COLLEGE STUDENT RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AND SPIRITUAL IDENTITY:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

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Dedication

To Josh, for constant support

And

To Sophie, for constant inspiration

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Abstract

There currently exists a large gap in the literature on Faith Development Theory and college student spiritual development, which has almost entirely been posited from a Christian perspective and using Christian research participants. Given this gap, I have reconstructed a conceptual framework, which removes the Christian content predominant in Faith Development Theory, as conceived of by James Fowler and Sharon Daloz Parks, and instead makes use of the language of "mainstream" and "marginalized" religions. I utilized both developmental research and theological literature pieces to determine the spiritual paths, beliefs and values of each of the religious groups in question: Protestant Christians, Jews, Muslims and atheists.

Based on this conceptual framework, I gathered data from Protestant Christian, Jewish, Muslim and atheist college students through focus group sessions, written questionnaires, and interviews to determine how they talk about their spiritual identities, and how those spiritual identities are impacted by their religious affiliations. Discourse analysis and qualitative coding techniques were utilized to develop an understanding of the interplay between religious affiliation and spiritual identity.

The major finding of the study was that the faith trajectory is the change over time in the religious (on nonreligious) individual's way of framing the world through faith. This implies both a specific, unique worldview for each group, the way of framing the world, as well as something they all share in common, faith. Based on this

understanding, I propose a separation of structural faith development from the newly specified Faith and Religious Marginalization Awareness Frame. The latter combines a faith frame unique to each religious or non-religious group with the growing awareness during the lifespan of the impact of Christian privilege and religious marginalization in society.

There are multiple implications of this study. Higher education researchers should no longer employ developmental theories that overlook the divergent faith frames of non-Christians. Campus professionals should endeavor to include religious minorities, particularly atheists, in interfaith dialogues, as well as challenge the existence of Christian privilege. Practitioners can also employ the understanding that positive, encouraging interactions with religiously diverse others foster growth in students' spiritual identities.

Chapter 1:

Introduction

This dissertation studies the interplay between religious affiliation and spiritual

identity among college students. There currently exists a large gap in the literature on

Faith Development Theory and college student spiritual development, which up until this

point, has almost entirely been posited from a Christian perspective and used Christian

research participants. Given this gap, I have adapted and restructured a conceptual

framework, which removes the Christian content predominant in Faith Development

Theory as conceived of by James Fowler (1981), and instead makes use of the language

of "mainstream" and "marginalized" as determinants of faith "trajectories." The

conceptual framework also contains the notion of a "developmental objective," which,

based on a particular religion's typical spiritual paths, beliefs and values, is at the core of

what someone with that religious affiliation is expected to accomplish through a fully

realized developmental trajectory.

Based on this reconstructed conceptual framework, the intention of this research

was to talk with and listen to Christian, Jewish, Muslim and atheist college students in

several focus group sessions, to determine how they talk about their spiritual identities,

and how those spiritual identities are shaped by their religious affiliations. It is my goal

that the results of this study will provide a better understanding of the interplay between

religious affiliation and spiritual identity and augment recent quantitative research on

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student spirituality, leading to new directions in identity research. In addition, I mean for the work to enable the further development of a conceptual framework that provides a more descriptive picture of the faith development of non-Christians. It is meant to promote a more moral and equitable treatment of people of other faiths on college campuses. Finally, the methods of data collection analysis I have chosen are intended to foster new knowledge of how groups co-construct identities.

The topic of this research is important for many reasons. The first is that "simple tolerance, respect, and celebration of religious difference are not enough on today's college campuses" (American College Personnel Association, 2006, ¶ 2). Treating students of all religious backgrounds as if they are the same as Christians is not a moral or equitable stance. Educators must be aware of the distinct differences between religious and spiritual identities, and how these impact students' lives. As well, enabling student affairs practitioners and researchers to better understand the spiritual lives of students coincides with "student affairs' central, historical educational value, *concern for the whole student*" (Rodgers, 1990, pp. 27, italics in original).

In addition, Fowler's (1981) conceptualization of Faith Development Theory is widely used by student affairs practitioners and higher education researchers (Stamm, 2005a), without any agreed upon understanding of whether or not it can speak to the lives of non-Christians. Some of the ways the theory, a cognitive-structural development model (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998), is likely being used are:

> (a) helping students understand themselves in developmental terms; (b) providing baseline data from which to initiate or change programs; (c) identifying what types of experiences are associated with development; and (d) selecting the design and delivery of developmentally appropriate services, classes, and programs. (King, 1990, p. 95)

The premise guiding the research I have conducted is that if Faith Development Theory is being used for all of these purposes, it must be explored to determine if those uses are appropriate for people with other religious affiliations.

Statement of the Problem

The research on individual faith and spiritual development within the higher education setting began nearly thirty years ago. Fowler (1981) fashioned a model for the full lifespan and Sharon Daloz Parks (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000; S. L. Parks, 1980)[1] focused in on young adulthood. Their theories have been highly influential, but they were not adequately designed to include people from religious minority backgrounds. Fowler's (1981) original study consisted of a sample that was a combined 85% Protestant and Catholic, and that was 98% White (p. 316). Parks (S. L. Parks, 1980) used a similarly uniform sample. She (S. D. Parks, 2000) discussed qualitative differences in how religious congregations support their young adults. She did not, however, consider how varied religious contents may affect them, when in fact, "religion and spirituality are typically expressed in groups or are at least influenced by reference groups" (Hill et al., 2000, p. 53). In the face of critiques, which I will discuss throughout this study, Fowler and Parks maintain their theories to be universal and unbiased.

Most research on faith development theory and college student spiritual development has focused primarily on the historically dominant religious group, "mainline" Christians (McCullough, Weaver, Larson, & Aay, 2000; Stamm, 2005b), and has rarely distinguished between the experiences of religious minorities (Hartley, 2004).

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[1] Throughout the course of her career, Parks has listed her authorship under a variety of names, including using her middle initial and/or her married name. According to APA guidelines, each of her texts is referred to utilizing her preferred name. Therefore, each is listed here with different preceding initials.

Recently, there have been some important exceptions to this rule. Preliminary results

from the major quantitative spirituality study by the Higher Education Research

Institution (HERI, 2005) begin to differentiate between religiously identified groups. A

second quantitative piece based on HERI data (Bryant, 2006) delves deeper into the

unique characteristics of religious minorities. One qualitative study comparing the

worldviews of eight religiously diverse students (Mayhew, 2004) is also a good start at

distinguishing between religious groups, though the author spends more time identifying

commonalities in the students' world views than he does accounting for divergences.

These studies do not sufficiently address the diverse situation on college

campuses today. Around 9% of students at 4-year colleges are affiliated with a non-

Christian religion, and 17.4% state that they have no religion ("This year's freshmen at 4-

year colleges: A statistical profile", 2006). There are 400,000 Jews and 75,000 Muslims

enrolled in college today (Schmalzbauer, 2007, p. 3). There are "251 affiliated Hillel

Centers, Foundations, and Jewish Student Organizations in North America," (p. 3) and

"the Muslim Student Association has 600 chapters in the United States and Canada" (p.

4). Even less mainstream, "Unitarian Universalist campus groups are active at 108

schools" (p. 5) and "the 'freethinkers, skeptics, secularists and humanists' … network has

expanded to include over 130 collegiate chapters" (p. 5).

The experiences of these religious minority students on campuses denoted as

secular but permeated by a "Christian ethos" (Seifert, 2007, p. 11) have gone largely

ignored. For example, searches for research literature specific to Jewish and Muslim

college students yielded few results[2]. In 2002, Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life commissioned UCLA researchers to analyze data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) to identify trends involving Jewish college students (Sax, 2002). Despite the usefulness of the findings, searches in four research databases demonstrate that the study has not been cited and used outside of Hillel professional circles. Continuing to ignore these non-Christian students would constitute a mistake, especially as religious minorities in this country do not have the choice to define their own social statuses (Markstrom-Adams, Hofstra, & Dougher, 1994).

Social science researchers have been called to find the balance between studying the mainstream, which defines the majority of the country almost to the point of exclusion, and the margins, which tend to obscure the fact that religious minorities are not part of the dominant culture (Beaman, 2003). This study will attempt to strike that balance, first bringing together research on Jews, Muslims and atheists, as well as Christians, with the literature surrounding developmental theory to discover how they can be synthesized. The study will also bring out the voices of college students, in order to provide descriptions of how religious and spiritual identities both exist and interact within individuals. As a researcher situated in the field of higher education, I have chosen to focus in on young adulthood, the age of traditional college students. Appropriately, this age is also considered something of a turning point in life by many developmental theorists (Kohlberg, 1984; P. G. Love, 2001; Parker, 1978b; S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks,

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[2] On Jewish students: MacDonald-Dennis, 2006; Shire, 1987; Yares, 1999/2000. On Muslim students: Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Mubarakh, 2007; Peek, 2005. Note that only texts written in or translated into English were examined for the literature review on Muslim college students.

2000; Perry, 1968/1999) as well as a time in which individuals enter a highly exploratory and personalized "congregation of one" (Arnett & Jensen, 2002, p. 465).

History of College Student Religious Involvement

During the post-Civil War period, Protestants constituted the vast majority of the student population (S. A. Smith, 1957) and campus culture was pervasively Protestant (Hollinger, 2002). Campus religious groups were not very common at this time, but when they existed, they were usually founded directly by students themselves, without support from local houses of worship. They tended to be oriented to the Evangelical Protestant tradition. Some of the earliest student groups were YMCAs and YWCAs, and soon after their initial founding, Y groups became dominant forces in the campus religious scene (Marsden, 1994).

In the early twentieth century, external religious organizations began placing pastors on campuses, instead of expecting the students to come to them or assuming students would seek out the Ys (S. A. Smith, 1957). This began with Protestants and quickly spread to Catholics and Jews, and this pattern of campus-based clergy has continued to the present time.

Student populations became larger, more diverse and more secular throughout the 1920s, alarming the rest of the society (Marsden, 1994). Instead of observing religious practices, students partied and joined fraternities and sororities. The 1920s and 1930s saw a rise in liberalism among Protestants and Jews (S. A. Smith, 1957). Many Jewish students had a strong desire to assimilate into the mainstream culture, even if this meant compromising some of their religious ideals for the sake of blending in. This was due to

their status as second-generation Americans. The trend toward overall decline in religious participation continued throughout the 1930s and the 1940s (Hoge, 1974).

It was also world events that changed students' mentality. The period just before World War II "was a sort of golden age for mainline campus ministries and insurgent evangelical groups such as InterVarsity Christian Fellowship or Campus Crusade for Christ were gaining increasing influence" (Marsden, 1994, p. 395). The war itself brought about renewed cooperation of religious groups on campus, in terms of both students and staff (S. A. Smith, 1957).

The post-war scene brought about the most dramatic changes to this point in history. The period after World War II saw a drastic increase in college enrollments by both Catholic and Jewish students on certain campuses, fed by rising immigration tides (S. A. Smith, 1957). After the war, Catholic enrollments jumped to 15-20% of students, while Jewish remained steady around 7.5% (S. A. Smith, 1957, p. 75) as the overall population of college attendees rose exponentially. Population counts were not only rising; so too was the amount of student involvement in religion. Researchers generally agree that "a high point of religious orthodoxy and commitment among college students occurred sometime in the early 1950s" (Hastings & Hoge, 1970, p. 27).

The situation for religious groups on campus changed dramatically during the late 1960s, and the return to orthodoxy ended quickly (Marsden, 1994). College students were becoming politicized and radicalized, and their newly developed world awareness was not easily juxtaposed with traditional religious practices. "The comfortable campus ministry buildings with which religious groups had surrounded the universities were now an embarrassment when the poor were crying out for justice. Theological discussion was

a cop-out if it did not lead to action" (Marsden, 1994, p. 418). Many students left their mainstream religious organizations to join the peace movement, although some students found connections between their religious beliefs and the Civil Rights movement.

By the end of the 1960s, students were seeking spirituality and meaning, if not organized religion per se (Hoge, 1974; Rogan, 1969). Many students had begun enrolling in religious studies courses, in order to have an entry into this exploration. The student religious experience was "characterized by the instinct for unity, the emphasis upon experiencing and the necessity to do, not just to think, in the religious sphere" (Rogan, 1969, p. 75). This was an entirely new expression of religious devotion, as it emphasized personal choice and action, rather than institutionally mandated beliefs and activities.

Beginning in the 1960s, the CIRP has made available data on student religious observance. During the thirty years between 1966 and 1996, the number of students who responded "frequently" or "occasionally" to attending religious services topped out at 91% in 1968 and bottomed out at 80.6% in 1995 (Astin, Parrot, Korn, & Sax, 1997, pp. 44-45). It rose again slightly in 1996.

By the 1990s, student values had changed dramatically. As a collective whole, religion was not at the forefront of their minds. Developing a meaningful philosophy in life, a primary goal of students filling out the CIRP questionnaire in the 1960s, was replaced by the 1990s with a desire to achieve financial stability (Astin et al., 1997). In the twentieth century alone, religious involvement on campus had gone from a primarily student-led venture, to one that was clergy-led, and less critical to students' lives than political activism in the 1960s and material success in the 1990s.

Religion and spirituality have long been considered an integral part of college

student identity by student affairs practitioners, higher education professionals who have

declared an interest in the "whole student" (L. A. Braskamp, 2007; Rodgers, 1990). In

the foundational documents of the field of student affairs administration, the American

Council on Education stated the importance of religious growth for college students

(1937/2004) and then reaffirmed its own role in supporting that growth (1949/2004):

> Assisting the student to reach his maximum effectiveness through clarification of his purposes, improvement of study methods, speech habits, personal appearance, manners, etc., and through progression in religious, emotional, social development, and other non-academic personal and group relationships. (American Council on Education, 1937/2004, p. 7)

> *The student discovers ethical and spiritual meaning in life....* The religious counselor and the religious-activities program with a broad social reference may assist the student in developing an understanding of proper concepts of behavior, ethical standards, and spiritual values consistent with his broadened horizons resulting from newly acquired scientific and technical knowledge. (American Council on Education, 1949/2004, p. 18, italics in original)

But this initial commitment made by some was not initially taken up by the field

as a whole. "As traditional Christian values waned at the core of community life, there

was no corresponding growth of a concept of spirituality that encompassed the growing

religious diversity on campus" (Dalton, 2005, p. 168). By 1987, educators were calling

for a renewed focus on spirituality in higher education (Collins, Hurst, & Jacobson,

1987). However, not until the recent years has there been a chorus of voices joining the

call (Cawthon & Jones, 2004; Cherry, DeBerg, & Porterfield, 2001; Chickering, Dalton,

& Stamm, 2005; Claerbaut, 2004; Dalton, Eberhardt, Bracken, & Echols, 2006; HERI,

2005; Hoppe & Speck, 2005; Jablonski, 2001; Kazanjian & Lawrence, 2000; P. Love,

2002; P. Love & Talbot, 1999; Mayrl, 2007; V. W. Miller & Ryan, 2001; Nash, 2001,

2007; Newman & Smith, 2004; Riley, 2005; Rogers & Love, 2007; Social Science Research Council, n.d.; Tisdell, 2003). In Robert J. Nash's (2007) opinion, the "real pluralism on college campuses today is religious, and this phenomenon presents all of us with an educational opportunity that is unique" (p. 4). Still, despite this upsurge, "research on students representing non-majority religious perspectives lags far behind" (Bryant, 2006, p. 2).

Faith development is one of the many theories, along with college impact and cognitive-structural developmental models, that influence student affairs practitioners' work with college students (Walters, 2001). In a review of research related to identity development among college students, Marylu K. McEwen (1996) places Fowler (1981) and Parks (S. Parks, 1986a) in the category of Religious Identity. She states that religious identity may be particularly salient to those students from minority religions that are not valued in the Christian-dominated culture of the United States. The identities of minority religious followers, however, are studied even less than those of Christians (Mayrl, 2007). In general, researchers believe FDT to be under-utilized and religious identities to be under-examined (Clark, 2003; Collins et al., 1987; P. Love, 2002; Markstrom-Adams et al., 1994). Faculty members do not view themselves as teaching graduate students in student affairs programs to respond to the spiritual questions of undergraduates (Rogers & Love, 2007).

