Stressful Change in Higher Education: An Interpretive Case Study

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STRESSFUL CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

AN INTERPRETIVE CASE STUDY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

BY

MARY E. H. PAULSON

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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There were times during completion of this dissertation that it seemed as though I was lost in what felt like the Bermuda Triangle of interpretive research. From the very beginning my dissertation chair, Dr. John Conbere, provided guidance and direction as I navigated my way through every step of my research. My two other committee members, Dr. Alla Heorhiadi and Dr. Jane Canney completed the triad of a dynamic and incredibly knowledgeable committee. Each of them brought perspectives to my research that enriched the process and the final product.

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I must also acknowledge my husband and my four children for their patience and acceptance over the past 6 years as I pursued my doctorate degree in organizational development. To my friends, colleagues and fellow cohort members, I can’t thank you enough for being my cheerleaders and supporters along the way.
Abstract

Higher education institutions have distinct features within them, and are increasingly faced with external forces that require adaptation and change. The circumstances surrounding the change may impact how change may be experienced as loss, stress or trauma. While the experience of change for an individual may be subjective, common themes may develop within an organization. This study explored the experience with difficult change at a private university in Ukraine, and the change process as described by faculty and staff. The primary source of data was obtained from interviews with fifteen faculty and staff members, including individuals serving in leadership positions. To gain an understanding of the case, it was essential to explore the Ukrainian context, including historical and political factors, as well as aspects of the organization itself. Four main themes emerged from the study that represent the experience with difficult or stressful change: experiences with change were multilayered and multifaceted, external demands led to a crisis of conscience, the change process led to revisiting core values and belief, and faith and spirituality influenced the experience with change. What was discovered in this study was how the change process that involved stress and loss led to introspection and a renewed sense of commitment to the work. The participants displayed a sense of hope and resilience amidst some very challenging circumstances. As the study progressed it appeared I may have been observing individuals and possibly an organization in the process of transformation.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Organizational change is a process involving groups of individuals with a shared purpose. The experience of change varies for each individual. Even though the experience is of each individual may be subjective, common themes may develop within an organization. Gaining an understanding of the change process within an organization results from exploring:

- the experiences of the organization’s individuals;
- the phases of the change process;
- the circumstances of change;
- the type of organization;
- and its historical context.

The change process experienced by individuals of a particular type of setting or organization is a relevant topic for inquiry and practice in the field of organizational development (OD). An emerging topic of interest in OD is higher education. The change process may be perceived as difficult in particular types of organizations, such as higher education institutions. Therefore, it is important to further study difficult organizational change in higher education to increase the current body of knowledge for OD practitioners.

Higher education institutions have distinct features as organizations that set them apart from other types of organizations. Tierney (2008) described the unique culture and structure in higher education. Higher education is clearly divided into different sectors within the organization; the faculty who are responsible for the curriculum and teaching, and the administration and staff who tend to the operations of the “business” side of the organization.
It could be asserted that in higher education, it is the curriculum and teaching that is the business of higher education; therefore the role of faculty is vital to sustaining the institution through the change process. Both divisions may share a similar mission, yet the manner in which they manage their domains of the organization and how they function may be different. The differences in management create prime grounds for tension or conflict. The experience of a change process may be impacted by these dynamics and differences, or may result in differences in the meaning of change.

**Researcher Interest in Topic**

My interest in pursuing further discovery in the experience of change came from working in multiple sectors; non-profit, human services, public education, and higher education. I have an interest in understanding the human experience and engaging with others in a change process in the context of the setting and circumstances. Having experience in multiple institutions of higher learning involved in a change process of some kind, I have observed that there seems to be both an individual and collective experience with change. Subsequently, as leaders continue to focus their work on managing the operations of the organization, the impact of change on the members can influence the dynamics and culture. In particular, in institutions with members, who have a commitment to a mission to educate and serve, change that is difficult has the potential to impact the experience for students. Understanding the impact of change is important for leaders and OD practitioners who practice in higher education. Members will benefit from an organization that pays attention to the human experience while providing supports and guides towards a positive change process.
Change is inevitable in organizations. Change may be considered a natural and evolutionary occurrence in any system. Change may be experienced as an exciting opportunity for growth with a vision toward something new, or may also be experienced as a loss of what used to be, and depending on the circumstances, the change and loss may be traumatic for those within the organization. Circumstances may include changes in organizational structure, changes in leadership and management, new initiatives for improving operations, down-sizing or right-sizing, lay-offs and job losses, or changes as a result of our ever-changing external environment with the integration of technology, the economy, or changes in public policy and regulation.

The circumstances surrounding the change in the context of a particular type of organization may impact how change may be experienced as loss, stress or trauma. Not only do these factors affect the corporate environment, but other sectors and organizations, such as higher education. While research on change and OD in higher education has become an emerging area of study (Cummings & Worley, 2009), there is very limited study specific to the experience of change as difficult or in the context of loss in higher education. A study by Zell (2003) comparing faculty responses to change to stages of grief and loss was the only exception. I was not able to find any research about the exploration of the impact of change as stressful or traumatic in higher education institutions.

Problem Statement

Institutions of higher learning face the decision to make changes due to multiple factors impacting academe. Changes to policy, changes in governance and leadership, as well as changes in curriculum, programs, and instructional methods are common as colleges and universities. While such changes may be necessary, they can often be difficult or stressful for
faculty. There is increasing inquiry into the human experience with change, including change in organizations that can be experienced as loss, stress, or even traumatic (Bridges, 2009; Jeffreys, 2005; Vivian & Hormann, 2013; Wilke, 2012). However, research specific to the experience and impact of change from the perspective of faculty and staff in higher education continues to be very limited. The more we can learn about the impact of difficult change on the members of higher education institutions, the better able we will be to assist faculty, staff and administrators going through such change.

**Purpose and Research Question**

The purpose of this interpretive case study is to develop a deeper understanding of how change is experienced by the members of an institution of higher education. The primary research question for this study was: what are the experiences of change that create stress in a higher education institution? In addition, exploration will include the circumstances surrounding or precipitating the change, their own experiences throughout the change process, and the extent to which they may have experienced the change as stressful.

**Significance of Study**

Traditional OD theories and methods originated in industrial settings, and have continued to be developed within the context of a corporate, business model. The evolution within the field of organizational development has involved both an evolution of original theories and methods and the application by practitioners in new contexts and settings. Through this evolution, new models have emerged to further expand the knowledge base for OD practitioners and their application in nonindustrial settings (Cummings & Worley, 2009).

Models of management from the business community have historically been applied to higher education setting without consideration for the differences between the sectors
(Birnbaum, 2001). This study utilizes traditional OD theory about change in conjunction with more contemporary models developed by practitioners as a framework for further inquiry about the experience of difficult change within a setting where there is limited prior research.

By engaging in further study within the framework of both traditional and contemporary models of change, there was an opportunity to further expand the knowledge base for the field of OD and application of its models across sectors, and specifically, higher education. This study may have relevance to those in leadership roles within higher education, as well as OD practitioners who practice in sectors such as education. As a single case study, the purpose is to develop an understanding of the uniqueness of the case as an example of the complexities of change within an organization. It is up to each reader to conclude what were the most relevant findings as they read a case study (Stake, 2006).

**Definitions of Key Terms**

There are several terms present in the literature that will be relevant for use in this study. While these terms are defined below, as themes emerge through the study, terms and concepts may become more defined or adapted based on the perspectives of the participants.

**Difficult change.** For the purposes of this study, difficult change will refer to the experiences of participants that they perceived as traumatic to some extent, and/or involved aspects of grief and loss at some point during the change process.

**Grief and loss.** Grief and loss has been studied described by multiple authors in reference to experiencing a death of a loved one and subsequent emotional reaction. For the purposes of this study, grief and loss will be explored in the context of the emotional and behavioral reactions to loss within the workplace as it relates to change. In the context of the workplace, Jeffreys (2005) stated, “Change = loss = grief” (p. 7), and further explains that
change results in losing what was changed from, creating a grief reaction that is normal, should be expected, and supported in order for healing to take place. Bolman and Deal (2006) stated, “Loss is an unavoidable byproduct of change” (p. 458).

**Higher education institution.** The American Council on Education (2012) described a higher education institution as an accredited, degree-granting institution that may include a community college or four-year institutions, private or public university, and nonprofit or for-profit college.

**Organizational change.** Cummings and Worley (2008) described organizational change as “moving an existing organization state to a future state” (p. 176). It was further described by Bridges (2009) as *situational*, in which change occurs under various circumstances or as a result of many possible events. For the purposes of this study, organizational change will refer to a situation where members report a collective experience of change experienced within the organization as a whole.

**Stress.** Stress is often described as an emotional, psychological, and/or physiological response to events or circumstances that exceed the ability to cope. Aldwin and Werner (2012) explained, “stress refers to that quality of experience, produced through a person–environment transaction, that, through either overarousal or underarousal, results in psychological or physiological distress” (p. 25).

**Transition.** Bridges (2009) described *transition* as the psychological process that occurs in the context of change, in which members of the organization internalize the change and begin to shift to moving forward toward the new situation. Cummings and Worley (2008) referred to this as a *transition state* in the middle of a change process. For the purposes of this study, transition will be referred as a phase of a change process where
members of the organization experience their own thoughts and feelings about change, loss and moving forward.
Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Many theorists in the field of OD have studied organizational change and there has been an evolution within the field as models and theories continue to emerge. Although new language and models have emerged, there remains a connection to the foundation and core of traditional OD practice, which reinforces such traditional models as valuable contributions to the evolution of the OD profession and practice with systems. For this study, three models of change were utilized to explore the impact of change; one traditional model, and two models developed by contemporary practitioners. These three models were selected due to their representation of the evolution of change models in OD over more than half a century, from a traditional planned change model, to reframing how organizations may self-organize and change emerges, to application of specific theory of change, loss and stressful events.

The first two models illustrated a three-phase model. The third outlined six categories, and included the context and precipitating factors associated with the change. These multiple models and theories provided a flexible framework from which to further explore and understand the experiences of participants, and are of particular interest to me as the researcher. Walsham (2006) gave merit to the subjective nature in the choice of theory in interpretive research, and the ability of the researcher to utilize theory as loosely or tightly as s/he chooses. For this study, these models were utilized to guide the discovery process and provide a frame of reference for understanding changes that occurred within the case.
Models of Organizational Change

Kurt Lewin is well known for his contribution to the field of organizational development as a result of his three-step model of change (Figure 1). Lewin’s (1947) model emphasized observable results related to a problem-solving model, and has been elaborated on by other OD theorists and practitioners such as Edgar Schein and Warren Bennis. Lewin described a process and approach for planned change and how leaders and change agents can manage such change.

![Figure 1. Lewinian Three Phases of Change](image)

The relevance of Lewin’s planned change model has been revisited over time by scholars and practitioners, and has even been criticized as outdated. However, Burnes (in Gallos, 2006) provided a review and reappraisal of Lewin’s model given criticism about its relevance in current practice. He argued that Lewin’s work was and still remains significant to our understanding of individual and group behavior in the context of change.

Another three-phase model described change in organizations in the context of loss. The work of William Bridges (2009) has emphasized change as loss, as well as the role of
leadership in understanding and managing transitions within an organization. Bridges’ model describes three phases of transition (Figure 2) in the context of the life cycle of an organization and the parallel to the life stages of humans.

Figure 2. Bridges’ Three Phases of Transition

Building on the work of Adizes (1979), Bridges explored seven life stages within an organization, the last stage identified as *dying*. It is from this point that Bridges inserted his own three-phase model for transition (Figure 2), including the dynamics within the group that may require the attention of leadership. The change process outlined by Bridges (2009) can be compared to the change process of others, and his model is distinct in explaining organizational change as transition within the context of loss. Furthermore, his work emphasizes the need for leaders and managers to understand this process in order to have meaningful and productive influence as change occurs.

What was most relevant in developing a conceptual framework for this study was the similarity among the referenced change models regarding change as a process with multiple
phases, beginning with an initial phase involving some form of destabilization, disruption, difficulty, or loss that precipitates change. However, while planned change models outline process leading to positive outcomes, the results of unplanned change may vary depending on the circumstances. Each model is distinct in how change is experienced by members of the organization and in relationship to the influence and role of leadership or change agents.

**Grief and Loss in the Workplace**

Change in the workplace can be framed in the context of loss or trauma based on the circumstances surrounding the change. Integrating concepts related to sources of loss, theories of grief and loss, along with models of transition and change, Jeffreys (2005) outlined stages for workplace transformation.

Table 1

*Jeffreys’ Stages of Workplace Transformation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Massive Impacts</th>
<th>Workplace Upheaval</th>
<th>Employee Changes/Loss</th>
<th>Grief Reaction</th>
<th>Transition/Adjustment</th>
<th>Healing and Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Markets</td>
<td>Layoffs</td>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Accepting the loss</td>
<td>Employee &amp; organizational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Globalization Disasters</td>
<td>Mergers</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Addressing the pain</td>
<td>adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bankruptcies</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td>Making the needed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outsourcing</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<td>changes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Deaths &amp; Illness</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing new group</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Jeffreys categorized three primary sources of change in the workplace and described the evolution or transition individuals may go through as a result (Figure 3). His model integrates precipitating events and circumstances along with the impact on individuals and the organization, as well as the subsequent change process that ensues. Understanding the
experience of loss for individuals originated from the work of theorists such as Bowlby (1992) and Kubler-Ross (1997). Both developed theory describing the phases of loss, and the subsequent grief reaction that ensues. While these concepts focused on the experience of the individual, there is relevance and value in the application to a group or organization. Bolman and Deal (2006) stated, “Loss is an unavoidable byproduct of change. As change accelerates, executives and employees get caught in endless cycles of unresolved grief” (p. 458). Understanding how grief and loss may manifest itself in the workplace assists in planning for and managing change.

**Change in Higher Education**

Over the past several decades, the field of organizational development has progressed in research and practice in its application across sectors beyond industrial and corporate settings. However, application in higher education has emerged only recently in the literature exploring organizational change. In fact, Cummings (2008) in the *Handbook of Organization Development* described special applications of organization development in the final section of the text, yet, none of the chapters discussed higher education. In another text, *Organization Development and Change* (Cummings & Worley, 2009), the authors described application of OD, change and reform in public education, yet there is no discussion of application in higher education.

Authors have explored aspects of culture and leadership in higher education as well as the social conditions and external factors influence the academy. Professional journals, such as *Higher Education, Studies in Higher Education*, and the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* are three primary sources for contemporary research about higher education. Review of the literature related to change in higher education revealed many
studies related to change and strategic planning, policy, change and governance, as well as changes in curriculum, programs, and instructional methods. Research specific to the experience and impact of change from the perspective of faculty and staff continues to be a very limited yet emerging area of study. One study compared the experience of change to stages of grief and loss (Zell, 2003), redirecting the focus of the research to the human experience associated with change.

The uniqueness of higher education was studied and identified by Bergquist (1992), with his description of four cultures in higher education. His study of organizational culture within higher education was further developed with his colleague resulting in their description of six cultures that exist within higher education (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). His original four cultures were identified as collegial, managerial, developmental, and negotiating/advocacy. As the external environment and culture of society has changed, two more cultures within higher education emerged and were identified as: 1) virtual given the global world of technology, and 2) the tangible culture in response to the virtual world and desire to hold onto traditional aspects of college learning.

The work of Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) emphasized the importance of leadership’s understanding of the culture and subcultures that exist within academia, given the dynamics of polarization and conflict that may arise. The collegial and managerial cultures are referred to as the twin pillars in higher education, yet the managerial culture has become more increasingly weighted than the other identified cultures. In addition, there is particular note about the perspectives of paradox and polarity as the ironic condition that exists in higher education, as well as their conclusion that “academic institutions are more resistant to change than other sectors of society” (2008, p. 226). This conclusion suggests that any change could
be experienced as difficult within higher education, yet, such generalizations seem short
sided without further study of how those in higher education experience change in the
context of the circumstances surrounding it.

Institutions of higher education are facing more and more challenges as a result of
external conditions. Understanding how colleges and universities can persevere and evolve
under the similar external conditions, much like other settings represented in the literature, is
an opportunity for new knowledge. Canney (2012) stated:

Higher education in America is being challenged with questions about the value and
validity of higher education, shifting markets of students, tumultuous economic times,
governmental regulations, demands for increased service and delivery modes, and
new for-profit institutions joining the market. The traditional delivery methods used
by higher education institutions are being tested with these changes. (p. 4)

Her study of resilience in higher education yielded themes related to overcoming adversity
and difficulties, change and transitions, and visionary leaders. Leadership was a factor
identified as influential with change and resiliency and overcoming adversity. Therefore,
understanding the process and impact of change within the context of conditions and
precipitating events and the role of leadership and its application to higher education
warrants further inquiry and understanding.

Change in organizations, including higher education, may also be met with resistance.
Understanding the origin of resistance is essential in engaging in and supporting members
through change. Zell (2003) studied resistance to change within the context of higher
education, applying Kubler-Ross’s (1997) stages of death and dying to the change process.
His study expanded the body of knowledge on change as loss, in recognizing circumstances
and external factors that may precipitate change, and how further understanding of such
concepts apply to higher education. He described the participants’ experiences for each stage
of grief within that particular case. This reinforced the need for further inquiry and
understanding of change as loss and the impact on institutions of higher learning, in order for
the effects of change to be better understood, and facilitated or managed effectively given the
current external conditions faced by colleges and universities.

