

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE MINISTRY: APPROACHES TO JUSTICE EDUCATION LEARNED FROM THE LIVES OF SOCIAL ACTIVISTS

Elizabeth McIsaac Bruce
Atlantic School of Theology

Abstract

This paper is the fruit of a narrative inquiry in which the author interviewed Christian social activists to learn what influenced their commitments to social justice. The paper offers a summary of and reflection on the research findings, which indicate the types of contexts, people, relationships, experiences, and activities that were spiritually formative for the participants' societal commitments. The author suggests that there is an implicit spiritually formative "curriculum" in the research participants' lives that is potentially formative for social justice ministry and proposes some potential implications from this study for academic theological education.

INTRODUCTION

As an adult religious educator, with an interest in adult theological education, particularly as it relates to social justice issues and actions, I embarked on a qualitative research project to understand what approaches to adult education might assist theology students to build socially just communities. The gap that I perceived between adult religious education on social justice issues and theology students' commitment to active social justice ministry was an impetus for my research. By social justice activism and ministry, I refer to advocacy for societal structural change to benefit the marginalized, impoverished and/or oppressed. In this project my focus was to understand what is important for forming social activists' commitment to social justice ministries. Due to the fact that I have been teaching individuals for ministry in the Christian Church in Eastern Canada, I focused the research on social justice activists who work in Eastern Canada and who do their work, in part, because of their Christian faith.

The primary purpose of this paper is to assist adult religious educators to foster student awareness of and commitment to social justice ministry by modeling aspects of adult theological education for social justice ministry on some of the lived experience of social activists. Based on the research findings, I make some adult religious education proposals for theological education programs that have social justice ministry as an educational objective (see also, Bruce 2003a, 2003b, in press, and forthcoming).

In this work I outline the method of the study, emphasizing the importance of narrative inquiry into life history for understanding what is instrumental in forming commitment to social justice ministry. I summarize and reflect on the research findings, which suggest that there is an implicit "curriculum" of significant life experiences for forming commitment to social justice ministry. Finally, I point out some potential implications of the research for adult theological education.

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Narrative inquiry was both a procedure for this study and a way of reading and understanding the significance of participants' journeys into social justice ministry. I chose narrative inquiry because, in part, it inquires into life experiences as a resource for education and because I wanted to explore experience as a means to learn what are some of the formative aspects of social activists' lives. A focus of narrative inquiry is on the learning that occurs in life. The narrative inquiry process can help the researcher to enter a story-telling dialogue where researcher and participants honour experience as a place of knowing and learning. Narrative inquiry places value on subjectivity, reflection, and a sharing of feelings and experiences. It emphasizes the importance of life history narratives as a forum in which one can articulate one's experience and reflect on its meaning (see, for example, Clandinin and Connelly 2000).

In this narrative inquiry I engaged in a total of twelve interviews comprised of three reflective conversations with each of four women and men who represent the Christian denominations (Anglican, Roman Catholic, and United Church of Canada) of my teaching context and who have worked consistently in the field of social justice ministry in Eastern Canada. Three of the participants were laypersons and one was ordained. Each participant has professional training and has worked in social justice ministry for many years. Their social justice ministry included justice education and social policy work, coalition building, community development, international development, and solidarity work. They have worked on such issues as human rights; gender and racial justice; peace and disarmament; sexual misconduct; residential schools; poverty; health care; and agricultural, fishing, aboriginal, refugee, and labour-related issues. The research participants shared with me the significant moments in their lives for forming their societal commitments. I recorded and transcribed the conversations and used a qualitative approach to data analysis to find emergent categories and themes (see Glesne and Peshkin 1992). Participants verified and adjusted the themes to reflect their stories. The research participants gave the author permission to publish the research findings. The author uses pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities.

The principal research questions were: What are some of the significant moments in the spiritual journeys of formally trained Christian social justice ministers? What bearing do these spiritual journeys have on their commitment to social justice ministry? I follow Anne Carr's definition of spirituality where she writes,

Spirituality can be described as the whole of our deepest religious beliefs, convictions, and patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour in respect to what is ultimate, to God. Spirituality is holistic, encompassing our relationships to all of creation--to others, to society and nature, to work and recreation--in a fundamentally religious orientation (1986, 49).