Ignoring students' spiritual centers does them a disservice. Avoiding critical thinking about religion and spirituality "allows students to assume that the beliefs with which they were raised are superior truths. It permits them to act on commitments resulting from indoctrination instead of informed reflection" (Raper, 2001, p. 19). In

faith development language, it means allowing them to dwell in Stage 3 tacitness, rather than moving to critical self-awareness (Fowler, 1981). And this is not what students themselves want. In a landmark study, researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles surveyed over 112,000 students on religion and spirituality (HERI, 2005). Initials results show that students are highly interested in issues of religion and spirituality.

Ernest T. Pascarella and Patrick T. Terenzini (1991, 2005) have analyzed the literature on how college affects students' religiosity and spirituality. In their first analysis (1991), they concluded the following on the topic:

> With some exceptions ... the literature published since 1967 fairly consistently reports statistically significant declines in religious attitudes, values, and behaviors during the college years.... The shifts include changing (usually dropping) affiliation with a traditional church, a reduction in church going or prayer, alterations in beliefs about a supreme being, or a decline in general religiosity. (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, pp. 280-281)

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) found 27 studies confirming this conclusion, and only five studies contradicting it. Selective institutions were found to be the most secularizing. They were careful to note that, although societal change and the general course of growing up may also have an impact on students' religiosity and spirituality, "maturation alone cannot explain all the decline observed to occur in students' conventional religious preferences, religiosity, and religious behaviors" (p. 293).

Nearly 15 years later, the same researchers (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) updated their findings on college student religiosity and spirituality, stating that conclusions were becoming more difficult to draw:

> Studies of religious values during the college years may be overlooking subtle shifts not so much in the saliency of students' religious values as in the ways in which students think about religion. Evidence is mounting to suggest that

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students' commitments to religious values during the college years may not so much increase or decrease as become reexamined, refined, and incorporated in subtle ways with other beliefs and philosophical dispositions. (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, pp. 284-285)

Other research has furthered established the complexity of the issue. Another source of potential confusion is that many of the studies during this period focus on religious behavior and not religious identity (J. Lee, 2000). It may be that studies are only asking conventional questions, and are not looking at signs of independent religious thinking. While students may be participating less in the organized structures of religion, "student interest and involvement in spirituality remain high" (Dalton et al, 2006, p. 3). Decline in participation must not be confused with decline in commitment (Clydesdale, 2007).

While older studies tended to show a decline in student religiosity, some of these more recent studies (Cherry et al., 2001; Hodges, 1999; J. Lee, 2000) demonstrate a more complex picture of the "environmental factors and other influencers that support positive religious growth" (Hartley, 2004, p. 117). Regression analysis of longitudinal data from the National Survey of Children, (Gunnoe & Moore, 2002) showed that the best predictors of religiosity in young adults aged 17-22 were the presence of role models, having religious friends and having religious mothers.

One study (J. Lee, 2000) found that a majority of students exhibited a change in religious beliefs over the four years of college, and that over a third actually strengthened their commitments. A later study by the same author (J. J. Lee, 2002) sought to determine the college factors that influence the religiosity and spirituality of students. Using a sample of 4,000 from the CIRP, Lee found that "while students tend to experience changes in religious beliefs, more students experience a strengthening of

religious convictions than those whose faith weakened" (p. 382). She also found that "religious behavior (i.e., attending religious service) *leads to* stronger religious convictions (i.e., stronger personal faith)" (p. 382, italics in original), suggesting a relationship between on-campus religious activities and students' beliefs.

An additional important study (Regnerus & Uecker, 2007; Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007) found that college cannot be considered the cause of the decline in the religiosity of young adults. In fact, the authors found that "those who never attended college had the highest rates of disaffiliation, decreased service attendance, and decreased importance placed on religion" (Uecker, Regnerus & Vaaler, 2007, p. 1667). They suggest other potential causes, instead of higher education, that could be the cause. They do not discuss, however, if maturation might be one explanation. As well, a national survey found that college graduates were much more likely to allow for the truth claims of other religions (Wuthnow, 2007).

There have been other, small studies on this topic. Shannon Hodges (1999) reports on the Spiritual Pathways series at the University of Minnesota-Morris, which had positive student response that led her to conclude that they have "interest in a lively campus discussion about the varieties of religious experience" (p. 27). Conrad Cherry et al. (2001) conducted a comparative case study analysis of four colleges and universities in order to counteract what they felt were inadequate theories of secularization in higher education. The study, which cannot be generalized to all of higher education due to its methodology, found a great number of student "spiritual seekers" (p. 276) exploring denominational boundaries, an openness to religious diversity, and a strong supply of religious and spiritual programs from which students could choose. In a small qualitative

study of four students on a Southern campus, the students cited relationships with peers and mentors as primary influences on their spiritual growth (Holmes, Roedder, & Flowers, 2004). One study utilizing discourse analysis techniques found that students are susceptible to the influences of both peers and a charismatic professor when formulating their understandings of spirituality (Small, 2007a).

In addition to the student perspective, there has been some research on how faculty and institutions influence student religiosity and spirituality. A study of faculty at ten church-related colleges found that many faculty did not know how to, and were not interested in, fostering students' inner lives (L. Braskamp, Trautvetter, & Ward, 2005). They were given little professional development to help them understand this task. Another study showed that while faculty in the hard sciences, mathematics and engineering tend to attend religious services and hold strict beliefs, "[evidencing] the compatibility of reason and faith," those in the social sciences and humanities are more likely to be atheists, as "secular philosophies and cultural movements that dominate the humanities are often based on open hostility to religious faith, and seek to root it out" (Sherkat, 2003, p. 161). Finally, a study based on HERI data (Lindholm, 2007) found that "highly spiritual faculty are more likely to employ student-centered teaching methods such as group projects, cooperative learning, and reflective writing," but also feel "constrained" (p. 15) when it comes to discussing religion and spirituality in their institutions.

In sum, the recent studies on college students and religion and spirituality have shown students to be highly interested in these issues and strongly influenced by their families, their peers, and the campus environment.

Alexander W. Astin (1984/1999) developed an influential engagement theory. It has been widely adopted in higher education, a Web of Science search (Thomson Scientific, 2006) showing that it has been cited around 200 times in other literature. Astin posited that "nearly all forms of student involvement are associated with greater than average changes in entering freshman characteristics" (p. 524). He also stated that "different forms of involvement lead to different developmental outcomes" (p. 527). Although Astin does not specifically discuss the place of religion on campus, I hypothesize that engagement theory does encompass involvement in campus religious and spiritual groups, which connect students to a local community of meaning and support.

Only a small amount of research, however, has examined the relationship between religious affiliation and/or religious commitment to college student engagement. Sylvia Hurtado and Deborah F. Carter (1997) found that "membership in religious organizations [is an activity] … significantly related to [Latino] students' sense of belonging" (p. 338). The authors hypothesize that for Latino students, who do not necessarily feel at home on predominantly White campuses, a religious group provides that necessary sense of community.

George D. Kuh and Robert M. Gonyea (2005) conducted an important study utilizing the 2004 National Survey of Student Engagement. Most saliently, they report:

> Students who frequently engage in spirituality-enhancing practices are also more likely to engage in a broader cross-section of collegiate activities. For example, they exercise more, attend cultural events more often, and are more likely to perform community service. They also are somewhat more satisfied with college and view the out-of-class environment more positively. Finally, they spend less

time relaxing and socializing and devote more time to extra-curricular activities. (Kuh & Gonyea, 2005, p. 6)

Margarita Mooney (2005) also found that "religious attendance increases college GPA and satisfaction in college... [interpreting] these findings to mean that regularly attending a church, synagogue, or other religious services provide students with structure and guidance which then improves their performance in class" (p. 17). Mooney further theorizes that a religious structure helps students create order in their lives and find a supportive peer group.

Finally, a study of college freshmen by Barry Posner, Charles Slater and Mike Boone (2006), found that "several values theorized as being essential components of spirituality (honesty, humility, and service to others) were clearly correlated with leadership behaviors and actions. That is, those individuals who embraced these values the most also reported taking more leadership actions" (p. 176). Because leadership is clearly a form of involvement included in Astin's (1984/1999) theory, this study is an example of the possible direct benefits of spiritual commitment.

Religion and Educational Attainment

There has been some precedent for including differences in religious affiliation and commitment levels in studies on educational attainment (Beyerlein, 2004; Darnell & Sherkat, 1997; Jeynes, 2003; Lehrer, 1999; Mooney, 2005; Sander, 1992; Zern, 1989). David S. Zern (1989) looked at the relationship between religion and educational attainment and found that "the salient dimension seems to concern *change* in religiousness, not religiousness per se," (p. 151, italics in original). Students who became more religious in college were more likely to have GPAs above the sample mean. Using

the 1992 NELS data set, William H. Jeynes (2003) found that "individual religious

commitment affects student educational performance" (p. 59) in a positive manner.

Alfred Darnell and Darren E. Sherkat (1997) found conservative Protestantism, generally,

has a negative impact on college degree attainment. Kraig Beyerlein (2004) revised this

study to show that it is actually fundamentalist Protestants that are less likely to achieve a

college degree. William Sander's (1992) study delineated differential levels of

educational attainment by religion and gender:

> Men of Jewish and other religion [sic] origin tend to acquire the most schooling...
> Also, Episcopalian, Catholic, Methodist and Mormon [sic] have positive effects
> on men's schooling relative to Baptist, Lutheran, no religion and other Protestant.
> ... For women, after all of the other background factors are taken into account,
> Jewish and other religion still have strong positive effects on schooling. The
> other religious effects are the same as they were for men. Catholics,
> Episcopalians, Methodists and Mormons acquire more schooling, relative to
> Baptists, Lutherans, no religion and other Protestants. (Sander, 1992, p. 133)

> Results of additional studies by Evelyn L. Lehrer (1999) and Astin (1993) support

those of Sander (1992), although in somewhat less detail.

Although literature on the relationship between religious activities, religious

affiliation, engagement, educational attainment, and other college outcomes is sparse, the

studies presented above do provide grounding support for the current research. Religion

is an important element of college students' lives and identities that must be further

explored.

<div align="center">Study Design</div>

The purpose of this study is to illuminate the ways in which college students of

varied religious backgrounds and affiliations speak about their spiritual identities, in

order to determine if current faith development models are adequately representing non-

<div align="center">17</div>

Christian students. This focus on their discourse will augment recent quantitative research on student spirituality (Bryant, 2006; Higher Education Research Institution, 2005). It also follows a previous study by this researcher demonstrating the effectiveness of utilizing discourse analysis and other qualitative methods to develop a further understanding of students' spiritual identities (Small, 2007a). It provides students with a means for informing researchers about what they think are the important ways their spiritual identities integrate with their religious affiliations, rather than having to follow the lead of a researcher-designed questionnaire to provide those answers. Finally, it gives insight to practitioners who strive to make college campuses equitable spaces for students of all backgrounds, including from all religious affiliations.

This study was designed to bring students of similar and different religious backgrounds at a large, public research university together to create discourse around their spiritual identities. Twenty-one students from four religious groups, Protestant Christian, Jewish, Muslim and atheist, participated in two sets of focus group conversations. The first set was religiously homogeneous groups; the second was religiously heterogeneous groups. An effort was made to be inclusive of other forms of diversity, particularly race and gender, as well as the different denominations within the religious groups themselves. Following the focus groups, students were asked to submit reflection documents designed to elicit their reactions to the study and to provide them with some personal processing of their experiences. Finally, eight students, a male and a female from each religious affiliation, were individually interviewed. Discourse analysis and qualitative coding techniques were utilized on the data to develop an understanding

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of the interplay between religious affiliation and background and spiritual identity, as well as to document the way identity is co-constructed during group interaction.

Research Questions

In this study, I will address the following research questions:

1. Do existing faith development theories accurately reflect the experiences of Christian, Jewish, Muslim and atheist college students?

2. How do Christian, Jewish, Muslim and atheist college students similarly or differently express their spiritual identities?

3. What forms of discourse mark the spiritual developmental objectives, faith trajectories, and faith influences of Christian, Jewish, Muslim and atheist college students?

In order to answer these questions, I will also explore the following sub-questions. Each will move the research process through an additional step.

1. How do students frame or conceptualize their spiritual identities in the ways they talk to other students and write about the topic?

2. Do students' expressions of their spiritual identities change depending on who they are speaking to, and if so, how?

3. After discussing their religious affiliations and spiritual identities, how do students express their understandings of these experiences and how they may or may not have been shaped by them?

The desired outcomes of this research are somewhat exploratory in nature. They are meant to build upon previous scholarship on religious affiliations and spiritual

identities, moving that scholarship in the direction of being able to address the development of non-Christians. I will use the results in a continued building process.

The exploratory shape of this research will not lessen its potential impact. This study can produce a greater understanding of college students among student affairs practitioners, including the ways that their identities develop during the years of traditional undergraduate enrollment. It will also expand the knowledge base in the research field, which has previously been focused to near exclusion on Christians and the Christian perspective.

Scope

The subjects in this dissertation will include traditional-aged college students from a public, non-sectarian university. They will represent four religious affiliations: Protestant Christian, Jewish, Muslim and atheist. The study will concentrate on exploring the pivotal young adult years. Focusing on this age group will illuminate an important period of growth during the lifespan.

Limitations

Students from Eastern religious backgrounds are not represented in this study. According to data from the CIRP aggregated for the incoming classes of 2002-2005, the undergraduate population at the university selected for the study is 1.9% Hindu (422 students) and 1.0% Buddhist (213 students).[3] This is a small minority of the campus, and the Hindu students are not represented by a member of the council of clergy members

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[3] In accordance with the guidelines for use of human subjects in research, I am not disclosing the name of the institution utilized in this study. Therefore, some citations of works containing reference to the name of the institution are not being provided. Others have been modified to provide anonymity.

who serve the campus (Association of Religious Counselors, 2005b). This limits finding students with comparable qualifications to the other students in the study. It therefore did not make sense to include one Eastern religion (Buddhism) to compare to the students from Western religions.

There is another reason for this limitation. The conceptual framework being utilized for this study also was not developed to consider the place of Eastern religions in this country. While they certainly could be considered marginalized simply based on their exclusion from the research in higher education[4], a systematic comparison of Hindu, Buddhist or other belief systems against Faith Development Theory must be explicitly undertaken in order to determine whether or not the conceptual framework appropriately describes the developmental trajectories of the adherents of these faiths.

An additional limitation of this study is that, due to the specific nature of the campus at which this research is being conducted, it cannot fully inform researchers and practitioners aiming to understand students at different types of colleges and universities. The university is a large, public, non-sectarian school, and therefore the students who attend the university differ from those who may attend religiously affiliated schools, private colleges and universities, small colleges, or community colleges.

A methodological limitation of this study concerns the ability of students to directly report on their own identities (Broughton, 1986). Because of my intention to utilize discourse analysis, I must rely heavily on the participants' spoken words as inferential data. Previous research encourages caution on this, labeling self-reports on

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[4] A thorough review of the literature turned up no articles about Buddhist college students and only two about Hindu college students (P. Kurien, 2007; P. A. Kurien, 2005). "The few studies that have looked at the growth of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism on campus report that tensions still exist" (Social Science Research Council, n.d., p. 15).

religion and spirituality as "imprecise" (Hill & Pargament, 2003, p. 65), likely to "contain biases" (Atkinson, Zibin, & Chuang, 1997, p. 105), and limited under certain conditions: "It is possible that one's understanding of self-identity issues is not consciously organized. Therefore, self-report assessments may not be able to asses the disjointed or low-conscious components of identity…" (Craig-Bray & Adams, 1986, p. 202). I will need to be prudent when analyzing the data of this study.

Finally, due to my status as a white, Jewish woman, I may not be fully trustworthy with my interpretations of the data (R. B. Johnson, 1997), particularly those supplied by the Muslim, Christian and atheist participants:

> The interpretation of the data is probably the point at which the ethnic minority researcher match with the ethnic researched community is most critical. This stage of the research process requires interpretation of the meanings of the outcomes of the data analysis in the proper ethnic community context. It is in this arena that the ethnic experience and knowledge of the ethnic community often differentiates the ethnic and non-ethnic researcher. (Becerra, 1997b, p. 113)

In addition, as a Jewish woman, I am potentially too close to the content that will be provided by the Jewish students to be objective about it. In order to address these last limitations, I will employ several techniques to improve my trustworthiness as a researcher. Details of this are provided in Chapter 4 of this study.