Summary

Through review of the literature, the three models of change selected illustrated the
process of change, both planned and unplanned. Precipitating factors of change, and the
experience of change in the context of transitions, loss, and trauma have also been introduced
and applied to change in organizations. With very limited study in the area of difficult change
in higher education, there is opportunity to further the body of knowledge for OD
practitioners in studying the experiences of difficult change in higher education. A deeper
understanding of the effects of change experienced by the members of an organization, and
the role or influence of leadership in particular settings or sectors, can be obtained through
further study of actual experiences in specific contexts.

Organizational change has been the subject of research and practice in the field of
organization development for decades. While traditional models of practice originated in
industrial and corporate settings, the field of OD has evolved and expanded to application
across sectors, including settings as unique as higher education institutions. In addition, the
process of change continues to be explored and understood more deeply in the context of
loss, and even traumatic. This evolution in the field yields opportunity to utilize existing
theory as a framework to do research that results in deeper understanding about the
individual and collective experiences within organizations. With deeper understanding comes an opportunity for OD practitioners and organizational leaders to respond effectively to the human needs of the system.
Chapter 3

Methodology

Currently, there is limited representation in the literature that focuses on developing a better understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the change process in higher education from the perspective of its members. In order to gain a better understanding of members’ perspectives and experiences with a change process, I used an interpretive epistemology to guide this study. This approach was selected based on the belief that truth or meaning of experiences is understood through our engagement with those who have experienced a similar phenomenon. From an ontological perspective, this is referred to as social constructionism, which means that reality is created or constructed by the individuals involved in the social world being studied (Creswell, 1998). The purpose of this study was to understand the perspectives of individuals with a common lived experience, namely difficult change in higher education. Given that my study focused on one organization, this was an interpretive single-case study.

Research Design

In order to gain an in depth understanding of the complexities of the experience of a change process within a particular context or setting, an interpretive case study design was utilized. Interpretive research, often referred to as qualitative research, seeks to gain understanding of the meaning of social processes, actions, and contexts. This approach to research is distinctly different than positivistic research, often referred to as quantitative research, which seeks to explain social reality through objective, observable facts (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Given the multiple models and intricate, interrelated aspects of how change is experienced within a particular organization, interpretive case study design provides
opportunity to explore the unique experience within a particular setting and recognize themes or patterns that may represent relevant meanings that emerge (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 2007). For this study, the case was in an institution of higher education that experienced difficult change.

In this study, I aimed to discover the experience of difficult change of the individuals within a particular institution of higher education. Through experience in higher education, I have acquired an awareness of the internal and external forces that can create stress. Of particular interest to me was the human experience resulting from such stress. Some examples of difficult change may be reorganization and restructuring of programs and/or administration, adding or eliminating programs, changes in leadership, financial challenges or layoffs, and other external influences (i.e. accreditation or other regulation). In order to further focus the study, the site’s leadership helped identify a particular factor that resulted in difficult change for the faculty and staff. The study focused on a particular context for change, such as accreditation, as a factor precipitating the change considered being difficult or stressful.

**Site of the Study**

As a single case study, selection of the site was an important factor for this research in order to gain an in depth understanding of the experience with change. Given the focus of this study and the research question, the site had to first acknowledge and identify itself as one that had experienced change that may have been difficult for its members. The Dignity University recognized itself as an institution that has experienced difficult change over recent years. Due to the need for this self-identification by the site, clear criteria for selection and
gaining access to the site were important aspects of the research. The scope of the study included interviews with faculty and staff from across the university.

**Criteria for selection.** The context of the research question focused on an institution of higher learning. Therefore, the site had to be an accredited college or university, or a department or unit within the institution that had been particularly impacted by change. In order to be considered as a site for this study, the leadership or administration had to acknowledge that it had gone through some form of change that may have been experienced as difficult within the past 5 years, or that the difficulty with the change has persisted even though the change occurred more than five years ago. The determination of difficult change was made upon initial inquiry with the potential site’s leadership. For the purpose of this study, difficult change was described as a change event or process that a majority of employees of the institution believed was stressful.

**Site selection.** Dignity University is a private university accredited by the Ministry of Education in Ukraine. My relationship with Dignity began in 2011, when I completed the first of three practicum projects providing consultation to the university as they engaged in strategic planning. Through this experience, I was able to develop relationships with those who worked at Dignity, and gain understanding of the stress experienced by faculty and staff as a result of the changes they had experienced. In particular, it was apparent that their deep commitment to the original mission of Dignity was, at times, in conflict with the demands placed on them to meet requirements of accreditation and to sustain themselves as an institution of higher learning in Ukraine.

My initial contact with the site was a Dean of Faculty [a department] at Dignity University. He acknowledged that the faculty had experienced the requirements of
accreditation to be stressful, and that the stress had changed the experience of teaching in recent years. Among multiple circumstances surrounding growth and change at Dignity, one particular factor included the necessity of accreditation was accepted in order for diplomas to be recognized by the state. The accreditation requirements resulted in challenges to program design, quality of education, and recognition of faculty accreditation (given many faculty received doctoral degrees in other countries, which is not usually accepted by the Ministry of Education in Ukraine). Although the Ministry of Education had changed policy in September 2014 that would allow for more freedom for private universities in its curriculum and developing programs, this was one identified stressor over recent years that met the criteria for selection of a site.

**Access and permission / gaining entry.** Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) outlined four main issues in gaining access to a site in order to do case study research:

1. identifying those at the site to make initial contact;
2. determining the best method for communication, such as by phone, a meeting (in person), or letter;
3. how to frame the request in a manner that may be more appealing to the site;
4. being prepared to address questions and concerns prior to and during the study.

The opportunity to conduct this study was contingent upon gaining access and authorization by leadership or administration at the site. Making contacts by referral and through mutual colleagues in the field of higher education was useful in gaining access to propose the study. As is customary in doing case study research, the site, an institution of higher education, was provided with a description of the purpose of the study and methodology, as well as an offer to present findings at the conclusion of the study, per
Stake’s (1995) suggestions. Furthermore, issues related to confidentiality and anonymity was addressed. Walsham (2006) described the issues and tensions involved with doing interpretive research within organizations. In particular, gaining access requires social skills and a relationship with the site in order to successfully gain and maintain access throughout the study. Therefore, direct, personal contact with the site was important in order to gain access for this study.

Initial contact was made with a member of leadership via email. This was followed by several conversations through Skype, as well as exchanges of email regarding the proposed study. Initially, discussion about the purpose of the study and the research question was discussed. We discussed examples from the literature involving change in higher education. Examples included eliminating programs, changes in leadership, and even curriculum and program changes. Through this dialogue, we were able to identify that accreditation was a significant stressor for Dignity University. However, with recent changes in government, policy and the Ministry of Education that will allow more freedom for institutions with their curriculum, that specific topic may no longer be perceived as a current stressor. Therefore, we discussed a more open-ended approach to exploring change, based on the individuals’ identification of what was difficult or stressful. Upon the request of the Dean, a letter was submitted along with an overview of the study for his review. This also allowed him to seek support from other leadership of the university, such as the Rector. Permission to complete the study was provided by the leadership of the university.

Coordinating travel abroad and visits to the campus was another important aspect of gaining entry for completion of the study. Given the costs of travel abroad, there was an effort to schedule the visits to campus for interviews immediately following other travel to
Europe. There was email correspondence with the Dean in the weeks preceding the travel to confirm dates for interviews on campus. At the same time, the Dean was determining his travel dates for an event abroad. The week prior to my planned visit, the Dean informed me that he would need to travel abroad on the same dates, and would not be available on campus on the dates I had planned to visit. With the assistance of one of my research committee members, I was put in contact with another representative at the university, a Director of one of the academic programs, to help facilitate my visit to conduct interviews on the scheduled dates.

With any study that explores the internal and personal aspects of an organization, tensions may exist over confidentiality and privacy for both individual participants and the organization as a whole (Walsham, 2006). While Stake (1995) referenced that organizations and participants may be open to having their stories told (unless they’ve had a recent negative experience), Walsham (2006) recognized the potential concerns regarding how identity of individual participants may be recognized even when names and roles are omitted.

It was determined through agreement with the site that a pseudonym would be assigned to the institution, as well as the participants. The role of participants within the university as staff or faculty was identified, and their programs and departments were omitted to protect from identification. Given the topic and nature of this study, sensitivity to these factors was necessary in establishing an agreement and obtaining permission from the site. Given that the study focused on higher education, it agreed that this study would be an opportunity to contribute to the advancement of research in higher education institutions, and may be of particular interest to Dignity University.
Participant Selection

In order to gain an in depth understanding of the collective perspectives and experience with change, a cross-section of its members were invited to participate in the study. This included leadership/administration, faculty, and staff. Faculty members and staff at Dignity University were invited to participate in 45-60 minute interviews. Recruitment for the study was coordinated with the assistance of a designated representative at the university. A translator was also hired, at my expense, to provide translation for participants who were not as proficient in English. Both the representative and translator signed a "Statement of Confidentiality" form. Participants were invited to participate in person or through an individual email. Mass emails for solicitation of any form were not allowed by policy at the university.

A script with a description of the study was provided to the representative so she was able to describe the study, and answer any questions or concerns of potential participants. This process for recruiting participants was determined necessary given the current circumstances in Ukraine (hybrid war time), and potential reluctance of faculty and staff to participate in a study conducted by a non-Ukrainian researcher. On site interviews were scheduled with those, who responded to the invitation to participate, and the meeting place for the interviews was coordinated with participants.

Methods of Data Collection

In this case study, multiple sources of data were utilized in order to understand the complexities and depth of the experience with difficult change. The primary source of data was interviews with faculty and staff. Other sources of data, such as informal observation while on the campus, and document review (e.g., documents, publications, and other media
available to the public) were also utilized to inform the study and triangulate the data. Data were stored electronically on a secure external hard drive not accessible to anyone but the researcher.

**Interviews.** Given that the purpose of the study was to gain understanding of the experiences and perspectives of multiple people and their stories, interviews were the primary method for collecting data multiple perspectives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, with a few beginning questions that allowed the participants to tell their stories. Follow-up questions by the interviewer were guided by the themes that emerged in each interview, which allowed for progressive focus to develop in the study. The key questions for interviews included:

The questions being asked included:

- *What has been your experience with change at your university that was stressful?*

- *What made the situation stressful?*

- *How would you describe the effects of the change on yourself and others?*

Probing questions:

- *What were your thoughts?*

- *How did it make you feel?*

From these questions, the participants had the opportunity to tell their stories, and were prompted for further expansion with, “Tell me more about…” based on the themes emerging from each interview, and statements that represented a collective experience or seemed to convey something significant. In addition, further probing to elicit more about the meaning of a particular aspect of a participant’s experience was essential. This occurred at
times due to the language barrier, and at other times to seek deeper understanding of the participant’s subjective experience with change.

Interviews were recorded and written notes were taken. This allowed for further review of responses through listening to recordings, and referencing notes in order to explore the interpretation of the data in conjunction with data analysis coding procedures. I also arranged for a translator to be available to assist with interviews with participants who did not speak English. A majority of the participants spoke English, yet the translator was helpful in the event that certain terms or phrases needed translation. The translator was required to sign a confidentiality agreement, so she was bound by the same confidentiality requirements as me, the primary researcher.

**Observations.** Informal observations during my visits to the campus for interviews were recorded and included as they seemed relevant to gaining a broader understanding of the case, the context of change, and in supporting themes identified from the participant interviews.

**Review of documents and publications.** In a case study, one of the tasks is to describe the organization being studied, so the reader has the context for the case. Document review aided in this description, and consisted of public documents that described the university. Documents included the university’s published strategic plan, articles by faculty and leadership, as well as texts published by the university.

**Review of media.** Relevant media was also viewed as an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the context of change. Two primary pieces of media included a promotional video produced by a student, as well as an independent documentary film about the events leading up to and throughout the Euromaidan revolution.
Data Analysis

As an interpretive case study, methods of data analysis included direct interpretation of the individual accounts of participants, as well as categorical aggregation of data from multiple participants (Stake, 1995). The primary source(s) of data were notes and audio recordings from interviews. I reviewed notes and listened to recordings for meaning and significance of issues described by the participants, and as a method for comparison to written notes from interviews. The notes reflected responses that were interpreted to reveal significant issues and themes regarding their experiences with change.

I considered transcribing the interviews and coding data to identify frequency and repetition of words and phrases, yet determined that such coding methods would be seeking to identify quantitative data rather than qualitative data, therefore compromising the interpretive nature of the study. This research did not limit important findings only to frequency of meanings as a single instance in an interview may carry significant meaning by itself, and very profound or important comments may carry great information (Stake, 1995).

Each interview was coded looked for common themes. My notes from the interviews and audio tapes were reviewed using a selective approach, and coded using the highlighting technique described by Van Manen (2014) to identify statements and phrases that appear to be most revealing about the subjects’ experiences and the issues faced during difficult change within the institution. Notes from interviews were reviewed, and key phrases and words were highlighted that appeared to reflect what was most significant about each of the participant’s experiences. Then the highlighted material was reviewed, and categorized based on the similarity to statements from other interviews as they related to the interview questions. In
addition, phrases from interviews that appeared to represent significant meaning related to
the research question were also highlighted and categorized with emerging themes.

In order to capture relevant quotes, audio recordings from the interviews were
reviewed and portions of the interviews were transcribed and compared to the themes
identified from field notes from interviews. Statements from interviews were selected based
on how the subject responded in tone of voice or other audible indicator, in addition to words
and phrases. Narratives and quotes from interviews were transcribed to support the themes.
Some narratives were selected to help capture the meanings and thematic expressions (Van
Manen, 2014). All selected statements were cautiously noted as to not identify any
participant.

In addition to interview notes, documents & publications, and other media that were
publicly available were reviewed to develop issues and shared meaning of the experience of
change. The three methods of data collection served as a form of methodological
triangulation (Stake, 1995). Themes and issues from interviews were reviewed and
compared to documents, publications, and media to identify common themes and issues that
represent the story of change for the site that result in the opportunity to better understand
and describe complexities of the context of the case and the experience with a change
process. This process of data analysis assisted in emergent and progressive nature of the
study, and for writing a report that was developmental in describing what was revealed about
the case.

As an interpretative case study, the report is designed to provide the reader with an
understanding of the case based on the researcher’s Stake (1995) suggested that an
interpretive case study differs from research with a hypothesis. Therefore, traditional
research report designs may not be appropriate. He identified multiple pathways for reporting findings for a case study, and noted several components that should be taken into consideration as part of the design. First, the researcher should understand whom the audience might include. For this particular study the audience may be research committee members, academic colleagues, organizational development practitioners, faculty and administrators of higher education institutions, and members of the site of the case study. Due to the range of people who may read the report, it was written for a broad range of readers. The case is described in a biographical manner, includes description of cultural and organizational contexts, as well as the researcher’s view of learning about the case in order to develop what Stake (1995) refers to as *vicarious experiences* for the reader.

Stake (1995) asserted that how the report is organized is essential to exploring the case. The organization of the findings from this study will follow a developmental and sequential process, with each section building on another in a narrative format. To orient readers to the case, the report includes information about historical events to provide understanding of the cultural context of change. This is followed by description of the site to acquaint the reader to the organizational context of change. As a study about the experience of the people in the case, the primary source of data was the interviews, which is where key issues and themes were identified. This is followed by other sources of data that helped build a better understanding of the case and identify how the themes were represented in other sources of data. The last chapter includes discussion about the findings and summary of what I have come to understand about the case. Any assertions about my interpretation of the findings will include reference to existing literature. Finally, the report includes personal reflections of my experience with the study and meaning for me as the researcher.
Researcher Bias

As a former faculty member from multiple institutions of higher learning, who had experienced change, I recognized how my own experiences in higher education may have been similar to some of the participants, and I could identify with some of their stories. In addition, I had collaborated with the site on projects, which had been completed over a year before this study. I had to recognize my potential biases and consciously maintain neutrality throughout the interviews, thus refraining from allowing any biases from influencing the interviews. In addition, I utilized reference materials related to research design, including the work of Stake (1995) and Van Manen (1997, 2014) throughout the study to guide me through my analysis and interpretation of the data.

My experience with interviewing was essential in the study in order to utilize the designed questions appropriately and prompt/probe in a manner that resulted in additional data directed by the participant. I was careful about responses that may have been influenced by my own experience and interests in the topic. Maintaining this boundary during the interviews allowed for discovery of new and relevant themes.

Being conscious of the influence of my own experiences and potential bias was also relevant while analyzing and interpreting the data. In particular, my clinical experience in the field of mental health had the potential to influence how I may interpret the content of interviews and the overall findings. When interpreting the data, attention to the coding procedures assisted me in keeping biases or preconceived ideas from influencing the interpretation of the data. However, this procedure was carefully balanced with the subjective nature of an interpretive study, where the researcher’s experience aids in guiding the study in a direction that seeks to answer the research question and seeks meaning.
In order to prevent my bias from influencing the interpretation of data, I engaged in reflection and consultation with my dissertation advisor/chair to process my own emotional responses to the experiences reported by participants. As the data were analyzed and themes were identified, peer readers were invited to review the findings. In addition, my dissertation advisor was consulted and reviewed the findings and offered feedback throughout the process. As thoughts were evoked from review of the interview notes, interpretation of the meaning and themes were written down, organized into a categories and themes, and reviewed by the dissertation chair. The categories were then cross-referenced with the interview notes once again in order to distinguish between the experience reported by participants and any potential reactions of the researcher to prevent bias from influencing my interpretation of the interviews.

