Understanding the Soil in which the Seed is Sown: how Catholic Confirmation Candidates and Catechists Perceive and Experience Spirituality.

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<u>Abstract</u>

Spirituality is intrinsic to the Sacrament of Confirmation within the Roman Catholic Church. Enshrined within the rite of the Sacrament is the 'gift of the Holy Spirit' (*Order of Confirmation*, 2016). It has been referred to as 'the … 'sacrament of the Spirit'' (Rahner, 1975, p.5 ff) and a Sacrament that celebrates 'the Spirit of God' (Mick, 2006, p.18). The *Catholic Update Guide to Confirmation* (ed. Kendzia, 2012, p.21) refers to the Sacrament as potentially leading to a 'spiritual awakening'.

Using hermeneutic phenomenology, this thesis explores the perceptions and experiences of spirituality of 10 school age candidates for Confirmation (aged 11+) from three parishes. Interviews were also conducted with catechists (or peer leaders), three older adults and two young people aged over 18 but below 30. The conclusions drawn are intended to develop understanding of how young people may perceive and experience spirituality, not to develop generalisations to be applied without further work. The thesis also highlights potential lessons for catechesis moving forwards and areas for further exploration relating to spirituality within the context of Catholic Confirmation courses.

Within this thesis I argue that perceptions of spirituality of young Catholics preparing for Confirmation (the candidates) cannot be assumed. They may, for instance, be influenced by family activities and by those accompanying the young person on their journey through life. How the candidates perceive and experience spirituality may impact on how they interact with the Confirmation preparation programmes. These perceptions should be explored and understood in academic work and in the practical work of the catechists leading Confirmation programmes, through the lens of the young people participating in those programmes.

Key words: Catholic Spirituality; Children's Spirituality; Confirmation; Catechesis.

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<u>Preface</u>

My personal journey in respect of this research topic came from being a practitioner in Confirmation catechesis and having a desire to understand how the spiritual voice of the young people is heard on those programmes.

The United Nations Convention – *Rights of the Child* (2009) - states in article 12 that 'the child who is capable of forming his or her own views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.' (United Nations, 2009, p.3). The rationale for hearing the voices of students is well established in education (see, for example, Ruddock & Flutter, 2004; McIntyre, Pedder & Rudduck, 2007; & Rudduck & Flutter, 2010). Similarly, the case for hearing children and young people's voices has been well established in research, including research relating to spirituality (see, for example, Stockinger, 2019; & Heland-Kurzak, 2019). The age range of those involved in research defined by the terms children and young people varies, with young people potentially stretching to those in their twenties. This thesis will use the term young people to mean those at secondary school engaged as candidates on the Confirmation programmes in the parishes involved with the research. This thesis explores, from the perspective of a professional doctorate, the voices of those young people and the adults (that is the catechists) involved in three Confirmation programmes to explore how they perceive and experience spirituality.

Drake and Heath (2011) proposed that a practitioner's development researching for a professional doctorate (such as the Doctorate of Education) involves an overlap between workplace learning (in my case, my work as a catechist with young people on Catholic Confirmation programmes), academic learning (that is the doctorate of education) and developing self-identity (reflexivity). By utilising a reflexive academic study to understand and interpret spirituality within the setting of Confirmation courses (the workplace), the intention is to use the research to develop academic interpretations of the phenomenon of spirituality

from the perspective of young people participating in a faith-based course. By setting this within the context of how the catechists perceive spirituality and how the phenomenon is described in respect of works relating to the Catholic faith, it is hoped that the research will reveal any similarities and tensions between the various definitions of spirituality and inform future, workplace, practical based research around how the spiritual voice of Catholic young people might be incorporated into the dialogue of catechesis within Confirmation programmes.

My position as a catechist meant that the research undertaken was in some instances that of an insider (that is an active catechist in a local Catholic parish). As Hodkinson (2005), who focussed on 'insider research' in respect of youth cultures, noted the position of an insider, 'may offer significant benefits in terms of practical issues such as access and rapport' provided this is balanced by a 'careful, reflexive, research approach' (p.146). Drake and Heath (2011) proposed that 'the impact of the insider researcher of undertaking a doctoral degree is not largely on the workplace *per se* in visible differences to practice, but on the way the individual thinks about practice' (p.65). Invariably, as a researcher undertaking a doctoral degree, I also had to consider the position of the outsider, for example in terms of the journey of the young people today. Whilst accepting that the research has changed the way I think about the practice of catechesis, I argue that developing further understanding of how young people on Confirmation programmes may experience and perceive spirituality has the potential to influence the practice of Confirmation catechesis in the Catholic Church.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The first query to be answered in this thesis is why this topic? As a practitioner in Confirmation catechesis, I have over 20 years' experience working as a catechist within the Roman Catholic Church, in particular, working with young people approaching the Sacrament of Confirmation. I have delivered various programmes and witnessed young people engaging at different levels with the programmes and from different backgrounds. In this way, I have developed a 'knowledge of the community' (Drake & Heath, 2011, p.1), gaining 'knowledge-in-action' by undertaking the role of the catechist and applying that knowledge in an adaptable way, that is 'reflecting-in-action' (see Schön 1991, pp.54-58). As a catechist, I am interested in how young people respond to the Confirmation programmes and what they think of the material under discussion. From my perspective, Confirmation links to how a person lives their life and to their spirituality. As such, I became interested in how the young people on the Confirmation programmes may perceive and experience spirituality.

The young people with whom I have worked over these 20 years were aged from 10 to 17. It is the norm in the diocese of Nottingham for the Sacrament to be conferred by the Bishop in the relevant parish once every two to three years. As a catechist, working in a local parish, it is striking that numbers coming forward for Confirmation are, generally, 50% or less than those coming forward to make their First Holy Communion (at the age of seven or eight). For the last 12 years, the parish in which I work celebrated Confirmation prior to the summer holidays and distributed Confirmation certificates after those holidays. On each occasion, around one quarter of the certificates remained unclaimed. Young people coming forward for Confirmation did not always continue to attend Mass after their Confirmation. The local situation resonated with a concern expressed by Pope Francis to visiting bishops from Portugal when he spoke in 2015 about 'the large number of adolescents and young people who neglect the practice of Christianity after the Sacrament of Confirmation (Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Portugal on their "Ad Limina" visit, 7 September 2015). Reflecting on the pattern of Confirmed young people not participating in the Mass, led me to

query why this might be so. Specifically, I was interested in how the young people were engaged with the programmes and how their voices might be heard on these programmes.

Listening to, and hearing, the voices of young people on a Confirmation programme is not a concept that should cause any surprise. It is embedded in the United Nations Convention, *Rights of the Child*, which states in article 12 that 'the child who is capable of forming his or her own views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.' (2009, p.3) and is an established aspect of research around education and spirituality.

The emphasis on hearing the voices of the young people preparing for Confirmation receives added weight from the fact that Confirmation programmes often emphasize the teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) that young people are taking their own decision to be a 'witness of Christ' (CCC 1303). *YOUCAT,* a youth catechism, highlighted that 'to be confirmed means to make a 'covenant' with God' (2011, p.122). Gomez (who was a catechist for over 20 years) proposed the following statement in the Candidates' *Survival Guide to Confirmation*:

> Part of the Confirmation ceremony will involve you confirming [your] …baptismal promises and, by so doing, you will be declaring that you have decided to be a member of the Church – rather than your parents deciding for you (1985, p.10).

There has also been a call from Pope Francis (2019) for those working with young people to practise the 'art of accompaniment' – 'actively [listening] to the needs of young people' (*Christus Vivit* [CV] 246). If, as part of Confirmation, the young people being Confirmed take their own decision to be 'witnesses of Christ' (CCC 1303), it is crucial that their voices are heard by the catechists delivering the programme. The concept of catechesis, and the importance within it of hearing the voices of those with whom the catechist works, is explored further below.

<u>Catechesis</u>

Published Confirmation programmes available in England generally explore faith development and aspects of Catholic spirituality utilising faith-based language. The *YOUCAT Confirmation Book* (2011), explores, for example, aspects of the Catholic faith such as God, original sin, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, prayer, , the Church, the Eucharist, Confession and Confirmation.   If the catechesis becomes a religious education session around aspects of the Catholic faith and teachings, it may fall short of its intended aim. Catechesis is about more than the imparting of information. As with education, it needs to journey with the young people concerned and listen to their voices.

In 1978, Nichols, in guidelines on catechetics and religious education, outlined catechesis as being 'broadly defined as "a dialogue between believers'', which requires 'the assumption of faith in both the giver and the receiver' (p.15). He proposed that the emphasis in the catechesis of the young has moved away from content to process and form. He linked this to changes occurring in the educational settings in schools:

> …one reason for this is the idea of 'child centred education'. This is the idea that educational programmes should be dictated primarily by the varying intelligence and the changing needs and interests of children (p.73).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2003) also notes this aspect of catechesis when it outlines it as being:

> An education in faith of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of the Christian life (CCC II.5).

As a catechist, I undertook a training course for catechists run by the local diocese in 2012. Whilst that course explored catechesis and the role of the catechists, including the qualities a catechist might have, their life and commitment as a Christian and practising Catholic, the presentation was missing an understanding of the voices of those with whom they will be working.

The concept that catechesis should be more than just imparting information (that is the content) is, however, clearly seen in key Church documents. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997 [GDC]) spoke of the need to understand the situation in which the catechesis takes place. It quoted the 1971 Church teaching that:

> The object of this investigation is multiple: included are examinations of pastoral action and analysis of the religious situation as well as the sociological, cultural and economic conditions (GDC 279).

In *Catechesi Tradendae (*the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II *On catechesis in our time* [CT]), Pope John Paul outlined that catechesis is about more than teaching. In his exhortation, he linked the aims of catechesis to 'a matter of giving growth, at the level of knowledge and in life, to the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit' (CT 20)[1].

This thesis aims to explore the voices of those participating in Confirmation programmes on spirituality in order to understand how they may perceive and experience the concept and so gain a better understanding of the soil in which the seed of faith is sown through catechesis. Pope John Paul II urged that catechesis 'should not be 'isolated from life or artificially juxtaposed to it' (CT 22). In respect of adolescents (the age of Confirmation candidates in this study), he wrote of catechesis as being a 'time of discovering oneself and one's inner world' (CT 38). This links the concept of content with that of a time of personal growth and discovery for those on any catechetical programme (including the young people studying to prepare to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation). The recognition of the social and cultural variables that influence catechesis was further acknowledged in the more recent *Directory of Catechesis* (DC), which emphasised the need for 'pastoral and relational dynamics of listening [and] reciprocity' (2020, DC 245). In order for this growth to occur, more needs to be understood about the soil in which the seed is being sown, that is (as outlined above) the concept of spirituality from both the perspective of the young people participating in the course and that of the sowers (or catechists).

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[1] The title for this thesis has been inspired by this quote.

The *art of accompaniment*

The concept of the catechist as a companion who listens and takes note of where a young person is currently links to thinking around 'the art of accompaniment'. In 2010, Ospino wrote an article on *Theological Horizons for a Pedagogy of Accompaniment*. In the article, he linked accompaniment to spirituality in that:

> The spiritual journey of the Christian community is marked by a relational character that calls for continuous accompaniment… Just as God walks with us so we are called to walk with those we encounter on our human journey (pp.421-422).

More recently, in his 2013 exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), Pope Francis stated that the Church 'will have to initiate everyone…into this 'art of accompaniment' which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other' (EG 169). He urged the Church to practise the 'art of listening, which is more than simply hearing. Listening in communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur' (EG 171). Kern (2016) , writing on *The Art of Accompaniment,* as expounded in *Evangelii Gaudium*, emphasised that this listening is part of a dialogue, a 'two-way street' that is 'careful' and 'caring' (p.3).

In his exhortation *Christus Vivit* (2019), addressed to 'young people and the entire people of God', Pope Francis urged for an 'accompaniment' of young people by adults. Whilst the term 'young people' is used to describe those older than the young people included within this study, the exhortation highlights the need for the 'charism of listening'. Pope Francis expounded how the young people at the synod (following which the exhortation was published) described qualities they would hope to find in a mentor:

> … a faithful Christian who engages with the Church and the world; someone who constantly seeks holiness; someone who is confident without judging. Similarly, someone who actively listens to the needs of young people and responds in kind; someone deeply loving and self-

aware; someone who recognises his or her own limits and knows the joys and sorrows of the spiritual journey (CV 246).

The qualities of a mentor described by the young people at the 2018 synod should have echoes in those of a catechist (in this case, the adult who accompanies the young person on their journey of catechesis their period of preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation).

The *Directory of Catechesis* (DC) in 2020 took this further, demonstrating the links between the concept of 'accompaniment and the catechist's role of being an 'educator' (DC, n.113). The *Directory of Catechesis* referred to the catechist as a teacher, 'communicating the knowledge of Christ' (DC 113) and as an 'accompanier and educator'. Willey and White's *Companion to the Directory for Catechesis* (2021), which has provided a useful explanation in respect of the catechist's role of 'accompanier and educator', has expounded on this to explain that it 'implies an interest in the development of the whole person – taking into account their spiritual life, their intellect, emotions, and their physical and psychological well-being' (2021, pp.59-60). In the words of Salai (2011):

> Catechists must be responsible for knowing the psychological soil of our students, while also being aware of the truths we wish to plant. To know our students, I contend that we must first become aware of ourselves as knowing subjects, judging our own experiences in light of epistemological norms (p.570)[2].

The Sacrament of Confirmation

The Sacrament of Confirmation is not as straightforward for catechists to explain as for example the Sacrament of Baptism. Krosnicki (1993) pointed out that 'the spirituality of Confirmation can best be discerned by a careful reading of the liturgical rite for the celebration of the sacrament' (p.195). Following that advice, it is appropriate to examine the *Order of Confirmation* (2016) in the Catholic Church at this juncture. This *Order* includes the Decree issued in 1971

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[2] This quote again links to the concept behind the title of this thesis, whereby I seek to understand the soil in which the seed of faith pertaining to the Sacrament of Confirmation is sown.

outlining the Church's teaching that the Sacrament of Confirmation has an 'intimate connection' with Christian Initiation. The introductory paragraph can be broken down to include four key aspects of Confirmation:

1.   the special gift of the Holy Spirit;

2.   completion of 'initiation in the Christian life;

3.   to enable 'the faithful, strengthened by heavenly power [to] go forth as
         true witnesses of Christ in word and example; and

4.   a Sacrament by which the faithful are bound more closely to the Church (2016, p.6).

The *Order* also reprinted the *Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation* issued by Pope Paul VI in 1971, which laid the background for the revised rite of Confirmation at that point (and on which the 2016 English revision is based). This *Apostolic Constitution* outlined the Sacrament's link back to Pentecost and the development of the rite of Confirmation in the East and West. Following on from the *Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation*, the 1971 *Apostolic Constitution* highlighted the link between the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation[3]. The *Order* drew on Vatican II documents, for example *Lumen Gentium,* noting that:

> …through the Sacrament of Confirmation those who have been born anew
> in Baptism receive the ineffable Gift, the Holy Spirit himself, by whom 'they
> are endowed… with special strength' (2016, p.11).

This link with Baptism has more recently been re-emphasised by Pope Francis, who wrote that

> …if in Baptism it is the Holy Spirit who immerses us in Christ, then in
> Confirmation it is Christ who fills us with his Spirit, consecrating us as his
> witnesses, participants in the same principle of life and of mission,

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[3] The Apostolic Constitution drew on the work of Pope Paul VI, who (in 1963) wrote that

'the intimate connection which this sacrament has with the whole of Christian initiation is to be more clearly set forth; for this reason, it is fitting for candidates to renew their baptismal promises just before they are confirmed' (section 71)

according to the design of the heavenly Father (General Audience, 23rd
May 2018).

Whilst this background may seem quite straightforward, theologians have
argued that the theology of the Sacrament is not clear cut. Osborne (1987), for
instance, notes 'the …disquiet among Catholic theologians on the entire issue
of confirmation' (p.113) before going on to explore a number of contemporary
problems he perceived with Confirmation. These problems included: the link
with Baptism (for example, exploring if the two Sacraments be separated by
time), the history of the Sacrament (for example, how the Sacrament of
Confirmation come to be seen as a separate sacrament), and the order in which
the Sacraments of Initiation might occur (for example, if the Sacrament of
Confirmation should follow or precede the reception of the Sacrament of the
Eucharist). Similarly, Martos (2001) has referred to how authors have called it a
'sacrament in search of a theology' (p.201). Contemporary issues noted by
Martos again included the link with Baptism and the age for Confirmation. If, for
example, the order of the Sacraments were to follow that set out in the Rite of
Christian Initiation for Adults, candidates would be Confirmed prior to receiving
the Eucharist. This has led for calls for Confirmation to immediately follow
Baptism of infants or for Confirmation to be linked to a child's first reception of
the Eucharist (Martos, 2001). This aspect of linking the Sacrament of
Confirmation to the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults is also, for example,
seen in Mick, (2006). Other aspects noted by Martos (2001) as influencing the
discussion on the most appropriate age for Confirmation include Ecumenical
links and the argument that Confirmation 'implies a willingness to be of service
to the community or to act on behalf of the church in some way' (p.205).

Martos (2001) contrasted a diversity in practice with the 'clarity' of the
Catechism of the Catholic Church. For Martos, the Catechism achieves this
clarity by primarily drawing on medieval scholasticism. The Sacrament is
'something that can be "received"' and has numerous effects:

> It marks a Christian as totally belonging to Christ…it makes Christians
> more deeply children of God, it unites them more firmly with Christ, it
> increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit and it unites Catholics more firmly with

their church; it gives a special strength to spread and defend the faith, to be witnesses to Christ (p.206).

Confirmation programmes in use in England may link the Sacrament of Confirmation to that of Baptism; however, they generally do not delve into the theologically appropriate age for the Sacrament to be received. Nor will the programmes explore in depth the history of the Sacrament or the theology behind aspects of the liturgy. They are more likely to follow the 'outline of the Sacrament as given in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (see, for example, the *YOUCAT Confirmation Book* [2014], which is based on *YOUCAT*, a youth catechism published in 2011).

The Sacrament of Confirmation and spirituality

The link between the Sacrament of Confirmation and the Holy Spirit is critical to why, in this thesis, I explore spirituality from the perspective of those involved. The effect of the Sacrament, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) is the 'full outpouring of the Holy Spirit' It brings:

> … an increase and deepening of baptismal grace (CCC 1303)

and:

> - it roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, 'Abba! Father!';
> - it unites us more firmly to Christ;
> - it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us;
> - it renders our bond with the Church more perfect; and
> - it gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross (CCC 1302).

The footnotes to section 1302 refer the reader to St Ambrose (from the fourth century) in respect of the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

> Recall then that you have received the spiritual seal, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of holy fear in God's presence.

> Guard what you have received. God the Father has marked you with his
> sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has placed his pledge, the
> Spirit, in your hearts (St Ambrose, see CCC 1302).

Confirmation is defined within *YOUCAT* as being a sacrament which 'completes Baptism; in it the gift of the Holy Spirit is bestowed' (2011, p.120). Rahner (1975) explored 'the sacrament of the Spirit'' (p.5 ff) identifying the Sacrament as a 'Sacrament of witness', a 'communication of the Spirit', and linking it with 'the presence of the Spirit'. Mick (2006) referred to the Sacrament as 'celebrating the Spirit of God' (p.18). *The Catholic Update Guide to Confirmation* (Kendzia, ed., 2012) referred to reception of the Sacrament as potentially leading to a 'spiritual awakening'. There is also a sense of growth and development. Vaugh-Spruce (2014), for instance, writing on the gifts of the Holy Spirit asked: 'Do you think suddenly these gifts will transform you…No, probably not… we can become strong in virtue by working towards God's grace … and 'exercising' these powers' (p.293). This emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit have direct connections to spirituality within a Christian context as outlined in the literature section below and influenced my decision to explore spirituality (as the soil in which the seed is sown) from the perspective of those involved with the Confirmation programme rather than the theological disputes around the Sacrament itself.

Indications from the literature around how young people might speak of spirituality

In order to set the research in context, I needed to develop a greater understanding of how young people may view spirituality. Initial research found very little information on how the young people on Confirmation courses perceive and experience spirituality. This lack of information hampers the practice of catechesis due to the lack of clarity around how reflective the language of the Confirmation programmes is to that of the young people preparing to receive the Sacrament. As Martos (2001) referenced 'there is a prevailing sense in religious education and catechetics today that … the

Church's teachings about the sacraments …need to make sense in terms of how people live their lives' (p.207).

The literature review (Chapter 2) illustrates that whilst spirituality is an area of interest academically, there has been little research into how young people undertaking a faith-based preparation programme might perceive the term. For instance, it is unclear from academic writing on children's spirituality, if children or young people engaged in religious catechetical programmes would associate spirituality purely with religion or if they would see them as two separate and distinct concepts. *YOUCAT* (2011) described spirituality as 'forms of piety in the Church, which in many cases developed [from]…the…way of life of the saints' (p.498). Such a narrow definition, however, may be challengeable. The academic works noted in Chapter 2, for instance, draw a duality between contemporary spirituality and religion. Rossiter (2011) outlined a summary of his proposed relationships between the terms 'Spiritual', 'Religious', 'Spirituality' and 'Religiosity', suggesting a distinction between 'human spirituality', (for example based around the natural side of life, such as human values, how we relate to others and the earth) and 'religious spirituality', which is informed by a particular religious group and which normally involves a belief in god, participation in particular practices and prayer (p.59). A commonly quoted phrase, for example, is that young people might be 'Spiritual but not religious' (SBNR); Harvey noted that:

> In scholarly and popular discourse, the two words [Spiritual and religious] are often said to refer to distinct phenomena. However, exactly what the distinction between religion and spirituality is remains far from certain (2016, p.128).

An understanding behind this thesis is that, whether or not young people on Confirmation programmes perceive such a distinction between spirituality and religion is far from clear and further work is required in this area to inform the practice of catechesis. For a catechist trying to understand the 'psychological soil of …[their] …students' (Salai, 2011, p.570), a common faith-based understanding of spirituality cannot be assumed.

Understanding the soil in which the seed is sown

Quoting the work of Louis-Marie Chauvet, Gabrielli (2013), wrote of the connection between ' the Spirit's work in the sacraments and the incalculable quality of grace… [which]…cannot be earned or logged on a balance sheet, but does require …a response as return-gift: the life of faith' (p.75). In order to explore the effects of the Spirit with young people, it is important to understand how the young people involved in the catechesis may perceive these effects and the influence of the Spirit in their lives. Without this understanding, the words of the catechist may (in the metaphor of the parable of the Sower – see Mark 4:5) fall on stony ground. This is echoed by a cautionary note from the American practitioner Ted Furlow. Furlow wrote 'If I wish to teach or communicate the 'good news' to them, then I must be able to recognise and adjust to the very unique 'who' and 'what' they are and adapt to their rhythm' (see Gabrielli, 2013, p.82). In order to 'adjust', the catechists will need to be aware of their own perception and experience of spirituality (the baseline from which they may be adjusting).

Conscious of the need to hear the voices of the participants in order for there to be both education and growth and of the lack of clarity around whether or not the language on spirituality from various Confirmation programmes accords with the voices of the young people on those programmes, I was motivated to develop a greater understanding of how young people on Confirmation programmes perceive and experience spirituality. By doing this, my hope was to help other catechists come to a greater understanding of the 'journey of catechesis' echoing the pedagogy of Paulo Freire in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000 reprint of 1970 publication) that:

> The students … are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own (p.81).

Using hermeneutic phenomenology, I intend in this thesis to address the following research questions:

1. How do Catholic Confirmation candidates perceive and experience spirituality?

2. How does this relate to the lived experiences and perceptions of spirituality of the Confirmation programme catechists?

3. How might a greater understanding of how candidates on Confirmation preparation programmes perceive and experience spirituality extend our understanding of the concept?

4. How might a greater understanding of how candidates perceive and experience spirituality enhance Confirmation catechesis?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Development

Pope Francis' call for people to exercise the 'art of accompaniment' (EG 169) gave added impetus to hearing the voice of participants on faith development programmes and to developing an understanding of how young people perceive spirituality. The concern behind this thesis is that a catechist cannot accompany candidates for Confirmation on their faith journey if they assume an understanding of spirituality rather to seeking to understand it from the candidates' perspective. Following Furlow's lead (see Chapter 1), I intend to build in this thesis on the writings of academics and practitioners to explore how young people preparing for Confirmation may experience and perceive spirituality in their lives (that is the soil in which the Word is sown), how this compares with the culture of the catechists and how the catechists may need to adjust to the 'rhythm' of the young people.

In Chapter 1, I illustrated how education and catechesis are linked, therefore, elements of the research undertaken into Catholic young people's spirituality has been conducted within an educational context. In response to the first research question posed, the literature search initially focussed on how spirituality is understood and defined within academic writing relating to Catholic spirituality, practice-based literature (including Confirmation programmes and writings relating to the practise of spirituality), articles drawing on primary research into children's spirituality and secondary literature from academic authors summarising theories relating to spirituality. In all instances the works were chosen with relation to their input on Catholic spirituality or the spirituality of children/ young people, especially if this pertained to an education-based context. The intention was to ascertain from these works how the Catholic Confirmation candidates might be expected to perceive and experience spirituality from insights gained from the sources noted prior to hearing the voice of the young people themselves. This initial literature search was undertaken through the use of Worldcat, bibliographies and discussions with my

academic tutors. In addition, I am a member of the International Association for Children's Spirituality and the literature review was enhanced through attendance, and presentation, at the International Association for Children's Spirituality Conference in Lincoln in July 2016.

Initially, I intend to provide a brief overview of pertinent aspects of Catholic spirituality. I will then give an overview of how this is reflected in a number of confirmation programmes pertinent to this study. This practice-based literature shows the anticipated rhythm of the young people involved (see Gabrielli, 2013, p.82, as outlined in Chapter 1).

Catholic spirituality (brief overview)

The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality (Downey, ed., 1993), argued by Cunningham (2000, p.29) to mark 'a certain maturing of spirituality in the post-conciliar period' [that is post-Vatican II], is, in itself, over 1,000 pages long. If a work of this depth is described as 'a kind of horizon overview of recent thinking in spirituality' (Cunningham, 2000, p.30), it would be impossible to enter into an in-depth analysis of spirituality within the Catholic Church within the short context of this thesis. Within this thesis, my intention is to outline broad elements of how Catholic spirituality might be defined that could have a bearing on spirituality within Confirmation courses.

Cunningham's (2009) historical definition of Spirituality was: 'one who lived under the impulse of the Holy Spirit as a follower of Jesus Christ' (p.147). Whilst simply put, this definition has a direct relevance to spirituality in the context of Confirmation programmes, which are explicitly linked to the Holy Spirit. Bringing this to the 21st century, Cunningham linked spirituality to three tasks outlined by Pope Benedict in 2005 *Kerygma/ martyria* (to 'proclaim… and witness…[the Word] both at an individual and community level'), *Leiturgia* (or 'worship [of] God by participation in the prayer life of the Church') and *Diakonia* (that is 'to "perform" the Gospel) (pp.148-149). For Cunningham:

to think of the Christian life "in the Spirit" as a working out of these three

elements of witness, worship, and service is a useful way of thinking about

spirituality in the broadest fashion free from any notion of elitism (p.149).

In the context of this study, how the candidates preparing to receive the

Sacrament of Confirmation experience and view a life 'in the Spirit' might be

pertinent to the first research question posed on page 22.

Holiness

The three elements Cunningham noted as expounded by Pope Benedict XVI

form part of a life of 'holiness'. A number of authors contributing to *The New*

Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality (for example Woods 1993, pp.944-945, Bacik

1993, pp.215; Downey 1993, p.919; & Sellner 1993, pp.591-592) have noted

the importance of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) - Vatican II - in the

development of Catholic spirituality. This is despite the fact that 'the word

spiritualitas appears but once in the index to the Latin original documents of

Vatican II' (see Flannery 1993, p.991). Sellner emphasised that Vatican II (for

instance in the seminal text *Lumen Gentium)* was a key turning point for

Catholic lay spirituality, when it stressed that all Christian people are called to a

holiness rather than just an elite or the 'vowed religious and clergy' (1993,

p.591). *Lumen Gentium* noted that 'the faithful… may wholeheartedly devote

themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbor', which could

be 'translated' as living a life of faith and good works (Vatican Council &

Flannery 1992, p.397). The *Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern*

World wrote of 'every Christian's need to 'decipher authentic signs of God's

presence and purpose…[emphasizing] social justice and the dignity of persons'

(p. 592). With respect to the three tasks outlined by Pope Benedict XVI (and

quoted by Cunningham above), through lives of holiness, those involved with

Confirmation programmes, might be expected to speak of spirituality in respect

of living out their lives 'under the influence of the Holy Spirit' as young people at,

for instance, school, in their homes, the church community and with their

friends. In the case of the catechist, these tasks might be evidenced in, for

example, their everyday lives, the Catholic community and as educators of the

young.

Religious practices

Taking the second task noted by Cunningham (2009), that is participation in the prayer life of the Church, part of this life of spirituality (holiness) could be expected by catechists working with the young people on Confirmation courses to relate to engagement with Catholic religious practices. Bacik (1993), for instance, identified a contemporary spirituality emerging from Vatican II as having an onus on the Eucharist, liturgical activity and Scripture (p.215). Cunningham (2009) highlighted particular aspects of spirituality from a Catholic perspective including: social justice, the Catholic tradition of Schools of spirituality (drawing their inspiration from particular figures such as Ignatius of Loyola) asceticism, fasting, prayer, the devotional life (including pilgrimages), almsgiving and the Blessed Mary and the saints (pp.149-170). These tie into the pastoral practices for 'cultivating spirituality in Catholic adolescents identified by Canales (2011, pp.81-99).

McGrath (1999, pp.14-16) has also presented a useful, and accessible, synopsis on Catholic spirituality, which links to the outline noted above in relation to Vatican II. He identified the following distinctive elements:

- the Church as a 'visible divine institution';
- the unity of the key liturgical actions and the role of the Church community in spiritual growth;
- the importance of the sacraments; and
- the role of the saints and the Virgin Mary (although Bacik, noted above, would point to a more Christocentric spirituality post-Vatican II).

The religious practices noted at the start of this section may occur as part of the liturgies of the Church or in a person's individual prayer life and may be influences by the particular culture or tradition in which they occur (see, for example, Willey & White, 2021, pp.123-124). Aspects of these religious practices, in particular the Sacraments, scripture and living a Christian life are all aspects of Catholic spirituality often found in the Confirmation practice literature. When analysing how those involved with Confirmation programmes, perceive and experience spirituality, an aspect of that analysis will involve

reviewing the extent to which this is contained within the boundaries of faith practices associated with the Roman Catholic Church.

Community

The engagement with Church religious practices fundamentally links to an engagement with community. Cunningham (2000) pointed out the usefulness of *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* in identifying key categories of Catholic spirituality including the person in relation to the world. Waaijman (2007) has also explored how spirituality is 'deeply interwoven with a 'world'…food, house, work…environment..' (p.8). Within Catholic spirituality, the spirituality is interwoven with something other than self in a particular way. Waaijman outlines how spirituality is linked with the doctrine of the Trinity in that, 'Trinity means, first of all, that the divine reality is itself a communion… In this divine community…human community is grounded' (p.8).

With respect to the communion noted above, Waaijman drew on the work of Michael Downey (2000). From the perspective of this study, Downey identified three features that characterise this communion:

> Human relationships in all spheres of life are to be brought into conformity with the equality, mutuality and interdependence that characterize the divine life… human life in Christ by the Spirit is a call to loving communion with God, others and every living creature. (p. 625).

For Downey, it was a sense of this gift of 'God's Love' that shapes Christian spirituality. How God's love as experienced through this communion is expressed by those preparing to be Confirmed within this research is unlikely to be expressed in the language used by Downey given the age, for instance, of those involved. If a sense of 'God's Love' is fundamental to Christian Spirituality, it is reasonable to expect it to be demonstrated within the research interviews and to include it in the analysis below in order to gain an understanding of how those involved may give voice to the concept of spirituality (research questions one and two) and if a love of God expressed through communion forms part of the 'soil' in which the catechesis sows its seeds.

'An integrated Christian life' (Cunningham 2009, p.148)

The title for this section draws on Cunningham's introduction to Catholic spirituality. To respond to the first two research questions, the analysis in Chapter 5 will review how integrated those involved with Confirmation programmes view spirituality with the faith practices explained within the programmes and with their everyday lives. McGrath (1999) noted, for instance, the importance of both faith and life in defining spirituality. Spirituality, he argued 'arises from a creative and dynamic synthesis of faith and life, forged in the crucible of the desire to live out the Christian faith authentically, responsibly, effectively and fully' (p.9)., with Christian Spirituality relating to

- a set of beliefs;
- a set of values; and
- a way of living (1999, pp.2-3).

The integration of this way of living, therefore, needs to form part of the analysis for how those involved with Confirmation programmes perceive and experience spirituality.

A key exponent of the concept of spirituality as involving activity and commitment towards others was Philip Sheldrake. He highlighted a movement from 'spiritual theology', in which there was 'a tendency to be individualistic, to ignore the social dimension of Christian spiritual life' (Sheldrake, 1995, p.54) to a 'more dynamic and inclusive concept, namely spirituality' (p.57).   This spirituality, Sheldrake argued: 'is not limited to a concern with the interior life but seeks an integration of all aspects of human life and experience (p.58). In 2013, Sheldrake wrote further on this topic, developing four types of Christian Spirituality including the 'active-practical' in which a person 'seeks to find spiritual growth through the medium of ordinary experiences' (p.15). It is reasonable, therefore, to seek an understanding in this thesis of perceptions of spirituality through a discussion around experiences not necessarily linked to religious practices.