Although there are several limitations to consider, this study will still provide valuable information about certain groups of college students, information which is not available in the current higher education literature.

Definitions

The literature on faith and spiritual development lacks an analysis of the interplay between religion and spirituality within individual identities. Among social scientists,

there is "little systematic conceptualization of the relationship of the two constructs" (Hill et al., 2000, p. 52). The terms are "are porous, historically variable, marked by varieties of evident and implicit theological understandings, and always remain open to the charge that they are either too general or too specific" (Bender, 2007, p. 1).

In addition, there are no accepted definitions of "faith" and "spirituality" in higher education (P. Love & Talbot, 1999), and spirituality may be treated as being a universal identity trait that remains largely separate and untouched by religion (Tisdell, 2005). The meanings of the terms "spirituality" and "religion" have even changed over time in modern society and in the psychology of religion academic field; they remain contested by researchers (Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). Although Fowler (1981) uses the term "faith" in his theory, his concept is "similar to the understanding of spirituality, in contrast to religion, in common usage among American's today" (Stamm, 2005a, p. 40). And, although many, if not most, religious people consider themselves spiritual, the reverse is not necessarily true, that spiritual people consider themselves religious (Gilley, 2005).

Many college students differentiate between religion and spirituality (T. J. Johnson, Kristeller, & Sheets, 2004). Michael Zabriskie (2005) found in a study of 1,200 students on four college campuses that 41.5% defined themselves as spiritual and religious, 27.5% as spiritual but not religious, 5.3% as religious but not spiritual, and 14.2% as neither religious nor spiritual (p. 85).

Patrick Love (2002), who calls for greater inclusion of faith in discussions of student development, sets the precedent for making "spirituality" and "faith" synonymous terms when talking about Parks and Fowler. In this study, I have initially

chosen to follow his lead with these terms. In differentiating between "religion" and "spirituality," I will follow the lead of Peter C. Hill et al. (2000), who maintain that historically the understandings of religion and spirituality have been too strongly separated, saying that "to speak of either individual spirituality or institutional religion ignores ... two important points: 1) virtually all religions are interested in matters spiritual and, 2) every form of religious and spiritual expression occurs in some social context" (p. 64). Therefore, "spirituality" (and "spiritual identity") will refer to core beliefs about the sacred, while "religion" will mean the actions surrounding that core, typically occurring within an institutional body. I will use the term "religious background" to refer to a student's upbringing within a particular institutional body, while "religious affiliation" will refer to current religious status. The current study will attempt to construct the relationship between religion and spirituality in a different way, by simultaneously examining the spiritual identities of people with varied religious backgrounds and affiliations. The terms in use, however, will not remain static; as I move through the analytic process, necessary language modifications will be made.

Overview of the Study

There are a total of 10 chapters in this dissertation. Chapter 2 reviews the literature bases of the study, which include college student development theory, Moral Development Theory, and especially, Faith Development Theory. Chapter 3 presents a deconstruction of the underlying Christian values of Faith Development Theory and a reconstructed conceptual framework that takes into account the spiritual paths, beliefs and values of Judaism, Islam, and atheism. Chapter 4 outlines the research methods that were used in the study to further build and establish this conceptual framework. Chapters

5 through 8 present results of the analysis for each of the religious groups included in the study. Chapter 9 ties the four groups together in discussion. Throughout Chapters 5-9, I will reference four areas of implication for my findings: morality/equity, model specification, research in higher education, and practice in higher education. These will act as guideposts throughout my analysis and discussion. Finally, Chapter 10 presents each of these areas of implication as well as the respective levels of importance and trustworthiness of my claims. I conclude by proposing changes that should be made within higher education in order to reflect the new understandings brought out by this study.

Chapter 2:

Review of the Literature

College Student Development Theory

The broadest frame for this study is that of college student development theory. (For an overview of college student development theory, see Creamer, 1990; Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Parker, 1978b). Developmental theories tend to cover the life-span, with college student development comprising "the ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her developmental capacities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education" (Rodgers, 1990, p. 27). These theories are critical in higher education, as they serve as the "underpinnings for the work of student affairs professionals in supporting student development" (Stamm, 2006, p. 99).

Although various authors classify the types of developmental theories in different ways, some basic categories are psychosocial theory, cognitive-structural theory, typology theory, and person-environment theory (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). The type being focused on in this study is cognitive-structural, which defines development as occurring in "sequential order regardless of cultural influence" (p. 11). All people are said to follow the same progression, and "neither skipping a stage nor regressing to a previous stage is foreseen, except under duress" (Reich, 1993, p. 149). These models "attempt to describe the increasing degrees of complexity with which individuals make meaning of their experience" (Rodgers, 1990, p. 35).

Cognitive-structural development is unique in its theorization of the natural

process of maturity and the accrual of content knowledge:

> What is considered development, as opposed to learning, is characterized by systemic change more than the accrual of bits of behavior or knowledge. It is change in the interrelations of the parts that enables the person to respond to more complex situations effectively. These changes often are referred to as *structural changes*. (Parker, 1978a, p. 12, italics in original)

Moral Development Theory

Lawrence Kohlberg

Within the broad frame of college student development theory sit two

predominant cognitive-structural development theories that influence the research at

hand. The first is Moral Development Theory (MDT). Lawrence Kohlberg is the pioneer

of MDT. In several works (i.e. Colby, Kohlberg, Gibbs, & Lieberman, 1983; Kohlberg,

1958, 1980, 1981, 1984; Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989), he posited a cognitive-

structural developmental theory of moral judgment, which was based on the following

elements:

> 1. Stages imply distinct or *qualitative* differences in children's modes of thinking or of solving the same problem at different ages…. 2. These different modes of thought form an *invariant sequence*, order, or succession in individual development…. 3. Each of these different and sequential modes of thought forms a '*structured whole*'…. 4. Cognitive stages are *hierarchical integrations*. Stages form an order of increasingly differentiated and integrated structures to fulfill a common function. (Kohlberg, 1984, pp. 14, italics in original)

Table 1 outlines Kohlberg's stages of moral development.

Kohlberg and his colleagues (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987a) developed a highly

complex method for determining levels of moral judgment, the Standard Issue Moral

Judgment Interview. The interview "consists of three parallel forms. Each form

comprises three hypothetical moral dilemmas, and each dilemma is followed by 9-12

Table 1. Classification of moral judgment into levels and stages of development (Kohlberg, 1984, p. 44)

Levels	Basis of Moral Judgment	Stages of Development
I	Moral value resides in external, quasiphysical happenings, in bad acts, or in quasiphysical needs rather that in persons and standards.	Stage 1: Obedience and punishment orientation. Egocentric deference to superior power or prestige, or a trouble-avoiding set. Objective responsibility. Stage 2: Naively egoistic orientation. Right action is that instrumentally satisfying the self's needs and occasionally other'. Awareness and relativism of value to each actor's needs and perspective. Naïve egalitarianism and orientation to exchange and reciprocity.
II	Moral value resides in performing good or right roles, in maintaining the conventional order and the expectancies of others.	Stage 3: Good-boy orientation. Orientation to approval and to pleasing and helping others. Conformity to stereotypical images of majority or natural role behavior, and judgment by intentions. Stage 4: Authority and social-order maintaining orientation. Orientation to "doing duty" and to showing respect for authority and maintaining the given social order for its own sake. Regard for earned expectations of others.
III	Moral value resides in conformity by the self to shared or sharable standards, rights, or duties.	Stage 5: Contractual legalistic orientation. Recognition of an arbitrary element or starting point in rules or expectations for the sake of agreement. Duty defined in terms of contract, general avoidance of violation of the will or rights of others, and majority will and welfare. Stage 6: Conscience or principle orientation. Orientation not only to actually ordained social rules but to principles of choice involving appeal to logical university and consistency. Orientation to conscience as a directing agent and to mutual respect and trust.

standardized probe questions designed to elicit justifications, elaborations, and clarifications of the subject's moral judgments" (p. 41). The interview can be adopted by other researchers through an approximately 900-page volume detailing the scoring protocols (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987b). MDT has since come to be measured most frequently by the Defining Issues Test (DIT), a much shorter protocol developed by James Rest and his colleagues (see Rest, 1979; Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau, 2000).

The availability of the two types of tests allows for both quantitative and qualitative measures of moral judgment. It also provides an alternative for those who suspect that "purely verbal methods for assessing moral judgment," (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999, p. 19) i.e. interviews, are not always reliable.

Because of the topic of the current study, it is relevant to mention that there have been some attempts made to determine the relationship between religious affiliation and moral development (Dirks, 1988; Rest, 1986). Kohlberg defined morality as being independent from other psychological phenomena, which includes "its autonomy from religion, … scarcely an uncontroversial claim" (Wallwork, 1980, p. 272). Rest (1986) supports Kohlberg's claim, stating that "[religious] affiliation has little relation to moral judgment," and that the most consistent finding is that "religious conservatives tend to have lower [moral judgment] scores than their liberal peers" (p. 131). Dennis H. Dirks (1988) also found an "inverse relationship between conservative Christianity and moral reasoning" (p. 326).

As for Kohlberg's own views on religion and morality, Rest and his colleagues state:

> Kohlberg did not have too much to say about the role of religion, and his scoring guides contain few references to religious thinking. Nevertheless, he did regard religious belief as not just a single, unitary, homogeneous set of notions; Kohlberg viewed religious thinking as taking many forms. Religious thinking changes with development. (Rest et al., 1999, p. 173)

Rest (1986) reviewed 20 studies of cross-cultural nature. He found that "the 20 studies do provide support for the generality of our [Kohlberg's and Rest's] view on how moral judgment works" (p. 110). Despite this finding, Kohlberg's research has been the subject of much analysis and criticism (Dirks, 1988). Areas of criticism include:

Kohlberg's use of a hard stage model, his claim of cultural universality, his focus on cognitive reasoning to the exclusion of other aspects of moral behavior, his use of hypothetical rather than real-life dilemmas, and his exclusive focus on justice issues as the bases of moral reasoning. (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, pp. 184-185)

Many researchers have focused on the notion that MDT does not accurately represent the moral viewpoints of women (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997; Gilligan, 1982/1996; Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1990; Gilligan, Ward, Taylor, & Bardige, 1988; Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy, & Belenky, 1996). One of the main reasons for this criticism is that Kohlberg's work, beginning with his dissertation (1958), followed his original sample of 84 boys for 20 years (Colby, Kohlberg, Gibbs, & Lieberman, 1983). Carol Gilligan's (1982/1996) well-known book, *In a Different Voice*, led the way in stating that girls and women, unexamined in this longitudinal study, develop in a qualitatively different way when it comes to morality. In it, she claimed that women do not develop a justice-oriented perspective on morality, but instead a care-oriented one:

> The notion of care expands from the paralyzing injunction not to hurt others to an injunction to act responsively toward self and others and thus to sustain connection. A consciousness of the dynamics of human relationships then becomes central to moral understanding. (Gilligan, 1996, p. 149)

These critiques are important for higher education, as "the differences in the two voices [justice and care] have practical implications for student affairs" (Rodgers, 1990, p. 38) and how practitioners interact with students. However, follow-up research has actually tried to dismantle this notion, one Rest (1986) calls "a myth" (p. 112) based on the fact that it was not grounded in empirical evidence. Years later, Rest (1994) found that there was still no research demonstrating the validity of the claim. One study (Thoma, 1986) even found that women faired better on Kohlberg's original justice-

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centered scale than did males. These strong criticisms of Gilligan's work, however, have not diminished her import in the field of higher education.

The critique of Kohlberg's (1981, 1984) claim of universality is based around the belief that "modern, Western ideology of individualism… is not the highest point of moral development for all cultures, many of which value obedience and respect for elders and tradition over personal conviction" (Burman, 1994, p. 182). Flaws in Kohlberg's model may be embedded in the basic assumptions of moral development research. Liesa Stamm (2006) points out that cognitive-structural models of development, or stage theories, are not necessarily valid in "defining human experience" (p. 107). She explains:

> Stage theories in general are premised on American values of individualism and autonomy. They assume that progressive development occurs as individuals engage in an increasing level of independent thinking, become more autonomous and less embedded in family ties, and reject authority. In contrast, many other societies around the world place a higher value on community than on individualism, and define maturity as developing the ability to subsume individual urges and needs to the agreed-upon common good. (Stamm, 2006, p. 108)

In addition to the work conducted with students in higher education, the critiques of Kohlberg's (1981, 1984) theory are also important for the study at hand, as MDT was a key influence in the establishment of Faith Development Theory (discussed in detail in the next subsection). Concerns over the conceptualization of cognitive-structural models and the potential biases inherent within them will naturally be carried over to any new work based on Kohlberg. The flip side of these concerns, however, is that the precedent for deconstructing well-accepted developmental theories has been established by previous researchers. Erica Burman (1994), for example, aimed to "deconstruct developmental psychology, that is to identify and evaluate the guiding themes or discourses that structure its current dominant forms" (p. 1), with the goal of improving,

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not tearing down, these models. Religion, however, has not typically been included among the categories of power and privilege that need to be considered in deconstruction (Burman, 1992). Based on both the history and this oversight, I propose a reexamination of Faith Development Theory.

<div align="center">Faith Development Theory</div>

<div align="center">*James W. Fowler*</div>

James W. Fowler is the pioneer of Faith Development Theory (FDT).[5] Fowler's life's work has combined Christian theology and developmental theory (Chandler School of Theology at Emory University, n.d.). Fowler's writing has been heavily influenced by developmental theorists before him: Erik Erikson (i.e., 1963/1993), Jean Piaget (i.e., 1967), and Kohlberg (i.e., 1981)[6]. Fowler's theory is also a cognitive-structural model, a type which is considered appropriate for measuring religiousness (Reich, 1993).

Fowler (1980) offers a specific bridge between MDT and FDT, explaining that his opinion is that "faith stages are more comprehensive than are the Kohlberg stages of moral reasoning.... The logic of faith is more comprehensive than the logic of rational certainty characterizing Piaget's and Kohlberg's cognitive theories" (p. 150). This superseding of faith stages over moral stages is not agreed upon by Kohlberg (Munsey, 1980), and could be viewed as turning "on its head Kohlberg's basic philosophical thesis regarding the relationship between morality and religion" (Wallwork, 1980, p. 279).

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[5] There is no consistent way of labeling the faith stages, both within Fowler's work and within his critics'. For the purposes of consistency, specific stages will be referred to with a capital letter (Stages) and numeral (i.e., 1), or with the title of the stage itself capitalized (i.e., Individuative-Reflective), regardless of the capitalization originally used by the author.
[6] Fowler (1981) cited a large number of works by Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg, including Kohlberg's (1981) *The Philosophy of Moral Development*, then forthcoming with a different title.

In his first major work on the subject, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (Fowler, 1981), Fowler defines faith in the following way:

> Faith helps us form a dependable "life space," an ultimate environment. At a deeper level, faith undergirds us when our life space is punctured and collapses, when the felt reality of our ultimate environment proves to be less than ultimate. (Fowler, 1981, p. xii)

Fowler (1981) believes that faith is held by all people, even doubters and disbelievers, not just those who have a religious affiliation. This is because he sees faith as "the most fundamental category in the human quest for relation to transcendence" (p. 14). Human faith development begins at birth with the Undifferentiated Stage of infancy, and proceeds throughout the life span through as many as six additional stages. Table 2 outlines Fowler's (1981) Faith Stages by Aspects. Left off of this version of the table are Fowler's comparisons of his stages to those of Piaget, Robert L. Selman (1980), and Kohlberg.

Stages 1 and 2 are the faiths of younger and older children, respectively. Stages 3 and 4 will be the main focus of this study, as they tend to be the faith stages where traditional-aged college students are located (Fowler, 1981, p. 112). Stage 3 Synthetic-Conventional faith is marked by a strongly held but tacit belief system, a direct association between symbols and the meanings behind them, and a conventional relationship to authority figures, including, for believers, a perceived personal relationship with God. "The adolescent's religious hunger is for a God who knows, accepts and confirms the self deeply, and who serves as an infinite guarantor of the self with its forming myth of personal identity and faith" (Fowler, 1981, p. 153). At this stage, God is understood anthropomorphically.

