leavy (New York: Guilford Press, 2009), 248.

result, I landed on using arts-based research (ABR) as a methodology and using arts-based methods including reflective writing to explore my research question.

Despite its young age, ABR as a research methodology has had many opponents and advocates working both for and against its acceptance as a distinct methodology. Primary advocates I encountered include Shaun McNiff, Tom Barone, Elliot Eisner, Patricia Leavy, and, more recent contributors, Maggi Savin-Baden and Katherine Wimpenny. Although it has been around in one form or another for a number of decades, ABR still faces opposition as a valid approach to research. Some of the challenge seems to be related to the arts being so widely interpretable and non-discursive. Speaking specifically to both the strength and the challenge of visual art, Leavy puts it this way: "visual art inherently opens up multiple meanings that are determined not only by the artist but also the viewer and the context of viewing."[36] I would echo that this is the strength of art and by extension, ABR: to open up dialogue and to present alternate perspectives. This is also a key approach to my work as a spiritual care practitioner and chaplain: to open up dialogue and to present or inspire an alternate view. Other key features of ABR that may contribute to its challenges for acceptance include: aesthetic knowing, multiplicity of presentations or representations, unscientific methods, substantial diversity in approaches, and an unfamiliar language and context. For me, all of these apparent challenges can be viewed as strengths. For me, ABR is not only a possible methodology, but also an epistemology; it is at the heart of how I know things and how I believe things can be known.

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[36] Patricia Leavy, *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practices* (New York: Guilford Press, 2009), 215.

Based on my experiences as a visual artist as well as a spiritual care practitioner, my firm belief is that we come to know things in a number of ways: through our minds, through our bodies (which include our senses), and through our spirits. Traditional scientific research methodologies and methods have tended to address epistemologies of the mind. ABR allows for multiple ways of knowing. Nancy Gerber et al. eloquently point out ABR's potential in this way: "Although not strictly a paradigm, the idea and philosophy of art-based research require a particular world-view that is inclusive of multiple forms of interactive knowledge. This world-view includes epistemologies rooted in *sensory*, *kinesthetic* and *imaginal* [italics mine] forms of knowledge."[37]

My research area is rooted in what I can learn about myself through the making of art. I am eager to engage in dialogue with the art, in process and in finished form, to hear what it "has to say" about the ideas I'm exploring. I know from my own experience and the experiences of others in the field, that there is much I could learn from this exchange—learning that is not possible in other, more scientific ways because it does not allow the voices of the body or the spirit to be heard. Additionally, I feel strongly about using a form of reflective writing to record and communicate my process and findings. In this way, I can do my best to ensure that my research is as broadly accessible as possible.

While there are many definitions of ABR and many terms used to describe this approach to research, there are some common characteristics. McNiff identifies ABR this way: "the empirical use of artistic experimentation by the principal researcher as a

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[37] Gerber et al., "Art-based research as a pedagogical approach to studying intersubjectivity in the creative arts therapies" in *Art as Research: Opportunities and Challenges*, ed. Shaun McNiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 39.

primary mode for both the process of enquiry and the communication of outcomes."[38]

Barone and Eisner state that "ABR is, at its deepest level, about artistic and aesthetic

approaches to raising and addressing social issues"[39] while Savin-Baden and Wimpenny

describe ABR as, "research that uses the arts, in the broadest sense, to explore,

understand and represent human action and experience."[40] Hence, a primary principle of

ABR as a research methodology is *the use of the arts to inquire*. Given that my research

project is based in arts inquiry, ABR is the most suitable methodology for this task.

Perhaps the most compelling argument for using ABR in my research project is

articulated by Michael Franklin. He states that ABR "seeks ontological knowing,

epistemological discovery, and to contribute to society at large. The methods of enquiry

found in ABR uniquely support the study and analysis of knowing and being."[41] The

aims and strengths of ABR, as articulated by Franklin, match the aims and goals of my

research project extremely well.

Of the challenges that ABR presents, many ABR advocates identify

representation of data and process as key weaknesses. Savin-Baden and Wimpenny

suggest that "it cannot be assumed that 'the data speaks for itself'; it does not. Thus, in

order for research to be plausible, rigorous, and credible, interpretation must be

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[38] Shaun McNiff, "Opportunities and challenges in art-based research," in *Art as Research: Opportunities and Challenges*, ed. Shaun McNiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 4.

[39] Tom Barone and Elliot Eisner, *Arts Based Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2012), 57.

[40] Maggi Savin-Baden and Katherine Wimpenny, *A Practical Guide to Arts-related Research* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2014), 1.

[41] Michael A. Franklin, "Know thyself: Awakening self-referential awareness through art-based research" in *Art as Research: Opportunities and Challenges*, ed. Shaun McNiff (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 91.

provided."[42] Ross Prior advocates for the importance of reflection in practice, for the benefit of the researcher. He says, "[Researchers] must find time and ways to stop, step back and reflect, particularly during artistic creation. This allows the reflective artist or artist-researcher to fully recognize what it is they know."[43] To Prior's recommendation, I would also add, "what they have learned." It is for these reasons, as well as my own sense of the importance of theological reflection, that I plan to rely on a reflective component in the research.

At a methodological level, much has been done to support art making as a way of conducting research. From its initial rise in the 1970s and its explosive growth in the 1990s, it has been called arts-based research (ABR), arts-informed research (AIR), and arts-related research (ARR) among other things. This approach was initially considered a qualitative method of research and yet remains challenging to place qualitatively because, as Savin-Baden and Wimpenny note, "it is not prescriptive, and invariably the rubrics that generally inform qualitative inquiry are not applied easily."[44] In fact, in my review of the literature on this research approach, I encountered much diversity in basic terminology, never mind application. The most recent handbook on ABR presents it as a unique approach to research, separate from qualitative approaches. Editor of this handbook, Patricia Leavy, suggests ABR is both an epistemology and a paradigm. In her introduction, she presents strong arguments for these views, supported by a number of references that demonstrate how ABR is most recently being understood and utilized in

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[42] Savin-Baden and Wimpenny, 90.

[43] Ross W. Prior, "Knowing what is known: Accessing craft-based meanings in research by artists" in *Art as Research: Opportunities and Challenges,* ed. Shaun McNiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 165.

[44] Savin-Baden and Wimpenny, 1.

the research community. She suggests that ABR "requires a novel worldview and covers expansive terrain"[45] and is distinguishable from qualitative approaches because of its rootedness in aesthetics, dependence on interactions with a viewer, and intersubjectivity.[46] In her work and the other contributions in her book, I found significant hope regarding a forward movement for this approach to research. They helped shape my understanding of the core tenets of ABR and underscored my argument for its appropriateness in my research, which I outline below.

Arts-based research utilizes an aesthetic, intuitive approach to research that employs the senses, the body, the spirit, and the non-verbal in aesthetic responses. It leaves room for the uncertain and mysterious. In communication with others, it provides resonance, non-verbal communication, and connection to our senses. Its weaknesses include its variabilities in communication and the potential for miscommunication with languages and symbols. Despite these, I elected to use arts-based research as my methodology because it uses the whole body. It allows for input from my physical body and spirit, not just my intellect. Because ABR allows for intuition, mystery, wonder, the unexpected, and the dialogic to occur, it was particularly suited for the questions I was asking about identity formation. I believe firmly that art provides another way of knowing about the world and I was particularly interested in knowing what it might have to say about my identity as a chaplain and spiritual care practitioner. Contrary to the Cartesian claim of *cogito ergo sum,* I know that I am more than my mind and my thoughts. I believed that to best answer my research question, I needed to allow other

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[45] Patricia Leavy, "Introduction" in *Handbook of Arts-Based Research,* ed. Patricia Leavy (New York: Guilford Press, 2018), 4.

[46] Ibid., 5.

aspects of myself room to be expressed so that I could get a fuller sense of what I was exploring.

Method

As mentioned previously, I utilized visual art making and reflective writing to research the professional identity of a spiritual care practitioner. As I outlined my particular plans for research, I held in tension Barone and Eisner's suggestion that the artist-researcher cannot have an agenda going into the process but "must understand making art as a process of discovery. She or he must be willing to be educated—indeed to be transformed—in that process."[47] Specifically, I took the following steps:

1. I began with two object-metaphor statements ("Chaplaincy is a mantle" and "I am a bowl") as drawn from previous written theological reflections on my spiritual care practice. Although I initially proposed to use four statements, I found through the research that the outcomes from visually and reflectively exploring a single statement yielded more than I had anticipated. Thus, in conversation with my thesis advisor, I simplified my original proposal to two statements.

2. I researched and reflected on the religious tradition of the object-metaphor (mantle or bowl) associated with the statement: its use, its function, its role, its significance in context, and its relationship to a larger story.

3. I researched and reflected on the cultural and artistic traditions of the object-metaphor associated with the statement. I considered its use, its shape, its common material and features, and more.

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[47] Barone and Eisner, 134.

4. I utilized visual art media that I deemed best suited for the creation of these object-metaphors and then made one (mantle) or a series (bowl) of the object.

5. During the art making, I recorded observations and reflexive thoughts, using audio, photographic, or written recording approaches, as the material and processes allowed.

6. Once the art making was complete, I reviewed my records of thoughts/ruminations and wrote reflectively on process, finished object/artwork, and new insights related to identity.

7. I concluded the research with a written meta-reflection, which notes common themes across the completed research project and highlights findings about what was anticipated and what was discovered.

8. I present the research and findings here in a written format, including photographs of the finished artworks. At this point, the finished works do not lend themselves to a more public viewing as I had initially hoped they might, but I have already presented a portion of this research at an annual spiritual care conference and will likely seek to share it with my local colleagues. Additionally, an informal, public presentation of my thesis work will occur at my degree-granting institution. I anticipate significant conversation and sharing of my findings to be held during this time with the college community as well as my healthcare colleagues.

With regard to validity and trustworthiness of the research, my research is not replicable. It is unique and it is a singular exploration of an individual. Validity and reliability are constructs of the scientific research method which was not the approach employed in this project. Hence, I looked to the suggestion of those more knowledgeable

than I in this field to provide complementary concepts of trustworthiness in terms of questions such as: Does the research *resonate* with others?[48] Does the research *provoke and invite questioning*?[49] Does the research *reflect authenticity and integrity* between the researcher and the research?[50]

In terms of the ethical implications of my research, I foresaw no ethical concerns beyond those for the care of myself and the revelation of my own internal process as I engaged with myself through reflexive and reflective activities. I did not employ any other researcher or research participant in my research. The ethics board that reviewed my initial research proposal approved the proposal without providing any comments or suggestions for me.

With this defense of my methodology and methods, let me next turn to the research itself. The research is divided into two sections: one for the mantle and a second for the bowl. Each of these sections is divided into three subsections. The first subsection describes how I engaged the tradition through literature, both religious and cultural. The second subsection describes the experience of making the object and includes imagery and reflections. The third subsection describes the insights gained through both tradition and experience and illustrates how I see these as impacting my identity and practice. Following these sections is a meta-reflection and my final conclusions.

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[48] Leavy, *Method Meets Art,* ix.

[49] Barone and Eisner, 51.

[50] Savin-Baden and Wimpenny, 2.

Part One: Mantle

The symbolic power of clothing, both in terms of what it hides as well as what it reveals, has everything to do with identity and how we perceive it.
—Dr. Norman J. Cohen, *Masking and Unmasking Ourselves*

The origin of my journey to spiritual care practice begins with a conversation between a chaplain and myself. I have a memory of a brief conversation during coffee time, following a worship service with my faith community. In my conversation with this man, he suggested to me, in his quiet unassuming way, that I consider chaplaincy as a vocation. I don't recall the context in which this suggestion was made, only that he made it and that I was drawn into a consideration of it.

My initial internal response was to reject the suggestion. An image that arose for me around this idea was of a masculine, navy blue suit; one that didn't fit me in any way and one I could not imagine donning myself. And yet, I felt intrigued as well; intrigued enough to investigate the process of becoming a chaplain.

I explored the educational process of becoming a chaplain at a local theological college. To my delight, I discovered that art making could be a part of the degree-granting process there. This, in combination with my own interest in studying theology and spirituality, inspired me to begin my journey to becoming a chaplain. I didn't know yet what the end result of my educational pursuits might be, but I thought I might begin with an academic degree and see where the path led. I began by doing something that felt familiar and safe while trying to remain open to what might arise for me and in me through that process.

Months later, I began the clinical portion of my chaplaincy training. That initial image of the navy blue suit remained very seminal for me throughout my educational process. When exploring this image with my peers in our group processing sessions, the word "mantle" began to present itself to me as a name for what I was imagining. The word and the image together felt heavy to me. I had trouble reconciling that feeling with my own experiences as a practitioner, which, although challenging, did not feel intrinsically heavy and poorly fitting. In fact, spiritual care practice felt like a very good fit, almost from the beginning of my training. The challenge for me came in the reconciling of my own understanding and experience of chaplaincy with my understanding of the history of ministry and the church. A number of questions emerged for me, such as: How do I fit within the history of chaplaincy? Where and how do I belong in the present world of spiritual care? I see these questions as variations of the ubiquitous questions of the human experience, Who am I? and Where do I belong?

The idea and image of a mantle remained with me throughout my training and, as I considered the importance of this object, I began to seek ways to view it differently, as is my natural inclination. I hoped to shift my perspective from seeing this as a negative image to seeing it in another way. I asked questions like, How can I wear a metaphorical mantle? What shape would it need to have? How would it look, if I could create my own mantle; if I could redeem it from the image I currently hold?

Within the context of this research project, I decided to use the image of a mantle as a starting point to visually explore metaphors of significance for me. Loosely referencing Killen and de Beer's structure for theological reflection as previously described, I looked at the role of mantle in both my religious tradition as well as my

cultural tradition through a literature review. I made plans to construct a mantle and, via

reflexive and reflective journaling, to glean insights about identity and spiritual care

practice. I planned to integrate my findings with my present understanding of spiritual

care practice and chaplaincy. I describe the process in further detail in the paragraphs that

follow.

Chapter Four

Engaging the Tradition Through Literature

I began my review of the literature by looking at both religious and cultural depictions of mantles. To be clear, "mantle" here refers to a garment, generally an over garment or cloak. According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, the origins of the word lie in a number of languages, including English, French, German, Italian, and Norse.[51] It appears to be ubiquitous within medieval European contexts. It is both a noun ("loose, sleeveless cloak") and a verb ("to wrap in a mantle") and has birthed a host of related terms and spellings including, *mantel, manteau, mantua* and emerging in the 1940s, a reference to the earth's geological crust. As I began to consider all the definitions and ideas related to this word, I simultaneously cultivated a sense of wonder about how these seemingly related and unrelated bits of information might add to my own research project on "mantle." Unable to hold all of the thoughts in my head, I elected to put them down on a large map where I could draw connections, distinctions, and make use of the benefits of visual data gathering (see fig. 4.1).

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[51] https://www.etymonline.com/word/mantle, accessed September 2017.
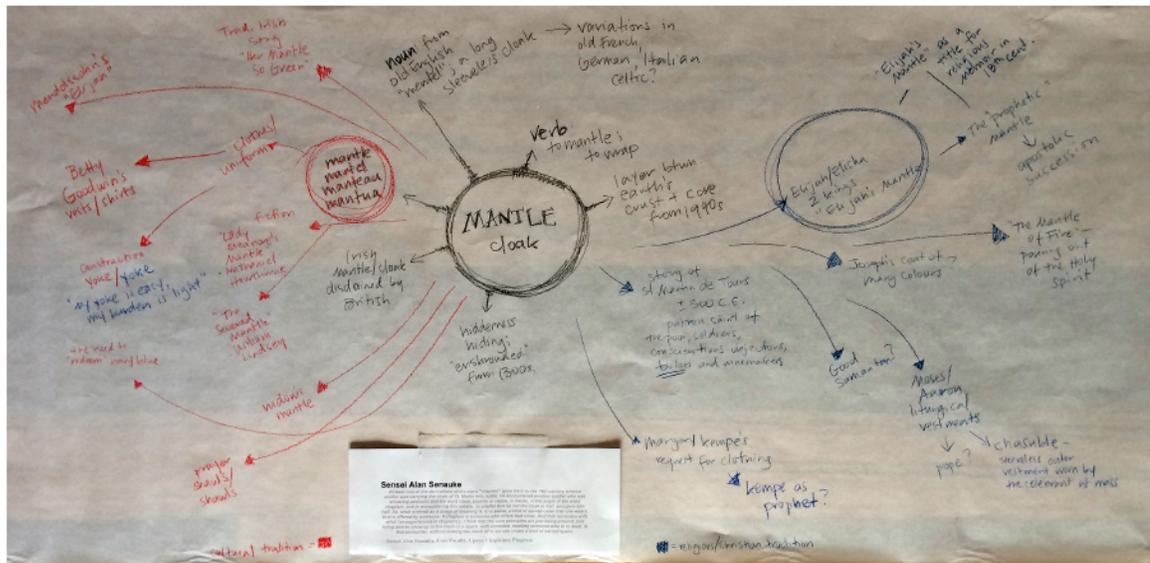
Figure 4.1. *The Mantle Map*[52]

I began constructing the map using a black pencil, which represented to me what I characterized as neutral information about the word "mantle." As I wanted to consider both cultural and religious references to "mantle," I elected to use two different colours to represent the differences in information and direction: bright red for culture and navy blue for religion. I wrote down my own initial thoughts and ideas. I read a broad sampling of the literature and noted ideas that emerged from the readings. The map developed over time and, eventually, I began to see and feel the greater importance of some entries. I circled these. I was drawn to the Biblical story of Elijah/Elisha over mantle references found elsewhere in scripture. Cultural references were more challenging for me to connect with initially, but in my research I discovered that

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[52] I include a side note to explain the importance of the quote on the map from Sensei Alan Senauke, a vice-abbot of Berkeley Zen Center in California and contributor to the Upaya Zen Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The quote holds substantial value for me as part of the origin story of the mantle because it was passed on to me rather providentially and unexpectedly by someone who had no inkling of the value and importance of the word "mantle" for me. I see it as a gift. It prompted me to consider this particular metaphor and the others I encountered, as paths to redeemable metaphors for identity and to an embrace of my experiences surrounding those metaphors.

broadening my topic area from "mantle" to "clothing and garments" yielded results that resonated more deeply and provided a better direction to pursue. Hence, it was a back-and-forth venture that involved engaging the literature, noting key ideas on the map, narrowing or broadening the topic area as needed, returning to the map to draw connections and distinctions, and eventually, being able to leave the map alone and to move forward with the making of the mantle itself. I kept the map taped up on my wall during the entire art making experience as a reminder of what my focus was and the breadth of the topic area in which I was immersed. It also reminded me of ideas I might want to reengage and it confirmed my decision to reject others. A more in-depth description of my engagement with the literature follows, clarifying the impetus behind my decisions in the making of the mantle.

Religious Literature

My engagement with the religious literature began with a cursory view of the Bible and mentions of the word "mantle." The use of the word was most prominent in the Hebrew Scriptures, and therefore, I looked at the origins of the Hebrew word translated as "mantle" in English translations. The lexicon I reviewed indicated that the Hebrew word for mantle is *'addereth*, which translates as either "glory" or "cloak." It has variations as an adjective (glory, splendour, magnificence as of a vine; of shepherds), and a noun (a glorious cloak made of fur or fine material).[53] It also referenced a prophet's

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[53] Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, and H. F. W. Gesenius, entry for "'addereth," *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs and Gesenius Hebrew English Lexicon*, accessed September 2017, https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/addereth.html.

garment.[54] *'Addereth* is identified as the feminine version of the word, *'addiyr*, which the writers of the lexicon define as "great," "majestic," and relating to nobility.[55] Another source translated "mantle" as different Hebrew words in some of the texts, which made definitive conclusions challenging to achieve.[56] After looking across references, I surmised that despite the conflicting definitions, I could at least confirm that in the instances where the English "mantle" was used, it was meant to convey a sense of greatness and/or some type of covering. The glory and the garment were entwined and, perhaps, synonymous in the Hebrew usage of the words.

As I reviewed the instances of the use of "mantle" in scripture, I was led by my own intuition and instinct to seek a connection to a scriptural reference. I looked for a story to which I might relate and which might resonate with me. Since my research is focused on a self-study, I allowed self to direct the research. I ended up selecting the story of the intersection between Elijah and Elisha based on my own predilection for the character and stories of the prophet Elijah. I looked at the Hebrew Scriptures directly, at related commentaries, and at use of these Biblical story themes in cultural contexts, such as memoir and religious treatise.

The relevant pericopes to the Elijah/Elisha mantle stories are found in I Kings 19 and 2 Kings 2. Chapter 19 recounts Elijah's flight from Jezebel into the desert and eventually to Mount Horeb. A well-known story of Elijah encountering his God on that

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[54] Brown, Driver, Briggs, and Gesenius, entry for "'addereth."