As this thesis is grounded in practitioner work, practice manuals also have a place within this literature review. Reflective of changing cultures and

increasing use of the term 'spirituality', Russi and Friel (2013), for instance, writing on working in a Catholic school, outlined spirituality as being linked into 'every aspect of life' (p.30) and 'seeking to know God, rather than seeking to know about God'(p.32). The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales' (2014) guide to spirituality *Do you love me?* (DYLM) is an example of a recent Catholic work that seeks to explore spirituality in terms of a journey of searching for meaning, of connectivity with self, the world and with God. *Do you love me ?* explored spirituality from the perspective of searching, recognising, experiencing, conversing, following and choosing God.

With regard to searching for God, the work proposed that, for instance, 'the thirst for someone or something (DYLM, 2014, p.16) to satisfy our deepest longing … is a desire for God himself' and:

> the desire to make sense of the life we live and to explore our inner longings is about the whole of us. We find God in the quiet and the busyness. Often when we look back over what has happened to us we see that God has been there with us as we have journeyed. (DYLM, 2014, p.16-18).

In respect of 'recognising' the work proposes that 'spirituality might be individual but it is never individualistic' (DYLM, 2014, p.28). This is important in relation to research questions one and two when considering the connections participants may make in respect of spirituality. In respect of 'experiencing', as with Sheldrake (1995) above, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (2014) contends that 'our spirituality says that God comes to us and our relationship with God is developed in the midst of the ordinary' (p.36). Conversing' with God, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales notes, 'involves both listening and speaking' but this can be 'anywhere, anytime' (p.55). 'Following' requires, according to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, being 'both contemplative (looking at the Lord) and apostolic (serving the Lord)' (p.63), whilst 'working for a better world, building the Kingdom and caring for others, is a non-negotiable element of our spirituality' (p.69). *Do you love me?* provides a practical example of how the three elements noted by Pope Benedict XVI can be applied to spirituality.

From the perspective of the first three research questions of this thesis, it was interesting to analyse if the participants involved in the research associated spirituality with the aspects of searching, recognising, experiencing, conversing, following and choosing God or primarily through faith-based practices or if they, through their experiences, have a concept of spirituality as wider than this and linked to all aspects of their lives.

Growth

Byrne (1993) is an example of an author who has emphasised the metaphor of the spiritual life as a 'journey'. This metaphor, he linked to the writings of St Paul and the concept of being transformed into the image of Christ; however, he noted that it has been revived in Catholic spirituality more recently through, for instance, some of the writings of Vatican II (p.565). Schneiders (2013), writing on Christian Spirituality, has written on spirituality as a 'lived experience… defined as conscious involvement in the project of life integration through self-transcendence towards the ultimate value one perceives' (p.1). Again, this concept of growth appears in spirituality 'manuals'. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (2014), for instance, advocated that people 'are called to recognise him [Christ]… and respond' but that they 'come to the point of recognition… gradually: the call to grow in relationship takes time' (p.30).

This growth over time has been developed in literature as 'stages of faith' (see Fowler, 1995). With respect to the young people within this thesis, most may be of an age that Fowler defined as having a 'synthetic-conventional faith':

> A person's experience of the world now extends beyond the family. A number of spheres demand attention: family, school or work, peers, street society and media and perhaps religion. Faith must provide a coherent orientation in the midst of that more complex and diverse range of involvements. Faith must synthesize values and information; it must provide a basis for identity and outlook (p.172).

The concept that the soil in which catechesis is being undertaken being affected by specific development stages also arises from consideration of the *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) and Willey and White's (2021) subsequent companion to that directory. These works also take into account more modern methods of communication and influence on young people, such as social media. The *Directory* notes 'pre-adolescence' as being a 'stage of life characterised by the dynamic of a passage from a safe and familiar situation to something new and unexplored' (264). Willey and White (2021) outline specifically ages 10 and 11 as 'growing in their ability to understand signs and symbols' and beginning 'to consider seriously who they will be when they are older' recommending catechesis in particular around vocations and the sacraments (p.129). They advocate 12 year olds as 'growing in their ability to think abstractly' making this, 'an ideal time to study Sacred Scripture' and 'to strengthen Catholic identity through study of … faith ancestors and basic doctrines' (2021, p.129). Ages 13 and 14, they note, are ages of 'identity issues and questions, 'in which young people are searching for 'a sense of belonging with others' (2021, p.130). To generalise in this manner risks hiding the individual's understanding of their own journey and how an understanding of a sense of growth in their journey may (or may not) be heard in the voice of Catholic young people preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. This would have an impact on how catechesis is undertaken on Confirmation programmes and influence the response to research question four.

Summary

There are specific aspects of the Catholic faith tradition that might be expected from this literature review to form part of any understanding of spirituality from the perspective of those considering a 'life lived in the Spirit' as part of a Confirmation programme. The soil in which any conversation around Confirmation as a life in the Spirit is sown may be influenced by a concept of 'holiness', there may be an understanding of spirituality as an internal matter for quiet reflection and prayer or an understanding of linkages to a wider community, including the Church community but reaching beyond that to everyday life and links to the wider world and creation. There may be a sense

of growth in spirituality. These concepts are pertinent when considering research question three in terms of how the adult participants experience and perceive spirituality when compared to the younger participants and research question four concerning how this understanding assists Confirmation catechesis. The next step within the literature review is to examine whether the themes noted above are reflected within Confirmation programmes available in England.

Confirmation programmes

The Confirmation programmes utilised by parishes within this study varied. One was based around the *YOUCAT Confirmation Book* (2014), one utilised aspects of the *Societas Doctrinæ Christianæ* (SDC), or Society of Christian Doctrine Confirmation) programme and one developed resources from a variety of sources around key topics[4]. Core to each programme was a 'refresher course' in the Catholic faith, that is the faith in which candidates would be asked to profess their belief as part of the Confirmation ceremony.

Elements of the religious-based Catholic spirituality noted above can be traced within these programmes. This in particular, relates to an emphasis on the Eucharist, spiritual growth and the importance of the Sacraments. Sessions examine particular aspects of the Catholic faith, including the Sacraments (that is Baptism, Confession, Eucharist or Holy Communion, Marriage, Ordination, the Sacrament of the Sick and Confirmation), prayer and how to put faith into action through living a Christian Life (for example, Gomez, 1993; Klein, 2002; Moore, 2004; Castle, 2008; & Curtin, 2011). The programmes concentrated on helping the young people think about their lives and what they might be called to do (their vocation). Curtin (2011), for example, began his programme with a session on the young people's journey and how the young people might discern God's call in their lives. The programmes are generally Christocentric (for example, Castle, 2008). Implicitly, there is an accepted expectation that young

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[4] See Appendix A5

people following these programmes will associate with this spirituality and it would be familiar soil in which to sow the seed of catechesis.

Explicitly, the term 'spirituality' may occur within these programmes. When the term is used, it rarely is defined and is often linked simply to the Holy Spirit or to the gifts of the Holy Spirit (that is wisdom, knowledge, understanding, courage, right judgement, reverence and awe and wonder). Castle (2008), for example, noted 'when the Spirit of Jesus came, according to St Paul…he showered spiritual gifts on those who believed and accepted Baptism' (p.93).

Core foci of sessions within Confirmation programmes are, therefore, often aspects of the faith and how that faith may be put into practice. Dependent on how the young person views spirituality (for example, as a religious-based activity or something embedded throughout their experiences within their lives), this may have an impact on how relevant they see this aspect of the programmes to their daily life.

An exception to the explicit use of spiritual contexts within Confirmation programmes can be found in Vaughan-Spruce (2014) and in an American Confirmation resource called *Have Faith* (Carotta, 2007). Vaughan-Spruce (2014) developed a programme of evangelisation and catechesis linked to YOUCAT and defined the period of evangelisation (prior to the period of catechesis) when the candidates can hear the 'Gospel message – that God the Father loves them…that Jesus, God the Son… died for them…; that God the Holy Spirit is sent into their hearts to make all things new' (p.15). The catechetical section of the programme includes time for a 'Spiritual Journal' – a silent time which is 'personal and reflective' (p.32), when the candidates can 'reflect more personally and intimately on their own lives' (p.23). A conscious link is made between this spiritual journal and a quiet reflective time. This linking of quiet spirituality to quiet reflection may help the young people reflect on the programme and gives them time for their thoughts, mirroring Sheldrake's conclusions about the web, that 'the majority of available definitions of spirituality emphasize inner experience, introspection, a subjective journey'

(2013, p. 4), but may not necessarily allow for the 'active-practical' spirituality outlined by Sheldrake (2013).

Carotta's (2007) concise guide differs from the majority of the programmes noted above. He explicitly used the term spirituality and devised the guide around enabling a candidate to develop their spirituality and a 'Spiritual Growth Plan. He did not assume an understanding of the term but sought to define it in the context of the programme. Spirituality, as outlined by Carotta (2007), has three dimensions: vertical – 'prayer and worship' (an internal dimension), horizontal – 'being a person of character and conscience', and internal – 'tapping into your inner strength' (pp.6-7). The latter two may impact on everyday experiences and being a person of spirituality. This guide, however, was not actively used in any parish in this study.

Summary

Confirmation programmes in general implicitly refer to aspects of acknowledged areas of Catholic spirituality using the language of the Catholic faith (for example the Sacraments, the Church, the lives of the saints and human virtues). Without further investigation involving research that hears the voices of the young people involved, it cannot be assumed in response to research question three on page 22 that the language noted (either in literature pertaining to Catholic spirituality or within the practice literature of Confirmation programmes) would be the language used by young people preparing to be Confirmed.

The spirituality of Catholic young people in their own voices

There is a lack of literature from the Catholic perspective outlining how the voices of young people engaged in faith programmes may perceive spirituality (or a life in the Spirit). Mercer (2007) has outlined in *Interface* that church life has tended to present children as 'objects of its educational efforts, rather than as child-practitioners of a living faith' (p.36). Whilst this has begun to change (see Chapter 1), examples of works that illuminate Mercer's point still exist.

Canales (2011), for example, identified 12 spiritual traits to be cultivated in young people. These included studying Scripture, prayer and the rosary. Canales' work also aligned closely to the language used in literature pertaining to spirituality within the Catholic Church. He outlined the benefits of spiritual practices such as 'Eucharistic Spirituality', Scripture, prayer and specific Catholic practices such as praying the rosary. Whilst his work initially pointed to the potential for the spiritual voices of young Catholics to utilise the language of the Catholic Church, the voices that are absent from his work are those of the young people themselves. This omission is something this thesis addresses. Brandes (2013), in a review of Canales (2011), stated 'the youth in this book are out of focus and in the background; the conversation that this work sparks is one among adults who work with young people, not one involving adults and adolescents' (p.430). Should Confirmation catechists wish to understand how those with whom they work may perceive and experience spirituality they need to hear the voice of the young people on this topic as the 'most significant action... of child empowerment engaged in by adult companions of children today… [is to] help children name themselves and their experiences (Mercer, 2007, p.40).

Literature aligned to the discipline of children's spirituality

To obtain indications from academic literature on how children and young people perceive and experience spirituality, the literature search was expanded to include works aligned to the discipline of children's spirituality in general, with an emphasis on research conducted with children and young people in education. This is a field in which the voices of children and young people have been embedded within research. It includes research that takes into account both a faith perspective (for example, Engebretson, 2002, 2004 & 2006; & Miller-McLemore, 2010) and non-religious-based context (for example, Adams, Bull & Maynes, 2016).

Contemporary children's spirituality – definition

It is clear from interdisciplinary studies of children (for example, Hay and Nye, 2006; Adams, Hyde & Woolley, 2008; & Hyde, 2008) and adolescents (for example, Engebretson, 2004; & de Souza, 2012) that there is no accepted common definition of spirituality. Spirituality is a concept for which authors have argued that there is neither an accepted definition nor even agreement that it can be defined (see, for instance, Best, 2000; Wright, 2000; & Moriarty 2011). Others have argued that if the study of spirituality is to be taken seriously, it must be capable of definition. Sheldrake (1995), for instance, noted that 'If [spirituality]…has no conceptual limits, effectively it means nothing' (p.40). De Souza, Bone and Watson (2016), for example, have drawn together writings on *Spirituality across Disciplines* with an 'ultimate aim … to try and clarify the diverse ways the term is understood so as to increase its applicability across a range of professions and disciplines' (pp.321 and 322). Some authors have commenced articles with working definitions to help set the context for their work (for example Benson, Roehlkepartain & Rude, 2003; Singleton, Mason and Webber, 2004; & Engebretson, 2006). Other authors who have studied the spirituality of children and adolescents have proposed key identifiable aspects of the phenomenon (for example Hyde, 2008; & Rovers & Kocum, 2010).

The intention within this section of the literature review is to illustrate a number of common themes ascribed to children's spirituality and to highlight where these overlap with spirituality from a Catholic perspective. These themes include the potential for children's voices on spirituality to be heard through discussion of their own personal experiences of relationships, where they feel connected and how they view this in relation to others whom they meet and the religious faith in which they are seeking to be Confirmed. The themes will be utilised in Chapter 5 to listen for where participants may have been implicitly aware of spirituality, without necessarily utilising a religious language as noted above.

Roehlkepartain, Benson, Scales, Kimball and King's (2008) study between 2006 and 2008 involved over 7,000 participants. It gave a good indication of key

themes that arise in literature pertaining to children's spirituality. A field test survey of adolescents was conducted with 6,853 participants. In total, 77 focus groups were held and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 32 young people. The youngest of those involved was aged 12. The oldest of those involved in the focus groups was 19. The summary analysis drew distinctions by country but not by age. Whilst directed at how young people experience spiritual development and not focussed on a particular religious context, the conclusions of such a wide-ranging survey cannot be overlooked within any literature review seeking to explore further how young people perceive and experience spirituality. In summarising how young people experienced spiritual development, Roehlkepartain *et al.* (2008) condensed their findings to the conclusions below:

1. Most youth surveyed believe life has a spiritual dimension
2. Some youth interpret experiences as spiritually meaningful; others do not
3. Many young people want to talk about spiritual matters
4. Most young people see themselves as spiritual, and most see themselves as doing well spiritually
5. Young people see spiritual development as both 'part of who you are' and an intentional choice
6. Many youth believe in or experience the transcendent (p.11).

Roehlkepartain *et al.*'s findings imply that it might be reasonable to encounter a concept of spirituality within those involved in this study. There is an important link to the concept that spirituality is innate, encountered in other academic works on children's spirituality. This aspect of children's spirituality literature will be explored further below.

In respect of the link between spirituality and religion, the study noted that:
7. Youth see religion and spirituality as related, but different
8. Most young people see spirituality and religion as positive (2008, p.25).

This aspect of the work might offer a particular pointer for the first research question. The analysis in Chapter 5 explores how research participants perceived spirituality in respect of links to religion, for example: if participants perceived any commonality between religion and spirituality, were the concepts perceived as linked or different and how did either relate to 'ordinary experiences'.

In respect of the ordinary experiences, Roehlkepartain *et al.* (2008) found that:

9. Everyday experiences and relationships nurture young people's spirit
10. Youth most often nurture spiritual development alone or by helping others
11. Many young people say family and friends help them spiritually - but one in five say 'no one' does
12. Most youth see their parents modelling religious or spiritual activities
13. Levels of religious involvement vary considerably across participating countries (p. 29).

The link between spirituality and the everyday has already been noted in respect of literature pertaining to Catholic spirituality and will be developed further below as a theme arising from literature relating to children's spirituality. Whilst point 13 above will not be explicitly followed up within this study, it is intended within the analysis to explore further the influence of family. This is linked into the concept of connectedness explored further below.

A sense of connectedness is an important part of the framework developed by Roehlkepartain *et al.*'s report (p.39). This report linked connectedness to a sense of 'belonging'. The theme of connectedness is explored below and links to other aspects of children's spirituality commonly found in academic literature, that is relationality and searching for meaning and purpose. Areas for analysis to be taken forward within this study include: spirituality as an innate concept,

relationality and connectedness, a search for meaning and purpose (belonging) and the influence of family and tradition[5].

Spirituality as an innate part of being human

A significant theme arising in the literature on Children's spirituality is that it is widely held to be an innate aspect of being human (see, for example, Hay and Nye, 2006; Adams *et al.*, 2008, Hyde, 2008 and Moriarty, 2011). Benson *et al.* (2003) relate spiritual development to 'the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence …it propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose and contribution' (p.205). Hyde (2008), for example, stated that spirituality 'is a natural human predisposition – something that people are born with and which continually seeks expression in life' (p.118). He re-emphasised this opinion in 2020 when he aligned his position on the innate aspects of spirituality with Hart (2003) in that 'rather than conceiving of people as human beings who occasionally have spiritual experiences, it [is] more helpful and accurate to think of people as spiritual beings who have human experiences (p.3). Moriarty (2011) noted that the understanding in writings by Cole that 'children's spiritual consciousness was universal, whether they were religious or not, and led them to a sense of connection with the earth and other people, and a sense of purpose and identity (p.273). Schneiders (2013), writing on Christian spirituality, did not express this concept in quite such terms but fundamentally stated that 'spirituality is not a doctrine or simply a set of practices but an ongoing experience or life project...its ultimate purpose if life integration' (p.1).

From the perspective of this study, the data analysis will include a focus on whether spirituality was confined by participants to religious people or expanded to include those participants viewed as non-religious.

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[5] For a more in-depth literature review on the definitions and descriptions of children's spirituality see, for example, Adams *et al.*, 2016.

Relational

Hay and Nye (2006 [originally published in 1998]) and Mercer (2007) were particularly influential in developing an understanding of how children's spirituality is a 'relational experience'. Hay and Nye introduced the concept of 'relational consciousness' in their work with children which illustrated how children exhibited relationships with self, other, the world and God. Hay and Nye (2006) suggested that 'every form of self-sacrificing behaviour – whether it is a concern for people with whom one has no connection either genetically or socially, or defence of the planetary environment – could be seen as a function of spiritual awareness' (p.135).They reasoned that a key aspect of children's spirituality was 'relational consciousness', where the child is 'objectively aware of themselves as a 'subject'' in relation not just to others but ' 'I-Self', 'I-World' and 'I-God' (2006, p.109). This echoes the earlier work of Buber (2013 edition of the 1923 translation) who developed the concept of *I-Thou* in which 'The primary words, *I-Thou* establishes the world of relation', the areas of relation pertaining to 'nature', men' and 'spiritual beings' (pp.3-4).

The concept of relational experience as an element of spirituality has had a significant impact on literature relating to children's spirituality. Engebretson (2002) presented a synthesis of literature around this area in a manner which compared 'Privatized, Individualised Spirituality' from 'A Need to Make Connections', asking 'does the spirituality of young people seek individuation or connectedness' (p.60). Later, Engebretson (2004) identified how, for the group of Australian teenage boys involved in her research, relationships with others gave 'meaning and purpose to life' (p.274) and Benson *et al.* (2003) related spiritual development to 'the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence …it propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose and contribution' (p.205). Fisher (2006) wrote on the relationships between self, others, nature and/or a God in his study of 1002 secondary school students aged from 12 to 18 years-old in Catholic, Christian community and other independent schools in Australia. De Souza (2006), for instance, has explored spirituality as developing through circles of connectedness. In 2012, de Souza also wrote about a framework of relationality, incorporating the concept of a continuum with

individual Self at one end 'which is separate from everything that is Other'. At the far end of the continuum, she argued, 'the Self become(s) part of the Whole which comprises Other and the individual has entered the realm of Ultimate Unity' (p.292). This concept of developing spirituality through circles of connectedness has informed the analysis in Chapters four and five. Hyde (2008) drew on his studies of spirituality of primary school children using hermeneutic phenomenology to outline four characteristics of children's spirituality, including a 'felt sense' (in which there is a connectedness and awareness with the moment in question) when 'individuals encounter and act upon the world with their whole bodies' (p.120). The three other characteristics, 'integrating awareness', 'weaving the threads of meaning' and 'spiritual questioning' (pp.121-125), link, to an extent, to the aspect of spirituality by which meaning and purpose is discerned.

With respect to whether these connections are of a positive or negative nature, Hay and Nye (2006) noted that spirituality is 'almost always seen as …associated with love, inspiration, wholeness, depth' (p.19). De Souza (2012) argued that whilst the majority of the research undertaken in this area portrays spirituality as 'a positive human trait' (p.291) the dark side of spirituality should also be explored. This was a view endorsed by Adams *et al.* (2016) and Lovelock and Adams (2017). Part of the analysis in Chapter five will focus on whether research participants viewed spirituality as connected to positive aspects of life or if it was connected to darker moments also.

Spirituality as a journey and layers of connectedness

Brendan Hyde (2007) also noted (from his own studies and those of de Souza) the concept of a journey whereby an 'individual might experience unity with the other' (p.83). He developed this to outline:

> Such a movement can be understood to spiral through different layers of connectedness with self, others, the world and possibly the transcendent… [with] …the potential to lead to the widest or deepest levels of connectedness, where the individual experiences becoming one with 'other', that is 'ultimate unity' (p.86).

De Souza's (2007) earlier work also explored the idea of layers of connectedness. How this journey through layers of connectedness might be expressed within faith-based Confirmation programmes is developed further below with the intent of developing a framework for the analysis within this thesis.

Spirituality as a search for meaning and purpose

This journey through layers of connectedness links to Hyde's (2008) 'integrating awareness', 'weaving the threads of meaning' and 'spiritual questioning'. It has been developed by authors such as Miller-McLemore (2010) who noted the importance of how people 'make meaning' and the influence of others around them, and Gellel (2018), who referred to the 'fundamental and intertwined elements of awareness and connectedness and meaning making' (p.19). Allied to a sense of how individuals connect with those around them and further afield, may be a desire, especially in children and adolescents, to develop a greater understanding of the meaning and purpose of life. In 2006, Engebretson identified a fourfold definition of spirituality including 'the illumination of lived experience with meaning and value' (p.330). Adams (2009) noted that 'inherent in many spiritual experiences or ponderings lies a search for meaning in which children attempt to make sense of life and the world around them' (p.115). All of these authors appear to link spirituality to a journey of discovery. Both a sense of connectedness and a search for meaning and purpose may be encountered when listening for the spiritual voice of young people.

Tradition and spirituality

An emerging theme in literature pertaining to children's spirituality is that of the link between spirituality and tradition (see, for example, Adams, 2019; Champagne, 2019; & Eaude, 2019). The articles by Adams, Champagne and Eaude link to the 16th international conference on children's spirituality, in which the relationship between children's spirituality and tradition formed a core topic for consideration (see Stockinger's report on the conference published in 2019). Eaude (2019) explored the influence of culture and traditions on children's

identities (p.5). For Eaude, 'how identities are constructed must be understood in relation to culture and traditions'. Culture '…[being] the background which is always there, even when we are not aware of it; and the lens through which everyone interprets, understand and makes sense of experience, even when they do not recognise this' (p.8). Traditions, Eaude defined as 'a type of culture, either as a macro- or a micro-culture, in that they encapsulate beliefs and practices passed from one generation to the next' (p.9). In respect of religious traditions, he argued that 'for some children religious traditions form a basis on which identities are constructed while for others the effect of these is at most slight' (p.13). Whilst Eaude's article post-dates the research contained within this study, one aspect of the analysis to be undertaken in respect of research question one will be to examine how tradition may be seen to have a bearing on how the participants experience and perceive spirituality

Adams (2019) sought to explore 'the relationship between children's spiritual experiences and traditions through the lens of space, that is the spiritual spaces which the children and traditions occupy and the fluidity of those spaces' (p.30). Interestingly, Adams highlighted the response of the adult in this article, noting that

> 'Children…find themselves in a strange hinterland, one which can move
> back to being vivid through the shimmering space, when an open-minded
> adult (perhaps a trusted relative, family friend, religious leader, teacher or
> sometimes the researcher) and the child knows that their views will be
> respected' (p.40).

The influence of a trusted person, and the 'tradition' in which the research participant views that person may impact on how they perceive spirituality. Champagne (2019) perceived 'traditions to be the raw material with which our spiritual stories can be constructed and told' (p.2). These traditions 'can be compared to language elements, which make possible the expression of our narrative – the recognition and the development of our spirituality' (p.2). As with Eaude (2019) and Adams (2019), whilst this article post-dated the research undertaken for this study, the influence of traditions on the experience and perceptions of research participants (and therefore the soil in which the

catechesis is being undertaken) is an important aspect of analysis for this thesis, impacting in particular on the first three research questions .

Summary

The literature on children's spirituality clearly highlights areas of spirituality that might be experienced by children and young people, irrespective of their religious background. With respect to the first research question on page 22, there is a lack of research around how young people preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Catholic Church may perceive and experience spirituality. It is unclear from the literature if young people on religious preparation programmes would perceive and experience spirituality as outlined within literature on Catholic spirituality or in the more general terms used by authors writing on children's spirituality. Any analysis of these perceptions and experiences needs to listen for spirituality linked to a Catholic understanding of the phenomenon and be open to an understanding of the term from a less religious-based perspective, including spirituality as an innate aspect of human life, connectedness and a desire of participants to make meaning from their lives. Gaining a greater understanding of how young people on Confirmation courses perceive and experience spirituality, especially as compared to how an adult catechist may perceive and experience spirituality, may enhance understanding of spirituality (research question three) and assist the practice of catechist, helping the catechist to understand better the soil in which the catechesis is being sown (research question four). Developing an understanding of how the young people's perceptions are shaped by culture and tradition may both assist the development of catechesis and contribute to the recent academic debate around the impact of tradition on children's spirituality.

Religious and contemporary spirituality - contrast and commonality

The division of themes according to whether they arise in literature pertaining to Catholic spirituality or children's spirituality to inform the analysis of how

research participants for this study perceive and experience spirituality may be oversimplistic and imply a separation between the two disciplines that may not be appropriate. King (2011) noted that 'some writers oppose spirituality and religion so strongly that they consider spirituality as connected with all spiritual orientations and practices *outside* religious institutions' (p.5). Other authors have noted how religion and spirituality may be synonymous or overlapping domains (see, for example, Benson *et al.* 2003, p.209). Champagne (2019) has argued that 'spirituality and religion refer to separate realities' (p.1). Gellel (2018) has maintained that 'religion and spirituality are not understood to be independent of each other' (p.18).

This literature review began with a brief overview of how spirituality might be described in works with a Catholic/ Christian focus. The use of faith-based language should not, however, imply a separation or dichotomy between the two. Miller-McLemore (2010), for instance, highlighted how studies of Catholic spirituality can be developed through learning from studies on contemporary spirituality, in particular studies relating to the spirituality of children. Sasso (2019) took this further arguing that

> …our propensity for putting everything into neat categories has us view the religious and spiritual life as opposites. This is an unfortunate mistake. As body and soul are united, so religion and spiritual life are partners (p.22).

How religion and spirituality are perceived by participants to be intertwined will have a direct bearing on the research questions.

Religion and spirituality as separate entities

De Souza and Watson (2016) identified 'two broadly distinct categories' of spirituality - 'one is the traditional perspective, drawn from a variety of faith traditions. The other encompassed newer religious and non-religious expressions of spirituality often referred to as New Age and/or secular' (p.343).

They link the former to a focus 'on interiority in spiritual practice… where the interior journey took precedence' (p.344) and drew a distinction in terms of how

religious and secular forms of spirituality have …[interpreted] …the word 'sacred' . Within a religious framework, sacredness is usually related to God and aspects of religion such as liturgy, music and doctrine...sacredness in secular forms of spirituality can include everyday activities, experiences or things that contain deep meaning and sentiment for the individual' (p.345).

This has echoes in Champagne's (2019) statement that 'spirituality and religion refer to separate realities' (p.1). This may be of particular interest when considering the perceptions and experiences of spirituality of young people on religious development programmes and if the findings of this analysis help extend our understanding of spiritualty (research questions one and three).

As illustrated when considering themes arising from Catholic spirituality, there has been a shift away from spirituality linked to interior faith practices to include spirituality linked to the everyday activities of life. Sheldrake (2013) emphasised the importance of linking spirituality with everyday life. Miller-McLemore (2010) highlighted how, for those who focus spirituality 'in solitude and silence or in organised worship, children – their noise, demands and distractions – are a major impediment' (p.23). Across history, and different religious traditions, she contests that 'religions have perpetuated a limited understanding of children's spirituality'. This Miller-McLemore, argued is:

…true despite recent popular movements and publications affirming everyday spirituality and despite longer standing religious traditions, such as Ignatian and Benedictine spirituality, which have encouraged the integration of faith into daily life (p.24).

The argument for spirituality being viewed as part of everyday life in a Catholic tradition has been taken up by various writings on practical spirituality. Rossiter (2011) writing on Catholic schools and contemporary youth spirituality, proposed a definition of 'spiritual' which touched on a connectedness and care for things other than self, for example 'human values; sense of meaning and purpose to life, love and care for self and others; sense of stewardship for the

earth' (p.59). When viewed in this regard, there is a direct link between aspects of Catholic spirituality and elements of spirituality highlighted in general studies with young people and children..

Despite Champagne's (2019) assertion that 'there is general agreement today that spirituality and religion refer to separate realities' (p.1), without any research on how young people participating on religious-based programmes view spirituality and religion, it is not possible to apply this generalisation in this instance. Rossiter (2011) argued that for young people, 'identification of the spiritual and the religious remains common'. Part of the analysis below in respect of the research questions focusses on where the young people sense spirituality exists – purely in faith-based practices or in the every-day or both.

In order to assist the analysis of how research participants in this study perceive and experience spirituality, the literature has been reviewed to identify areas in studies of Catholic and children's spirituality overlap and where they vary. These areas of variance and overlap may impact on the analysis of how research participants experience and perceive spirituality. The argument is that, in the absence of previous research, it is not possible to assume that spirituality and religion do, or do not refer to separate realities when considered from the perspective of those involved with Catholic Confirmation programmes.

Catholic spirituality and contemporary spirituality definitions

Variances

Undeniably, the links between spirituality and a belief in Christ will act as a variance between Christian spirituality and a contemporary, non-religious based spirituality. An area of divergence between Catholic spirituality and that found within wider studies of the term involves belief in a transcendent being. Fisher (2001) defined this belief in a transcendent being as 'some-thing/some-One beyond the human level (that is ultimate concern; cosmic force; transcendent reality; or God – through Faith)' (p.100); whilst Catholic spirituality would be

linked to Catholic Theology around a Trinitarian God (three person in one God) and spirituality often expressed in a Christocentric fashion (see Bacik, 1993 & 2002; & Sheldrake, 2013). As Sheldrake identifies 'Christian spirituality is intimately related to a specific understanding of God and God's relationship to the world and to humanity' (2013, p.43), it is 'creation-centered', based on 'the Incarnation', discipleship', 'sacramental', 'redemptive', 'communal' and 'at the center… is the notion of God's abiding presence in the Christian community and also God's indwelling in every person as spirit, empowering, guiding, and inspiring the journey of the community and of each person towards an ultimate union with the divine in eternal life' (2013, p.44). This is illustrated in the language noted above around the call to holiness, to serve God and neighbour and illustrates both variance between non-religious-based spirituality and Catholic spirituality – that is the belief in a trinitarian God that then governs why spiritual actions are undertaken. Consequently, whilst aspects of spirituality in terms of connecting with neighbours etc may be similar in Catholic and children's spirituality, the rationale lying behind those connections may vary.

It is not clear, however, how reflective the language used to describe Catholic spirituality, as illustrated in the early part of this literature review and, to a large extent, in the Confirmation preparation programmes, is to the language used by adolescents preparing for Confirmation and how linked this would be to their everyday experiences of spirituality. The use of non-religious-based language to express spiritual experiences or perceptions does not, necessarily mean that participants view spirituality and religion as two distinct entities. In order to understand the soil in which the seed is being sown, a catechist needs to be aware of how the young people experience spirituality and how they perceive it, especially in relation to spirituality's links with religion.

Overlapping concepts

Within the literature review above, there are a number of overlapping concepts that may assist in determining if research participants have an awareness of spirituality as a concept in their lives. These include:

- spirituality as a conscious sense of self and how that self-connects to other people and the world with (in religious terms) an aspiration to be become something more (whether based on God or an 'ultimate reality'); and
- spirituality involving growth and a search for meaning and purpose.

Relational connectedness and Catholic spirituality

De Souza (2006) drew on Hay and Nye's theory of 'relational consciousness' (2006) to explain the concept of spirituality using the idea of 'circles and layers of connectedness' (p.178). The concept of connectedness is highlighted above as a core aspect of how spirituality may be experienced for those of a religious or non-religious background. It is a concept that might be described in terms of every-day experiences (connectedness with friends and family, for instance) and links with the faith-based language and the concept of discipleship highlighted by Sheldrake above. Figure 1 below illustrates how this idea of a sense of connectedness might fit with Catholic spirituality:

Self (de Souza), Themselves (Fisher), The Human Person (*New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality – NDCS*)

Family and Friend (de Souza) , love of neighbour (*Lumen Gentium*), The Moral Life and The Person in Relation to the World (NDCS)

Empathy for people who are different (de Souza) love of neighbour (*Lumen Gentium), The Moral Life and The Person in Relation to the World (NDCS)*

The Environment (Fisher), The Person in Relation to the World (*NDCS*)

Other (de Souza), some-thing/some-One (Fisher), Love of God and Prayer and Devotion (*Lumen Gentium* and *NDCS*)

Figure 1: De Souza (2006), Fisher (2001) and aspects of Catholic spirituality.

Within the analysis undertaken of this research in response to research questions one to three, it is pertinent to consider if research participants associated experiences of spirituality with connectedness and if they explicitly associated that connectedness with spirituality within the Catholic tradition.

Growth and searching for meaning and purpose

As noted above, an aspect of Catholic spirituality is the metaphor of the spiritual growth as being a journey. The sense of being on a journey to discern a meaning and purpose is developed in a number of the Confirmation programmes noted above (for example Gomez, 1993; & Curtin, 2011). Carotta, as noted above, took this further in his programme devised around enabling a candidate to develop their spirituality and 'Spiritual Growth Plan (2007). This journey is particularly linked with a journey of discovery of life as a Christian and a sense of connectedness with God, others and self.