	Bounds of Social Awareness	Locus of Authority	Form of World Coherence	Symbolic Function
Table 2. Faith stages by aspects Adapted from Fowler (1981, pp. 244-245)				
Stage 1 – Intuitive-Projective Faith	Family, primal others	Attachment/ dependence relationships. Size, power, visible symbols of authority	Episodic	Magical-Numinous
Stage 2 – Mythic-Literal Faith	"Those like us" (in familial, ethnic, racial, class and religious terms)	Incumbents of authority roles, salience increased by personal relatedness	Narrative-Dramatic	One-dimensional; literal
Stage 3 – Synthetic-Conventional Faith	Composite of groups in which one has interpersonal relationships	Consensus of valued groups and in personally worthy representatives of belief-value traditions	Tacit system, felt meanings symbolically mediated, globally held	Symbols multi-dimensional; evocative power inheres in symbol
Stage 4 – Individuative-Reflective Faith	Ideologically compatible communities with congruence to self-chosen norms and insights	One's own judgment as informed by a self-ratified ideological perspective. Authorities and norms must be congruent with this.	Explicit system, conceptually mediated, clarity about boundaries and inner connections of system	Symbols separated from symbolized. Translated (reduced) to ideations. Evocative power inheres in *meaning* conveyed by symbols
Stage 5 – Conjunctive Faith	Extends beyond class norms and interests. Disciplined ideological vulnerability to "truths" and "claims" of outgroups and other traditions	Dialectical joining of judgment-experience processes with reflective claims of others and of various expressions of cumulative human wisdom	Multisystemic symbolic and conceptual mediation	Postcritical rejoining of irreducible symbolic power and ideational meaning. Evocative power inherent in the reality in and beyond symbol *and* in the power of unconscious processes in the self
Stage 6 – Universalizing Faith	Identification with the species. Transnarcissistic love of being	In a personal judgment informed by the experiences and truths of previous stages, purified of egoic striving, and linked by disciplined intuition to the principle of being	Unitive actuality felt and participated unity of "One beyond the many"	Evocative power of symbols actualized through unification of reality mediated by symbols and the self

The transition to Stage 4 Individuative-Reflective faith occurs when a young adult is forced to begin critically examining his/her beliefs or congruence with an authority figure. This stage is marked by an acceptance of one's internal authority over commitments, beliefs, and values, and a breaking down of the previously tacit assumptions. "The two essential features of the emergence of Stage 4, then, are the critical distancing from one's previous assumptive value system and the emergence of an executive ego" (Fowler, 1981, p. 179). Stage 4 individuals also tend to deconstruct symbols, seeing them rationally as separate from their meanings.

For adults that progress from Stage 4 on to Stages 5 and 6, there is a widening of concern for all humans, an ability to hold conflicting beliefs in dynamic tension with one another, and a renewed understanding of the power of symbols. Fowler (1981) considers Stage 6 to be extremely rare. People at Stage 6 can be said to live a "transcendent moral and religious actuality" (p. 200). When someone reaches the Universalizing Stage, "he or she participates in the valuing of the Creator and values other beings – and being – from a standpoint more nearly identified with the love of the Creator for creatures than from the standpoint of a vulnerable, defensive, anxious creature" (Fowler, 2000, pp. 55-56). These people are often experienced as being subversive of existing religious structures; however, Fowler believes that in order to reach these stages, one has to embrace a God concept:

> I think it is highly unlikely that persons will develop in faith beyond the Individuative-Reflective Stage without committing themselves to some image or images of a faithful ultimate environment and shaping their lives in the human community so as to live in complementarity with it. Faith, at Stages 5 or 6, will take essentially religious forms. (Fowler, 1981, pp. 292-293)

An additional concept that Fowler introduces to describe faith stages is the "average expectable stage of faith development" (Fowler, 1981, p. 161), which is based on the faith stage of the surrounding community. This means that people are unlikely to move beyond the faith stage generally exhibited by the people of influence surrounding them.

Fowler's work has made an impact on a wide variety of fields. Citations of his main texts can be found in psychology, sociology, health, social work, religious studies, theology, education, the sciences, and various interdisciplinary fields. A Web of Science search (Thomson Scientific, 2006) shows that his books have been referenced over 400 times in other literature. He is widely recognized as the dominant thinker in the area of faith, spiritual, and religious development (Brelsford, 2001; L. B. Brown, 1987; Downs, 1995; Hyde, 1990; T. P. Jones, 2004; Le Cornu, 2005; S. Parks, 1986b; Reich, 1993; Steele, 1990; Streib, 2003c, 2004, 2005; Vanlue, 1996; Webster, 1984). Fowler has also been the focus of several journal special editions (*Horizons*, *Religious Education*, and *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*) and several edited books (Astley, 2000b; Astley & Francis, 1992; Bassett et al., 1991; Broughton, 1986; Dykstra & Parks, 1986; Osmer & Schweitzer, 2003).

Fowler has heavily influenced emerging researchers as well. Nancy S. Vanlue (1996) analyzed 141 dissertations written from 1980-1994 on FDT, finding 60 to be highly relevant to the higher education literature and 37 of those having a primary focus on Fowler. The "vast majority" (abstract) of the dissertations were written from a Protestant perspective. Nine years after Vanlue (1996), Heinz Streib (2005) found that "well over 100 dissertations could be located for which Fowler's faith development

theory constituted at least a significant position" (p. 105), although none of those

mentioned included a focus on a non-Christian religion.

Having such a powerful influence has made Fowler's work the subject of strong

scrutiny. The two most important areas of criticism for the study at hand surround

methodology and Western, Christian bias.

Methodology

Fowler's (1981) original study was conducted from 1972 to 1981, and consisted

of individual interviews with 359 participants conducted by Fowler and his research

team. The sample is described as the following:

> The respondents ranged from 3.5 to 84 years of age, with the largest number in
> the 21-30 age group. The majority (54.1%) of the respondents ranged in age from
> 13 to 40 years old. Males and females shared almost equal representation in the
> sample, but whites (97.8%) dominated the sample. There were more Protestants
> (45%) than Catholics (36.5%) or Jews (11.2%) in the sample, and only a small
> representation of Orthodox (3.6%) and other orientations (3.6%). (Fowler, 1981,
> pp. 315, 317)

Although this sample improves upon Kohlberg's (Colby et al., 1983; Kohlberg,

1958) major imbalance of using only males, it does result in other problems, particularly

racial and religious imbalances. At the time of publication, Fowler (1981) himself had

not attempted to validate or modify his model through cross-cultural research, although

he did anticipate doing so. He also wrote that "tests of statistical significance and other

indices of reliability of the sample [had] not yet been undertaken" (p. 313). In none of

the 18 other works authored or co-authored by Fowler that were reviewed for this study

does he refer to cross-cultural sampling or these statistical tests eventually being

conducted.

Analysis of the interview transcripts by Fowler's team consisted of assigning discrete passages a stage value under a particular stage aspect. Each aspect was then averaged, followed by an overall average for the entire interview (Fowler, 1981, p. 314). Inter-rater reliability between the two raters on each interview fell between 85 and 90%. It is important to note that the stages were described and assigned values *before* the interviews took place, meaning that the participants were placed into purely theoretical categories that were unsubstantiated by previous research. In addition, although Fowler calls for a "larger, more scientifically drawn sample" to "confirm or refute the theory developed herein" (p. 323), at no time has he actually been involved in such a study.

Over the years since the publication of *Stages of Faith* (Fowler, 1981), Fowler and colleagues developed three editions of the *Manual for Faith Development Research* (Fowler, Streib, & Keller, 2004). The manual was originally published in 1986, and revised in 1993 and 2004. The current version includes extensive directions on how to conduct a Life Tapestry Exercise and Faith Development Interview. The latter section directs researchers to question interviewees on the following subjects: life review (including image of God), relationships, values and commitments, and religion (including sin). The coding process for the interviews and written pieces is similar to that used in the original research from 1972 to 1981, with additional focus paid to the various aspects of faith. Unlike Moral Development Theory, which is widely examined using the Defining Issues Test (Rest, 1979), a quantitative procedure, in addition to the qualitative Standard Issue Moral Judgment Interview (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987a), there is no well-accepted quantitative model for examining FDT.

Elements of Fowler's (1981) research methodology have been criticized (Broughton, 1986; Hoehn, 1983; Jardine & Viljoen, 1992; Nelson, 1982; Nelson & Aleshire, 1986; S. D. Parks, 1991; Streib, 2003b, 2005; Wallwork, 1987; Webster, 1984). John M. Broughton (1986) notes several methodological concerns, namely that there was only one participant at Stage 6 in the original study (Fowler, 1981), that men routinely scored higher than women, the religious bias of the sample, and the lack of rationale behind the interview protocol. In addition, Broughton doubts people's abilities to make accurate representations of their own lives.

Another issue is that Fowler (1981) has not outlined his work using a traditional research framework, fully describing research questions, limitations, results, discussion, and implications (Creswell, 2003). Although interviews have since been described as a valued means for analyzing levels of cognitive-structural development (King, 1990), Fowler has not demonstrated why the interview is the best means for verifying his hypotheses (Webster, 1984). These omissions do not allow other researchers to verify his findings (Hoehn, 1983). The nondisclosure of the theory to the participants has also been seen as a problem (Nelson & Aleshire, 1986).

Basing 30 years of research assumptions on Fowler's (1981) original methodology is fraught with problems. Some are the same concerns held for Kohlberg's work (1981, 1984), such as sampling and relying on interview data, and even include the basic choice of employing a cognitive-structural developmental model (Stamm, 2006). The latter has implications for biases built inherently into the theory itself. For FDT, the concern is that it is biased against non-Christians.

Western, Christian Bias

Many researchers have criticized the overwhelming dominance of Christians and Catholics in Fowler's original sample and/or the insistence that the theory is universally applicable to all religions (Broughton, 1986; Hartley, 2004; Hoehn, 1983; Hyde, 1990; Kwilecki, 1988; Le Cornu, 2005; Nelson, 1982; Shire, 1987, 1997; N. M. Slee, 1996; Stamm, 2005a, 2006; Streib, 2004; Tisdell, 2003; Wallwork, 1980). Harold V. Hartley (2004) critiques the monotheistic nature of the samples in most studies of student spirituality. C. Ellis Nelson (1982) says that Fowler has "a vague Judeo-Christian slant" and his theory is based upon a "generalized Judeo-Christian myth" (p. 170). John Snarey's (1991) research shows that FDT "is biased in favor of subjects from urban communities, advantaged social classes, and liberal Protestant denominations" (p. 301). A key signal to potential Western bias is Fowler's (1981) embracing of "radical monotheism" (p. 22), which he privileges over "pantheism, dualism, or polytheism" (Hoehn, 1983, p. 78).

Fowler does not consistently maintain the separation between his own religious affiliation, liberal Protestantism, and universality. He (1981) has stated that he is doing both descriptive and normative work with FDT. Some of his most parochial language can be found in *Faith Development and Pastoral Care* (Fowler, 1987). In that text's discussion of the "kingdom of God," he calls the concept "Christian," (p. 76) as opposed to his usual "Judeo-Christian" (i.e., Fowler, 1981, p. 206). In other writings that have been targeted to theologians and Christian educators, he has directly expressed the Christian basis of his theory, saying: "I am trying to bring to clarity a Christian understanding of the *human* vocation" (Fowler, 2000, p. 75, italics in original) and "Faith

development theory stands at the convergence of developmental psychologies and a tradition of liberal theology deriving from Christian origins" (Fowler, 2003, p. 229).

At times Fowler acknowledges some of this bias, noting that he has used the term "faith" to imply universality, but the term "vocation" to refer to "the life lived in response to God's healing and transforming grace, … life 'in Christ' and in active loyalty to God" (Fowler, 1991b, p. 118). Although he has updated some of his language, replacing "kingdom of God" with "inbreaking commonwealth of love and justice" (Fowler, 1991a, p. 25), he has maintained that the nature of being for humans is to have a relationship with God (Fowler, 1996). Not striving to be in that relationship is unnatural.

In a 20-year review of faith development research, Streib (2003a) found only six major cross-cultural studies, four of which were empirical (Drewek, 1996; Furushima, 1985; Kalam, 1981; Snarey, 1991). This lack may be due to a failure to include cross-cultural instructions or interview questions in the *Manual for Faith Development Research* (Fowler, Streib, & Keller, 2004). Whatever the reason, on the basis of this work, Streib (2003a) concludes that "the research is not yet sufficient to provide empirical evidence of Fowler's universality claim, a claim that Fowler has not revoked but also has not repeated lately" (p. 28).

The four empirical studies mentioned by Streib (2003a) were dissertations conducted on FDT with non-Christian samples. Snarey's (1991) study on non-theistic Jews and Kalam's (1981) study on Muslims and Christians in India will be discussed in the appropriate Analysis sections. The third relevant study was Randall Y. Furushima's (1985) research on Japanese and Chinese Buddhists in Hawaii. While Furushima found representatives of Stages 3 through 6 in his sample, he also found data that was not

accounted for by Fowler's (1981) theory. One of the most unusual applications of

Fowler's (1981) work has been the dissertation by Paula A. Drewek (1996), which

examined the faith development of Bahá'ís in Canada and India. While the author

generally confirmed Fowler's (1981) theory, she found particular problems with Stages 3

and 4, noting inherent Western cultural biases within them.

There are several other criticisms of Fowler's (1981) work that, while important,

are not the focus of the study and therefore will not be discussed at length. They are:

- The definition of the term "faith" (Anderson, 1994; Avery, 1990; Dykstra,

    1986; Dykstra & Parks, 1986; Fernhout, 1986; Hyde, 1990; T. P. Jones, 2004;

    Nipkow, Schweitzer, & Fowler, 1991; Osmer, 1990; S. D. Parks, 1991; Shire,

    1987; Steele, 1990; Streib, 2003b; Vanlue, 1996; Wallwork, 1980, 1987;

    Webster, 1984)

- The focus on the structures of faith development rather than the contents of

    people's faith, often espoused by Christian researchers (Astley, 2000a; Avery,

    1990; Furushima, 1985; Kwilecki, 1988; Le Cornu, 2005; Lyon & Browning,

    1986; Moran, 1983; N. M. Slee, 1996; Streib, 2001, 2003c)

- The cognitive rather than affective focus of the theory (Furushima, 1985;

    Goldmintz, 2003; Jardine & Viljoen, 1992; Mayhew, 2004; Nelson, 1982;

    Streib, 2001; Vanlue, 1996)

- An inherent gender bias, similar to that for which Kohlberg (1981, 1984) was

    criticized (Bolen, 1994; Frieden, Baker, & Mart, 2006; Hyde, 1990; N. Slee,

    2004; N. M. Slee, 1996)

- The conceptualization of Stage 6 Universalizing faith (Helminiak, 1987; Howlett, 1989; Moran, 1983; S. Parks, 1986b; S. L. Parks, 1980; Philibert, 1981; Reich, 1993).

Fowler has created a developmental framework that emphasizes cognition and abstraction, individuality over community, self-sacrifice, faith over deed, and a belief in the transcendent. This synthesizes into a model that privileges a very personal, self-focused, self-directed, and internal way of making meaning in the world, all within the basic rubric of living through one's faith in God.

Sharon Daloz Parks

Sharon Daloz Parks is a theologian and developmental theorist (Practicing our Faith, 2003), who has also examined faith, which she defines as "the activity of seeking and discovering meaning in the most comprehensive dimensions of our experience" (S. D. Parks, 2000, p. 7). Parks is a prominent supporter of Fowler's work, and has embraced much of Fowler's (1978, 1981) design. She too draws heavily on the works of preceding developmental theorists Erikson (1963/1993), Kohlberg (1981), Robert Kegan (1982), and especially, William G. Perry (1968/1999). Beginning with her dissertation, Parks (S. L. Parks, 1980) has sought to expand the middle stages of Fowler's (1978) theory to speak more thoroughly to the faith development of young adults. Of her reconceptualization, she says: "Faith Stage 4 may be divided into two stages we shall call Young Adult and Adult" (S. L. Parks, 1980, p. 127).

Parks (S. L. Parks, 1980) describes the shifting of the locus of authority during the phases of young adulthood as beginning outside the self, during adolescence, to shifting

to a "validating internal authority" (p. 135) as various authority figures come into conflict. Although there emerges an element of choice, the young adult still searches for an authority to rely on. At this point, "the emerging self is yet fragile, there may yet be a dependence on and a straining after the security of choosing/knowing that one side of the tension is 'right' or 'better'" (p. 140). Parks (S. D. Parks, 2000) also explains that "the most profound marker of the threshold of young adulthood is the capacity to take self-aware responsibility for choosing the shape and path of one's own fidelity" (p. 64).