**Ethical Issues**

A key ethical issue and possible tension for this study was confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity of the participants. Therefore, pseudonyms were assigned to the institution and all participants. There were no direct benefits for participants in the study. For university leaders, there may have been benefit in understanding the experience of participants in the change that was stressful. It is up to the Dignity University’s rector to decide whether to share the results with members of the university following the conclusion of the study.

All participants were provided with a description of the study, its purpose, and how confidentiality was guaranteed. After reviewing the information, the participants were asked if they are willing to volunteer. Whether or not they choose not to volunteer, no others were notified of their choice. Participants were reminded of their right to discontinue the interview
and/or withdraw from this study at any point in time, and their right to abstain from answering any questions they may choose.

Another ethical consideration in doing case study research was the fact that the presence of the researcher at the site may result in exposure to and observation of aspects of the organization not necessarily intended for the study. Discretion and careful consideration for adhering to data collection procedures was necessary. Of particular concern were informal observations while at the site, which occurred outside of the planned data collection procedures. Stake (1995) addressed such observations in an example of a student researcher overhearing a conversation by some subjects in passing, outside of the interviews and observations. From this example comes an ethical decision-making issue for the researcher in understanding how one’s presence may be intrusive, being conscious of the behaviors or intention of the researcher, and utilizing discretion in what information is used for the study based on the means in which it was obtained. Although I spent time on campus among members of the university community and had the opportunity to observe the social environment informally, the language barrier served as a natural protection of privacy, given I do not speak Ukrainian.
Chapter 4

Findings

What began as an endeavor to understand the human experience of those within an organization in the context of theories of change, evolved into a journey and revelation of the deeper spiritual aspects of a human system committed to a larger purpose or mission. As the researcher, I intended to learn more about the experiences of difficult change in a higher education institution. My interest in this research originated from my prior experience in higher education, study of organizational change, and my desire to explore the circumstances surrounding or precipitating change. I wanted to learn more about the experiences of faculty throughout the change process, and the extent to which they may have experienced the change as stressful or traumatic. The purpose of this interpretive research was to gain understanding of the meaning of social processes, actions, and contexts of the case. As themes began to emerge from the interviews, it became very clear that while change may be experienced as difficult, that same difficulty revealed the strength that comes from the human spirit as well as a deep sense of purpose and commitment to the mission of the organization.

The Process

While a majority of my findings resulted from interviews, there was a need to learn more about my site, its structure, and history in order to develop a better understanding of the context of the experience of the participants. Upon obtaining approval to conduct my study at the site, I was referred to a designated staff member by the leadership to assist me with coordination of interviews and meetings. In addition, a language interpreter was arranged with the assistance of the site. In order to gain access to the site to conduct the study, the university required that a trusted translator be utilized for the interviews. This was necessary
in order to protect the privacy and interests of the university given external factors in Ukraine at the time. Both the translator and staff member assisting with scheduling and coordinating interviews signed confidentiality agreements.

I became familiar with the site of my study and its context through meetings about the structure and programs at the university, from the experience of my travel to Ukraine, from working at the university in its buildings, informal observations of the daily activities on campus, and through documents, publications and media available to the public about the university. Having traveled to and from Ukraine in each of the three years prior to my study, I was able to experience change in the larger context of society and as a culture. English speaking airline and airport staff had increased significantly. In addition, the increased emphasis on security both personally and as a country, including advisories for foreign travelers, was distinct as a result of the Ukrainian Revolution and war with Russia in the Eastern region of Ukraine. Despite the larger political and societal conditions, many of the leadership, faculty and staff of the university agreed to participate in my study and tell their stories.

**Ukrainian Context**

The Revolution of Dignity and conflict with Russia in Crimea in the Eastern region are just recent examples of Ukrainian people’s experience with adversity and struggle for independence as a country. Ukraine has a history of over a century of political and religious oppression, corruption, famine and genocide, and war. Through my own travel to Ukraine over the course of 5 years, I was provided with an oral history of the country through my encounters with many people of Ukraine. While there was history of occupation by Germany, Poland, and Soviet regimes, most stories shared by people I encountered focused
on the years of occupation by the Soviet regime. This history is also well documented in the literature and public media.

The 20th century was wrought with periods of cultural and religious oppression, massive corruption, and attempts at independence for Ukrainians. The country and its people were subjected to Soviet occupation for many decades, as well as attempts at occupation by Nazi Germany during WWII that brought the Holocaust across the borders into Ukraine, resulting in the deaths of 850,000 to 900,000 Jewish people in Ukraine. Between WWI and WWII, the “interwar period,” there was an effort toward Ukrainization that would require government to support local (non-Russian) languages as well as social and cultural development. However, this was met with resistance, and an influential Russian official of the Ukrainian party, who believed in Russian superiority, declared the “Theory of the struggle between two cultures” (Lebed, 1923, as cited in Subtelny, 2009). This theory asserted that Russian culture was superior and progressive, and although Ukrainian culture represented the heritage of Ukraine, it was too closely connected to peasantry and rural culture. In order to be a progressive nation, Communists were encouraged to support the “natural process” of domination of Russian culture rather than Ukrainization (Subtelny, 2009).

Throughout many decades of the 20th century, there was continued tension and struggle between creating Soviet culture in Ukraine, Russification, and the Ukrainians preserving their cultural identity. Of particular conflict amidst this struggle was the issue of language, and the efforts to revive their language and culture after such long periods of suppression, and to recreate texts in Ukrainian that were destroyed during this era.
Ukraine was also impacted by Soviet efforts toward industrialization, collectivization, famine, genocide, as well as cultural and religious oppression. Collectivization and agricultural restructuring became a war on peasants, in particular, a class of peasants, who owned more property and were a bit wealthier than other peasant farmers. Those, who resisted collectivization, were executed or deported to labor camps in Siberia or the Arctic. The need for grain procurement to fund industrialization became a ruthless enforcement of quotas on peasant farmers. The state began systematically confiscating most of the peasants’ grain for its own use, leaving many unable to support themselves and their families (Subtelny, 2009). Every November, Ukraine observes “Holodomor Remembrance Day” to recognize the deaths from holodomor (famine genocide). People were deliberately starved to death by the Soviet Communist regime in 1932 and 1933. Millions of Ukrainians died from this man-made famine, and it is still reflected on as one of the most traumatizing events inflicted on the Ukrainian people.

During the time of Soviet rule, religious oppression had a significant impact on Ukrainian people spiritually and psychologically. While freedom to worship was supposed to be guaranteed by the Soviet constitution, there were efforts by the regime to suppress religious education, rituals and practices, limiting publication of religious texts, and closing down places of worship. In particular, there was a direct effort against the Greek Catholic Church (Subtelny, 2009). These efforts were met with religious dissent and many religious activities went underground, with priests performing baptisms, marriages and other forms of religious worship in basements and other clandestine locations. This was a great risk, for those caught could be exiled. Efforts to suppress religious freedom during this period failed, and are actually believed to have influenced a renewed interest in religion (Subtelny, 2009).
**End of Soviet rule in 1991.** Despite gaining independence from the Soviet regime, the years following continued to be a struggle for Ukraine to regain its identity as nation and a culture. Governmental structures and the political spheres continued to be affected by massive corruption and perpetuation of Soviet institutions. Corruption and the perpetuation of Soviet institutions was also observed at state universities, which became and has continued to be a primary influence on Dignity University’s mission to create an ethical, moral, and corruption-free nation.

**Orange Revolution of 2004.** In 2004, it was discovered that the presidential elections in Ukraine were manipulated to favor the candidate preferred by Russian proponents, which resulted in massive protests and a peaceful march on Parliament by demonstrators dressed in orange. Many cities refused to acknowledge the results. The Supreme Court of Ukraine ordered a new election, and a new election was held under the supervision of international representatives to ensure there was no fraud. The candidate favored by most Ukrainians, Yushchenko, was declared the winner and was sworn into office, ending the Orange Revolution. While this event first seemed to be a political victory for Ukraine, it was later realized that other than some minor changes in policy, no major reforms would result (Subtelny, 2009).

**Euromaidan 2013 -2014.** Euromaidan began in November 2013 as protests by thousands of students on Independence Square (Maidan) in Kiev, who demanded that Ukraine sign an Association Agreement with the European Union. What started as peaceful protests by students erupted into a revolution involving brutality against protestors, violence between demonstrators and police, and led to the resignation of Ukraine’s president and exile to Russia.
Euromaidan was more than a national event for the people of Dignity University, as many members of the university community, including faculty and students, participated in the protests and provided pastoral care. There was fear for their safety, as well as concern about pressure from the government’s security forces on staff and leadership at the university. The revolution escalated in violence in February 2014, and one of the university’s young faculty members was killed. Dignity University experienced a loss, which was very personal to their community, amidst what was considered a victory for civil rights in Ukraine. Euromaidan was of historic importance to the university, as Dignity had proclaimed civil disobedience toward the government, its policies, and corruption. This meant that leaders members of the campus community spoke publicly about their support for the protests, and students and faculty were supported in their involvement.

**War with Russia in Crimea.** In the year preceding this study, following the events of Euromaidan, Russia once again took action against Ukraine by invading Crimea in order to reclaim it as part of its empire. From a psychological perspective, this invasion triggered somewhat of a “flashback” of what was experienced in Ukraine in the last century, and has reignited the historical and cultural division among the people of Ukraine and their identity as Ukrainian or Russian, and the tensions between Eastern and Western Ukraine. While walking through the city where Dignity is located, I made an observation of guards in schoolyards. It was explained to me that due to the history of the Russian invasion in Chechnya. In 2004, over a thousand people were taken hostage at a school in Russia, and hundreds (including children) were subsequently killed. Given this history, the local government was taking precautions by placing guards in schoolyards.
While it was reported that many preferred to stay in the Crimean and Donetsk region, many fled and were welcomed as refugees in many cities in the western part of the country. However, it is still questioned whether those, who stayed in the occupied region of eastern Ukraine, remain there by choice, or by fear. There is a history of persecution of Crimean Tatars, and the recent events reignited many fears for people in Crimea.

Organizational Context of Change

“Dignity University” was once a theological academy that was originally founded 1928. It was subsequently closed in 1944 when Ukraine became occupied by the Soviet Union. At that time, all texts for studying theology in the Ukrainian language were destroyed. After the occupation of western Ukraine in 1939, those, who wished to study and practice Christianity, were unable to do so publicly. Ukraine began rebuilding itself as a country after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, which allowed Christianity to be studied and practiced in public once again. The theological academy reopened in 1994 with a co-educational student body. In June 2002, the school was inaugurated as Dignity University.

At the time of this study, the university was organized into three main academic departments, referred to as “faculties”, which include the Philosophy and Theology Faculty, Humanities Faculty, and School of Journalism. In addition, the university had several additional professional training institutes, certificate programs, and research institutes. Figure 4 illustrates the main structures of academic programs, professional programs and institutes.
I was unable to obtain information about the specific structure of the administrative offices and departments. However, examples of administrative departments include the Financial Department, Development Department, and Department of International Academic Relations. As I was oriented to the site, it had been mentioned there was a community of about 300 faculty and staff working at the University, with about 200 of those full time teachers. Given the number of part-time faculty and staff, and the growing number of programs and activities, the number of people who work on campus may be larger and continues to grow.

Upon arrival in the city in Ukraine where Dignity University is located, I was invited to meet with a member of the administration to discuss my study. The offices of administration continued to be located in the oldest academic building belonging to the university, which was also the location for studies in catechism, psychology, and social
pedagogy/social work. At the time of my visit, the building was undergoing renovation, including new windows. It was explained that the renovations resulted in the need for some staff to move to temporary offices and share workspace. While explained with apologies for the inconvenience, it was also shared as an example of the excitement with the growth at Dignity University.

Meetings and interviews took place at three different properties at the university, all within the same city and just miles from each other. Each location and building had faculty offices and classroom spaces for the different academic programs at Dignity. Given the growth at Dignity over the past several years, some programs had moved to new buildings and new spaces. In addition to the administrative building, I had meetings at the site of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, which was also a location for programs business and journalism. On the same property, adjacent from this building, was the location of the seminary.

I was informed of the recent construction and newest buildings on a new campus, including a student residence (collegium) on a site designated as the new student campus. Along with the collegium, a new academic building for classes, faculty, program offices, dining, and a coffee shop had been built. Academic programs for those studying history, sociology, civic leadership, government, public administration, and business administration are located in the newest and largest building on this site. The main dining area was also a large space that was used for events. It was explained to me that the vision of the new campus was a site that would be welcoming to students, faculty, and the community. While on site during my research, I was able to spend time on the new campus in the coffee shop and dining area. I was also provided a brief tour of the collegium, which not only was
housing for students, but faculty-in-residence, visiting scholars, as well as an apartment for adults with special needs. The new campus had a clear purpose for the university to fulfill the vision of building an open academic community for students and visitors, both local and from abroad.

**Participant interviews.** Following orientation to the site, interviews were conducted with volunteers who identified as faculty or staff of Dignity University and/or staff of one of the programs on its campus. In order to accommodate participants, interviews took place in different locations at the University, in spaces at three of the main properties. Conducting interviews at multiple locations on the campuses allowed me to observe the natural elements and daily activities on campus and gain a better sense of the campus community and culture. The participants included faculty and staff members, including some in leadership or management roles. Some participants had served in multiple roles during their time of employment. Other participants identified that they were also graduates and now work for Dignity University.

A total of fifteen (15) staff and faculty members of the university and programs were interviewed, some have had both administrative and teaching responsibilities during their time of service. While many of the participants spoke English, a translator was available to assist with interviews for participants did not speak English fluently. Seven of the participants utilized the translator for their interviews. Participants represented three parts of the university’s structure:

1. Faculties or Academic Departments
2. Administrative Departments or Offices (Operations)
3. Institutes (Research, Professional Education and Certificate Programs)
One participant served in all three of the above capacities, four identified themselves as current faculty from two of the academic departments, five identified as staff from administrative departments, and five from professional institutes. Their years of service ranged from under one year to those who had served at the theological academy prior to its establishment as a university two decades ago. Table 3 lists participants in the order in which they were interviewed, with pseudonyms that were assigned alphabetically. Their roles as staff or faculty, as well as gender are also included. Maintaining anonymity of the participants was expressed as an essential requirement in order to gain access to the site, so no other additional demographics or potentially identifiable information is included.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Faculty or Staff (Service in multiple roles indicated in parenthesis)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Aleksander”</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Anastasia”</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Aneta”</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Bohdana”</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Borysko”</td>
<td>Staff (administration)</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Danilo”</td>
<td>Staff (administration and academic)</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Fedir”</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Ivan”</td>
<td>Staff</td>
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<td>“Katerina”</td>
<td>Staff</td>
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<td>“Leysa”</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
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<td>“Mykhailo”</td>
<td>Staff</td>
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Each participant shared some information about his or her role at Dignity University as we began the interviews. A brief introduction to each participant is included in this paper in order to provide additional context and unique perspective of those who have experienced change at Dignity. These introductions will remain brief and include general information in order to maintain anonymity as agreed upon with the site.

**Aleksander.** As a staff member in the administration, Aleksander reframed “stress” as “challenges” in response to my first interview question about change that has been “stressful.” He identified the historical, political, cultural, and global influences as stressors in their country that challenged the university. From his perspective, internationalization and curriculum development were two important aspects of the university that were significantly challenged by the previous requirements of the Ministry of Education. Aleksander saw the importance of internationalization for the university. Most importantly, he viewed the responsibility for the future of Ukraine as a primary challenge for the institution amidst the larger external environment and cultural context.

**Anastasia.** As a faculty member with previous experience at another institution, she identified the experience of change and adapting to a new organizational culture as stressful. Becoming socialized among other faculty who had been at Dignity for long periods of time, the rapid change occurring at the university, and the differences between her previous [and
larger] institution and Dignity were all factors that influenced the stress experienced as a newer faculty member. Anastasia’s experience as a new faculty member provided perspective about the adjustment for those, who are new to Dignity and come from other work cultures.

Aneta. The experience of change from becoming a University, followed by changes within programs, curriculum, and the impact of accreditation requirements by the Ministry of Education were all identified as stressful over more than a decade for her. Historical factors, including religious persecution and the university’s efforts to recreate texts in Ukrainian language, hold meaning for her as a faculty member of the University. Of particular significance was the experience of loss due to lack of acknowledgement of a Theology degree by the state, given the history and original identity of Dignity prior to becoming a university. Although accreditation was ultimately obtained, there was a significant period of difficulty for the faculty, students, and the institution, as a whole, to overcome.

Bohdana. As a staff member in one of the programs with the university community, Bohdana identified the “non-monetary compensation” of the work that they do that sustains them through stressful times. She explained that sometimes the work in a small team became frustrating when tasks are assigned in order to get the work done, yet did not allow individuals to use their ideas and interests. There may be less cooperation, which may result in feeling tired and disappointed, and may create conflict among the team. Participating in the creation of projects and seeing the results can be a source of inspiration and “inner feeling of being self-realized” through the work. Amidst bureaucratic policies and procedures that seem inefficient, daily work, and stress within and between departments, the outcomes of the work that they do for the larger community “inspires us,” she stated.
Borysko. “Change is a permanent condition” at the university, from the perspective of one of the leaders at the institution. With a vision for Dignity as being recognized as a “global university,” he identified many factors both internal and external that influence the dynamic change occurring. He described change as challenging, uncomfortable, stressful, yet bearable, when there is a shared goal. Of particular significance was the process of accreditation as an imposed process, that once obtained, provided “perverse satisfaction” amidst the work for the larger mission of the university. The risk of abandoning one’s beliefs and the mission, and succumbing to external stressors was characterized in one very powerful statement, “self-complacency is most sinful.”