[55] Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, and H. F. W. Gesenius, entry for "'addiyr," *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs and Gesenius Hebrew English Lexicon*, accessed September 2017, https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/addiyr.html.

[56] James A. Strong, entry for "mantle," *A Concise Dictionary of the words in The Hebrew Bible; with their renderings on the Authorized English Version* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1890. Part of *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992 reprint).

mountain occurs in verses 11-18. In this story, God instructs Elijah to anoint Elisha as his prophetic successor. In verse 19, Elijah does so by using his mantle to import a new role and identity for Elisha. The verse reads, "So [Elijah] set out from there, and found Elisha son of Shaphat, who was plowing. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him."[57] Elisha appears to understand the relevance of the thrown mantle, as he proceeds to say goodbye to his family and finish his present tasks before joining Elijah as his servant. The next few chapters are dedicated to stories of the reigning kings of Israel and Judah. The story returns to Elijah and Elisha in 2 Kings 2. We encounter the mantle here again as a symbol of Elijah's identity and role. Having journeyed together to different parts of the country, both Elijah and Elisha eventually arrive at the shores of the Jordan River where Elijah uses his mantle to part the waters. Beginning with verse 8 and my italicized emphases, the text reads,

> [8]Then Elijah took his *mantle* and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.
>
> [9] When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." [10] He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." [11] As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. [12] Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.
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> [13] He picked up the *mantle* of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. [14] He took the *mantle* of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" When he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.

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[57] I Kings 19:19, New Revised Standard Version.

15 When the company of prophets who were at Jericho saw him at a distance, they declared, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha."[58]

I have emphasized the word "mantle" here in order to highlight the role it played in the story, noting that it functioned as a powerful tool as well as an article of clothing. In my initial reading, I had an inkling that this combination of roles might be something I would want to explore further later.

Once I had decided on the scripture passage, I began to examine the related literature. I explored interpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures from the perspective of both Christian and Jewish commentators.

In the commentaries I reviewed, the agenda of the Deuteronomist writers is emphasized as a defining factor in terms of how the stories of Elijah and Elisha were told and received. What the agenda precisely was, however, is not completely clear. Terence Collins suggests that the writers of the prophetic stories used "artful adaptations"[59] of the stories to communicate a larger story. He says that, "The work is an artistic composition inspired by serious theological and ideological intentions."[60] Walter Brueggemann concurs with Collins that these books are not to be considered factual history, but rather, "an interpretive commentary upon that royal history, or, as we might say, it is a 'theology of history;' an attempt to understand the vagaries of lived public experience in that world with particular reference to YHWH, the God of Israel."[61] From her perspective as a

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[58] 2 Kings 2:8-15a, NRSV.

[59] Terence Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah: The Redaction Criticism of the Prophetical Books* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 23.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Walter Brueggemann, "Letdown and Revival: 1 Kings 19:1-21" in *Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Kings* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2000), 2.

narrative theologian, Havilah Dharamraj emphasizes the prevalence of agenda pushing

from the Deuteronomist writers as evidenced in their role as narrators of the stories. She

states that, "The end to which the character and narrator work in tandem is—as is usual in

Hebrew narrative—to lead the reader to adopt the narrator's point of view and espouse

his evaluation of characters and situations."[62] R.P. Carroll suggests that the

Deuteronomists had an agenda to present stories of Israel in order to remind them of their

relationship to their god, YHWH.[63]

Despite a lack of consensus on the particular agenda being pushed, it seemed to

me that a few common perspectives emerged about the role of the mantle in these two

stories. Generally, there were two views on the meaning of the mantle. It was considered

a symbol of: a) Mosaic succession and/or b) a prophetic role.

The interpretation of the Elijah/Elisha stories as representative of a Mosaic

succession seems quite popular and perhaps, well founded, within the majority of the

theological work I encountered. Carroll claims a very clear connection between the

prophets and Moses when he states that, "The institution of prophecy was to be a

continuous and permanent office constantly supplying the people of Israel with a

covenant mediator who would recreate the role of Moses for the nation."[64] For theologian

Brian Britt, the connection is more concretely identified in the existence of garments; in

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[62] Havilah Dharamraj, *A Prophet Like Moses: A Narrative-Theological Reading of the Elijah Stories* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2011), 2.

[63] R.P. Carroll, "The Elijah-Elisha Sagas: Some Remarks on Prophetic Succession in Ancient Israel," *Vetus Testamentum*, 19, Fasc. 4 (Oct. 1969): 400, accessed October 4, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1516735?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents, DOI: 10.2307/1516735.

[64] Ibid., 401.

Moses' veil and Elijah's mantle as examples of protection, concealment, and revelation.[65] Dharamraj points to the parallels of location in both stories through Mount Horeb,[66] and through the miraculous parting of waters at the Jordan River and the Red Sea.[67] Collins suggests similar parallels and goes on to clarify why it was so important to communicate a Mosaic succession in the prophet stories. He says, "For the writers of the Deuteronomist school of thought, a belief in God's abiding presence among his people was matched by a belief in the constant, if intermittent, presence of prophetic intermediaries of the divine word through whom the guidance which the Lord had begun in Moses was to be continued."[68] Thus, in Collins view, evidence of Moses is synonymous with evidence of YHWH's presence and voice. These theologians suggest that words, symbols, event descriptions, settings, dialogue, and even garments had a role to play in concretizing the lineage from Moses to the prophets.

While most theologians I encountered espoused a Mosaic succession, there were a few that emphasized other connections. John Noble focuses on the definition of the Hebrew word for mantle, *'addereth*, as a royal garment. He draws connections between Elisha and the Levitical priestly line through Samuel, particularly in the receipt of robes.[69] Britt also makes connections to Samuel, but points to Elijah rather than Elisha as the heir and identifies the robes of Samuel and Elijah as "a symbol of their prophetic

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[65] Brian Britt, "Prophetic Concealment in a Biblical Type Scene," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64 (2002): 50, accessed October 10, 2017, Academic Search Complete, EBSCO*host*.

[66] Dharamraj, 87.

[67] Ibid., 176.

[68] Collins, 136.

[69] John T. Noble, "Cultic Prophecy and Levitical Inheritance in the Elijah-Elisha Cycle," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 41.1 (2016): 56, accessed September 21, 2017, http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0309089216628410.

office."[70] I would suggest that here Samuel is traditionally identified more closely with the role of a priest than a prophet, and therefore, find this connection a bit thin. However, the notion that the mantle/robes/garments identify a prophetic role for Elijah and Elisha is very prevalent in the literature.

What characterizes this prophetic role? one might ask. Carroll identifies certain traits as prototypical. According to him, the prophet must be a prayer and healer, a mediator of YHWH's word, and a spokesperson for YHWH[71], most of which seem to carry a distinctive relationship with power. For Dharamraj as well, the mantle as a symbol of the prophetic role is a mantle imbued with power. It has a history of use that impacts both its function and its wearer. Referencing an earlier Elijah story, Dharamraj points to the role Elijah's mantle played in his encounter with YHWH and the impact of that encounter on the garment. She says,

> On other occasions [the mantle] has been used to shield Elijah at the moment of theophany, and later, to invest Elisha into office as successor. As such, it reminds powerfully of Elijah's prophetic status, demonstrated in these two occasions by this unique privilege of conversing with deity face to face, and in his authority to install a representative of God."[72]

Brueggemann also comments on the mantle as "an object invested with enormous significance and power,"[73] affected by the encounter with YHWH. However, he purports that the mantle itself is powerless without someone to inhabit it. He says, "the external sign of the mantle by itself...without a match of intrinsic force, is meaningless and

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[70] Britt, 43.

[71] Carroll, 402.

[72] Dharamraj, 176.

[73] Brueggemann, 294.

powerless."[74] Thus, it is suggested, the mantle has power and significance only when worn by someone who knows the value of it and knows how to use its power.

For Collins, that power and significance is not only experienced by the prophets lucky enough to wear the actual garment, but has become a metaphor for prophets throughout history. He claims that, as Elijah gives Elisha his mantle, he also gifts him his identity and spirit. In this way Elijah's act is "an indication of the continuity of prophecy symbolized in the one mantle and the one spirit. Prophets come and prophets go, but prophecy remains, and the prophets of Israel must all wear the mantle of Elijah."[75]

However, there is another way to conceive of the mantle in a prophetic role, and this is one less associated with power and more associated with belonging. In an interesting shift, Noble asserts that the prophets were in some ways members of a unique community. As Noble quotes I.M. Lewis he suggests that they were "'...likely comprised of the socially marginal and peripheral,'"[76] which perhaps spurred on the caricaturist view of the odd and misunderstood prophet that seems to have garnered some support over time. To think of the mantle as an identifying garment for a group known for their oddness and nonconformity rather than their power, seems to me to better capture or to at least offer a more complete picture of the prophetic role. In thinking of the mantle as a mark of the prophetic community then, it makes sense for Noble to suggest that the mantle not only carried the prophetic identity of Elijah, but was also a means of adopting Elisha into the role.[77] More than that, Noble proposes "the conferment of [Elijah's]

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[74] Brueggemann, 295.

[75] Collins, 137.

[76] Noble, 55.

[77] Ibid., 58.

clothing is a means of claiming Elisha"[78] into his role as a prophet and into the

community of prophets of Israel. This language of "claiming" suggests to me a

significant sense of ownership that I find somewhat puzzling. However, Brueggemann

offers that the meaning of the mantle gifting seems both clear and acceptable to Elijah

and Elisha.[79] Perhaps the full meaning is beyond what we can presently surmise from the

text and from our past interpretations of it.

This sense of uncertainty in meaning also emerges in the study of clothing and

identity by Jewish theologian Norman Cohen. Put more succinctly, Cohen alleges that

there is always more to explore in the text. He compares the Torah to a garment with

many layers[80] and invites readers to see the midrash as an invitation to ponder the

interpretable gaps in the texts themselves.[81] In addition to a garment, he describes the

Torah as a mirror of which he says that, "when we gaze into it, it reflects back to us our

own personalities, ambivalences, struggles, and potential for growth."[82] In these ways, he

suggests the Hebrew Scriptures as a place for wonder, for reflection, and for meaning

making. This perspective resonates deeply with me and I was particularly drawn to what

Cohen might have to say about the role of the mantle.

Cohen begins by pointing to garments in the Hebraic creation story. He describes

some of the rabbinical dialogue about the origins of Adam and Eve's home-sewn, fig-leaf

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[78] Noble, 45.

[79] Brueggemann, 238.

[80] Dr. Norman J. Cohen, *Masking and Unmasking Ourselves: Interpreting Biblical Texts on Clothing and Identity* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2012), xviii.

[81] Ibid., xiv.

[82] Ibid., 6.

garments, constructed after their sin of disobedience. Cohen then goes on to comment on

the construction of the garments God makes for them before sending them out into the

wider world. Here Cohen pauses to suggest that the garments were generally thought to

have been made of some kind of skin. However, he also highlights a scholarly discussion

about the translation of the Hebrew word *'or* which translates as "skin" and *'or* which

translates as "light" and what that might suggest about the garments and the relationship

between God and his human creatures.[83] I was enchanted in thinking about the possibility

of the garments being made of light. It seemed to me a beautiful heritage and a profound

addition to the story that has often been interpreted as a banishment and rejection. Cohen

poses that it is these garments that have traditionally thought to have been handed down

through the generations of righteous believers, through to the prophets.[84] In speaking

about Elijah's mantle in particular, he alleges that the mantle was thought to be made of a

ram's skin, in homage to the ram sacrificed by Abraham in place of his son, Isaac.[85]

Finally, Cohen comments on the significance of the mantle Elijah gives to Elisha,

described in Jewish tradition as *ol malchut shamayim*, "the yoke of heaven."[86] Cohen

claims this "yoke" symbolized YHWH's covenant and his commandments. In a

contemporary take on this idea of a "yoke of heaven," Rabbi Moshe ben Asher suggests

that by taking up what is now a metaphorical "yoke," the bearer is granted a freedom of

sorts; "not to be enslaved, but to be enabled, given the opportunity to make all life

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[83] Cohen, 17.

[84] Ibid., 19.

[85] Ibid., 132.

[86] Ibid., 136.

flourish."[87] What resonated strongly with me in Cohen's work was his proposal of the rich tradition and sense of meaning inferred in every aspect of the garments. I embraced aspects of this legacy and carried them into my mantle making. I considered how wearing my mantle might be reflective of taking on the "yoke of heaven."

Moving away from direct commentaries on the Hebraic texts, I briefly looked at the role of mantle and garments in religious communities. While I did not venture into the history of ecclesial clothing, I did review the memoirs of Margery Kempe for whom dress seemed to play a significant role. As a medieval laywoman, Kempe experienced a transformation of her faith in adulthood and in response, felt a distinct calling to emulate the dress of those committed to a life of obedience to God. The challenge was that most, if not all, of the women she espoused to copy, were virgins and their white clothing declared this. By contrast, Margery was married and no longer a virgin. In her memoirs, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, she recounts a number of encounters with clergy and churchgoers, who seem to have no problem passing harsh judgment upon her as she argues and periodically dons these garments. The white clothing that she sought to wear was not seen as acceptable to her community. Nevertheless, she pursued the wearing of them, bolstered up by her visions of Jesus, and a few supportive friends. Her desire and her commitment to honour her God is commendable, and her determination, inspiring to me. She sought to inhabit an identity, of which the white clothing was a palpable demonstration.

Another historical figure that was firmly directed by her faith and judged for her choice of clothing is Joan of Arc. As she wore more traditionally masculine clothing,

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[87] Rabbi Moshe ben Asher and Magidah Khulda bat Sarah, "The Yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven," accessed October 26, 2017, www.gatherthepeople.org/Downloads/KINGDOMS_YOKE.pdf., website copyright 2007.

anna-katharina höpflinger claims that she both benefitted from and was criticized for her garb. Although höpflinger sees a distinct separation between clothing and religious identity,[88] author Cordelia Warr, quoting Quentin Bell, sees clothing from these medieval times functioning as a "'natural extension of the soul.'"[89]

Further explorations in the literature revealed echoes of the notion that the mantle itself or that clothing could be imbued with power and meaning. In the memoir, *Elijah's Mantle: or the Memoirs and Spiritual Exercises of Marion Shaw* from 1765, author Shaw describes her recipe for living a good, Christian life as she faces her own death. Her publisher explains in the preface to the book that Shaw's account is meant to function in the way that Elijah's mantle functioned, that is as something for those left behind to pick up and utilize.[90] Evangelist G.W. Scheutz also utilized the idea of the mantle as a mystical and meaningful item in his treatise on indwelling of the Holy Spirit called *The Mantle of Fire.* Twentieth century author William Lindsey used the inspiration of a saint's mantle to shape a story about human integrity, sacrifice, and love for others in his book, *The Severed Mantle.*

Further evidence of recognition of the spiritual, and perhaps cultural, importance of mantles can be seen in a book that examines a number of Islamic poems about mantles. In this book, *The Mantle Odes,* author Suzanne Stetkevych examines three of the most well-known "mantle" poems. It was fascinating for me to discover that this

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[88] anna-katharina hopflinger, "'She Even Carried Weapons:' Clothing, Religion and Identity," *Material Religion* 6, no. 3 (Nov. 2010): 375, accessed October 17, 2017, EBSCOhost, doi:10.2753/175183410X12862096296964.

[89] Cordelia Warr, "Materiality and Immateriality," *Material Religion* 6, no. 3 (Nov. 2010): 372, accessed October 19, 2017, EBSCOhost, doi:10.2752/175183410X12862096296928.

[90] Marion Shaw, *Elijah's Mantle: or the Memoirs and Spiritual Exercises of Marion Shaw* (Glasgow: John Bryce, 1765), A2.

particular garment played a significant role in another religious tradition, and exhibited both similarities and differences in the role of the mantle and how it functions. In the odes she examines, Stetkevych identifies the mantle as part of an exchange between a poet and the Prophet, which she calls "the symbolic countergift."[91] In its simplest form, the pattern of exchange goes like this: a person pledges allegiance to the Prophet through a beautiful poem and then the Prophet gifts the poet with a garment. Stetkevych goes on to explain that the mantle plays a larger role than just a countergift. She says that, "more than serving as a symbol or emblem, a ritual token, of the Prophet's acceptance and protection, the garment is a symbol of the soul or self...the mantle of the Prophet conveys his protection and, therefore, the legitimacy of the wearer's rule."[92] It appears that the mantle here confers an acceptance and element of identity as it does in the Biblical tradition.

Cultural Literature

Having completed my review of the religious literature, I moved on to the literature more distinctly associated with cultural representations of mantles and clothing, in general. The idea that clothing and identity are firmly entwined seemed even further underscored in this literature. In their book on gender and clothing, Claudia Kidwell and Valerie Steele aim to "explore the historical relationship between our outward appearance and our definitions of masculinity and femininity."[93] Although now a bit dated, the essays

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[91] Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muhammad* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 62.

[92] Ibid., 64.

[93] Claudia Brush Kidwell and Valerie Steele, *Men and Women: Dressing the Part* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 1.

in the book still contain relevance as we consider the relationship between clothing and identity, at least in terms of gender identity. In the same way that Brueggemann claims Elijah's mantle had no power independent of its wearer, Steele suggests that context is what gives meaning to garments. She states, "It is the history of clothes and the context in which they are worn that determine the meanings we ascribe to them."[94] Similarly, she contends that others interpret what we wear, particularly in a professional context, and, thus, meanings are construed about who and what we are.[95]

A more intentional connection to identity through clothing can be found in the book, *Not Just Any Dress: Narratives of Memory, Body, and Identity*, edited by Sandra Weber and Claudia Mitchell. These editors and authors suggest that clothing can suggest much more about the areas of memory, body, and identity than a direct examination of these areas individually might yield. They claim that,

> Although we may not be immediately aware of it, talking about clothes forces us to speak, directly or indirectly, about our bodies, about details of material culture, about context, about commerce and commodifications, about social expectations and personal aspirations, about media influence, family relationships, work, play, values, social structures and more.[96]

Contributor Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen emphasizes this further when she says that "dress is the most direct and visual vehicle to convey the cultural image of an individual..."[97] In this way, the editors and contributors of the book suggest that clothing

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[94] Valerie Steele, "Appearance and Identity" in *Men and Women: Dressing the Part*, ed. Claudia Brush Kidwell and Valerie Steele (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 6.

[95] Ibid., 17.

[96] Sandra Weber and Claudia Mitchell, eds., *Not Just Any Dress: Narratives of Memory, Body, and Identity* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004), 4.

[97] Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen, "Made in China" in *Not Just Any Dress: Narratives of Memory, Body, and Identity,* ed. by Sandra Weber and Claudia Mitchell (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2004), 186.

and garments have the ability to communicate more than the sum of their parts. Clothes are imbued with meaning and that meaning changes with context. Additionally, the authors claim, we can utilize this fact to shape our sense of self, both projected and internal. They say that, "how we dress can be read as an expression or even an extension of multiple aspects of our identities, or as a way to narrate aspects of self."[98] S. Brent Plate expands on this notion in his edited work, *Religion, Art, and Visual Culture,* by broadening these explorations to any object that we view with our eyes. His hypothesis is that the act of *looking* at something has the capacity to change who we are and how we experience the world in which we live. Using the field of religion as an example, he states that, "attention to the act of looking will reveal a host of characteristics about religious practices and, as a result, about religions themselves in ways that studies of deities or sacred texts, alone, will not."[99] For my research, this suggests a cultural recognition of the impact of objects and garments, intertwined with their religious, spiritual, or identity-related significance. It suggests that the object itself has something to say, which resonates with my own understanding of art, and in the context of this research project, of clothing. Contributor James Elkins pushes this idea further into the realm of identity when he states that his visual encounters with objects change him as a person. "Art is among the experiences I rely on to alter what I am," he says.[100]

In a final purview of the literature, I looked for how other artists had used garments and clothing directly in their artworks. The poetry of Sunyata MacLean and

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[98] Weber and Mitchell, 261.

[99] S. Brent Plate, ed., *Religion, Art, and Visual Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 10.

[100] James Elkins, "The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing," in *Religion, Art, and Visual Culture,* ed. S. Brent Plate (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 45.

fiction by Nathaniel Hawthorne, the visual art of printmaker Betty Goodwin and sculptor/installation artist Michelle Blondel, traditional Irish music as well as a composition from Felix Mendelssohn all contributed to a more complete image for me of the role mantles have played in creative explorations over time.