Following her initial exploration, Parks expanded her theory in two more books (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000). While the theory itself did not evolve, her applications of it did. In *The Critical Years*, Parks (S. Parks, 1986a) focused on higher education, "the institution of preference for the formation of young adults in our culture," (p. 133) as the main type of mentoring community, communities which foster young adult growth in faith. She has since discussed the roles of other groups and organizations, including the workplace, travel, nature, family, and religion (S. D. Parks, 2000). Particularly relevant to this discussion are religious communities, which she describes as "a shared way of making meaning" (p. 197). In describing these communities, her Christian framework is revealed to the reader: "Religious faith communities that serve as a home for the formation of faith in the young adult years are most effective if they are themselves open to possibilities for ongoing transformation at the hand of Spirit" (p. 198).

Parks's theory is certainly susceptible to many of the same critiques as Fowler's is (i.e., see Webster, 1984 on her 1980 methodology), as her work is situated within his framework. This situatedness is evidenced by her evoking the same religious language,

such as "Kingdom or Commonwealth of God" (1986a, p. 97). An obvious limitation of Parks's work stems from her samples. Her original sample (S. L. Parks, 1980) consisted of ten male and ten female undergraduates, 18 of whom were White, at a private Protestant, residential, liberal arts institution (pp. 290-291). It is unclear in future explications of her theory (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000, 2007) whether or not she has expanded her sample.

In summary, Fowler's theoretical underpinnings are certainly present within Parks's work, as evidenced by her focus on expanding individuality and authority and her Christian worldview. Because Parks's work is situated within Fowler's, and because he has been cited much more frequently in the literature, his theory will be the main focus of the forthcoming sections, with Parks's thoughts included as often as they are relevant.

Why continue to utilize Fowler's and Parks's theories, despite all the problems inherent within them? First, because they are the dominant theories in the area, they "provide useful heuristics for guiding the work of student affairs professionals" (Stamm, 2005a, pp. 63-64). Some educators have embraced Fowler's Stage 3 to 4 transition as "the most critical passage in the faith journey" (Raper, 2001, p. 20). Parks's (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000) idea of the mentoring community applies well to higher education's living-learning communities, and provides warning about the "unhealthy aspects of the pledging experiences of fraternities and sororities" (P. Love, 2002, p. 367). The emphasis on higher education is also useful, as the "academic community has the potential to enhance or inhibit this process of faith development" (Hartley, 2004, p. 116). Finally, religion is a highly salient element of identity, as important to college students as ethnicity and gender (Garza & Herringer, 1987).

Religious Identity Development Theories

Fowler and Parks are not the only theorists to describe developmental trajectories that incorporate religion, spirituality, or faith. Unfortunately, the proposing of alternate theories is much less common in the literature than is the critiquing of what already exists. The four locatable theories of this type will be presented here, coincidentally, at least one from each of the non-Christians groups included in this study. They represent different constructions with varied levels of detail, and only one (Shire, 1987) is even a response to Fowler (1981).

Judaism – Shire and MacDonald-Dennis

Michael J. Shire (1987) is the rare Jewish educator who has made an attempt at integrating Fowler's (1981) theory. He does this seemingly reluctantly saying that "the normative design of the stage sequence, which posits a more individuative faith with each succeeding stage, has little parallel in a Jewish understanding of spirituality" (Shire, 1987, p. 24). Despite his concern that "a universalist and syncretistic approach blurs the significant differences between religious traditions and often assumes a Western Rationalist position" (Shire, 1997, p. 53), Shire does not offer an alternative theory. Instead, he maps Jewish ritual observance throughout the lifespan onto Fowler's schema (Shire, 1987). He describes Stage 3 as being highly conformist toward the expectations of the synagogue and the rabbi, Stage 4 as being focused on internal meaning and prayer rather than prescribed behavior, Stage 5 as the re-embracing of the power of rituals, and Stage 6 as a holy union with God.

Christopher MacDonald-Dennis (2006) conducted a dissertation with Jewish undergraduates and proposed a five-stage theory of their understandings of anti-

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Semitism. His stages are: Ethnoreligious Awareness, Acceptance/Minimization, Awakening to Historic and Political Consciousness to Anti-Semitism, Rejection of Christian Hegemony, and Redefinition. In the final two stages, individuals begin to challenge the Christian dominance in society and come to believe "that Christian hegemony and anti-Semitism are forms of oppression that must be fought along with other ones" (p. 275).

Islam – Peek

An important religious identity development model was created by Lori Peek (2005), who interviewed 127 highly religious Muslim college students in New York and Colorado. Peek was able to identify a pattern of three stages of religious development in her sample, Religion as Ascribed Identity, Religion as Chosen Identity, and Religion as Declared Identity (p. 223). Unfortunately, she does not reference Fowler (1981) or Parks (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000), so it is unknown whether she feels her stages correspond with theirs.

Peek's (2005) stages cover broader time spans than do Fowler's (1981). The stage described by Peek that covers the ground of Fowler's Stages 1 through 3 is Religion as Ascribed Identity, which takes place during childhood and adolescence. It is characterized by a lack of critical reflection and a taking of religious identity for granted. Those at this stage are highly conformist.

Progression to Peek's (2005) second stage, Religion as Chosen Identity, occurs when an individual comes to feel that he/she has chosen his/her own religious identity, rather than it being provided externally, and when it is prioritized over other aspects of identity. This transition typically happens for Muslims in college, as "the campus setting

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[provides] space and time to explore their identities and make choices about who they [want] to be and how they [want] to live their lives" (p. 227). The presence of a Muslim peer group greatly aids this growth. This is similar to Fowler's (1981) Stage 4, Individuative-Reflective faith and Parks's Young Adult faith (1980).

Peek's (2005) final stage is Religion as Declared Identity. Unfortunately, due to the timing of her study being just after the events of September 11, 2001, it cannot be known if this is a generalizable stage. However, the traumatic events in the country caused the students in Peek's study to once again reevaluate their Muslim identities, and on the whole, to reaffirm them. "Many of those interviewed reported becoming more reliant on God as they became more cognizant of their own mortality" (p. 231). According to this, the task of Muslim American adulthood is declaring identity in the face of obstacles.

Atheism – Achermann

There is no American study on the faith development of atheists. In a German study, Markus Achermann (1981; as cited in Oser, Reich and Bucher, 1994, p. 47) developed a developmental trajectory for atheists. Table 3 summarizes the theory.

This theory is unlike Peek's (2005), in that it has less to do with internal identity and more to do with a perspective on the world. Although Achermann does not reference Fowler (1981) in any way, his theory does share a similar concern for what Fowler calls *Bounds of Social Awareness* and Achermann calls *Relations with Others*. Fowler's *Locus of Authority* corresponds to Achermann's *Own Control of the World*. Fritz K. Oser et al. (1994) point out that in Achermann's model, "from level III onward, other human beings

Table 3. Levels of 'religious' development of self-declared atheists Achermann (1981; as cited in Oser et al., 1994, p. 47)			
Level	Other powers	Own control of the world	Relations with others
I	They control. Human life is passive. Actions are reactive.	Not yet effective.	Not yet perceived in this context.
II	Heteronomy is eased through growing of the world.	The individual determines his or her life, or at least claims the right to do so. Self-determination is egotistical.	Unchanged.
III	It is accepted that certain events are beyond human control.	Improved control of surrounding world. Egotistical (disasters, accidents, suffering) self-determination mellowed by discovery of other(s).	Discovery of the other(s) as an instrument for furthering one's own power and control.
IV	In addition to the events of level III certain personal traits are recognized as being beyond human control.	Egotism has disappeared. Self-determination is preserved, but limited by equal and reciprocal relationships.	The relation with others is characterized by mutual interaction and reciprocal influencing. Self-determination is negotiated, as is joint control of outside world.

(in particular an interactive social network) take the place occupied by God in the eyes of

believers" (p. 49).

It is also critical to note that the title of chart, taken directly from the original text,

is "Levels of 'religious' development of self-declared atheists." The term religious is

marked in quotations by the author, likely in order to express that it is an imperfect way

of defining the worldview of atheists. I will address this difficulty in language with the

data I collect from the atheist students in the current study, and then propose alternative

language to use.

Reviewing these three religious identity development theories, it is clear that

understandings of faith development from non-Christians differ in varying degrees from

the conceptualizations of faith development held by Fowler (1981) and Parks (S. Parks,

1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000). In the next chapter, I will analyze how these religious and non-religious perspectives, more broadly examined, complement or contrast FDT. This analytical process coincides with K. Helmut Reich (1993), who suggests that the true developmental objectives of FDT and the solutions to religious problems should be determined by theologians. Although I am certainly not a theologian myself, I can take the beginning steps necessary for separating FDT from a strictly Christian perspective. These steps extend both Kohlberg, who did not consider religion as having an impact on morality (Wallwork, 1980), and Fowler (1981), who built a theory upon faith but did not differentiate between religious affiliations. The fundamental choices these influential researchers made to overlook religion and religious diversity require reconstruction, which I take on in the next chapter. This reconstruction will lead directly into my research methods and my purpose of ascertaining that FDT adequately represents non-Christian students.

Chapter 3:

Conceptual Framework

Analysis

In this chapter, I will develop a conceptual framework for the spiritual developmental trajectories of Christians, Jews, Muslims, and atheists, using the research that ties the four worldviews in question to FDT.[7] A version of this analysis has previously been presented (Small, 2007b).

The theorizing and creating of different developmental models for different population groups is not a new phenomenon. In the developmental literature surrounding race and ethnicity, for example, at least sixteen individual models exist (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). These models have been established to help educators to understand the lives Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans. In one study that examined religion as a factor in student success (Hoffman, 2002), it was found that religious minority students were similar to racial minority students in several outcomes. This suggests that spirituality may be studied from multiple religious perspectives. Religions also impact the worldviews and values of their adherents (Tropman, 2002), and spirituality necessarily is one element that would be influenced by this.

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[7] When presenting terminology from the religious traditions, I will standardize any transliterations of words from foreign languages (i.e., Hebrew and Arabic) and italicize these words for clarity.

The voices of other researchers support this suggestion. Due to the Protestant foundations of many higher education institutions, "most of us know little about the belief systems, values, assumptions, and behaviors associated with other religious traditions" (Chickering, 2005, pp. 97-98). This Protestant privilege leads researchers to ignore the fact that "as members of different religious groups, individuals pursue different spiritual goals. Unless we play favorites, the diversity of traditions dictates a pluralistic approach attentive to numerous brands of equally developed faith" (Kwilecki, 1988, p. 310).

However, it seems as though favorites have frequently been played. Studies on the psychology of religion are often conducted on Christian samples, only later to be discovered incompatible with non-Christian groups (Hood et al., 1996). A review of the previous studies of psychology and religion found that "the psychology of religion [was] still almost entirely confined to work within the broadly Judeo-Christian traditions" (L. B. Brown, 1987, p. 12) and works that did look at other religions did so through the Judeo-Christian lens. This also reflects back upon the influential choices made by Kohlberg (Wallwork, 1980) and Fowler (1981) to overlook religion and religious diversity within their models.

Many faith development studies that claim universality have used majority (or completely) Christian samples to make their claims (Anderson, 1994; Bassett et al., 1991; Bussema, 1999; Das & Harries, 1996; Fowler, 1981; Fulton, 1997; Hammersla, Andrews-Qualls, & Frease, 1986; Hunsberger, McKenzie, Pratt, & Pancer, 1993). Matthew J. Mayhew (2004) points out the problem with this, saying: "While these studies are useful for understanding how certain students make meaning of spirituality, they fail to give

equal voices to students [and other age groups] who represent nontraditional worldviews" (p. 649). Also, this compromises research generalizability (Hood et al., 1996).

One reason why there may be so little research on non-Christians is the lack of available quantitative instruments. In a large volume of all the scales measuring various types and conceptualizations of religion, spirituality, and faith (Hill & Hood, 1999), of the 126 included, not a single one specifically attempts to study a non-Christian population. Eighteen scales are designed to measure some aspect of Christian belief or practice.

Researchers at HERI were among the first to break down any findings on student religion and spirituality by the students' religious affiliation. Alyssa N. Bryant (2006) reports on their findings from the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Pilot Survey* (HERI, 2003). Her research was specifically designed to "examine religious minority students in their own right, without constant comparisons to majority perspectives (i.e., Christianity)" (p. 3). Table 4 and Table 5 display some of her prominent findings for Muslim, Jewish, Unitarian Universalist college students and students with no religious preference. Bryant notes that "although the non-religious students are the least likely to believe in God, it's noteworthy that over a quarter, in fact, do believe, illustrating the reality that identifying as nonreligious is not synonymous with atheism" (p. 13). The findings of Bryant (2006), as well as those from HERI itself (2005), will be integrated in this section to guide the differential examination of four groups of students.

Table 4. Ultimate spiritual quest Adapted from Bryant (2006, p. 206)	
Religious preference	Most often cited "ultimate spiritual quest":
No religious preference	I do not consider myself to be on a spiritual quest (46.9%)
Muslim	To follow God's plan for me (28.8%)
Jewish	I do not consider myself to be on a spiritual quest (30.8%)
Unitarian Universalist	To discover who I really am (31.6%)

Table 5. Current views about spiritual/religious matters Adapted from Bryant (2006, p. 206)	
Religious preference	Most often cited description of spiritual/religious views: +
No religious preference Muslim Jewish Unitarian Universalist	Not interested (46.2%) Secure (58.4%) Secure (32.4%) Seeking (37.3%)

+ Students were asked to "mark all that apply." Other options not shown include "Conflicted" and "Doubting."

Like the researchers at HERI, my research differentiates by religious affiliation, taking steps to adapt MDT and FDT and reconstruct a model that adequately represents non-Christian students.

Faith Development Theory and Christians

Background on Christianity

Protestant Christianity (hereafter referred to as "Christianity") is centered on the concept of justification by belief:

> Salvation comes by God's grace alone, which is received in faith, not earned by any good work. It does not deny the importance of good works in the Christian life, but it holds that good works are a result of faith in God, not a way to earn God's favor, which is available to all who will receive it in faith. (Koenig, 1990, p. 70)

The main doctrines of Christianity surround: the triune God, creation, the fall, redemption, the church and its sacraments, eschatology, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit (Gunton, 1997b). Since the creation, "God remains close in relations of interaction with the creation, but in such a way that he makes it free to be itself" (Gunton, 1997a, p. 142). Due to human beings' essential state of need, they must "be rescued from a plight which currently distorts and ultimately threatens to destroy their creaturely well-being under God, but which lies utterly beyond their control or influence" (Hart, 1997, p. 189). The

two sacraments recognized in Protestantism are baptism, which is a "symbolic washing away of sin and reconciliation with God," (Koenig, 1990, p. 74) and the Lord's Supper, in which "the spirit of Christ is recognized as permeating the elements, being in, with, and under them" (p. 75). Sin is not exactly evil deeds, but "the belief that man is self-sufficient, that he is the master of his fate and the captain of his soul" (Spurrier, 1952, p. 70).

Because of Fowler's (1981) centering his Stage 6 on the Kingdom of God, it is important to make mention of Christian eschatology. End-of-time theology has become extremely important in modern-day Christianity. The understanding is that the Kingdom of God will result in

> a transformation of the entire created order. The redemption which is promised is one which involves not only human persons, but societies, other living beings and the realm of nature. The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Fergusson, 1997, p. 237)

Christian eschatology is also very individualized. "Eternal life means … that the unique personality of a person never dies; it lives forever – hence, eternal life" (Spurrier, 1952, p. 158). In addition, God is said to forgive humans for their mistakes if they are repentant, and thus spare them from the fate of hell after death.

There are many varieties of Christianity flourishing in this country. The current analysis will concentrate on the "mainline" denominations: the liberal Protestant denominations, which include the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, and the United Church of Christ, and the moderate Protestant denominations, which include Methodists, Disciples, Northern Baptists, Lutherans, and other Reformed churches (McCullough, Weaver, Larson, & Aay, 2000; Roof & McKinney, 1987). This matches with Fowler's own affiliation as a liberal Protestant.