Danilo. With many years of service in many positions of leadership, Danilo described the university’s change in the context of “rapid growth” of both as an institution and as a society, as well as his own experience of “change within the change.” He spoke of the experience of and preparation for change, both mentally and spiritually, and the generational influences in a post-soviet society. Healing from historical wounds of the past through open communication and rebuilding trust was proposed as the way to manage change through stressful times. According to Danilo, being connected to the larger mission empowers and gives energy. The family members of those who work at the university also share the sacrifices and serving the mission becomes a part of their lives. Of particular influence was the message he shared from Dignity’s founding leader, that it is through witnessing [a new reality], communicating, and serving, they will achieve their mission to create change and transformation for a better, “corruption-free” society.

Fedir. As a member of the faculty for many years, Fedir identified two external factors that had great influence on their faculty and the university: accreditation and
Euromaidan (referred to as “The Revolution of Dignity” in Ukraine). He described the “tension of our conscience” as a result of the effort to remain true to Christianity and the values and approach to solutions, but also conform to requirements of system of state education in order to obtain accreditation. The stress was described as somewhat of a “schizophrenia” or “double consciousness” amidst the conflicting ideals between their belief system and mission, and the imposed requirements under post-Soviet governance in Ukraine. Before the revolution, there was great stress when the Ministry of Education commission would come to review Dignity’s accreditation materials. Yet, the faculty in their department conformed to submitting all requirements while feeling contempt for the obligations imposed by the Ministry of Education. He described this experience as “contempt and forma.” Great stress came from the dilemma of how to keep the good faith (in an ontological sense); “We cannot [go] against our conscience.”

Ivan. Ivan, a staff member in a leadership position, described multiple examples of change that were difficult and challenging, such as moving onto campus to live among students in the new collegium, change in work, experiencing conflict and turnover within his department, and changes in university leadership. In particular, the “time of unknown” in anticipation of the leadership change was stressful. Relationships and communication were important for Ivan to learn and be inspired, and without it among staff and with leaders and managers, there was stress. Challenges faced with management and within the department resulted in feelings of anger, disappointment, and sadness. The problems within his department were difficult and stressful, yet he believed the experience resulted in good learning about managing conflict.
Katerina. Her experience of change involved multiple factors, as she was a new staff person, and she had been a student of another university. Katerina first experienced the difference in culture between universities, as she observed the level of cooperation among students, faculty, and staff at Dignity. Having come from a university where students had very few rights, she has found the culture at Dignity to be very supportive. There was a focus on improving and challenging oneself in the environment, which was experienced as a “positive stress.” Euromaidan was an example of the sense of community at Dignity, as vice rectors, deans, faculty, and students became active in the protests and revolution. The “negative stress” experience resulted from bureaucratic processes within and across departments that affected daily work tasks, resulting in frustration and procrastination. Despite the negative stress, Katerina stated that it was “a dream come true” to work for change at Dignity.

Leysa. Her experience of change focused on the experience of moving into the collegium to live among the students. “My world transformed as an extension of the office,” she stated as her main concern at the time. The adjustment was stressful for several months, including restless nights, as there was no longer the same boundary between work and her life and time at home (off campus). Over time, it changed her interaction with students. “I perceive them differently… I have more credibility and they trust me more.” The relationships that have developed have created a more family-like atmosphere and a more personal atmosphere, which seems to have improved everyone’s social and academic experience in the collegium.

Mykhailo. Reflecting on his experience as a “rookie” staff person, Mykhailo was open about the embarrassment, he felt during his difficult adjustment, while learning his job
tasks. Mykhailo described a significant difference in the culture at Dignity compared to the university where he had studied, where his professors and those in authority were all men. He realized it was another part of his adjustment to work in an environment where women, and young women, were in leadership roles. Mykhailo’s insights about himself, his relationships with coworkers, and his own change by coming to Dignity told an important story about transformation.

**Natalka.** Having experienced multiple roles over more than a decade, Natalka shared observations of the growth and change at Dignity since its inception. She spoke of the challenges of doing research at the university while also seeking funding to support their work and salaries. In the first several years, there was a feeling of insecurity about the future that was shared by many at the university. In more recent years, change became a much deeper experience on an emotional and spiritual level with the university’s participation in Euromaidan. In a very stressful time in Ukraine, there was a discovery of the core spiritual basis of the value of relationships, and solidarity among members of the community at Dignity. There has been the shared experience of joy and grief that was very powerful. The shared grief from the death of a young faculty member, who died during a protest in Kiev, has since transformed to faith and hope for the future of Ukraine.

**Vasylyna.** A recent graduate from a university, Vasylyna experienced change in her own transition to the workforce when she started working at Dignity, and has since experienced change within her department. “At first I had to get used to this other life.” As a member of a team within her department, it took time to learn jobs tasks and roles, and her team worked closely with their manager. A sudden change occurred when the manager needed to take a leave suddenly. Although the manager would remain available via phone or
Skype, the change from having day-to-day assistance was stressful. “We didn't know it in advance,” she stated. The workload shifted to the team, resulting in more work without the support of their manager. This resulted in a period of feeling tired and exhausted. However, Vasylyna reflected on the circumstances as “temporary stress” that required her to learn to do the work more independently. Having experienced such changes, Vasylyna now knows what to expect from changes.

**Yeva.** As a longtime member of the university community, Yeva reflected on the challenges faced throughout the years as they worked with the mission. She spoke of the inspiration from administration, and students who believed, “We will change Ukraine. We wanted to do something good.” She stated, “I can work my values here.” The original faculty and staff worked for the mission yet may not have had the education and experience to run a university. So, to grow as a university, it was necessary to hire more professional staff to operate the many departments of the university. For many, it was a change from traditional Soviet Union to work and serve the university beyond a traditional work schedule of nine to six, to work because you want to, for the idea and the challenge, not just for money.

**Yosyp.** Currently identified as staff, Yosyp has been in multiple roles at Dignity for many years. He identified the growth and development of the university as the context of many challenges. This growth has included the addition of buildings and campuses and the addition of programs and departments, which has impacted the sense of community as students, faculty and staff are more spread out resulting in a decrease in communication and relationships. While the growth has helped create a more diverse and open campus community, for some, this growth was experienced as a loss of the small, close community where students and faculty studied and worshipped together. Change in leadership was also
experienced as a challenge and loss for those, who have been with the university for some time. With the growth and increased diversity of this open community, has come a fear of loss of identity and concern that the original core values of Dignity will not be as strong as they once were. The sense of community and desire for a “visionary university” is something it is believed must be maintained in order to serve the mission to create a civil society.

**Findings from Interviews**

This study was a journey into understanding the individual experiences of people within an organization from their own perspectives. Therefore, the primary source of data was the interviews with faculty and staff. As participants shared their experiences during their interviews, the themes began to emerge. The themes represent both individual and collective experiences. Each participant expressed a unique perspective on the change experienced as an individual; yet as the study progressed, some commonality became apparent. In order to further maintain protection of the identity of participants, quotes from interviews will not identify participants by their pseudonyms, but will simply reference participants and the context of their statements when describing themes.

**Description of Themes**

This study was a journey into understanding the experiences of people within an organization from their own perspectives. Therefore, the primary source of data was the interviews with faculty and staff. Participants described their individual experiences with change and the multiple circumstances both internal and external to themselves and the university. While some participants described the practical experiences amidst change in their daily work, others reflected on a deeper process of introspection triggered by the stress of change. Each participant expressed a unique perspective on the change experienced as an
individual; yet as the study progressed, some commonality became apparent. As a result, four main themes emerged from this study:

1. Experiences with change were multilayered and multifaceted
2. External demands led to a crisis of conscience
3. The change process led to revisiting core values and beliefs
4. Faith and spirituality influenced the experience with change

In order to further maintain protection of the identity of participants, quotes from interviews will not identify participants by their pseudonyms, but will reference quotes from interviews to support each of the themes.

Experiences with change were multilayered and multifaceted. There was no single factor that precipitated the change experienced by individuals at Dignity University. The participants identified multiple circumstances, both external and internal to the university. Participants talked about how change can be experienced concurrently for an individual, the organization, and larger society. In addition, change may be a recurring experience, and circumstances of change may ‘overlap’. Each of the participants shared their individual experience with change, as well as their observations how others in the organization may have been affected.

This experience was referred to as change within the change, which became a good representation of the multiple aspects of change that individuals encountered. One participant shared her experience through the translator. The translator provided interpretation of her statements, and explained:

She understood that to go to Dignity that she needed to change with the changes of the university, simultaneously. As the university changes, she changes her
personality, and as a professional member of the team. She is more open and she
develops herself; develops her outlook, her personality, simultaneously with the
changes in the university.

This multifaceted experience with change was represented in the other interviews throughout
this study, with each individual sharing a unique perspective.

To understand the experience of change as described by the participants, it is
important to understand the circumstances surrounding the change. There was no single
precipitating factor identified by members of the staff and faculty, and participants shared
both their perspective of their own experience with change, and that shared with others. For
many participants, historical events, as well as social and political factors were referenced as
influencing the change at Dignity. In addition, changes internal to the university were
influential.

Government funding was only disbursed to state institutions and universities, which
created great challenge for any private universities to sustain themselves in Ukraine. Dignity
University was established during a pivotal time of social development in Ukraine, when
non-governmental organizations (NGOs) began forming as a means to support the efforts of
social activists and other initiatives aimed at improving society.

As a private university, Dignity was among just a few institutions in Ukraine that had
to support itself and operate much like a struggling non-profit organization. Statements from
interviews reflected the financial challenges in a culture where philanthropy is a new
concept:

- We were only the first university that was [a] fundraising university to a very high,
  high extent. This was something very unique in the country. We were facing the
challenge to begin that process for the first time in a country that really doesn’t have that culture of philanthropy, and specifically university fundraising. So we are always… often facing a ”double task.” We would have to establish that and start building a culture of philanthropy, on the on hand, to be able somehow to fundraise in that culture we established.

- There were good resources to provide for all basic needs, good salaries, maintain good staff. Because it is private and depends on generosity of benefactors from all over, the U.S. and Europe, we worried, ‘Well, what will be the next year? Will there be work? Will there by salary?

Euromaidan was a significant event that had influence on both the university community and the people of Ukraine. Euromaidan has also been attributed to changes in government and political power, as well as social and educational spheres. In several interviews, Euromaidan was identified as a national event that had direct impact on the campus community:

- We experienced [a] big and very stressful event as a country at a national level, and it also affects life at the university; personal lives.

- The university proclaimed civil disobedience to the government. It was December [2013]. A year ago. And for the community it was [pause]… When I ‘m thinking about that time I’m immediately getting emotional [tears]…because we also gathered together as a community and we were discussing what we will do and whether everybody is supporting this decision.

- Euromaidan showed us only one thing: that nobody can do something for you. That you should do it by your own hands. So this is a great challenge and now we
understand that… even in the educational sphere, that we should do something by our own hands. We shouldn’t expect someone to come with the idea and with the thinking of making the brilliant future. We should do this [ourselves].

Before Euromaidan, Dignity endured many years of difficulty with accreditation by the Ministry of Education. In particular, it was shared that in 2011 there seemed to be a persistent effort by the government to deny accreditation for some programs. At times it felt as though the university was being persecuted, and they feared that the government would try to close their program. The difficulty with accreditation led to recollection of the university’s early efforts to recreate religious texts in Ukrainian language as a result of decades of religious oppression in the country while under Soviet occupation. This was described in one interview:

All the time we belonged to Russian empires, and to Soviet Union. It was direct program of the communist party. It’s not necessary to make translation of philosophical works, for example, into Ukrainian life. Why have Plato in Ukrainian, when we have it in Russian and everybody can read in Russian language? Only, but very important point: Don’t give people [the opportunity] to study sources, historical, also sources they will never be able to write their history. Somebody else will write your history. Knowing the sources, changing the sources, falsification the sources, but somebody else will do it instead of you.

In addition to the external circumstances influencing the experience of change, circumstances internal to the university were identified. Multiple participants described how change was constant at Dignity University. One of the first interviews with a leader at Dignity resulted in a powerful phrase: “Change is a permanent condition”. Dignity
University has been in pattern of growth and change since its inception. For those, who have been a part of the campus community for many years, there has been the experience of observing the changes on campus and letting go of old ways to move forward into the future.

Rapid growth was described in the following statements:

- Basically the university grew a lot; it’s changed a lot. It’s really increased several times. I remember when the university when it was more of a tight knit community, like a smaller community. And now, it’s really expanded. It’s a much bigger community. And usually when you have this expansion, you also think about the identity.

- One thing that is really a challenge to me is rapid growth… opening new departments and new programs, and also clearly being part of very innovative enterprise. We are pretty much different in what we are trying to achieve… almost everything we are doing, we are doing for the first time.

- As we grow we lose part of our identity [sense of community]… or maybe we didn’t lose it, but in danger of losing our identity.

- In the beginning… it was more challenging, but there was more of this sense that the community knew each other better. There was the sense that it was kind of more linked with each other in a smaller community than when bigger.

- We used to be one community, one closed community. We were small and physically in one building that made us feel this strong sense of community. Now as we grow we lose this part of or our identity. The quality is the same but there is no such intensity in the communication as before. It’s not bad; it naturally happens but we all experience this.
• Growth that is normal and we are celebrating also causes a shift in our identity.

During the past several years of growth and change, the university has experienced changes in leadership. Most significant was the change in rector. Although it was expected that a new rector would be appointed, the following statements seemed to capture the essence of the anticipation of a new rector:

• That was stressful… time of unknown waiting for this change. We didn’t know for some time that he would become rector… what would be the relation to rector and me? Would he like to know the details of my work, what is his style of management? Is he very harsh, how would we communicate, how often does he talk with people? Very many questions for which I didn’t have answers. Very helpful was the communication of the current rector. He was asking people what do you think about this, and that, what do I think about this change? And I told him what I thought. It was important that he listened to them. Being open and transparent, and making decisions in a group, at least discussing them as a group.

• It was a challenge. The new rector had a different style and different charisma. Our former Rector was the father of the university, the patriarch. The one who created it [the university]. It was difficult to accept.

Other changes in leadership were experienced within departments and programs. Unexpected changes in leadership seemed to be experienced as difficult, as well as significant change in management styles. Other statements related to changes in leadership included:

• We used to share work, and after [the manager] left I have to do the work. I had to learn new tasks. It was unexpected. No time for preparation. We didn't know it in
advance. First two weeks, I didn’t think I just worked. Didn’t have time for thinking. I was exhausted and a bit stressed in general.

- It was stressful, as no one discussed that with me. I was just told, ‘From now on you will be working with this guy.’ At meetings, everyone just reports what they have done, very little discussion… I did not like his style of management. I didn’t communicate with him that much. It was rather stressful. I communicated with my former chief. I report to him, but he’s not adding value to my work. We didn’t have any conflicts; he didn’t inspire me to work better. There was very little I would learn. There wasn’t the relationship, didn’t inspire you. This change [in management] wasn’t even discussed.

Multiple participants identified change to the campus with the addition of a residential college as an influential factor. While many state universities in Ukraine have dormitories, Dignity University created its own model for residential life on campus just three years prior to this study, which was building the residential college, called the collegium. Housing students, faculty and staff, the collegium is an effort to create relationships and sense of community at the university. In addition, there is an apartment for people with disabilities to live on campus, and visitors to campus from abroad stay in apartments in the collegium. This serves as an opportunity for faculty, staff and students to experience the world outside of their own and expand their worldview. By sharing living space and interacting with one another beyond the classroom and typical day on campus, the staff believed there were new opportunities to create a cohesive yet more global community. The collegium as a community was referenced in statements from multiple interviews:
• It’s a new building without a culture or history. The goal was to start to build a new culture and history.

• [It is a] new challenge to live in a community, like a special community. It’s unlike other communities… [we] started to create some unique community.

• For most students, they became closer to ideas of the university, of the spirit of the university.

• To share my life with students and live in same building as boss. My world will transform as an extension of the office, which is so, but not so bad.

• When I walk in building, I feel I know these people, we’re friends, I perceive [students] differently.

• It was more like a family atmosphere, family-like. More personal atmosphere was useful.

• Moving to collegium to live among students… changed part of my life. Most important things that were helpful; people living here quickly make friends. I like being with students, at school you feel yourself young, feel as part of a team.

Very early in the study it became apparent that describing the experience of change at Dignity University as “stressful” may be a matter of perception. More than one participant had reframed the concept of stress and described it terms other than “difficult”. Some participants reframed stress as a positive rather than negative experience. Ambition and motivation were terms used by multiple participants in the context of stress having a positive influence during challenging times. Stress from change was reflected upon, reframed and referenced with the following statements:

• I would prefer to talk about challenges.
• It is the beauty of growing.

• The change seemed difficult… but it was my imagination.

• What was difficult and stressful became a good experience about managing.

• Perhaps the only stress is the idea of responsibility for the future generations.