As I headed into the art making portion of this visual metaphoric exploration, I held onto a few questions that had arisen for me in the literature review. In light of the Elijah/Elisha story, I wondered about inheritance and legacy. I questioned whether it was spiritually acceptable for me to create my own mantle, rather than inheriting it from someone else. At its heart, this is really a question of calling and of vocation. It asks questions like, Do I have a right to be here? and it underscores one of my original questions, How do I belong here? Additionally, I wondered about to whom and how I might leave a legacy of a mantle.

I also held questions about functionality of the actual mantle: Should I make it fit me, like a garment? Or should it be more representative of the vocation/literature? I wondered how I could both honour the tradition and yet make the garment something I would be happy to wear and in which I could find meaning to support me in my work as a spiritual care practitioner. I wondered, could I shape the mantle to fit me or do I need to accept it as it is metaphorically given? I see this, too, as another variation of the question, How do I belong here? The making of the mantle allowed for further exploration of some of these questions, but I would venture that these questions will continue to be explored not only in this research project but also likely throughout my career as a chaplain.

Chapter Five

Engaging the Experience: Making a Mantle

Figure 5.1: *a) The Mantle sketch and b) the Mantle completed*

I began the making of the mantle as I had with the study of the overall topic, by sketching out some of the ideas that had already emerged (see fig. 5.1a). Quite naturally, divisions in the garment construction emerged and seemed to parallel different aspects of chaplaincy, as I understood it. I identified the top section as the head/thinking component of the mantle. The middle section I connected to heart and feeling, and the bottom section I called legs and doing or action. This separation helped me to focus on the following: how I wanted to reflect those components in the selection of materials, how I wanted to construct them, and with what they would be embellished to further depict their "identities." I then made smaller sketches of each section to help bring focus and to

elaborate on each part individually. I have used these sections to create a writing structure that documents my artistic process of making the mantle. These smaller sketches appear at the beginning of each of the written sections, alongside photographs of the finished garment. Viewing the early sketches and photographs together helps to demonstrate the change in direction and action throughout the project.

Once I had the initial sketches completed, I began to gather materials. Simultaneously, I wrote journal entries describing my pursuits and also my reflections on them. When I started the actual making of the garment, I added verbal dictation to help capture my reflexive thoughts as I was working. When I completed the garment, I reviewed both written and verbal notations, looking for themes that might suggest persistent traits and behaviors that might broaden my understanding of myself. I considered questions like, What thinking was repeated? Was there internal dialogue that resurfaced? Were there similar responses to the process even across the various media I used? I was looking for ideas and thoughts that persistently surfaced. When I discovered these items, I highlighted them and eventually gathered them into categories. It made sense to me to try and see where my emphasis was during the process and where my thinking and pondering lingered. I determined seven areas that seemed significant to me and resonated with my sense of self and my practice as a chaplain. They are, in order of prevalence in the written and verbal notations: Practice, Tensions, Aesthetics, Femaleness, Language, Legacy, and Ritual. Practice is related to my understanding of spiritual care practice. Tensions is related to any tension between two areas/ideas. Aesthetics is related to the artistic presentation of the garment and includes things such as: visual coherence, appearance, colour, construction, and pattern. Femaleness I see as

any reference made to or about female aspects, as I understand them. Language refers to the points where particular words or phrases brought insight. Legacy points to statements that have something to do with inheritance or continuation of a role. Ritual refers to moments where sacred space and time was invoked for me through action or an object. To give a sense of the richness of the reflections, I have highlighted some of my learnings in the following paragraphs, using each section of the garment (top, middle, bottom), combined with the relevant categories identified by name and italicized throughout. I begin with observations from the overall experience of making the mantle, and then proceed with highlights from each section of the garment.

Beginnings

Many of the highlights emerged in the planning stages of the mantle, as I was thinking about how I wanted to make it. My earliest journal entry notes,

> **I am thinking about sewing and traditionally female exploits of making clothes. I feel a draw to knitting; to something warm and distinctly handmade.**[101]

Both specific ideas and general ideas quickly rose to the planning surface, with no structure yet to hold them in place beyond the three categories of garment construction. I connected material with meaning as I worked out details of the garment. My thinking process moved back and forth between design and execution. I considered ideas and either tossed them aside or tried to catch them and pin them down. What follows is a bit of a chaotic writing jumble of observations made during the overall construction of the

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[101] Personal journal entry, September 21, 2017. I have elected to highlight my personal journal entries by using an alternate font. In this way, I aim to distinguish these reflexive and reflective responses from the rest of the written work in this research.

garment. In a way, these demonstrate how my scattered ideas emerged in bursts, and then began to solidify over time with the hands-on experience of making the mantle.

Early on in my planning I decided that I wanted to allow the garment to have unfinished edges, by which I mean edges that are not sewn up. This means they will likely fray over time. I saw this as a visual reminder of my desire to reflect on the ongoing and unfinished process of identity formation for me *(Practice)*. Additionally, it reflected my artistic penchant for artwork that is not permanent, but honours the natural processes of disintegration and even death *(Aesthetics)*. These ideas resonated deeply for me and I held on to them.

I decided to use navy blue as an overall colour for the garment as it would reflect my desire to acknowledge an inheritance from the clergy of my youth *(Legacy)* and, by extension, the history of the church *(Practice)*. It is also a nod to my own love of the colour and the need to make it my own somehow *(Aesthetics)*.

As I began to construct the garment itself, terminology specific to sewing and knitting activities surfaced for me. I began to see the richness of the language already built into garment construction. There was "yoke," which is a sewing term for the shoulder section of a garment. This word evoked remembrance of a scripture passage for me where Jesus speaks of the "yoke" that he offers ("my yoke is easy, my burden is light," Matt. 11:30). Additionally, it reminded me of the role yokes play in helping their bearers to carry a load. Other terms such as "remnant," "casting off/on," and "selvage," are all terms used in the making of garments that have other definitions in different contexts *(Language)*. I saw these terms functioning as a reminder of the multiplicity of

understanding that comes from language and the potential for cross-lingual meaning making.

Throughout the garment construction, I encountered memories of my mother and sister. Both fine garment-makers, these women have instructed, supported, and inspired me in my acquisition of skills to make clothing. As a result, I thought about what legacy and inheritance I already have from my family, particularly from females who have been role models for me *(Legacy, Femaleness)*.

During the overall construction, I was repeatedly struck by my ability and equal inability to stay focused on the process at hand. Rhythmic activities such as knitting and hand sewing created a natural structure, which was helpful to maintain focus. However, over time, this rhythm became too familiar and eventually created an environment where I had to work to stay focused on the activity, instead of letting my mind wander. This served as a metaphor for me as I considered my practice of spiritual care, which requires me to remain fully present and focused at many times throughout the day, sometimes over long periods of time. The activity reminded me of my own limitations in practice *(Practice)*.

My last primary observation from making the garment was how my creative thought process worked rather organically. As I made the mantle over several weeks, in and amongst many other kinds of work, I began to recognize how ideas and solutions can emerge for me. The early morning hours, in the liminal space between sleeping and waking, seemed ripe with non-judgmental spaces for ideas to creep up from the depths of me. In the same way, as I reflected on how ideas came to me, an image of blooming yeast

emerged for me that seemed a very fine metaphor for my own thinking process. My journal reads,

> There's a beautiful process that happens with yeast as it is proofing, and when you watch it, it is surprising. The yeast sits at the bottom of the bowl, with the liquid on top. As it begins to bloom, it rises to the surface of the liquid, almost popping up there. And that's the image I have for trusting in the process of ideas emerging.[102]

Both of these experiences suggested to me that the "yeast" of ideas already lies within me, and that, when conditions are favourable, they will rise to the surface *(Practice)*. I think this has significant ramifications for my practice in terms of trusting what lies within not only myself but in others, as well as trusting those things to rise to the surface when conditions are right.

In considering some overall observations from the making of the mantle, I now turn to the individual sections and the observations and reflections garnered from each.

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[102] Personal journal entry, October 27, 2017.

Yoke

Figure 5.2: *a) The Yoke sketch and b) the Yoke completed*

In my mantle, the yoke is representative of the head and of thinking. My initial plans were for it to be very firm, almost like armor. An early entry from my written journal reads,

> The upper/shoulder section feels like it should be solid fabric. Something tightly woven and reliable. It seems to me that it should be the foundation of the mantle as the rest flows from it, really.[103]

I had a clear idea of the fabric I wanted to use and the shape I wanted the yoke to be as demonstrated in my initial sketch (see Fig. 5.2a). However, once I began to gather the materials I hoped to use, I quickly realized that the material available to me would not produce something I wanted to wear *(Aesthetics)*. I wrote in my journal,

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[103] Personal journal entry, September 26, 2017.

> ...I reflect on my original design and think about discarding elements so as to make it more palatable for me; less costume-y. I am not happy with the discarding, however, and put the work aside for the night. In the early morning hours, I begin again to think about the design.[104]

I moved from using animal fur as a nod to Biblical prophetic garments, to using strips of leather. Instead of the initial idea of using bits of glass or mirror fragments, I decided on glass beads. While these elements changed, some elements remained the same as when I originally conceived of them. For example, I stuck with my initial decision to create a randomness or spontaneity with the placement of these meaningful embellishments, so as to create visual interest as well as a sense of play. These decisions reflect the inclination in me to create something that reflects a better sense of who I am personally and who I am as a chaplain *(Aesthetics)*. The references to a sense of play and to spontaneity are indicative of something I have come to value in my practice, but which does not always come naturally, that is, the ability to experiment and to play *(Practice)*. The placement of the strips of leather and sparkly beads make loose reference to my spiritual heritage through the story of the giving of garments of light and garments of skin from the Hebrew Scriptures *(Legacy)*. Yet these story elements are interpreted in a way that also reflects who I am, an element that is important to me. Other meaningful elements of the yoke include: unfinished edges which reference the incompleteness of my journey and identity formation: three rows of glass beads which loosely emulate a clerical collar; woven strips of leather that reference inherited garments of skin; and a small, overall shape that fits my body more appropriately than the original design and exudes an informality and approachability that is critical in my practice.

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[104] Personal journal entry, October 27, 2017.

Bodice

Figure 5.3: *a) The Bodice sketch and b) the Bodice completed*

With the yoke completed, I moved on to construction of the middle section, what is termed "bodice" in sewing circles. I loosely sketched out my initial thoughts of this section, keeping in mind my desire for it to reflect the heart and feelings. In contrast to the yoke section of the mantle, I conceived of this as emulating more female aspects of myself and of my practice. Initial words like "warm" and "open" reflected my intent and direction *(Femaleness, Practice)*.

As I thought about closures for the mantle, I realized that I had already been considering the number three as a starting point for the closure design. A journal entry from October 19 reads,

> After reading "Made in China" by Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen and her comments on the number of buttons she selected for her jacket as referencing her cultural tradition, I realized that I hold three as a sacred number for myself, too. I know it's sacred in many traditions, but for me it is representative of

where my strengths are: myself, my family, my God; my God who is Trinitarian; and then myself, my community/the world, and my God.[105]

For me, each grouping is a triad and the three triads together reflect a comprehensive picture of my sense of rootedness and foundation of strength, particularly for my spiritual care practice *(Practice)*. Coming from this angle, it made complete sense to me to choose a prayer shawl knitting pattern because the pattern is built on three stitches. Having constructed a shawl in the past, I was already familiar with the pattern. This pattern invites the knitter to enter into a prayerful, contemplative practice while knitting. Advice from the pattern's designers reads, "The making of a prayer shawl is a spiritual practice which embodies our thoughts and prayers for the receiver. It is a gift freely given with no strings attached. Made in prayer, as prayer, for prayer, the shawls are passed on hand-to-hand and heart-to-heart."[106] The shawl is composed of a pattern comprised of three knit stitches alternating with three purl stitches.[107] As accompaniment, I entered into a prayer time that was encouraged before, throughout, and following the activity *(Ritual)*.

As a further play on the idea of threes, I decided to pray the names of God as I knitted, one name for each stitch. Prior to this research project, I had explored my own personal theology and had settled on the names of God for myself as: Abba (informal Hebrew for "father"), Yeshua (Hebrew for "Jesus"), and Pneuma (Greek for "breath" or "spirit"). In my knitting activity for the bodice, I decided to add the female version of

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[105] Personal journal entry, October 19, 2017.

[106] Victoria Galo and Janet Severi Bristow, "Prayer Shawl Instructions," accessed November 7, 2017, https://www.shawlministry.com/instructions.html, website copyright 2018.

[107] Knit stitches and purl stitches are the two basic stitches of which knitted garments are constructed. The plethora of knitted patterns are a largely a play on these two stitches.

Abba, which is Amma, the informal Hebrew for "mother." It seemed to me that this better reflected my understanding of who God is and also how I wanted to address God.

The naming of God in this knitting activity raised a number of issues for me that were both enlightening and challenging. As I settled into the knitting pattern (knit one stitch, pray "Abba" or "Amma," knit a second stitch, pray "Yeshua," knit a third stitch, pray "Pneuma," and repeat using purl stitches in the place of knitted ones), I began to think about the consequences of my actions. I asked, What might it mean for me and for my practice to invoke the name of the Holy here and to imbue the garment with the name of God? A phrase from the Psalms rose up in me as I considered naming God. It reads: "My help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."[108] I made connections between this phrase, and the naming in my knitting, and the idea of the mantle being a protective garment, as described in the Elijah stories.

An additional consideration arose for me, as I continued praying and naming. I considered the order of naming I was using and wondered about perceiving the Trinity from alternate angles. I recognized an inherent hierarchy present in the order of the naming which is reflected in many Christian churches as "Father, Son, Spirit," perhaps acknowledging the chronology of their appearances in the sacred scriptures. However, my knitting activity suggested to me to consider what would happen if my perception of the Trinity began with Pneuma instead? How might a change in perception of the Godhead affect my own relationship with God, and by extension, my spiritual care practice *(Practice)*?

As a continued play on this thinking, I more thoroughly explored seeing God as a female parent in addition to the male parental role already in my mind and heritage. My

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[108] Psalm 124:8, NRSV.

experience of naming God as "Amma" in addition to "Abba" was revelatory. I had begun

my patterning by naming "Abba" and then three stitches later, naming "Amma." I

proposed to myself to try beginning with Amma instead and the results were memorable

for me. In my journal, I say,

> So I switched up the language that I'm using in the meditative patterning. When I was beginning, I used Abba, Yeshua, and Pneuma, in that order, and then I would switch to Amma, Yeshua, and Pneuma. But to start this next section, I switch the order around a little bit so I am beginning with Amma, Yeshua, and Pneuma. And I'm noticing how much starting with Amma is resonating with me. I'm wondering about invoking that aspect of God, the feminine aspect, as a beginning place instead of as secondary role; a primary focus, instead of a secondary focus. And it feels to me when I do that, as if I am aligning myself or somehow it reminds me of other cultural and religious traditions in the world where God is seen primarily as feminine as opposed to masculine. So I'm not sure how to integrate that perspective of God into my own faith tradition. But I feel like it's an important aspect of who God is so I think it's a good challenge for me to figure out how to incorporate that aspect or how to see that aspect.[109] *(Practice)*

As I continued with the knitting and the praying, I began to recognize the activity

as a ritual of sorts, including prayer and activity and reflection *(Ritual)*. I worked to stay

focused on the activity and to keep external thoughts at bay or to release them once they

rose in my consciousness *(Tensions)*. My journal reflects this tension in a number of

places. It reads,

> I'm moving between periods of consciousness and contemplation and periods of I'm not sure what they are, not really meditation…they're just sort of being present, I suppose. Maybe they're being present with the heart as opposed to being present with the head. It feels like that is something that's important to contemplative practice so I'm trying to be conscious of that invitation; to try to be present with the heart in this. Present to myself?[110]

and then again, from a slightly different angle the next day,

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[109] Personal journal entry, November 7, 2017.

[110] Personal journal entry, November 9, 2017.

It's very hard to remain present, emotionally present, all of the time. I wonder about prayer and meditation that emerges from the body independently of the mind. Is there room for that? Can a body be in prayer without the mind being conscious of that? I think so. I think of beings in the natural world that are not cognitive and yet seem to behave in a prayerful manner. Trees, for example. So I guess I trust that even though my mind is not as reinable as I would like it to be, there is value in my body continuing the act of prayer whether my mind is aware of it or not.[111]

The challenges and insights brought through this knitting experience have many consequences for my practice and my own relationship with God. In equal measure, the activity provided a pleasant experience as well, as I once again considered my mother's role in my ability to knit *(Legacy)*, and was reminded of the enjoyment I take in the act of knitting itself, which in recent years, I had forgotten. It reminded me that pleasure can be part of the activity, too *(Practice)*.

Skirt

Figure 5.4: *a) The Skirt sketch and b) the Skirt completed*

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[111] Personal journal entry, November 10, 2017.

My plans for the bottom portion of my mantle, the Skirt, began with a rich collection of metaphors. I connected themes through the language of sewing, once again, playing with the word, "remnant" *(Language)*. In sewing circles, this term refers to cast offs, or small pieces of fabric, that can't be used for large projects or pattern pieces. They are the leftovers of the big bolts of fabric normally seen in fabric stores. This term also refers to God's people Israel who are described as a "remnant" in a number of Bible passages, following their exile into Babylon (e.g. Isaiah 46:3, Jeremiah 23:3, NRSV). In a similar way, the folks I serve as a chaplain are generally seniors and often live isolated, solitary lives and, I think, function as a remnant of our Western society. In many ways, they are cast-offs, as both they and we wonder about their place and value in the world. As I considered using fabric remnants in my mantle, I noted in my journal,

> [Using fabric remnants] seem such a fitting metaphor to use for the bottom half of my mantle, reflecting not only those I serve that may be the castoffs, but also as a reminder of my own brokenness and the ability of God to stitch these bits together and make something good from them.[112]

Yet, soon after this observation, my concern about how the mantle would appear began to overrule the richness of the metaphor. I began to see the sewing together of many smaller pieces as patchwork-y and too much like a costume. I struggled with letting go of my initial concept because it seemed such a rich metaphor to me and full of so much meaning. In the end, I settled on using a single piece of fabric for the skirt because I felt strongly about not wearing anything that suggested a costume. Although I saw the value in having multiple metaphors present in the garment to remind me of my research journey, I also wanted to actually wear the mantle, or at the very least, to have it better represent who I am and who I see myself to be *(Aesthetics, Practice)*. In general, I am not

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[112] Personal journal entry, October 26, 2017.

exuberant or vivacious and neither is my spiritual care practice. Rather, I am drawn to quietness and simplicity and believe I exude those qualities. I wanted the mantle to emulate that.

Coherence across the garment was also a deciding factor in the selection of one piece of fabric as opposed to a mélange of remnants. This, too, is reflective of both my personal identity and my professional one. In my journal, I explored the tension between function and appearance:

> I think if I'm wearing a mantle I don't want to be distracting from the conversation or the meeting at hand. I want it to function well. I want it to move. I want it to be imbued with meaningful things to me but I don't want those things to be a distraction.[113]

In a similar vein, I decided against adding embellishments on the outside of the skirt. Although in the early stages of design I felt excitement thinking about the potential for conversation catalysts with the mantle, I ultimately decided that I felt more at home in a garment that "fit" me, as I am now and as I try to embrace myself *(Aesthetics, Practice)*. The one concession I made was to add pockets to the skirt, so that it would provide some function for the garment, as I carry keys, pagers, and pens wherever I go *(Practice)*.

Shortly after deciding to use a single piece of fabric for the skirt, I discovered, to my initial frustration and eventual laughter, that I had miscut one of the pattern pieces. This meant that I would have to alter my plans for the skirt by either appearance or by function. I would need to make it narrower or I would need to make it out of more than one piece of fabric. Initially, I had hoped the skirt would be an A-line shape, broad enough to at least metaphorically act like a covering and to have the ability to cover

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[113] Personal journal entry, November 14, 2017.

someone like a blanket. Nestled within this hope was the delight I felt in thinking about how the garment extended my spiritual care practice physically, by providing someone with a cover, should they need one *(Practice)*. However, with the cutting mistake, I had to alter this hope. If I used additional fabric, from another piece with a slightly different colour and weave, I could still manage to keep to this design element. Yet, adding another fabric would alter coherence of the garment and this challenged my aesthetics and sense of how I might appear. In the end, I elected to reshape the skirt, which allowed me to use the same piece of fabric but required that I narrow the skirt design so that it could no longer really function as a wider covering. Words from my journal underscore the tension of this decision for me:

> I've been thinking about how the appearance of the mantle is important to me and still wrestling with whether it is functional or whether it's more representative or metaphorical in its being. Perhaps that tension will always be there for me.[114]

The experience of making the skirt revealed to me the importance of aesthetics in my life and in my appearance. Initially, I recognized that this importance could be viewed as a negative quality, related to pride in one's appearance. However, I choose to see it, rather, as an indicator of my own personal preference for fabrics, colours, and shapes. This characteristic is reflective of who I am and what is important to me, in both my strengths and in areas needing growth *(Aesthetics, Practice)*.