In this context the expression, "spiritual journeys" refers to life experiences interpreted by the participants with reference to their Christian faith.

Narrative inquiry as a discipline helped me to see that one of the things that life stories can teach us is that daily events and encounters are part of a larger whole that is a tapestry of formation. With the insight from Lorri Neilsen (1998, 250-51), that there is an ongoing curriculum in the lives we lead, I came to see the process of movement through life and the

choices within that movement as a “curriculum” of meaningful events and encounters. Listening to the formative aspects of the participants’ life stories provided insight into what is significant in coming to social justice ministry as a vocation. In addition, the narrative inquiry process helped the participants understand better what was formative for their commitments, and it helped to affirm them in their social justice ministry.

As a narrative inquiry the findings are descriptive. They depict the participants’ accounts of their stories, describe what the participants determined to be significant for engaging them in their ministry, and outline the meaning that participants gave to these life experiences (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). Following Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) work in narrative inquiry, I interpret the actions of the participants (in this case their social justice ministry commitments) in the context of their narrative histories. By discussing the history of their coming to social action, the participants and myself came to understand many of the influences that were instrumental in engaging the participants in social activism. The narratives show patterns and they provide evidence of the types of experiences in life that are formative for social justice ministry. It was through the process of discovering many significant moments in their spiritual journeys into social justice ministry that we came to see that the identified formative events and encounters in the participants’ lives *as a whole* were like a “curriculum” to which they responded as people who engage in social justice ministry. This “curriculum” was spiritually formative for the participants’ awareness of and commitment to social justice ministry as their vocation.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings include the significant contexts of the family, the Church, and the times of the participants’ formation. The findings also demonstrate important relationships with individuals, and within groups, communities or organizations as significant for the participants’ social ministry commitments. In addition, the participants shared the importance of formal education for their formation for social ministry.

Contexts

The first research finding was that of significant contexts. These include the family, the Church, and the times. Participants’ families were influential in fostering compassionate values and/or for providing examples of care for others outside of the home. In most cases family was also an affirming context. Three of the four participants noted the importance of loving and supportive homes as an important source of their later commitments. In the case of one participant, the home was not affirming, but she sought and received affirmation from surrogate families through her involvement with youth groups. A significant finding, as well, was the way in which the seeds of societal awareness were developed in the home. For example, Judith, a Roman Catholic recalled, “We woke up every morning with the radio tuned to the news, and we had breakfast, and she [Judith’s mother] often interpreted the news to us and was interested in the community and politics.” Daniel, a United Church participant, told me of his mother who helped him to see that those who were distinct from him in terms of class or race or abilities were not that different from him. Deborah, another United Church participant, told me about her father’s sense of justice on a trip that they made to the United States. She said, “We went with this Chinese family.... We had to sit...both going and coming to wait for their family to be

interrogated and I remember my father's absolute fury. I think that did stay with me, that that was totally wrong and that my father thought it was totally wrong."

The theme of the family also worked in a second direction for three participants (who came from upper middle class backgrounds). They eventually disagreed with the family's values and identified with other classes of people. For example, Deborah said, "Gradually... I was really not at all interested in living a 'normal upper-middle class life.'...I felt that I wanted to live some kind of alternative lifestyle...to the kind of situation that I had grown up in...an alternative to what our society seemed to be offering."

A second contextual theme that was influential on the participants' formation was their affiliations with their respective church communities. The Church, through sermons, spiritual practices, and programs provided insight into the justice dimensions of Christianity. For example, regarding his church's educational influence on him, Daniel said,

One of the books that was really important for me during my high school years was a book called *God Speaks Through People*.... It's part of ...the old curriculumfor the United Church.... It had these stories or biographies of notable...modern day people. Martin Luther King.... Ghandi was in there.... It...showed me that God speaks through people.... then when I started reading the Scripture more carefully and seeing that Jesus said, 'When you do this to the least of these, you do it to me,' what are you really saying? That Jesus, you're really there? ...Yeah. I mean there's something divine, holy about you and me.... I could see God in people. It really helped me to have a great deal of respect for people because that means I had to start seeing God in even people that I don't like.