A search for meaning and purpose to life has also been demonstrated to be found in wider studies of the spirituality of children/ adolescent (for example Benson *et al.*, 2003; Engebretson 2002, 2004 & 2006; & Rossiter, 2011), although not necessarily in a faith context. It may be, as Benson *et al.* (2003) state, particular to issues in adolescence and young adults 'issues of meaning, purpose, vocation, relationships and identity are particularly salient during adolescence (p.210). Benson *et al.* in this regard align to the stages of faith development noted above, for example, in relation to Willey and White (2021, p.130). To what extent the young research participants in this study viewed 'growth' or a search for meaning and purpose as part of spirituality will be explored further in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

The review of literature from a Catholic and children's spirituality perspective has highlighted commonalities of understanding including: a sense of being on a journey of growth and discovery (for example Downey, 1993, Benson *et al.*, 2003) and a sense of connectedness with others (for example Carotta, 2007; & de Souza, 2006). Similarly, there are overlaps between the dark aspect of spirituality noted by de Souza (2012) and specific aspects of Catholic spirituality. Moore's Confirmation Course (2004), for instance, contains a session on 'Self-Acceptance', including issues noted by de Souza (2012) around issues of low self-esteem and 'pressures …to conform in a negative way' (p.65). Ultimately, a core difference arises (when set in a Christian context) through the belief in a Christocentric God and the reason ascribed to the spiritual experiences. How implicitly or explicitly religion and spirituality are linked by those participating in this research will form a key part of the analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 to respond to research questions one to three and inform the response to research question four. Without this understanding of the soil in which the seed is being sown, the process of catechesis may fall on stony ground (see Mark 4:5).

With reference to the first research question, within this thesis I will, use the themes outlined in Table 1 below to explore further if those engaged in preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation (a Sacrament intimately linked with the gifts if the Holy Spirit and connectedness/ discipleship) perceive, experience and describe spirituality. This will be set alongside how the catechists perceive and experience spirituality in response to the second research question. This in turn, it is hoped, will assist in responding to the fourth research question by examining how this can assists catechists in their accompaniment of the young people on their journey of preparation. This research will help to illuminate how young people preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation perceive and experience spirituality; thereby, contributing to a greater understanding of Children's spirituality. In response to research question three, I will also seek to contribute to the academic understanding of the linkages between religion and spirituality and the recent academic developments around how spirituality may be influenced by tradition. In order to do this, a methodology is required that is suitable for research of an experience lived by participants and interpreted by them and the researcher.

Table 1 : Core themes to be utilised when analysing how those involved with this research perceived and experienced spirituality include:

Spirituality	Example authors
Religious based – including Church Community, liturgical actions	Shelton, 1983
	Castle, 2008
	YOUCAT, 2011
	Downey, ed., 1993
	Cunningham, 2000 & 2009
	McGrath, 1999
	Canales, 2009 & 2011

Relational/ Love of neighbour/ Holiness/ discipleship	*Lumen Gentium,* 1964
	Byrne, 1993
	Hay and Nye, 2006
	Engebretson, 2002
	De Souza, 2006
	Mercer, 2007
	Hyde, 2007
	De Souza, 2012
Connectedness/ Individualistic/ active practical	Carotta, 2007
	Sheldrake, 1995 & 2013
	Russi and Friel, 2013
	Do you love me?, 2014
	Fisher 2001
	De Souza, 2007
	Waaijman, 2007
	Benson *et al.,* 2003
	Roehlkepartain *et* al., 2008
	Gellel, 2018
Meaning Making	Engebretson, 2004
	Roehlkepartain & Benson *et al.*, 2008
	Gellel, 2018
Religion and spirituality (separate or partners)	Roehlkepartain *et* al., 2008
	King, 2011
	De Souza and Watson, 2016
	Sasso, 2019
	Champagne, 2019
Tradition/ influence of family and friends	Roehlkepartain *et* al., 2008
	Eaude, 2019
	Champagne, 2019
	Adams, 2019
	Stockinger, 2019

Spirituality as an innate part of being human	Coles, 1990
	Hart, 2003
	Hay and Nye, 2006
	Adams, Hyde and Woolley, 2008
	De Souza and Watson, 2016
Positive and negative aspects of life	De Souza, 2012,
	Adams, Bull & Maynes, 2016
	Lovelock and Adams, 2017

Chapter 3: Methodology

Authors who have undertaken research into how children and young people understand spirituality have used a variety of research methods. Engebretson (2002), for example, reported on a study that used a 'short open-ended questionnaire' with around 200 secondary students (p.62). In 2006, she reported on further research around a definition of spirituality that was initially tested through 20 interviews and then developed into a questionnaire to be used more extensively (p.331). Likewise, Fisher (2001) used questionnaires in his quantitative study. The wide-ranging research involving Roehlkepartain *et al.* (2008) utilised questionnaire, focus groups and in-depth interviews. Moriarty (2011) used interviews and Hyde (2005a & 2005b, 2008, 2010 & 2020) used observation within the context of hermeneutic phenomenology in their research.

The literature review identified a range of characteristics of spirituality that young people may use when describing experiences that they perceive to be linked to spirituality. Identifying these characteristics is in accord with the assertion that if we are to study spirituality, it 'must be capable of definition' (Sheldrake, 1995, p.40). How people understand and interpret spirituality for themselves will, nevertheless, be influenced by their experiences. Taken from the perspective of Erricker and Erricker (2016), this means that 'it might be better to understand spirituality or the spiritual as an attempt at translation from experience to language' (p.vii). Champagne (2010) perceived that there is a 'cognitive process' to how children experience a spiritual life (p.375), reasoning that 'perception and experience need to be integrated and adapted, reframed intersubjectively, in order for the individual to realise and actualise his or her relation to reality.' (p.375). For this reason, the first two research questions focus on both listening for how participants might experience spirituality (using characteristics identified in Chapter 2) and how they might perceive it when set within their cognitive processes.

In order to address the first two research questions in the thesis, the research needed to involve both elements of description (that is what a spiritual experience is from the perspective of the research participants) and

interpretation (that is how they understand spirituality or what is it in that experience that, for them, makes it spiritual). In order to enable this research to occur, I sought a methodology that would facilitate the participants to interpret spirituality in a manner that allowed for a conversation to develop, which might aid that interpretative process.

The research for this study was set within hermeneutic phenomenology, on the understanding that the 'epistemology [of hermeneutic phenomenology] is grounded on the belief that knowledge making is possible through subjective experience and insight' (Kafle, 2011, p.194). Hyde (2008), who utilised hermeneutic phenomenology in his research on spirituality noted that 'the underpinning philosophy of …[hermeneutic phenomenology allows]… knowledge to be realised in the interpretation and understanding of the expression of human life' (p.119). This aligned hermeneutic phenomenology with the investigation envisaged within the first two research questions.

I briefly outline hermeneutic phenomenology below and why it is a methodology suitable for this study. The use of the methodology was tested through a pilot study, which is also summarised below. There follows an explanation of the research design for this study, including the relevant research ethics and the impact of hermeneutic phenomenology on that research design. An initial evaluation of the applicability of hermeneutic phenomenology for my research will be expanded upon in Chapter 5, following the analysis and discussion of the data.

Research approach

Hermeneutic phenomenology is accepted as a valid research approach in educational studies (for example Nielsen, 2000; Barnacle, 2001 & 2004; Sharkey, 2001; Friesen, 2012; & Henriksson, 2012) and studies of the spirituality of children and young people (for example Hyde, 2005a & 2005b, 2008 & 2010; & Moriarty, 2011). Hyde (2005a) has argued that it is an appropriate 'framework for reflecting, interpreting and gaining insight into the features of children's spirituality' (p.33). Hermeneutic phenomenology

underpinned Hyde's (2008) later work on children and spirituality and his further work examining the 'nurturing' of children's spiritual development (2010). Hyde (2005a) justified hermeneutic phenomenology as relevant as it was 'research … [that] results in the production of something new, created out of the encounter of the interpreter and the life expression, or text, being interpreted' (p.36). Moriarty (2011) has similarly justified hermeneutic phenomenology as being a suitable methodology for the study of spirituality of children. The research within this thesis sought to explore both how young people and adult catechists perceive and experience spirituality (see research questions one and two).

Hermeneutic phenomenology involves both description and interpretation. Finlay (2012) has outlined 'Phenomenological research characteristically starts with concrete descriptions of lived situations…the researcher proceeds by offering a synthesized account, for example, identifying general themes about the essence of the phenomenon' (p.21). The experience being described has, to an extent already been interpreted by the research participant. That interpretation was further developed through the 'conversation' with the researcher and the researcher's subsequent analysis and writing.

> Interpretation is [therefore] required, say hermeneutic phenomenologists, to bring out the ways in which meanings occur in a *context*…of that individual's life situation…as researchers make sense of data… through a specific historical lens and…in a particular social-cultural field' (Finlay, 2012, p.22).

Drawing on the philosophy of Husserl and the concept of the 'lifeworld', van Manen (1990) described hermeneutic phenomenology as

> the descriptive study of lived experience (phenomena) in an attempt to enrich lived experience …and…[an] interpretive study of the expressions and objectifications (texts) of lived experience in an attempt to determine the meaning embodied in them (p.38).

 Put succinctly, 'hermeneutic phenomenology is consequently the study of *experience* together with its *meanings'* (Henriksson and Friesen, 2012, p.1). There are no set rules for hermeneutic phenomenology. For van Manen, hermeneutic phenomenology was a methodology rather than a method being a

'methodological text…a *methodos* (a way) to do qualitative research rather than a method' (Sharkey, 2001, p.21). Henriksson and Finlay (2012) have gone so far as to propose it 'is as much a disposition and attitude as it is a distinct method or program of discovery' (p.1).

In the light of the above exploration of hermeneutic phenomenology, it was determined that this approach would be suitable for both the younger and older participants. With that in mind, to shape the research design, I have drawn in this study on the work of van Manen (1990), reflections on the use of hermeneutic phenomenology in education (in for example Friesen, Henriksson and Saevi, 2012) and the application of hermeneutic phenomenology in works relating to children's spirituality (including Hyde, 2005 & Moriarty, 2011). The research design was also tested through a small pilot study.

Pilot study

The pilot study took place in a parish in the East Midlands and involved one young person preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation (given the pseudonym Amy) and one adult catechist involved in that preparation (given the pseudonym of Polly). The parish in question was later used for conversations with four candidates and two catechist leaders within the main body of the research.

In line with the research questions later used in the wider study, the questions posed in the pilot study sought to explore both general experiences of importance to the participants and experiences interpreted by participants as being spiritual in nature. The aim of these questions was to explore how aspects of spirituality might be embedded in a participant's life, how they might perceive spirituality and to what extent religion and spirituality might be intertwined for participants.

Both participants associated spirituality with faith-based moments. The adult participant, in particular, identified spirituality as wider than religion and involved a sense of connectivity with God. This connectivity reflected the sense of

'relational consciousness' developed within Hay and Nye (2006) and de Souza's concept of a continuum with an 'other' (2006 & 2012). On the surface the younger participant, Amy, associated spirituality with religion and '*something holy'*. For Amy, a spiritual person was Jesus. Her reasoning was clear and straightforward '*he's very holy'*, '*he …rose from the dead because nobody can do that like that just proves to you that he's very special'*.

The young participant concentrated on special moments often associated with the Sacraments, especially Baptism and First Holy Communion. First Holy Communion was recalled as a special moment in her journey as a Catholic and for the sense of community. It involved, for Amy, a sense of being '*one big happy family'*. This displayed the sense of connectedness illustrated through the literature review above and gave added weight to the conclusion from the literature review that the layers of connectedness involved with spirituality was an area to investigate further in any analysis of the wider research.

There was a sense of the lived moment when the adult participant reflected on the beauty of nature. The sense of connectedness with creation was illustrated when Polly talked vividly of a breath-taking moment looking at the hills when, surrounded by natural beauty, her life came into place. Later in the interviews, Polly summarised this as '*if you can love yourself, you can love others and if you can love others you can love the environment and the beautiful world that we live in'*. This moment illustrated van Manen's 'lived space' (1990, p. 101) utilised by Hyde (2005) and Friesen (2012). It was a moment of 'lived time' (van Manen, 1990, p.104) when time slowed for Polly and her attention was caught up in the instance. The pilot study illustrated the opportunities within hermeneutic phenomenology to identify moments of strong connectivity in the future research that may align to aspects of children's spirituality highlighted in Chapter 2 above.

For Polly, the wonder and awe of the world around was felt ever more sharply after darker moments in her life and was intertwined with a deep belief in God, '*it's when you and God become so intertwined that you can't separate it'*. In these moments, there was a sense of the 'lived other (relationality' (van Manen,

1990, p.104) when there was a deep connection with God. Within the context of this study, this could be said to be a moment of lived spirituality. Listening and engaging in conversation with Polly, exploring key themes and reflecting on the whole conversation illustrated that, for Polly, spirituality was something that could be described and experienced. Without it there was something missing. It involved, in Polly's life, wonder and awe of creation, an awareness of connectivity of self with the wider world and creator and had a deep emotional quality. The interviews revealed anecdotes of lived spirituality when Polly's life had a deep connection with time, space and God. The concept of 'lived spirituality' is relevant to the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 and the conclusions in respect of the research questions.

For Amy, life had not had the ups and downs experienced by Polly. Spirituality was explicitly things connected with something '*holy*'. However, implicitly, Amy's understanding of the term was demonstrated in the warmth of the moments when Amy described as being '*special and happy*', '*peaceful and calm and like a happy time*', and when '*you're all stood there together*'. It also involved the sense of being an individual, unique and valuable with particular roots. In Amy's words '*it just all adds up*'. This interpretative statement summed up a moment characterised by an awareness of lived space, time, body (that is feelings) and relationality. It indicated possible aspects of spiritual moments that might be encountered in the research interviews for the main body of the thesis.

Both Polly and Amy understood 'spirituality…through the lens of their faith traditions' (Natsis, 2017, p.73). Again, indicating a theme that was useful in the wider study. Spirituality, for both participants, was not necessarily one of 'spiritual theology' (see Sheldrake, 1995, pp.57-61) but one integrated with their life experience. How spirituality was described by each participant was bounded by the lens of their life experience to-date. The use of life experience to interpret and describe spirituality by the individual may be one reason why it is so difficult to pin down or define (see Chapter 2). The pilot study highlighted areas in the participants' interviews where aspects of spirituality could be identified in particular experiences and where participants came to particular realisations about those moments (for example when it just added up).

The use of hermeneutic phenomenology enabled me to identify evocative moments in the interviews. These moments helped to illustrate the participants' understanding of spirituality further. Amy had less of a sense of a deep connectivity with God than Polly. Both demonstrated the importance of moments of lived spirituality, when core aspects of an awareness of time, space, self and others were felt by the participants as a spiritual experience. This implied, in relation to the first two research questions, that the use of hermeneutic phenomenology would draw out experiences of spirituality in the wider study and the analysis of these experiences could be both thematic and experiential. The questions utilised in the study, and the rooting of the information in the life experiences of the participants, led to faith and non-faith-based responses and unexpected/ unplanned conversations. Polly stated in amazement '*I never believed that all that would come out today*'. The development of conversations that gave rise to unanticipated answers in the pilot study also indicated that hermeneutic phenomenology was appropriate for the wider research underpinning this thesis.

My interaction with the research conversations and the hermeneutic reflection of the participants meant that it was unlikely a conversation with Amy and Polly would be repeated in the same manner at a different time. This illustrated a potential weakness of hermeneutic phenomenology, as Henriksson and Saevi (2012) have eloquently noted 'no matter how much effort we put into describing the experience and interpreting its possible meaning, phenomenological texts can never be heard as completed symphonies; well conducted they may be, but they are eternally bound to be études' (p.59). This weakness was, for my research, outweighed by the interpretative strength of hermeneutic phenomenology. The title of this study clearly indicates that it is concerned with people's perceptions, rather than quantifiable facts and figures. The interplay of the interpretation of the research participants and researcher contribute to the light being shone on the experience under investigation, as van Manen (1990) asserted:

> Within hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher becomes part of the process. There is no intent to bracket out the researcher's own

understanding. A phenomenological description is always *one* interpretation, and no single interpretation of human experience will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another complementary, or even potentially *richer* or *deeper* description (p.31).

Building on Nielsen (2000), Barnacle (2001) argued that 'combining the factual information, and subjective experience results in a deeper quality of understanding than would be the case if [the work]… were approached in either mode in isolation' (p.5). In practical terms, within the context of this research, the pilot study indicated that the use of the analytical themes developed through the literature search in Chapter 2, combined with identifying moments of 'lived spirituality' through listening for an identifying the existentials of 'lived time', 'lived space', 'lived body' and relationship to others' (in particular a sense of lived relationship to God in this instance) could help shed light on how the research participants perceived and experienced spirituality. This approach accords with the potential options outlined by van Manen (1990, Chapter 7) for 'balancing the research context' (p.161) and Friesen's work on hermeneutic phenomenology (2012).

Research outline

Van Manen (1990) separated hermeneutic phenomenology from case studies as the latter also aim to explore how a case 'may differ in time and place from other groups and situations' (p.22). This study was set within the boundaries of a particular age, geographical and religious community, that is participants and candidates engaged with preparing for Confirmation in the Diocese of Nottingham. In this context, it might also be argued that the case being considered is that of those engaged in Confirmation preparation within the diocese (see, for example, Gillham, 2000, p.1).

Despite the distinction drawn by van Manen (1990) between case studies and hermeneutic phenomenology, there are specific boundaries involved in the research which are reminiscent of case studies. The research involved a group of participants from a geographical area, faith background and time. All those

participating were engaged with a Catholic Confirmation programme in the East Midlands of England. Unlike some case studies, however, its primary focus was on how those engaged with Confirmation programmes may perceive a phenomenon called spirituality rather than why they perceive it in this manner (see Yin, 2003, p.5). Using hermeneutic phenomenological language, the common linkage to case studies is maintained to be the 'text' being studied (Sharkey, 2001). Within hermeneutic phenomenology, a text is not necessarily a piece of writing. The text being studied can be the participants involved in a study.

<u>Hermeneutic phenomenology and the research design</u>

<u>*Sample*</u>

Engebretson (2004) used 20 interviews to test a potential definition of spirituality and Roehlkepartain *et al.* engaged in a total of 32 in depth interviews during a much wider study of spiritual development. Within hermeneutic phenomenology there is no set anticipated sample. As Laverty (2003) has highlighted:

> …the aim in participant selection in phenomenological and hermeneutic phenomenological research is to select participants who have lived experience that is the focus of the study, who are willing to talk about their experience, and who are diverse enough from one another to enhance possibilities of rich and unique stories of the particular experience (p.29).

Finlay (2012) has highlighted how

> the choice of a single case may provide sufficient access to a phenomena depending on the epistemological goals of the project…if the research aims for generality across the field, then a wider sample representing different aspects is required' (p.21).

Although, as Finlay also noted, Giorgi had recommended 'recruiting at least three participants, arguing that the differences between them make it easier to discern the individual experience from the more general experience of the phenomenon' (p.20).

The number of research participants was guided by Finlay's writings, noted above. Table 2 below shows the number of participants per parish.

Parish	Catechist (s)	Peer Leader (s)	Candidates
1	1	1	4
2	1	0	2
3	1	1	4
Total	**3**	**2**	**10**

Table 2: The number of participants per parish.

All three programmes were conducted in parish settings with young people of school age, aged 11 or above. As the core focus of this thesis was how the young people perceive and experience spirituality, a total of ten young people were engaged in the research. The participants attended a mix of Catholic and non-Catholic schools. Factors such as specific age and school background have not been factored into the analysis as the aim of the research is to ascertain how those adolescents on Catholic faith-based Confirmation programmes perceive and experience spirituality rather than how adolescents aged 11 or 13 at Catholic or non-Catholic schools perceive and experience spirituality.

The number of peer leaders (a young person aged over 18 but below 30 who was also involved in the delivery of the programme but not trained as a catechist) participating in the research was limited as one parish did not have any young peer leaders involved in the delivery of the Confirmation sessions. Whilst not formally deemed as catechists, these peer leaders were closer in age to that of the younger participants (that is the Confirmation candidates). The research undertaken gave the necessary coverage to enable analysis at both an individual level and on a more generalised basis in Chapters 4 and 5.

Data collection

The primary data collection was through two semi-structured conversations with each participant. As noted earlier, whilst questionnaires and focus groups have been used in previous studies pertaining to spirituality of children/ adolescents, the primary aim of this research was a qualitative approach to understanding how those involved perceived and experienced spirituality. Van Manen (1990, p.63) noted the 'hermeneutic interview' as being an on-going conversation with the interviewee which 'tends to turn interviewees into participants or collaborators of the research project', of 'borrowing' experiences and reflections on experiences 'in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience' (p.62). Moriarty (2011), using hermeneutic phenomenology, collected her research through semi-structured interviews with children aged eight to ten. Friesen (2012) has explained how 'the principal supply of meaning or of experimental data is often presented by open-ended "qualitative" interviews"' (p.49). Whilst the age range of those involved in this study was above this, the use of semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity to hear the research participants express their experience and perceptions of spirituality in their own words.

The aim of the semi-structured interview was to provide a sufficiently similar framework to enable comparison of interview data whilst also enabling a conversation to occur. Drawing on Gadamer (1989), Sharkey (2001) described this in hermeneutic phenomenological terms as the 'hermeneutic inquiry…[being] …sustained by a responsiveness to the subject matter as it is opened up in conversation' (p.22). Core to the interviews were four key areas: an experience that stood out for the participant, a person that meant something to them, a spiritual experience and a spiritual person. Van Manen (1990) recommended 'stay[ing] close to the experience as lived…be[ing] very concrete. Ask[ing] the person to think of a specific instance, situation, person or event' (p.67). The focus of the questions discussed in the research interviews drew on the pilot study and the work undertaken as part of the literature review. The first interview discussed the aims of the research and explored what spirituality

meant to each participant. Participants were also asked to describe an experience which stood out for them as different and to discuss a person who stood out for them in their lives. The second semi-structured interview sought to explore life experiences of the participants that may be associated with their understanding of spirituality. There was also then an opportunity to discuss the meaning of spirituality in the light of the conversation to-date.

It was clear from the review of literature in Chapter 2 that there is a strong emphasis in literature pertaining to children's spirituality that the phenomenon may have aspects that were not necessarily aligned to any explicit religious context. The initial interview focussed on experiences and people that stood out for the research participants. The aim was to identify if any aspects of spirituality as identified in Chapter 2 implicitly formed part of these experiences without necessarily adding the religious dimension at this stage.

Hyde (2008), in his hermeneutic phenomenological analysis of spirituality in Australian Catholic primary schools, specifically chose to use three sessions based around Hay and Nye's (2006) categories of 'spiritual sensitivities' (p.119) rather than utilising the term 'spirituality'. Hyde's research was, however, with primary school children. Whilst acknowledging that the use of the term spirituality may not initially elicit 'useful pathways …[for] follow-up questions' (Singleton, Mason & Webber, 2004, p.252), as the contention of this research was to enable participants to help to define the phenomenon, the second interview with each participant sought to gauge how comfortable they were with the term.   This second interview took place a minimum of one week after the first and focussed explicitly on experiences and people participants explicitly associated with spirituality. By focussing on spiritual moments and people, the aim was to understand explicitly lived spirituality in the view of the research participants, potentially enabling a greater understanding of how aspects such as religious practices might influence this perception.

The intention behind having two interviews with participants was to allow time for a conversation to occur, with space for reflection and interpretation. Whilst both interviews had an outline framework behind them, the core four areas

noted above were guided by prompts rather than an explicit question and answer session. The use of prompt sheets – or 'probes that guide the conversation away from theory and explanation and keep it firmly rooted in the concrete' (Finlay, 2012, p.49) was designed to enable the conversation to flow more smoothly and to steer the conversation from the descriptive to the lived element, utilising, for instance, probes such as 'how did you feel?' (see Friesen, 2012, p.50).

The prompt sheets helped to draw on particular memories for the research participants. Henriksson and Saevi (2012) have noted within hermeneutic phenomenology that 'only a particular chord…[is needed]… to vibrate for a memory to flash back to us (p.64). Punch (2002) advised researchers working with children to combine 'traditional 'adult' research methods, such as participant observation and interviews…with… a more innovative approach such as using task-based methods' (p.330). Participants were asked to bring an object or piece of writing which meant something to them and which they would be willing to share (such as Beth's necklace or the turtle brought by Nola, which reminded her of her grandfather). In this way the research drew further on aspects of holding a hermeneutic conversation as noted by Henriksson and Saevi (2012) that 'objects…[can]…open the back entrance to memories and, thus, function as mediators between the past and the present (p.65). Hyde (2005a) who utilised hermeneutic phenomenology in a study pertaining to the spirituality of children noted that 'a conversation works most effectively when the subject matter of the conversation assumes control, while those in dialogue allow themselves to be led by it' (p.35). By starting to build rapport through the first interview, it was anticipated that the participants might be prepared to bring an object to talk around to help shape the conversation in interview two. The experience associated with the object was then explored in a concrete fashion (as recommended by van Manen) and helped to enable the research to explore further the participants' perceptions of spirituality.

Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations for the research were governed by Bishop Grosseteste University's Research Ethics Policy (2017), BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011 & 2018) and Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2018). They were also informed by Oliver (2010), Denscombe (2012) and guidance on ethics of research with children in Greig, Taylor and MacKay (2007), including the 'summary of good practice guidelines for research standards in general and in relation to children and young people (pp.253-254). Permission to undertake the research was obtained from Bishop Grosseteste University's Research Ethics Committee before any data collection was undertaken.

The research ethics application, approved by Bishop Grosseteste University, outlined how I would ensure that participants were able to give informed consent to the research and were able to withdraw from the research at any stage. I contacted the gatekeepers (that is the parish leaders of the Confirmation programmes), the candidates and their parents, asking them if they are willing to participate in the research[6]. The letter explained the research and the benefits that may flow from it. No adolescent participant was included in the study unless written permission had been obtained from themselves and their parent/ guardian. The researcher further outlined the purpose of the research in the initial interview and enabled participants to ask questions about the research.

The young participants in the research were aged under 16. As such, in accordance Bishop Grosseteste University's research policy, BERA guidelines and the policies of the Diocese of Nottingham, appropriate safeguarding measures were applied (for example by ensuring appropriate measures are in place in respect of adult supervision and that there was anonymity for the individuals participating in the research). The researcher had a valid DBS clearance obtained by the Catholic Church as part of their work as a catechist.

[6] See Appendix A1 for an example of the correspondence sent to participants and the outline of the interview structure used

The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis, with other adults were nearby if required.

A critical consideration within the ethics guidelines and policies was that no harm should come to the participants. The nature of contacting the candidates meant that participant selection was self-selective and participants were assured that they may withdraw from the research at any stage. Participants were enabled to state where they preferred the interviews to be held and given 'power' over the direction of the conversation by having the choice of examples and the objects they wished to discuss. Steps were taken to ensure that anonymity of participants was respected unless participants were to reveal that they are participating in any illegal or harmful activities. As noted earlier, from previous research (for example Singleton *et al.*, 2004), I was conscious that the use of the term 'spirituality' might cause confusion. Rather than omitting the term, I was mindful of any signs of confusion or discomfort in the interviews and prepared to move onto queries pertaining to specific experiences in the participants' lives that had a particular meaning to them.

The interviews, by location or through assumptions around the nature of the research or the interests of the researcher, may have been influenced by the links to religious surroundings and/or the religious aspect of the Confirmation programme. Conscious, therefore, that the participant may be concerned about giving the 'wrong' answers, which may contradict Church teachings, or of potential 'judgemental' feedback on responses (for example if they felt that their answers would be viewed as incorrect in some ways by the researcher), I took care to explain the research, encourage questions to aid understanding and to explain the steps that would be taken to anonymise the data. I emphasised that the research was concerned with how people perceive spirituality rather than judging those perceptions to be correct or incorrect. The question framework was rooted in the participants' own life experiences. This helped all participants to recall the life-experience concerned rather than to anticipate a 'correct' answer. Mindful of de Souza's (2012) article on the 'dark side of Spirituality', the researcher did not ask about positive or negative experiences but encouraged

participants to talk about experiences which come naturally to them and which they wished to discuss when considering spirituality within their lives.

Subjectivity, hermeneutic phenomenology and the research design

As part of the research design, consideration was needed as to how issues such as perceptions of gender and power might impact on the work. Part of the process of hermeneutic phenomenology required that I was aware of my own background and its potential impact in that 'what the researcher may take for granted is highlighted and tested, opening new possibilities for questioning and extending the researcher's own horizon of understanding' (Hyde, 2020, p.4).

This reflexive process required being aware of the how I might be perceived by participants and any impact that this might have on the research. The adult catechist participants might view me as a fellow catechist (an insider) before seeing me as a researcher (or potential outsider). There was also a gender differential, in that two of the catechists interviewed were female (as I am) whilst one was male and both peer leaders were male. Within the Catholic Church, positions of leadership in the ordained ministry are limited to males. This is not the case within catechesis. In all the parishes catechists were both male and female and familiar with working together on an equal footing. One set of participants had a greater awareness of the researcher as a catechist as they were drawn from the catechist's own parish. Younger participants might view me as a catechist (or educator) who might expect 'correct' answers, or as an outsider who might not understand their views (either from a religious perspective or through a difference in age or ethnicity). As Oliver (2010) outlined 'It is extremely difficult to shed the combined social experiences of a number of decades' (p.97). With respect to gender, for example, 'individuals are conditioned into understanding and conceptualizing the world as a member of a gender group' (p.97). Each participant was interviewed as an individual to avoid any unconscious adoption of gender roles within peer groups of mixed-gender or race (see Pattman & Kehily, 2004, p.138).

Building on from Punch (2002), the issue for this researcher was ensuring that the participants were informed as to the nature of the research in such a manner as to avoid influencing their answers. This process had to enable sufficient trust and rapport to be built to allow the participants to express their own opinions and life experiences without anticipating what they thought the researcher was most interested in hearing. To avoid bias from gender or perceptions of power, Oliver (2010) noted that 'it is a question of trying as much as possible to ensure that the respondents accurately reflect their views' and with regard to the data analysis 'that the researcher does not make unwarranted or unnecessary assumptions' (p.97). Hermeneutic Phenomenology lends itself to the approach recommended by Oliver (2010). It also aligns to recommendations in Robinson and Kellet (2004) to allow participants to 'take control of the conversation agendas (p.84), engaging them at an 'active' level (p.87) and is, to an extent, geared to enabling the issue of the data validity to be addressed through the collection of data based around concrete examples. With Robinson and Kellet's (2004) advice in mind, the research was designed to root the discussion in the life experience of the participant, basing it in something that has a memory and meaning for that participant (regardless of why that memory is chosen). As Henriksson and Saevi (2012) have noted 'a telling of lived events is a recalling of the *lived* in the shape of a memory (p.63) The retelling 'itself shines upon the phenomenon it evokes' (Henriksson and Saevi, 2012, p.61).

By choosing hermeneutic phenomenology, I also deliberately took account of conscious assumptions and interpretations within the research process both from the perspective of the research participants and the researchers. The 'bracketing' of being able to 'suspend taken-for granted knowledge and (pre)judgements in relation to the phenomenon' (Hyde, 2020, p.4) is not embedded within the hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Instead, within hermeneutic phenomenology, the position of the researcher is of relevance

> 'empiricism and the claims of objectivity made by those employing these so-called 'scientific method' are called into question by the hermeneutical approach… In hermeneutic phenomenology reflexivity in research is

embraced, rather than the notion of rational objectivity' (Hyde, 2005a, p.34).

In Chapter 1, I outlined my journey as a catechist that led me to undertake this thesis. In respect of spirituality, my experience of this phenomenon has been through the lens of my Catholic upbringing and subsequent practice. After the close of one of the interviews noted below, the young person concerned asked me about a spiritual experience that stood out for me. This was a fair question as they had shared their experiences as part of the research process. The experience that came to mind was on a pilgrimage to Fatima. Unlike some of the research participants whose experiences are retold in Chapter 4, pilgrimages had little tradition in my family. However, sitting in the square watching a rainbow behind the crucifix, I was aware of a peace and the presence of God in a way that was unique for me. Whilst the memory has faded, the 'felt' sense of the moment has persisted. Such experiences may have helped influence my decision to use hermeneutic phenomenology within this study.

Impact of hermeneutic phenomenology on the analysis of the research

Analysis

Within the interviews, research participants (as with other hermeneutic studies) were 'led to reflect on their own experiences as they had lived them' (Hyde, 2020, p.6). Analysis of the data needed to take into account that, within hermeneutic phenomenology, the data are always to an extent being interpreted by someone. For Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), for instance, there is a 'double hermeneutic' where the researcher interprets data that has already been interpreted by the participants (pp.35-36).

This process of interpretation was fundamental to the analysis undertaken. Hyde (2005a) described hermeneutic phenomenology as a framework for 'reflecting, interpreting and gaining insight into the features of children's spirituality' (p.37). The process of reflection and interpretation was guided by

potential ways of analysing the data outlined by van Manen in 1990. Key for van Manen was both the continual reading and re-reading of the data and the writing process itself (see, for example, p.93 and Chapter 5). With respect to reading of the research materials, van Manen (1990) suggested:

- 'wholistic reading' of the transcripts – that is 'what sententious phrase may capture the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole';

- 'selective reading' of the transcripts – that is 'what statement (s) or phrase (s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being highlighted'; and

- 'detailed reading' – that is 'what does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described' (p.93).

All the research transcripts were subjected to multiple reads to gain a picture of the participant's position in respect of spirituality and to identify the statements or phrases and clusters of sentences that helped build this picture. Care was taken to identify any 'moment of serendipitous insight, that is a 'chance moment' that provided compelling insights into the lived meaning and experience of spirituality (see Hyde, 2020, p.10).