Most participants shared how they were able to overcome these responses and move forward to a more positive experience and perspective. For some, the change in perspective resulted from an inner discovery process, while for others, their outlook improved as circumstances changed for the better.

Some individuals described their individual response to stress and change as worrisome thoughts, tension, frustration, difficulty sleeping, lack of motivation and depression or sadness. Conflict was also related to stress. Reflecting on the past and some difficult times, participants described period of hopelessness:

• For my colleagues and me it was a ‘depressive state’.

• There was a time of stagnation and pessimism.

• There was a “spring depression” after Maidan. It was a hard winter... [we were] overwhelmed and tired.

• I have some stressful relations with my colleagues, I have a problem when a woman tells me what to do, especially when a younger woman tells me what I should do and teaches me. Maybe it’s more personal but it disturbs me and makes me nervous. I had relations with men; my teachers were always men. Now I come here and women are in power… It is okay for women to be in power but when a younger woman [pause]... men are more simple.
• Bureaucratic procedures… then there’s less time for work. We’d get angry; like we’re fighting with [a department in the administration].

• There were a lot of conflicts inside of our team.

• I was feeling angry, disappointed, sad about that. [long pause]. I understand it, that’s a process. I needed to organize myself and if I don’t do anything it will last and last for a long time.

• I was waking up, going to bed with stress… I even had headaches.

• I released it. Let it go. I was angry at some point… I think that it was a good experience of managing conflict.

Adjustment to the culture of Dignity University was another form of change. For those who were new to the university, there was the experience of adapting and adjusting to a culture of work and life. While many faculty and staff have been a part of the university for many years, some as students, then staff or faculty, others have come to the university as it has grown and become a more open community. People new to the campus community experienced a change in culture compared to where they’ve come from:

• It was rather stressful to change the work from one university to another.

• I observed some new people who also joined our team and it is also a stress, especially when people come from state universities.

• So it’s a stress, as our university is a private one, like different conceptions of work and morals. Our university is [Christian] university and very European oriented, so our focus is on Europe and European traditions and values, and this why sometimes [new] people have to face this double challenge. Because of the university is private, and secondly the university is [Christian] and European oriented.
• I felt embarrassed when I came here to work. I couldn’t adapt to the new work environment. Everything; new rules, new people, some form of community building, everything new to me.

Although adjustment to a new culture was stressful, those new to the university also recognized positive aspects of the culture. Compared to working at a state institution, working at Dignity University was described:

• [Coming to work at Dignity] is a dream come true. [At the state institution] there was high level of corruption. [We] had no voice or independence…[it was] a disconnected community.

• Large state universities, national universities… they are more closed between the connections between the departments.

• [Dignity University] is open to change. It is not afraid of change. It is more flexible in processing those changes. And as far as we know the big universities in size, we are more mobile we can conduct those changes more quickly and rapidly… Here all departments, all different institutes interact very closely and very often.

**External demands led to a crisis of conscience.** For the people of Dignity University, the institutional values and mission were often experienced to be in conflict with societal and political influences. Participants described the tensions between their values with their work, and the external demands from government to have accredited programs. This dilemma was referred to as tension of conscience. Statements from interviews that support this theme include:

• How can we do? We are Christians. There were a lot of conflicts inside of our team, because how can we do [good work] because we must do everything right by divine
laws, church law, and we must be open to our society. Do right by society and do “good education.” But good education from the framework of state education and state institution.

- Should I look for another job? Will I try to stay and work through the turbulent times?
- We are way different from many state universities which are still pretty much shaped by the Soviet habits and heritage that they inherited from the Soviet times; there’s fairly high levels of corruption of those other types of entities.
- Government makes you busy and then you are happy once you got your papers; There is satisfaction, yet ‘perverse satisfaction’.
- You should stay Christian with values and approach solutions, and on another side you should be in system of state education because students need diploma recognized by the state.
- The [external] corruption creates a perverse reality; it creates tension.

This theme was further represented in the following statements regarding the continued influence of the Soviet-regime in Ukraine’s government, including the Ministry of Education:

- On one side it was very important for our students to receive recognized by the state diploma. That was very important and I understood…it is necessary to follow what state need from us in this curriculum in order [for students] to receive a recognized diploma. From another hand, every one of us understood that it is a very high price [we are] giving for this.
- Schizophrenia of thinking, a double standard, double way of thinking. It was very stressful. We were under pressure of the Ministry of Education’s system of
management, paradigm of thinking, of old, post-Soviet thinking. And from our point of view this thinking is over and we should change radically; our approaches to higher education are different.

- It was positive that we made a lot of steps and tried our best for it [accreditation]… we liked that our graduates could receive diplomas recognized by the state. There were lots of postulates [requirements] to fulfill that destroyed our curriculum. It was very stressful.

- If you are denied your right and possibility to be creative… you know you have to see some real results of your work. Not that you were able to gain something by fulfilling stupid rules. It is not a result in itself to go through these intricacies of bureaucratic rules and get what you think you wanted. And so it is a *perverse satisfaction*.

**The change process led to revisiting core values and beliefs.** Throughout the interviews, participants spoke about the mission of the university. Whether a faculty or staff member, who had been with the university for a long time, or someone new to the university adjusting to the culture, the values and vision shared by those at Dignity were an important influence on the work:

- I think when you have that upheaval and this kind of events within the country, in those moments you start to think about very existential questions. You think about your life, about your values, and what is most important for you. [voice shaking, eyes tearing up, long pause] So it is also a time of discovery or rediscovery of your core spiritual basis.

- I can work my values here. I can speak about my values at work. [Other] people also live with those values.
• You discover how important, first of all, relations with people. How dear people are and you need to appreciate your family, your kids, your coworkers, your community. You have to look at the positive side of these relationships… I remember that a lot of people were speaking about relationships, how important relationships are in our lives. Besides work, business it’s important that we are, like, a community. We have these everyday connections and these connections are important. We shared our joys, and we shared our grief.

• It’s important to keep it united around values, goals, and kind of preserve the nice, friendly, open and spiritual atmosphere that was from the beginning.

• A major value is the sense of community.

Revisiting core values and beliefs was also represented in statements related to a sense of purpose, and the mission and vision of Dignity University:

• You can work because you want it. Not just for money, but for the idea.

• I think it would be very difficult to do that [the work of a new university] without some kind of sense of mission of the university. Because that’s what inevitably sits in the back of your mind, the perception that what you do is really an important thing, and that in some way or another way that’s going to be helpful or changing… in changing the country or the environment.

• We will change Ukraine. We wanted to do something good.

• In a larger sense, the mission empowers you to an extent and gives you energy.

• Higher education is an investment into future generations. A good future generation is a pre-requisite for a stable country.
I think it would be very difficult to do that [the work of a new university] without some kind of sense of mission of the university. Because that’s what inevitably sits in the back of your mind, the perception that what you do is really an important thing, and that in some way or another way that’s going to be helpful or changing... in changing the country or the environment.

**Faith and spirituality influenced people’s experience with change.** The meaning of faith discovered in this study includes both an inner sense of conviction and commitment, as well as a connection to the divine within the context of a religious belief system. There were many statements from the interviews that supported this theme:

- This university was united around prayer. We tried to do things together, to show our peaceful protests together. I think that was helping. So it was both a very stressful experience, but sometimes in the moment of stress you also experience the beauty of friendship, and strength of prayer.

- Our faith keeps us here.

- It certainly takes some effort to make yourself mentally and spiritually ready to do this.

- Here at [Dignity], the community puts a lot of hope in God. It’s, like, a very spiritual community and that really helps just to do your work. Let’s work and hope that God will provide for us so we will be able to continue our work in the future. I would say the priests, the hope and prayer unites this community.

- The spiritual aspect of this academic community, it’s really strong. I think for a lot of people it was really an important factor, to put aside all worries and just work exactly
in this community. Not looking for other jobs. So despite there may be uncertainty, still put hope in God, working in this community, this university.

One participant explained that Dignity University, in its ambition to be a global university and make a difference in the 21st century, emphasized three modalities (of Christian life) for change and transformation that would subsequently become an important element of the university’s strategic plan: Communicating, witnessing, and service. These modalities were described during his interview, and in a paper he had presented at a conference in Rome in 2014. The also appear in the university’s strategic plan. He first described the modality of communicating:

Especially since the Soviet regime when it was too dangerous to be open, and people lived in fear and in hiding, after the collapse of the soviet regime, the people felt wounded. This problem can be healed through communication and by creating a space for communication; to speak, to talk, to be sincere and open, and spread this new habit.

Second, he explained the modality of witnessing change and a new reality:

People change by communicating with others and by witnessing and looking at others’ lives and experiences. Witnessing a new reality than what people are used to. For example, you can speak all you want about what corruption is, but to invite people to where there is no corruption, to experience what is corrupt-free. That kind of witnessing is transformative.

And last, he described service and sacrifice of one’s time for others or a cause:

Maidan was an example of how the sacrifice of many people for us to move forward. With service, there is some kind of sacrifice. For example, even spending
time with someone, for an hour, helping them or having a simple conversation with someone, and offer some kind of help and support. There needs to be some kind of action to help or serve.

Ultimately, these three modalities have become the pillars of how Dignity University actively engages in working toward its mission. They are believed to be the vehicles for change that can transcend the unfavorable conditions that have been encountered by the university.

**Summary of Findings from Interviews**

With the emerging design of interpretive case study research, the themes from participant interviews expanded beyond practical descriptions of their experience with change. Themes evolved into description of a more spiritual journey of personal growth amidst the change. Although the stress of change under particular circumstances were recognized and described by participants, the themes surrounding faith, hope, empowerment and resilience became a clear aspect of change for the members of the university community. The themes of this study appear to parallel what occurs in a planned change process, with an outcome that can be experienced as transformational. Perhaps it is possible that what has emerged from this study was a true example of transformation.

**Observations**

The interviews were arranged to take place at locations preferred by or convenient to the participants. This required that I travel between each campus location and building to meet with participants at various times of the day. In doing this, I was able to observe the activity across campuses over the course of several days during my two visits to the university. This allowed me to observe the natural elements and daily activities on campus and gain a better sense of the campus community and culture.
Open and global community. The experience of change and growth, and the vision of an open community, was not just a theme from interviews, but a very real observation during my time on the campuses during my study. In particular, I spent time in one of the newest buildings at the university, where a cafeteria and coffee shop were located on the first floor. We may compare this space to a campus “Student Center” that appears on many campuses in the United States. In addition, the cafeteria space was also used for large events, which were attended by people on and off campus. There were also faculty and program offices and classrooms in this building. It had been explained to me that the purpose of this building and the design of the first floor was to create an opportunity for people from the larger community to come on campus and experience what Dignity was about, and participate in events and programs for the public.

I spent a significant amount of time between interviews in the coffee shop during my study. During certain times of the day, the tables were full, and there appeared to be a significant amount of conversation and dialogue. It appeared that meetings would occur at the coffee shop on campus, as people would arrive and greet those already waiting at a table. Tables appeared to be occupied by people who could be students, faculty, community members, as well as parents with their children. On one particular day, it appeared as though mock job interviews with students were taking place at the tables surrounding me, perhaps as an opportunity to interview in English. During my second visit, which was over our American Thanksgiving holiday, I observed a large group of students viewing a Thanksgiving episode of the American sitcom, “Friends” in the cafeteria. It was explained to me that they were part of a program exploring other cultures and traditions.
During my two visits to the campuses, I also observed several events for the public that took place on campus. While I did not have the opportunity to attend the events, I did observe the preparations for the events, and was provided some brief description of the events taking place. One event was described as an event to address corruption in the public sphere, which was attended by people from the campus community, leaders, and public sector. Other events invited presenters and scholars from abroad to lecture on topics of global interest. The atmosphere on campus during such events was very positive, and people often spoke of events and activities as part of daily conversations on campus. These events were also publicized on campus and on social media. These observations align with the themes discovered from interviews related to the growth of the university, as well as efforts to be an open and more global campus.

**The spirit of Jean Vanier.** During my time on campus, I was offered the opportunity to tour the “collegium” at the residential campus, and learn more about the community members with disabilities living on the first floor, which was part of program on campus that engages people in the community with disabilities on campus. I was also invited to visit a facility in the community serving people with disabilities. In addition, the university provides space on one of its campuses in one of its buildings for the office of the L’Arche community, which they call “The Friends,” to operate their non-profit efforts to create communities for people with and without disabilities to live together.

As I learned of these efforts, the work of Jean Vanier (philosopher and theologian, and founder of the L’Arche communities) was often referenced. The initiatives on and off campus to integrate people with disabilities into the community were stated to be, “In the Spirit of Jean Vanier”, which reinforced the work of the university to create an open
community, and influence Ukrainian culture based on Christian values. The university established its *Emmaus Center of Spiritual Support for Persons with Special Needs* more than 10 years prior to this study. This represented the innovation of the university, and realization of the vision for a new Ukraine, beginning with the campus at Dignity.

**Review of Documents, Publications and Media**

Since the purpose of this study was to learn about the human experience with change, the primary source of data for this study was the interviews with faculty and staff at Dignity University. Other sources of data, including observations, documents review and review of media, were utilized to gain a broader understanding of the case and determine if themes, events, and contexts of change from the interviews are represented and reinforced from other sources. Stake (1995) described how documents can be key measures for the case, and can serve as substitutes for records that a researcher may not have access to. Given the circumstances of change at a national level, and the university’s efforts to become an open and transparent institution, review of public documents and media was determined to be a useful method for obtaining additional data to further understand of the case, the context of change, and the themes from the interviews.

**Documents and publications.** During one my visits to the university, I had the opportunity to obtain copies of publications to help provide additional understanding of the historical and contextual aspects of the case. In addition, the university has recently developed and published its strategic plan, which was available to the public in electronic format on the university’s website.

**Church of the Martyrs.** Through the interviews with participants, I learned about the influence of historical events on the people at Dignity University. In particular, the history of
religious oppression and loss of historical and religious texts, which the university has worked to recreate. I was able to obtain a copy of one publication referenced during an interview. The booklet, *Church of the Martyrs: The New Saints of Ukraine*, profiled religious figures and those who were faithful to the church, and provides history of the attacks on religious institutions and the church during periods of Russian, Soviet and Nazi occupation throughout the 20th century (Turij, 2006). Printed on its back cover is a quote of the late Pope John Paul II during a visit to Ukraine in 2001:

> These brothers and sisters of ours are the representatives that are known out of a multitude of anonymous heroes… who in the course of the twentieth century, the ‘century of martyrdom’, underwent persecution, violence in death rather than renounce their faith.

The power of the above statement was also represented in the interviews, and the themes related to faith and working for the mission. The experience and perseverance of the people of Ukraine throughout history, and in recent years as described by participants, are a testament to the resilience of the people of Ukraine and at Dignity University.

**Publications.** Faculty and staff at Dignity University were very active in scholarship, and often lectured locally and abroad about issues of importance to Ukraine, and the mission of the university. A conference paper was provided by one of the participants, which was delivered in Rome in September 2014 as a reflection on democratic citizenship in Ukraine and at the university. Many of the concepts from this paper represent the collective themes from this study. One of the themes from this study identified a “tension of conscience”, and had even been described as a “schizophrenia” and “double thinking” between core beliefs
and values amidst the societal and political influences, even after the collapse of the Soviet regime. The paper provided further understanding of this phenomenon:

One of the legacies of the Soviet time was a practice of leading a “divided” life.

While the communist ideology was gradually fading out, Ukraine was increasingly becoming more and more trapped into corrupt practices. Widespread corruption was not only undermining the country’s political, economical, legal, and social life, but foremost, it corrupted and perverted human relationships. However while corruption and hypocrisy were steadily occupying the life of many in the post-Soviet Ukraine, the need for an authentic human life started to evolve as well. (Participant’s paper, 2014).

The paper also addressed the sense of purpose and its role in a changing, post-Soviet society. As the university began to grow and change, it was important to create programs for students to earn diplomas and do good work in society. It was equally important to attend to residential life on the campus to provide an opportunity for personal growth and change, as well as a sense of community. This initiative was reflected in the paper:

The question we asked ourselves was the following: is there a way in which a university apart from conveying knowledge to the young people and helping them to explore and master the academic domains, can also provide an impetus and context for enhancing them to grow as caring, loving, conscientious, responsible, and generous individuals?

The answer was the collegium, which was reported to be an impetus of change for the staff and faculty-in residence that participated in this study.
A second publication obtained by the university was a recent book of essays that explores the “three minds” of political, social and global ethics from a European perspective. A joint venture with the university, it is an artifact that symbolizes what participants discussed as an effort to become a *global university* in working for the mission. It is also an example of the scholarly activities to address contemporary issues and contribute to the education of future generations in Ukraine. Issues of social justice and addressing social problems, sovereignty, and global technology are explored, and represent the context of change for many countries, from which changes in higher education may result.

For Dignity University, the collapse of the Soviet regime and subsequent revolutions have resulted in a deep sense of purpose and responsibility to humanity and the future, both in Ukraine and worldwide, that is grounded in faith in humanity and Christian values. As stated in the conference paper authored by one of the participants, “This is essentially a Christian approach which enables us to respond to an unrelenting need for the authentic life of many Ukrainians. This need is by far not limited to Ukraine, but it has a global dimension as well (2014, p.6).” Such references and scholarly works represent the university’s commitment to its mission and hope for the future in response to adversity and change.