A third theme in relation to significant contexts was the times in which the participants were formed. The times provided a context of alternatives, and, in particular, the movements of 1960s and early 1970s played an important role in supporting and educating the research participants about social justice issues. This is partly a function of the ages of the participants, as they ranged in age from their late forties to their late fifties. Peter, an Anglican, and Judith both spoke about the influence of music of the 1960s. For example, Judith said,

When I came to the States, it was wonderful.... There were always people with guitars and all of these wonderful folk songs that were really in their heyday, civil rights songs, Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul and Mary and all of these various singers with a strong political message. That was very formative. Songs like, "If I had a Hammer" and "We Shall Overcome," these for young people, these make a tremendous impression.

Similarly, Deborah spoke of the importance of this time; she said, "It was an amazing time, and I think that it probably made it possible to think more about alternatives and different ways of doing things and to make that seem almost natural.... I've tended to think in those kinds of alternative ways, ever since."

Relationships

A second finding was the importance of relationships. The participants identified relationships with teachers, mentors, friends, and colleagues who were significant witnesses or examples of societal commitment. These relationships offered affirmation and support to the participants, and they provided inspiration through their commitments, spiritual depth, and integrity. For example, Deborah told me about some of the mothers who lived in a housing project where she worked. She said,

The mothers of the youth that I was working with... were no different from my mother except that they had no resources and that they were left to live in that inner city housing project on the edge of skid row.... They were role models to me.... They also taught me very deeply that this “welfare bum” stuff was absolute utter garbage. These weren’t welfare bums; these were mothers who were doing their best to bring up kids in incredibly limited circumstances.... Being in that context... taught me a reality that much of the class I had been brought up in and what I saw in the paper and the dominant attitudes of society were totally garbage.

An example of the importance of relationship with teachers and mentors was Judith’s reflection on the times that she spent with Brazilian adult educator, Paulo Freire. She said,

Paulo Freire’s writing and life and person, he was one of the great heroes. I found that in the meetings with him, that he actually was more like Christ I think than any other person I’ve ever met.... I have to say that about Paulo Freire. ... He was just the most wonderful, beautiful human being. I still believe in Freire’s approach even today; it’s as important as it was when he was alive and is very much needed.

The research participants also highlighted the significance of social justice communities and networks that helped to shape and encourage involvement in social justice ministry. These provided significant theoretical or theological frameworks, insights and approaches to social justice ministry as well as affirmation, support, and challenges to the participants. The research participants noted such groups as the YMCA/YWCA, Student Christian Movement (SCM), Canadian University Services Overseas (CUSO), GATT-Fly, Ten Days for World Development, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, other leadership training programs, coalitions of churches and community groups, and Third World solidarity movements that were significant to them. For example, Peter spoke about his experience in Western Canada, when he said,

There’s this ethos of everybody having to work together. It’s not just a small town ethos; it’s a provincial one. The networks are there, they’re in place, a tremendous amount of work goes into maintaining them. In the prairies there’s all that traditional organizing in the thirties, the Cooperative Movement and the CCF [Co-

operative Commonwealth Federation].... The networks were there. I got an education in organizing.

In addition, community was important to all of the participants. For example, Deborah recalled, “We rented houses and we lived together and we made all our meals together and we met and talked about all our different work once a week, so really from the time that I was about twenty, I’ve been in many things ... where people were living in communes.”

Formal Education

A third research finding was the significance of the types of formal education in the participants’ narrative histories. Participants’ education included justice-oriented courses, programs and self-directed studies. Some of them studied theology and, in particular, feminist and other liberation theologies. Others studied sociology, history, economics and/or adult education. For example, in speaking about liberation theology, Daniel and two others noted Gustavo Gutierrez’s book, *A Theology of Liberation* (1973). Daniel said, “That was a very formative book for me.... It was the first time that integrated a sense of theology with a social analysis that was contemporary and grounded in the work we were doing.” Others mentioned the significance of feminist theologians such as Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Dorothee Soelle. In addition, Judith continued to emphasize the significance of Paulo Freire. She said,

I found that Freire was tremendous with his various steps of process...starting with the problems identified by the people and their own explanation of these problems; not coming in with an agenda ...entering into an educational process where everybody together learns. ...It wasn't action for people, but with oppressed and poor people (see Freire 1970).