FDT has been widely examined from the Christian perspective (Astley, 2000a, 2000b; Astley & Francis, 1992; Avery, 1990; Conn, 1999; Droege, 1992; Dudley, 1999; Dykstra, 1986; Ford-Grabowsky, 1987; Fortosis, 1992; Fowler, Nipkow, & Schweitzer, 1991; Gibson, 2004; Huebner, 1986; T. P. Jones, 2004; Le Cornu, 2005; Ma, 2003; Nelson, 1982; Osmer, 1990; Steele, 1990; Wilhoit & Dettoni, 1995). Some Christian denominations have been particularly receptive to FDT. In a review of the work done on faith development in the thirty years since he started his work, Fowler (2004) found that Catholic theologians and educators had been the most receptive to it. Liberal and moderate religious groups, including Unitarian Universalists, United Methodists, liberal Baptists, Episcopalians, Disciples of Christ, and also Reform Jews also found FDT useful.

All this is not to say that FDT has been warmly welcomed by all Christians, particularly as it comes to theology (Downs, 1995). Lutherans have been among the groups least receptive (Fernhout, 1986), because they believe that "if faith is a gift, the human attempt to develop one's faith is inappropriate" (Avery, 1990, p. 75). The varied reactions from different denominations are explained in that, "while the more conservative traditions do not find the theory specific enough in theological content, some from less conservative traditions find it overly specific" (Steele, 1990, p. 93).

There is much research on Christians throughout childhood, adolescence and young adulthood that can help to frame the discussion of the applicability of FDT. For example, Robert Coles, a pediatric psychologist who has conducted lengthy interviews with hundreds of children of a variety of religions in countries around the world, finds

that "children raised in Christian homes are quick to focus on Jesus as Savior because they know full well their own vulnerability as boys and girls" (Coles, 1990, p. 212). Coles cites one boy as an illustration of how close Christian children feel to God: "'You know, I guess the Lord and us, we're all in this together: us hoping to be saved, and Him wanting to save us'" (p. 224).

According to the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR, n.d.) "Protestant teenagers are relatively active in religious organizations and activities, both within and beyond their churches" (p. 5). Most hold traditional, literalistic beliefs about God and other Christian tenants, although this is less true for mainline Protestant teenagers. They strongly report that religion is important to them and that they discuss it frequently with their families. Finally, the majority say they would continue to attend their churches if given the choice otherwise.

Stella Y. Ma (2003) conducted a study on 59 Christian campuses (total sample unknown). When asked what they perceive the influence of college experiences to be on their spiritual formation, "the five most influential items were peer relationships, working through crises while at college, personal spiritual disciplines, praise and worship sessions, and Bible or theology classes" (p. 330). Females tended to rate nonacademic experiences higher than males did.

Gender differences have been found by other researchers. Joy F. Hammersla et al. (1986) conducted a study with a sample of 542 undergraduates at a Christian evangelical institution. They found a difference between the male and female participants: "Among women, God appears more salient, respected, and awesome than among men, and less punitive, indicating a greater sense of God's deistic qualities (all-

wise, eternal, holy) among women and a greater unwillingness to attribute negative terms to God" (p. 430).

Kenneth E. Bussema (1999), in a study of 127 students at a Reformed, Christian liberal arts college, also found differences between the faith stages of the male and female participants, saying that "the men interviewed reported having more discussions and theological debates about religious and church issues, while the women talked more about discussions about faith life" (p. 25).

Three of the mainline Protestant denominations were singled out in HERI's (2005) *Spirituality in Higher Education Study*. Episcopalian students show "slightly above average scores on Charitable Involvement and Ecumenical Worldview, and relatively low scores on Religious Commitment and Religious/Social Conservativism" (p. 21). Presbyterians and members of the United Church of Christ tend to resemble students in general, meaning that they exhibit few, if any, extremities in belief. Presbyterians "earn slightly above average scores on Religious Engagement and Charitable Involvement, and relatively low scores on Religious Skepticism." Members of the United Church of Christ "score slightly below average on Religious/Social Conservativism and Religious Skepticism" (p. 22).

<center>*Faith Development Theory and Jews*</center>

Background on Judaism

Judaism differs from Christianity in the belief in Jesus as the messiah, but more profoundly, in its answer to the faith/works dichotomy:

> In Judaism, God considers people's actions to be more important than their faith; acting in accordance with biblical and rabbinic law is the Jews' central obligation.

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As Christianity developed, however, it did away with most of these laws, and faith became its central demand. (Prager & Telushkin, 1981, p. 78)

Judaism is a religion of action, not of faith (Unterman, 1981). The three main obligations for Jews are "to live a life of *Torah*, worship, and good deeds" (Ackerman, 1990, p. 15). While Judaism does have an eschatological component, it is much more focused on the present world (A. B. Cohen, 2002; Zecher, 1990). In fact, Jews believe that "God … requires woman and man to become partners in creating the world" (Borts, 1996, p. 201) on an ongoing basis, and that this is a commandment, not an option. Judaism, if practiced on a daily basis, includes many other obligations: prayer, keeping *kosher*, honoring mother and father, *Torah* study, charity, and visiting the sick and those in mourning (Goldman, 2000).

As a Jewish educator, Shire's (1987) perspective on Fowler's (1981) definition of faith is particularly helpful. Shire states:

> It is particularly difficult in Judaism to define a concept of faith. The corresponding Hebrew term, *emunah*, describes a relationship of trust between God and humankind; one in which we set our hearts upon a transcendent reality and expect a covenantal relationship in return. However, this *emunah* is expressed in active terms through the performance of *mitzvot* [commandments]. These *mitzvot* become the lens through which we view the world and the tools by which we act in the world. There is no *halachic* [legal] stipulation that we should accept a dogma of belief; rather, the *aggada* [set of non-legal guidelines] provides us with a variety of images, symbols, and metaphors that have informed the Jewish faith. We cannot, then, make the dichotomy between belief and faith ... taking place in Christianity. Judaism sees faith as the expression of one's relationship to God, manifested in human responsibilities. Both of these categories comprise *emunah*. (Shire, 1987, p. 24)

This analysis will be narrowed to focus primarily on Reform and Conservative Judaism, which are the mainstream denominations. Together, they make up 78% of Jews in the United States (Lazerwitz, Winter, Dashefsky, & Tabory, 1998, p. 10).

Developmental and Other Literature and Judaism

Only one faith development study has been carried out with a specifically Jewish population. Snarey (1991) conducted a study with the non-theistic Jewish founders of a nonreligious Israeli *kibbutz* [commune] in order to test the construct validity of Fowler's (1981) theory. After categorizing his interviewees by faith stage, the author compared his results to studies conducted with members of other religious groups (i.e. Fowler, 1981; Furushima, 1985; Kalam, 1981) to test the scale's universal applicability. He states:

> The lower scoring groups were typically younger adults or adults who were selected because they represented a deficit characteristic. The higher scoring groups were generally older adults or intentionally selected elites. Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and other religious groups were otherwise found throughout the ranked list, although there is an apparent tendency for groups of elite Protestants to post somewhat higher mean scores than both elite and non-elite non-Protestants. (Snarey, 1991, p. 295).

Although Jewish faith development work is sparse, literature on the Jewish lifespan and identity can help to frame the discussion of the applicability of FDT. Jewish identity is extremely difficult to define (Ackerman, 1990). Researchers themselves hold very different views of the situation. Opinions range from the "extreme assimilationists [who] foresee significant erosion of Jewish life" to the "extreme transformationists [who] perceive the beginnings of a major revival in Jewish life," (S. M. Cohen, 1988, pp. 123-124) with plenty in between.

The are a variety of specific explanations for the reasons behind the ever-changing definition of Jewish identity. For decades the primary goal for many Jews in America was assimilation (Amyot, 1996). There has been a separation of Jewishness, the peoplehood, and Judaism, the religion (Feingold, 1991). American Jews in the twenty-

first century are becoming less ethnically identified, while simultaneously more religiously observant (Dashefsky, Lazerwitz, & Tabory, 2003). But, because Jewish identity is not defined the same way it was generations ago, young Jews are struggling to determine how to relate to the Jewish religion (Horowitz, 2002). Measurement of the complex construct of Jewish identity is itself problematic, as researchers use various scales of observance, beliefs, and values, which do not necessarily even tap into people's true, underlying identities (Gordis & Ben-Horin, 1991).

Some researchers have written pieces that declare that Jews develop religiously in the same ways as do other groups. On example is Perry London and Allissa Hirchfeld (1991), who say: "The overall process of adolescent identity formation must apply to Jews as to other groups" (p. 45). Another is Jay Goldmintz (2003), who is a rabbi and the headmaster of a Modern Orthodox day school in Manhattan. Goldmintz utilizes Fowler's (1981) theory without questioning how it applies to Jewish religious development.

Despite the complexity, researchers have attempted to define and measure Jewish identity with various populations. Jewish identity development occurs throughout life (Horowitz, 2002), and it begins in childhood. Coles (1990) found that Jewish children are closely tied to the history of their people and that they already believe they are partners in God's work. According to one child: "'A Jew is someone God has chosen to send here to represent Him and try to improve His world'" (p. 260). However, a study Judith A. Press (1989) conducted with a small group of 2nd through 7th graders attending a Hebrew school found that the students' main feeling was ambivalence, both toward the schooling and toward their Jewish identities.

Adolescence is considered a key time in Jewish identity development. It is "the ground where the battle to save American Jewry will be fought" (Yares, 1999/2000, p. 41). One study found "family (family-of-origin and family-of-procreation), friends (including youth groups) and schools as the most important sources of Jewish socializations" (Himmelfarb, 1980, p. 58). However, the interaction between these three social forces and their relative importance remains unknown.

Carol A. Markstrom, Rachel C. Berman, and Gina Brusch (1998) found a significant relationship between religious denomination and living in a Jewish setting among Jewish adolescents. Their main determination was that while living in a Jewish environment prevented the youth from stagnating at immature stages of identity development, it did not necessarily promote them to advanced stages.

Jewish teenagers do not seem to act very strongly on their beliefs. Using a sample of 414 Jewish youth in Minneapolis, researchers found a contradiction between the adolescents' statements that Judaism was important to them and their willingness to act on those beliefs through ritual observance or by dating only Jews (Leffert & Herring, 1998). Their primary connection to the religion was for group membership. Findings from a study of 1,300 Massachusetts Jewish teenagers aged 13-17 who had become *b'nei mitzvah* [reached the Jewish rite of passage] were similar (Kadushin, Kelner, & Saxe, 2000). These teenagers also felt passionately about Judaism, but did not take the corollary actions "that might set them apart from a largely secular, pluralistic culture in which they are trying to 'make it'" (p. vii).

Gustav Niebuhr (2001) reported on a study conducted by the Conservative movement of Judaism in 2001, saying that participants in the study exhibited a decline

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after four years in the number of literal beliefs they held about Judaism, such as the *Torah* being God's actual word. This may represent a shifting to more complex thinking about Judaism, rather than a lessening of commitment to it.

According to the NSYR (2004), only 12% of Jewish teenagers talk about religious or spiritual subjects with their families on a weekly basis (p. 1). They are the least likely to talk about religion and spirituality, compared to Protestants, Catholics, and the religiously unaffiliated. The NSYR also demonstrated that very few young Jews, compared to Christians, view themselves as having a personal relationship with God (C. Smith, 2005). Jewish adolescents also have fewer paranormal beliefs. They do not usually commit themselves to the idea of living "for God" (p. 45), but they have had a larger than normal number of experiences with powerful worship and miracles.

In a study of young adult British Jews, Jennifer Sinclair and David Milner (2005) found a relationship between age and security in participants' Jewish identities. Older participants were "more concerned than their younger counterparts to identify sources of spiritual meaning and value in their lives…. and, specifically, what made Jewish observance worthwhile" (p. 110). For all participants, new situations were triggers to reexamining identity issues; for the younger adults, this happened upon entry to college, and for those in their later 20s, it was the start of a new job.

In 2002, Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life commissioned researchers at HERI to use CIRP data to compare Jewish students to the general national student population, both in the 1999 cohort and in trends since 1971 (Sax, 2002). Briefly summarized, they found Jewish freshmen: have higher "intent to participate in volunteer or community service while in college" (p. 6), have "less frequent attendance at religious

services, fewer hours per week devoted to praying/meditating, and lower levels of 'spirituality'" (p. 6), and are more committed to "keeping up to date with political affairs, developing a meaningful philosophy of life, and helping to promote racial understanding" (p. 50). Jewish freshmen have also become more likely to attend college far from home and to apply to greater numbers of schools, trends which have not been seen for non-Jewish students and are unrelated to socioeconomics (p. 27).

Bryant (2006) had the following findings for her sample of 2,100 Jewish college students in the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Pilot Survey* (HERI, 2003): 75% of Jewish students self-rate as the most compassionate religious group (Bryant, 2006, p. 7). Eighty percent have the same religion as their parents (p. 7), but most are not very inclined to say that they have a spiritual guide in their lives. Relatively few self-identify as religious (19%, p. 9), report praying (45%, p. 9), or believe in God (60%, p. 13).

Also according to the recent HERI data on spirituality (2005):

Jewish students earn above average scores on Ecumenical Worldview, Ethic of Caring, and especially Religious Skepticism, and below average scores on Religious Commitment, Religious Engagement, and Religious/Social Conservativism.... [Their] scores on Spirituality tend to be considerably below average.... Jewish students obtain only average scores on Spiritual Quest and Charitable Involvement. (HERI, 2005, p. 21)

Other studies have shown Jewish college students to differ from Christian college students. According to Mayhew (2004), Jewish students are likely to frame their spiritual experiences in terms of their families, whereas Christian students are likely to frame them in terms of God. The Jewish students in Zabriskie's (2005) study differed significantly from the Christian students, with only 41.2% defining themselves as both spiritual and religious, as compared to 65.5% of Catholics, 69.1% of non-Evangelical Protestants, and 71.1% of Evangelicals (p. 87).

Adam B. Cohen (2002) looked at coping among Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. He conducted three different studies with three different samples, including the GSS and college students. His main finding was that Jews are much less likely than Catholics or Protestants to turn to God in times of crisis, and that spirituality is much less of a predictor for Jews in satisfaction with life.

Turning finally to Jewish adults, in a study of 350 Israelis Jews of varying denominations, Aryeh Lazar et al. (2002) found that motivations for religious behavior included: belief in a divine order, ethnic identity, social reasons, family, and the way one was raised. While the authors expected clear patterns in the data to emerge based on denominational affiliation, "only the belief in a divine order motive ordered the persons in these categories monotonically from those who identified themselves as orthodox to those who identified themselves as secular" (p. 517). The authors conclude that there are more complex motivators for religious behaviors among those who do not believe in God.

Faith Development Theory and Muslims

Background on Islam

Islamic belief is centered on the Five Pillars of Faith: (1) God's oneness, (2) the Prophethood of Muhammed, (3) the book of *Qur'an*, (4) the final judgment, and (5) the existence of Angels and Jinns (Hedayat-Diba, 2000; Ricks, 1990). Islamic observance is centered on the Five Pillars of Islam, which are obligatory actions for all Muslims. These are: (1) the declaration of faith, (2) prayer, (3) almsgiving, (4) fasting during the month of *Ramadan*, and (5) pilgrimage to Mecca (Hedayat-Diba, 2000; Norcliffe, 1999). Muslims believe in the truth of the Jewish and Christian stories, and in their respective prophets,

but augment those faiths by stating that "Muhammed's message is the fulfillment of all those that preceded it, and Muhammed himself is the 'signet' (seal) in the ring of prophecy and closes the prophetic cycle begun by Moses" (Ricks, 1990, p. 92).

Intentionality is critical in Islamic observance (Renard, 1996). During daily worship, "going through the motions will not do; without proper intention the duty to God is not fulfilled, and the act of worship invalidated" (D. Brown, 2004, p. 127).

Muslims in North America are highly diverse, encompassing many variables such as national origin, language, denomination, race, class, and generational status (Leonard, 2003).[8] But Muslims are unique from other religious minority groups in that they are more likely to define their identities by their religion, as opposed to by any other factor (Bryant, 2006; Peek, 2005, p. 220). "For Christians, Muslims, and Jews from the Middle East, one's religious affiliation determines one's identity. A person is born, grows up, and dies in a specific religious community" (Haddad, 1996, p. 65). Religion is clearly not the main form of identity in American culture; for Muslim immigrants, this change may come as quite a shock.