Van Manen (1990, Chapter 7) outlines some possible methods for working the text to develop an understanding of the phenomenon in question. These methods include an analytic reading of the texts. Taking this as an initial approach, the transcripts were then reworked to shed light on relevant anecdotes and statements or sentences that highlighted the meaning of spirituality to each participant.

Chapter 4 below focusses on how the individuals involved in the study perceived and experienced spirituality. As this study is fundamentally about hearing the voice of those involved with Confirmation programmes on Spirituality, all participants are represented as individuals.

The position I brought to this research was an awareness of lived spirituality in a religious context and an understanding of aspects of spirituality identified within previous academic research. Utilising this position is valid within hermeneutic phenomenology. The analytical approach was taken with the data using the lens of the themes developed during the literature review. The texts were also reviewed from an existential perspective using the existentials of 'lived time', 'lived space, 'lived body and 'lived relationship to others' (see van Manen, 1990; Hyde, 2005a; & Friesen, 2012). From the perspective of this study, 'lived spirituality' was added to van Manen's original examples. Lived spirituality, in this instance, was the point where there is an intersection of the existentials noted previously in a manner that shows a depth of awareness of connectivity with the world around a person. This connectivity in a Catholic sense also carried with it an awareness of connectivity with God. The results of this thematic and existential approach are outlined in Chapter 5 to help identify the 'essential' themes inherent within spirituality in this instance 'without which the phenomenon could not be what it is' (van Manen, 1990, p.107).

The writing and re-writing process, focussed on drawing out different elements of Spirituality to identify potential essential themes, meant that particular anecdotes or phrases shed light upon spirituality in different ways dependent upon the lens that was in use (that is an analytical theme identified within Chapter 2 or an existential approach). This required the anecdote, phrase or sentence to be repeated at different points in the analysis chapters below. This is not unusual within hermeneutic phenomenology research. Hyde (2005a), writing on children's spirituality quoted one phrase from a participant called David nine times.

<u>Evaluation of hermeneutic phenomenology for this research</u>

The use of hermeneutic phenomenology as a framework to aid discovery of the essences of children's spirituality has an established pedigree. The investigation of the thoughts and perceptions of research participants through semi-structured interviews has also been used by previous researchers (as outlined above). Whilst the lack of ability to replicate conversations may be a

weakness of hermeneutic phenomenology, the interpretative element of the methodology, as noted above, is also its strength.

Hermeneutic phenomenology requires a conversation between researcher and research participant through which a shared understanding of the phenomenon being investigated is sought. To help enable this conversation to develop, the research was kept to a relatively small number of participants in order to allow time for the discussion to occur. The format in each interview was governed by experiences, people and objects chosen by the participant. The length and level of conversation that occurred varied according to each participant. As will be seen below, there was a depth of engagement with the adult participants and with some of the younger participants that is not reflected across all interviews. The analysis undertaken from an analytical and existential perspective has illuminated perspective on spirituality across all participants. The detailed reading, re-reading, writing and re-writing that followed enabled me to constantly shed new light on possible perceptions and experiences of spirituality. These are outlined in Chapters 4 and 5.

Laverty (2003) outlined different methods that may be used by researchers to establish the rigour of research, including the 'construction of texts that are credible to the experience', the use of 'vivid and faithful' descriptions of the experience and demonstration 'that the inquiry was conducted in a manner to ensure the topic was accurately identified and described' (p.31). It is hoped that these aspects of rigour can be identified through the reporting and analysis of the research highlighted in the following chapter.

Conclusion

The research within this study sought to understand the perceptions and experiences of those involved with Confirmation programmes. The aim of the study was to advance knowledge of how young people perceive and experience spirituality and enable a greater understanding of the soil in which the seed of catechesis is sown when preparing young people for a future 'life in the Spirit' following receipt of the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Catholic Church. As

my intent was to understand the lived experiences of spirituality, hermeneutic phenomenology provided a viable framework for the research.

Having examined previous research into children's spirituality that used hermeneutic phenomenology and works outlining aspects of hermeneutic phenomenology as a research design, I used semi-structured interviews with participants, basing those interviews around memories of concrete life experiences of those participants and using physical objects to bring memories to the foreground of their minds. The resulting interview transcripts were read and re-read using analysis informed by the themes developed in chapter 2 above and the existentials developed by van Manen (1990). The resulting written conclusions are presented below. Chapter 4 focusses on the individual voice of participants, highlighting how the individuals involved in the research perceived and experienced spirituality (in response to research questions one and two on page 22). Chapter 5 focusses on the essence of spirituality from the perspective of the groups involved to develop a more wholistic response to the first two research questions and indicate how this research may advance understanding of spirituality (in response to research question three). Chapter 6 seeks to summarise the responses to the first three research questions and explore how these responses may add value to the practice of catechesis on Catholic Confirmation programmes.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Research Data (individual texts)

As this thesis focusses on the voices of participants, this chapter will consider the individual voice of each participant. As outlined in Chapter 3 above in respect of the methodology used within this research, the initial analysis is based on the rich analysis of the interviews for each participant[7]. The aim in the inclusion of this level of detail in Chapter 4 is to give the reader a sense of the rich voice of each participant and a sense of the interpretation by each participant of spirituality from their perspective. Each individual is treated as a text in the terms of hermeneutic phenomenology. Diagrams have been used below to illustrate the sense of connectivity within each interview. They pull from the sense of relational connectedness highlighted by academic authors and illustrated in Figure 1 above (p.50). The stronger the sense of connectivity, the deeper colour assigned to the circle in the diagrams below. I will use these diagrams within the analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 below in respect of responding to the research questions.

The individual text analysis in Chapter 4 is followed by a thematic analysis in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 seeks to add to the depth of the analysis by taking a thematic approach to the analysis, analysing the meaning of spirituality to the groups of participants taking part in the thesis. This approach accords with the reading and re-reading recommended by van Manen (1990) and outlined on p.72 above. Prior to considering the individual texts, further information has been added on the Confirmation programmes in each parish as background context.

Confirmation programmes

The catechists from the three parishes involved in the research used three different core texts based on availability and the preference of the catechist. Parish 1 used a programme developed over a number of years (the parish developed version in Appendix A5). Parish 2 used the programme developed

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[7] See Appendix A6 for the framework used within the initial analysis of each interview

by the *Societas Doctrinae Christianae*. Parish 3 used a short programme based on the *YOUCAT Confirmation Book* (2014).

Parish 1

The catechists in the first parish divided the Confirmation group into small learner groups based on age. The programme was determined using a range of set topics (see Appendix A5). The sessions began with the whole group together and a reading linked to the following Sunday. The group then split to focus on key topics. The sessions were designed to enable both a review of the faith and a focus on discipleship and putting that faith into action. Catechists used self-developed resources or resources drawn from a range of Confirmation programmes available in the UK or on the internet according to the age and prior knowledge of the candidates.

Parish 2

In the second parish, the catechists met with the candidates for three sessions and focussed the programme around the use of the *YOUCAT Confirmation Book* (2014). . The Confirmation book explored topics such as God, Jesus, searching for the Holy Spirit, prayer, the Church, Eucharist, Confession and Confirmation. The accompanying Confirmation Handbook for the catechists included worksheets and games to assist the candidates to explore these areas further.

Parish 3

The Confirmation programme used in the parish was produced by the S.D.C. and is typical of those encountered in other parishes. It is based around worksheets utilising faith-based questions, starting with the Sacrament of Baptism, exploring the life of Christ, the Church, the Sacraments of Confession, Eucharist, Matrimony, Holy Orders and the Sacrament of the sick and the Creed. How these might be taught in respect of the ways in which people live their lives is introduced through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit: understanding,

wisdom, right judgement/ counsel, knowledge, reverence/ piety, courage/ fortitude and wonder and awe and fear of the Lord.

Candidate 1 (parish 1) – Beth

Précis

Beth had come to the UK from abroad. Key memories for Beth involved the people who still lived back in the family homeland. For Beth, spirituality was '*love of God or connection to God...I think of God and how He will always be there for us.* Explicitly, therefore, spirituality, was linked to a belief in God and Beth's religion.

Key words, sentences or phrases within the text that point to the essence of spirituality for Beth include feeling loved, with a love that is never ending, being kind helping each other, having a connection / becoming closer, coming together. With respect to lived spirituality, the sentences that capture how this may feel for Beth were '*it feels like somebody's there for you. I will always be there for you and will always be there for you'*.

Beth's interview demonstrated that she placed an emphasis on how people demonstrated care for each other. This aspect of caring for others was important in how Beth envisaged God and her relationship with God. It was illustrated when Beth described the importance to her of an infinity necklace, given to her by her family before Beth came to England. The importance placed by Beth on caring for others also meant that, on reflection, Beth linked spirituality to family moments when people helped each other and showed care for each other.

For Beth, the family connections within spirituality are strongest. Her family's religious background and tradition was Catholic, with aunts and family members

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[8] All the names of those participating the research have been altered as discussed with participants. Parish names have also been removed.

able to talk to Beth about her religion. Figure 2 below is a variant of Figure 1 (p.50) used in Chapter 2. It acts as a diagram to illustrate the strength of connectivity in certain areas demonstrated in Beth's interview. The darker the circle, the greater the sense of connectivity that came through the interviews in this area. Figure 2 illustrates how, for Beth, spirituality was primarily experienced through connectivity to family and her perceptions of God. The darker the colour illustrated, the stronger the sense of connection evidenced within the interview framework.
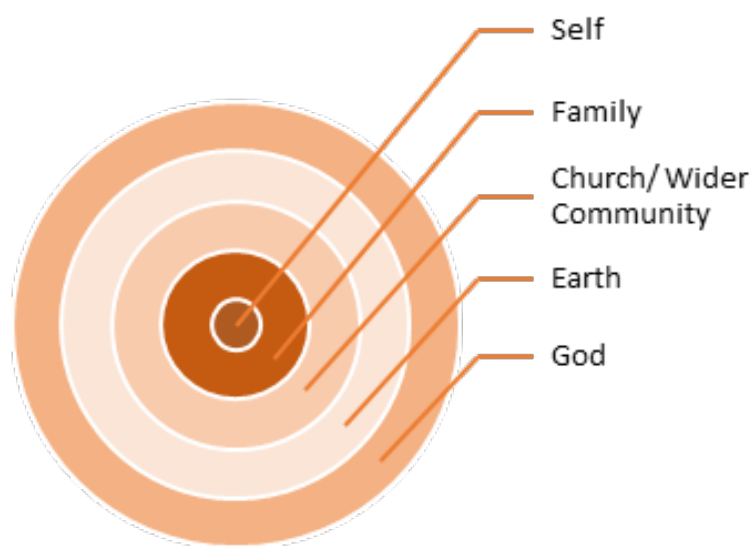
Figure 2: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Beth's interviews.

Detailed outline

In the first interview, when discussing experiences and people that are important to Beth, the influence of the memories of family time back at 'home' could be seen. The distance of that connection made those memories more important. One particular memory that stood out for Beth was Sunday lunch in the family home with aunts, uncles and cousins. The memory included doing fun things with her cousins (like swimming) and the coming together of the family, who would talk about what has been going on in the week and have lunch together ('*I felt…loved because you were with your family*'). Beth

described how the most important part of the experience was '*seeing each other and being with each other*'.

As with Dave (whose outline is given below on pages 122-125), the important person to Beth was a family member who listened to her. This family member (an aunt) was largely in touch with Beth through facetime. The connectivity felt with the aunt was that she was always there for Beth:

> *She will give me advice like to tell me what to do and how to get through that tough time…. It feels like somebody's there for you, she will always be there for you.*

This sense of connectivity and support were of great importance to Beth, who described her aunt as '*loving'* and '*caring*'. The sense of connectivity with family also came through in the conversation when Beth spoke of items that were of value to her. Particular items mentioned were an infinity necklace and a miraculous medal. These will be explored further below.

Beth explicitly described spirituality as '*I think it means love to God or connection to God I think of God and how he will always be there for us'.*
On reflection, the sense of being there to help someone also means that, retrospectively, Beth identified this as something spiritual in the family meals or the aunt about whom she has spoken. There was:

> Beth*: talking about lots going on and how we can maybe help each other*
> Researcher: *And what about your aunt?*
> Beth: *Yes, I think she's very spiritual by her being always available for people whenever they need her and whenever there's a negative thing going on in your life, she always finds time to make it positive or make you happy about it about it.*

Implicitly, Beth also linked spirituality to caring for others and to moments linked to positive emotions.

In interview two, the importance of the connection to people you love came through again when Beth spoke of her necklace and miraculous medal. The necklace was in the shape of an infinity loop and had been bought for Beth by her wider family when she was emigrating. It symbolised that love the family

had was never ending ('*it's the symbol of the infinity sign and the message was from them that our love is never ending*'). Beth also associated it with the love of God and it had an explicit spiritual meaning for her in this sense ('*it links that your love will also be never ending for God and God's love for me will be never ending*'). Overtly, when asked after a spiritual event and spiritual person in her life, these were linked to the Church and praying. Beth described her first Holy Communion and, whilst family members were there, the 'spiritual' element was receiving the body and blood for the first time, after which '*I was going to every week received the body and blood and Jesus and become a better like Catholic*'. A spiritual person in her life was another aunt. This aunt was considered spiritual because of her evident religious nature, '*she's always close to God because she's lonely and she doesn't have anybody at home. She's really close to God and she devotes her life to God*'. This aunt gave Beth the miraculous medal and spoke to her of the saints. In terms of characteristics Beth associated her with being '*kind*' and '*loving*'.

In respect of research question one when asked about Spirituality and Confirmation, for Beth it was about becoming closer to God. There was a sense of connectivity in terms of being part of a group and growing closer to God:

> *You learn more about your faith. You gather around with people you've never met before and you talk about your faith and in the future, you can become closer to God.*

Within Beth's explanation of spirituality and spiritual experiences, there was an understanding of the Eucharist and specific religious practices. The primary association with spirituality came from it helping you '*be closer to God and take the right path*'.

Candidate 2 (parish 1) – Nola

Précis

Nola and her family had recently moved to the parish. For Nola, spirituality was '*believing…having faith or closeness to something special to you*'. Explicitly, therefore, spirituality, was linked to faith and belief.

Key words, sentences or phrases within the text that point to the essence of spirituality for Nola also emphasised the sense of connectivity within spirituality. Family moments were special because of that sense of connectivity and '*doing everything together'.* Words such as 'close', 'watching over others', 'love' and 'cared for' occurred repeatedly throughout the interview. There was a sense of felt spirituality when Nola described the moment with her family sitting on a bench, aware of her surroundings and those present with her. This moment was recollected as being '*beautiful*'. The sense of awareness of her surroundings in moments of felt spirituality imply a possible greater sense of connectivity with the earth than demonstrated by Beth. See Figure 3 below.

Self
Family
Church/Wider Community
Earth
God

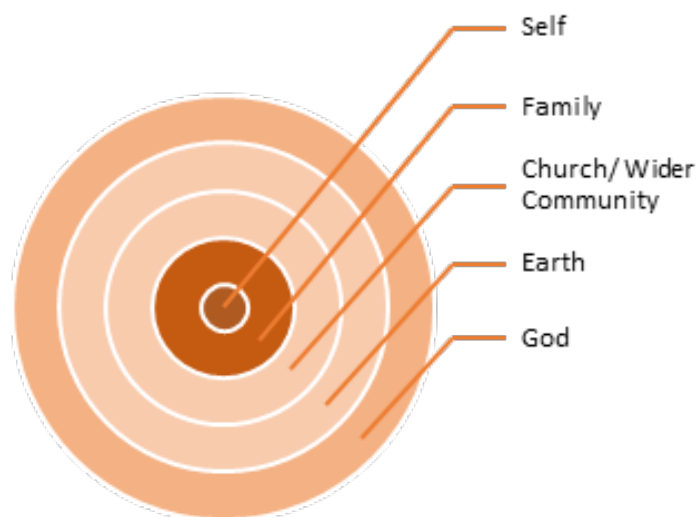Figure 3: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Nola's interviews.

Detailed outline

Nola's favourite subject at school was history as she felt that learning from the past can help us not to make the same mistakes again. The experience that Nola described as standing out for her was a family trip to York. The sense of importance of togetherness as a family was evident throughout Nola's

description of the event. A particularly vivid moment was sitting on a bench as a family looking at the Castle with the city behind it (*'we were getting towards the end and we all sat down on the bench together to kind of look at the view of the Castle against the city because it is really beautiful and quite nice'*). The sense of being together seemed to permeate the memory. Nola spoke of how the family *'spent the whole day together just doing the walk and talking about things'*. The family talked of football, school and their mum's new job, *'I was happy because we were kind of like away from technology and stuff so everyone was engaging with each other and none of us were separate on our own'*.

That sense of connectedness with family also came through in terms of things that were important to Nola. Nola spoke of a blanket sewn with badges earned as a Girl Guide, Doc Martins that her dad drove two hours to buy for her, and a pillow her mum had bought her.

When asked about a special person, Nola described her dad, whom she portrayed as *'really funny and he gives good advice and he is very good at empathising with people and can kind of understand your situation and make you feel better about it'*.

In respect of spirituality, Nola explains that for her this was about *'believing, I guess having faith or closeness to something special to you'*. On reflection, Nola associated this with the day out as a family but was unsure what it might mean with regard to her dad. The day out was a clearer link for her to spirituality as:

> *There were moments when we were all close together as a family and no one was distracted by anything and we were all kind of enjoying being together as one.*

This illustrated how, for Nola, togetherness was a critical element of spirituality.

This is again shown in the second interview when Nola described someone she perceived to be a spiritual person. Whilst Nola had never met her, she described her grandma. There was a religious element to this in that grandma

had a '*mini church'* in her house, but the sense of connectedness was also paramount:

> *My dad always says how she was like the glue in the family. She kept everybody together and he said that he thought that was kind of like broken when she passed away ……..*
>
> *She was a really caring and lovely person and I never met her but from what my dad has told me he's a lot like her.*

For Nola, a spiritual person was religious but also connected to others and cared for them:

> *They are very selfless and they are not thinking of themselves, they always want the best for other people and they try and help others around them as much as they can.*

Two particular spiritual memories for Nola involved her First Holy Communion and a family visit to the Vatican. The influence of Nola's faith showed in these memories; this faith was set within a feeling of connectedness. Nola made her First Holy Communion with her brother. Summing up this day was a bracelet given her by close friends of the family:

> *Close friends of family gave it to me … after Holy Communion and it was a time when everybody close to our family was there to celebrate me and my brother's Holy Communion. It was quite a special time… [The bracelet is] special to me because I like the message on it 'Guardian Angels all above watch over those we love', which I think is quite a nice thing to put on a bracelet as a gift to somebody …it made me feel cared for and thought about by people … this bracelet kind of sums up the whole day to me. It was quite an important day for me.*

The family visit to Rome included a friend of the family who was a priest. Nola described how special it was to see the Pope and to hear him speaking. However, Nola also related a special moment when her dad's friend prayed for her family and when the family were all in the Vatican '*we all prayed together in the Vatican for each other and the things that we need'.* When asked what was

especially important to her about the visit, Nola replied '*I think us all praying together'.*

Whilst Nola described an image of spirituality as being the dove (the symbol for the Holy Spirit), the moments on the Confirmation course that stood out for her was sitting in the small groups discussing things and finding out what each other thinks. Of all the candidates interviewed, the sense of importance of connections and togetherness was possibly strongest for Nola. As well as assisting in developing an answer to the first research question around how Confirmation candidates perceive spirituality, the setting of this perception within the context of the candidates' experiences has a direct bearing on the fourth research question around how an understanding of the ways in which candidates may perceive spirituality could influence Confirmation catechesis moving forwards.

Candidate 3 (parish 1) – Mary

Précis

Mary's family had lived abroad when she was younger. Having moved to England, the importance of her grandparents could still be seen as a key influence in Mary's life. In respect of research question one, Mary had a sense of connection to her family and her past. Explicitly, spirituality for Mary was very much linked to faith and religion and to prayer and knowledge (*spirituality is understanding faith*). Key words, sentences or phrases within the text that Mary explicitly linked to spirituality includes being 'taught' about spirituality and being 'introduced' to the 'faith' and having a 'connection with…faith'. Implicitly, that sense of connection, trust and empathy, infused moments not explicitly linked to spirituality.
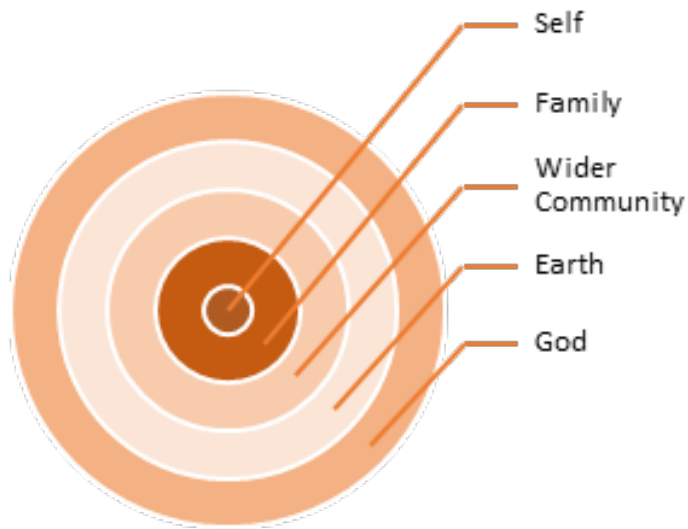
Figure 4: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Mary's interviews.

Detailed outline

When asked to describe a key experience in her life, Mary spoke about the time she had lived abroad when she was about one or two years old. Her parents had been busy working and Mary spent a lot of time with her grandparents:

> *I just remember feeling really happy there. My grandparents are very significant people in my life because they've always taken care of me and still live with me now. I know this doesn't have to be linked to spirituality but it is because my grandmother she was the one who taught me most about spirituality and my faith that I believe in now.*

When asked how her grandmother links to spirituality, the conscious connection for Mary between spirituality and religion became clear:

> *Well she's the one who introduced me first to the faith I've been brought up in and told me all about it in terms of praying and all the prayers that I am meant to know. She was one who taught me the rosary as well and everything.*

Mary described her grandmother as a role model, similarly to significant people for other candidates who participated in the research. Her grandmother was described as someone with whom Mary could talk to about anything, including when she was in trouble of any kind and her grandmother would help her find a solution. Mary associated her grandmother with spirituality. When asked to describe spirituality, for Mary, it was about '*having a connection with the faith or belief that one has'.* This, for Mary, was the Christian faith, but interestingly the definition was left open to all faiths and beliefs.

During her interviews, Mary talked about specific objects with meaning for her. One was her photograph album, without this Mary felt she would lose access to part of her past. The other was a small turtle bought for her by her grandfather. Whilst Mary saw her grandmother as a significant spiritual person in her life, Mary also described her grandfather as a spiritual person as he was a prayerful person. The turtle appeared to be important to Mary as her grandfather seemed to be a more distant person in her life:

> *Sometimes my grandpa he struggles with showing affection … he loves us all very much and it's just really nice that he bought this for me because I did not expect it.*

This is one of the reasons, Mary chose to speak about her grandfather:

> *It's different from my* grandmother *because my* grandmother *has always been a prominent part [in spirituality] she's been the one leading me through it but he sometimes for example when I'm ill or when I'm feeling sad or angry, sometimes he just comes to me and tells me to pray or he prays for me and he always has a little bottle of holy water with him and that helps me and reminds me of spirituality and what it means to us.*

The distance in the relationship appeared to make the connection established through the turtle more significant '*it got more special because my grandfather, he is getting old so the time we have is limited and I would like to remember him by this'.* In respect of research question one, as with other candidates, there was a significance to the connection with family as '*they don't forget about you despite what may happen'.*

The conscious and explicit link for Mary between spirituality and her faith meant that, when asked about a spiritual person, Mary felt that they were someone who prayed with her or for her. When speaking of a spiritual moment, Mary translated this into a significant moment when she realised something about her faith. This moment was at primary school when a pupil had spoken about a gospel story Mary did not know (and about which she had not been taught at school). This '*showed me that there was a lot more to spirituality than the stuff they were teaching us'.*

In conclusion, Mary emphasised a link to seeking greater depth in her faith in her revised definition of spirituality '*spirituality is understanding the faith I believe and also telling other people about it and always trying to search for a deeper meaning'.* It was this searching that Mary associated with spirituality within the Confirmation programme and may have an impact on the response to the fourth research question :

> *Confirmation is obviously becoming an adult in the Church and increasing in spirituality that's what we can hope to achieve in this course. We should always search for that deeper meaning and have faith.*

Candidate 4 (parish 1) – Mark

Précis
For Mark, spirituality was '*your soul and your mind and the way you think'.* There was a connection to faith in that he viewed his mum as a spiritual person because she made him *'think about his faith'*; however, spirituality was seen partly from the perspective of being an innate part of a human being. This varied from the perceptions of other participants considered previously.

Key words, sentences or phrases within the text that point to the essence of spirituality for Mark related to connectivity with others and the feelings associated with that connectivity (for example happiness, kindness and love). Mark had a strong sense of family and the connectivity of family shone throughout his interviews. There was a sense of lived spirituality in the family

moments described with a sense of lived time and lived relationship being evident through the beauty of the moment and the 'hug' exchanged. This sense of lived spirituality was evident when Mark spoke of his pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela (and the shrine of St James the Great). Within this aspect of the interview, there was a sense of lived relationship to the wider community and Church and a sense of lived time and space as Mark sat in the *huge* cathedral. Mark translated that sense of family into his definitions of spirituality and linked this definition to both his experiences and the Confirmation course. That sense of connection to the community and to space around him is illustrated in the diagram (Figure 5) below.
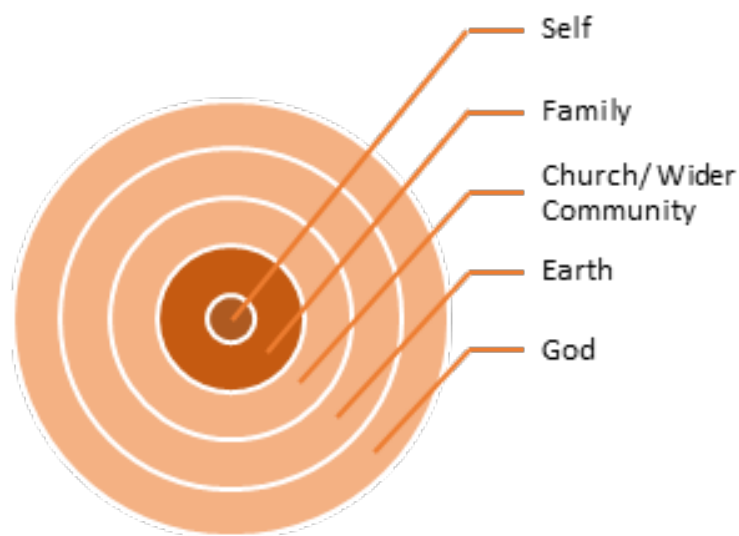
Figure 5: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Mark's interviews.

Detailed outline

Mark's sense of connectivity with his family was evident in both the experiences he described within his interviews. The initial experience was that of his grandma's wedding. This was a particularly happy moment for him due to his '*being with my family because most of my family lives far away and I enjoyed all of us being together'*. He particularly remembers being near the altar for a family

photograph and meeting all the new family members. Mark's grandma, he recollected, was also a very important person in his life. As with other candidates, the special person was someone who he was able to talk to about anything:

> *My grandma, she's always there she helps me in so many different ways. I can always speak to her she comes here to help all the time. I just love her and she loves us like. She looks out for me because she is like willing to devote as much attention as you want in that moment and I find that really caring off her.*

Key qualities of grandma included being loving, hardworking and always there for people. For Mark, spirituality was:

> *how someone is, not physically, but their personality and their characteristics that's what comes to mind when I say that…charity, loving to the people and how you are to the people that's what makes you you. I know it's weird and controversial, but what defines you is what other people think about you in a society, how loving you are.*

This sense of loving others meant that Mark definitely associated spirituality with his grandma.

That sense of caring, of being close to others also came across when Mark spoke about the object he had brought with him. The object was a sliver key ring bought for him by his dad when they were on pilgrimage to Santiago. His dad bought him the keyring at Santiago cathedral after they had walked 85Km, it told Mark: '*how my dad is thinking like me like I want an object to remember this'*.

When asked if the object reminded him of spirituality in any way, Mark was definitive that it did – not because of where it was bought but because of what it meant to him. It was bought at the end of a pilgrimage when '*on the way all I was thinking about was my connection to God and it gave me time to think because obviously it's a long walk'.* The key ring meant so much to Mark '*because it's an object that gives me good memories when I was thinking about God'. T*he link to spirituality is also due to the reflection on self:

In my opinion it makes me think about what spirituality is which is to think about yourself, what you are in your mind and your soul and it makes you think about … this. I think it was meant to be because I think that's what I think spirituality is.

That sense of connection to self, other people and to God also came out in a particular spiritual moment Mark remembers from that pilgrimage. He specifically recollected the moment at the end of the pilgrimage:

It was the same moment more, specifically when we got there and I sat down and it gave me time to think about what I just done and what I've gone through when we got there and I sat down and it gave me time to think about what I just done and what I've gone through and I remember because the cathedral is huge and I remember taking pictures and that's what it means, it means the memory to me.

Mark explained further that:

I was fascinated by the fact that I've managed to do it and I believed because I done it with the help of God and the Holy Spirit. Obviously it's an 85 kilometre walk and it meant a lot to me and I've never done something like that before and it struck me that I managed to do it and I was happy and it was all good. The atmosphere was all good, many people all talking about the same things, things about God and the community, I was with people that had the same belief as me and that made me think that I'm part of a group in the community.

Through the memory, there was a sense of the size of the cathedral, but also of being part of a community. Whilst in the first interview, religion had not been part of the definition of spirituality, the sense of God being part of the experience is illustrated above.

That explicit, conscious linking to religion also came through when Mark was asked about a spiritual person in his life. That person, for Mark was his mum:

It's my mum because she always makes me think about my faith and things that I like doing and what to do and what not to do and just helps me.

Here, when asked about spirituality from a conscious sense, faith is again brought into the definition.

When asked how this relates to Confirmation, Mark emphasised that connection in a manner that is more explicit than with other candidates. In Confirmation, Mark explained, we '*think about what we believe and what God means to us and we just think about God and the connection with him*'.

Whilst Mark saw spirituality as linked to the non-physical aspects of a human being, he was the only candidate in the four interviewed from that parish who noted the influence of the Holy Spirit. Towards the close of the interviews, he drew an explicit connection between spirituality and the gifts of the spirit:

> *The gifts of the Holy Spirit would embody what I think I feel, like everything the Holy Spirit brings to us is courage and we need to accept those gifts and use them right.*

Candidate 5 (parish 2) – Alison

Précis

Alison had returned to the Church after taking a break of about six years following a 'religious crisis'. Whilst initially her views on spirituality were linked to the Church rather than everyday life, in the second interview the definition changed to include a connectivity to faith as opposed to Christianity through the link to her father, who followed pagan beliefs. Alison described spirituality as '*what you believe in*'. Core phrases and words reflective of spirituality in this interview centred around faith, religion and belief. There was a strong sense of spirituality being evidenced by the way in which you might live out your life. This spirituality linked to the idea of a welcoming Church community and the example of the saints; however, those who did not come from a faith background were explicitly excluded as representative of spirituality from Alison's perspective. This apparent distinction between spirituality and everyday life may have a bearing when considering the answers to the research questions.
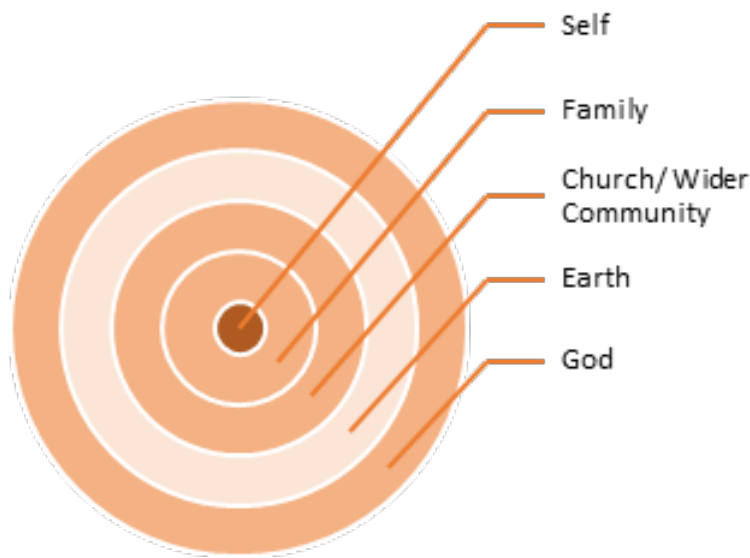
Figure 6: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Alison's interviews.

Detailed outline

The initial experiences and important person discussed were not linked by Alison to spirituality in any sense. Alison described her first memory as an experience that she remembered when, aged around six, she was on a trampoline with her cousin who accidentally kicked her. The person of importance to Alison was her mum. Alison described her mum, who protected her, made sure she was alright at school, and nothing got in her way. In the first interview, Alison described spirituality as '*what you believe in and how you are with your belief'*. Words associated with spirituality included praying, meditating and being *'calm within yourself'*. Despite Alison's mum being someone who protected her, Alison did not perceive spirituality as being associated with her mum. At this point, there was a more definite split between spirituality (which was associated with Church) and everyday life than had been seen elsewhere.

During the follow-up interview this perception of spirituality changed slightly. Alison brought along a necklace given her by her dad (whom she saw occasionally). Her dad followed non-Christian beliefs and the necklace

represented that faith. Alison did associate the necklace with spirituality, not because of its faith connotations but because:

> *it connects me to my dad even if he isn't here it's a symbol of our relationship as father and daughter it makes me feel comfortable.*

This connection with others was also seen in respect of a teddy bear that Alison valued as she had had it since she was born.