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION: ADDITIONAL THEMES IN THE DATA

By bringing experience into dialogue with theology, we can deepen our understanding of events by helping to illuminate them for their meaning (see Killen and De Beer 1994). Feminist and other liberating theologies written primarily by women assisted me in this task of deepening my understanding of the research findings. This type of theology offers a useful means for drawing out insights from the findings, for education for social justice ministry, because this theology has within it substantial resources for raising consciousness and moving one to action for liberating systemic social change. My prior knowledge of these types of theologies enabled me to see some similarities between the themes in the participants’ narratives and aspects of these theologies. Reviewing these theologies in relationship to the research data enabled me to identify and articulate additional themes in the participants’ narrative histories that were significant for helping them to engage in social justice ministry. In what follows I offer an overview of some of the themes in these theologies and point out some of the ways that these themes are present in the participants’ narrative histories.

Very briefly, feminist and other liberating theologies written primarily by women reflect critically on women's experience of gender oppression in light of Christian history and practice, and they examine the linkages of the experience of gender oppression at the personal level with larger societal structures. Their aim is to create alternative, inclusive theologies and socially just actions (see, for example, Ortega 1995). These theologies emphasize the affirmation of women, engaging in dialogue with differences, commitment to and solidarity with the victims of injustice, risk in proximity to justice struggles, and mutual, communal, and interdependent relationships (see, for example, Heyward 1995; Welch 1990). Interdependent relationships and communities provide contexts and bases for consciousness-raising for social change (see, for example, Ruether 1993; Zappone 1991). These theologians also seek out and articulate new images and symbols to overcome sexist, hierarchical perspectives in Christianity, focusing particularly on the God of relationships as a resource for change (see, for example, Johnson 1995). In addition, they emphasize creative and artistic spiritual expressions as a means of fostering and sustaining their work and for forwarding societal transformation (see, for example, Fiorenza 1996). In the following, I use these theological emphases on affirmation, connecting with those who are different from oneself, proximity to justice issues and risks, creative spirituality, and relational and communal interdependence to highlight additional significant spiritually formative aspects of the participants' lives to which adult religious educators might attend when focusing on theological education for social justice ministry.

Affirmation

The participants noted their affirming experiences inside and outside the home as initially formative for, and spiritually influential on their later commitments. Such affirmation occurred in their families, where there were loving relationships that provided a firm foundation of support and encouragement for later justice commitments or through relationships with parental figures in youth groups and in leadership training programs. For example, in reflecting on influential people in his spiritual journey Daniel said, "I would say parents in the formative sense, not in a particularly social justice sense, but in the sense that I was loved and cared for." Similarly, Peter identified his parents as important in his formation, where he said, "My parents respected my freedom and paid unwavering loyalty towards me."

One can also see the theme of affirmation in the participants' other relationships and communities, including those with mentors, teachers, colleagues, and friends as well as through church-related and community-based justice groups. For example, as a young woman, Judith was assisted by a priest to develop her leadership abilities through golf. She said, "He took an interest in cultivating my golf and teaching me -- to have this person take that kind of an interest and to nurture you along and coach you. And you knew certainly that he had an interest in your progress, which was a great motivation." Similarly, Deborah spoke about the significance of community for affirmation where she said, "Being part of communities was hugely important for me; co-op houses were important to me for lots of time. Those were my support." Affirmation of their abilities and support of the participants' potential was essential to their later commitments.

Connecting with Difference

Stepping outside one's immediate class and family background and taking steps in the struggle for systemic change to work with others, distinct from one's self, characterize key formative aspects of participants' lives. All of the participants stepped outside of the class out of which they had been born and entered into the reality of others who were distinct from them. These distinctions were related to race, culture, poverty, oppression and/or societal marginalization. This movement outside the participants' contexts helped to foster and shape their commitment to justice. For example, Judith spoke about the importance of her involvement with an organization in Africa. She said,

I can almost smell and taste Africa and visualize the people, the rainforests, the... huts, and ...the struggle and the poverty of the people's lives. I think touching base directly with that poverty and being part of that is something that one should never ever forget. I would say that no formal training, nothing has been as helpful as that experience.