Despite the substantial changes I made to the skirt, I was left with a garment that functions, is imbued with meaning, and fits me well. It is not perfect, and this perfectly reflects the imperfections in me and in my practice *(Practice)*. However, the imperfections are not meant to be its focus and the mantle is not meant to function as a

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[114] Personal journal entry, November 14, 2017.

penitential hair shirt. I recognize, rather, that the mantle has an unfolding, inherent

pedagogy for me, which I celebrate and embrace. Finally, as I believe is a function of all

good art, it contains potential for meaning making over time. I look forward to the

meanings that will continue to emerge in my interactions with the mantle.

Chapter Six

Insights

As I completed the bulk of my work on making the mantle, I returned to thinking about Killen and de Beer's approach to theological reflection focusing on the intersection of tradition and experience and the standpoint of insight that results from this intersection. My thoughts are perhaps more simply stated as, What did I learn and how will I integrate it?

In addition to the seven categories I noticed emerging in the journal entries, I also identified repetitions of themes that seemed to speak more directly to my identity. I saw these emerge across the overall design period as well as within the moment-to-moment art making sessions. I see these as identity traits or characteristics and have separated them into two sections I labeled Habits and Groundings.

In Habits, I can identify three qualities that continually surfaced for me, regardless of the activity. These qualities of character are not unfamiliar to me, and yet, I appreciate the reminders of their existence in me brought about by the research activities.

The first Habit I can identify is the tension I feel between what is functional and what is non-functional but still meaningful. More simply stated, I ask the questions: What is it? What good is it? How is it useful? I am fascinated to discover that I am still asking these questions given my own firm belief that activities and objects do not need to have a specific function to have value. However, this tension in me was already present at the beginning of this project, and therefore, I am not surprised to find it present throughout the research. It suggests to me that there may be an underlying preference in me for an activity or object that has an obvious function; one that is measurable or quantifiable in

its inherent value. To recognize that such a tension exists in me will be valuable as I consider activities and programs for my spiritual care practice that may not have an immediately identifiable purpose. It also reflects something in my work environment where the emphasis on what is best for the patient and what is best for the organization are often at odds with each other. It seems to me that having ongoing and thoughtful conversations about activities that have no immediately obvious value and those that are easily measured as serving a particular function, is now and will continue to be a critical part of my spiritual care practice in a healthcare environment. Additionally, it contains threads already woven into conversations about the value of human life, the elderly and the very young, where the ability to function in a particular way equates a value on life.

The second Habit I am able to name is that of perfectionism. In the making of the mantle, I had many opportunities to either "make do" or make perfect. I have a natural inclination towards perfecting my tasks and this has been the source of challenge for much of my life as I have become aware of this leaning and have tried to learn to expect less from myself and from others. Knowing how deeply embedded this predisposition is, I was sometimes surprised by my ability to accept less than perfect within the research. For example, in the creation of the mantle's bodice, I noticed an error in the knitting pattern. To make it perfect, would have required me to take apart the knitting I had already done, which was not a small task, but neither was it an onerous one. In the end, I elected to "invite the mistake to be visible,"[115] as I wrote in my journal. I further commented on my ability to occasionally accept imperfections and the importance for me of practicing that. The visible imperfection is a reminder to me of my perfectionist habit and my knowledge of its limiting consequences. The repetition of opportunities to face

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[115] Personal journal entry, November 7, 2017.

my perfectionism in this project impressed upon me the desire for me to do a job well, as well as the risk of seeking perfection in all I do. The concrete ways I was able to allow "mistakes" to remain in the garment reflects an emerging, unfamiliar, gentler, and less judgmental way of being in the world. I see the ability for me to embrace this way of being as critical to my ability to encourage the same in others, particularly those I serve in my work.

The third Habit I was able to identify is the reluctance to let go and the grief that comes with letting go or making changes. In particular, I think of two stages of the mantle making that required a pause as I had to change direction. Initially, as I considered the fabrics available to me and realized how costume-like the mantle would be should I have chosen to use fake fur, I felt quite hopeless about the scope of the change needed. It seemed that most, if not all, of the meaning I had hoped to build into the garment would have to be excluded. In a similar way, changing the shape of the skirt seemed a very disappointing option for me given the hope I had for how the skirt would function and what it might mean metaphorically. I recognize that the word "hope" continues to emerge even now in my writing and the threads of hope throughout these mantle-making plans were strong and energizing. To lose that hope also meant a loss of energy and momentum. Making the mantle reminded me of the need to pause for that kind of loss, however small it may have seemed, and to allow the feelings of disappointment and frustration to be expressed so that forward movement might yet return. In this recognition, I see enormous potential for my own self-care and my care of others, to honour the feelings that come with change, often partnered with a requirement to release a hope, and in taking the time needed to grieve that loss. It reminds me that we are all

tender beings who experience hurt and disappointment and need time to name those hurts. Once the pausing and naming is done, we can perhaps move forward. We often do manage to do this on our own. This learning has enormous implications for the work I do, particularly where lost hopes have not been named or grieved.

Alongside my reflections on my research that pointed to these Habits, I also was able to identify three Groundings, which function as part of the foundation of who I am and what I am able to do. I see these as complementary to the Habits I own in that they are as deeply embedded in me as the Habits. The Groundings provide sources of hope and strength to me. It was a delight for me to see them pop up in the research as I encountered the need for them.

The first Grounding I recognized was the pleasure I take from making art and from crafting. My present life does not allow for enough space and time to make art regularly, and I was struck, during this project by the familiar feeling I had of "getting lost" in the art making process. Losing a sense of time and the importance of other tasks or distractions is an indicator to me of something that gives me pleasure and engages me on many levels. I love that feeling. It feels like a cyclical event, with energy being consumed by the activity and stirred up by the activity in equal measures. These kinds of activities are so fulfilling and pleasurable for me. They bring me joy. The research was a good reminder for me of the necessity of keeping this kind of activity in my life. Additionally, it suggested to me the value of creative practices in many forms for all people.

The second Grounding I identified was that of adding ritual to my activity. I have sometimes felt that ritual needs a community present to function well, but this research

project affirmed for me the value of performing ritual in private. When I use the word "ritual" here, I am referring particularly to the addition of prayer and of candle lighting. In these two ways, I saw a method of connecting to God and of inspiring hope in the work I was facing. On a number of occasions, I lit a candle to create a bridge between God and myself. In my journal entry from November 9, I wrote,

> So just noticing that before I started I decided I would light a candle again. And felt a degree of optimism or lightness in myself as I considered that. Perhaps because I think of the candle as representative of God's presence and by lighting it my own sense of working in solitude is diminished. And this gives me hope and lightens my heart. The lighting of the candle also feels like ritual or ceremony and it invites me into a contemplative space very quickly.[116]

It seems a simple thing to me, in some ways, and yet I can't deny that it roots me and orients me very quickly. The power it has to connect my senses and my body with my mind, as well as to connect me to traditions of the church seems profound. I know its value deep in my bones and I do not question it. I simply engage it when I need it. It has significance for the work that I do as well, in terms of experimenting with some simple rituals that may prove valuable as well to those I serve.

Lastly, I recognized a Grounding in my natural inclination to ruminate and reflect. I say "natural" here, recognizing that conditions need to be favourable for this skill to develop over time. I have been lucky to have those conditions. So while I may have some predilection for looking for deeper meanings and connections, I also have come to understand that it takes time and space for these meanings and connections to emerge. Perhaps the key is in recognizing the value of the activities of pausing, chewing over, holding in tension, musing, contemplating, and making space for them to occur, and then trusting that something will emerge. The grounding in this for me is that, when I'm faced

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[116] Personal journal entry, November 9, 2017.

with a problem or challenge, I can ruminate and trust that something will eventually come. There were a number of instances in this research where I felt I had to hold a problem in tension and consider it before moving. Taking time to consider or "admire" the problem, as my friend Kathleen would say, can allow answers to emerge and this is an echo of the blooming yeast metaphor I described earlier in the paper. A key motto from my clinical pastoral education also encouraged this perspective. It states, trust the process. To my surprise, I discovered that I have begun to integrate that learning unconsciously and have seen the outcomes in this research project. I have come to rely on the process and to trust in my own ability to make sense of things and to find answers, in consort with many other things I find serendipitous and providential. I am affirmed in my belief that there is often a mystery in how answers come to the fore.

Conclusions

In reflecting on the preparation for and execution of the making of the mantle, I am aware of how little the literature seemed to directly impact the art making process. Although it certainly helped form early and big questions, I had originally anticipated a rich dialogue between the literature and my experience. The one question that did linger throughout was the question of legacy. This was expressed in my wonderings about from whom I was inheriting my role as chaplain and, if I was not directly inheriting from anyone, did I have the right to inherit the role at all? Despite the mantle making activity and the gleanings I received from it, I still wonder about my suitability for my role and the idea of calling or being called. I still wonder about the alignment of my personal and professional identity.

However, I am pleased with having had the opportunity to explore these and other questions and to continue to hold those questions in tension as answers arise for me over time. I am pleased to have some understandings of myself affirmed, as well as having had a light shone on other aspects of self that I had forgotten or not known. I have a richer sense of myself and of how that self might operate as a spiritual care practitioner. I wonder how I might utilize my mantle as a reminder of what I have learned. Will I hang it in my office? Will I wear it on special occasions? Looking outside of myself, I think about the possibility of engaging clients in conversations about clothes and identity. As well, I consider the value of holding workshops with other spiritual care practitioners and exploring together what kinds of mantles we might wear. I feel energized and also more settled within myself as a result of the project, which I see as a good conclusion to my original exploration.

Part Two: Bowl

To make a thing oneself is the nearest way to understanding.
—Bernard Leach, *A Potter's Book*

Early on in my second practicum of chaplaincy training, I met a young woman who was headed to surgery later on the morning that I met her. After a very brief introduction, I asked what I believed was a simple question: "What are you hoping for with this surgery?" I was quickly overwhelmed by her response, as it was generous and full of feeling. She spoke at length, through tears and her combination of many words and deep emotions caught my inexperienced self by surprise.

Reflecting on the event later, an image arose for me of myself as the spiritual care practitioner holding a very large, metal bowl. At the same time, I had a sense that I was also the embodiment of that bowl; both the bowl and bowl bearer. I envisioned the client emptying her liquid self into the bowl, and I envisioned the bowl overflowing with her offering. I sensed that the bowl could not contain all she was giving and neither could the bearer hold the overflowing bowl. It was too much for one person to hold. As I reflected further on the event, my role in it, and what resources I could rely on to support me in a similar situation in future encounters, I uncovered an image of God being present in the event and having a bigger bowl than me. God's bowl lay underneath my own bowl and caught the overflow. Once this image became firmer in my mind, I was able to find some peace with what would likely be an occasional, if not frequent, occurrence in my practice.

In thinking about useful metaphors for this research project, this past experience and the emergence of a bowl as a representative image quickly came to the fore. I settled on the following defining, metaphorical statement to describe the focus of my inquiry: "I

am a bowl." The bowl felt elemental and rudimentary. It felt base and foundational and, thus, significant. In addition, this metaphor related directly to how I saw myself as a spiritual care practitioner, and so would likely contain key elements of my own understanding of who I was and the ways I needed to grow. An understanding of self and one's growth edges are seminal to the sense of identity that is at the core of the ability to practice spiritual care well.

In a similar structure to the Mantle section of this paper, I aimed to engage tradition and experience in a reflective process as I examined the bowl metaphor, coming to a "standpoint of exploration" which Killen and deBeer so effectively identify as the culmination of openhearted investigation into these two realms.[117] For the purposes of this paper, tradition was once again explored in the literature related to the religious tradition to which I affiliate, namely, the Christian tradition. As well, I also engaged the literature from a broad cultural tradition, which examines clay and bowls, form and function. Experience was engaged through the making of clay bowls and through utilizing a reflexive/reflective journaling practice to capture thoughts and feelings during the experience. The insight gleaned from both of these investigations round up this research section on bowls, identity, and the practice of spiritual care.

Beginnings

As with the Mantle section, I began my research of bowls by creating an idea map (see Fig. 7.1). I found this exercise to be extremely beneficial to initially collecting my thoughts, adding new information, and, literally, drawing connections. Looking at it now,

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[117] Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1994), 17.

I can quickly and easily identify the paths chosen from the vast array of choices. I elected to use a small range of colours to indicate ideas related to culture or religion. Cultural
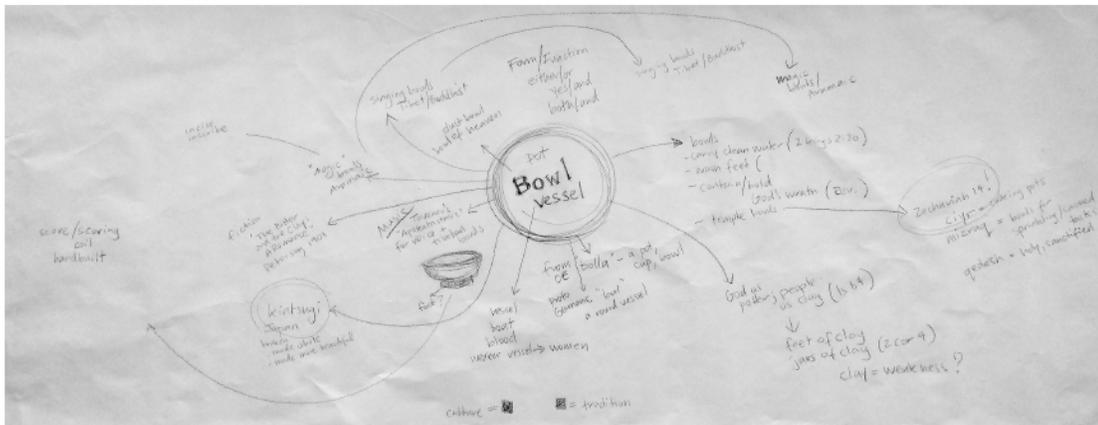
Figure 7.1. *The Bowl Map*

tradition was identified by a brown pencil crayon and reflected the clay I knew I would use to make my bowls. Religious tradition was identified by grey as a nod to the original image I had of a metal bowl. The map served a similar role to the Mantle map, in that it stayed up during my entire research and writing process, reminding me of the origins, decisions, and foci of my inquiry.

Beginning with the word "bowl," I searched etymological origins and discovered correlations to "pot," "cup," and "vessel" within that of "bowl." From the Old English "bolla" to Proto-Germanic "bul" to Old Norse "bolle,"[118] I was surprised to find the original words so closely tied to the word we use today. As well, the definition still so closely represents the meaning we ascribe to this object. A bowl is a bowl is a bowl, it seems, and it lies at the roots of our social, human experiences.

Yet, we have also imagined the use of bowls in other contexts and in various other functions. For example, we have identified the "bowl of heaven" to indicate the sky. We

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[118] https://www.etymonline.com/search?page=1&q=bowl, accessed December 19, 2017.

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have talked about the "dust bowl" in reference to areas of land in North America that were agriculturally decimated during the 1930s. If we look at "vessel" as an extension of "bowl," we enter into correlations with boats and carriers of blood in our own bodies. Perhaps, at its simplest, we may define a "bowl" as *something that holds something else.*

To bring some parameters to my own research, I elected to stick with the word and idea of "bowl" as the metaphorical source, as opposed to "vessel" or other options. I also opted to examine clay bowls as opposed to bowls made with other materials. In a similar reasoning for the choosing of sewing/crafting as methods for the making of a mantle, I chose clay because I have some experience with the material but not extensive experience. This again mimics my own spiritual care practice, wherein I have some training and experience but am not yet an expert in all areas.

My overall experience of researching bowls has been one of incalculable richness. I was surprised to find incredible correlations between clay and the human body, and between ceramics and spiritual care practice. This was a very fruitful inquiry for me and the limits of this paper prevent me from disclosing all I discovered. However, I have attempted to convey the key learnings and so begin with riches gleaned specifically from engagement with the literature.

Chapter Seven

Engaging Traditions Through Literature

Religious Literature

I began to engage with the literature by looking firstly at religious literature. I considered incidences in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures where bowls were mentioned. I looked briefly at the role of bowls in other faith traditions, such as healing bowls in the Buddhist tradition and the magic bowls of late antiquity. I thought about bowls in the temple, bowls used to wash feet and hands, bowls used for drinking and eating. I eventually narrowed my focus to bowl references within my own faith tradition. I discovered, to my surprise, that my concordance had very few references to bowls in either the Hebrew or Christian scriptures. Of the three listings, all were connected to either temple or cleansing rites. Once I broadened my search to include vessels and pots, I discovered a few more notations, but until I began to look specifically at the Hebrew translations, I did not come across an abundance of references to bowls or pots. One of the scriptural references that surfaced from my Hebrew word search was found in the last chapter of Zechariah.

Zechariah, chapter 14, recounts a prophecy about what the world will look like, on a day in the future, when God's kingdom will finally be realized and will be integrated everywhere. This integration will have a world-wide impact, including, as the writer(s) outline, substantial changes in geography, in weather, and significantly, in relationships between peoples. The prophecy culminates in a focus on Jerusalem, where all peoples will come to worship God. The chapter concludes with this pericope and my italic emphases:

On that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, 'Holy to the Lord.' And the *cooking pots* in the house of the Lord shall be as holy as the *bowls* in front of the altar; and every *cooking pot* in Jerusalem and Judah shall be sacred to the Lord of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and use them to boil the flesh of the sacrifice (Zech. 14:20, 21a, NRSV).

This text resonated with me instantly because it holds a personal significance.

Nearly 20 years ago, I conducted a visual exploration of this passage using photography.

I was inspired by the textual suggestion that holiness could be found in all things. At that

time in my life, I was struggling to find redemption for, or simply an alternate perspective

of, the life I was living as a housebound mother of two toddlers. This text and my

photographic explorations of it helped me to see my world differently and granted me

some respite from my daily grind.

I chose to return to the text for this research project because I believed and sensed

that the text still had more for me. I felt had not plumbed the depths of the meanings

available to me. I trusted that digging deeper into the text would yield greater

understanding not only of the text, but also of myself.

The historical background of this text lies in the rebuilding of the Hebrew temple.

In the Babylonian overthrow of early 6th century BCE, the Hebrews, or the Israelites, had

been scattered across many lands and were separated from their home city of Jerusalem.

Their temple within this city was key to their worship life and national identity.

Destruction of the temple and scattering of the people in 586 BCE[119] had effectively

destroyed them, rendering them homeless, and hopeless. However, with the reign of

Persian kings Cyrus and Darius, the Hebrews were allowed to return to their homeland,

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[119] Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 17.

and exact a measure of control over their lives.[120] Reconstruction and rebuilding are the primary contexts within which the book of Zechariah was written. Theologians Rex Mason, Paul Redditt, and Mark Boda among others agree that the book of Zechariah documents the time period of about 520 BCE and forward. In the Hebrew Scriptures, Zechariah is bookended by Haggai and Malachi, which act as both historical and literary companions and have similar themes with connecting messages. Five common themes in Zechariah, identified by Mason and reiterated by Redditt in his book, are: the centrality of Jerusalem to the Hebrews' identity, a cleansing of the community by God, the welcoming of all nations in God's kingdom, an appeal to the authority of previous prophets and prophecies, and a concern for present and future leadership.[121] Mason suggests that "hope for the future is one of the chief characteristics" of Zechariah, particularly for the latter half of the book.[122]

In my encounters with the Zechariahian scholars and theologians, one commonality I found was that there seemed to be a consensus about the division of the book into at least two parts. Zechariah chapters 1-8 constitute the first part and these chapters contain historical cues and names that help to date them. By contrast, chapters 9-14, also known as Second Zechariah, do not contain the same amount or kinds of information that would enable dating or even authorship. These latter chapters are filled with visions, allusions, and references to potentially future times. Another key commonality was the challenge with properly dating it or assigning authorship. Al

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[120] Mark Boda, *The Book of Zechariah* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016), 10.

[121] Paul L. Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 93.

[122] Rex Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 76.

Wolters states plainly at the beginning of his study, "The book of Zechariah is notorious for its difficulty."[123] Boda notes with particular attention to the latter half of the book that, "since the material found in Zechariah 9-14 is so heavily reliant on earlier biblical materials and is more universal in its depiction of the situation on earth, it is difficult to ascertain a precise historical context."[124] Hayyim Angel seems to agree when he writes that, "Unlike chapters 1-8, chapters 9-14 do not contain dated prophecies of the names of historical personalities from that time period. There are no other clear indicators that allow us to contextualize the prophecies."[125] Konrad Schaefer maintains that any attempts to date the latter half of Zechariah are conjectural.[126] As well, he suggests the text was written in such a way to allow for ongoing application and interpretation, depending on the lived experiences of its audience.[127] He says that, "Those who expanded the original text understood themselves to be preserving the tradition and ensuring that the prophet's word would continue to be interpreted and applied in changing historical circumstances."[128] Schaefer's comment here nods to another challenge with chapters 9-14, which are the apparent inconsistencies with authorship. Not only do there appear to be challenges with historically dating these last chapters, but also with who actually wrote it. Paul Redditt speaks more directly to this as he claims early in his article on

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[123] Al Wolters, *Zechariah* (Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2014), 1.