*Strategy 2020.* Dignity University’s strategic plan illustrates the growth and change of the past decade, as well as the vision for the future and the *new generation of Ukraine.* Review of this document reinforced many of the themes and statements from participants who described the changes at Dignity. The organizational structure, an outline of its programs and institutes, as well as organizations and affiliates are outlined and represent the initiatives for forming a global and open university that offers opportunities for students,
faculty, and community. The growth at the university with the addition of new buildings, campus locations, and programs is a focus on the strategic plan.

Of particular significance in this document was the introduction written by Dignity University’s founding leader, who continues to serve as President of the university while serving as a Bishop in Europe. His address to readers described the purpose and process of the development of their plan and vision:

In a time of special challenges and trials for Ukraine and the world, the University is called by Christ’s Church and society to new tasks, and so it needs a well-developed and integrated strategy. At the end of 2014, the university engaged in a thorough strategic planning process, starting with prayer and deep reflection about its goals and values, which helped community to articulate numerous points for development… This planning process, which involved staff, students, and approval by the university Senate, is itself an expression of our values of openness, grounded in our foundation in faith, solidarity for service, and professionalism. Together we are called to create new projects and present unexplored horizons for the University and the country. (p. 2)

The vision and values of the university, which were communicated by participants as a source of focus and strength, were also communicated in the strategic plan. For example, the vision highlights creating a culture of “witnessing, serving, and communicating” as a means of spiritual formation and influence on society, both in Ukraine and abroad. The strategic plan document serves both as a piece of marketing, and an artifact that represents the process of change, as well as the faith and hope for the future that has empowered the people of Dignity through very difficult times.
**Other media.** In addition to documents and publications, I viewed to explore the context of the change experienced at Dignity University. First, a promotional video created by a graduate of the university’s journalism school was viewed for content that connected to the identified themes. Second, a documentary film about Euromaidan was viewed to gain better understanding of the relevance of a national revolution on the country. Given Dignity’s involvement in Euromaidan and the stress and loss experienced as a result, gaining a better understanding of this event was important for this study.

**Promotional video.** A graduate of Dignity University’s journalism program created a video about the university; its history, its growth, and its mission for Ukraine. In addition to portraying the life and activity on campus, people from the community, public figures, and graduates of Dignity shared their perspective and experience of the role of the university in Ukraine. The statements of those in the video connect with the themes identified in the participant interviews regarding the growth and change of the university amidst a larger context of change in the Ukraine.

The context of change and the role of the university in post-Soviet Ukrainian society were commented on by those portrayed. A member of the parliament, and chair of the parliamentary committee for science and education, was highlighted in the video describing the “new values” of the university, stating that the values create “a moral and ethical foundation, very important and necessary for Ukraine today for personal and professional development.” Those outside of the university recognize the personal transformation of students, amidst the change at the university and in the country.

The influences of faith amidst stressful and tragic events are illustrated by the commitment to service and response to the war in Ukraine. A Colonel from a military
hospital shared his perspective of priests and students from Dignity who have volunteered to provide pastoral care to those wounded in the war with Russia in the eastern part of the country. A student volunteer of the efforts to support the military stated, “The soldiers feel they are not forgotten, and that Ukraine is with them. They’re very happy and say this is a little light in dark times.”

The university’s volunteer brigade has worked to help set up hospitals and serve those suffering from the consequences of the war. The volunteer work of a graduate and faculty member of the university was highlighted. The faculty member working with the volunteer brigade explained, “Today’s challenges are very important, crucial. On the one hand, it is terrible that so many people must suffer. On the other hand, many people are showing solidarity and are more deeply analyzing the meaning of their lives.” The graduate of Dignity who produced the video made a statement as a member of the campus community during recent years:

The journalism school renewed my faith in journalism. Living at the collegium and being a student [at Dignity] renewed my faith in people. I came to understand what community means. What it means to have a circle of people who count on you.

These statements encompass what many participants of the study described as the experience of change and transformation amidst stressful and difficult times.

**Documentary film.** In 2015, a documentary film about Euromaidan was released titled, *Winter on Fire: Ukraine’s Fight for Freedom.* The film depicts the story of the events on Maiden from November 2013 through February 2014, and included actual video of the protests and violence, and testimonials from people who participated. In their own words,
Ukrainians tell the story of betrayal and brutality by their government, and how these events opened the wounds of the past for many. Throughout the film there were statements that mirrored those of participants of the study about Dignity University regarding a vision for the future, and working for that despite the difficulties faced. As I watched the film, I could make parallels between the faith, hope and resilience of those at Dignity with that of the demonstrators during Euromaidan. People were empowered by the collective action toward a shared goal that was inspiring. As one man in the film stated, “Look at these people and how inspired they are. Not because of alcohol or drugs, but because of togetherness.”

They believed that their peaceful protests would have impact, as they did during the Orange Revolution. Peaceful protests developed into tensions, which then erupted into violence by police. The violence was not expected. Watching this film helped me develop a deeper understanding of the emotional and psychological experience of those at Dignity, whose friends and colleagues were participating in the demonstrations. Video of police beating unarmed demonstrators as they lay on the ground covering their heads; many police running by stop to kick and beat with stick as they on the ground or as people try to run and hide. The images of blood and brain matter on the pavement made the horror of this tragic event much more real.

The community of demonstrators shared in the grief and loss of one of its own, Serhiy Nigoyan, who became a symbol of the people as one of the first people to be killed by the Berkut forces. One very young demonstrator described how it was one of worst moments, when police shot Serhiy. Another shared how many who knew him described Serhiy, “How pure, how beautiful and how open this human being was.” There was parallel between the experience of loss among of a well-liked member of the demonstrations, and the experience
of the faculty and staff at Dignity University and the loss of a faculty member during the revolution. The individual lost became somewhat of a symbol of the sacrifices made for their country, and represents the deep conviction of the people of Ukraine who believe in a better future. In essence, the person becomes a martyr, as many religious figures became during the 19th century during the years of religious oppression while occupied by the Soviet regime.

What began as a protest about European membership became a fight for their freedom and civil rights. As one demonstrator stated, “To reverse the existing political regime.” This statement had historical relevance, much like statements made by participants of the study. The difficulties experienced in the present triggered memories of the past; of the times of war, oppression and Soviet occupation in the 20th century. It was also a reminder of what the people were able to overcome, as a nation. Described as a “People’s army”, which “Taught Ukrainian youth how to organize themselves.” These statements connected well with statements by my participants about the responsibility to make changes on their own, and the strength and empowerment that comes from adversity and a shared vision. As stated in the film, “They were driven to make this country better.”

Community, solidarity, and togetherness were also portrayed as a large part of the experience. The film recognized how people from all ages, people with disabilities on crutches, teachers, doctors, street cleaners, and people from different religions came together from Kyiv and all over the country. They came to end corruption, for freedom and togetherness, as brothers and sisters. It was stated that these events, “Showed how important the spirit of unity is.” This was also realization among those who participated in the study, as well as a value shared by the culture.
Much like the vision of Dignity University for “Communicating, witnessing, and service” in the spiritual formation of those who join the community, the events of Euromaidan resulted in similar conclusions. In a news conference included in the film, Catherine Ashton, European High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy responded to the events on Maidan urging, “The importance of dialogue and the importance of listening to what people are saying.” One final statement in the film summarizes the outcome of tragic events and represents in the transformation and resilience of a community that was similar to themes among this study’s participants: “Maidan was a singular experience, that everyone felt real unity, real patriotism, and felt the presence of God.”

Summary of Findings

Review of documents and other media was utilized as an opportunity to gain a broader understanding of the context of the change at Dignity University. Viewing the additional material provided additional perspective of the change, and reinforced elements of the shared experience and circumstances of change. The themes described by participants were also recognized in the documents and media related to Dignity university and events in Ukraine. Through review of other material, I was able to identify a similar process of change that was discovered through the emerging themes from interviews (see Table 4). Ultimately, what emerged from both the interviews and the other material reviewed were themes of faith, spirituality, and change resulting from stressful circumstances.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>External demands led to a crisis of conscience</th>
<th>The change process led to revisiting core values and beliefs</th>
<th>Faith and Spirituality</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The individual experience of change was multilayered and multifaceted</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Observations</strong></td>
<td>Open and global community on new campus; student center &amp; collegium</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>“The Spirit of Jean Vanier” and realizing the new vision for Dignity University and Ukraine</td>
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<td>“The Spirit of Jean Vanier” and realizing the new vision for Dignity University and Ukraine</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Documents</strong></td>
<td>Strategic Plan 2020 outlines the rapid growth described by participants</td>
<td>Church of Martyrs publication and history of persecution</td>
<td>Strategic Plan 2020</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Church of Martyrs publication and history of persecution</td>
<td>“A divided life” in paper by participant</td>
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<td>“Of three minds” of political, social and global ethics publication</td>
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<td><strong>Media</strong></td>
<td>Euromaidan: Winter on Fire: Ukraine’s Fight for Freedom (documentary film)</td>
<td>Winter on Fire: Ukraine’s Fight for Freedom (documentary film)</td>
<td>Dignity University’s promotional video; commitment to service for Ukraine</td>
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<td>Dignity University’s promotional video; commitment to service for Ukraine</td>
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Chapter 5
Discussion of Findings

What began as an endeavor to understand the human experience of change for those within an organization, evolved into a journey and revelation of the deeper spiritual aspects of a human system committed to a larger purpose. I intended to learn more about the experiences of difficult change in a higher education institution. Interest in this research originated from my prior experience and study of organizational change theories, and my desire to explore the circumstances surrounding or precipitating change, learn more about the experiences of faculty and staff throughout the change process, and the extent to which they may have experienced the change as stress and/or loss. As themes began to emerge from my interviews, it became very clear that while change may be experienced as stressful, it is the response to that difficulty reveals the strength that comes from the human spirit, faith, hope, and a deep sense of purpose.

What was reported by participants and observed during this study is interpreted as the different phases or stages of change and the differences amongst individuals and where they were in the change process at the time of the interviews. Therefore, the discussion of the findings references the contemporary models of change described in the review of the literature in Chapter 2 of this paper. In order to further explore the meaning of the themes that emerged, other concepts from the literature related to organizations and the workplace are integrated into the discussion.

The Multi-layered and Multifaceted Experience of Change

While change can occur as a natural process, change is often precipitated by events or circumstances that create the opportunity for change. By leaving the question open to
participants’ individual experiences with change, I was able to gain a better understanding of the various circumstances from the participant’s perspectives. If I had selected one specific factor, it may have limited participants’ responses depending on how relevant the specific circumstance was to each person interviewed. When asked about their experience with change that was difficult or stressful, participants shared the circumstances surrounding the change, which revealed multiple factors that were influential. Factors both internal and external to the university were identified, including the national revolution of Euromaidan, which was of particular importance to the university, and the people of Ukraine.

Jeffreys’ (2005) created categories outlining circumstances and precipitating factors as employee change and loss, workplace upheaval, and massive impacts external to the organization (see Table 5). For Dignity University, there were factors that fell into all three of Jeffreys’ categories, which are reflected in some of the findings of this study.

Table 5

*Jeffreys’ (2005) Precipitating Factors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Massive Impacts</th>
<th>Workplace Upheaval</th>
<th>Employee Changes/Loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Markets</td>
<td>Layoffs</td>
<td>Colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Mergers</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globalization</td>
<td>Bankruptcies</td>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disasters</td>
<td>Outsourcing</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deaths &amp; Illness</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The historical and societal events, as well as external influences described in the findings, fit in Jeffreys’ category of “massive impacts” (2005). Until changes in government policy in September 2014, accreditation requirements by the Ministry of Education was a significant stressor, and were even perceived as a threat to Dignity University. The death of a faculty member involved in the protests during Euromaidan would fit the category of workplace
upheaval and a significant loss to the university. In addition to the influence of events that may have precipitated the change the, multiple participants spoke of the rapid growth of the university as significant. Dignity established itself as a private university in the aftermath of the end of Soviet occupation, and at a time when resources were limited. Yet, the university’s vision for Ukraine was expanding amidst the revival of Christianity in the country. The national uncertainty of the first several years seemed to be experienced as somewhat of an upheaval within the university, as well as constant growth and change. This was particularly compelling given the continued Soviet ways that remained influential in Ukraine’s government.

The work of both Jeffreys (2005) and Bridges (2009) provided frameworks for understanding changes in organizations as transitions, and in the context of grief and loss. Both authors identify the need for time to grieve, as well as understanding of grief reactions. Understanding the individual reactions to change was an integral part of this study. What was discovered was an assumption in my original research question, focusing only on change as stressful. Through interviews it was found that while some participants identified with the idea that change was stressful or difficult, for others the experience was reframed as “challenges.” The reframing of “stressful” may be interpreted as part of the transition and adjustment phase identified by Jeffreys (2005), and the “neutral phase” identified by Bridges (2009). The difference among participants and their perceptions and descriptions of stress and change reinforces the subjective and individual nature of the findings of this study. It also represents the differences in progression through change among individuals within the same organization. Jeffreys’ (2005) use of the term *evolution* supports the understanding that change is a natural, gradual process that may be influenced by the surroundings, and may be
experienced differently among individuals in the same organization.

Table 6

*Jeffreys’ (2005) Evolution of Individuals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grief Reaction</th>
<th>Transition/Adjustment</th>
<th>Healing and Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings, Attitudes,</td>
<td>Accepting the loss, Addressing the pain</td>
<td>Individual &amp; organizational adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td>Making the needed changes, Developing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>new group identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bridges’ (2009) model for transitions follows a similar path for understanding the reactions to change, framing the experience as a normal grieving process. With both models, the reactions to change are normalized, and reframed as a sometimes painful, yet necessary part of change in order to move forward in a healthy manner with a sense of renewal and growth.

Figure 3. *Bridges’ Three Phases of Transition*

The multiple precipitating factors and circumstances identified by participants, as well as the subjective perceptions of stress, could explain how reactions to change may vary.
For some, the adjustment to the organizational culture was stressful and challenging. It was mentioned that some people chose to leave the university, yet others were able to adjust and adapt. This reframing seemed relevant to the study as a possible indicator of cultural preference to speak only positively about events and the institution. In addition, this reframing, along with reference to positive stress in conjunction with negative stress, could be symbolic of the last phase of the change process. Jeffreys (2005) describes the stage of growth and healing as adaptation by the individuals and organization to the new conditions.

Bridges (2009) describes this phase as a *new beginning*, which is the development of a new identity, new energy, and a new sense of purpose that makes the change begin to work.

Stressful events may not just be single, catastrophic incidents that create fear. Stress can be caused by perceived or real threats by external influences, much like what was experienced during the period of restrictive policy on accreditation imposed by the Ministry of Education in Ukraine, which left some departments feeling persecuted by the government and under a threat of closure. In an effort to sustain itself as a university and provide diplomas to students from accredited program, there was no choice but to comply and continue through bureaucratic processes that hindered what they truly believed to be the purpose of educating their students. Although the growth of the university and having accredited programs was perceived as positive, for some, this came with stress over what may be lost as a result:

- It was positive that we made a lot of steps and tried our best for it [accreditation]… we liked that our graduates could receive diplomas recognized by the state. There were lots of postulates [requirements] to fulfill that destroyed our curriculum. It was very stressful.
• On one side it was very important for our students to receive diplomas recognized by the state. That was very important and I understood…it is necessary to follow what state need from us in this curriculum in order [for students] to receive a recognized diploma. From another hand, every one of us understood that it is a very high price [we are] giving for this.

This type of reflection is an indicator of what is referred to as “letting go” of what was in preparation for what is new (Bridges, 2009). Rather than perceiving this as dwelling on the past or resisting change, this is interpreted as a sense of value in honoring the past in order to look to the future in how participants spoke of the history of the university and their country as a relevant aspect of change that should be communicated for this study.

Another aspect of stress recognized in this study was the impact of Euromaidan. Throughout the interviews and in media, many references were made to events of the past and impact on their country. It appeared that the revolution had re-opened some old wounds, bringing to the surface some fears and sadness. This was particularly evident during one interview with a participant who spoke about the loss of a faculty member during the protests on Maidan. As she spoke of the events leading to his death, she spontaneously and unexpectedly erupted into tears. Such a response is consistent with the responses to grief, loss and trauma found in the literature (Bowlby, 1982; Jeffreys 2005; & Kubler-Ross, 1997).

Although Euromaidan was a stressful event resulting in death and loss for the nation and the university, it is also perceived as a triumph for Ukraine and its future. The changes at a high level of government created a sense of empowerment for the people of Ukraine. New leadership and subsequent changes in policy by the Ministry of Education created new freedoms for Dignity to continue to develop its new programs and resume its work toward it
mission for Ukraine and the common good.

“The only thing that is constant is change” (Heraclitus, as cited in Plato’s Cratylus, 402a). This old quote represents the collective experience of those who participated in my study. Rapid growth and innovation at Dignity University were described by a number of the participants of the study. A leader of the institution who participated in the study described this:

One thing that is really a challenge to me is rapid growth… opening new departments and new programs, and also clearly being part of very innovative enterprise. To the extent that there is not really any other university of this kind in Ukraine [that] we would be able somehow to follow or take advantage of whatever they are doing or achieving. We are pretty much different in what we are trying to achieve… almost everything we are doing, we are doing for the first time.