A spiritual experience for Alison was when she returned to the Church after a six-year hiatus. The spirituality of the moment was crystallised by the welcome people gave her:

> *Everybody opened their arms and said come on in … you feel quite nervous at first because I was coming back, six years is a long time. but there is a new priest, new servers' service and a lot of people have changed, but I was welcomed back.*

This welcome back was to somewhere Alison described as her '*safe place',* it was '*the church I grew up in, I was baptised here, I did my communion here'.* Part of the reason for the safety was the welcome and it was the fact that it was acceptable to be openly Catholic in the church. Alison contrasted this with other places where she would not talk about being a Catholic:

> *I don't go around mentioning my religion a lot coz people say 'Oh you're Catholic you are, are you? But here it's 'yeah come on in', it doesn't matter, it's very welcoming, whereas in other places I don't mention that I'm Catholic a lot.*

The welcome, and the community aspect of spirituality, also became obvious when Alison spoke about a spiritual person in her life. The spiritual person about whom Alison chose to speak was her grandma. Grandma went to the church and was known by a lot of people:

> *She comes to church every week and she's living the message of Christ everywhere she goes. She's nice and talks to everyone she's great…*
> [she's] *welcoming she'll talk to anybody and everybody and she'll have a conversation with you even if you've never met her before.*

Thinking back on the conversation, in respect of research question one, Alison reflected on and expanded on her definition of spirituality '*I feel like spirituality to*

me is all about the qualities and how you come across to people and how you are in touch'.

In terms of the Confirmation course, in both interviews Alison highlighted the example of the saints as a core link to spirituality:

> *Knowing about different saints is important because you often lose sight of how people suffer and go through things. Learning about saints and what they've done and what they've gone through gives people a role model to look up to and guide them.*

Critically, for Alison, getting confirmed linked to this spirituality, in that:

> *Confirmation brings you further into the Church I'm becoming more religious it can change your spirituality you become like a better person through the Church because they teach qualities like kindness and forgiveness immersing yourself into that makes your spirituality a lot stronger.*

There was still a very strong link between spirituality and Church, but there is also an understanding that it related to the qualities of the person and how they connected with others.

Candidate 6 (Parish 2) – Patrick

Précis

Whilst Patrick had definitive views on spirituality and spiritual people (who where his granny and granddad), he struggled with explaining a spiritual experience. He firmly linked spirituality to religious practice and belief (*how devoted you are to Christianity*). His interviews demonstrated a connectivity with family and the Church community. This connectivity was linked to spirituality as it was a connectivity with Christianity (see Figure 7 below). Key words and phrases included commitment and a sense of helping others. The conversation explored his views on spirituality through his thoughts on his grandparents and on St Andrew, whom he particularly admired.
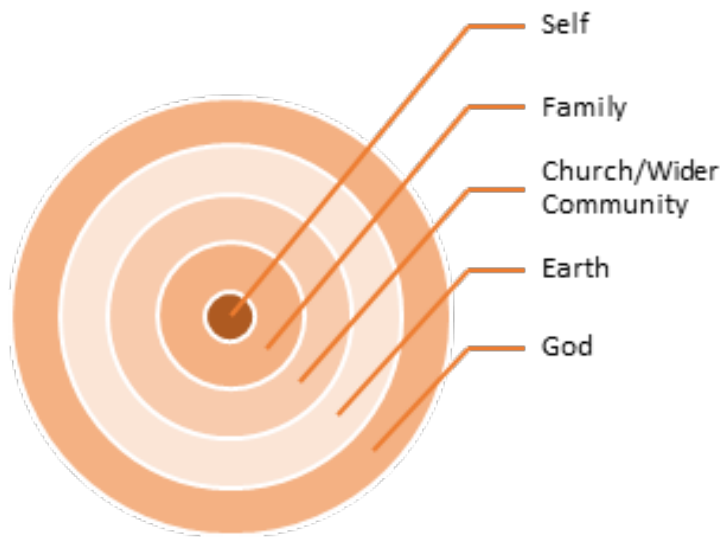
Figure 7: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Patrick's interviews.

Detailed outline

Patrick began the conversation by speaking about a happy moment in his life when he got into a new school. It was not a school to which his friends would be going but he was quite philosophical about this as:

> *To be honest, I think everyone has to step out of their comfort zone I stepped and jumped and leaped way out of mine and to be honest it kind of worked because you meet so many new people and you can just be yourself and find new people.*

The sense of putting yourself into new situations and meeting new people permeated the conversation.

Granny and grandad featured heavily in both conversations. Granny '*had to deal with* [Patrick] *crying'* and grandad is described as someone who '*cares the most for everyone'*. For Patrick, they were both the embodiment of a spiritual person – working hard around the parish, organising pilgrimages and welcoming people.

Spirituality for Patrick (whilst he was keen to say that he was not a *human dictionary*) was:

> *How you perceive yourself and how you're devoted to Christianity and how devoted you are to being a Catholic. Some people say I can just pray at home I don't have to go to Mass, fair enough, some people go so far to go on pilgrims* [sic] *which is like my grandad and my nan.*

For Patrick, there was also something about putting his faith into practice. In both conversations, he explained why he admired St Andrew so much in that St Andrew followed Jesus, preached about him and was prepared to die for being a Christian on an upturned cross '*when he got the power of the Holy Spirit he didn't sit there he went out places he was amazing because he did his job'.* Patrick perceived St Andrew as welcoming everyone to the faith. This was one quality he also saw in his granny and granddad.

Mixed into the conversation was an obvious awareness of the kindness of his granny and granddad for him and his family and for others. Patrick recounted how his granny had helped a friend who had recently lost her husband and how his grandad had helped with a drug and assault rehabilitation centre. Whilst it was possibly more difficult to tease out perceptions of spirituality from the conversation, it was clear that these were qualities Patrick associated with his granny and granddad, who, in turn, he associated with being spiritual. From the conversation involving both them and St Andrew, the idea of being welcoming, persistent and living out your faith and doing what God asks you to do was also a key part of this. He was very proud of his grandparents' commitment to marriage and planning how they should celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. The hard-working nature of his granny and granddad in the parish permeated both conversations. Patrick spoke of the work his granny put in in the garden, the contribution his grandad made to the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), the pilgrimages his granddad organised and the welcome they gave to everybody.

For Patrick, these were all qualities he admired and thought should be recognised. In terms of Confirmation, for him it was about:

> *Stepping somewhere forwards, you might want to step backwards back into your comfort zone but when you go in you step out of your boundaries because you want some progress*.

Spiritually, this involved doing what Jesus asked – like St Andrew and his grandparents.

<u>*Candidate 7 (parish 3) – Clarissa*</u>

Précis

For Clarissa, spirituality explicitly meant the Holy Spirit. In respect of research question one, whilst there are aspects of the 'human spirituality' noted by Rossiter (2011, p.59 – see Chapter 1) in the experiences related by Clarissa, these were not recognised as spirituality by this particular participant. As with Alison, whilst Clarissa demonstrated a sense of connectivity with family members, if these members were not linked to religious practices, Clarissa did not associate them with spirituality. Spirituality was linked to a sense of connectivity to the parish, using words such as *feeling at home* and *being part of the parish.* For this reason, Figure 8 below illustrates that whilst there was a sense of connectivity to the Church community this is not as deep as the sense of connectivity demonstrated by other participants (for example Mark) to the wider community.
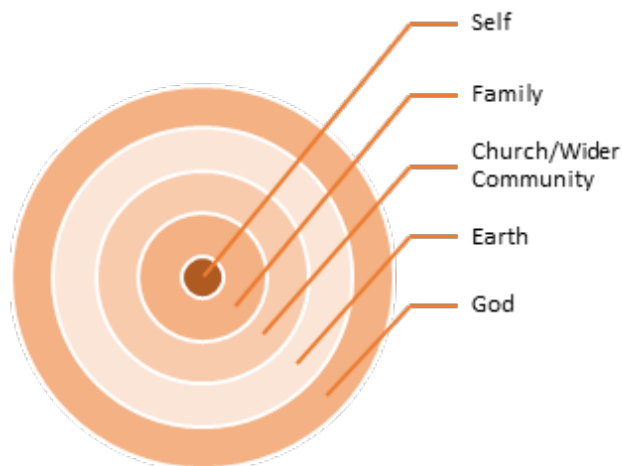
Figure 8: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Clarissa's interviews.

Detailed outline

For Clarissa, Confirmation preparation was about learning more about the Church:

> *We learn mostly like about the Church and why I'm getting Confirmed and like, the Church's views and that it's our choice to be confirmed… we all talk about why we are doing it and I quite like listening to people's reasons about why they are doing it.*

As with Alison, there was a sense of the church community in Clarissa's interview. Her reasons for being Confirmed included a wish to '*just like be part of the parish, feel at home…[be] properly part of it'.* When asked what spirituality meant to Clarissa, the answer was simply '*the Holy Spirit as '*the title of the Holy Spirit has the word in it'. Picturing spirituality evoked images of the apostles at Pentecost. In respect of research question four above, Confirmation, for Clarissa, was about being '*part of the parish, feel at home, well I do but I'd feel more part of it, properly part of it'.*

Interestingly, when asked about a spiritual person, the link between spirituality and God became stronger. Clarissa chose to talk about Jesus:

> Clarissa*: I'd say Jesus because I think of Jesus, the Holy Spirit and God*
> Researcher*: What characteristics of Jesus are important here?*
> Clarissa*: He was kind, strong, powerful like the Holy Spirit.*

When asked to describe people who were important to her, Clarissa spoke about her sister and her family. Her sister is someone '*an older person I can look up to and stuff and give me advice and stuff like that'.* Whilst Clarissa associated some of the characteristics of Jesus with her sister – for example that her sister was '*strong*', 'quite *kind'* and '*will help her with stuff'*, she did not think that her sister was spiritual. One particular memory that stood out for her with her sister was after Clarissa had had her bedroom redecorated. This was the last time Clarissa remembered playing with her sister (as they often now

play with their own friends). During the interview, the significance of the moment became clearer when Clarissa spoke about her sister's illness. This illness also meant that there was a strength in memories when Clarissa and her parents were able to spend time together:

> *It was just me, mum and dad, and we were like having some quality time together because my sister was poorly, talking about school, they made time for me*

Another strong memory came from when the whole family have been able to have time together on a visit to Harry Potter World. On this occasion it was: *just me and my family, not a care about anything else'*.

Candidate 8 (parish 3) – Nicholas

Précis

Nicholas was a candidate who loved books and the ability to paint or build material to create an image. Of all the candidates, in respect of research question one, his use of imagery shone through when he described spirituality in respect of the similarity with the energy running through a Newton's cradle.

Core phrases and words reflective of spirituality in this interview centred it on being part of human beings, supporting and believing in other people, goodness and a sense of calmness. Whilst the sense of connectivity came across strongest in respect of family, the interviews demonstrated a strong sense of connectivity to God together with a sense of connectivity with others, the wider church and, the setting in which experiences took place. This connectivity is illustrated in Figure 9 below. The darker the circle, the stronger the sense of connectivity in this area in the interviews. The diagram illustrates the stronger sense of connectivity demonstrated in Nicholas' interview than in the interviews with other candidates.
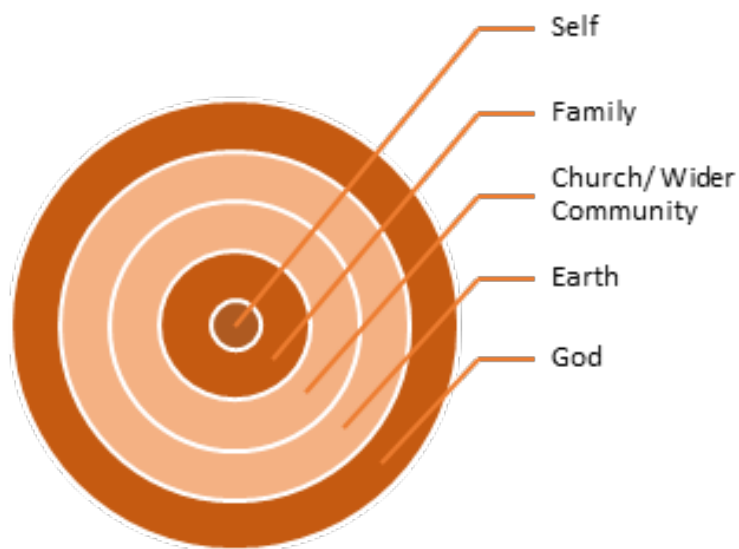
Figure 9: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Nicholas's interviews.

Detailed outline

Nicholas had a strong sense of connectivity with his family. He described in detail a family trip to Legoland:

> *I guess it's kind of that aspect of being able to create what you want. My sister really enjoyed it, it made her happy and it made me happy and being in a place where the grownups finally understood where we were coming from.*

Nicholas was appreciative of the trip and the work his parents had put in to organise it and to capture the memories. Those memories and the connections it gave him were important to Nicholas. He described his dad as the one who:

> *holds the whole thing together. He creates those memories by taking photos. He is the one that always preserve those memories and those memories are kind of crucial for everything.*

When asked about a person who stands out in his memories, a different type of connectivity came through. This time Nicholas described his early football coach. This coach he remembered as a person who respected the team, not for being children, but for being people. He believed in the team and helped them to enjoy the game, even though they lost quite a bit:

> *Our spirits weren't dampened because we were doing something we enjoy, doing with someone that was nice to us and that really understood us.*

Whilst of a similar age to the other candidates, Nicholas had perhaps the most evocative description for spirituality, it was:

> *…what we are made of. I think we are made of a spirit and that links in with the Holy Spirit, which is the essence of goodness I believe and that essence is what makes us a good person.*

Using vivid imagery, he went on to explain that:

> *Our spirituality is the thing that started our heart beating, started a whole body functioning … because there's no other way that we could have started … it's like when you stop the Newton's cradle, there's no way to make it go again without pulling on the without pulling on the string and it keeps going for ages. I believe that's what spirituality is - it's the thing that keeps you going and starts you going. The Holy Spirit is what keeps you going and it's what stops that Newton's cradle from stopping. If we were not nice to each other, if we did not have any moral decency, then the whole world would just collapse I think war is an example of moral indecency and that is unfortunately where the Holy Spirit is not present.*

Within this description, you find an understanding of the Holy Spirit and creation and of qualities that Nicholas attributes to spirituality. These qualities included being nice to each other and moral decency. This link to the Holy Spirit and creation is the reason why the heat diagram in Figure 9 shows the outer circle as darker than that used with other candidates. When asked if spirituality was a word Nicholas would associate with the family holiday or his football coach, it was but in the sense of a link to religion. The spirituality in the holiday involved:

the prayers that we said in the evening. I'd associate this as being a moment of calm after rushing around all day. I'd associate that calmness and the quietness with spirituality.

Spirituality was linked to the prayers, the calmness and the stillness rather than the family activity during the day. The conscious link between spirituality and God also came out when Nicholas spoke of his coach:

He had almost found God without meaning to, so spirituality as I said was having moral decency, and he had a lot of that he spoke to us as people he respected us as people rather than what a lot of people make the mistake of doing, which is respecting you as a child, respecting you as a person is a completely different.

When asked about a spiritual experience and a spiritual person, the examples Nicholas chose were explicitly linked to religion. This time Nicholas described a family trip to Lourdes, where he had been struck by the calmness despite the huge crowds. There were '*people talking but it was still calm and a sense of awe'*. Being with his family is still an essential part of the experience, but there was a strong sense of connection to his faith:

As a family we were still together because we had everyone there … but it also meant that it was kind of showing that we all believed and even that, after if we lost a parent, we would still know how to get to them where I think people without faith don't really have that connection, don't really believe that they're going to see their parents again.

The person Nicholas chose to describe as a spiritual person was the Bishop. This was partly from respect, but also Nicholas perceived the Bishop as a person who would listen (a quality he also noted in his football coach):

He's been recognised by not only myself but other people and he's been given that position of authority … he's not controlling he listens and I think I would find it quite easy to go to Confession to him. Listening is a very key thing, as Mother Teresa said, you can have conversations with God, you listen and he listens.

So, whilst Nicholas had a deep sense of spirituality, it was intimately bound up with an assumed connection with God.

In respect of Confirmation, Nicholas saw this as the Holy Spirit giving a boost to his spirituality. This reference tied back to his explanation of spirituality as our energy:

> *I think that we are made of spirituality, which is as I said last time like the Newtons Cradle. Well, I think that the Holy Spirit will boost us and it's what we're here to achieve. You were given spirituality but you have to pursue it and follow it through.*

He saw those helping with his preparation and those involved with the Confirmation as helping him. Interestingly, he also commented that through Confirmation he will gain the '*feeling of the Church has accepted me fully now. I want to be here, and they want me to be here'.*

When considering how an understanding of the candidates' perceptions and experiences might influence Confirmation catechesis in the fourth research, the sense of belonging is important to candidates. Nicholas, for example, saw the connection to the Church growing stronger through Confirmation and which strengthens you to live like Christ:

> *Confirmation is the giving of the Holy Spirit … so I associated this automatically with the Holy Spirit because the Jewish festival on which Pentecost is held is the giving of the 10 commandments - let's tell you how to live…- then Pentecost is the giving of the Holy Spirit which allows you to live like Christ so I think it's all kind of based around the Holy Spirit.*

Candidate 9 (parish 3) – Michael

Précis

Michael explained how, prior to the Confirmation programme, he had not really been prioritising going to church but that the programme and the away time at the diocesan youth centre had helped strengthen his faith. Michael explained that he loved doing things and when the group had been away at the centre,

they had made the Mass *'really fun'*, you could choose the music and get involved. The importance of connections with family, pets and friends and positive experiences came across in the interviews with qualities in experiences that Michael associated with spirituality. Spirituality itself was, for Michael, about *'faith and the connection to God'.*
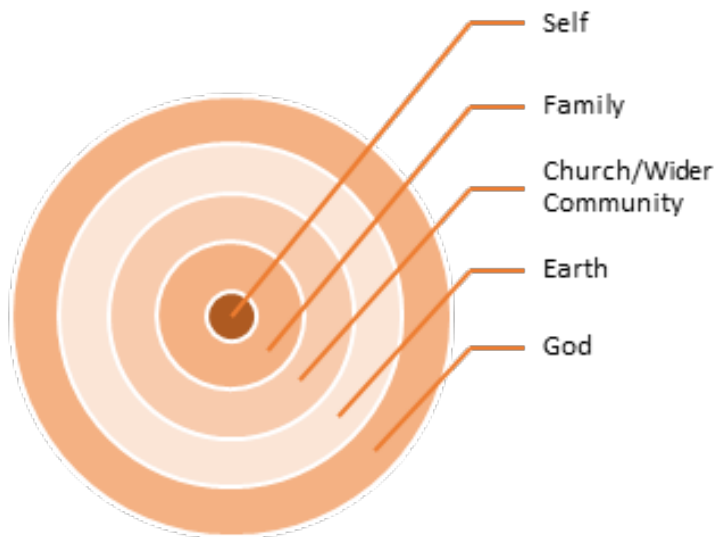

Figure 10: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Michael's interviews.

Detailed outline

As noted above, the events and experiences described by Michael had a strong connectivity to the family. One of his main memories was the day his parents had brought home the new dog. His mum, dad, sister and aunt had been there, and he remembered he and his sister rushing down the stairs to meet their parents and the new puppy. For Michael this is a really happy memory. His connection with his dog also came through in the second interview. His dog is, he describes, very loving, and when he (Michael) gets in trouble, the dog will stay with him and try to comfort him.

A special person in his life is Michael's mum. He describes how they can have their ups and downs but – even when Michael gets in trouble, things get back to normal. Michael described his mum as *'nice, kind, thoughtful'*.

In terms of spirituality, Michael initially describes this as being about *'faith and the connection to God'.* When asked about a spiritual person, Michael's answer was simply *'God'.* He perceived God as being *'always just there to pick you back up again and it may take a minute and it may take a week'.* As the conversation developed, Michael expanded on spirituality to include the qualities of *'love, happiness, kindness, respect and stuff like that'.* He included the day he got the new dog as being linked to spirituality as *'it was adding another member of the family … and it made me feel happy'.* This sense of a link to positive experiences also came out when Michael spoke of his mum. He associated these with spirituality on the up times but not when things were going wrong.

Just as a spiritual person explicitly links to faith (i.e. God), the spiritual moment Michael described is his first Holy Communion. His family were all there. Standing out in Michael's memory was *'all the people there and actually taking the communion for the first time'.* For Michael, the day was about community in that it was about *'becoming a part of something bigger'.* He also associated this experience with spirituality as he associated it with *'love and kindness'.* This was less so with Confirmation, a sacrament Michael associated less with love and kindness and more with *'understanding … [and] ... being brought further into the community'.*

Candidate 10 (parish 3) – Luke

Précis

Luke described himself as coming from *'a very religious background'.* Linking to the academic literature around spirituality and tradition, Luke's family and community were very important to him, including his extended family abroad. His background formed part of the experiences and prayer life discussed. Luke's initial description of spirituality was *'faith, devotion to God, how I live my life, my soul.'* He associated Confirmation with spirituality in this sense and in the sense of the preparation programmes being a *'coming as a community, as a group altogether'.* Within the experiences he described, there was a deep connection with family, of being welcomed, and of being safe and loved. His

family were part of the Church community and, through the religious practices of the family, there was a sense of connectivity with the wider Church community. This deep sense of connectivity with family and God reflected the sense of spirituality found in Nicholas' interviews (see Figure 11 below).
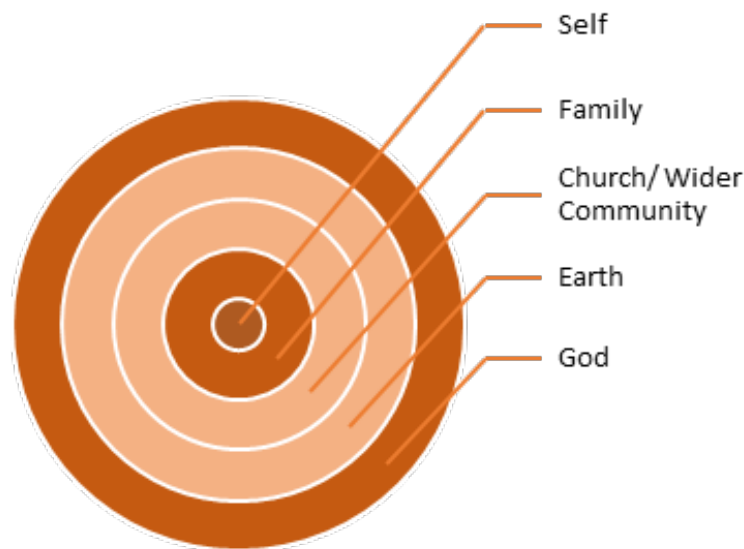
Figure 11: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Luke's Interviews.

Detailed outline

When Luke was asked to speak of an experience that stood out for him in his life, the importance of his immediate and wider family and the community of which he was a part influenced his choice. He named several examples but focussed on two in particular, a community trip to Skegness and a family holiday with the extended family at their home abroad. Remembering the trip to the seaside, he spoke of a moment when they were sat on the sea wall eating ice cream, they were:

> *looking out to the beach and I could see all the parents talking and the kids having ice cream and looking out and on the beach a family and a dog, there's also a surfer … I'm happy I'm feeling quite calm and relaxed, no stress about school or anything … we are all happy as a family we're all together we're in communion I would say.*

Again, with the family trip to see extended family members abroad, that sense of connection comes through. He recollects driving up to the house and the extended family waiting to greet him '*I just love ……. its peaceful and I feel safe there, I just feel loved because there are other people with me'.* The importance of the feelings of calm, peace and safety came out later in the interviews when spirituality was discussed in more detail.

The importance of family also shone through when he spoke about a person important in his life. That person was his mum, whom he described as:

> *The most persistent, hardworking, devoted, caring mother a child could have I reckon. I love her to bits; all she does is for her children.*

Key characteristics of his mum included her selflessness but also her willingness to forgive and the role model she gave Luke in this regard '*the other day this kid really annoyed me and I told my mum and my mum told me to forgive and forget'.* Luke explained that his mum is prayerful and helped guide him in his faith. When asked about spirituality and how this related to his experiences and his mum, Luke described feelings of '*being together as a family, happiness, peacefulness, calm where there's no stress at all tranquil that's it safe'.* With his mum, he felt '*happy, calm, tranquil, protected, loved, cared for, I feel wanted'.* During the second interview, Luke brought along a watch his mum had bought him and explained '*I just picture my mum in my head when I look at it'.* It is not the item itself that is important but the connection it brings with the person who gave it to him.

Spirituality, for Luke, was bound up with his faith, which in turn is fundamentally connected with his immediate and extended family. He described spirituality in a number of ways. It was:

> *… faith and the connection to God. Spirituality is your soul and your inner consciousness, your faith. I think it's like your love for God and how you live your life. From my experiences, I think the biggest thing that keeps popping up is my family. My family are helping with my spirituality, helping me to increase it and they're always there and they are role models and then I can become closer to God.*

Simply put, for Luke, spirituality was about '*how you live your life',* his '*personal time with God',* when there is, *safety and peace. When I'm talking to God I feel safe and calm with God and God feels like my family, my other family.* In this way Luke demonstrated both an awareness of spirituality in the everyday and in quiet, prayerful times with God.

When asked to describe a spiritual moment in his life, Luke – as with other candidates – chose to talk about his first Holy Communion. For him, that moment was important '*because it's like a whole new leap of faith and spirituality coz I'm getting closer to God'.* Feelings he associated with the experience included '*happy and calm*', '*blessed and luck'.* For Luke, it was a '*spiritual high*'.

Spiritual people for Luke included his mum and a priest friend of the family and an aunt and uncle. All three were prayerful and important to Luke from a faith perspective. All three would pray with Luke and his family. He described his auntie as being '*full of the Holy Spirit'*, who would guide and direct her on her way through life. The priest who has been influential in his life is noted as being '*loving and kind'.* He remembers going to Confession to him and coming out '*feeling so clean, I don't have to worry about my sins'.* The link between the Holy Spirit and Confirmation meant that Luke saw the sacrament as one through which your spirituality grew:

> *I feel this is like a new level to your spirituality. You feel like you get the gifts and your personality changes … you get more self-control more courage.*

Catechists

Catechist 1(parish 1) – Pauline

Précis
Pauline had emigrated to England, leaving her family largely back at home. Pauline got involved with preparing candidates for Confirmation for personal growth when she was alone in the parish, little expecting to be still carrying out

the work some years later. On a wholistic reading of the text, in relation to research question two, Pauline's spirituality and faith were intertwined, for example there was a strong sense of connectedness with family and with those who have passed away. That spirituality had a home within her prayers - including the Rosary, but is associated also with moments of calm, stillness and peace. There is a strong sense of lived spirituality in Pauline's interviews, a spirituality in which there was connectivity with the lived moment, the earth around her and a sense of connectivity with others and with God. The strength of the family links has been shown as a deeper colour than previously used for other participants due to her links with her father and sister, both now deceased This leads to a diagram of much deeper depth than that used to illustrate the perceptions and experiences of the candidates noted above (see Figure 12).. This intertwining of spirituality and religion, together with a wider sense of connectivity will be explored further in response to research question two in Chapter 5 below.
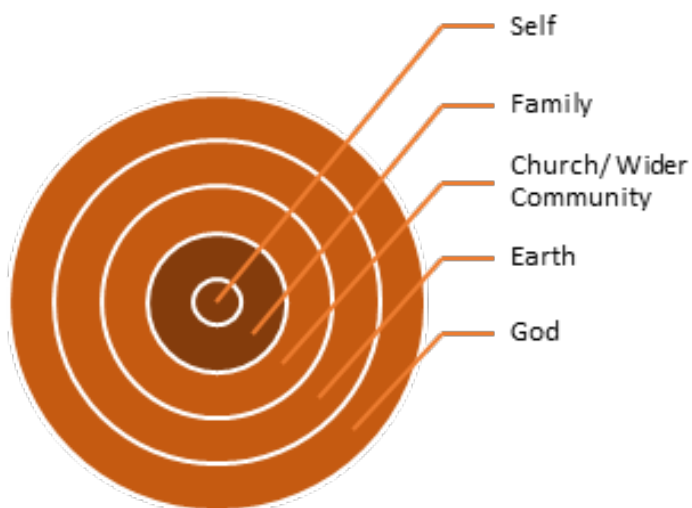

Figure 12: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Pauline's interviews.

Detailed outline

In the first interview, in respect of experiences and people who stood out for her in her life, there was a commonality around the experiences in terms of a sense of feeling of calmness. Neither the experience nor the person Pauline narrated were particularly chosen for a specific connection with spirituality. The experience related was that of getting married. Whilst marriage might be an experience that, on reflection from the literature review, would have particular connotations with connectedness with family and friends, Pauline's interpretation of the spirituality of the moment was based on the sense of calmness and peace. In describing the moment, the importance of having her mum there was emphasised as was the fact that the wedding was occurring in the church; however, the moment inspired a sense of spirituality for Pauline through the music of Ave Maria and a sense of calmness, peace and safety '*It was something personal to me, it was calm, it was relaxing, it was that peace'.*

That calmness and peace appeared to be set within Pauline's Christian faith. Pauline also interpreted the moment from the perspective of the Holy Spirit's presence:

> *There are the gifts that are working within you and around you.*
> *Everything just seemed to have fitted at that point. If the Holy Spirit was*
> *not there, it would not have been what it was.*

There is a sense of the hermeneutic in Pauline's reflection that everything 'just ... fitted'. In this respect, Pauline had an awareness of spirituality at that moment through connectivity with those around her but also through the deep sense of connectivity with self (an inner peace) and an awareness of connectivity with the Holy Spirit.

This sense of calmness, Pauline also associated with the person she described as standing out in her life. The person was her sister, who had recently died. Pauline described moments with her sister, amusing moments of gossip and joking about things that might get them both in trouble. However, Pauline also described how her sister would help her keep calm and work through issues that might be troubling her. A particular item of importance to Pauline was a set

of rosary beads her sister had bought her. Pauline described how the rosary beads create a link to her sister when she prays:

> *If I am saying the rosary with these rosary beads … my sister is with me. I am not alone. Whatever I am praying for, we are praying it together. I am not saying the rosary by myself, in my head there are two of us saying the prayers.*

Again, whilst not explicitly linking her sister to a sense of spirituality at this point, there is that deep sense of connectedness to her and through her to God.

When asked to interpret spirituality during the first interview, Pauline described how, for her, it was not about something being 'holy'. It was about having an '*awareness of the works of God and the works of Jesus and the works of the Holy Spirit*' and '*where you are with life in general*'. Particular feelings, Pauline associated with the sense of spirituality, were a sense of inner calm and inner peace. When asked if she would associate this sense of spirituality with the experience and person described, Pauline reflected and concluded '*yes I suppose I would … but I never thought of it like that*'.

Having demonstrated an awareness of spirituality in life and stated that spirituality was not about being 'holy', when asked to describe a spiritual experience Pauline associated this with a visit to Medjugorje. The experience shared was not one of a particular liturgy or faith practice, but rather a moment on her own coming away from another group, aware of the cross in her vision and a sense of creation around her, when she was aware of speaking to her father (who was deceased) and assuring him that all was going well. Whilst not used explicitly as a term, the inner peace and calmness noted in the previous interview were also present in this moment.

When describing a spiritual person in her life, Pauline recalled experiences with her mum. These experiences involved the gist of prayer her mum had passed onto her and how, no matter how bad things have got, her mum:

> *has not got angry and said that's it and I'm going to stop this and I'm not going to church anymore. The more things have happened the more she has turned to God.*

Unlike in the previous interview, when asked to describe spirituality following these reflections, the sense of peace is still there but with a more explicit relationship with the 'holy':

> *I would describe it as having an inner belief that there's something greater than you and to be able to persevere no matter what life throws at you, because it's not always going to be good, there's going to be some rough things but perseverance and never doubting that there's a purpose to everything and you might not know it but there's a purpose to everything and what's critical is experiencing it. I would say peace I suppose if you are at peace but I don't know what that looks like.*

Interestingly, when discussing how this relates to Confirmation, Pauline raised the idea that young people may be aware of that spirituality but unable to articulate it and that it may depend on what experiences those young people have had in their lives. This latter reflection will form part of the analysis of the younger participants interviews below and in the conclusions pertaining to research question four in Chapter 6.

Catechist 2 (parish 2) – Josie

Précis

Overarchingly in Josie's interview there was a sense of her faith intertwined with daily life. Josie used her experiences to illustrate a move from a faith of the head to a faith of the heart. This faith had a heavy influence on how Josie described spirituality and how she saw it interplaying with Confirmation. The lived spirituality moments glimpsed during Josie's interviews held deep connections with others and with God. This sense of lived relationship from a hermeneutic phenomenological sense is particularly deep for Josie. This is illustrated in Figure 13 below.
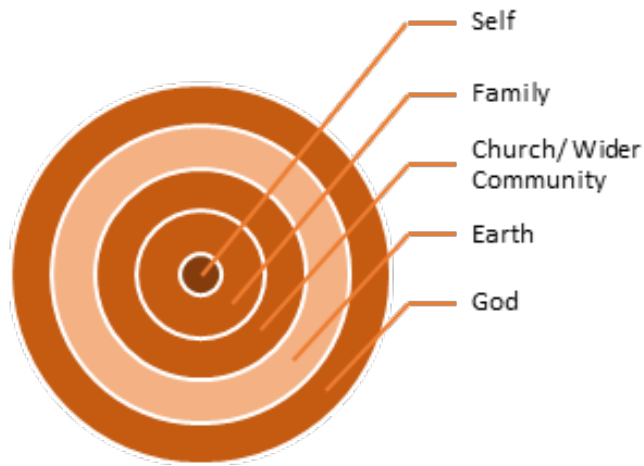
Figure 13: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Josie's interviews.