[124] Mark Boda, *The Book of Zechariah* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016), 35.

[125] Hayyim Angel, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi: Prophecy in an Age of Uncertainty* (New Milford, CT: Maggid Books, 2016), 82.

[126] Konrad R. Schaefer, "Zechariah 14 and the Composition of the Book of Zechariah," *Revue Biblique* 100, no. 3 (April 1993): 368, accessed Dec. 21/2017, www.jstor.org/stable/44089164.

[127] Ibid., 395.

[128] Ibid., 396.

Second Zechariah that "quite a bit of the material" in the twelve books of the minor prophets have "been added to the words of the prophet whose name is in the title."[129]

Given the inconsistencies in authorship and the challenges of dating the book, I wondered what, if anything, could be said for sure about its content and meaning. How is it meant to be read? The scholars I encountered seemed to have different opinions on this as well, moving from apocalyptic to eschatological viewpoints, looking at literary references, patterns, and devices to help guide them. The scope of this paper does not allow for a close look at their in-depth investigations into what each allusion, metaphor, or vision might have meant to its original audience, never mind the current one. However, the broad themes mentioned previously are helpful for a general interpretation of what significance might be assigned to the bowls and pots in my chosen pericope; themes of restoration and rebuilding, with an emphasis on how identity of the Hebrew people might be affected, shaped, and reinformed.

In approaching textual interpretation, I aligned myself with Mason's caution against forming too firm an opinion about the dating, history, or true meaning of the last chapters. He states, "We must also listen for the message which spoke through these chapters and led to their being preserved, passed on and presented in their extant form. Their difficulties must not blind us to the fact that they proved an inspiration to the people of God through many successive times of crisis and change."[130] Mason further underscores a potential benefit of not having these scriptures rooted in a particular time

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[129] Paul Redditt, "Second Zechariah: Visions and Oracles." *Bible Today* 53, no. 6 (November 2015): 349, accessed December 21, 2017, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.

[130] Rex Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 82.

period. He suggests that with room for some ongoing interpretation, the text might remain vital for those reading and hearing it. This approach to reading the texts resonated with me and with my own sense of a continued vibrancy within this and other sacred texts. Mason claims that,

> When [the texts] are viewed and studied in this light they can be seen as the excitingly living documents they are. They represent not just a 'static' word of God given once for all. They testify to the ongoing experience of that word among the people of God in whose life it proved to have a continuing relevance and vitality, always coming fresh and authoritative in new situations and changing circumstances.[131]

I certainly felt this "continued relevance and vitality" in the Zechariah text and this feeling propelled me to follow my gut instinct about its significance for me personally. My initial draw to the text still continued to resonate with me. I relished the ideas that, in time, all things and all people will be made holy in the kingdom of God, that there will be no distinction between profane and sacred, and that all will be welcome as God's children. This perspective roots my very spiritual care practice and I am determined to see all people as holy, image-bearers of God, equally worthy of love and care, simply because they are human. As I searched to have my interpretation of this scripture verified by other theologians, I became frustrated at finding little to openly support my own hermeneutic approach. To be fair, a number of the interpretations I read would allow for the transition from profane to sacred, but would stop short of declaring that this transition might be a metaphor for the transformation of all people to holiness and to inclusion. For example, Boda interprets the transition of the profane cooking pots to sacrificial bowls as a reflection of the need for more vessels due to the number of new people coming to worship God. He states that, "while holiness is expanded considerably

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[131] Mason, 8.

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here to include all of Jerusalem and Judah, it is not universal holiness."[132] Redditt concurs as he claims that the writer(s) of Zechariah are suggesting that "the holiness traditionally associated with Jerusalem would be shared with Judah"[133] and that the increase in worshippers "would require the use of every available bowl for preparing sacrificial meals."[134] Mason seems to agree that the transformation of the bowls from profane or common to sacred is partially due to a need for more vessels, but he also allows for the transformation to act as metaphor for the dissolution of profane and sacred things. He suggests the text should be interpreted to mean that "the whole of life, religious and secular, will reflect the covenant relationship with God..."[135] Angel suggests that the text celebrates a spread of "holiness that will pervade the Temple in this ideal age when all will recognize God's kingdom"[136] but he does not extend that holiness to the people themselves and instead hinges it on the peoples' ability to recognize God's kingdom.

Schaefer goes the furthest in suggesting that there is an inherent universalism in the text without coming right out and saying that this is meant to apply to all people, independently of whether they are aware or not. He says, "even ordinary cooking pots will share in [Jerusalem's] sanctity. Every distinction between holy and profane, chosen people and gentile will be eliminated save one, whether or not one worships Yhwh."[137]

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[132] Boda, 781.

[133] Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi,* 143.

[134] Ibid., 144.

[135] Mason, 133.

[136] Angel, 88.

[137] Konrad R. Schaefer, "The Ending of the Book of Zechariah; A Commentary," *Revue Biblique* 100, no. 2 (April 1993): 233, accessed January 16, 2018, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44089151.

In this literature study, I became more aware of my own leanings towards a Universalist view and of the unpopularity of this view by some scholars. As I considered this leaning, which I see as rooted in a feminist paradigm, I attempted to find a feminist viewpoint to this text. I believed such a viewpoint would support and perhaps broaden the Universalist view I held. I turned to feminist interpretations of Zechariah, but had some trouble finding them. I considered whether this was a result of my own skewed reading of the text and a feeling of determination to find agreement with my view or whether there was a gap in the research. I was surprised to find that in her chapter on the books of Zechariah and Haggai in *Feminist Biblical Interpretation,* author Beate Schmidtgen does not even address the latter half of Zechariah. I was substantially challenged to find other distinctly feminist interpretations of this part of the book. However, in the end, I did find a few authors who, while not identifying as specifically feminist, did seem to approach the text from a feminist perspective. Schaefer, for example, suggests that a more Universalist reading of Zechariah is in not in opposition to the text and that a Universalist viewpoint is actually central to the book, which is "echoed and outdone in chapter 14."[138] A key source for reading the text as a metaphor for inclusivity was the work of Carol and Eric Meyers. They rest their hermeneutic approach to this text on the claim that the last chapter of Zechariah particularly addresses an end time, which "will involve a reversal of temporal reality, with its distinctions between sacred and profane."[139] At first read, this statement does not necessarily seem to expand previously mentioned interpretations, but I found it invited a hopeful examination. The Meyers look closely at the Hebrew words

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[138] Schaefer, "Zechariah 14 and the Composition of the Book of Zechariah": 375.

[139] Meyers and Meyers, 480.

used for "bowl" and "pot" in the text and build their textual interpretation on those

definitions. They draw a very direct line between transformation of the bowls/pots and

transformation of a community. They conclude that,

> ...the appearance of the mundane 'pots' of verses 20 and 21 is the key to the radical transformation of the future age. As cooking vessels, they touch the lives of all; food prepared in them is consumed by people throughout the land. Thus by their very ordinariness they bespeak inclusivity. The language used for food preparation—'sacrifice' and 'cook'—merges the processes involved in preparing sacral and secular repasts. Thus the inclusivity of a mundane vessel becomes combined with a procedure, actually a reversal of a procedure that implies sanctity for everything prepared in such a vessel.[140]

As evidenced in this quotation and in the other arguments they build, I found in

the Meyers an ally in my own interpretation to see the text as a portent of a time when all

are welcome simply because they are inherently so and not because of any action on their

part. For me, this is congruent with the messages of love, grace, and belonging as gifts of

God and stated in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. As I travelled further in my

journey to understand more from the pericope, I was inspired to turn and to look more

directly at the forms and functions of the objects themselves.

The writers of Zechariah mention two types of vessels in this passage: a cooking

pot and a bowl. The Hebrew word in the text for the cooking pot is *sîr*. According to the

Hebrew lexicon I researched *sîr*, pronounced "seer," is identified as both a "household

vessel" as well as a pot "of the temple."[141] There are over twenty references to it in the

Hebrew Scriptures, which we also know as the Old Testament. The Hebrew word for

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[140] Meyers and Meyers, 507.

[141] Brown, Driver, Briggs, and Gesenius, entry for "ciyr," *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs and Gesenius Hebrew English Lexicon.* accessed December 21, 2017, https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/ciyr.html.

bowl used in this passage is *mizrāq*, pronounced "miz-rawk."[142] This word refers to the

vessels used for wine or a basin for tossing a liquid.[143] There are at least fifteen

references to this term in the Hebrew Scriptures.

These terms are two of a number of terms used to describe bowls or pots in the

Hebrew Scriptures. Old Testament scholar A.M. Honeyman conducted a thorough

examination of these ancient vessels in his book, *The Pottery Vessels of the Old*

Testament, aiming to connect Hebraic textual references to archaeological artifacts.

Although published in 1939, his work appears to remain a seminal resource on these

vessels. He lists thirty different Hebrew terms that relate to vessels. The photographs and

drawings are particularly helpful in understanding similarities and differences.

Honeyman is quick to mention the challenge of his work due to the inconsistent

use of terminology within the scriptures.[144] He notes that "detailed information as to

material, texture, form and finish, whereby vessels might readily be identified, is just

what the Biblical writers do not give, and we can never be quite sure whether the writers

are using their own word for an earlier period or are using an archaic term with perhaps

an inadequate idea of what it signifies."[145] His notation of this challenge assisted me in

understanding why there were so few English references to bowls in my initial search. Of

the two Hebrew words mentioned in this paper, he identifies *sîr* as likely the most

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[142] Brown, Driver, Briggs, and Gesenius, entry for "mizraq," *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs and Gesenius Hebrew English Lexicon,* accessed December 21, 2017, https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/mizraq.html.

[143] Ibid.

[144] A. M. Honeyman, "The Pottery Vessels of the Old Testament" in *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (Apr. 1939): 76.

[145] Ibid.

common cooking vessel, a "two-handled, round-based open-mouthed cooking-pot."[146]

Mizrāq is not verbally defined in terms of form, but its function is defined as for use within sacred spaces and activities.[147] In the accompanying drawings, it is easy to see the difference between the two. *Sîr* is round-bottomed and has two well integrated handles near its open mouth. It is a large-bellied vessel. Honeyman suggests it was meant for use in a fire, so would either have been held above the fire or placed directly into the fire and would have had no need to be set down.[148] By contrast, a *mizrāq* is shallower, wide mouthed, and has a foot so that it can be set down.[149]

James Keslo's illustrated book, *The ceramic vocabulary of the Old Testament*, adds to the foundation laid by Honeyman in this area. Keslo notes some thirty-four Hebrew and Aramaic words for pottery vessels in the Hebrew Scriptures and also notes the challenges of identification. "The most difficult identification problem is the bowl family," he states, and goes on to explain that despite only having eight words for bowls, many more than eight examples have been discovered bearing different shapes and sizes.[150] Keslo is thorough in his research, addressing each term, noting scriptural references, and differentiating between vessels made of clay and metal using helpful illustrations. He notes that both the *sîr* and *mizrāq* were likely made out of either clay or

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[146] Honeyman, 85.

[147] Ibid., 83.

[148] Ibid., 85.

[149] Ibid., plate xix.

[150] James L. Kelso, *The ceramic vocabulary of the Old Testament* (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1948), 11.

metal, depending on their function.[151] In terms of function in the temple, he purports that a *mizrāq* was used to collect the sacrificial blood while a *sîr* was used to take away the fatty ashes.[152] By noting that both were used in temple activities, he may be suggesting that the *sîr* and *mizrāq* were not so very different from each other, at least in terms of their value in the temple and perhaps as seen on a spectrum of sacred to profane.

In a slight shift away from defining bowl function, R. P. Gordon's work added an interesting nuance to my research topic as he examines archaeological findings of bowls, likely from the time of Zechariah. He notes that these bowls were inscribed with the letters, *qds*,[153] which reference the Hebrew word for "holy," *qodesh*, pronounced ko'-desh.[154] He points out that vessels with this inscription have been found away from temple sites and are differentiated from "most holy things" which would refer to bowls that remained in the temple.[155] He suggests that there is a possibility that the owners or makers of these bowls were inscribing them as a way of keeping the "legend" of Zechariah's prophecy alive.[156] A lovely nuance to this suggestion comes from Meyers and Meyers who propose that archaeological finds like these indicate that these bowls were not created consecrated, but were designated as such afterwards, and are holy

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[151] Kelso, 13.

[152] Ibid., 27.

[153] R. P. Gordon, "Inscribed Pots and Zechariah XIV 20-1," *Vetus Testamentum* 42, fasc. 1 (January 1992): 120, accessed December 21, 2017, DOI: 10.2307/1519128, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1519128.

[154] Brown, Driver, Briggs, and Gesenius, entry for "qodesh," *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs and Gesenius Hebrew English Lexicon,* accessed January 15, 2018, https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/qodesh.html.

[155] Gordon, 121.

[156] Gordon, 122.

independent of what they contain or what particular function they may have.[157] This perspective resonates loudly with me as I consider my own inclusive leanings, my research of bowls as metaphors for persons, and "bowl" as a metaphor for self.

Cultural Literature

I turned next to the literature on the culture of bowls, particularly of clay and pottery. In this area, the work of Alfred Searle and Suzanne Staubach on the history of clay was quite helpful to me. From Searle's book, *The Natural History of Clay*, I found the description of clay's chemical makeup fascinating, particularly when viewed through a metaphorical lens. He outlines the potential confusion about what actually defines clay and firmly states that, "there can be no doubt that, scientifically, clay is *not a mineral but a rock*."[158] Additionally, he underscores the importance of the addition of water to rock to create a plastic quality in clay. He states that, "So long as the clay contains a suitable proportion of moisture it is plastic and may be made into articles of any desired shape, but if the amount of moisture in it is reduced or removed completely, the material is no longer plastic."[159] He further outlines the historical construction of clay via sediment as well as various uses of clay for commercial purposes.

Staubach follows a similar path as she outlines the history of clay, but she does so through description of particular clay vessels and related accoutrements, such as kilns and pottery wheels. Her focus is less on the chemical composition of clay and more on the

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[157] Meyers, 486.

[158] Alfred B. Searle, *The Natural History of Clay* (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1912), 3.

[159] Ibid., 20.

human impetus to create things from clay. For her, the primary characteristics of clay are its ubiquitousness, its plasticity, and its durability after being fired.[160]

The work of both Searle and Staubach enriched my research as I considered the relationship between rock and water, which lies at the heart of what clay is. Correlations between clay's composition and the creation story from my own faith tradition allowed for deeper reflection on humanity's core characteristics as well as deeper connections to the research method materials I was planning to utilize. I ruminated on the necessary partnership between the two and the balance required to maintain a solid object. I thought about rock as a metaphor for the self and water as a metaphor for nourishment, inspiration, and catalyst. I had a deep sense of a true partnership between them. At the core of this partnership is an element (rock) that would only reach potential malleability, and perhaps functionality, through partnering with a lubricator (water). I was enchanted with this partnership and what I might learn about myself from considering it further. If I used clay as a metaphor for my human experience, what rocks were at my core? What lubricators were necessary for me to function? How might too much or too little in either element affect my own functioning? I held these questions and wonderings in one hand as I continued to read and engage with literature around clay bowls.

Steven LeBlanc and Lucia Henderson make clear in their book, *Symbols in Clay: Seeking Artists' Identities in Hopi Yellow Ware Bowls,* the very long tradition in creating bowls from clay. Their particular study aims to identify what makes clay bowls from the indigenous Hopi people unique and how to identify the maker(s) of such clay ware using bowl markings as identification. Although their research focused primarily on the Hopi,

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[160] Suzanne Staubach, *Clay: The History and Evolution of Humankind's Relationship with Earth's Most Primal Element* (New York: Berkley Books, Penguin Group, 2005), xii.

the shapes, functions, and techniques they described seemed to be common to indigenous traditions elsewhere. In fact, their work suggested to me that making clay bowls are ubiquitous to the human experience.

Taking a different view of clay bowls, Courtney Lee Weida looks in particular at the work of contemporary female artists working with clay in her book, *Artistic Ambivalence in Clay: Portraits of Pottery, Ceramics, and Gender*. Her research questions how "gender issues impact the ways in which we tell histories of ceramics, and how do they relate to present perspectives of artists working in the clay medium?"[161] I found her work fascinating, challenging, and helpful in thinking about how I, as a woman, might relate to clay and to bowls differently than a man; of how my female identity might allow and not allow me to relate in particular ways to clay and to bowls or vessels.

However, the writing that resonated most deeply from engagement with the cultural literature was by Bernard Leach, an English potter from the mid-twentieth century. His book, *A Potter's Book,* aims to be instructive to both potter and consumer, although it contains much technical information that I imagine would be of little interest to most people. A true craftsman, he writes with a passion for the material and the field of ceramics, encouraging potters to hold to a high standard in the face of increasing commercially produced pottery. As I considered making clay bowls, I was inspired by his calls to excellence. For example, he writes, "The upshot of the argument is that a pot in order to be good should be a genuine expression of life. It implies sincerity on the part of the potter and truth in the conception and execution of the work."[162] His descriptions of

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[161] Courtney Lee Weida, *Artistic Ambivalence in Clay: Portraits of Pottery, Ceramics, and Gender* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 1.

[162] Bernard Leach, *A Potter's Book* (London: Faber and Faber, 1945), 20.

the potting processes and personal reflections make for a rich study and consideration of art making. I found his writing poetic and honest and I was intrigued by his suggestion that function is a key principle of beauty.[163] This notation was an apt foreshadowing of the struggle I would soon encounter in my experience of making clay bowls.

Finally, I looked at the literature for inspiration and variation in the work of contemporary potters and ceramicists. Suzanne Tourtillott's book, *500 Bowls: Contemporary Explorations of a Timeless Design*, was valuable in helping me to think about form and function. Many of the examples in this book challenge the notion of what we might consider a bowl. I found the works were a catalyst for me in thinking about bowls and about identity. I asked questions like ,what makes a bowl a bowl? and a corollary, what makes a person a person? Is it a bowl because we say it is or because it has a particular function? Is it its shape that makes it a bowl? What are the core elements of a bowl? I felt compelled to explore this idea visually and began making drawings of bowls, trying to uncover the most elemental representation of a bowl. I share this experience more fully later in the paper.

This process was helpful for me in thinking about what lies at the heart of the definition of a bowl and at the heart of the definition of humanity. In a similar vein I asked, what makes me a chaplain? Is there an inherent quality to me being a spiritual care practitioner or am I one because my nametag says so? In considering these questions, I came back to my original hypothesis, which is that the core quality of a bowl is that it is *something that holds something else.* As to the question of what makes a person a person, this seemed much too complex to whittle down to a few pencil strokes. I had hopes that I

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[163] Leach, 8.

would uncover something in the research but also realized that the answers might lie beyond the parameters of this paper.

I concluded engagement with the literature and moved ahead with the experiential component of this research. It seemed to me that many questions had been generated through encounters with the literature and I was eager to explore them visually, beginning with, what makes a bowl a bowl? Not having the tools to work on my own at home, I joined a local ceramics class for beginner and intermediate ceramicists. Descriptions and reflections of that experience follow in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight

Engaging the Experience: Making the Bowls

To begin my experiential research on bowls, I enrolled in a local ceramics class for beginner and intermediate ceramicists or potters in early January 2018. In my class was a mix of people with a range of skills. Some were very adept and worked independently while others waited for weekly instruction from the master teacher. My skill level leaned more towards beginner than intermediate, but I had some basic knowledge of ceramics and how to use clay to make bowls. I vacillated between working independently and relying on instruction. The class ran once a week for ten weeks and activities were planned for the students to learn and develop skill in a variety of pottery techniques.