Proximity to Justice Issues and Risk

An additional theme is the importance of engagement in justice struggles and the risks associated with such commitments. The research participants connected with justice movements and worked directly with issues in solidarity with the victims of injustice. This type of hands-on engagement in justice actions helped to form their justice commitments. In addition, the participants' stories indicate that their justice commitments led to risks, including the possibility of losing their lifestyle, professional image, relationships with others, and/or risking their lives. Such risks were instrumental in solidifying their commitment to social justice ministry. For example, when Daniel was working in the Philippines he was confronted in a home by a group of armed militia. He said,

They asked us repeatedly why we were there. Well, the story was we were the guests of the bishop and to learn about what the church does in the community in Bible study and stuff like that. It should have been stuff that satisfied them. Well, that wasn't going to satisfy them. I said we're also looking at how the church gets involved with communities and community work and how the church can help out people, how the church can help out people cooperating and do their agricultural work, another sort of easy answer. That didn't satisfy them. Finally, the discussion came, ... "Why are you really here? We understand these other things, but there's something that's not all together true; it doesn't fit." Well, it came down, that I said, "Okay...we're here in order to understand the human rights situation and what the role of the churches are and what the role of the international community is about that." At that point, I had to make a decision. This is all within a couple of minutes discussion, of whether or not I stood up for my faith or I didn't. Lie down, die, live, whatever. I had no idea who I was talking to. Fortunately, it was the New People's Army, and they said, "Good you're our friends, let's eat."

Creative Spirituality

Positive and creative theologies and spiritualities were also formative in the lives of the research participants. Some examples of the participants' creative and positive spiritual and theological perspectives include affirmation of the goodness of humanity, the importance of love and respect for others, and the insight that God is present in relationships. For example, Deborah's creative sense of spirituality was well expressed when she said, "Spirit [is] in the moments when there is real interconnectedness with people and something of deep enjoyment or creativity or a sense of working together. A lot for me is in genuine experience of community or genuine moments when you achieve a small step in justice."

The participants' spiritual perspectives came from experiences in worship; hearing preaching on the Scriptures; prayer practices; communal discussions; and journaling or spiritual programs that included attention to societal issues and relationships, attended to reflection, or emphasized integration of mind, body, feelings, creativity, and artistic expression. For example, referring to the integrative nature of his spiritual formation in theological school, Daniel said, "So, the integration was helpful. I mean it was personal; it was work-related, action-oriented and it was also intellectual. And all of those things were happening at the same time." Similarly, the spiritual practices in Judith's formation in a lay community included daily worship, reflection, study, prayer, and training in leadership and religious education. She expressed the impact of this lay community on her spirituality when she said,

It deepened my sense of God, of Christ, of who Christ was and is, of what Christ represented and continues to represent in the world, of the whole question of justice and injustice, of prayer and how to pray more effectively, how to lead and help to share prayer with others. In the whole religious education part of it as well, it certainly deepened my sense of how to present. It opened the door to all kinds of resources.... It helped me immensely when I went to Africa, to have had that depth of experience.... Because when I took on the responsibilities I had in Africa, ...I was equipped with an awful lot in order to do my work.

Interdependence

It has already been emphasized that the relational and communal aspects of the research participants' life histories were essential for providing contexts of support, challenge, visions of and actions related to social justice ministry. These relational and communal aspects of the participants' lives acted together in an interdependent manner in their role of formation for the work of justice. The participants came to their social justice ministries through the influence of family, relationships, and communities. In addition, the other aspects of the participants' narratives including the contexts, educational endeavours, spiritual experiences and risks played as significant roles as did proximity to the issues, the teachings of the Church, or the times of the participants' formation. All of the findings worked together as a whole and in an interdependent manner. One finding was not more important than another, nor was one of these elements insignificant.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY

The first implication of this research for adult theological education is the importance of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry was a useful method for identifying influential aspects of the participants' lives for their commitment to social justice ministry. The participants' narratives revealed that ordinary life experiences are a tapestry of formation. Adult religious educators interested in socially conscious theological education can look to such narratives as potential areas for curricular, programmatic, and/or thematic considerations.

In adult theological education we have an important opportunity to facilitate intentional awareness of the formative nature of our life experiences. Each of us has a story that formed and continues to form us. Theology and ministry students come to us with their prior knowledge and life experience. Their experience and knowledge needs to be affirmed and integrated into our teaching and learning.