Detailed outline

The first experience Josie described was one where she was living by herself with little support bar what her family can give her. In this experience, Josie explained she came to understand what poverty really is about. It was a time when Josie '*had nothing at all I was just about getting on my feet and getting it together on my first home here with not a particularly pleasant place*'. Within that memory, whilst it was a sad and fearful time, Josie recollected, with gratitude, the help from her family and from friends. This help came, in particular, from one friend '*she was lovely to have, somebody who just accepted you as a person*'.

The development of Josie's spirituality was also influenced by a Jesuit priest. Josie had met this priest in her early career. Whilst intelligent and intellectual,

this priest through his commitment, faith and humour, helped Josie to *'be more than just a teacher of subject'*. Throughout the interview, Josie sought to explain her path from a theology of the head to that *'of the bones,'* whereby her faith and spirituality became part of the DNA of her life. The priest *'was the one who began that process of me becoming who I am really am'*. Josie described him as a friend with whom you could *'be yourself completely without having to worry about what you said'.*

For Josie, spirituality was a faith sowed inside a person that was able to flourish and grow. Spirituality was, for Josie:

> *the presence of God, it's God within but it's also the realisation that God is within and that is for me to nurture. I love the parable of the sower that speaks about spirituality and it's so true that if you haven't got within yourself the right kind of things going on then your faith can't flourish.*

She explained:

> *Every person has the spirituality, it's just that for some it's not as flourished as they would want it to or where they're at is where they need to be at the moment and it's accepting that it is the presence of Christ and it is feeding and nurturing that and growing that to be the better person.*

The idea of nurturing and growing the faith had a particular influence on her work as a catechist:

> *It's bringing that to others as well, which I guess is what a catechist tries to do we try and bring the love of God the love of Jesus to the people that we're working with and therefore hopefully nurturing their spirituality.*

For Josie, being a catechist was about:

> *the personal witness that you give in the way that we deliver what we deliver. I am absolutely passionate about people being welcome.*

The sense of innate spirituality and growth will be explored in Chapter 5 in relation to the second research question, whilst the influence of that perception of growth in respect of spirituality will also be considered in respect of the fourth research question.

Not surprisingly, the same sentiments flowed through the second conversation. In relation to research question two, unlike for a number of the candidates, spirituality was explicitly and consciously part of Josie's life – both her life of prayer and her everyday activities. In this second interview, the conversation turned to a mini-retreat Josie had attended early on in her teaching career. Whilst initially reluctant to go on the retreat, once there, there was a transforming experience when Josie learnt how to take Scripture *'from your head to your heart'.* For Josie:

> *when I became a good teacher was when I kind of spiritually understood the gospel message in its fullest because it was teaching from the heart.*

Again, the metaphor of growth was part of this story. Spirituality, for Josie, was alive when it was being watered and nourished by asking the deeper questions. The priest leading the retreat helped to bring this alive, according to Josie, by his humanity and by helping people pray using different senses *'it was moving away from the pen on the paper and the written word and you can express it in a way using this form or that form.'* The feelings Josie associated with this prayer were ones of serenity, peace and calmness.

The embodiment of a lived spirituality was her mum for Josie. Josie's mum was the Catholic parent. It was:

> *my mum who did all the prayers and we prayed the rosary and all our prayers but not in another sense. She was very human, she was very humble, she was just the same with everybody she met. She radiated that sense of faith but it was a real faith, it wasn't a faith that was up in the sky where you had to be seen kneeling and saying your prayers. It was a faith that was very definitely passed on.*

Josie illustrated her sense of that practical, lived faith and spirituality with a story of a neighbour who would ask her mum to pray for him. Her mum always agreed to do this, but one day said:

> *well I will but one day perhaps you'll get there and say one for yourself and the next week he came and he sat with her and he sat next to her for the next 20 years just because she'd given the invite.*

Her mum's spirituality was '*real… it affected every aspect of her life. It was a lived spirituality*' For Josie her mum lived out her school prayer to 'love, respect and serve' through how she loved and treated people:

> *she just did it with joy, and that's part of it as well, she smiled and laughed and saw the better things and that was born out of a deep faith a deep spirituality that she had which enabled her to see you know this is bad but there's always worse.*

This embodiment of a practical spirituality can be seen in Josie's approach to being a catechist and to Confirmation. Confirmation, for Josie, was:

> *not a big show it's just being the best you can be and it's loving in the best way you can love and it's realising that God is always with us.*

It was about, bringing alive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, encouraging the courage of the young people and enabling the young people to '*keep the flame of faith* alive in their lives.

Catechist 3 (parish 3) – Bill

Précis

During the interview, Bill described a sad time in his life that had had a profound impact on the development of his spirituality. At this low point in his life, he was accompanied on his journey by a priest who helped him through the time. The sense of someone listening to him and accepting him as he is, was a way of being that came through when Bill later descried catechesis. Bill's spirituality was founded on his faith and could be seen in moments such as a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. It was also a very practical spirituality that '*has to involve other people and situations outside of ourselves'.* A moment of lived spirituality for Bill was a hug given him when he was at one of his lowest moments. There was a deep sense of connectivity with those who had walked before him and with the earth around him (see Figure 14 below). For Bill, this spirituality was part of the beauty of religious practices
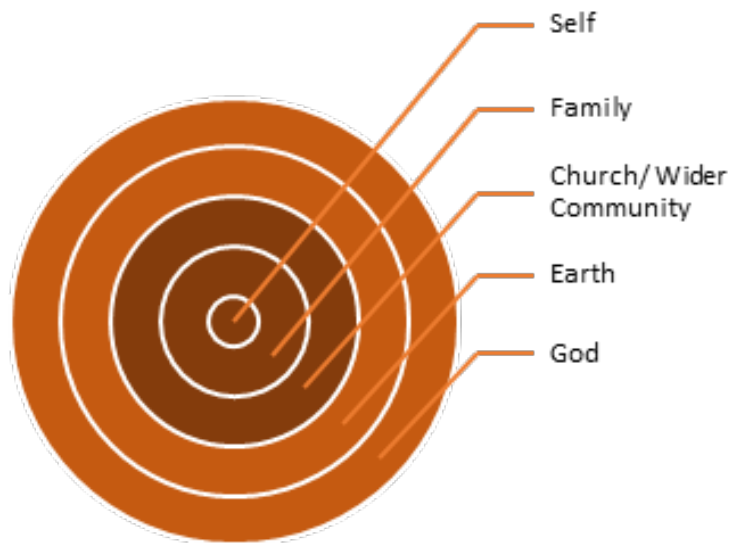
Figure 14: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Bill's interviews.

Detailed outline

Bill has been a catechist in his local parish on a number of occasions. In respect of his spirituality, Bill described an event in his life that had had a '*profound effect*' on him some years earlier. It had been a difficult time but, throughout the period concerned, Bill had been accompanied on his journey by a priest who he described as being a:

> *very good listener. He was are very good compassionate person. He was great fun he understood young people and he was a very selfless man he was visibly flawed too …. he provided a home away from home a home … I was always welcome and always able just to be me.*

A core aspect of the accompaniment was the *love and compassion* offered and being church – not in the sense of a '*collar*' but in '*unconditional love*':

> *that's what the Church should be and when we go around our daily business, if we express that spirituality to other people, no matter who they are or what they believe, then we are performing the very things that God asks.*

The spiritual moment was captured for Bill when his friends gave him a hug. Bill describes this as *a 'hug of love'*.

Bill's faith, family and spirituality intertwined. He shared an old T-shirt from a pilgrimage to Santiago during the interview. He got it shortly after his marriage and described the pilgrimage as:

> *the pilgrimage we made was so lovely so human, human all the ways I think that summed up our marriage - you get to see all of life and life's journey and hopefully share it with really nice people and you never know what's going to be turning up … I don't leave sight off the fact that there's always God's love, it's all about God not in an overtly religious way but just a presence, belonging, sharing.*

The sense of faith and of belonging and community came through when Bill spoke of the pilgrimage, as did his appreciation of creation (and the awe and majesty of that creation):

> *You meet a huge number of people along the way of all ages and all abilities I know languages in all colours shapes and sizes it was a real melting pot very intimate experience… it's almost like a foundation stone of bedrock … it's experiencing God through the people we meet and sharing that presence.*

It was linked with a connectivity to creation:

> *being intimate with God's creation, because there's so much of it … you are open to the elements, you are walking every single step along a road that's been trodden hundreds of thousands and tens of thousands of times before, but it's as fresh and hard … as it has been for anybody else who has walked that way. The people who walk it walk it with their own stories and experiences, it's just such a rich tapestry of rich stained window and we are all part of it and can also see the wonder of it too.*

For Bill, embodied in that sense of community, was a sense that '*every person is spiritual whether they are aware of it or not*'. The spirituality was grounded in our humanity "*nothing to do with ticking boxes or airs and graces*" but with a core constant '*the only way I can explain my spirituality is that God is the constant in all of those things. God is a God of love*'.

Whilst Bill wished that the young people could sense the beauty of some of the old prayers of the Church, in terms of research question four, he recognised that being a catechist involved responding to '*the young people's reality*':

> *I think if I was to just teach them in a dogmatic sort of way … in a prescriptive way as is on the paper then the course isn't long enough to do it justice and … it's not doing them any good it's meaningless.*

In respect of research question four, he saw the role of the catechist as being:

> *able to talk [to the young people about] people that meant something to them … don't take people for granted, see the value the quantifiable value in everybody.*

To help do this, he worked with the young people to help them '*listen to the gospels listen to how Jesus met ordinary people and saw the extraordinary in each of those people*'.

His hope was to help the young people to:

> *understand the Mass more, or to understand the Mass is a long-term relationship, and just like any other relationship it gets more interwoven with one's own self into a fabric of your being. The more you stick with it, the more you allow it a time and space of its own and the comprehension that can come from it … we also have to provide the cake [spirituality] and the sustenance for others we're contributors as well as consumers.*

Summing this up for Bill was a deep sense of helping and accompanying others. It involved a faith that was intertwined with his daily life and a sense of the spiritual in the grounded every day. This faith was sustained and interwoven with the Mass and sensed through creation and practical meetings with people:

> *I think spirituality therefore should follow practical little practices within the day and the week. A form of prayer … has to involve other people*

and situations outside of ourselves, so we provide something of our life to other people.

Peer leaders

Dave – a young peer leader who worked with Pauline (parish 1)

Précis

Dave was in his early 20s and active in the local parish. Although not a trained catechist, he assisted the catechists on the Confirmation programme to help the young people to '*develop their faith. I'm trying to give them a different viewpoint to help them understand their faith more and to develop'.* Pauline's reflections on the perception of spirituality being intertwined with the experiences of those on the programme are insightful in respect of understanding Dave's views on spirituality. For Dave, there was a sense that spirituality involved being 'whole'. However, in respect of research question two, as with some of the young people, he spoke of two spiritualities, one in general and one associated with his religion. The latter was very much associated with church and prayer. Dave was younger than Pauline and, whilst there is a sense of lived spirituality in the calm, quiet of the church, this was less evocative than that demonstrated by Pauline at Medjugorje. This is illustrated in the heat diagram (Figure 15) below.
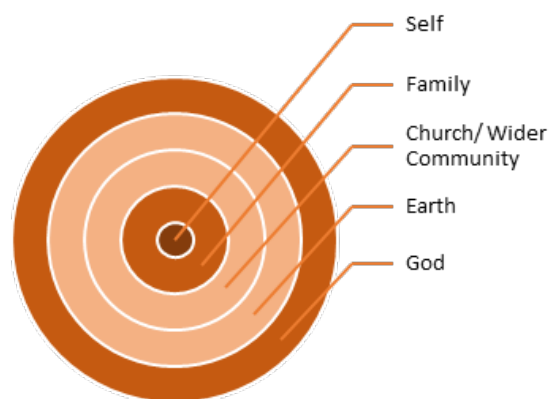

Figure 15: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Dave's Interviews.

Detailed outline

In the first interview, when talking around an experience and a person important in his life, Dave spoke of getting his first job. This he remembered as a particularly happy time in his life. It was the achievement of a goal and carried with it feelings of relief and satisfaction. Whilst Dave went on to associate spirituality with feelings of happiness, it was a word that he explained he would not associate with that moment. Exploring spirituality further, Dave explained that, it was a deeper happiness:

> *Spirituality, it's quite an in-depth and complex word. At the end of the day I think it's all down to the individual, it's what they think is spirituality and for me it's the sense of being whole and being able to feel that you're doing the right thing.*

The important aspect for Dave was the sense of being whole. Dave explained that, whilst he was happy to receive the job interview, happiness was not solely tied to that job:

> *to do well in life is to have your friends and family close and live out that whole spiritual life, as long as you've got enough money to live and do whatever you need to do.*

Earlier in the conversation Dave had recalled a person who was important to him in his life. That person was his grandma – a grandma who was fair, loving, did not take sides but has her own opinion and was always there for him. On reflection, Dave explained that this grandma was spiritual in the sense we had discussed.   Dave's definition of the spirituality of this grandma went as follows:

> Dave*: She is not religious at all but she is spiritual in a sense. So she has no specific religion or stuff like that but she believes in things such as God and Angels and thinks that things happen for a reason, so in one respect she isn't but in one respect she is - not in the usual set way as in religion and church but she has her own belief and her own way of doing things.*
>
> Researcher: *And what about that being whole?*
>
> Dave: *She definitely embodies that; she has had a very good life but she would give that up in a heartbeat for any of her family. She had a very*

difficult upbringing … it's only now that she's getting to see what actually happened and she knows what's happened in the past has happened for a reason and stuff like that.

Interestingly, until this point, spirituality for Dave could have been taken to equate to aspects of the academic literature equating to sense of being connected (being 'whole'). From the second paragraph above, there was more to spirituality than being connected, it included an understanding of the meaning and purpose of things. Dave also brought into the definition that there was something about a sense of a transcendent and having a belief in something more than we can see.

The inclusion of that belief in something transcendent becomes more focussed for Dave in the second interview. In this interview, the queries specifically asked around a spiritual experience and a spiritual person. For Dave, the spiritual experience he recalled related to being in church, but this was not linked to a particular liturgy or communal religious practice. As with Pauline, the moment related to a period of stillness and isolation from those around them but a moment of connectivity with God. There was a sense of peace and calmness in the moment, Dave gave an account of the time when he is in church alone, in particular if it is dark:

> *[the church] it's silent but it's still quite full at the same time especially when it's quite dark in the evening and you can just sit in the presence of the Lord and just have a conversation.*

When asked about a spiritual person, Dave's linking of the term to religion became clearer. He chose to speak about his Catholic grandma:

> *she has been religious all of her life. My other grandma has that spirituality in the other way but this grandma is a Catholic like I am and she's always been trying to encourage us to be more spiritual in ourselves. She's always encouraging us to go to church, … she prays every night and she's always saying a prayer for you and stuff like that.*

Reflecting on why that grandma had come to mind when asked about a spiritual person, Dave concluded that '*maybe I attached the connotation of spirituality to*

religion and I would say she is quite religious she's quite religious member of our family'. Dave went on to talk about religion and spirituality being intertwined in some way but there was always a sense that spirituality somehow involved a belief in a God. Speaking of the initial grandma discussed, for instance, Dave outlined that:

> *She is kind and giving she wouldn't want to harm anyone. She believes that there's always someone watching over you so I suppose in that respect she doesn't believe in God per say but she still has that perception that someone is watching her on looking out for her as we have with God.*

Potentially, there was less awareness of an innate aspect of spirituality. The potential impact of this for catechesis will be reflected on in response to research question four in Chapter 6 below.

Peer Leader 2 (parish 3) – Chris

Précis

Chris was in his early 20s and had joined the confirmation course team:

> *to learn more about my faith and it's very rewarding to help another group of young people unless a journey.*

For Chris, key words and phrases in the interviews showed that there was a strong sense of spirituality as being a guiding force in your life. That guiding force was primarily linked to his faith. In respect of research question two, similarly with some of the young participants, when asked about spiritual experiences not linked to church, Chris was unable to think of anything that was not linked somehow to church. For this reason a lighter colour has been used to illustrate connectivity with the wider community in Figure 16 below than was used for the older catechists. As Dave demonstrated a sense of connectivity to God in the lived moment he recollects in the silence of the church, Chris had an awareness of that connection as a guiding force in his life.
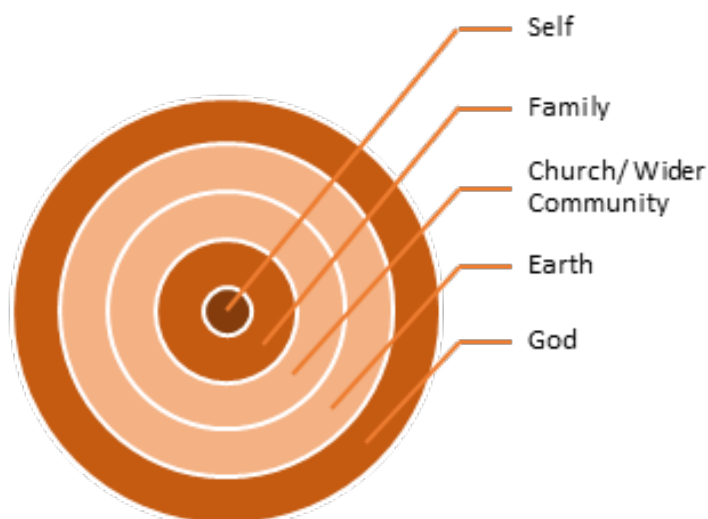
Figure 16: Diagram illustrating the strength of connections within Chris'
interviews.

Detailed outline

A defining experience for Chris was the death of his mum. He spoke of how, at
time, he would talk to God about how he felt and what was happening:

> I really leant on my faith and grew closer to God it was just having
> somebody to talk, to somebody who would just listen and not be
> judgmental.

The sense of God as a guiding force in his life had a profound impact on Chris'
sense of spirituality.

This sense of having someone guide him, influenced who Chris spoke about as
important people in his life. He highlighted two particular priests, one of whom
would have known Chris when his mum died. These people were important to
Chris:

> They were quite supportive and would answer questions that I might
> have had … help me to become involved in programs to put that faith
> into action.

Chris recollected his own Confirmation, in particular the moment his sponsor put her hand on his shoulder '*it was reassurance … it wasn't just me standing up in front of all these people there was someone there that was supportive'.*

Chris describes a spiritual person as being '*a good listener, a good friend… always there listening, giving advice'.*

When describing spirituality that sense of a guiding force, listening and giving advice was also very much prevalent. The connection was with the transcendent God and was repeatedly described by Chris as 'ghost' like. Whilst this might have had resonances with the Holy Ghost, this was not the term Chris used, it was:

> *a guidance, something you can't see, something that you feel, a ghost type of thing, someone who's there to guide you in the right direction*

and

> *it's like a ghost something that you can't see but something that you know is … there*

and

> *it's like a ghost, something that you can't see but you can feel is there, something that you believe in, something that you can't see but you can feel.*

In Christian terms, this guidance for Chris was very much linked to guidance from God and the Holy Spirit, it was:

> *when I felt the gifts of the Holy Spirit and learnt more about my faith, which I would not have got through without, … and having those conversations with God as to what's happened and what is planned.*

After his mum died, Chris described how he felt that this spirituality guided and directed him and helped to show him the right path. This guidance he also, on reflection, felt was present when he got his first job:

> *Looking back on it I would associate … [spirituality]..with getting my first job, looking back on it somebody was guiding you in the right direction - just persevere with it and you may enjoy it.*

This sense of guidance and direction was the spirituality that Chris associated with Confirmation and his involvement with the young people:

> It's a person guiding you along, guiding you to create new ways to encourage young people to get involved, to get that feeling across that going to church isn't a bad thing that there can be fun aspects to it.

Understanding the importance of how personal experiences, such as Chris', in shaping perceptions of spirituality may have a bearing on the responses to research question four below.

The impact of the spiritual people Chris mentioned, and those who had guided him on his journey, was also present in the interviews. In respect of research question four, Chris is conscious that how young people interpret spirituality will depend on their experiences as '*sometimes they can be dependent on their personal experiences'*. He recollected how one of the priests about whom he had spoken was always there to '*listen, happy to help give guidance, supportive',* but was also fun and down to earth (which Chris told through a competition in Lourdes to find the cheapest religious object on sale). This guidance he felt was part of a role of the catechist and youth leader. For Chris, the role of the catechist and youth leader was to assist the candidates to '*complete their aims for confirmation'* and to do this by having fun with the young people and talking to them.

Summary

The use of hermeneutic phenomenology within the interviews drew out key words and phrases that helped to illustrate how participants may have experienced or perceived spirituality. Analysing the text for moments of 'lived' activity, be it a sense of connectedness or time, for instance, drew out moments where spirituality may have been sensed by those involved in the research (for example Mark at Santiago de Compostela or Pauline in Medjugorje).

Chapter 2 illustrates how authors exploring the spirituality of children and young people have emphasised the importance of relational consciousness and

a sense of connectedness within that spirituality. The diagrams used above have been included to give a sense of where this connectedness was strongest in each of the interviews. This will be explored further below. In each interview, the importance of tradition can also be clearly seen. Again, this will be explored further below, drawing on the context of the academic literature from, for example, Eaude, noted in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2 outlined academic research into the spirituality of children and young people. Within this literature a distinction is drawn by some authors between spirituality and religion (including an oft quoted phrase of being 'Spiritual But Not Religious'). The methodology chosen for this study specifically sought to explore how participants might experience spirituality and how they might perceive it. As noted in Chapter 3, other authors (such as Singleton *et al.*, 2004) did not use the term spirituality within their research. A core aspect of my research was how spirituality was perceived through the lens of the participant. This thesis was confined to young people on a religious preparation course. Perhaps unsurprisingly religion was considered to be spiritual; however, there was also a sense in some of the younger participants that if you were not religious you were also not spiritual. This was not a concept found within the academic studies in Chapter 2. Conscious spiritual moments were often associated with moments when there was a sense of connectivity with self and God, an awareness of where they were at the times and the feelings associated with those moments. The understanding that spirituality and religion could be separate, was more prevalent in the older catechist interviews than for the two peer leaders or most of the younger participants. This may be of particular interest when considering the soil in which catechesis is sown in response to research question four in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5 below explores how participants experienced spirituality using the themes drawn from the academic literature in Chapter 2. Following on from authors such as Champagne (2019) and Eaude (2019), it examines how this may be influenced by the traditions of the participants and, drawing on Champagne (2019) how participants actually perceive spirituality.

Chapter 5: Spirituality as Experienced, and Spirituality as Perceived, by Participants

The research questions posed at the start of this thesis were focussed on exploring how Catholic Confirmation candidates perceive and experience spirituality, how this research may extend understanding of spirituality; how the perceptions and experiences of the young people involved in the research related to those of the catechists interviewed; and how this might assist Confirmation catechesis. Primarily, this chapter seeks to answer the first two of these research questions. The knowledge gained from this analysis will be summarised in Chapter 6, which will also address how this knowledge may advance understanding of spirituality in response to the third research question posed and how it may impact on the delivery of catechesis (in response to the fourth research question).

How candidates might be expected to experience and perceive spirituality

Within Chapter 2, I outlined how spirituality may be perceived if taken from the perspective of literature pertaining to Catholic spirituality and in relation to published Confirmation programmes. I also drew on work from researchers specialising in children's spirituality and how they described spirituality when considered from outside of a religious perspective. These works highlighted some core aspects of spirituality that I might have expected to find within this research. These aspects included from a Catholic perspective (for example Cunningham, 2009):

- the proclamation and witness to God at an individual and community level;
- participation in the prayer life of the Church (for example through involvement in particular faith-based activities);
- performing the Gospel (for example as noted by Sheldrake (2013), through the 'active-practical' activities of the everyday.

From works such as Willey and White (2021, see Chapter 2), it might be reasonable to expect to find a sense of searching for belonging to a community within the spirituality of those interviewed.

Within the work of the academics researching children's spirituality noted in Chapter 2, there were indications that I might find a sense of spirituality within the young people interviewed that related to spirituality being an innate aspect of being human, that is that it could exist outside of religious practices and be experienced through how the participants viewed or experienced live in relation to the people and world around them (for example Hay & Nye, 2006). Some authors (such as de Souza, 2004 & Hyde, 2007) have suggested that the deepest level of connectedness could be where the individual 'experiences becoming one with 'other'. Academics writing from a perspective of children's spirituality noted in Chapter 2 also drew attention to a potential for a search for meaning and purpose within the spiritual life of children and young people and highlighted the emerging academic area of interest in respect of the influence of tradition on the spiritual lives of children and young people. Within the academic domain of children's spirituality, the authors noted in Chapter 2 also outlined a sense of how young people may perceive spirituality to be different from religion, including a potential to consider themselves to be Spiritual but not Religious (often abbreviated to SBNR).

My research involved the experiences and perceptions of spirituality of a group of young people preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Roman Catholic Church. This was not an area that has been examined in any depth in academic literature. Specifically missing from the literature from a Catholic perspective was research that drew on the voices of young people themselves. Initially, therefore, I examine below how the voices of the participants can be explored to ascertain how their experiences and perceptions of spirituality overlap with the areas noted above in respect of Catholic spirituality. I then explore if spirituality can be discerned within the interviews using the areas identified by researchers focussing on children's spirituality. Within Chapter 6, I focus on how this may enhance understanding of spirituality in respect of the potential dichotomy drawn by some authors between religion

and spirituality and if the influence of family or tradition within these interviews can add value to this academic area.

The thematic analysis in this chapter is informed by Appendix A6. This appendix gathers together the diagrams used in Chapter 4 and key words used by participants when interviewed. This appendix helps to illustrate aspects of spirituality that may be of particular importance to each participant and informs the wholistic reading of the texts necessary to respond to the research questions.

The analysis involves drawing information from phrases or anecdotes used in Chapter 4. As noted in Chapter 3, within hermeneutic phenomenology, this is not unusual (for example Hyde, 2005a). Particular anecdotes or phrases may shed light upon spirituality in different ways dependent upon the lens in use at the time (that is an analytical theme identified or an existential approach (as detailed in Chapter 3).

<u>Confirmation Candidates</u>

<u>*Spirituality and the Church*</u>

With respect to the first research question posed, all the participants associated spirituality with the Christian God and with religious practices. The spiritual experiences, for instance, noted by the young research participants included First Holy Communion, attending church for the first time after a break, Confession, praying with family members on pilgrimage or getting the gift of a cross from family members. This aligns to aspects of the Confirmation programmes or Catholic spirituality as relates to participating in the prayer life of the Church outlined in Chapter 2. When asked to reflect on these moments, there is a sense of belonging associated with these moments. Alison, for instance, remembered the welcome accorded her when she returned to the church. This sense of belonging was captured when the priest shook her hand, leading Alison to feel '*overwhelmed*'. Luke, in Santiago, recollected the sense he had in that spiritual moment of being part of a community with the same

beliefs. Mark recollected the sense of people around him on his First Holy Communion and of being part of something greater than himself, that is '*doing something…big'*. Nicholas recollected the '*huge* crowds' at Lourdes, but the crowd was united, calm with no queue jumping or arguments. There was a sense of unity in the community in this moment. These spiritual moments recalled by the younger participants touched on the sense of community articulated by Waaijman (2007) and noted in Chapter 2. The Confirmation candidates interviewed perceived connectivity with the church to link to spirituality. They also demonstrated a wish to belong.

Sense of belonging and a search for increased knowledge

There was a strong link in the interviews with a wish to be part of the Church community and with a sense of searching for answers and a sense of belonging with a parish or the wider Church. Michael, for instance, saw his grandparents as spiritual due to their commitment to the church. Alison's spiritual moment, as noted, centred around her being welcomed back to the parish community. There was a sense of the lived moment in her description of the handshake of welcome from the parish priest. Clarissa saw Confirmation as an opportunity to be '*part of the parish'*.

For other candidates it was both about increasing knowledge and being part of the community. For Michael, Confirmation was about gaining '*more understanding'* and '*being brought further into the community'*. Nicholas saw the programme and Confirmation as a way to increase his knowledge and be accepted within the Church community. Mary linked Confirmation to spirituality in the sense of growing in knowledge, which Mary felt would help her to be an '*adult in the Church*'. This desire to be part of the Church community aligns to literature on Catholic spirituality outlined in Chapter 2 (for example Schneiders, 2013), with specific reference to stages of faith development as identified by Fowler, 1995 and Willey and White, 2021.

Aligned to a sense of being part of a Church community, were the values for living as part of that community, linked to the Gospels. From the perspective of

Confirmation catechesis, the sense of spirituality involving being part of the Church and living in accordance with specific values would align to Confirmation programmes (such as that illustrated in Appendix A5).

Christian values

The emotions attached to spiritual moments, and to people or other experiences recollected by the young participants, often aligned to the values associated with Christian spirituality noted by McGrath (1999) and the 'love of God' highlighted by Waaijman (2007) as an identifiable characteristic of the Church community. Appendix A6 summarises some of the key words that captured the essence of spirituality within the interviews. Recurring concepts include love (for example for Beth and Nola), caring for others (for example for Nola, Patrick, Mark and Michael) and living out the values of your faith (for example for Alison, Nicholas and Luke). In this respect, the young people interviewed found links between their spirituality and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit as taught on the Confirmation programmes.

Explicitly the perceptions and experiences of the young research participants aligned to aspects of Catholic spirituality noted in the academic literature Confirmation programmes in Chapter 2 to the concept of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit and to belonging to the Church community that are found within Confirmation programmes.   Chapter 2 also outlined research from authors who have studied children's spirituality in general and, whilst similarities may be found within these works and the perceptions of those involved in this research, areas of divergence also appear within this research in relation to the works noted in Chapter 2, including the correlation between spirituality and religion.

Kerygma/ martyria), leiturgia and diakonia

From the perspective of the young people interviewed linking spirituality to the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church, it was possible to spot the seeds of the three tasks outlined by Pope Benedict in 2005. There was a desire to be part of the community of the church (for example with Alison and Clarissa), accompanied by a wish to grow in knowledge of God and the faith (to

be part of the prayer life of the church). Partly, this was evidenced by a tendency to select church-based activities (such as the participants First Holy Communion) when describing spiritual moments. There was a worth placed on positive Christian values (and performing the Gospel). All were united by a common goal to witness their faith when being confirmed. To an extent these characteristics may have been drawn from their family traditions.

Family and tradition

In Chapter 2, I highlighted the relationship between spirituality and tradition had been a core topic for consideration at the 16th international conference on children's spirituality (see Stockinger, 2019). I drew attention, for instance to the work of Eaude (2019), who, for example argued that culture is a lens through which people 'interpret, understand and make sense of experience, even when they do not recognise this' (p.8). The research interviews conducted with participants shone a light on this argument and highlighted the importance of understanding the background of participants on any Confirmation programme. Each of the candidates interviewed was influenced somewhat by their family background. This went beyond the types of religious practices with which they were familiar (for example, praying together as a family in the case of Nola or going on pilgrimage together in the case of Luke) to having a bearing on the characteristics they perceived to be part of spirituality. Where the young participants spoke of a living person as a spiritual person (that is they chose someone other than Jesus or the Holy Spirit) spirituality, to an extent, took its shape for them from the characteristics they admired in that person. I will illustrate this using a number of the interviews with the Confirmation candidates.

Beth and her family had moved to the UK from abroad and her extended family still lived abroad. Key aspects of spirituality within Beth's interviews reflected a wish to retain connections with that extended family. Beth had an infinity necklace given her by that extended family. It reminded her of their never ending love and the never ending love of God. Beth spoke about her aunt abroad who was loving and caring and always there for her. Beth saw

spirituality through the lens of her family and the desire to remain connected with her extended family in a way that does not end.

That sense of being close to an extended family who will not forget you also infused Mary's interviews. Mary recollected happy memories with her grandparents. She viewed her grandmother as a particularly spiritual person, recollecting her as '*the one who taught me most about my faith*'. The teachings from her grandmother inspired Mary to wish to learn more about her faith. Her grandmother's example and influence also came across in the interview as key contributory factors behind Mary's definition of spirituality (of having '*a connection with …faith or belief*'). The influence of family and tradition on the perceptions of spirituality of the young people interviewed was not limited to those with extended family who lived abroad or apart from those being interviewed in some way.

Patrick drew his inspiration from his grandparents. Patrick's grandparents were actively involved in his local parish, '*never expecting anything in return'.* In a sense they demonstrated their spirituality to Patrick through the active-practical work referred to by Sheldrake in 2013. Patrick was also impressed by their commitment to each other in a marriage that had lasted 40 to 45 years, their determination and the way in which they welcome everybody with open arms. For Patrick, these were spiritual people who were aligned with the spirituality he admired in St Andrew, who was courageous and did his job because it simply '*what God wanted him to do'.*

Nola's perception of spirituality as '*having faith or closeness to something special'* can be seen throughout her interviews in relation to the spiritual moments with her family. One such moment was sitting on a bench looking at York Castle with her family. The hermeneutic element of this moment came from the sense of togetherness in the experience, people put away their phones and were just '*together*'. From the perspective of this thesis, how the young participants perceived spirituality was heavily influenced by how they related to others and the values placed on those relationships. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the 'cultural' lens of the research participants had a visible

influence on their understanding of spirituality. This leads to another area noted in the literature review, that is the link between relational consciousness, or connections with others, and spirituality (see p.39).

Innate spirituality versus spirituality bounded by religion

It is with respect of spirituality as being an innate aspect of human beings and the correlation of spirituality and religion that the responses received from the young participants most diverge from anticipated responses that might be derived from the literature review and deviate between participants. Whilst acknowledging the emphasis placed on standards that would align to Christian values and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, when recognised by some candidates, these values were not always explicitly linked to spirituality. Connections with family members were important, but these were not always aligned (despite the reasonings of authors such as Hay and Nye, 2006) in the perceptions of the young people involved with the interviews with spirituality. In other words, spirituality was confined by religion by some participants and was not necessarily perceived to be an innate aspect of being human. Whilst the candidates participating in the research noted the importance to them of people who showed their faith by caring for others (for example Beth, Nola, Mary, Alison, Patrick, Clarissa, Michael), a number of candidates specifically excluded these people from their perception of spirituality.