The making of clay bowls was my primary research method and I supplemented this approach with writing reflections as I had when making the mantle. However, my process was somewhat altered from that of the mantle. Firstly, I found the classroom setting, in which I was surrounded by other students, to be a significant challenge to recording immediate responses as I was making the bowls. Due to the messy nature of pottery, I was also unable to make physical notes or to dictate. Instead, I elected to pay very close attention to the thoughts and feelings that arose during the bowl-making activities and recorded them as best as I could later that evening or during the next morning. I left those initial writings alone for a few days and then returned to them to write reflections on those initial responses. In a similar process to that of the mantle, from this set of writings, I identified six emergent themes that I list below in order of their prevalence. These themes helped shape and categorize the findings of the research I

discovered during my art making. I found in them the gems of my instinctual, gut responses to the art-making process and from them I forge an understanding of key identity traits that will help increase self awareness and shape my spiritual care practice. The themes are: Language, Aesthetics, Tensions, Materials, Feelings, and Practice. For the purposes of this project, the category of Language includes instances where I was struck or strongly impacted by the language I encountered and explored, specifically within the art making process. Here I identify the category of Aesthetics as similar to the way I identified it within the Mantle section, as encompassing the artistic presentation of the vessels and including visual coherence, appearance, colour, construction, and pattern. However, I broaden it here to also include instances where I encountered a struggle between form and function and between beauty and ugliness. The category of Tensions relates to any two or more areas where I felt conflict. The category of Materials refers to my particular responses to the clay or the process of making clay objects. I include a Feelings category to focus on the significant role feelings played in my research activities and to point out how they were catalysts for my behaviour. Finally, I include Practice as a reference to my understanding of activities that relate more directly to my spiritual care practice. To highlight these themes in the written findings, once again I have added them in italics at the end of correlating sentences in the sections that follow.

As I have already stated, this encounter with clay and bowl making was an incredibly rich learning process for me. From being faced with my own fears about openly identifying myself as a Christian to responding to a repeated feeling of frustration with materials, I learned much about myself through process and through metaphor. What follows are the highlights of this engagement with clay and with the practice of making

clay bowls. I begin with some general overall notes on the experiences including my initial plans. I continue with specific references to findings that emerged from direct engagement with the materials. I have organized these findings into the categories of the pottery techniques I learned which are: Handbuilding: Coil, Handbuilding: Slab, and Throwing. Finally, I finish with comments on how the findings might be integrated into my understanding of self and my spiritual care practice. Images of the works in progress and finished works can be viewed in the Appendix.[164]

Beginnings

To help better communicate the general ceramic activity and research method used, let me explain the process I used to make bowls from beginning with the raw clay to completing the finished bowl.

Throughout the course, I made a number of bowls from soft clay using various techniques. Once a bowl's initial construction was finished, a drying stage followed to allow the bowl to firm up before I worked on it further. Normally this was a weeklong wait. At the second stage, the bowl was trimmed and slightly altered. After the second stage, it was ready for its first firing in a kiln. This first firing is called a bisque firing. The heat from bisque firing substantially changes the composition of the clay, making it much more solid and less fragile but still permeable. Glazes are often applied after bisquing to make the vessel impermeable. Finally, the glazed ware is fired in a kiln at a

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[164] I chose to use an appendix for these illustrations rather than inserting them throughout this section as I did in the previous section. My reason for doing this is that I believe it is helpful for the reader to see the bowls in various stages of completion, from the green ware stage to finished glazed ware. I believe including them in the text throughout would hamper the flow of the writing. Additionally, an appendix allows me to include all of the bowls I made, not just the ones to which I refer in the text. I see this inclusion as providing a fuller picture of the process and results to the reader.

higher temperature, which again affects the composition of the clay as well as the glaze. This is the general process used to make a relatively permanent piece of pottery. My aim with this description is to give the reader a sense of the time and activities required to make a bowl. This process was repeated for every bowl I made, and so a pattern and repetition of activities ensued, with bowls being worked on simultaneously at various stages in their completion.

Although I began the class with a rough idea of how to make bowls from clay, I did not posses a firm idea of how I was going to capture what I was experiencing. I expected that journaling and photographing the experience would be part of the research method, but because I was not able to foresee how the setting, people, and activities might impact and shape my research, I was not able to plan ahead and so did not begin journal writing or photographing until my third class. Thus, some of my earliest experiences have been lost to this project. However, much was apprehended and is described in the pages that follow.

As previously mentioned, I discovered that the group setting of my ceramics class would significantly impact my research process. The entire experience of conducting research in a group setting, without intentional group participation, was unsettling for me. Although I made conscious efforts to keep my research to myself and to not involve others in what I was studying, I found this separated me from the benefits of learning together *(Tensions)*. This was a constant inner conflict made clear in a journal entry from early February:

> I think I'm really feeling the limitations of my experience/skills as well as the makeup of the class. I am kind of working on my own, which others are doing as well, and also joining in for demonstrations that I think will be helpful for me

later. So I'm feeling a bit left out as well as happy to be left out, so that I can pursue my own things.[165]

The upside of working in a group setting was that it provided me with a place to examine how I function in groups. I found throughout the class that I had something of a love/hate relationship with group activities and having to rely on others. This was made clear to me during an instance when I had to rely on a technician to do her work in a timely manner so that I could proceed with mine. To my disappointment, I discovered her work had not been done on time *(Feelings)*. Part of my reflection on that event reads as follows,

> I know this was a feeling of disappointment for me...a step for which I had to rely on another person...How do I deal with those instances? I think I take them one at a time...sometimes I am able to wait and sometimes I am impatient.[166]

With a group setting as my only option for making clay bowls, and needing to rely on others to do their work in a reasonable time, I found I eventually fell into a rhythm of expectations from week to week. I was not aware of this during the research itself, but as I began to write reflections, I noticed a pattern of behaviour developing as follows,

1) I would head toward the class feeling very excited *(Feelings)*.

2) That excitement carried me into class and energized me as I sought my work from the previous week.

3) Over the course of the class time my feelings changed and, almost consistently shifted from excitement to frustration and/or disappointment *(Feelings)*. This was

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[165] Personal journal entry, February 6, 2018.

[166] Personal journal entry, February 13, 2018. It is important for the reader to note that I utilize ellipses as a punctuational pause in my journal writing. In the text presented here the ellipses are from the original journal entry and do not indicate an omission in the text.

due either to work not turning out as I had expected or work not being fired on time.

4) By the end of the class, I had almost always achieved a sense of resignation or closure. Somewhere along the way, I was able to shift my perspective, get some help, or lower my expectations so that I could achieve some closure on the class and work.

I was surprised to find this became quite a firm pattern for me. Realizing it gave me a sense of hope that I contain an ability to face frustration and disappointment quite regularly and am able to find ways to accept it. This was an unexpected learning.

In addition to working in a group, another research characteristic that impacted the overall process of creating bowls was engagement with the clay. Engagement with such a visceral material profoundly affected me, as I became aware of my body's direct interactions with it *(Material, Feelings)*. This is aptly described in a journal entry from January 2018:

> I loved the feeling of this. Love the feeling of the clay beneath my fingers. Love the feeling of giving shape to something and seeing my "fingerprints" or my shaping marks, rather, on the piece. I think, "This is me making marks on this bowl. These are my hands that are making this."[167]

and again in February 2018:

> The physicality of the clay is something that is unique, though. It has little to do with my brain, at least at first. The first action or the action that regularly raises its head, is the tactile sensation of the clay. I can work with it, respond to the feeling, feel a spark of intuition/creativity and move towards that goal, then go back into feeling the material.[168]

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[167] Personal journal entry, January 30, 2018.

[168] Personal journal entry, February 6, 2018.

The clay not only inspired in me a sense of wonder at its tactile nature, it also occasionally engendered in me a sense of frustration as I strove to make it do things I was imagining it could do. I experienced both pleasure and frustration with its seemingly limitless flexibility *(Feelings)*. However, I soon discovered that it could only be pushed so far before it collapsed when too soft and wet or broke when too hard and dry. The clay reminded me of its limitations. From this I learned to be conscious of benchmarks or indicators when I was approaching the edge of what were these boundaries *(Materials)*. I learned to pull back and hold off.

As I strove to make as many different types of bowls as possible, using as many different techniques as I could, I very quickly engaged my own personal preference for certain shapes, textures, and colours *(Aesthetics)*. This preference, paired with my relative inexperience in working with clay, created an ongoing struggle between beauty and ugliness. I struggled to make the beautiful bowl from my imagination, but it often seemed the clay would not or could not comply with my hopes. From an early class I note,

> With one of the bowls I was making, at one juncture in the process, I paused, observed the pot and just saw ugliness. I didn't like it. I tried to convince myself of the inherent beauty in it, but really, I wasn't convinced. I did what I could to amend the mess, and kept trying to improve on it. I conceded that it wasn't likely to be something beautiful, but perhaps could be okay.[169]

As I was frequently faced with a bowl of which the parts or the whole seemed ugly to me, I was challenged to consider what I thought was beautiful. These thoughts naturally translated into questions about beauty and value *(Aesthetics)*. I asked, Is a thing more valuable to me because it is beautiful? Is a thing inherently more valuable if beautiful? How might that translate metaphorically? Is a person more valuable to me

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[169] Personal journal entry, January 23, 2018.

when beautiful? I considered these questions and tried to get at what I believed lay at the heart of the concept of beauty for me. My reflection reads,

> How might I bring beauty into my spiritual care practice? Can the practice be beautiful? How might that translate into practices? What makes something beautiful for me? Form, certainly. A coming together of various elements; a cohesiveness, even though the parts may seem disparate. If I can see a wholeness, a continuity, a completeness of some sort, then it feels satisfying for me; then I can see the beauty.[170]

I reflected further on this idea of wholeness by considering my work with those that have advanced dementia. As I reflected, I begin to draw conclusions about how beauty is related to connectedness, to its ability to connect. Connection is at the core of my work as a spiritual care practitioner, and the ability to connect is critical to my practice. In my reflection I consider,

> Maybe that's what makes something beautiful for me—a connection. The ability to connect with it somehow. For it to draw something out of me or touch something in me.[171]

The challenge of being faced with something that was not beautiful for me came up not only during the initial and middle stages of making bowls, but also at the final stages when glazes, colour, and other embellishments might be added *(Aesthetics)*. As I considered what to do with bowls that I found uninspiring and displeasing to look at, I reflected on ways to move forward with what I had available to me. I used the "I am a bowl" metaphor to consider how to approach finishing the bowls. I wrote,

> Remembering that beauty is important to me, how can I ensure [the bowls] reach their best selves? How can I do my best to ensure that? And what might that say about me as a bowl?...If I am the bowl, I would want the best opportunities for me to achieve my best self. I would want those in control to

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[170] Personal journal entry, February 6, 2018.

[171] Ibid.

seek the best for me; to not cast me off just because I initially appear to be unbeautiful, hobbled, a mishmash of clay bits.[172]

Throughout the classes, as I engaged the clay, I was also faced with the persistent question of what makes a bowl a bowl, and by extension, what makes a human a human and what makes a spiritual care practitioner a spiritual care practitioner? I contemplated my original hypothesis that a bowl is *something that holds something else*. As I worked with the clay, I held an inner dialogue, exploring the connections between my thoughts and my experience, demonstrated in the following reflection:

> ...wondering about holding as a bowl, as a person...wondering about the need to hold things as an aspect of being a person as well as being a spiritual care practitioner. Is that part of my true calling? To hold things?[173]

The dialogue continued throughout the class, in concert with my physical exploration of differently shaped bowls. Eventually, as I was working with a flat slab of clay, torn at the edges, I explored what might be at the very heart or foundation of identifying features of a bowl *(Aesthetics)*. I reflected later,

> Thinking also about shapes. the variety of shapes and structures that make up what we call a bowl. Might this speak to spiritual care practice and the variety of practitioners? Or to humans and the variety of humans? There seems to be such a rich connection between bowl and clay and human, actually, from base elements of rock and water to the ability to hold.[174]

These felt like such rich reflections to explore more deeply and broadly. I reflected further and considered function as a core element of bowls *(Aesthetics),* but this idea did not hold up when I connected it to the metaphor of bowls as humans. My firm belief is that our identity as humans has little to do with our ability to function in certain

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[172] Personal journal entry, February 27, 2018.

[173] Personal journal entry, January 30, 2018.

[174] Ibid.

ways. I believed there had to be some other core element of a bowl and I pushed to find it. I entertained the idea that *potential* might be a core element, the potential to hold something, and it seemed to me that this element soundly correlated to the metaphor of humans as bowls. Humans certainly held inherent potential to be humans, I believed. By contrast, the elements of function and of potential were reversed in importance when considering the metaphorical correlation between a spiritual care practitioner and a bowl. These ideas are illustrated in the quote that follows with my italicized emphases:

> And yet, I know that not all bowls need to function as bowls, that is, hold something tangible. So maybe it has to do with the shape...even just a suggestion of a curve...the *potential* to hold something, even if not the ability? Is it *potential*? The suggestion? Can I ask the same question of what makes a chaplain a chaplain? is it *potential*? No, the question doesn't hold there. [Chaplain] identity is definitely related to the tasks/duties. But what about as a human? I don't believe a human is constituted by what they can do. I think *potential* for doing something is a reasonable correlation to a bowl. So this works for the metaphor, "I am a bowl."[175]

This exploration of what makes a bowl, what makes a human, what makes a chaplain, resounded so deeply within me that during the day after my class, I was compelled to further explore visually what lies at the core of what constitutes a bowl. I was also hoping to glean more about what is at the core of being a spiritual care practitioner and what is at the core of being a human. I completed a number of drawings (see fig. 8.1), and as I state in my reflection from the day, "was hoping for a reveal of some kind that would tell me something else about bowls."[176]

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[175] Personal journal entry, January 30, 2018.

[176] Personal journal entry, February 2, 2018.
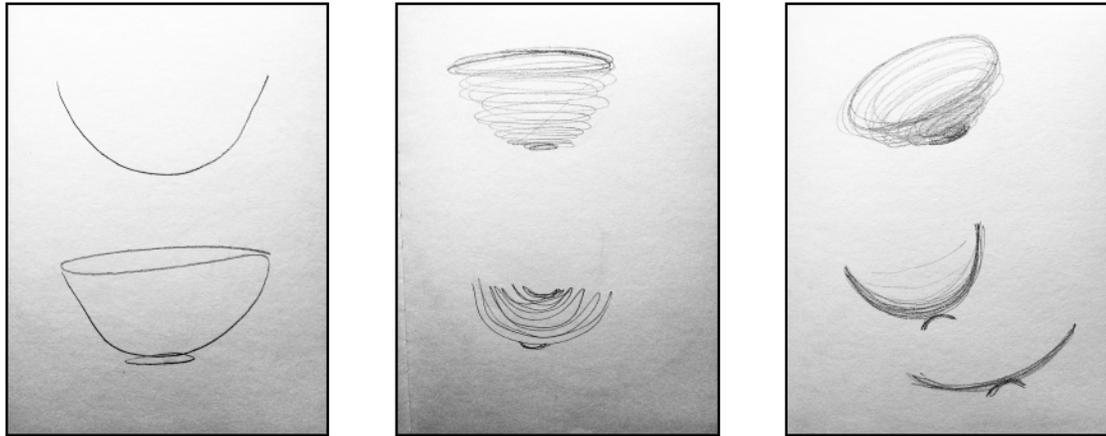
Figure 8.1. *Bowl drawings*

However, nothing significant about these connections was revealed during that creative activity. What I did experience was a deep joy at using visual media to explore an idea *(Feelings)*. I say,

> I appreciated that it felt right to me to do this exercise, though; that I felt compelled to visually explore the question.[177]

As my visual explorations continued at home, I turned from drawing bowls to thinking about the composition of clay where I also found richness in meaning. Thinking about rocks and water as the core composites of clay, resonated with me as a metaphor for humans who are also, at some level, composites of rocks and water. I made two paintings exploring these elements in a visually pleasing composition (see fig. 8.2). Of this exploration I wrote,

> My aim was also to create something for myself to remember the combination of the two elements as metaphors for my own life/my own being. One could spend a lifetime exploring the relevance of these two elements as analogical for one's view of personhood, it seems to me. I wanted a reminder for myself. I wanted to create something beautiful for myself that would remind me of the pairing of

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[177] Personal journal entry, February 2, 2018.

these two things: how I am made physically and also figuratively, from my faith tradition, of rocks and water.[178]
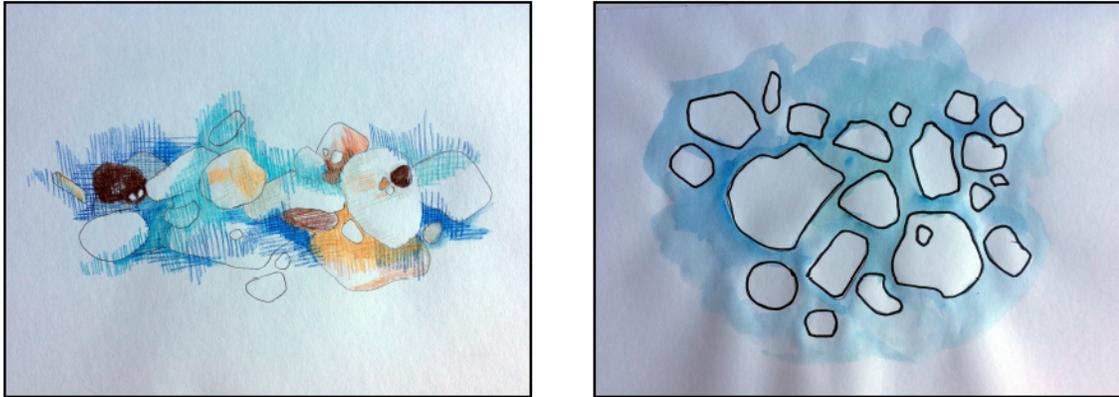

Figure 8.2. *Rocks and water paintings.*

I considered the presence of meaningful connections between the mentions of rock and water in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures and saw how these correlations could sustain a lifetime of wondering and connecting physical characteristics to metaphorical ones. The engagement with the clay and with the making of bowls expanded ideas so broadly for me, that I imagine these will resonate long after the research has been completed and will substantially inform my spiritual care practice. I can see the potentially infinite ripples moving outwards from the original engagement. I will address these ripples more fully later in this paper. For now, I would like to share more of the findings I discovered through the specific categories of making clay bowls.

An explanation of the categories may be helpful for the reader to more fully understand the processes I used to make bowls. I named these categories after the bowl-making techniques I used, with the two main streams being: 1) handbuilding and 2) throwing on the wheel. I understand handbuilding to refer to any approach to making

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[178] Personal journal entry, February 2, 2018.

things out of clay that does not involve using a potter's wheel. In handbuilding, the potter uses their hands and simple tools. The handbuilding techniques I learned were: making pinch pots, using coils, and using slabs. Throwing on a wheel involves using a potter's wheel along with a number of other tools besides hands. I will explain this technique further when throwing is discussed later in the paper. For now, we continue with handbuilding techniques.

Handbuilding: Coil

Building with coils is a challenging task. Although it is likely one of our first experiences with building clay objects, creating a good coil is not easy. This struck me a number of times as I tried to do what I considered a simple task: make a snake shape out of a ball of clay. This snake shape is the coil. Achieving an even thickness throughout the length of the coil was a greater challenge than I anticipated but I persisted, stopping occasionally to alter the direction the shape was heading. My aim was to create a bowl out of coils, beginning with a base shape of a flat circle of clay and building up the coils around the outer edge of the circle. In order for the bowl to be made whole, the coils had to be scored and moistened across their length and then blended into the coils preceding them. In a photograph of my Transformation Bowl at an early stage, the coils and the blending can be observed (Appendix, fig. 10.6).

My Transformation Bowl was designed to be a visual representation of the moment of transformation mentioned in the Zechariah passage I explored in the religious traditions literature. In this passage, a transformation happens between a *sîr* (a commonly-used, high-sided, round, small-mouthed bowl or pot) and a *mizrāq* (a sacred,

wide-mouthed, low-sided bowl or pot). With Transformation Bowl, I attempted to explore how those shapes might be transformed from one into the other. When viewed from the side, the difference in shapes is observable.

Working on this bowl was a challenge for me right from the beginning because, although I had made a few initial sketches of the imagined bowl, executing it was a journey into the unknown. I reflect on the challenges of risking the unknown in this journal entry from January 30, 2018:

> I think I can make something as beautiful and functional as I can, at the same time acknowledging that there are limits to what I can do because I don't know everything. What I would like to do is capture the feeling of excitement in the face of the unknown instead of fear or apprehension in the face of the unknown.[179]

In reflecting on the process of making this bowl, I recognize in this comment my hope to capture that same feeling of excitement when faced with the unknown in my spiritual care practice. I would like to choose to face the unknown with excitement and anticipation. It seems to me that the creation of this bowl underscored my hope to do just that *(Practice)*.

Through the handbuilding process and the making of this particular bowl, I found myself surprised at my general response to the activity *(Feelings)*. I seemed to gain a new understanding of self. I explored that knowledge further in a reflection that reads,

> This working with the clay feels revolutionary to me and somehow important; is it a revel in myself? In my ability to make a mark? to just enjoy how my fingers/body and mind work together?...reveling in my hands and mind (the knowledge) and spirit (hope) working together towards making a whole. That seems a good thing to me. Reveling in my own knowledge is repulsive to me and raises so many red flags about pride and vanity. It is a curious dance to celebrate oneself.[180]

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[179] Personal journal entry, January 30, 2018.