Haddad's (1996) point is supported by additional research that shows that "holding a minority status in the broader society is more salient to religious minorities than holding a minority status in the local context only" (Markstrom-Adams et al., 1994, p. 466). This salience is prime during adolescence, which is the time in many religions when an individual is expected to make a declaration of commitment: "Such public testimonies or affirmations may be of even greater salience to religious minorities who

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[8] The ideologies and practices of the Nation of Islam, with primary membership of African-Americans, is a qualitatively different religion from the Islam observed by Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants in the United States (Haddad & Esposito, 1998; J. I. Smith, 1999; Wormser, 1994). As such, and in order to delimit the work of this study, it will not be included in the current analysis.

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must affirm their beliefs in societal contexts where their religion is not broadly adopted and/or supported" (p. 457).

Developmental and Other Literature and Islam

A limited amount of literature about Muslim children, adolescents and young adults can help to frame this analysis. Although "Muslim students are increasingly visible on college and university campuses across the country" (Leonard, 2003, p. 111), Islam has only minimally been integrated into the higher education and developmental theory literature bodies. No more than one faith development study has included Muslim participants. Thomas P. Kalam (1981) conducted faith development interviews with Christians, Hindus, and Muslims in Chavakkad, India. The author found that Fowler's (1981) and Kohlberg's (1981) stages were culturally biased and that their claims of universality were "unfounded, because they were identifying specific content as structural stages" (Kalam, 1981, p. iii). Based on this study, another researcher comments that Fowler (1981) has "confused certain content with structural stages" (N. M. Slee, 1996, p. 75).

Bryant (2006) found the 826 Muslim college students who were in her sample to be highly religiously active, more so than any of the other minority religious groups she examined. She describes them in the following way:

> Muslim students are the most religiously devout in both belief and behavior compared to other religious minority groups. This trend is apparent in how they perceive themselves religiously and spiritually relative to peers, their fervent belief in God, their commitment to prayer and religious service attendance, and the evident link between faith and the central aspects of their identity and life purpose. Coinciding with their high levels of religiousness, Muslim students' faith is rooted in strong familial bonds. Nearly all Muslim students share the same religious preference as their parents and are more inclined than other groups to "frequently" discuss religion and spirituality in the context [sic] family

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conversations. Although many do not feel disillusioned with their religious upbringing, close to one-third feel obligated "to a great extent" to follow their parents' religion. (Bryant, 2006, p. 21)

Two Muslim women writing about their own experiences (Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006) described experiencing "negative stereotyping, difficulty practicing their religion, and discrimination" (p. 22) on college campuses. In the face of this, Muslim undergraduates are often interested in expressing their religious beliefs more publicly than their parents ever did (Mubarak, 2007). In addition, Mayhew (2004) states that Muslim students have a close relationship with God and remain heavily connected to parents and other role models.

As for teenagers, the NSYR study of 3,370 only had 18 Muslims in its sample (C. Smith, 2005). According to the researchers, serious adolescent observers of Islam regularly fast, pray, attend mosque, and give to charity. They are a large minority of all teenage Muslims.

Coles (1990), the only researcher that could be located who included Muslim children in his/her work, found these youths quite willing to behave in submission to God, when awake and even in their dreams. According to one boy: "'If you fight Him, you'll lose. If you surrender to Him, you'll win" (p. 232).

Special Considerations: Muslim Women and Muslim Immigrant Identities

There are two important characteristics that must be noted about Muslims in America, because they differ strongly from both Christians and Jews. First, even among moderate Muslims, there are strongly defined gender roles (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Williams & Vashi, 2001; Wormser, 1994), which tends to be true only of the more conservative branches of its sister religions. Second, nearly all Muslims in this country

are first or second generation immigrants (Hermansen, 2003). The consequences of these distinctions have been explained in some of the literature.

Muslim gender roles are made obvious by women's dress. The veil, or *hijab*, worn by Muslim women is highly contested in the United States, where women are able to choose whether or not to wear it. Feminists are the most opposed to the *hijab*. On the other side of the debate, the veil is often construed as a way of managing men's sexuality (Read & Bartkowski, 2000).

In a small qualitative study, Darnell Cole and Shafiqa Ahmadi (2003) found that the primary reasons why young Muslim women began veiling were "parental expectations, peer pressure and religious obligation" all of which added up to "establishing a 'good Muslim' identity" (p. 54). Women who eventually chose to stop veiling usually did so when negative reactions from non-Muslims caused them to reevaluate their belief in the practice. Those who continued to veil despite obstacles expressed that the criticism helped to build up their resolve.

Even adolescent Muslims are not immune from having to think about their gender status and its relationship to their religiosity. In fact, Muslim girls' awareness of identity may be forced at an earlier age due to their modest dress (Barazangi, 1989). This is not the case for Muslim boys, "for there is little to distinguish them from non-Muslim teenagers" (Wormser, 1994, p. 36). In a study with 10 young female Muslims, Kristine J. Ajrouch (2004) found that

> Arab girls who wear the *hijab* are held to a higher standard than are Arab girls who do not…. Maintaining honor is central not only for the girl herself; it extends to other family members and to the community. Her actions are carefully scrutinized, and thus she essentially becomes the measure of Arabness. (Ajrouch, 2004, p. 383)

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Immigrant identity is also fraught with complications. Media stereotypes of Muslims were prevalent even before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (Abu-Laban, 1991; Haddad, 1998; Hasan, 2000; Speck, 1997; Wormser, 1994), and may be a developmental obstacle to young Muslims. Sharon M. Abu-Laban (1991) explains: "These images have implications for passing on traditions to the young; for the retention and transmission of religion; … and the nature of the evolving paradigm of values and world views transmitted from one generation to the next" (p. 27). These misunderstandings may impact Muslims during the college years if professors do not fully understand Islam or refuse to accommodate students' religious commitments (Speck, 1997).

For the students in Ajrouch's (2004) sample, having second generation status led to a blended Arab-American identity. Asma G. Hasan (2000) agrees that recent Muslim immigrants in America are more likely to retain allegiance to the values of their home countries. In addition, research has shown that the stronger one is connected to one's ethnicity, the greater one's loyalty to the corresponding religion will be (Hammond, 1988).

In a study of Arab families in the United States and Canada, Nimat H. Barazangi (1991) found that many second-generation Muslim immigrant youth had difficulty negotiating the connections between their parents' homeland and their new contexts. According to the author, this confusion could lead to one of the following outcomes: rejecting the beliefs of one's parents, continuing to have unresolved conflicts between them, having different sets of behaviors for different circumstances, or trying to develop one's own critical understanding of these dual contexts.

Barazangi (1989) also found that conflicting values between immigrant parents

and American-born Muslim children can cause confusion among adolescents:

> Arab-Muslim youth, like any other youth, observe what the majority of their peers or role models in the media project as the accepted dress: the one that draws the attention of the opposite sex. Therefore, when Arab-Muslim immigrant parents … react by preventing their children, particularly daughters, access to the environment (for fear that they will abandon the customary dress) or by enforcing the "old home" customs of dress, they cause confusion in the minds of their offspring. (Barazangi, 1989, p. 72)

Public schools can be particularly difficult to navigate (Eck, 2001; Haddad, 1996;

Pulcini, 1995; J. I. Smith, 1999; Wormser, 1994). The problems include sex-education,

co-educational physical education classes, and school uniforms requiring skirts, all of

which are affronts to modesty, and cafeterias that do not clearly mark meat products,

which can cause issues with dietary restrictions. The concerns for young Muslims in

public schools go beyond their ability to observe rituals and modesty, to feeling "pulled

between two worlds and therefore … never [developing] a solid, integrated identity"

(Pulcini, 1995, p. 181).

<p align="center">*Faith Development Theory and Atheists*</p>

Background on Atheism

Atheism has been included in this study in order to expound on the faith

differences between religious and non-religious believers. Contrary to what might be the

popular understanding of the term, atheism is *not* defined as a disbelief in God, but as a

lack of belief in God (Campbell, 1998; Scobie, 1994). In fact, it is "*atheism, in its basic*

form, is not a belief: it is the absence of belief. An atheist is not primarily a person who

believes that a god does *not* exist; rather, he does *not* believe in the existence of a god"

(G. H. Smith, 1979, p. 7, italics in original).

Because of this broad definition of atheism, however, it is quite difficult to characterize. Atheism is not "a comprehensive philosophy of life or ideology. It is impossible to infer an all-encompassing worldview from the fact that someone identifies as an atheist" (Nash, 2003, p. 8). Nash (2003) describes seven varieties of student atheism that he has encountered in his years of conducting seminars on religious pluralism. Jon C. Dalton and his colleagues (Dalton et al, 2006) identify two distinct type of "secular seekers … who are engaged in spiritual search outside the context of religion" (p. 7). According to Ray Billington (2002), there are several forms of non-theistic religious expression, including reverence of the arts, communing with nature, being in community, and even experiencing sexual relations. One particular form of atheism is secular humanism, which is defined as "a comprehensive nonreligious life stance that incorporates a naturalistic philosophy, a cosmic outlook rooted in science, and a consequentialist ethical system" (Flynn, 2002, p. 42).

Developmental and Other Literature and Atheism

According to Nash (2003) who has written on fostering religious pluralism in higher education, religious and spiritual observances of all varieties have become highly tolerated on college campuses. The revival of religion has also been noted in the higher education literature. But, Nash says, atheists have not been accorded the same respect on campus or attention in journals. This lack of attention is clearly reflected in the literature on atheist adolescents and college students that was available for the current study.

Fowler stated in an interview early in his career that non-theists tend to advance to Stage 4 more quickly than theists due to the rational, critical environments in which they

usually grow up (Kuhmerker, 1978). However, he has not spoken positively about their

ability to move beyond Stage 3 or 4:

> When teaching college sophomores and freshmen, I encountered a number of Stage 3 atheists and agnostics. At present our society seems to be populated by a substantial number of Synthetic-Conventional adherents of what might be called a "low" civil religion that involves mainly tacit trust in and loyalty to a composite of values such as material success, staying young, and getting the children out successfully on their own. (Fowler, 1981, p. 249)

Coles (1990) finds what he calls "secular" children to be no less interested in

spiritual matters, saying: "Mind-boggling ironies and paradoxes are not beyond the

contemplation of children reared under no religious aegis yet encouraged at home and

school to search soulfully for some view of things" (p. 296). He also confirms that these

children are just as susceptible to the teachings of their non-religious parents as religious

children are.

The NSYR included an option for adolescents to select no religion (C. Smith,

2005). Of the respondents who selected that option: 8% were atheist; 8% were agnostic;

54% said they were "just not religious"; 9% were "religious" nonreligious; and 21% said

they didn't know or refused. Fifty-two percent currently believe in God, although 66%

did at one point in life (p. 86). Their reasons for becoming nonreligious were: intellectual

skepticism and disbelief, 32%; don't know why, 22%; lack of interest, 13%; just stopped

attending services, 12%; life disruption and troubles, 10%; dislikes religion, 7%; lacked

parental support, 1%; and vague or no reason, 2% (p. 89). This data does not clarify

when these transitions from religious to not religious happened in the adolescents' lives.

Eugene J. Mischey (1981/1992), using a sample of 32 adolescents by religion and

college/work status, found a significant difference in faith-scores of religious believers

over non-believers. The author was surprised by this finding, "since faith development

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theory posits structural factors and not content factors (such as religious orientation) as responsible for progression" (p. 182). This led Mischey to conclude that "a religious environment may provide a milieu in which individuals are encouraged or, even, forced to grapple with abstract symbolism so that they may clarify their life-perspectives" (p. 187). By extension, this may mean that a non-religious environment does not provide this encouragement.

In a study of 150 college students in Glasgow, Geoffrey E.W. Scobie (1994) found that 40% of students declared ideologies that were a negation of some aspect of religion or politics. This either occurred because these students' own worldviews were not highly organized and personally understood, or because their beliefs were systematized against a targeted, rejected belief system.

Bruce Hunsberger et al. (1993) conducted three studies with varied groups of Christian undergraduate students (either currently affiliated or having been raised as a Christian) and found that low levels of Christian orthodoxy were related to high levels of doubt and high levels of complexity in thinking about religious issues. In addition, the various types of religious doubt were highly correlated, revealing an overall pattern of doubt. However, no causal relationship could be established between doubt and complex thinking. Although this study was not conducted with atheists, it can help clarify their mindset.

In another study conducted by Hunsberger and several colleagues (Hunsberger, Alisat, Pancer, & Pratt, 1996), the researchers examined the patterns of doubt and fundamentalism among 348 undergraduates. They found that doubters have different ways of thinking about religion, and that thinking about "religious issues may precede a

drop in religiosity for some people" (p. 211). They concluded that "low fundamentalists

… seem to respond to divergent thinking (i.e. critical questioning and considering

alternatives to their beliefs) by changing their religious beliefs" (p. 218).

> According to HERI (2005), students marking their religious affiliation as "None"
>
> had the highest mean score of all groups on Religious Skepticism, and the lowest
> mean scores of all groups on Religious Commitment, Religious Engagement,
> Spirituality, and Equanimity. The "Nones" also earn a very low overall score on
> Religious/Social Conservativism.... [The] "Nones" also receive the lowest score
> of all groups on Charitable Involvement ... [and] on Compassionate Self-Concept.
> (HERI, 2005, p. 19)

> The atheist student and agnostic student in the qualitative study by Mayhew

(2004) actually confirmed Fowler's (1981) separation of cognition from affect, although

this was not the case for the religiously affiliated students he interviewed. Their

responses to spirituality were also quite "cerebral" (p. 657). Mayhew concluded that

perhaps the opportunity to "attend church services or to participate in faith-based

practices … might provide more opportunities for religious students to develop and use

emotion-based vocabularies to describe spiritual experiences" (p. 667).

> One of the biggest questions surrounding atheism is what causes people to give up

their belief in God. A major historical catalyst for atheism has been advances in science

which, "despite the affirmation by many of its pioneers that they remained believers, has

effectively appeared to make God redundant by offering a naturalistic account of what

had previously been held to be miraculous" (Billington, 2002, p. 3). Life events also

catalyze people into becoming atheists. Disillusionment with God (particularly following

petitionary prayers) and childhood trauma are two causes (Wulff, 1991).

> Atheists themselves explain their adoption of a nonreligious worldview in one of

four ways: "(1) metacognitive considerations, (2) problems of theodicy, (3) self-

liberation, and (4) negative experience with religious education" (Oser, Reich, & Bucher, 1994, p. 52). When believers become nonbelievers, their religious belief systems may be replaced with totally self-serving ideologies or ones that are society-serving.

This body of literature on Christians, Jews, Muslims, and atheists will be brought forward in the next section of this study to demonstrate how it complements and contrasts with FDT.

Complements and Contrasts between Faith Development Theory and all Considered Religions

In this section, I will directly compare FDT as conceptualized by Fowler (1981) and Parks (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000) with the spiritual paths, beliefs and values of each of the religious groups in question: Christians, Jews, Muslims and atheists. Areas of complement and contrast between the existing theories and this basic understanding of the religions themselves will lead to the better understanding of the developmental trajectories of non-Christians and, ultimately, a conceptual framework adapted for understanding the growth in faith of individuals within these groups.

Faith Development Trajectory for Christianity

The Christian underpinnings of FDT have been pointed out in the review of the literature, and will not be repeated here. Instead, I will mention a few additional ways in which FDT and mainline Christianity align. First, the view that the person grows more and more individualized through the young adult period resonates with Christianity. An inherent individualism within Christianity has been pointed out:

> There has been a renewed emphasis in some Christian circles on the idea that Christianity – the example of "the Christ" – helps people to discover latent

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powers within themselves. The key is not so much to depend on Christ as a redemptive force that exists independently of oneself but to allow Christ's example and teachings to awaken one's own capacities. Rather than trusting in Christ, the believer learns from Christ to trust the power that lies within. (Wuthnow, 1998, p. 152)

Christians are also required to be personally justified in their faith. Community membership is not enough to confirm salvation. Each person must "wrestle inwardly (and at times in what seems like a frightening aloneness) to try to determine whether they have heard God's will correctly" (H. Smith, 1991, p. 362). No one mediates between the believer and God. This can be seen as corresponding with a person's growth to Stage 4 faith (Fowler, 1981), when he/she is able to trust oneself to make appropriate religious decisions.

However, from a Christian perspective, self-centeredness is a sin, as it leads one to believing that no one else, including God, is needed. Once a person turns toward God, self-consciousness and self-centeredness are given up, and developing an identity can begin (Rottschafer, 1992). This could be seen as a move from the highly individualistic Stage 4 to the more embracing Stage 5 (Fowler, 1981).