For Alison, for instance, spirituality involved belief, meditation and being calm. Alison would not have concurred with authors such as Hyde (2008) and Moriarty (2011) to the extent that that spirituality was an innate part of being human in that, for her, spirituality was defined by religion. Spirituality was not a term Alison associated, for instance, with her mum, despite her mum being a person who keeps her safe and will do anything for her. Clarissa associated spirituality with the '_Holy Spirit'_ and, whilst she identified qualities in her sister such as being '_strong', 'kind' and 'helping her'_, which might in a religious sense be associated with the Holy Spirit, these characteristics did not mean that Clarissa associated her sister with spirituality. Similarly, whilst Beth, Nola, Luke, Mary, Mark and Michael associated spirituality with positive human

characteristics, such as love and kindness, they had an explicit understanding of the spirituality that was associated with faith and religious practises rather than being an innate human characteristic. Beth, for instance, drew a link between spirituality and kindness, helping others and being there for them; however, when asked explicitly about spiritual experiences and people, these were linked to God and her faith. For Mary, whilst the spiritual person was loving and caring, they were spiritual because of their religious activities, such as the use of holy water.

The exception to seeing spirituality as bounded by religion and confined within religious people or practices were Nicholas and Mark. Nicholas had a sense of spirituality as essential to life (for example, as a life-giving force that starts our '*heart beating*'). Nicholas was able to identify positive aspects of spirituality within non-religious people, for example his football coach. Mark identified spirituality with how loving you are as a person. As such, their connections with the wider community perhaps ran deeper than Alison and Clarissa (and this is illustrated in the diagrams in Appendix A6).

The explicit correlation of religion and spirituality by most of the younger participants in this study would not necessarily be expected from the research into academic literature highlighted in Chapter 2. To a degree, it might be considered the opposite of the concept of spiritual but not religious found in academic literature on spirituality. In addition, for some candidates, the link between religion and spirituality was such that they demonstrated little awareness of spirituality in the 'active-practical' sense noted by Sheldrake in 2013. This has a bearing on the response to the fourth research question, which considers the potential impact on Confirmation catechesis on the research.

Experiences versus perceptions

As noted in the literature review (on p.40), Hay and Nye's (2006) concept of relational consciousness has been influential in the field of study relating to children's spirituality. The depth of the sense of connectedness between an

individual and others (for example family, creation and a transcendent other) has also been highlighted by authors such as de Souza (2012). As noted above, the young participants within this study all associated spirituality with aspects of the Catholic faith. With respect to the first research question behind this thesis, there was an explicit understanding that spirituality linked to religion and religious practices.

Singleton *et al.* in 2004 sought to explore youth spirituality through personal narration and 'evocative technique' whilst avoiding the use of the term spirituality (p.252). The rationale for the avoidance of the term spirituality was given as the answers received might be influenced by uncertainty around the term spirituality and 'those who were prejudiced against some particular form of spirituality…[might]…write off the interview as concerned with something irrelevant' (p.252). The importance of the sense of connectivity can be seen from outside when analysing the research interviews. The connections were not always perceived as spiritual by the participants. In other words, if, as previous authors have done, spirituality was excluded as a term from the research interviews, the importance of the church in the explicit perception of the younger research participants might have been missed.

How the young participants viewed spirituality was influenced by their background. This influence also links to the sense or desire for connectedness that the participants also experienced. The sense of connectedness to immediate or extended family for Mary, Nola and Patrick evidences that this (as might be expected from the works of de Souza for example) and forms part of how the participants within this study experienced spirituality. Further examples of this connectedness can be found, for instance, with Mark, who recollected with happiness the feeling of being with his family at his grandparents' wedding, Luke, who described spiritual moments with his family, as times when they were *'in communion'* with each other. Given the previous work on children's spirituality, it is perhaps no surprise to note the important of this sense of connectivity with others as being found in the experiences and perceptions of the research participants.

Connections with moments of 'lived spirituality'

With all the younger participants in the study, the deepest sense of connectivity (as noted above) came with the family. Within the illustrative diagrams in Appendix A6, this is shown, for instance, in the deep sense of connectivity for Beth and Mary due to their sense of connection with their extended family, having (moved to the UK from abroad.

A depth of connection is also noted for Luke, Nola, Mark, Michael and Nicholas. This was not common across all participants (despite the similarity of structure used for the interviews and analysis throughout the study). All four participants displayed a sense of felt spirituality in moments with family members. These moments were reflective of the sense of being 'spiritual beings' as identified by Buber (2013, see page 40 above). They were and infused with the existentials of 'lived time', 'lived space', 'lived body' and 'relationship to others' (outlined by van Manen, 1990) and referred to in Chapter 3 above). Mark's pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela with his father contained a particular moment in which he might have been said to have felt spirituality. This spirituality was experienced through a deep sense of connectivity with his dad (identified through the key ring he kept in memory of the experience), the place in which he sat, the sense of the vastness of the space and the sense of those around him having a common belief and purpose. The sense of peace in the moment was captured in the simple phase, *'It was all good'*. When Nicholas was in Lourdes, he was aware of the people around him and the space itself created an awareness of a 'connection', there was the *'massive church that you felt was watching you..., not in a weird way, but there was some kind of connection'*. For Luke, there was a strong sense of connectivity in the simple description that *'We're in communion I would'*. Again, he described being with his family as times of *'happiness, peacefulness, calm, where there's no stress.. tranquil… it's safe'*. The sense of 'lived spirituality infuses Michael's description of a moment in Lourdes when *'there was definitely something different about the place'*. There was a sense of wonder at this point in the interview captured through a sense of the place, those present and a calmness in the air *'there were huge crowds every day, but it's not like other places with huge crowds, there were no*

arguments, is no one shoving each other... it was calm and a sense of awe'.
Whilst Moriarty (2011) and Rossiter (2011), from the respective perspectives of children's spirituality and Catholic spirituality in schools, both identified a link with spirituality for young people through a sense of connectedness with the earth, none of the young people spoke of experiencing spirituality through a sense of beaty of the world around them. Mark and Nicholas demonstrated an awareness and connectedness to the space and time in which the experience they described occurred but did not ascribe the spirituality of the moment to an explicit sense of connectedness or stewardship with the earth. This aspect of spirituality was missing from the interviews with the candidates.

Summary

With respect to the first research question, the candidates interviewed situated spirituality (in the main) within the context of religion – which is at variance with aspects of the literature explored in Chapter 2. There is a sense of connectivity but those moments of connectedness, whilst aligning to descriptors of spirituality as outlined by authors such as de Souza (2012), Hyde (2007) and Hay and Nye (2006), were not necessarily associated with spirituality by the young participants on this study (e.g., Clarissa and her sister). In essence, candidates might be said to experience spirituality in the context outlined by authors such as de Souza (2007) and Hay and Nye (2006) but perceived spirituality from the context of the Catholic spirituality outlined by Cunningham (2009), amongst others, and the spirituality programmes.

Whilst some candidates (such as Luke noted above) were able to talk in an experiential manner about spiritual moments, others – such as Clarissa – excluded non-religious people and experiences from her perceptions of spirituality. Of interest to a catechist might be how this limitation of spirituality affected a candidate's understanding of the term in the active-practical sense outlined by Sheldrake (2013).

How embedded (that is connected) spirituality is within the world vision of the candidates could, therefore, have a direct impact on catechesis within

Confirmation (research question four). From the practical sense of a doctorate in education, there is also the consideration of how the candidates' perceptions of spirituality may vary from the perceptions and experiences of those leading the programme and how this in turn may impact on the fourth research question posed.

Peer leaders and catechists

The diagrams in Appendix A6, based upon both an analysis of key words and sense of connectivity glimpsed through experiential moments, illustrate that, in this instance, the peer leaders were a 'bridge' between spirituality as perceived and experienced by the candidates and spirituality as perceived and experienced by the catechists. This has potential implications in respect of catechesis and Confirmation programmes and, hence, will be brought up again when the fourth research question posed is considered in Chapter 6 below.

Innate spirituality

With regard to this 'bridging', the two peer leaders, demonstrated an understanding of the innate aspect of spirituality that might be closer aligned to that of the candidates than the potentially more developed understanding of the catechists. Chris, specifically associated spirituality with religion (comparing spirituality to a guiding voice in his life with explicit overtones to the Holy Spirit). Dave spoke about two grandparents. One of these grandparents he associated with spirituality due to her practice of the Catholic religion. The other grandma, Dave noted as having innate positive values (such as a deep care for her family). Dave did associate this grandma with spirituality but this (as with some of the candidates) was not due to these positive human values but due to her having a belief in the transcendent (*so in one respect she is [spiritual], not in the usual set way as in religion and church, but she has her own belief and her own way of doing things).* Whilst there may have been an awareness, as with the young participants of an association of people who might be viewed as spiritual with positive human values, the bounding of spirituality by religion by the peer leaders indicates this is not a perception that might be limited to younger

teenagers. This will impact on how those the peer leaders experience spirituality how open they may be to discuss spirituality outside of a religious context with those on the Confirmation programmes.

The catechists had a much more developed perception of spirituality as innate, and not necessarily bounded by religious practices, than demonstrated by the candidates. For Josie, for instance, whilst her faith was intimately bound with her spirituality, spirituality was also about *'humanity'* and *'being the best you can be and it's loving the best way you can love'.* Pauline described how spirituality involved *never doubting that there's a purpose to everything'.* Both had a sense of spirituality as part of being human and caught up with daily life. Bill, whilst finding his spirituality in his faith, was the most explicit that spirituality was an innate part of being human, in that, for Bill: *every person is spiritual whether they are aware of it or not*. Bill's interview had echoes of Nicholas in the sense of spirituality being an energy within life as *a living thing*. The catechists demonstrated as a group an awareness that, whilst they may find their spirituality through their religion, spirituality in general can exist outside of religious practices. This was a key area of divergence from the younger participants in the study and one that may be of interest when considering the response to research question four in Chapter 6.

Kerygma/ martyria), leiturgia and diakonia - Church community, belonging and Christian values

As with all the young people interviewed, the interviews with the peer leaders and catechists linked to the three tasks outlined by Pope Benedict in 2005. The roles of those interviewed as peer leaders and catechists on Confirmation preparation programmes evidenced their commitment to performing the teachings of the gospels and of witnessing to the gospels as individuals and at a community level. Chris viewed his role as a peer leader as a way of *'giving back'*. He brought an object to talk about in the interview that consisted of an item made for him by the Confirmation candidates affirming the work he does as a peer leader. People Chris associated with spirituality were people who evidenced their faith and belief in their daily lives, in their participation in church

activities and in how they treated others. Whilst Dave spoke less about participation in liturgical activities, his key spiritual moment was one of quiet prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Dave also valued those who publicly evidence their faith and beliefs (and witness the gospel) in how they live out their lives. He spoke with feeling about the example set by his grandma, for instance, how she encourages Dave and his family in their faith, to go to church and to pray and to be *'more spiritual in ourselves'*. That spirituality encouraged by his grandmother linked to the aspects of spirituality under consideration here.

Similarly, the catechists valued people who had witnessed the gospel to them at some point in their lives. All the catechists had sort to be public witnesses to the gospel in terms of how they lived and all demonstrated a keen awareness of the spirituality of prayer activities. For the catechists, these activities were embedded in their daily lives. The tendency to associate spirituality with a religious event such as First Holy Communion was noted earlier in respect of the young people interviewed. These experiences were described using aspects of connectivity, often with other family members who were present. For some young people, such as Nola, the descriptions went deeper and included a felt sense of the moment (for example in the sense of being cared for and sense of togetherness). The felt sense of connectivity with the Church community comes through to a much deeper extend in the catechist interviews than in those of the young people or peer leaders.

This sense of felt spirituality within the Church community infused Bill's perceptions and experiences of spirituality in the celebration of the Mass, which he expressively described as *'a long term relationship… interwoven with one's own self into the fabric of your being'*. The sense of appreciation for spirituality within the practical demonstration of gospel values infuses Bill's description of the *'hug of love'* he received from a person he associated with spirituality within one of the darkest moments of his life. Josie and Pauline both spoke about spiritual individuals who lived out their faith in practical ways and had particular impact on their lives Josie spoke of a spirituality that *'stays alive'* and evidenced this through the practical demonstration of faith evidenced by her mum, similarly Pauline spoke of the impact her mother had on her faith. Josie summed up the

depth of this practical spirituality embedded in her faith and believe in the gospels as being a spirituality that's '*the presence of God within'*, growing the seed of that spirituality and bring that spirituality to others. The importance of catechists recognising spirituality and enabling that seed to grow was demonstrated by each of the catechists interviewed.

Chris, one of the peer leaders, had a deep sense of connection to the parish community and members of the church. As noted in Chapter 4, Chris's journey had been influenced by the death of his mum. He viewed spirituality as a guiding voice in his life. That guidance was also associated with members of the church who had given him help and support. As might be expected, all three of the catechists demonstrated strong connectivity to the church. Unlike the candidates, this was not evidenced through a wish to belong but through spiritual moments and people whom they spoke about in the interviews. The connection with the community of the church could be said to be a seed that had been planted and flourished in their lives rather than a desire for something to come in the future. The analysis of the involved listening for the experiential moments and from those to identify moments that capture the essence of the phenomenon in question. Such a moment occurred for Bill when he spoke of his life in the church. He eloquently brought out this aspect of spirituality in his life through simply describing it expressively as '*the sense of walking the way with people'*.

The influence of family, traditions and connections

Within the interviews of the young people, a sense of the importance of family traditions and connections could be seen in respect of how they perceived and experienced spirituality. The value placed on family and how family members might influence a person's perceptions of spirituality is also evidenced through the interviews with the peer leaders. Dave spoke of both his grandmas, one he associated with Catholic practices and readily described as spiritual. The other grandma he viewed as spiritual as they had a faith and belief in the transcendent. Aware of different ways in which these family members might be considered spiritual, Dave concluded that spirituality was '*really down to the*

individual'. This simple conclusion may also account for why authors in Chapter 2 have noted so much difficulty in defining spirituality. How it is perceived and recognised may be heavily influenced by the person's own life experiences, traditions and points of influence. This can also be drawn from the interviews with Chris. As noted earlier, Chris had lost his mum at an early age. He greatly valued the guidance received at that time from people in the church. This appears to have greatly influenced his perceptions of spirituality, which he summed up as *'something that you can't see, that you can fell…someone who's there to guide you in the right direction*.

The influence of family traditions is still present in the interviews with the catechists. Josie spoke of the faith passed onto her by her mum (a *'simple'* faith that Josie continues to practise). This faith can be seen in the examples Josie uses during her interview of a faith, and spirituality, that nourishes, feeds and nurtures. Pauline, likewise, is influenced by family memories. Again, these memories are ones of caring for others seen through both her mother and sister. Bill spoke simply of how going to church had always been part of his life. The soil in which the catechists spirituality found its roots includes the family traditions from which they took their inspiration. That soil has been enhanced through greater life experiences and wider connections than is possible for the younger participants interviewed. The moments about which the candidates spoke in respect of spirituality were overwhelmingly positive. They were filled with connections with close family or friends. A few were everyday moments (for example sitting on a wall with family in York), were spirituality and the everyday coincided, but more were moments of passage associated with the church – such as first holy communion. For the catechists, those who had helped to grow and nurture their spirituality were drawn from a wider circle. Of particular importance, are those who had helped and guided them at low points in their lives such as the person who simply gave Bill a *'hug of love'* or the friend who accepted Josie *'as a person'*, with no judgement attached.

In respect of the second research question, the spirituality nurtured and grown throughout the lives of the catechists led to a greater sense of connectedness throughout these interviews with a wider range of life experiences than the

connections evidenced by the younger participants. Whilst there was a sense of felt spirituality for a few of the young participants when they were aware of a connection to time, space, those around them and the transcendent (such as for Mark in Santiago), these moments were the exceptions during the interviews. The spirituality perceived by the young people did not, in the main, have the depth of connectivity evidenced by the catechists. Mark's sense of spirituality in Santiago included an awareness of those around him, a sense of being in communion with a great many others and a sense of common faith. Bill's description of his journey to Santiago has been influenced by the opportunities to experience spirituality through wider connections in his life, leading to a greater explicit awareness that *we've lost the habit of stopping… just looking at something in awe whether it's a sunset or birds flying across the sky'*. This sense of awe in the moment, and of connection to the earth and to God, through that moment was in Pauline's description of looking back at the cross on the hill in Medjugorje. As noted above, this connection with creation was missing in the interviews of the young people and not consciously part of the soil for them in which the catechesis was being sown.

Integration of perception and experience

When considering the perceptions and experiences of the candidates, I noted that experiences of spirituality could be discerned for some participants that were in accordance with aspects of spirituality identified by authors noted in Chapter 2 but were discounted as spiritual experiences by participants in this study. This in particular related to participants perceptions of whether spirituality was bounded by religion and only found in the context of an experience or person they considered to be 'religious'. A key difference with this study is the interest not just in how spirituality is experienced (as per Singleton *et al.*, 2004) but also how it is perceived. In the case of a number of young people, the perceptions and experience could be said not to align.

To an extent, this was also present for the peer leaders, although Dave developed his interpretation of spirituality as the interviews (and the conversation) progressed. Chris, associated spirituality with God as a guiding

hand in his life. Chris, for instance, only associated around half of his friends with spirituality. He had positive connections with his friends who demonstrated positive human characteristics (and might be said to involve spirituality as outlined by Hay and Nye (2006) for instance); however, Chris' explicit understanding of the term was still bounded by religion.

The catechists, as noted above, had a depth of connectivity across as range of areas identified by de Souza (2012). This depth of connectivity might be reflexive of their greater life experience. They also had a greater alignment between the experience and perception of spirituality than that demonstrated by the younger participants within the study. The catechists were able to appreciate the spirituality in moments not associated with religious practices or people. Bill, for instance, could see spirituality in a simple moment of watching someone build a pile of grass and just being in that moment. Bill spoke eloquently of the beauty of Mass and prayer but also appreciated spirituality in the everyday moments. Pauline sensed spirituality in the jokes and stories she shared with her sister but also in the moments of calm and peace in church or in a filed looking up at a cross. Spirituality was founded in their religion but not bounded by it. In other words, their faith was at the core of their understanding and experience of spirituality but the spiritual experiences occurred outside of explicit religious practices and people and were recognised as such.

Summary

In total, five adults were interviewed as part of the research. Two of these were in their late teens / early twenties, three were trained catechists. With respect to the second research question, for the adults, as for the candidates interviewed, there was an explicit relationship between religion and spirituality. Unlike a number of the candidates, the catechists were also aware of spirituality as an innate aspect of humanity and were aware of this spirituality through strong connections with family, friends, those around them in general, the immediate and wider Church community and God. There was a greater appreciation of spirituality in the earth and an ability to sense these connections through specific moments recalled within the interviews.

In Chapter 2, I noted that de Souza (2006) proposed that a person's spirituality matures as a person senses connectedness to the 'Other' (that is a transcendent being), which enables them to deepen knowledge of themselves and their 'inner self'. In reference to the first two research questions, all those involved in the interviews had a sense of connectedness to God. For the candidates, this sense of connectedness was sometimes limited to religious practices. Their strongest connections were often with family and friends, whom they did not necessarily associate with the church and, therefore, with spirituality. This sense of connection to God did not appear to be sufficiently strong in the younger candidates interviewed to enable the deeper understanding of self-referred to by de Souza (2006). The variance is evident with the catechists. These individuals demonstrated a depth of spirituality and awareness of God in the world. With reference to the second research question behind this thesis, this connectedness meant they were aware of how they experienced and perceived spirituality and were able to sense through their experiences the world and people around them. For this reason, the illustrative diagrams in Appendix A6 show deeper colours in each circle, indicating the stronger connections between the catechists and those around them.

Conclusion

In Chapter 2, I highlighted the lack of evidence of to how young people engaged in faith programmes in the Catholic Church perceive and experience spirituality. Highlighted above are ways in which the candidates participating in this research study experienced spirituality. Thematically, the analysis highlights the importance of the relationship for those involved with Confirmation programmes of religion and spirituality and how they experience and perceive this relationship being played out in the world around them. The thematic analysis also highlights that there may be a distinction between perception and experience of spirituality and those perceptions and experiences will be partly driven by the family and cultural tradition in which the research participant is situated.

One interesting aspect of this research is that it was not necessarily recognised as such by the participants. The concept of being 'Spiritual but not religious' was not highlighted by most of the younger participants in the study. As they were actively participating in a programme to prepare to be Confirmed, it is not surprising that they would not see themselves in this light. Absent from the majority of the interviews was also a recognition of people who might be spiritual but not religious. The exception to this was Nicholas, who recognised spirituality in his football coach. This recognition was still within the context of religion (for the coach, in Nicholas' opinion '*had almost found God without meaning to'*). Spirituality was very much part for Nicholas of God's plan. How this impacts on the research questions posed on page 22 and on the soil in which the seed of catechesis is sown will be considered in Chapter 6 below.

Chapter 6 : Conclusion – summary of knowledge gained and the impact on catechesis

Context

In this chapter, I outline how hermeneutic phenomenology has impacted on this thesis. I reflect on the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 above in answer to the first two research questions. I move on to consider how this might extend understanding of spirituality and how the analysis undertaken in this thesis may develop a greater understanding of the soil in which the seed of catechesis is sown on Confirmation programmes (research questions three and four).

Influence of hermeneutic phenomenology on the research

Before moving on to the conclusions in respect of the research questions posed at the start of this thesis, it is pertinent to reflect on how the analysis has been impacted by the use of hermeneutic phenomenology. The analysis, outlined in Chapter 3, was undertaken using both a thematic and experiential approach (in particular listening for the existential of 'lived time', 'lived space', 'lived body' and 'relationship to others'. This approach highlighted the connections to family, friends and others present in the experiences used by participants and was enabled through the use of conversation directed at concrete moments in the lives of participants. These moments were explored through both questions designed to paint the memory (such as 'what happened?', 'where were you?' etc.) but also to gain insight into why the moment was special to the participant recalling it (for example, 'how did you feel?'). This approach linked to aspects of spirituality highlighted in Chapter 2. It illustrated how, for the younger participants, spiritual people and spiritual experiences were associated with religious practices. Listening for examples of lived experiences elucidated where participants had moments that involved connections across different layers. Where these connections included a sense of lived time, space and relationship to others, there was a depth to the experience that highlighted it as

a particular spiritual moment for participants. These moments were experienced by a small number of the candidates but all the catechists.

The use of this methodology helped to demonstrate that, for the younger participants, whilst they may have experienced spirituality through relationships, connections and a search for meaning and purpose as illustrated by authors studying children's spirituality highlighted in Chapter 2, this spirituality was not necessarily perceived as such by the participants. All participants associated spirituality with a belief in a transcendent being and with religious practices. Some of the younger participants perceived there to be an aspect of spirituality that was innate to being human but others only recognised it when set in the context of religion. This was at variance with the perceptions and experiences of the catechists.

New knowledge: reflections of a catechist

Drake and Heath (2011) proposed that:
> a practitioner researcher will have engaged with new knowledge at all stages of the project, from conceptualisation, through methodology, methods and empirical work, to the thesis…new knowledge derives from all these dimensions of the study… and is both directly connected to undertaking the project…in a practice setting and unique to each researcher and their research (p.2) .

In Chapter 1, I reflected on the process of undertaking a Doctorate in Education, developing knowledge through reflection. The literature review undertaken as part of this thesis identified that the voice of young people in the Catholic Church is often missing from academic research in respect of how they may perceive and experience spirituality. This is in spite of the call of Pope Francis that those working with young people should listen to their needs (CV 246). This active listening, as outlined in Chapter 1, is a fundamental part of the role of a catechist and is part of the accompaniment role of the catechist (as outlined in, for instance, the *Directory of Catechesis,* 2020). The application of hermeneutic

phenomenology to research within a practitioner setting absent from previous studies, as Drake and Heath highlight above, generated new knowledge both in terms of the applicability of this research methodology in this setting (see pp.151 ff) and the insights gained as a result. It also informs the increased understanding with respect to spirituality reported in response to the third research question below.

Response to research question 1: How do Catholic Confirmation candidates perceive and experience spirituality?

On page 55, I outlined how Sheldrake had asserted that to study spirituality, it 'must be capable of definition' (1995, p.40), Erricker and Erricker (2016), had maintained that 'it might be better to understand spirituality or the spiritual as an attempt at translation from experience to language' (p.vii). In this thesis, it has been possible to see both perspectives. Chapter 4 highlighted the individual voices of the participants as texts in their own right. These voices highlighted the range of descriptions of spirituality (from being identified as the Holy Spirit to being the energy that runs through life). Each participant interpreted spirituality from the context of their own experiences.

Spirituality, as seen in Chapter 2, can be defined in a religious context. This definition could be seen in all the interviews within Chapter 4. The initial common experience influencing that experience was that of being involved in Confirmation programmes. Candidates linked spirituality with the Holy Spirit, with the Church community, with external religious practices and with Christian values. One aspect to note was the desire to belong to the community evidenced within the interviews with the young people. The emphasis that was placed on aspects of the definition varied as it was interpreted by participants through the lens of their own experiences. Whilst she associated spirituality with religion, Beth (for instance) translated it to have a significance in respect of caring for others and being together (partly through her experiences of family members who lived in different countries but who showed great care for her). Aspects of the characteristics of spirituality outlined in respect of Catholicism in Chapter 2, could be identified within the interviews. These aspects were

applied and translated by the participants when speaking of spiritual people or experiences.

Noticeably, there was also an emphasis on increasing their knowledge of God and becoming a part, or taking an adult part, in the Church community. The depth of the personal relationship sought with God was also influenced by experience and their families. Nola, for instance, emphasised the importance of being with family, those family moments included family prayer on pilgrimage. Alison, who had been away from the Church, sought an increase in knowledge (as in information) and found spirituality through the welcome of the community.

If the lens of definition for spirituality used is that of the aspects of spirituality as outlined in literature relating to children's spirituality, the emphasis shifts within the interviews to the relational experience. Within a number of the interviews, there are moments recognised as spiritual by participants within which a number of relational experiences (i.e. moments of closeness with others, the place in which the experience takes place and a sense of closeness to God) coincide. These moments of lived spirituality occur in some but not all of the candidate interviews (for example, Mark, Luke and Nola). For other candidates, such as Patrick and Clarissa, moments of potential spirituality (as identified within the children's spirituality works in Chapter 2) are excluded as spiritual by the participants.

The key findings are, therefore, that for these participants, spirituality was perceived through the lens of the Confirmation course in a positive, faith-based sense. This spirituality was evidenced in their experiences, but the depth of that experience was influenced by the culture in which the participants lived and by those with whom they came into contact. Whilst all participants experiences carried elements of aspects of spirituality identified by authors writing on children's spirituality, the lens through which participants viewed spirituality sometimes prevented these aspects from being recognised as such by those interviewed.

<u>Response to research question 2: How does this relate to the lived experiences and perceptions of spirituality of the Confirmation programme catechists?</u>

The core difference between the candidates and the older catechists arises from the more wholistic manner in which the catechists' perceptions of spirituality aligned to their life experiences. As with the candidates' interviews, spirituality was defined by the peer leaders and catechists within the context of their faith. The similarity of the catechists' understanding of spirituality to the definitions of Catholic spirituality (as outlined in Chapter 2) was higher, with the greatest integration being present for the catechists. These similarities can be traced in experiences of spirituality that showed a depth of connectivity across multiple areas (see Appendix A6) and an understanding of spirituality within everyday occurrences, which was sometimes absent for younger participants. When the catechists spoke of spiritual moments, for instance, there was a deep sense of the lived moment and of connectivity with others. These hermeneutic moments were illustrated in simple phrases such as Bill's '*hug of love'*. The sense of connections to others, the world around them and to God in both liturgical and everyday moments infused their interviews.

Within the interviews for both the candidates and the catechists, the influence of those who accompanied them on their journey through life can be seen. This influence had particular impact when the person accompanying the interviewee was perceived by them to be acting in a spiritual manner. For the candidates, this was often a person they considered to be prayerful who also showed a care for others and who provided support to the interviewee. The catechists, with a range of experience (including some significant moments of hurt or pain) saw spirituality in the person who helped them in these moments, regardless of how prayerful they considered that person to be. These differences highlight a core area in which this thesis advances understanding of spirituality, that is in respect of how understandings of the link between religion and spirituality influence Confirmation candidates' perceptions of spirituality. Hearing the voices of the Confirmation candidates on spirituality is an original contribution to research. Listening to both the catechist and candidates voices on spirituality to

enable an understanding of how these may align is not an area that has received significant attention previously. This leads onto the query as to how this research may impact on the practice of catechesis outlined below. These sections add to knowledge of how a phenomenon is understood in an academic sense and how this increased understanding may be applied practically.

Research question 3: How might a greater understanding of how candidates on Confirmation preparation programmes perceive and experience spirituality extend our understanding of the concept?

Personal Context

Prior to considering the impact of this research on the professional context, I would just like to consider how the research has extended understanding of spirituality. The response to this consideration is partly informed by my reflections as catechist undertaking a professional doctorate.

Using the Venn diagram proposed by Drake and Heath (2011) and reproduced below, the academic practices around reflexivity and undertaking professional doctorates have overlapped with my understanding of my identity as a practitioner researcher, in particular in terms of my understanding of the definition of spirituality. This has led to a re-examination of some of my initial interpretation and understanding of the Catholic writings around catechesis/Confirmation.

Self- project, developing identity

Academic practices in universities

Workplace site of professional learning

Figure 17: Venn diagram illustrating aspects of the professional doctorate from Drake and Heath (2011, p.62).

As a catechist, reflecting on knowledge gained through the literature search, I (and other catechists) might assume that the aspects of spirituality as outlined from writings pertaining to Catholic spirituality were known, recognised and understood by the Confirmation candidates. As noted in Chapter 2, there is an overlap between these areas of Catholic spirituality and Confirmation programmes, which include sessions relating to liturgical activities, prayer, being part of the Church community and ways of witnessing to, and proclaiming, the Gospels. Prior to undertaking this research, and reflecting on the academic literature, I would have assumed that the soil in which the seed of catechesis was being sown was one in which spirituality as outlined in the Confirmation programmes and that literature relating to Catholic spirituality would find resonance in the voice of the young people on the Confirmation programme. The analysis in chapters 4 and 5 have changed this assumption.

Following the research analysis undertaken in Chapters 4 and 5 above, I became aware that my personal experience of spirituality would be close to that of the three catechists interviewed. Whilst acknowledging the position Drake and Heath (2011) proposed that 'the impact on the insider researcher of undertaking a doctoral degree is not largely on the workplace per se in visible differences to practice, but on the way the individual thinks about practice' (p.65), the reflexivity inherent in the professional doctorate can lead to a number of proposals in respect of practice in the workplace. My original research proposal submitted for the doctoral degree programme sprang from my experience as a catechist on Catholic Confirmation programmes and a perceived issue in terms of queries and questions raised by young people. The academic context in which the research has been placed has brought a fresh lens to the research. My initial motivation to develop new knowledge around hearing the spiritual voices of young people on Confirmation programmes has remained unchanged. My position in respect of this research and the learning gained has changed my thoughts as a practitioner researcher in a professional setting

As the voices of young people engaged on a Confirmation programme in respect of how they perceive and experience spirituality is an area little studied, the increased understanding of both the individual voices (Chapter 4) and the impact of the thematic analysis in Chapter 5 enhances knowledge of spirituality. In particular, the research has highlighted how the lens through which the person is determining how they themselves perceive spirituality is critically important. This is influenced significantly by how the young people explicitly understand the link between religion and spirituality. In addition, the influence of those from whom the young person receives support and encouragement and the way in which the family interacts with spirituality may influence the young person's perception of spirituality and recognition of it at different points of their daily life. This influence has an impact on the explicit perception of the link between religion and spirituality.

I have used the Venn diagram format to illustrate this area, which I believe is the core way in which this thesis expands understanding of spirituality. Chapter 2 highlighted different ways in which spirituality might be defined within Catholic literature and literature relating to studies of children's spirituality. Whilst there are differences in these definitions (in particular around a Trinitarian God and the religious practices associated with the Catholic faith), Figure 1 highlighted how the definitions may also share common aspects, for example in how we treat others and connect with the world around us. Using the Venn diagram format, the overlap for the catechists may have been quite significant. They had an understanding of spirituality that was not solely bound by their religious practices as well as a depth of connectivity to others and to the world around them. This is illustrated in Figure 18 below. Circle A represents the spirituality linked to the literature relating to Catholic spirituality. Circle B represents spirituality as defined in works pertaining to children's spirituality:
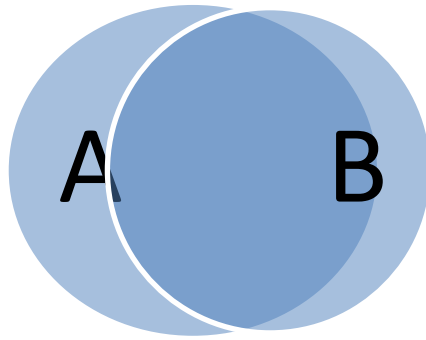
Figure 18: Representation of the potential overlap between aspects of Catholic spirituality and non-faith based spirituality definitions (catechists).

For the peer leaders, the overlap between the definitions of spirituality was still evident. There was, however, less of a recognition of areas of innate spirituality than evidenced in the catechist interviews and less depth of connectivity with the wider community and creation. This is illustrated below.
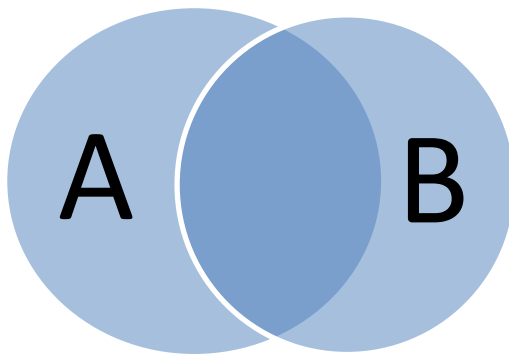

Figure 19: Representation of the potential overlap between aspects of Catholic spirituality and non-faith based spirituality definitions (peer leaders).