[180] Ibid.

I created a number of bowls using the coil handbuilding technique. All of them bore somewhat of an organic, perhaps lop-sided shape. With my predilection for perfectly round, geometric shapes, I was somewhat agitated by this, but I strove to stretch myself and to think about beauty and function in different ways. I felt determined to pursue my goals as best as I could regardless of the challenges I faced. In the creation of the Holy bowls, I met an unexpected challenge.

Holy Bowl 1 and Holy Bowl 2 (see Appendix, figs.10.3 and 10.10) are bowls I designed based partly on a quote from potter Bernard Leach. In *A Potter's Book* he identifies patterns as "concepts of decoration reduced to their utmost simplicity and significance. They are analogous to melodies in music and proverbs in literature. Their significance is enhanced by directness of personal statement."[181] I took his suggestion, blended it with the Zechariahan notation of bowls being marked "holy," and then designed two patterns that would reference the word "holy." The reader will notice that the pattern on Holy Bowl 1 is more overt in its decoration than the covertly patterned Holy Bowl 2.

With Holy Bowl 2, I created a pattern from the areas of negative space found in a cursive writing of the word "holy" so that the loops of the ascending "h", "l" and the descending "y" all became solid, filled forms. Similarly, the closed space of the "o" became part of the pattern, too. I applied the pattern using a brush and a stain after it had been bisque fired. I felt as if I had a secret embedded in the pattern that was visible only to myself. This felt good and right to me *(Feelings)*. However, when it came to Holy Bowl 1, my experience was dramatically different.

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[181] Bernard Leach, 101.

With Holy Bowl 1, I decided to create a pattern out of the word "holy," by cursively writing the word "holy" in a continuous line all around the inside of the bowl. At first, it seemed a brave action to me to so obviously declare my faith in this way. I note in my journal that the "religious connotations" to the word "have me feeling insecure and shy."[182] My first thoughts read,

> I think I'm afraid of offending someone or by having a conversation, I may end up offending someone, because so many Christians have behaved in ways that are not respectful of others. I don't want to be aligned with them."[183]

Despite my misgivings, I began the patterning anyways and was soon observed by both my instructor and a fellow student, both of whom commented on how the patterning was taking shape and indicating an appreciation for how it looked. I noted that I immediately felt flustered by the encounters and didn't know how to respond to their comments. I stuttered a brief description of what I was planning as well as some statements of gratitude, all the while feeling a sense of shame and anxiety about what I was doing *(Feelings)*. Once these people moved away, I wondered what had happened for me. I wondered where these unexpected feelings had come from, and why I had behaved the way I did. As I was later able to reflect on the incident, I realized that I had aligned the word "holy" with my own faith tradition. I had made a firm correlation where there is actually none present. It seemed to me that this was at the heart of my discomfort. I wrote,

> If I remove the connotations [between the word holy and Christianity] for myself, I feel freed of the implications and the discomfort. Because I love the idea of the inscription and the tradition of writing on the bowls and the transformation of the bowls in Zech. If I focus on these aspects, I love the

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[182] Personal journal entry, March 5, 2018.

[183] Ibid.

meaning behind this activity. Fear and suspicion snuck into this, though, and I don't know from where...from the past, I suppose. Also, the unfounded but adopted belief that "holy" belongs to the Christian linguistic tradition, which it does not.[184]

This was a significant encounter for me and provided a good challenge as I considered my own understanding of myself as a Christian as well as my sense of how Christians and Christianity are received in my world. The encounter also prompted me to think about the correlations between myself as a bowl and as a spiritual care practitioner *(Practice)*. I asked myself, How do I or will I address the notions that, for some folks, chaplaincy equals Christianity or equals clergy? In my spiritual care practice, I have previously dealt with this issue and I continue to face this assumption. As familiar as this issue is to me in my practice, I was somewhat surprised to discover that a related assumptive view existed in me. The encounter highlighted for me this assumption and I value it as a result, although the encounter was initially full of discomfort and unease. As I now conclude sharing the findings from the Handbuilding: Coil category, I hope to describe equally valuable experiences using other bowl-making methods.

Handbuilding: Slab

Handbuilding with slabs is a different experience from coil building. A slab is a flat sheet of clay that can vary in thickness. I normally used a thickness of about one quarter inch in my work. Once reached the desired thickness, slabs are sometimes laid within or on top of a mold of some kind and left there to dry, where they assume the shape of the mold. Broken Bowl and Water Bowl are made using a this kind of slab technique (Appendix, figs 10.14 and 10.17). Broken Bowl was made by tearing off pieces

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[184] Personal journal entry, March 5, 2018.

of clay from a larger slab and then scoring and blending the pieces together to make a whole. It was made by placing the joined pieces inside a mold to create a specific shape. I modeled this bowl after the Japanese technique of *kintsugi*, which is a process whereby broken pots are made whole again using precious metals as bonding material. In this process, the broken pieces are made both useful and beautiful again, while the effect of the metallic bonds helps to elevate the bowl from its original state. Its brokenness is highlighted almost like scarring, and increases the value of the bowl. I was so enchanted by this technique and the metaphorical suggestions it communicated about value in brokenness, that I wanted to ensure I captured that in my own bowls *(Aesthetics)*. I wanted to explore the process of making such a bowl as well as have the reminder for myself of my own brokenness and inherent value. While I was not able to use precious metals to create bonds, I elected to create seams in the bowl, rather than intentionally breaking it, to emulate a *kintsugi* bowl. The darkened seams and the rough, uneven edges remind me of my own brokenness as well as a wholeness and a beauty in spite of the brokenness. The bowl seems to me a very powerful metaphor not only for how I see myself but also as a reminder for how I see others, especially my clients *(Practice)*.

The second bowl I made from a slab challenged again in me the notion of what makes a bowl a bowl, the form versus function debate that pervaded my ceramics research *(Aesthetics)*. Out of what seemed to be a small, insignificant slab of leftover clay, I was able to envision something like a bowl; something that might hold something else. Using a variety of supports, I created a shallow, wave-like bowl, which I eventually titled, "Water Bowl." From my journal entry that day I ask,

> what constitutes a bowl? Is it the shape? the function? the materials?...Am still excited about these questions...There is something here to be plumbed/explored

it seems. Something to keep wondering about. What makes a SC practitioner one? Is it the function? Is it the title? What makes Wenda Wenda? Is it the things she does? Is it the person she is? They are intertwined, I think.[185]

These questions kept returning to me for the duration of the research project as I wrestled with a form that seemed to have a distinct function. The questions continued on in another guise as, What makes a human a human? This query seems to lie at the heart of my spiritual care practice: to identify, highlight, invite out, and celebrate the humanness of others *(Practice)*. As these questions lingered in my mind, I moved away from handbuilding and began to engage them using a potter's wheel.

Throwing

A potter's wheel is made up primarily of a small, flat, round base on a housing about eighteen inches off the ground. The wheel is powered by foot and/or by electricity and spins in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction. One sits on a stool facing the wheel, with one leg on either side of the housing. A pedal for controlling the speed is nearby for ready access to the potter's foot. The potter rests their elbows on their upper legs and leans over the wheel sufficiently so that both hands can meet roughly in the centre of the wheel. In this way, the potter creates a solid foundation from which to apply even pressure to counteract the centrifugal force created by the spin of the wheel. Objects on the wheel are drawn to the outer edges due to the force. The potter works against or with that force, pushing and pulling the clay to create a shape. Because of the constant force and movement, bowls thrown on the wheel often have an evenness and regularity of form, rather than the organic, uneven, and irregular shapes that tend to emerge from handbuilt work.

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[185] Personal journal entry, January 30, 2018.

I was drawn to working with the wheel for many reasons. A significant one for me was the language around this technique. Many of the words used in throwing have meaningful, if not profound, correlations in the non-ceramics world *(Language)*. For example, the key to making bowls or any vessel on the wheel involves a process called *centering*. Centering is the foundation of throwing on a potter's wheel. A lump of clay is placed at the centre of the wheel, a small amount of water is dripped over it, and the potter increases the speed of the wheel. With elbows firmly placed on legs, the potter applies even pressure from both hands to the lump, adding water as necessary. The potter can feel where there are irregularities and, as she applies pressure, decreases these irregularities. The final result is a lump of clay that is perfectly centred on the wheel. This is the optimal position from which to make a vessel. Clay that has been centred properly creates the foundation for an easier and more even distribution of clay as well as thickness and shape. Without centering, vessels will be lopsided, uneven, and can even collapse. In a similar way, centering is critical to my own spiritual care practice. Being rooted and firmly centred in my own beliefs and values allows me to operate from a place of groundedness. When I am off centre, I am out of alignment and this impacts how I provide care to both my client and myself. Centering is a key concept in both practices and is difficult to master in either realm. As I spent much time learning how to centre on the potter's wheel, I contemplated how critical it was as well as how difficult to do properly.

In ceramics, proper centering is dependent on two things: pressure and lubrication. Pressure from my hands, arms, and shoulders force the shape of the spinning clay. Lubrication prevents the clay from drying out and creating friction. Both are

necessary for the creation of an evenly shaped bowl. As I spent time learning how to

centre my clay, I considered,

> So when I'm under pressure, what is my lubrication? Pressure is another setting
> where I need to self-empathize and apply self-care. This is important for me to
> remember because I think I regularly expect myself to function well under
> pressure. If I imagine myself as a bowl being shaped under pressure, I am much
> more likely to open and comply when there is lubrication. Can I self-lubricate
> when I find myself in a situation?...Can I accept that without lubrication things
> might go awry?[186]

In fact, my reflexive and reflective writing were overpopulated by thoughts and reactions

to the concept of lubrication. I moved beyond the clay experience and continue to

consider how lubrication and friction might play a role in my encounters with clients

(Language, Practice). I wrote,

> Friction comes so quickly without lubrication. So if I think about how friction
> comes in a meeting with a client, I think about the many ways I can try to
> reorient or reshape the conversation so that it goes more smoothly. Apologies
> and a stepping back can sometimes achieve this. A clarification of statements can
> be the answer. Is it all words? Can a touch achieve the same thing? Not sure. At
> this point, I imagine words of comfort and clarity as lubrication...I wonder also
> about embracing the friction when it comes; if it always needs to be
> eradicated.[187]

The existence of friction and lubrication are a constant in the process of throwing

on the wheel. They are never fully eliminated at any stage. As I moved from learning

how to centre properly, the next stage was to "open up" the clay. In this stage, while the

clay spins, the potter applies pressure with a thumb or finger on the top of the lump,

pushing downwards. Once a hole has been created, a combination of fingers inside the

lump and fingers outside the lump begin to pull upwards and slightly outwards. Key to

this process is the even application of pressure and pulled direction, as well as

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[186] Personal journal entry, February 13, 2018.

[187] Ibid.

lubrication. The pulling needs to happen simultaneously with both hands in play, one on the outside and one on the inside. This action is done repeatedly until the vessel is the size, shape, and wall thickness that are desired.

In this process, I again encountered the importance of lubrication in the presence of friction. My reflexive writing reads,

> I have to stop mid-pull because I can feel that the clay is too dry and I am going to have problems if I continue. I add water again and loosely run my hands around the outside of the vessel as it turns slowly, mimicking my instructor.[188]

As I later considered the impact of this process during reflection, I gleaned a valuable insight about the importance of stopping mid-pull and pausing *(Practice)*. I wrote,

> I like the reference to a pause here. It seems easy for me to correlate these events to spiritual care visits...but I think I need to relate them more closely to identity. What might this tell me about myself?...that when I feel friction coming on, I take a pause. Yes! A pause...to pause after the sensory experience so as to make the fullest meaning possible, rather than jumping to conclusions. So a pause, to lubricate (self-care, self-empathy) and then to continue.[189]

There were a number of other processes related to throwing, such as "anchoring" and "trimming," that also yielded richly beneficial reflections on my practice and sense of self. The length of this paper prevents me from sharing all I have learned. However, I have a sense that, as I live with these objects, their impact on me will continue to shape my sense of self and my practice. As I draw to a close this description of findings from my research with making clay bowls, I am certain that I am not yet finished with the bowls nor are they finished with me. I now continue this paper by describing the integration of my encounter with the religious and cultural literature on bowls and with the experience of making bowls.

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[188] Personal journal entry, February 13, 2018.

[189] Ibid.

Chapter Nine

Insights

In seeking insights from my research into bowls, I identify an overarching theme as well as a collection of smaller relevant themes. The smaller themes I have once again organized into categories of Habits and Groundings, as I did with the mantle research. In terms of Habits identified, I distinguish four and I see them as deeply interrelated. They are: Expectations, Control, Limitations, and Perfectionism.

Regarding the first Habit I identify, my experience in making the bowls was peppered with expectations: expectations that coil building would be child's play, expectations that what I made would be naturally beautiful and useful, expectations that what I initially envisioned would be achievable, expectations that I would receive sufficient instruction when needed, expectations that what I created would remain whole and solid throughout the process. I experienced a sense of failed expectations frequently and needed to find ways to process those sensed failures. Illustrated through the bowl-making process, I began to see a two-pronged solution. Firstly, I could reduce or lower my expectations and try to be more open to experiences as they unfold. Secondly, when faced with a sense of failed expectations, I could try and consider alternate views to the experience. In the example described below, I was able to do this with a thrown bowl that collapsed on the wheel as I was pulling it into shape. I say,

> I try to fix it and just make it worse. [The top of the bowl] separates from the base. I bunch up the top part of the clay and put it aside to rest. I wonder if there's a possibility of creating a bowl out of the clay that is left on the wheel and I risk it by trying. I pull a small bowl up from the base. It is not pretty to me; I am not attracted to the shape it makes, at least from the outside, but the bowl

> shape on the inside is pleasing. I decide to keep it and I finish it off, thinking I can maybe change the shape of the outside once it is leatherhard.[190]

and my later reflection reads:

> I like this practice of seeking to redeem what is left after the event of something going wrong. I think it demonstrates a healthy attitude towards failure...or is it a deference to the need to fix something? No, I don't think so. I can't fix the original bowl, but I can look and try to bring up something good from the ashes.[191]

The repeated encounters with failed expectations supplied ample opportunity to consider how to process the conflict within me. As I consider the many times I encountered failed expectations in the research, I see I was able to utilize a variety of coping strategies to shift my thinking some of the time, and to apply self-care other times. I see that expectations are a part of my life experience and will be a part of my spiritual care practice as well. Broadening my coping strategies to better address this Habit will benefit myself as well as those I serve.

The second Habit, the issue of Control, is not a new one for me, and, as with Expectation, I believe is a relatively common human experience. In the context of my research, dependence on others and lack of experience were key characteristics in my struggle with control. Frustration was a key feeling associated with it. The experience in my ceramics class seemed to mimic what was happening for me outside of class as well, as job changes and family trouble erupted partway through my research process. I felt confronted by a lack of control over so many things. In my journal entry from late February I note,

> I can't move forwards with confidence; there are too many things that I am not in control of. So what do I do with that? How do I sit with the tension? How do

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[190] Personal journal entry, February 27, 2018.

[191] Ibid.

I alleviate it? Do I self-medicate with distractions? I think I am just doing what's in front of me, but it feels so much less than satisfying. It's like I am trying to learn to be satisfied with less.[192]

In the context of the ceramics class, I felt a loss of control over process, since I needed to rely on others to fire my work when they had time. I felt a loss of control as I engaged with materials that were somewhat unfamiliar to me. Again, this created a feeling of frustration in me. As I consider the implications of this experience for my spiritual care practice, I can see from my journal entry that I have an awareness of this frustration and am trying to consider what to do about it. This awareness seems to be a call to me to consider how to broaden my coping strategies.

The third Habit theme I identify is that of Limitations. Here I identify limitations as those things that limited my ability to do my work, such as an unfamiliarity with the clay and lack of experience with ceramics techniques. In facing these limitations, I felt not only frustration but also disappointment. At one point in my reflections, I noted that it was my lack of knowledge about drying processes that limited my ability to make good decisions about making my bowl. I continued reflecting and moved to blame others as the cause of my unhappiness. From there I blamed the system altogether that hadn't prepared me nor made it easy for me to succeed. Then I paused and noticed where I had gone in my reflections. I began to ask myself questions instead as I tried to navigate my inner conflict. I asked, What can I do about a system that is not functioning well? I answered this way:

> I can complain. I can vent. I can try to get help on my own elsewhere. I can try to directly ask for/demand the things I need. I can go to other areas of the system

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[192] Personal journal entry, February 27, 2018.

to share my concerns. I can take the opportunity to respond to the class assessments to share my concerns.[193]

As the class progressed and my limitations were frequently realized, a change in me began to take place as I faced these challenges again and again. Eventually, I began to see a way to accept my inexperience. I commented on this in a journal entry following the experience of making a bowl on the wheel that ended up off centre and of uneven thickness. With the input of my instructor, I decided to leave it as it was and to move on. I noticed that this was a change for me in behaviour and attitude and I commented as follows,

> To my surprise, I agree and allow the work to be what it is, and in a way this seems to honour my limits and inexperience as somehow not lacking but more of a recognition that good work can be done even with inexperience. I know this to be true and for me to embrace it is a good thing, I think.[194]

I found that eventually, even or maybe because of a repetition of these limitation challenges, I was able to find new ways of coping with them. I see this as immensely beneficial to me in terms of increasing strategies to face challenges, especially ones that seem habitual or common to me.

The final Habit I name is Perfectionism. Being confronted with this trait again in this part of my research has only solidified for me how deeply this personality trait runs in me. It has been a humbling experience to realize how it pervades my life experience. However, the opportunity to examine it and reflect on it within the context of my research has given me greater perspective and allowed a gentler attitude towards its presence in me. The following journal entry illuminates this point:

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[193] Personal journal entry, February 6, 2018.

[194] Personal journal entry, February 13, 2018.

> I am not friends with the idea of making mistakes. I don't like seeming and feeling incompetent...the lean towards perfection or at least the best I can do, is significant. I think that's okay.[195]

As the particular class from which the reflection emerged progressed, I continued to muse on my inclination to perfectionism and realized a truth about myself in a later reflection. I say,

> Perhaps there are some or many who will happily be satisfied with less than perfect. I have to work at being satisfied with less than perfect, and it's good for me to practice it. This doesn't make me better or worse than another, but it is helpful for me to know this about myself, though, and to practice.[196]

It seems to me that learning to "make friends" with or to be hospitable towards my perfectionism will be key to managing this deeply-rooted trait.

As may be obvious to the reader, I see the Habits I've identified as strongly interconnected, and I suggest here that the Groundings I identify will be similarly linked. I identify my four Groundings as: Hope, Acceptance, Pausing, and Looking Again.

My first Grounding is the presence of Hope. Early on in my ceramics class, I came face to face with what seemed an innate ability in me to hope. I noticed, as I was willing a handbuilt bowl to hold together, that I would not give up on it. I state,

> I have a sense in myself of a hopeful feeling that I can make this work. I don't give up.[197]

Similar experiences were peppered throughout my experience of making bowls. Hope continued to arise in me in one form or another. Later in the course I paid closer attention to this rise and embraced it as good support for me. I say,

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[195] Personal journal entry, March 5, 2018.

[196] Ibid.

[197] Personal journal entry, January 23, 2018.

I like that I keep trying. I have a sense of pride about that; that I don't give up; that I am capable of determination. I don't think this is vanity or conceit; it is focus and maybe even a firm hope that things can change.[198]

Hope also impacted my encounters with the literature as I sustained hope about finding interpretations of scripture, which aligned with my own. Here hope was a driving force that kept me searching for affirmation and community. It is a grounding that I believe is as deeply embedded in me as my perfectionism.

Acceptance is the second Grounding I discovered or re-discovered in the research and it, too, is closely connected to my drive to perfect. For me, acceptance is the ability to let go of some expectations and to make peace with unexpected outcomes. As noted, I am naturally inclined towards perfectionism, and so I do not find acceptance an easy task. However, once again, the prevalence with which I was challenged to face failed expectations and unexpected outcomes, created opportunities to practice. Over time I found that by the end of each ceramics class I had achieved some degree of acceptance. In some instances, this looked like resignation, but I see it as a kind of acceptance all the same. As I concluded the ceramics class and considered how to complete the bowls I had created, I found myself faced with a barrage of memories of my initial plans and expectations. I sensed a need to find a way to accept that much of what I had anticipated had not come to fruition. As mentioned, practice had somewhat prepared me for this event. I write,

> This feels a little new to me; this practice of acceptance and not striving for perfection. Thinking about the process now, I can feel a sense of relief at abandoning perfectionism; it's so much work...Perhaps I can allow [my perfectionism] to "run free" when there is sufficient time and space to do so, and then to rein it in when neither space nor time are in abundance. Because

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[198] Personal journal entry, February 13, 2018.

there is something satisfying for me about striving to do better/best. That is a pretty good feeling...[199]

Coming to this kind of acceptance about my need to perfect allows me to honour my drive to make things well and yet provides a balance to this drive. It does not try to eradicate the perfectionism, but rather helps it to find a proper place that will augment my life and my practice. It reminds me of who I am and how to best work with all the varied parts of myself.