Narrative inquiry was also a useful means of helping the participants to discover some of the formative aspects of their own stories. Narrative inquiry is not only a useful method for identifying and affirming students' prior learning and abilities but also for potentially helping them to notice and integrate into their educational processes areas where they need further work. Students might be encouraged to examine their spirituality in their lifestyle choices, stewardship of their resources, and commitments to the needs of others. The fact of the interdependent nature of life experiences highlights the importance of attending to personal story and the insights that come with reflective awareness of the formative nature of life.

A second implication of this research for theological education is the potential to apply the insights from the findings to adult theological education. I suggest applying some of the formative dimensions outlined in this research study to adult theological education programs that have social justice ministry as a goal in the following six ways:

- 1) Where possible in the theological curriculum and in appropriate theology courses, attend to current events and societal issues and incorporate social analysis and action-reflection models of learning including the "praxis" of conscientization, which is a reflective and ongoing process of coming to awareness of issues, doing social analysis, and actions that contribute to positive social change (see Freire 1970). Include interdisciplinary studies in the social sciences and liberating theologies that attend to justice, human rights, and equality issues and practices.
- 2) Cultivate reflective and affirming learning communities for fostering relationships that can further commitment to systemic social change by creating environments where students are encouraged to value their gifts, experiences, and abilities. This approach can be facilitated through small group seminars that provide opportunities for students' self-reflection and mutual affirmation. Such opportunities can also help students to foster collegial relationships, to provide opportunities for peer feedback, and to help students to integrate theory, contemporary issues, spirituality, and practice. The intentional fostering of such relationships may include times of communal celebration and group processes and assignments to foster opportunities for collegial support, encouragement, and challenges.
- 3) As instructors, be aware of the importance of our witness and commitments as potentially formative for students. Theological educators have a significant potential for personal

impact on students. As theological educators we have an important opportunity to offer positive role modeling and integrity in our commitments, as well as mentoring of and support to students. Not only what we say, but also the caring, affirmation, support, and encouragement offered to our students is formative. Similarly, modeling what we teach in life through integrity in our research and life commitments also has enormous potential to inspire.

- 4) Make connections with community groups, societal organizations, and movements outside of the academy, such as local coalitions or agencies involved in advocacy or specific social justice issues. These may or may not be church-based, but they have the potential to inspire students to justice commitments; to help them to do social analysis; and to offer examples of concrete contexts where groups or organizations accomplish justice work. Interfaith, ecumenical, and global justice, human rights, and environmental organizations may have the potential to offer educational opportunities that include outreach to the community. These opportunities can assist students to gain experience in proximity to justice issues by engaging them in practical, field-based placements or projects. Facilitating exposure to and practical experiences in a variety of ministry contexts, including ministry to the marginalized, oppressed or impoverished, and those that are distinct from students' previous contexts can provide significant opportunities for the expression of faith, self-donation in the practice of ministry, and spiritual integration. Such groups may also be able to provide resource people to assist with supervision of ministries of service and justice.
- 5) Utilize the experience and expertise of activists and community groups committed to systemic social change by inviting them to courses as guest speakers and resource people. People who work in social justice ministries or in community groups that are committed to social change are often willing to share their stories and their commitments. A potentially key area for developing socially conscious theological education is the inspiration of models and witnesses who live a commitment to social change in their lives.
- 6) Explore creative spiritual practices that integrate theology and social justice ministry by attending to spirituality and creative expression. Where possible, I suggest that theological educators integrate contemporary societal issues into seminar presentations and written assignments, such as reflective and creative writing, and/or into spiritual practices. Provide opportunities for alternative means of creative expression, such as attention to the arts and embodiment. In addition, focus spirituality on feelings as well as thoughts by engaging in personal and communal reflection. Journaling; personal sharing and feedback from peers; and creative opportunities to worship and to use art, music, and drama may help individuals to reflect theologically on specific issues and to foster spiritual and societal awareness.

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that there is an implicit "curriculum" of significant life experiences for forming commitment to social justice ministry. In this paper I argue that narrative inquiry into life history is important for understanding what is instrumental in forming activists' vocational commitment to social justice ministry. I suggest that theological educators

might apply the insights from the participants' life history narratives to adult religious education programming. As well, based on theological reflection on the research findings, I recommend theological education that emphasizes fostering reflective and affirming learning communities, positive mentoring relationships, outreach to members of the community, proximity to justice issues, and creative spiritual expression to further adult theological education for social justice ministry.

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