The rapid growth and innovation was also illustrated in the university’s strategic plan, which was created throughout a period of several years of engaging in a comprehensive strategic planning process. All of which occurred as the university was experiencing multiple stressors and changes both internally and externally. As a private, Christian university, state funding was not accessible, so financial restrictions were limiting in a country where philanthropy was a new concept. Although occupation by the Soviet regime ended more than 20 years ago, government policy on educational institutions continued to be heavily bureaucratic and restrictive for a private university.

Obenchain, Johnson, and Dion (2004) studied adoption of innovation, organizational culture, and the distinctions between Christian institutions, private independent institutions,
and public institutions. The purpose of their study was to identify how organizational culture may impact innovation in Christian institutions of higher learning. What appeared to be relevant about their research in relationship to this study was the focus on Christian institutions, aspects of the culture and innovation.

As participants told their stories of change at Dignity University within the context of post-Soviet Ukraine, the connection between a vision for the future of Ukraine and the need for innovation in higher education through new programs was conveyed:

- Together we are called to create new projects and present unexplored horizons for the University and the country.
- [Dignity University] is open to change. It is not afraid of change. It is more flexible in processing those changes. And as far as we know the big universities in size, we are more mobile we can conduct those changes more quickly and rapidly.

The authors found that despite what may be perceived as conservative values, along with limited resources that may inhibit innovation, Christian universities actually fell between private-independent and public universities in their adoption of innovation (Obenchain, Johnson, & Dion, 2004). Their study also acknowledged the financial challenges of tuition-dependent institutions, as well as the pressures of globalization, technology, and market changes. These external factors were relevant aspects of change for Dignity University as Ukraine sought a new post-Soviet identity, and the Church began to reestablish itself in society:

- We had to be quite dynamic and entrepreneurial to compete with other universities and to develop and grow under conditions that were not so favorable.
- We were only the first university that was [a] fundraising university to a very high,
high extent. This was something very unique in the country. We were only the first university that was [a] fundraising university to a very high, high extent. This was something very unique in the country.

Amidst the external pressures imposed on the university to obtain its own funding and meet requirements for accreditation, Dignity proceeded to grow and develop through many difficult years. The continued innovation and addition of new programs following difficult times appears to be consistent with the finals phases of adaptation, growth, and new beginnings for the university (Jeffreys, 2005 & Bridges, 2009).

The growth at Dignity and efforts to create a campus culture was realized by the addition of the collegium and other new physical structures on a new location to create a residential college atmosphere. What I discovered through my study and time on campus was that the collegium was much more than what we know as “student housing” in the United States. It is a means of acculturation for students, faculty, and staff. At the collegium students, faculty and staff live their daily lives as a community, developing relationships. Faculty and staff described the experience of living among students, and both the challenges and benefits of truly knowing the students. It created an atmosphere that resembles that of a family. Citing the work of Edgar Schein and many other theorists, Obenchain, Johnson, and Dion (2004) described organizational culture types in their study of colleges and universities. One in particular ascribed to a human relations model, emphasizing cohesiveness, participation, teamwork, sense of family, and interpersonal cohesion.

The collegium represents the vision of creating an open, inclusive and global community for its students. People with disabilities from the community reside at the collegium, and campus visitors from abroad are often accommodated there is order to create
an open culture on campus. This seems consistent with what Obenchain, Johnson, and Dion (2004) included in their study related to an open systems model. This emphasizes creativity, flexibility, adaptability, growth and innovation. The building adjacent to the collegium is open to the public, has a dining hall and coffee shop, and many public events are hosted there. Dignity emphasized personal and professional development, as well as creating an open and global society in post-Soviet Ukraine. The collegium is a very practical and powerful opportunity to be consistent with its espoused values.

**A Crisis of Conscience is Anything but a “Neutral Zone”**

Bridges (2009) described the middle phase of transitions as the *neutral zone*. However, that phrase is somewhat misleading. In reality, this phase is described as a period when things are in flux, there are ambiguities, more anxiety, and individuals and an organization are caught “between two somewheres” (p. 40) of letting go and moving forward. For the faculty and staff impacted by accreditation requirements and imposition on their curriculum and way of teaching, this was a very stressful time. This period as a time prior to Euromaidan had been described as *stagnation*. The language used to describe the ethical and moral dilemmas experienced included phrases such as *double consciousness*, *schizophrenia* and *tension of our conscience*. Such statements were powerful to hear, and were interpreted as incongruence between the values of the individuals and the policies and requirements imposed on the university by the government. The phrase “tension of conscience” was a very powerful statement used to describe the stress that was experienced as a result of accreditation. Multiple participants described their perspectives of the *crisis of conscience*: 
• Government makes you busy and then you are happy once you got your papers; There is satisfaction, yet ‘perverse satisfaction’.

• Schizophrenia of thinking, a double standard, double way of thinking. It was very stressful. We were under pressure of the Ministry of Education’s system of management, paradigm of thinking, of old, post-Soviet thinking. And from our point of view this thinking is over and we should change radically; our approaches to higher education are different.

• On one side it was very important for our students to receive recognized by the state diploma. That was very important and I understood…it is necessary to follow what state need from us in this curriculum in order [for students] to receive a recognized diploma. From another hand, every one of us understood that it is a very high price we are giving for this.

• It was positive that we made a lot of steps and tried our best for it [accreditation]…we liked that our graduates could receive diplomas recognized by the state. There were lots of postulates [requirements] to fulfill that destroyed our curriculum. It was very stressful.

It cannot be speculated what may have occurred without the changes in policy for accreditation in September of 2014, following Euromaidan. The changes created freedom for the university to move forward with its plans for growth and expansion of new degree programs, and allowed them more freedom with designing curriculum. Without the change in circumstances, this study may have discovered something very different.
Core Beliefs and Values can Transcend Amidst Adverse Conditions

The circumstances surrounding the change at the university created stress that resulted in introspection and exploration of core beliefs and values. For some, there were periods of doubt and uncertainty. Whether during the early years of financial instability, or in adjusting to the changing culture on campus, there was reflection about how one’s beliefs and values may work within the organizational context. Examples included:

- Should I look for another job? Will I try to stay and work through the turbulent times?
- You should stay Christian with values and approach solutions, and on another side you should be in system of state education because students need diploma recognized by the state.
- I think when you have that upheaval and this kind of events within the country, in those moments you start to think about very existential questions. You think about your life, about your values, and what is most important for you. So it is also a time of discovery or rediscovery of your core spiritual basis.

The concept of subjective fit was interesting to explore in conjunction with the participants’ revisiting their core beliefs and values. It can be best explored as a dynamic between the individual and the environment, which can create stress. A study done by Newton and Jimmieson (2009) attempted to identify specific factors related to subjective fit with organizational culture work stressor-adjustment relationship. Their study was unable to conclude strong correlations, yet it provided a comprehensive exploration of the variables that may influence or buffer the amount of stress experienced with adjustment to the workplace. This concept refers to how well employees perceive or believe their own characteristics match those of the organization. Value congruence, sense of belonging,
organizational identification, shared social identity, and social supports were all described within the context of subjective fit and may act as buffers with work related stress and overall adjustment. Their research supports the theme related to participants’ revisiting core beliefs and values, and their statements that represent their continued commitment to the mission and work of the university:

- I think it would be very difficult to do that [the work of a new university] without some kind of sense of mission of the university. Because that’s what inevitably sits in the back of your mind, the perception that what you do is really an important thing.
- It’s important to keep it united around values, goals, and kind of preserve the nice, friendly, open and spiritual atmosphere that was from the beginning.
- I can work my values here. I can speak about my values at work. [Other] people also live with those values.
- Besides work [and] business it’s important that we are, like, a community. We have these everyday connections and these connections are important. We shared our joys, and we shared our grief.

Amidst all of the changes, adjustment and stress, the people of Dignity University have continued to work for the vision and mission amidst some very challenges circumstances. It was mentioned that some people chose to leave the university, yet most chose to stay and continue their work despite uncertainty. This led to more curiosity about the meaning of this commitment to the mission and persevering through some very difficult circumstances. Many participants spoke of the rewards of the work and belief in the mission. As explored earlier, subjective fit, values congruence, sense of belonging, and social support from the campus community may help us understand this continued commitment.
It was in the context of work and vocation that I found another source to help explain what I was hearing from participants. Sayers (1974) wrote extensively on the Christian understanding of the purpose of work. She offers a few propositions that are well suited for this study. Her first assertion stated, “work is not, primarily, a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do” (p. 73). This means that the work one does must be a full expression of the person mentally, spiritually, and physically. The people of Dignity gave of themselves to the work and the mission, which was demonstrated by those choosing to live in the collegium among students, and those who chose to come to Dignity and immerse themselves in the organizational culture despite the stress and challenges of the adjustment. Participants new to Dignity spoke about how the work and activity on the campus went beyond a traditional workday. And within the workday, adjusting to the number of meetings and other kinds of involvement were an important part of the work culture. When viewing the organization as having a life of its own, it is as thought each faculty and staff member becomes a part of that life.

Sayers (1974) also explained vocation in a secular context, reinforcing that when a person is called to secular work, it is as true a vocation as religious work. A person may serve God in his/her work as long as the work is without degradation. This was especially relevant as Dignity University implemented its strategic plan by creating new programs and degrees for students to enter careers in the public sector. The following statements by participants in the study help articulate this idea:

- We were trying to look for alternative ways. A way to channel energy… a way to get real delight… genuine delight from the results of one’s work.
- I can work my values here.
Developing programs beyond the original programs in church history, theology, philosophy, and the humanities, such as business, journalism, and public administration created opportunities for graduates to live the mission and serve God through their work, and ultimately, contribute to the common good of Ukraine.

A third and very powerful message from Sayers (1974) challenges our contemporary understanding of “service.” She emphasized, “the worker’s first duty is to serve the work” (p. 80). In doing so, the work will serve its purpose. I now recognize how some participants came to Dignity to serve the work of the university and its mission. The type of the work or position held sometimes seemed secondary to doing work that was needed. There were multiple participants who had served in multiple roles, and had accepted new appointments with acceptance and commitment. For most, it did not seem to be a matter of promotion, or achieving new status and position, but serving the work of the university. Participating in the creation of projects and seeing the results can be a source of inspiration and “inner feeling of being self-realized” through the work. Dignity’s President articulated how the vision for the university aligns with Sayers’ (1974) propositions, in his introduction of Strategy 2020:

> It is important to foster a true respect for God and one’s neighbor. Be critical and creative, build up, don’t humiliate, bless and do not curse, work and don’t complain, study, pray, be tolerant, and be fruitful. The final criterion for evaluating the strategy will be the university’s ability to learn and teach others how to live with dignity, honesty, in God’s peace and joy. (p. 2)

**Faith and Spirituality as Sources of Hope and Resilience**

Throughout this study, themes surrounding values, beliefs, faith, hope, vision, and mission have been at the forefront of how Dignity University has responded to stressors and
hardship. For the participants of this study, the result has been a renewed vision of the purpose of the work. The stress and hardship seemed to result in reflection and inner exploration for many of the participants. For many, this brought them toward a higher consciousness of thought and awareness of their core beliefs. The participants of this study have persevered despite tremendous stress and loss, and they have continued to build a university community based on faith and spirituality.

Recognition of the complementary relationship of stress and resilience as a human dynamic emerged from the stories shared by participants. When I began my interviews asking questions specifically about stress and difficulty, I also began to realize through their stories that there was a positive aspect to experiencing adversity for this organization. I also heard about the importance of faith, hope, and the deep conviction many have for doing the work for the mission. It is here where faith and spirituality as sources of hope and resilience became a part of my findings.

While the research and literature on reactions to stress and loss provide descriptions of behaviors and symptoms that may be exhibited, it is also important to be aware of the human capacity for change and resilience. Resilience has been globally defined as the ability to recover or “bounce back” from adversity or hardship. For some this has been misinterpreted to mean that it is the ability to remain “tough” without becoming vulnerable. To the contrary, it is the ability to recover from events that may “knock us down,” and the ability to get back up and move forward. Canney’s (2012) study of resilience in higher education revealed factors that contributed to resiliency. Two subthemes from her study were also discovered in the stories shared by participants of this study. These include dedication and commitment of faculty, staff and administrators leading to success, and the vision to add
new academic disciplines and programs to expand opportunities for students.

Pulley and Wakefield (2002) described several elements of resiliency in work and career, “acceptance of change, continuous learning, self-empowerment, sense of purpose, personal and professional networks, reflection, skill shifting, and your relationship money” (p. 9). While all of these elements appear relevant to this study, there are three that connect well with the stories shared by participants: acceptance of change, sense of purpose, and reflection. These elements are consistent with the final phases of change and adaptation in Jeffreys’ (2005) and Bridges’ (2009) models. It was not just in their stories that this became apparent, but also through my observations of their ability to reflect and honor the past in order to move forward using those experiences as lessons.

Discovering the role of faith and spirituality as a source of hope and resilience for the people at Dignity University was of particular significance. This study was not intended to define the meaning of faith, so I am using this term to represent what was discovered regarding the role of a deep belief system, religiously and/or spiritually, that is a core source of strength for the individual. Faith may have relevance in a secular context, yet for this case, Christianity was part of the foundation of the university. In addition, the role of prayer for individuals and the organizational culture was apparent. Both spirituality and religiosity has been correlated with psychological health and resiliency, in addition to being a moderating factor in the relationship between perceived stress and psychological functioning (Reutter & Bigatti, 2014).

**Leadership has influence in fostering resiliency and change.** Several participants discussed the role of leadership at multiple levels, and changes at departmental levels. While it could be assumed that the change in Rector was a significant stressor, in and of itself it
wasn’t a predominant issue expressed by those participated in the study. Whether a change in managers of a department, or the change in Rector of the university, changes in leadership and different management styles appeared to result in reactions, including stress, which would be considered normal under such circumstances. Worry about the unknown of a new leader seemed to represent the importance of the role of leadership at the university, especially amidst the multiple circumstances encountered by Dignity University since its establishment. The former Rector continues to serve as President of the University, and the new Rector was familiar to people since he had been with the university for many years in another leadership position.

Argyris (1998) described how empowerment and internal commitment to an organization is developed through participation during a change process. At Dignity, there seemed to be something deeper that drove participants to transcend stressful circumstances, and continue to contribute to the vision rather than fall into a pattern of despair. Studies found Christian institutions tend to be characterized as having strong participatory leadership, momentum as an organization, and a very distinct organizational culture (Flowers, 1992, as cited in Obenchain, Johnson, & Dion, 2004). Dignity University seemed to display the features of a more open and participatory organization, even with report of some minor bureaucratic procedures on the administrative side of the University’s functions. As stated by the university’s president in his speech introducing the Strategy 2020:

This planning process, which involved staff, students, and approval by the university Senate is itself an expression of our values of openness, grounded in our foundation in faith, solidarity for service, and professionalism. Together are called to create new projects and present unexplored horizons for the University and the country. (p. 2)
Despite the external pressures and conditions faced by Dignity University, it appeared that the organizational culture may be the source of the innovation that helped it maintain its vision through stressful times, and changes in policy at a government level has created the opportunity for Dignity to realize its goals.

Their founding leader guided them through the early years of growth and its challenges, not only in practical matters, but as their spiritual leader, as well. As the original source of the vision for the university and its role in Ukrainian society, the anticipation of his succession and transition to a new leader seemed to create uncertainty for a period of time. Norman, Luthan, and Luthan (2005) described their study of the contagion of hopeful leaders in organizations. They explained how in turbulent times, organizational leaders are able to maintain their vision. They possess and continue to develop psychological strengths, such as hope, in themselves, their followers, and the organization. This contributes to the resiliency of the organization as a whole.

As I read about the contagion effect of hopeful leaders (Norman, Luthan, & Luthan, 2005), I was able to recognize deeper meaning in what I had heard from participants. Although the change in leadership was difficult, the strength of the rector’s leadership from the university’s start had transcended the transition and his followers continued to move forward. Although he was appointed to a new role as a leader with the church in Europe, he remained a leader for the university in a different capacity as President of the University.

Canney’s (2012) study of resilience in higher education revealed themes related to overcoming adversity and difficulties, change and transitions, and the influence of visionary leaders. Leadership was identified as influential with change and overcoming adversity. This was represented in statements captured from interviews:
Inspiration came from the administration. [Dignity] can change Ukraine. We will change it, but we will need to build our small community and be an example of how to live.

At hard times our leaders tried to gather us together to say ‘don’t be afraid’. You have a chance to make change in the system. You must say it loud for them… Don’t be afraid.

The mission of the university continues to drive their efforts with the leadership of the new rector and other leaders who are present on campus working to implement the many goals established and continue the vision and mission. The literature continues to grow in its exploration of faith and spirituality in the workplace. Whether a religious-based or secular setting, faith and spirituality is becoming a consideration in the literature on management as management models evolve and become more holistic (Neal, 2013). Spirituality, faith, wisdom and hope continue to be recognized as influential aspects of leadership in organizations and recognizing who are the difference makers (Waddock & Speckler, 2013). A sense of hope is imperative amidst difficult times and can influence positive outcomes. For Dignity University, a sense of hope was imperative to sustaining the mission and vision.

This is supported in the work of Norman, Luthan, and Luthan (2005), who described the contagion of hopeful leaders in organizations. The importance of leadership possessing and modeling a sense of hope can have significant influence on an organization, which was apparent at Dignity University. They explained how in turbulent times, organizational leaders are able to maintain their vision. Hopeful leaders possess and continue to develop psychological strengths, such as hope, in themselves, their followers, and the organization. This contributes to the resiliency of the organization as a whole.
Throughout this study, this sense of hope was both referenced and experienced through my interactions with the people of Dignity University, reinforcing the importance of hope in the face of adversity. In her work on the art of leadership, Adler (2006) made a powerful statement that helps conclude this concept, “Hope is what people bring to a situation; hope is what leaders bring to their organizations and to the world” (p. 486).