I learned to use my third grounding, Pauses, to create an environment where I can reconsider my initial reaction and perhaps make changes that are more beneficial. Pauses for me means stopping what I am doing, either by choice or by force, and taking a moment to breathe or reflect on what is presently happening. The value of pausing in relation to making bowls has already been noted previously in this paper. However, another reflection made during this research process identifies some broader implications of the benefits of pausing in life. It points to what might happen while we pause. I write,

> So perhaps waiting on the thing, ruminating, putting something away for a while, are all ways to allow the thing to bloom, yield...but also to allow myself and my natural inclination to hope, to see things in a positive light...[200]

In pausing, there is the impact of the pause not only on what I am involved with, but also directly on myself. Learning the value of a pause for myself as well as for those I serve, will be helpful in keeping myself grounded and providing time and space to reflect, to calm down, and to consider alternatives. I see it as a very useful tool and one I am grateful to have noted.

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[199] Personal journal entry, March 5, 2018.

[200] Personal journal entry, February 6, 2018.

The last Grounding I mention is that of Looking Again, which I see as a direct correlation to Pausing. Pausing allows for time to Look Again. Looking Again allows for reconsideration, a shifting of perspective, an assessment of the first look. It asks questions like, What did I miss the first time? When I look again, how can I see with a fresh eye? Looking Again is often what happens after the pause. The making of the Transformation Bowl was instrumental in teaching me the value of Looking Again. As the bowl began to take shape, I needed to let go of my expectations and to hope for a good ending. As it was built and I saw a loss of beauty in it, I had to find someway to accept that it was valuable anyways. Looking Again at it allowed for something else to emerge for me. Instead of perceiving of it in terms of form, I began to see it in a different light. I write,

> The more covered part reminds me of a sheltering place, a covered place while the lip is more inviting to drink from...there's probably something further to explore in that. Covering and inviting to refreshment...safety and hospitality...I really like thinking about it as both safety and hospitality.[201]

Looking Again allowed me to reconsider what seemed a failure or at least displeasing. As I looked again, with a fresh eye and non-judgmental heart, I was able to find something else in the work. As I further invest in this Grounding, I believe I will continue to uncover new ways of looking at things and situations that will expand my ability to cope and to serve well.

Having presented my learnings in categories of Habits and Groundings, I now turn to an overall theme that emerged for me in this study. The theme of Transformation arose for me as a significant motif late in the research. As I considered the original pericope from Zechariah 14, and the experience of making the Transformation Bowl, I now see the point of transformation as a profound and resonant place. It is the moment of

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[201] Personal journal entry, February 6, 2018.

transformation that inspires and resonates with me as an idea that best represents my current experience as a spiritual care practitioner and a human. The space where something is transformed seems to me a sacred space, a holy moment, a liminal place where nothing is certain or solid or complete. It may be, by nature, a place of ugliness or un-beauty because it is neither fully one thing nor another. In thinking about the research, this may explain my own disappointment with the state of the finished Transformation Bowl. Perhaps this bowl makes visible the difficulty in moving from one thing into another. This explains much to me as I consider my habits of expectation, control, limitations, and perfectionism all being challenged within a context of transformation. All of these habits would come into conflict in a setting of transformation. As I further consider the impact of transforming, lingering questions emerge in me. I ask, Is transformation a one-time event or can it be life-long? If transformation is life-long, how does that impact my ability to function? How does it impact my ability to know myself? To know others? How might this perspective affect my interactions with clients, if I begin to see them as beings in a constant state of transformation?

This is not a new idea, I realize, as I can recall various poster texts and Internet memes encouraging a perspective that would see all people in various stages of growth. This prevalence is certainly related to what I am asking. What resonates with me from this project, however, is that true transformation is difficult, not pretty, and also suggests a profundity. This thinking about transformation has contributed to my understanding of self as I envision myself in a moment or moments of transition, being transformed from the daily, functional bowl of the kitchen to the holy, sacred bowl of the temple and, perhaps, back again. Rather than a focus on the end result though, I am spellbound by the

moment of transformation, the years of transformation, and maybe even the lifetime of transformation. This suggests to me another lingering question: What might it mean to live fully in a state of perpetual transformation? At present, my gut response is to turn away from that possibility. At the moment, it sounds too unsettling. My initial reaction is to imagine it as living in constant change, with repeated failed expectations, a loss of control, a continual facing of limitations, and a perpetual need to make things perfect within this context. However, when I consider my own Groundings and other coping strategies, I realize that I might already be engaged in just such an ongoing, continuous transformation. I might already be living in a context where constant change, failed expectations, control issues, limitation challenges, and conflicts with perfectionism are rife. This is the stuff of life, I think, and a shift in perspective, a shift in standpoint, will allow me to see these things not as failings or shortcomings, but rather as the context in which I personally and perpetually live. When I pause, I can see what are my habits and remember what are my groundings. In this way, I can better manage the constant challenge of transformation and can more fully integrate my research learnings. Having thus integrated some of my research findings, and describing my hopes for other parts to be integrated in the future, I move now to conclude this section on bowls.

Conclusions

I began this Bowl section with a story about offering spiritual care to a young woman and, in that context, I imagined myself as a bowl and a bearer of bowls. This image became a catalyst for me to seek further meaning in the metaphor "I am a bowl" and to pursue this by engaging with tradition through religious and cultural literature.

Following that study, I embarked on a journey of creating clay bowls where my experience was captured in reflexive and reflective journaling. Out of these notations, I drew insights on pronounced themes. I examined these themes and drew meaning from them regarding how they might speak into the formation of my personal and professional identity. I reflected further on what I might learn about myself from this inquiry and identified what I termed Habits and Groundings. I teased out the meanings these might have for me and described how I imagined integrating what I had learned into my life and my spiritual care practice. The theme of transformation continues to linger with me. My initial questions of What makes a bowl a bowl? and What makes a human a human? continue to gently prod me to wondering. I have been moved into related areas where lies the conflict between form and function, between beauty and ugliness or non-beauty, between the sacred and the mundane. I believe these are good places for me to be and from which to question. I see these seemingly opposite tensions as rich with possibility for exploration and growth; for transformation of both my own self and the way I practice spiritual care.

As my core research comes to a close and my individual projects are completed, I turn, in the following pages, to a more general reflection on the entire process of this inquiry, hoping to uncover further themes from which to draw insight into my personal and professional identity and my understanding of myself.

Chapter Ten

Meta-Reflection and Final Conclusions

For human beings the drive for meaning, the drive to have what we encounter, endure, create, feel, and think in our lives make sense in an integrated manner, rivals the drive for physical survival.

— Patricia O'Connell Killen and John deBeer,
The Art of Theological Reflection

As I draw this research project to a close, I would like to spend some time conducting a meta-reflection on the process and the findings. I root this work in the definition of the prefix *meta* as a "passing over, or a going from one place to another"[202] and see myself moving on from this research project to another stage in my life as a spiritual care practitioner. I wonder about what I am bringing with me and what I am leaving behind. I ask myself, What new things have I learned? and How have I revisited older lessons? I also think about how I can share what I have learned. Looking back on the work done with mantles and bowls, I can see similarities in themes, habits, and groundings, which I outline below.

The theme of Tensions runs through both Mantle and Bowl. In this theme I see the demand to hold two or more areas in tension, such as, struggles between the function and non-function of an object, between holding on to an original idea and adapting to needed change, and between the desire to just make art and the need to stay focused on the research. In this research, I frequently felt the need to hold things in tension. Because of this research, I have come to see Tensions as an underlying constant of human experience and life. The challenge ahead for me lies in my ability to continue to hold such tensions until shifts occur, either internally or externally.

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[202] Kennedy, foreword in *Thou Art That* by Joseph Campbell, xvi.

I can see the theme of Aesthetics in both the Mantle and the Bowl. My research demonstrated for me how deeply and personally this concept is rooted in me. I now recognize my own need to pay attention and tribute to it. I have identified an ongoing, inner debate for me between form and function, beauty and non-beauty. However, I now know that I have choices about where I place my value in relation to aesthetics as well as how tightly I hold my definitions of beauty and worth. The constant engagements for me in this research between beauty and non-beauty, between form and function, and between function and non-function were equally rich and challenging for me. So much so, in fact, that I experienced an unsettling and shifting of aesthetic ideas I had believed were firmly ensconced in me. Much was called into question and this seems to me to be a good shift both personally and professionally.

I see the relevance of the Practice theme as an indicator of how I ensured that my research stayed on point with my research goals. The prevalence of this theme indicates that I was always thinking about how to integrate what I was learning about myself as a spiritual care practitioner and considering how to integrate my learnings into my practice. In fact, I found that my natural interest in applicability reached beyond simply personal metaphors ("I am a bowl" "Chaplaincy is a mantle") to include a broader section of humankind in my musings, so I asked questions such as, What makes a human a human? and What would the mantles of other practitioners look like? This demonstrates to me that I have already integrated, to a degree, my personal and professional identities, and that issues related to my profession, seep into my personal life. It seems clear to me, from doing this research, that my work is important to who I am and to what I do in life and

that I am continually seeking ways to improve my practice. It also reiterates for me my sense of how identity is held socially and in relation to others.

The emergence of the theme of Language in the research underscored for me how important communication is to me and what a rich resource language is for reflection. When I consider the rich etymology of the words I encountered, along with multiple meanings for some of them, I can reflect that the concept of Language resonated deeply and continues to resonate with me as a resource for making meaning and for discovering meaning that already lies within the texts.

As I move on from repeated Themes, I now turn to related Habits that emerged in the research. Although the words I used to describe these varied in the Mantle and Bowl sections, nonetheless I believe there are connections between them. The emergence of Perfectionism as a prevailing Habit in both Mantle and Bowl indicated to me how deeply embedded this trait is within me. Seeing it emerge again in Bowl after my Mantle experience, allowed me to look a bit closer at the impact it has on my interaction with the world. As well, its prevalence challenged me to view it in a positive light whereby I might consider seeing it as a catalyst for doing things well, rather than as something to eliminate. Learning how to see the drive to perfect as one approach of a number of approaches to life will, I think, bring me more flexibility and contentment. Practicing other approaches, such as a "good enough" approach, will additionally assist me in achieving good self-care as I accept my limitations and alter my expectations.

Limitations, Expectations, and the need to Control were Habits I identified in Bowl. I see all three of these as related to a Habit I noticed in Mantle, namely, the Reluctance to let go. In some ways, to me these are the natural byproducts of a

perfectionist viewpoint. It seems to me that perfectionism can create unrealistic expectations, which then come into conflict with limitations and lack of control. From this place, there will likely be a need to let go of initial expectations and, as I discovered in me, a reluctance to do so. However, over time and with practice, I observed that I was capable of letting go of the need to make perfect. There were two Groundings that helped with this, and again, I see them as different versions of the same concept.

With Mantle, I identified the Grounding of Rumination and Reflection as significant to my life. In Bowl, I identified Pausing and Looking Again as valuable practices. I now see the pausing and looking again, as natural elements of rumination and reflection. I also see them as key approaches to shifting my desire for perfectionism. When I pause, I stop making meaning. When I pause, I allow for space and time to enlarge and I invite an openness into the event. When I look again, I shift my perspective, almost as if I were sitting on the end point of a compass arm, as it swings away from the previous setting. I am still rooted to the central point (i.e. to the object, to the event), but am now trying to see the central point from a different angle, so that I have more than one place from which to make meaning. When I pause and look again, I am making room to wonder and to be curious, to reflect both on where I have been and where I am now. This ability seems to me to be one good coping strategy for addressing my need to perfect and the disappointing byproducts of that drive.

In addition to reflecting on these common Themes, Habits, and Groundings, I would like to reflect on a few questions that emerged for me during the actual art-making part of my research. I asked, How am I engaging the traditional and cultural literature as I work on the art? How is it directly impacting the work, if at all? At the end of Mantle, I

noted a sense of surprise at how little an impact the literature seemed to have made during the making of the mantle. However, looking back at the art-making experiences now, I can identify a number of impacts and subsequent integrations. I see the impact of the literature both visually within the object-metaphors and also in the questions posed throughout the art-making processes. For example, when I look at my mantle, I see the woven leather as emblematic of the skin used in the traditional, religious garments of the prophets, such as Elijah. Similarly, when I see the reflective beading around the collar, I remember the hermeneutics of Jewish scholar Cohen who claims a homonym between the Hebrew words for skin and for light in the Genesis story of God-given mantles. The literature enables me to revel in the notion that my own mantle is connected to a mantle of light through this textual interpretation and integration. I see the colour of my navy blue mantle as having a direct correlation to my own history of the church and of people in ministry. This connection leads directly to questions of legacy and tradition, to passing on of sacred gifts and to calling. All of these ideas are physically embedded in the mantle, and they stem from my engagement with the tradition through literature.

In similar ways, the bowls I created clearly integrate the ruminations, wonderings, and learnings from engagement with the literature. The physical scribing of the word "holy" as well as patterns made from the script connect the object to the Zechariah text where inscription is a key characteristic of the noted bowls. The Transformation bowl I created makes visible the point of transformation mentioned in the Hebrew text and is entirely rooted in that moment. Integration of tradition and experience is the foundation of this bowl. In addition to the physical and visual integration of tradition with experience in the bowls, I would also suggest that engagement with the literature shaped much of my

inner dialogue such as when I considered various iterations of holiness. This, in turn, led to questioning about how beauty and function are related to holiness and value. I asked, What makes something beautiful? What makes something or someone holy or valued? Both of these questions, in addition to others that arose, were prompted by my engagement with the literature. Now that I have come to the end of the research and have looked more closely at the evidence, I find that integration of tradition and experience is quite evident in the work itself as well as in the reflective writing.

As I work towards final conclusions, I want to briefly reflect on the discovery of at least one limitation I noticed in the research. While I was initially ecstatic about using metaphors as the origins for my research, I did find instances where the metaphors would not hold. I noticed this particularly for the bowl metaphor ("I am a bowl"). Function seems such a foundational element of this object that I struggled with whether the metaphor would hold at all once I determined that my identity was not entirely dependent on my function. The reader will likely have observed this to a degree in the reflective writings. I see this realization as a limit of the research as proposed and untested and am grateful for this learning. It has allowed me to see that, although metaphors function in many valuable ways when we try to make meaning, they may not function infinitely. In response to this insight, I have accepted the breakdown of the metaphor and yet held on to the findings that seemed to suggest valuable, meaningful connections between one thing and another. Lakoff and Johnson speak to the value of partial understanding as they state, "Metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally."[203]

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[203] Lakoff and Johnson, 193.

Final Conclusions

As I think about where I began with my research, I return to the stories that compelled me to seek out understanding of who I am as a spiritual care practitioner. I think about my experience of attending church as a child and my observations of ministers wearing dark-coloured suits. I remember the therapeutic process of unpacking my reticence to becoming associated with clergy as I imagined them and of the mantle image that arose from that process. I think also of the woman I encountered, and many others since, for whom I sensed myself as a bowl and bowl-bearer for their outpourings; as someone who holds something. I consider the many unmentioned stories that have brought me to the profession in which I am now firmly planted: stories of challenge as well as support. All of these have helped shape both my personal and professional identity.

The aim of this research paper at its origin was to explore how the practice of art making might in(form) the identity of a spiritual care practitioner. Arts-based research methodology was the underlying structure I chose for this exploration and arts-based methods were utilized in its pursuit. I created object-metaphor statements of identity and used them along with a type of theological reflection to help shape the research. I began by exploring tradition through the relevant religious and cultural literature on the topic areas. I then engaged experience by creating the objects themselves noting, both reflexively and reflectively, my thoughts and feelings about the process, with the aim to learn more about myself. From these reflections, I gleaned insights about my habits and my groundings, where my shortcomings lie as well as my strengths, and shared those insights in the previous pages of this paper. However, as Killen and deBeer note, "until

our lives change as a result of what we have learned, insight remains incomplete."[204] Therefore, I understand that change resulting from the research is integral to completion of it and attempt here to propose how things will change because of this work.

In thinking about change and forward actions from the research, I can identify a few things. For myself, I see the need to continue to learn about and to understand myself, both personally and professionally, since these constitute my identity as a chaplain. As Kelly notes in the epigraph to this thesis, provision of spiritual care begins with knowing who we are and what we bring. I have also been reminded of the value of art making for myself, both in the pleasure that it brings as well as its capacity to reveal answers to questions through its non-verbal characteristics and pathways. Art making is a great resource for me in terms of self-care strategies as well as a research methodology and method. I continue to see it as a particular way of knowing and a distinct epistemology.

In terms of change around me, I believe my research adds to the literature on identity research of chaplains. Through it I suggest an alternate way of exploring identity formation that is not rooted solely in psychological, religious, or ecclesiastical models. Through it I also highlight the potential value of using art making to seek answers to qualitative research questions. Although I remain a junior researcher, this work contributes to the literature and helps to close the gap on research in the area of chaplain identity. Though unique and particular, my research has the capacity to be applied more universally as chaplains and spiritual care practitioners reflect on their own identities and ways of learning about themselves. In the sharing of my findings, either formally or

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[204] Killen and deBeer, 43.

informally, I expand the knowledge of how we know ourselves and how art making might help us know more.

Perhaps the greatest change resulting from this research will be in how I interact with my clients. As I meet them, person-to-person and spirit-to-spirit, I will wonder about what unique things they hold, whether heavy or light, and what mantles, visible or invisible, they themselves bear. Change is also present in my increased attention to metaphors and to imagery that arise from my encounters with others. Change is present in my reaffirmed ability to reflect and to value time for reflection; in knowing that this time will continue to lead me to insights that have the potential to benefit both myself and those I serve.

The insight that lingers most strongly with me as a result of this research project is the idea of eternal transformation, which I see as constant change. Barone and Eisner speak about art making as a "process of discovery" from which the maker "must be willing to be educated—indeed to be transformed—in that process."[205] This idea resonates with me, although I would expand that process of discovery to be accessible in many areas, not just in art making. It seems to me that an openness to life experience through many approaches and an expectation of continual change will lead to discovery, knowledge, and transformation. In my move forward from this project, it has become an aim for me to become more willing, more open, and more fully transformed.

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[205] Barone and Eisner, 134.

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Appendix: The Bowls

Figure 10.1. Pinch pot, view A.

Figure 10.2. Pinch pot, view B.

Figure 10.3. Holy Bowl 1.
Handbuilding, Coil – Bisqued, view A.

Figure 10.4. Holy Bowl 1.
Handbuilding, Coil – Bisqued, view B.

Figure 10.5. Holy Bowl 1.
Handbuilding, Coil – Glazed.

Figure 10.6. Transformation Bowl.
Handbuilding, Coil.

Figure 10.7. Transformation Bowl.
Handbuilding, Coil – Bisqued.

Figure 10.8. Transformation Bowl.
Handbuilding, Coil – Glazed, view A.

Figure 10.9. Transformation Bowl.
Handbuilding, Coil - Glazed, view B.

Figure 10.10. Holy Bowl 2.
Handbuilding, Coil – Bisqued, view A.

Figure 10.11. Holy Bowl 2.
Handbuilding, Coil – Bisqued, view B.

Figure 10.12. Holy Bowl 2.
Handbuilding, Coil – Glazed.

Figure 10.13. Broken Bowl.
Handbuilding, Slab – Bisqued, view A.

Figure 10.14. Broken Bowl.
Handbuilding, Slab – Bisqued, view B.

Figure 10.15. Broken Bowl.
Handbuilding, Slab – Glazed.

Figure 10.16. Water Bowl.
Handbuilding, Slab – Bisqued, view A.

Figure 10.17. Water Bowl.
Handbuilding, Slab – Bisqued, view B.

Figure 10.18. Water Bowl.
Handbuilding, Slab – Glazed.

Figure 10.19. Thrown Bowl 1
Wheel Thrown – Bisqued, view A.

Figure 10.20. Thrown Bowl 1.
Wheel Thrown – Bisqued, view B.

Figure 10.21. Thrown Bowl 1.
Wheel Thrown – Glazed.

Figure 10.22. Thrown Bowl 2.
Wheel Thrown – view A.

Figure 10.23. Thrown Bowl 2.
Wheel Thrown – view B.

Figure 10.24. Reclaimed Bowl.
Wheel Thrown – Glazed, view A.

Figure 10.25. Reclaimed Bowl
Wheel Thrown – Glazed, view B.