A small number of the peer leaders demonstrated an understanding of spirituality that would match Figure 19 above. For others, the overlap was less (e.g. Beth and Nola, who, whilst appreciating non-religious qualities, were still heavily influenced by religious grandparents to associate spirituality with religion). How this may appear in the Venn diagram format is illustrated below:
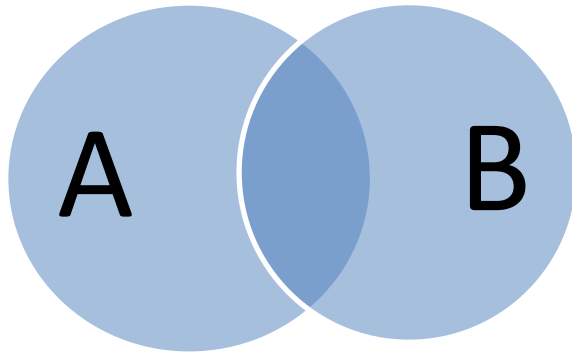
Figure 20: Representation of the potential overlap between aspects of Catholic spirituality and non-faith based spirituality definitions (candidates), where the candidates perceptions of the link between religion and spirituality mean they are less aware of spirituality outside of a religious context.

Other candidates, such as Michael and Clarissa defined spirituality in the context of religion only. For these candidates, whilst spirituality as defined in works pertaining to children's spirituality could be recognised by the researcher, it was not acknowledged by the candidate. This is represented by Figure 21 below. In this figure, circle B (representing spirituality as outlined in work relating to children's spirituality) exists but it is 'greyed out' as it was not acknowledged by the research participants.
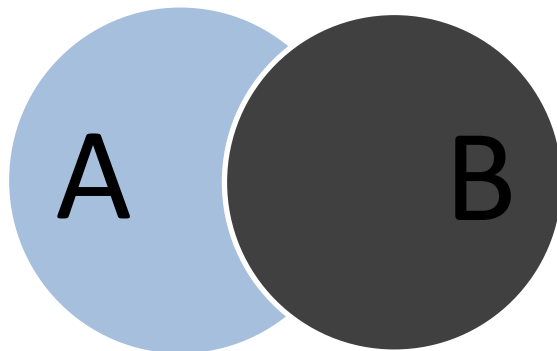

Figure 21: Representation of the potential overlap between aspects of Catholic spirituality and non-faith based spirituality definitions (candidates), where the candidates perceptions of the link between religion and spirituality mean they are not explicitly aware of spirituality outside of a religious context.

In Chapter 2, I referred to a life in the Spirit (p.31). In the diagrams above, this life may not be recognised by candidates represented by Figures 19 and 20 if

that spirituality is not explicitly associated with religious activities. It is from this position that I have approached the response to research question 4 below.

<u>Response to research question 4: How might a greater understanding of how candidates perceive and experience spirituality enhance Confirmation catechesis?</u>

I have pointed to a number of areas arising from the research that may have an impact on the application of catechesis on Confirmation programmes. These include: the sense of growth and wanting to be know more about God and be part of the community; the distinction drawn by some candidates between religion and spirituality to the extent that people who demonstrated positive human values were excluded from the concept of spirituality; the influence of family and those who accompany candidates on their journey; and the 'bridge' provided between catechists and candidates by the peer leaders. In addition, underpinning the research was an exploration of how those participating in it connected with others around them (see Appendix A6). This can impact on the delivery of Confirmation programmes for, as de Souza (2007) noted 'if we understand spirituality as pertaining to a relational dimension of being which is built up with layers of connectedness, it has distinct relevance for the development of learning programmes' (p.103).

In essence, the programmes need to be delivered in a manner that is flexible to the different perspectives and experiences of the candidates. Without this flexibility, Bill doubted the efficacy of the programmes maintaining that '*if I was to just teach them in a dogmatic sort of way ….. in a prescriptive way as is on the paper … it's not doing them any good it's meaningless'.* Bill's words echo the advice of Ted Furlow noted in Chapter 1 and quoted by Gabrielli (2013), that catechesis needs to adapt to the 'unique rhythm' of the young people involved. Due to the links between spirituality and Confirmation, the proposal from this research is that this flexibility should spring from an understanding of how the candidates may experience and may perceive spirituality. As the peer leaders may be closer to the candidates in respect of how spirituality is perceived and experienced, catechists may gain knowledge from having initial conversations

with the peer leaders. Each of the young people involved in this research had their own unique perspective on spirituality but it was a perspective that would influence how they might put the practical application of the elements learnt on a Confirmation programme into practice. A conversation around spirituality might form part of the initial evangelisation retreat, in the case of the programme developed by Vaughan-Spruce (2014), or the introductory sessions at the start of the catechesis on the programme. As Pauline concluded, the young people experience spirituality will partly depend on their own experiences.

In order to understand how the candidates perceive and experience spirituality, it is proposed that it is insufficient to just ask them what they think the concept means. The analysis in this thesis has highlighted both how research participants perceived spirituality and, using aspects of spirituality identified by academics interested in children's spirituality, how it might be experienced without being recognised as such by participants. The use of concrete examples and items aided this understanding within this research. The use of such examples may be of benefit to catechists.

De Souza (2007) described spirituality as 'pertaining to the relational dimension of being, which is reflected in expressions of connectedness that spiral outwards to link with the social, communal and physical 'other'' (p.102). The analysis within this thesis has indicated that, in some instances, whilst spirituality might be identified by a third party listening to the memories of the research participants, this spirituality was not always recognised by those involved in the interviews. The analysis within this thesis has indicated that, in some instances, whilst spirituality might be identified by a third party listening to the memories of the research participants, this spirituality was not always recognised by those involved in the interviews. In addition, the types of connections and relationships described sometimes showed a depth of experience and reflection (such as Nicholas's experience on the trip to Lourdes), whilst others were more factual (such as Patrick's recollection of his first day at a new school).   Taking the time to listen to the young people's perceptions of spirituality and what experiences matter to them and

understanding where these points of connection are for the candidates and how these might be developed could be an important aspect of catechesis moving forwards.

With respect to having a sense of connectivity with God, the Confirmation programmes used in the parishes involved in this research, followed a similar range of topics (for example Confession, the Eucharist, Confirmation, God, prayer and discipleship). This, to an extent, might help to satisfy the candidates' desire for a '*deeper meaning'* (Mary) and learning '*more about your faith*' (Beth); however, it is based on a teaching of information rather than the development of a relationship. In this respect, the depth of connectivity to God through prayer and the Mass, as perceived by the catechists, was rarely present with the candidates. This calls to mind the aspect of Catholic spirituality noted by Russi and Friel (2013, p.30) and noted in the literature review in Chapter 2, that the search for knowledge is not just to know 'about' God but to 'know' God. This sense of connectivity with God was less evident in the interviews with candidates than in the interviews with the catechists in this study. In the language of *Do you love me?* (see Chapter 2 above*)*, the candidates demonstrated a search for God, the ability to recognise God through people associated with faith and a wish to follow God but did not necessarily demonstrate an awareness of lived spirituality through conversations with God or in everyday moments in their lives. A core question moving forwards might be how catechists can work with candidates to enable them to develop this depth of knowledge. This query may, in turn, link into the search by the young people to '*increase in spirituality'* (Mary), becoming 'stronger' in spirituality (Alison), reaching '*new levels*' of your spirituality.

Based on this thesis, to develop an understanding of how candidates perceive and experience spirituality, may involve listening for areas that focus on how the candidates perceive spirituality outside of religious activities and the areas of connectivity influencing those perceptions. For example, catechists might listen to the voices of candidates to hear if spirituality is confined to things relating to the Church or if it is something the young people sense and perceive in the everyday aspects of their lives (as outlined, for instance in McGrath, 1999, and

Miller-McLemore, 2010, in Chapter 2). Equally important, is an ear to hear moments of lived spirituality. Catechists may need to develop the conversations with candidates to help them identify moments of spirituality through their relationships with those around them and the world in which these moments are situated, to deepen a sense of connectivity with God through a sense of place.

Catechists need to be aware of the candidates as individuals. The analysis in Chapter 4 has highlighted the variety of influences in respect of spirituality in a young person's life. For the young people involved in this research characteristics of spirituality tended to be positive but were expressed from the perspective of the faith background and tradition of the candidates concerned. Candidates drew inspiration on spirituality from people who accompanied them in their lives, that is people who inspired them, listened to them and supported them. The catechist needs to listen for who these people are. If this person was religious, the candidates often perceived them as an example of a spiritual person. As outlined above, Nola expressed this directly when she noted that *'togetherness'* was a key aspect of spirituality. For others, as outlined, this might be the extended family, such as grandparents and aunts. This has a key link to the 'Art of Accompaniment' noted in Chapter 1 above, from a religious perspective, and to Adams' (2019) concept of an 'open-minded adult' with whom the young person can discuss spirituality (p.40). This thesis indicates that understanding, developing and engaging with this sense of connectivity may be an important part of catechesis within a Confirmation programme. The importance of the sponsor within the Confirmation programme gains significance when considered in the light of potentially being a person considered to be spiritual by the candidates who might accompany them as they develop their faith. In my experience, the sponsor at Confirmation is often chosen by the parent. Parish recommendation can also be that it should be the candidate's godparent. This person may not be best placed to walk with the candidate through their future faith journey to help them develop the seed of spirituality sown in their lives

In terms of tradition and a sense of connectivity with this tradition, there was a wish in this study by the young people to increase the connectivity with the

Church community (which could potentially be seen as a keeper of this tradition). Candidates, such as Michael, Nicholas and Clarissa, expressed a wish for greater connectivity with the Church community This may be a particular area that may be a valued aspect of catechesis on a community-based Confirmation programme moving forward and ties directly with Waaijman's work on Catholic spirituality (2007) as outlined in Chapter 2 above.

As well as being aware of the above in respect of the young people with whom they are working, it is important to realise that other catechists and peer leaders might have different views and experiences. This rounds back to my personal reflections earlier in this chapter (pp.156-157). Each catechist and peer leader should be aware of how they perceive and experience spirituality and the potential individual nature of this. Each person interviewed in this study had perceptions of spirituality that, to an extent, were shaped by their personal experiences. Chris' views on spirituality included, for instance, a connectivity to God for guidance in his life, an aspect that the candidates may not have felt as strongly in their experiences to-date. Whilst this research may help illuminate aspects of spirituality in an area where previously young people's voices have not been heard loudly, the influence of family and experiences of those involved may help indicate why this phenomenon has proven so difficult to define.

Finally

The data gained using hermeneutic phenomenology have provided an insight into how individuals involved in Confirmation perceive spirituality and how their personal histories shaped them. These insights relate to a particular group of research participants, in a particular geographical area in a particular time. The insights gained are presented to add context to academic literature in respect of spirituality. By considering spirituality within the context of how research participants might experience the phenomenon as defined within academic literature and from the perspective of how participants perceive it, a variance was identified between experience and perception. This variance was not present within the interviews with the catechists and as such, potentially, has an impact on how catechists need to think when sowing the seed of catechesis

within Confirmation courses. Clearly visible within the interviews was also the impact and influence of those accompanying the young people on their faith journeys in respect of how they both experience and perceive spirituality. This influence can have an impact on the soil in which the seed of catechesis is being sown. Consideration of the traditions of the candidates in this regard, and the impact of those traditions could inform the practical application of catechesis at an early stage of the Confirmation programme. The lens through which spirituality is viewed by the catechists should include an aware of their own perceptions and experiences and an openness to hear the perceptions and experiences of the candidates.

Martos (2001) noted that 'there is a prevailing sense in religious education and catechetics today that …the Church's teaching about the sacraments …need to make sense in terms of how people live their lives' (p.207). If the Sacrament of Confirmation is a Sacrament fundamentally linked to spirituality, and that spirituality is bounded and understood by those participating in the programme of preparation by their own life experiences, understanding how the candidates perceive and experience spirituality (that is the soil in which the catechesis is sown) requires more than a set faith-based teaching programme but a dialogue between young participants and adult catechists based on an understanding of how different people may view or define spirituality.

<u>Appendices</u>

A1: Research Information and Consent Sheet: Parents

A2: Research Information and Consent Sheet: Candidates

A3: Research Information and Consent Sheet: Catechists

A4: Interview Framework and Prompt Sheets

A5: Outline Confirmation Programme (Parish 1)

A6: Diagrams illustrating strength of connections evidenced in research

   interviews

A1: RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET: Confirmation Candidate Parent

Outline of the research

Spirituality is a term which is used within Confirmation courses; however, it can mean different things to different people.

 The intention is to undertake a research project to develop an understanding of how spirituality is described in literature and how it is defined and described by those involved with Catholic Confirmation courses. This understanding will be set within the context of literature around teenage spirituality within education contexts and Catholic definitions of Spirituality (e.g. the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales' guide called *Do you love me?*, published in 2014).

Your son/ daughter's contribution will help to develop an understanding of how Spirituality might be defined and described by young people participating in Confirmation courses. The hope is that this will help future conversations between catechists (those leading Confirmation preparation courses) and the young people participating in those courses.

There are no right or wrong answers. The research will focus around experiences which stand out for your son/ daughter in their life and experiences that they would associate with 'spirituality'.

All data gained will be anonymised before being used in writings or presentations about the results of the research. Your son/ daughter's help with the research will be really welcome but at no time should your son/ daughter feel they have to participate.

Who is the researcher?

Name: Stephanie Gilluly

Institution: Bishop Grosseteste University, Longdales Road Lincoln Lincolnshire LN1 3DY

Contact details:

Stephanie.gilluly@bishopg.ac.uk

What will my son/ daughter's participation in the research involve?

The research will take the form of 2 interviews (about half an hour in length in each). The first will focus on your son/daughter's thoughts on how they might describe spirituality and why. The second interview will focus on concrete experiences which might be described as spiritual. For this interview, they will be asked to bring along an object (or written piece) which means something in particular to them.

Will there be any benefits in taking part?

By taking part, your son/daughter will help develop an understanding of how young people think about spirituality, which will – hopefully – help other Confirmation candidates and programmes. They may find they increase their own understanding of spirituality.

Will there be any risks in taking part?

Candidates may feel unsure about some of the terms being used. They will be encouraged to ask me for any clarifications of any terms about which you are unsure.

Another adult known to your son/ daughter will be in the parish centre if needed at any stage.

The procedures to be followed have been clarified with the Parish Priest. The researcher has undertaken the relevant checks for working with children as part of her work as a practising catechist – including an enhanced DBS (Disclosure Barring Service) check in 2016.

What happens if my son/ daughter decides they don't want to take part during the actual research study, or decide they don't want the information they've given to be used?

Your son/ daughter may withdraw from the research at any stage by emailing me at Stephanie.gilluly@bishopg.ac.uk or by asking you to do this on their behalf.

How will you ensure that my son/ daughter's contribution is anonymous?

Participant's contribution, and the name of the parish, will be anonymised.

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Title of research project: Spirituality within the context of Catholic Confirmation Courses:

how it is defined and described

Name of researcher: Stephanie Gilluly

		Yes	No
1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above research project and have had the opportunity to ask questions		

		Yes	No
2.	I understand that my son/ daughter's participation is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.		

		Yes	No
3.	I agree to the researcher contacting my son/ daughter about this research project and for the data to be used as the researcher sees fit, including publication.		

Name of parent:

Signature:

Date:

Contact details:

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

A2: RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET: Confirmation Candidate

Outline of the research

Spirituality is a term which is used within Confirmation courses; however, it can mean different things to different people.

My aim is to undertake a research project to develop an understanding of how spirituality is described in literature and how it is defined and described by those involved with Catholic Confirmation courses.

Your contribution will help to develop an understanding of how Spirituality might be defined and described by young people participating in Confirmation courses. The hope is that this will help future conversations between catechists (those leading Confirmation preparation courses) and young people, like yourself, participating in those courses.

There are no right or wrong answers. The research will focus around experiences that stand out for you in your life and experiences that you would associate with 'spirituality'.

All information you provide will be anonymised before being used in writings or presentations about the results of the research.

Your help with the research will be really welcome but at no time should you feel you have to participate.

Who is the researcher?

Name: Stephanie Gilluly

Institution: Bishop Grosseteste University, Longdales Road Lincoln Lincolnshire LN1 3DY

Contact details:

Stephanie.gilluly@bishopg.ac.uk

What will my participation in the research involve?

It will take the form of 2 interviews (about half an hour in length in each).

The first will focus on answering any questions you may have about the research, experiences you might pick out as particularly memorable in your life and how you think you might describe spirituality.

The second interview will focus on experiences which you might describe as spiritual. For this interview, you will be asked to bring along an object (or written piece) which means something in particular to you.

Will there be any benefits in taking part?

By taking part, you will help develop an understanding of how young people think about spirituality. This will– hopefully – help other Confirmation candidates and programmes. You may find you increase your own understanding of the term.

Will there be any risks in taking part?

You may feel unsure about some of the terms being used – please ask me for any clarifications of any terms about which you are unsure.

Another adult known to you will be in the centre if needed at any stage.

What happens if I decide I don't want to take part during the actual research study, or decide I don't want the information I've given to be used?

You may withdraw from the research at any stage. There is no problem with this. Please just email me at stephanie.gilluly@bishopg.ac.uk or ask your parents to do this on your behalf.

How will you ensure that my contribution is anonymous?

Your contribution, and the name of your parish, will be anonymised in the research analysis and any work written about it.

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Title of research project: Spirituality within the context of Catholic Confirmation Courses: how it is defined and described.

Name of researcher: Stephanie Gilluly

	Yes	No
1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above research project and have had the opportunity to ask questions		

	Yes	No
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.		

	Yes	No
3. I agree to take part in this research project and for the data to be used as the researcher sees fit, including publication.		

Name of participant:

Signature

Date:

Contact details:

A3: RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET: Confirmation Leader

Outline of the research

The Sacrament of Confirmation in the Catholic Church has been referred to as a 'Sacrament in search of a theology' (e.g. van Slyke, 2011, Bellows, 2013 and Kendzia, ed., 2012). However, enshrined within the rite of the Sacrament is a linkage to the 'gift of the Holy Spirit' (*Order of Confirmation, 2*016).

The intention is to undertake a research project to develop an understanding of how spirituality is defined and described by those involved with Catholic Confirmation courses. This understanding will be set within the context of literature around teenage spirituality within education contexts and Catholic definitions of Spirituality (e.g. the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales' guide called *Do you love me?*, published in 2014).

There are no right or wrong answers. The research will focus around experiences which stand out for you in your life and experiences that you might associate with 'spirituality'. A similar set of interviews is being undertaken with a number of young people participating on the confirmation courses.

Martos (2001) notes that 'there is a prevailing sense in religious education and catechetics today that if the church's teaching about the sacraments are true, they need to make sense in terms of how people live their lives' (p.207). Your contribution will help to develop an understanding of how Spirituality might be defined and described by those participating in Confirmation courses. The hope is that this will help future conversations between catechists and Confirmation candidates.

All data gained will be anonymised before being used in writings or presentations about the results of the research. Your help with the research will be really welcome but at no time should you feel you have to participate.

Who is the researcher?

Name: Stephanie Gilluly

Institution: Bishop Grosseteste University, Longdales Road Lincoln Lincolnshire LN1 3DY

Contact details:

Stephanie.gilluly@bishopg.ac.uk

What will my participation in the research involve?

It will take the form of 2 interviews (about half an hour in length in each). The first will focus on answering any questions about the research you may have, experiences you might pick out as particularly memorable in your life and how you think you might describe spirituality. The second interview will focus on concrete experiences which you might describe as spiritual. For this interview, you will be asked to bring along an object (or written piece) which means something in particular to you. The data gained will be set in the context of how spirituality is incorporated into Confirmation courses and how young people describe spirituality. It would be very much appreciated if you could bring an outline of the programme utilised in your parish.

Will there be any benefits in taking part?

By taking part, you will help develop an understanding of spirituality that will – hopefully – help other catechists, Confirmation candidates and programmes. You may also develop your thoughts on spirituality.

Will there be any risks in taking part?

None are noted.

What happens if I decide I don't want to take part during the actual research study, or decide I don't want the information I've given to be used?

Participants may withdraw from the research at any stage by emailing me at stephanie.gilluly@bishopg.ac.uk .

How will you ensure that my contribution is anonymous?

Participants' contributions, and the name of the parish, will be anonymised.

Please note that confidentiality and anonymity cannot be assured if, during the research, it comes to light any participants are involved in illegal or harmful behaviours which I may disclose to the appropriate authorities.

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Title of research project: Spirituality within the context of Catholic Confirmation Courses: how it is defined and described.

Name of researcher: Stephanie Gilluly

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for

    the above research project and have had the opportunity to ask

    questions

Yes	No

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

Yes	No

3. I agree to take part in this research project and for the data to be used as the researcher sees fit, including publication.

Yes	No

Name of participant:

Signature

Date:

Contact Details:

A4: Interview Framework and Prompt Sheets

Catechists (A)/ candidates (B)

Name: Date and Time:

Location:

Introduction

Outline of research from research participant letter

Able to stop at any time.

B – explain where another adult is

Interview

Question & Prompts	Reflections
A + B Could you tell me a little about yourself? What would be your top 3 likes and dislikes?	Aim: Set interviewee at ease. Hopefully non-faith-based
Can you describe an experience which stands out in your life? See prompt sheets	Begins to explore experiences as part of the 'getting to know you' section & before spirituality as a word is explored

Can you describe a person you know who stands out in your life and why? See prompt sheet	As above
Sometimes the things we most value tell a story about us (For instance – if I was to ask you what you would save from your house if all the people were out and there was a flood, what would you say? Why that object?	Links to them before introducing word 'spirituality'
A + B Could you talk to me about your Confirmation course? What's it like What's it about Which parts do you engage with most?	Aim: Set interviewee at ease but introduce faith aspect after experiential questions above.

What does the word spirituality mean to you? What do you associate with the word?	
Reflective: Would you associate the word 'spiritual' with the key experience you have described: Why? And would you associate the word 'spiritual' with the person you described? Why?	Explores their perspective on spirituality and their views on what it may/ may not mean. (Their interpretation)

Ask to bring an object which matters to them, could be as discussed earlier or could be something different Link back to the flood question earlier)

Interview 2

Explore the object brought & why Do you associate the object with an experience? Do you associate the object with a person or people? Could you tell me more about the experience, object or person? Would you associate it with spirituality?	
Thinking of our discussion so far, can you describe a spiritual experience which stands out for you? Refer back to notes if necessary for prompts) Plus see prompt sheet	
Have you met a person or people whom you would describe as spiritual?	

Can you tell me about them? See prompt sheet	
Thinking about the experience and the person you have described, for you, what stands out for you as aspects of 'spirituality' Any other aspects you would add?	<u>Reflective:</u> What areas do they place emphasis on? (Goes back as per HP to explore areas further)
Do you think this relates to Confirmation?	Do they associate spirituality with Confirmation?

Any questions from them for me?

Thank them for their time

What happens next with the research

<u>Can you describe an experience which stands out in your life</u>?

Who

What

Where

When

What makes it stand out to you?

Key things you would pick out as essential to the experience?

How did you feel?

What particularly stands out for you in the memory?

What did it mean to you?

<u>Can you describe a person you know who stands out in your life and why</u>?

Who

Why

How

What makes them stand out to you?

Key things about them?

Explore the object bought and why

What do they associate with it (Experience, person, place)

What is it?

What does it mean to you?

Why is it important?

Key things about it?

Would you associate it with spirituality?   Why?

Thinking of our discussion so far, Ccan you describe a spiritual experience which stands out for you life?

Who

What

How did you feel?

Where

What particularly stands out for you in the memory?

When

What did it mean to you?

What makes it stand out to you?

Key things you would pick out as essential to the experience?

Have you met a person or people whom you would describe as spiritual? What about a spiritual person whom you have met?

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Can you tell me about them?

Who

Why

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How

What makes them stand out to you?   Why do you associate them with spirituality?

Key things about them?

A5 - Confirmation Programme: Parish 1
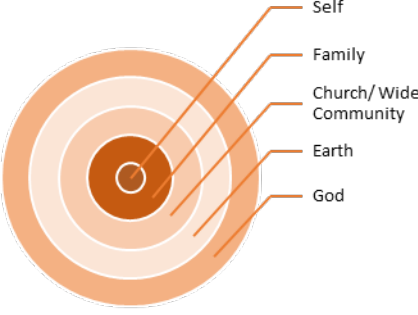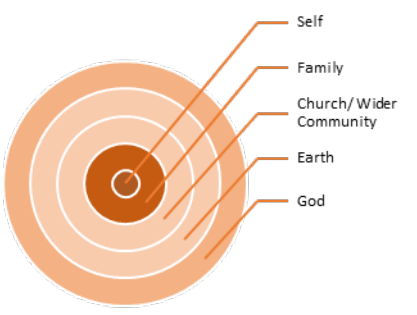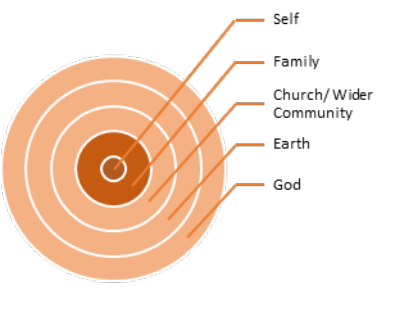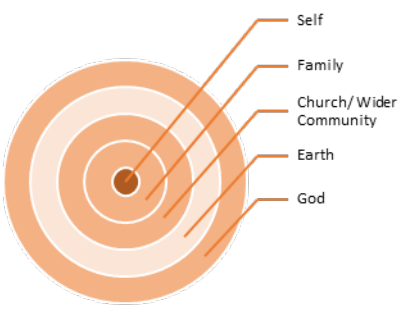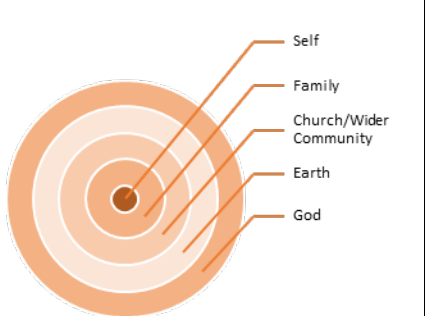
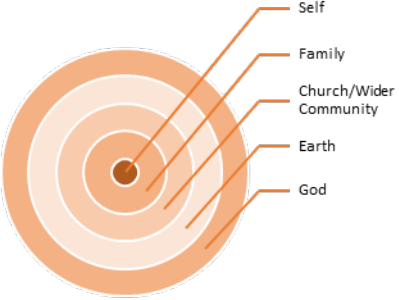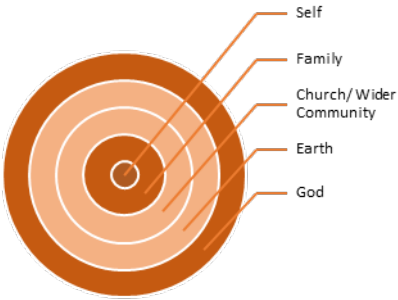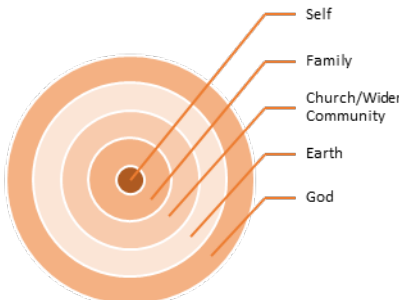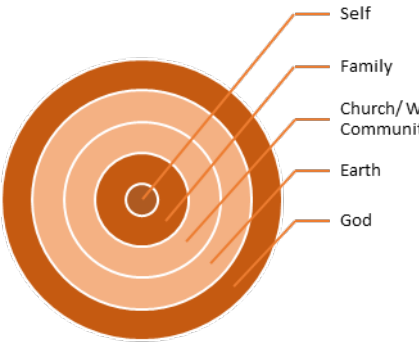| Date	Following Sunday	Theme
7/11/18	32nd Ord Time: This poor widow (Mark 12:41-44)	Getting to know you Quiz
14/11/18	33rd Ord Time: Psalm 15 Preserve me God I take refuge in you	Introduction to Confirmation Their Faith Journey to-date
21/11/18	Christ the King: John 18:33-37 I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice.	Where do they see God in the world? Mass of enrolment – committing to the journey
24th/ 25th November: Mass of Enrolment		
28/11/18	1st Advent: Jeremiah 33:14-16 A virtuous branch grow for David	Belonging to the Church
5/12/18	2nd Advent: Luke 3:1-6 The call of John the Baptist	The faith which we profess
12/12/18	3rd Advent: Luke 3:10-18 Someone is coming who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire	Discipleship (Searching for and recognising God in our lives)
Christmas Break		
9/1/19	The Baptism of the Lord	The Sacraments
16/1/19	2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 The Spirit distributes gifts to different people	The Sacraments of Initiation
23/1/19	3rd Sunday 1 Corinthians 12:12-30: You together are Christ's body, but each is a different part of it	Vocation
30/1/19	4th Sunday: 1 Corinthians 13:4-13: Faith, hope and love	Acts of charity
6/2/19	5th Sunday: Luke 5:1-11 They left everything and followed him	Following God
14/2/19	6th Sunday: Luke 6:17,20-26 Beatitudes	The example of the Saints
Half Term		
27/2/19	8th Sunday: Like 6:39-45 Can the blind lead the blind?	Focus on Lent – developing your personal relationship with God
6/3/19	Ash Wednesday	
13/3/19	2nd Sunday Lent: Transfiguration	Prayer Life
20/3/19	3rd Lent: Luke 13:1-9 Fig Tree	The Sacraments of Healing
27/3/19	4th Sunday of Lent: The Prodigal Son	Confession
3/4/19	5th Sunday of Lent: Neither do I condemn you.. go away and do not sin any more	Holy week and Easter
Easter break		
24/4/19	2nd Sunday Easter: John 20: Receive the Holy Spirit	The gifts of the Holy Spirit and the fruits in our lives
1/5/19	3rd Sunday of Easter: John 21:1-19 Do you love me [Peter]	Anointing

8/5/19	4th Sunday of Easter: John 10:27-30 I know my sheep and they follow me	What comes next? What is God's will for you?
15/5/19	Practice with candidates	
17/5/19	Practice with candidates & family	

Appendix A6: Diagrams illustrating the strength of connections noted within the interviews
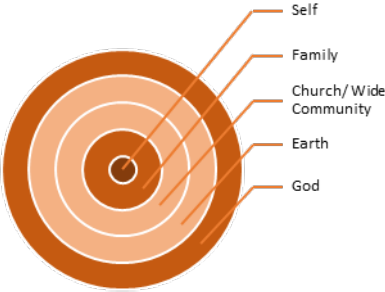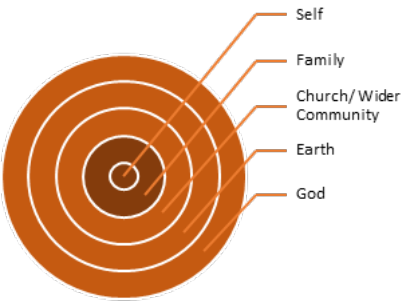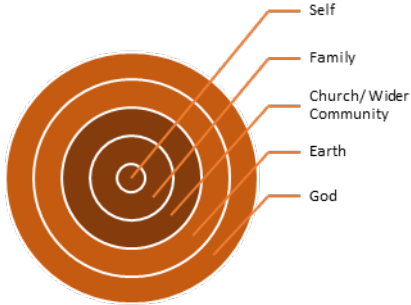
(The darker the shading, the stronger the sense of connectivity demonstrated in the interviews between the participant and the area concerned)

<u>Candidates</u>

Beth	Nola	Mary
Key words Love of God, somebody's there for you, love, being kind, connection, love is never ending, becoming closer to God	**Key words** Believing, having faith, doing everything together, watching over others, love, cared for	**Key words** Understanding faith, connection with the faith, taken care of, being taught about the faith
Mark	**Alison**	**Patrick**
Key words Your soul, your mind, the way you think, hug, huge cathedral, help, love, community	**Key words** What you believe in, calm, welcoming, saints, connects, safe place, qualities and how you come across to people	**Key words** Devoted to Christianity, safe, commitment, caring, living out your faith

Clarissa	Nicholas	Michael
Key words Holy Spirit, feeling at home, part of the parish, being part of it, quality time together	**Key words** The thing that starts you going and keeps you going, Holy Spirit, part of human beings, happy, supporting, believing, goodness, calmness, holds everything together, prayer, moral decency, acceptance, being part of the Church	**Key words** Faith, connection to God, family, love, kind, thoughtful, happiness, community, being part of the Church, always there for you
Luke		
Key Words Faith, devotion to God, soul, family, being welcomed, safe, loved, calm, relaxed, selflessness, peaceful, together, protected, love of God & how you live your life, Holy Spirit		

<u>Peer Leaders and Catechists</u>

Dave	Chris	
Key words Whole, peace, calm, quiet, doing the right thing, belief, selfless, meaning & purpose, presence, someone watching over you	**Key words** Guiding force, direction, supportive, reassurance, listening	
Pauline	**Josie**	**Bill**
Key words Calm, stillness, peace, Holy Spirit, just-fitted, connection to those around her and who have gone before her, holy, inner belief	**Key words** Faith of the heart, acceptance, growth, be yourself, presence of God within, welcome, serenity, peace, calmness, radiated faith in every aspect of life, joy	**Key words** Faith, listening, accepting, hug of love, beauty, compassion, selfless, welcome, unconditional love, God's love, belonging, understanding, being part of something

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