**Summary of the Experience with Change**

“Growth is sometimes painful and change can be alarming” was a statement made by the Dignity’s President in his address at the introduction of Strategy 2020 (p. 2). The purpose of this study was to learn about the human experience with change in a university as a stressful experience. The research question and questions for interviews were designed to gather stories from participants about their experiences. As the study progressed, I learned about the many stressful and difficult circumstances the members of this university community had encountered and how they were impacted. While the perceptions of the experience with stressful change varied among individuals, there was a collective experience with change that involved an internal process along with what was happening in the environment.

Reflecting on meaning, purpose, faith and values appeared to be an integral part of the change process for many of the participants. Participants both described and demonstrated their reflective process during the interviews. What I discovered as the study progressed was that I may have been observing individuals and possibly an organization in the process of transformation. Throughout the interviews, most participants described their experiences with change and stress, including their thoughts and emotions. There appeared to be reflection and introspection. Some participants described a deeper sadness and the
realization of core beliefs and values as a result of change and loss. The hardship and loss were described as an opportunity to really explore what is most important, and participants found themselves challenged to revisit the very core of their belief system.

Amidst hardship and loss, there was deep reflection followed by a raised awareness that appeared transformational. What emerged was a deep sense of conviction and commitment to the work and mission of the university, as well as faith and hope that transcended and persevered through many years of hardship and loss. What was revealed was the strength of the human spirit within an organization when allowed to openly express themselves through their work and serve the mission.

The work of Chris Argyris (2000) is known as a foundation of organizational development, and provides us with a model for understanding how real change can happen in organizations. His work took the change process deeper and farther into how real change comes from exploring our basic assumptions and beliefs, and identifying gaps or discrepancies between mission, values and goals. Argyris’ Model II Theory—in-use is also referred to as double-loop learning (see Figure 6), which illustrates how learning and change requires a process of exploring the meaning of why we do what we do. A single loop approach to change merely corrects or changes routine behaviors. Following the massive impacts of Euromaidan and changes in government, the university engaged in deep reflection and prayer as part of their strategic planning process, which was described in the Strategy 2020 document:

At the end of 2014, the university engaged in a thorough strategic planning process, starting with prayer and deep reflection about its goals and values, which helped our community to articulate numerous points for development, now
crystalized into the strategic plan… Together are called to create new projects and present unexplored horizons for the University and the country.

Mezirow (2000) described transformative learning as a process of personal transformation is continual all the while facilitating organizational development and change. For the individual, this process requires the ability to engage in subjective reframing and critical self-reflection of one’s own assumptions. There is a parallel process that occurs within the individuals as change is occurring within the larger system. Transformation is represented by the awareness of the individual of the dual process that is occurring with the self, and within the organization. Statements from participants referencing change within the change and self-realization seemed to represent this kind of change. The reflective responses in some of the interviews appeared to represent a deeper exploration of core beliefs and values, which precipitates real change and transformation (Mezirow, 2000).

Cultural and Clinical Lenses of the Researcher

In the United States, we utilize a medical model of diagnosing and pathologizing the psychological and emotional aspects of the human experience. This model is applied in the field of mental health and is utilized by mental health professionals who practice as clinicians. Stress and trauma have become an area of focus for research and practice for its impact on individuals, groups, communities, as well as historically and globally. As an American clinical social worker engaging in research and practice in the field of organizational development, I must acknowledge the cultural and clinical perspective that I brought to this study. However, I cautiously integrate this into my report as a means to explore additional meaning and understanding of the findings of this study, as they may connect to organizational concepts and frameworks that have been researched in the United
States.

From a clinical perspective, reactions to stress, loss and trauma may be experienced emotionally, psychologically, and/or behaviorally. Grief and loss, stress reactions, and trauma are all experiences that may impact a person with enough intensity and duration to result in symptoms that meet diagnostic criteria as a mental disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of Mental Disorders. In the most recent edition, the DSM-V, there is a category of disorders specific to stress and trauma-related disorders, which includes disorders of adjustment. Grief and loss, referred to as bereavement, may even be diagnosed as a depressive disorder should the duration and intensity of symptoms exceed what is considered within clinical and cultural norms of the grieving process (American Psychiatric Association, 2004).

Organizational psychology and organization development are both fields of study that utilize foundations of human behavior to understand how to work within systems. The medical model for diagnosing problems and conditions in individuals has also been applied to groups of people and organizations. Considering the circumstances, the stress resulting from the change has the potential to be experienced as traumatic. Jeffreys’ model identified three categories related to the circumstance or precipitating factors resulting in change. This may be influenced by the individual perception of change, factors on an organizational level, as well as occurrences external to the organization. His model also describes the continuum of loss, stress and trauma that may be experienced as a result of adverse events.

Beyond the growth and change, there had been external events that created significant stress. There was a period of time that was described as “stagnant” when requirements for accreditation were imposed by the government. This could be interpreted as a state of being
frozen by circumstances that create a sense of powerlessness and vulnerability. There was a perceived threat, as though the government policies for accreditation were designed to deconstruct what Dignity University had created.

Repeated exposure to stress of the work that exceeds and overwhelms the capacity to cope can result in cumulative trauma (Vivian & Hormann, 2013; Wilke in Hopper, 2012). Cumulative trauma, ongoing wounding, serial disruption, and permanent (or persistent) transitions are all concepts explored in the context of change, trauma, and loss (Vivian & Hormann, 2013; Wilke, 2012). In addition, being overburdened by demands that eventually exceed a person’s capacity to cope can also be considered cumulative trauma (Wilke, 2012). These concepts help with understanding how organizational change may be as loss, be difficult individually or collectively, and without an opportunity to resolve or evolve, can perpetuate the experience of change as potentially traumatic.

Vivian and Hormann (2013) described how the clinical presentation of individuals with post-traumatic stress is paralleled in organizations, and how a history of trauma may result in susceptibility to experiencing stressful events as traumatic. Given the history of Soviet occupation and oppression of religious practices for so long, this experience could be understood as re-traumatization. The historical trauma of Ukraine was being triggered and perpetuated by policies that still resembled the time of Soviet rule.

The consideration for stress being experienced as trauma may also lead to developing understanding of how to respond to the needs of an organization. Vivian and Hormann (2013) described multiple levels of influence in understanding organizational trauma, as well. Their work described multiple perspectives including a more clinical focus on individual influences and actions, a broader view of organizational events or dynamics, as well as
external factors such as funding or pressure from the community. Vivian and Hormann (2013) described the healing process following trauma in organizations. In particular, they identified the following aspects of the healing process (page 101):

- Ensure safety, stability, and containment
- Name the trauma and normalize the experience
- Integrate the trauma in affirming and meaningful ways
- Move forward

These aspects of the healing process appear to parallel phases of a change process. In addition, ensuring safety, stability and containment and the importance creating an environment conducive to resiliency and healing. It could be suggested that the role of leadership, along with faith and spirituality, provided individuals of the university the support they needed to mitigate any circumstances that may have been traumatic for them.

The experience of trauma is subjective. Although clinical definitions of diagnostic criteria describe trauma as a specific set of symptoms resulting from a particular event, the experience of trauma and the impact on an individual is influenced by multiple factors. From a Western clinical lens, the experience of stress and loss could potentially be viewed as the experience of trauma. However, there would need to be further inquiry and data specific to trauma in response to the adverse events to support this perspective.

The concept of global trauma has also been introduced as a phenomenon that may be a shared human experience in modern society. Global events including terrorism, war famine, disease, and natural disasters become widely publicized in the media. Trauma is increasingly being accepted as a common human experience, from which no one is immune. Therefore, the shift in focus has become how people and communities can recover and heal
from trauma. And perhaps, how faith and spirituality may be a mitigating factor with the impact of traumatic events, and a source of healing after great hardships and losses.

**Limitations of the Study**

Because this is a single case study, my findings are limited to this particular case. There are limitations that exist with case study methodology. Stake (2006) explained that it is up to each reader to conclude what were the most relevant findings as they read a case study. There is subjectivity in determining which themes would carry significance in the case of a single instance. The process of listening to recorded interviews, transcribing, and highlighting key phrases was useful in identifying themes. Utilizing other sources of data, such as review of documents and media related to the case and its context assisted in supporting the identified themes. As this study is reviewed, readers may have a different perspective of what may be important to him or her as they read. By only taking the perspective of the researcher, other single instances may have been missed that could be have been viewed as significant by others. In order to address this limitation, current literature related to the themes was referenced to make connections to the broader body of knowledge.

Another limitation of this study was the number of participants who volunteered to be interviewed. Recruiting participants may have been impacted by availability during the dates of my visits, and comfort level with participating in a study with a non-Ukrainian researcher while a war was underway in another region of the country. The small sample size of 15 people provides limited perspectives on the change. Given the estimated number of 300 faculty and staff, this sample size limits the findings to the individuals who participated and may not be generalized across the university. The participants represented multiple departments from both the administrative and academic sides of the university, including
some in leadership roles, who also shared their thoughts and observations about their
departments and the university as an organization. While the smaller sample provides an
opportunity to have more in-depth information and participants spoke of their observations of
the experience of others, the findings represent the individual and subjective experiences
with change and cannot be generalized across the entire university or beyond this case.

A distinct feature of this study that presented as a limitation includes the cultural and
language differences between the researcher and the case. Although a translator was
available and was utilized by seven of the participants with limited English, the words I
received in English may not have conveyed the intent of the speakers. Further, I have a
Western cultural perspective and may have misinterpreted participants’ meanings due to their
different cultural viewpoint. Throughout the interviews, there was opportunity to check for
understanding and ask follow-up questions related to comments that may be culturally
specific. In addition, participants asked questions of clarification related to the interview
questions.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Given the findings are specific to this case, replicating this study across other
institutions of higher education may be useful for creating new theories of change for higher
education. This study also revealed many potential areas for further inquiry. Each of the
themes identified could be studied to develop a deeper understanding of the human
experience with stress, change and transformation. As the literature continues to build a
framework for understanding stress and trauma in organizations, there is also a need to
further develop the body of research pertaining to resilience and healing.

Further research exploring the role of leadership and management amidst traumatic
and stressful circumstances would add valuable information to the body of knowledge. How organizational leaders and managers understand the experience of members of their organization can inform how they lead. Understanding the parallels that may occur through change and traumatic events between leaders and the people in their organizations could influence how leaders can empower and support resilience and healing. It is here that I would suggest more research exploring how aspects of faith, hope, and spirituality as mean of coping and resilience in organizations experiencing stressors.

As I engaged in this study and sought the meaning of what I was hearing and observing, it appeared as though I was witnessing an organization of individuals in the midst of various phases of change and transformation. This left me with a question for future research that could have profound implications: How does an OD scholar/practitioner go into an organization and determine whether transformation has occurred on individual and organizational levels? The answer can only be found through future research of how concepts of double-loop learning and transformation may be observed and measured.

**Implications for Leaders and Organization Development Practitioners**

A primary implication for leaders and organizational development practitioners is the importance of understanding the experience of members of the organization, and having the ability to support and guide the organization through hardship and stressful events. In addition, it is essential for leaders and OD practitioners to be aware of how trauma may be a part of change, how it may manifest itself in the workplace, and what helps people cope. The literature specific to stress in organizations provides a framework for addressing the needs of the organization in order to move forward. Utilizing existing frameworks for change and fostering resilience through stressful circumstances is another important aspect of leadership
and organizational development practitioners. The growing body of research on resilience represented in management and OD literature attests to the evolution of management models to consider such human aspects of doing business.

Faith and spirituality in the workplace are emerging areas of study in management literature, and have relevance in the field of organizational development. As management models becomes more holistic in their approach to engaging employees and creating healthier organizations, the spiritual aspects of organizational learning and change become even more relevant. Faith and a sense of hope amidst the challenges faced by organizations have great relevance, and are now included in the literature on leadership and positivity in the workplace.

Engaging whole systems in change first begins with the development of the leader, or facilitator of change. Beginning with acquisition of knowledge through study, then engaging in practice to gain skill is just the first loop of development for an OD practitioner. The ability to be reflective of one’s own experiences with adversity, exploring and discovering the deeper meaning of one’s commitment to the work, and recognizing one’s own source of resilience through change is where the second loop of learning and transformation occurs.

**Personal Reflections**

Through this study, I discovered a parallel between the experience of change and transformation of the case, and my own process of change and growth. The experience doing interpretive research about the lived experience of participants of the case presented me with the challenge of maintaining a boundary as the researcher. Given my professional experience as a social worker, as well as my own experience in higher education, I could relate to some
of the stories shared by participants. In addition, I found myself reflecting on my own values and beliefs, and how they influence my own work and life.

Of particular significance were the modalities of change identified: communicating, witnessing, and service. The research process was an opportunity to practice these modalities. The process of gaining entry, becoming oriented to the site, and listening to participants tell their stories represents the communicating and connecting with others as an opportunity to develop understanding. Through my series of travels to Ukraine, spending time on the campuses beyond my interviews, interacting with members of the campus community, spending time in the city where it is located, and traveling to and from Ukraine, I was witnessing the changes that have occurred over time. Not only did I study the change, I experienced change myself on a visceral level by witnessing the transformation as it occurred. Service is represented by the giving of myself to this research project, which gave voice to the experience of the people who participated by telling their story. In essence, I served the work and in doing so, there is value and meaning regardless of the impact in the academic literature.

As I reflect on my experience as the researcher, and the subjectivity and limitations of a single case study, I couldn't help but question the impact of such a study on the existing body of knowledge on organizational change. What I can conclude is that my experience seemed to parallel some of the personal experiences described in the study. This has contributed to my own growth and transformation, which will have impact on how I engage in my future work more meaningfully. Most of all, I have a better sense of how I can infuse my beliefs and values into my own work.
References


Appendix A

CONSENT FORM
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

The Experience of Stressful [Difficult] Change in Higher Education: A Case Study

663106-1

I am conducting a study about the experience of stressful change in an institution of higher education [a college or university]. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a member of the faculty or staff at the [Dignity] University. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Mary E. H. Paulson, Doctoral Candidate in the Organizational Development program in the College of Education, Leadership and Counseling at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, is conducting this study. Dr. John Conbere supervises this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of how change is experienced by the members of an institution of higher education. The primary research question for this study is: What are the employees' experiences with change that creates stress in higher education institution? In addition, exploration will include the circumstances surrounding or precipitating the change, their own experiences throughout the change process, and the extent to which they may have experienced the change as stressful.

Research specific to the experience and impact of change from the perspective of faculty and staff in higher education continues to be very limited. The more we can learn about the impact of difficult change on the members of higher education institutions, the better able we will be to assist faculty, staff and administrators.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to participate in a 45 - 60 minute interview at an agreed upon location. Interviews will be audiotaped, and a research assistant will be present to assist with language translation and transcription of the recordings. The research assistant may be a faculty or staff member of [Dignity] University, who may be known to you. The research assistant/translator will sign a “Statement of Confidentiality” form. Recordings will be useful for review to listen for meaning and significance of issues described by the participants, and as a method for comparison to written notes from interviews that reflect responses that were interpreted to reveal significant issues and themes regarding their experiences with change. The questions that will be asked include:

- What has been your experience with change at your university that was stressful?
- What made the situation stressful?
- How would you describe the effects of the change on yourself and others?

Possible probing questions:
- What were your thoughts?
- How did it make you feel?
- How did this change appear to affect others?

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no direct benefits or risks to the university or to you anticipated. Participants may end the interview at any time for any reason if they choose. The study has no direct benefits or monetary rewards for the participants. There may be an indirect benefit of the research, as it will be adding to the knowledge base in the field of higher education.

Confidentiality:

Given the research assistant/translator is a faculty or staff of [Dignity] University, your identity will be known by the research assistant. The research assistant/translator has signed a “Statement of Confidentiality” form. Your name and other identifying information will not be included in the records from the interviews. The records from this study will be kept confidential. Recordings In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way. The name of the university will not be identified in the report. It will be identified as a “private university in Ukraine”. The types of records I will create include audio recordings, typed transcription, and handwritten notes. Research notes will be kept in a locked storage box in a locked personal office. Any audiotapes of interviews will also be stored in a locked storage box. No identifying information will be used on the notes taken. Backup of information will be stored on this researcher’s personal computer that is password protected. Upon completion of the study, electronic files will be transferred to a secure flash drive, which will be stored in a locked storage box in a locked personal office. All materials will be destroyed 5 years after completion of the study and successful defense of the dissertation, in accordance with the American Psychological Association’s (APA) guidelines.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the [Dignity] University or the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time up to and until October 31, 2014. You may withdraw from the study by simply stating so to the researcher, or contacting Mary Paulson by email at [email address]. Should you decide to withdraw data collected about you will not be used. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Mary E.H. Paulson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at [phone number] or by email at [email address]. You may also contact Dr. John Conbere at [phone number] or by email at [email address]. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-5341 with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study and to be audiotaped. I am at least 18 years of age.
Signature of Study Participant

_________________________  __________________________

Date

Print Name of Study Participant

_________________________

Signature of Researcher

_________________________  __________________________

Date