In exploring how psychological development and Christian spiritual development are related, Joann W. Conn (1999) asserts that, in both cases, the person is invited to "lose" (p. 8) oneself. "In psychological terms, losing our self is for the sake of authentic intimacy and mutuality. In Christian terms, losing our self is for the sake of Christ and the reign of God" (p. 8). This losing of the self, however, cannot occur until there is a self to give. Sacrifice must be made knowingly. Therefore, the person must first become fully independent.

Proposed Modifications to Fowler and Parks for Christians

Christian researchers, some supportive and others not, have proposed revisions of Fowler's work or their own conceptualization of Christian faith development (Astley, 2000a; Downs, 1995; Droege, 1992; Fortosis, 1992; Gibson, 2004; J. A. Gorman, 1995; Steele, 1990). For the sake of space, I will not recapitulate the entirety of their theories. Instead, I will bring together much of these researchers' thoughts, plus those of Fowler (1981, 1987) and Parks (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000), to reconstruct a trajectory for Christian faith development. In order to do so, I have pulled themes out of each researcher's suggested developmental tasks and stages and compiled them, as well as included research findings from the literature summarized above. It is important to note that those research pieces that did not specifically focus on FDT are difficult to class by stage; therefore, classification decisions were based on their complementarities with other researchers' thoughts.

Stage 1. In Stage 1, the young child is beginning to learn the core truths of his/her family's religion, Christianity (J. A. Gorman, 1995). This is mostly received directly from the parents (Downs, 1995). These truths are best taught in a non-reflective manner, allowing the child to relish the fantastical elements of the story (Steele, 1990) and Christianity's powerful symbols (Astley, 2000a). The child responds to this education "by faith with trust in a God who is loved and who does understand" (J. A. Gorman, 1995, p. 155). He/she feels a close connection to Jesus as a role model (Coles, 1990).

Stage 2. In Stage 2, the older child has learned the story of his/her community of membership (Astley, 2000a). Older children focus on the ritualistic elements of religion and will perceive God as distinctly anthropomorphic (Steele, 1990). The child is still

very self-centered (Gibson, 2004) and takes religion and God in literal terms (Downs, 1995).

Stage 3. The Stage 3 adolescent has learned the story of Christianity well enough now to feel ownership of it (Steele, 1990) and think about it in a newly rational way (Astley, 2000a). As Fowler (1987) has said, adolescents and adults at this stage are the most committed servants of the churches. They seek out inspirational role models and authority figures to guide them (Gibson, 2004) and tend to enmesh themselves in communities of like-minded thinkers (Ma, 2003; NSYR, n.d.). Belief at this stage is highly dogmatic, personalized (Fortosis, 1992; Fowler, 1981), and, for women especially, highly relational (Bussema, 1999; Hammersla et al., 1986). Those at Stage 3 may believe that God has a preferential affinity for members of this religious group (Downs, 1995).

Stage 3.5. Stage 3.5 is being inserted in order to represent Parks's (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000) transition period of young adulthood. While the individual at this stage has not yet become autonomous, he/she has begun to choose his/her own authority figures, rather than simply accepting those who have always been there.

Stage 4. Stage 4, which occurs after the transition period of young adulthood, features an internalized commitment to Christian principles, as well as an emergence of the critical understanding of the religion (Gibson, 2004). Men, in particular, may focus on analytically examining their beliefs (Bussema, 1999). The individual steps back from a perceived personal relationship with God and begins to rely more on an internalized faith (Fortosis, 1992) and the ability to trust oneself (H. Smith, 1991; Wuthnow, 1998). He/she is likely to also retreat from the community of believers, critiquing the church but

still using it to meet one's needs (Downs, 1995; Fowler, 1987). Symbols are rationally

separated from their meanings (Fowler, 1981).

A major task of this stage is negotiating the conflict between the demands of the

present life and the expectations for the transcendent future (Steele, 1990), as the person

is on a "quest for covenant in Christ" (Loder, 1998, p. 254). He/she is now more

autonomous and individual (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000), feels quite correct in

his/her beliefs (Astley, 2000a), and does not express much skepticism about those beliefs

once they have been internalized (HERI, 2005).

Stage 5. At Stage 5, the individual comes to embrace the paradoxes both within

theology and between the personal and the communal (Downs, 1995; Fortosis, 1992;

Fowler, 1981). He/she faces the task of reappraising his/her life in relation to God

(Steele, 1990) and embraces the relativity of one's position (Downs, 1995). He/she also

begins to abandon all forms of self-centeredness (Rottschafer, 1992). This person's

beliefs are far more complex than the average church member's (Astley, 2000a).

Stage 6. Finally, at Stage 6, the main task is a decentralization (Downs, 1995) and

losing of the self (Conn, 1999). The "individual at this stage embraces and acts upon

principles that reflect the interest of God's Kingdom, which entails more than just the

salvation of individuals but the redemption of all creation's structures stained by sin"

(Gibson, 2004, p. 302). This person is living a "transcendent moral and religious

actuality" (Fowler, 1981, p. 200). The ultimate model of a Stage 6 life is that of Jesus

Christ (Droege, 1992), and this point can only be reached if one is truly open to Jesus as

savior (T. P. Jones, 2004).

Reviewing this trajectory, it becomes clear just how well FDT corresponds with Christianity. By this analysis, overlapping themes include: (1) progressively more complex thought, (2) inclusion of more people into one's circle of concern, (3) commitment to God through stronger and more self-directed faith, and (4) an eventual giving up of the self for God. Finally, (5) radical individualism is accepted, despite the seeming paradox with the widening circle of concern, as it embraces a direct relationship to God and an understanding of one's personal role in conducting God's work on this earth. These five main themes will now be carried over to the developmental trajectories for the other three groups in question.

Faith Development Trajectories for Non-Christians

The five main themes identified through the Christian example will now be examined in light of the spiritual paths, beliefs and values of Judaism, Islam, and atheism.

Progressively More Complex Thought

The notion of progressively more complex thought developing throughout the life span is accepted broadly in the non-Christian population. For one, Judaism places a lot of emphasis on learning, and this even extends through Jewish students' higher expectations for academic success in college (Sax, 2002). Jews are also taught from childhood the "idea of full freedom of inquiry, including the full right and obligation of dissent, even as to the most sacred propositions" (Friedman, 1991, p. 88).

Islam also embraces the cognitive advancement of its adherents, as at minimum, they are to grow more proficient at reciting the *Qur'an* in Arabic, beginning in childhood

(H. Smith, 1991). Islam also has a long history of intellectual achievements (Denny, 1998).

Finally, no strand of atheism rejects the idea of progressively more complex thought. In fact, those focus on rationality may embrace it more strongly than do any of the religious traditions (Kuhmerker, 1978).

Inclusion of More People into One's Circle of Concern

One important difference between the beliefs and values of Christianity and those of non-Christian religions, specifically, is the broadening circle of concern. In Christianity, time seems to be given for teenagers and young adults to develop personally before they return obligations to the community. There is the luxury of this personal development time, with more responsibility for one's self than for others.

In Judaism, the obligation include others in one's focus begins at 13, when the teenager becomes a full-fledged adult in the eyes of the community, one who is required to contribute to the group. "The *mitzvah* (a religious obligation, which flows from the covenantal relationship between the Jewish people and God) of *tsedakah* [charity] places on every Jew the obligation to right the injustices of society" (Einstein & Kukoff, 1991, p. 11). The circle of concern is widened much earlier for Jews than for Christians and a communal focus is maintained throughout life (Coles, 1990; L. Miller & Lovinger, 2000).

A concern for others is also built into Islam. Muslims are expected to balance the individual and the community, and the family is the primary force for keeping people from straying from the correct path (Norcliffe, 1999). Islam is highly universal, as well, in its recognition of Judaism and Christianity as sister religions (Ricks, 1990). Like Jews, Muslims may have an earlier broadening of concern to larger groups of people than do

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Christians.

Atheists are actually the most similar to Christians in the way their circle of concern is broadened, because they do not belong to a religious group that requires communal participation. According to Achermann (1981), in earlier stages, an atheist is egotistical and self-focused. In later stages, he/she develops "reciprocal relationships" with others. However, this will be more likely for those strands of atheistic beliefs that are humanistic in nature, as opposed to those that are more individualistic (Nash, 2003).

Commitment to God through Stronger and More Self-Directed Faith

As Christians develop, they take on more personal ownership of their commitment to God. This ownership comes back to them in the great return of a direct relationship with Jesus Christ and the ability to confirm one's own salvation through faith. As other religions do not have a Christ-figure, this notion of self-directed faith is quite dissimilar.

Judaism's understanding of the individual's selfhood differs from Christianity's in that Jews are not given the opportunity for self-fulfillment, through a savior or through relationship to God; they are instead given responsibilities. Second, it is the community that guides the person's values (Friedman, 1991), not the person him/herself through the Jesus relationship. Also, "Judaism is more than an expression of an individual's faith in God; it is a reflection of the covenantal relationship between God and the Jewish people" (Einstein & Kukoff, 1991, p. 134). The community mediates the relationship between the person and God.

Undoubtedly, Muslims are highly committed to their faith, as religion is often their most salient form of identity (Haddad, 1996; Peek, 2005). While it makes sense that

Muslim youth will feel more ownership of their faith as they age, Fowler's (1981) theory suggests that later points in life "are concerned primarily with how one *extricates oneself from* too unthinking an immersion into group norms, values, and symbols" (M. Gorman, 1981, pp. 107, italics in original). This is the fulfillment of a Christian's self-actualization. However, this extrication from the group may not be an appropriate description for Muslims, a people whose identity is primarily defined by religion.

As for atheists, self-determination does make sense, considering that they likely view themselves as individual beings living in a world without a master plan. By definition, the relationship to God is the main distinction between atheists and theists. Although an atheist may become more self-directed in his/her beliefs, it will not be toward God. For some, it may be toward interconnectivity with all of humanity.

An Eventual Giving Up of the Self for God

The ultimate goal of the Christian spiritual path is to develop a full self that can be given over to God's cause. This objective is dramatically different from that of Jews and atheists, although somewhat similar to that of Muslims.

Judaism does not expect self-sacrifice in the same way Fowler (1981) outlines in his Stage 6. In fact, Jews are never supposed to give up the pleasures of life. "Through all Judaism runs this double theme: We should enjoy life's goodness, and at the same time we should augment this joy by sharing it with God, just as any joy we feel is augmented when shared with friends" (H. Smith, 1991, p. 302). Instead of making sacrifices, Jews balance their obligations to God and their satisfaction of life. If they do engage in an act of decentralization of the self, it is on behalf of the community.

Muslims do share a similar objective of giving one's self over to God's cause,

although it is the timing of this principle that differs between them and Christians.

Devout Muslims live their entire existences as a sacrifice to God, as this is the main

objective of their spiritual lives. The commitment to this begins at an age long before

Fowler's (1981) Stage 6, as young as childhood (Coles, 1990). In fact, the word "*Islam*"

itself means "submission" to God (Eck, 2001, p. 269).

Finally, although the reasoning behind this is totally different, just as with Jews,

an atheist will not give up the self for God. However, those atheists that are committed to

a particular quest or value in life, such as spiritual atheists, secular humanists, or social

justice atheists (Nash, 2003), may sacrifice themselves for that cause.

Radical Individualism

Lastly, many of the themes discussed above come together under the umbrella

concept of radical individualism. The individualism promoted within Christianity is a

unique attribute that does not correspond with the three other groups being studied here.

One major distinction between Christian and Jewish beliefs and values is the

balance of individualism and the communal. While Christianity leans toward the

individual gaining enough self-awareness to make personal sacrifices as the ideal way to

bring about change, Judaism encourages greater and stronger commitment to the

community as the ideal way. All elements of Judaism incorporate a communal

component, which is "the predominant feature of Jewish religious life" (Shire, 1987, p.

24). In Judaism, it is "through the collective that the experience of God is most

profound" (Jacobs, 1995, p. 17). "The three principles upon which Jewish practice is

based – *Torah*, worship, and good deeds – are applied to both the individual and the

community" (Ackerman, 1990, p. 20).

There is much in Islam that conflicts with Christian notions of individuality (Norcliffe, 1999), and therefore, developmental theories that are built around them. For one, "children are encouraged to show *ishan* – kindness, reverence, conscientiousness and sound performance – toward their parents…. [and] are expected to obey their parents in everything, even when grown up" (p. 154). But mainly, it is the lifelong submission to God that most poses a problem for individuality: "Radical individualism … undercuts obedience to the community's moral and ritual regulations and leads to communal fragmentation" (Pulcini, 1995, p. 182). Although this disagreement with individualism is not universal among young Muslims (Hasan, 2000), it is most common.

Radical individualism would apply to some atheist individuals, such as fundamentalist non-believers or existential humanists (Nash, 2003), whose understanding of the world specifically rejects the meaning made by certain groups. It would apply less to those mentioned in the previous subsection, who have a larger cause to advance. But although those atheists who are humanistic or social justice oriented are the most likely to reach a stage of development that allows them to make the kind of personal sacrifices demanded by Christianity, their emphasis on humanity as a whole must be seen in direct opposition to the ultimate focus of Christianity.

Proposed Modifications to Faith Development Theory

The analysis above shows that the Christian underpinnings of FDT come into conflict in many ways with Judaism, Islam and atheism. These complements and contrasts with the groups' spiritual paths, beliefs and values will be used to inform reconstructions of the developmental trajectory for each group.

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Proposed Modifications for Jews

Proposing a developmental trajectory for Jews is more of a creative endeavor than was the developmental trajectory for Christians. This is because other researchers have not specifically crafted models of their own. Shire's (1987) thoughts on Jewish observance throughout the stages will be included here, as will MacDonald-Dennis's (2006) on Jewish awareness of anti-Semitism, and the other researchers and theologians presented above.

Stage 1. Stage 1 for the Jewish child will not differ in structure from that of a Christian child. It is only the specific religious truths being taught that will. At this age, the family basis of the Jewish religion is initiated, and this lasts at least through young adulthood (Mayhew, 2004). The child learns that he/she has a responsibility for contributing to God's work (Coles, 1990).

Stage 2. At Stage 2, the Jewish child begins formal socialization into a religion that is separate from the mainstream. The process of Jewish education begins in the home, and proceeds through formal lessons in the synagogue on such topics as Hebrew, the *Torah*, and Jewish history (Einstein & Kukoff, 1991). The child may be ambivalent about this separation from the larger, dominant culture and his/her emerging Jewish identity (Press, 1989). This is perhaps because at this stage, he/she has the tendency to identify with "those like us" (Fowler, 1981, p. 244), a group which is noticeably opposed to the mainstream. The Jewish child will begin to realize that his people are the object of stereotyping (MacDonald-Dennis, 2006).

Stage 3. At Stage 3, the primary task of the Jewish adolescent's life is *bar* [for males] or *bat* [for females] *mitzvah*, the rite of passage ceremony. There are several

important consequences of reaching this rite of passage. First, the adolescent is now "obligated to observe the commandments, to perform the *mitzvot* of the *Torah*" (Einstein & Kukoff, 1991, p. 113). This is quite different from the individualized "quest for covenant in Christ" (Loder, 1998, p. 254), as it is a communal obligation. The teenager has joined the Jewish *people's* covenant with God, not a personal one. As such, an additional consequence of the *bar/bat mitzvah* is the inclusion in the *minyan* [prayer quorum] (Shire, 1987). Despite all of this, there remains a tendency not to act upon one's beliefs (Kadushin et al., 2000; Leffert & Herring, 1998), perhaps because these young people do not yet know how to enact communal obligations on an individual level.

The Jewish teenager continues to be socialized into the group, and is heavily influenced by parents and friends (Himmelfarb, 1980). He/she finds much power in the *kedusha* [holiness] of symbols (Goldmintz, 2003) and in the worship community (C. Smith, 2005), especially when it is filled with identifiable role models (Shire, 1987). At Stage 3,

> the synagogue provides an outlet for feeling religious: coming to services on the High Holy Days, joining with friends, neighbors and family in public worship; being moved by ancient and modern liturgy and music.... There are definite expectations of what the synagogue should be, and what the rabbi should represent, since this is the place that confirms a religious identification. (Shire, 1987, p. 18)

Despite what has been suggested by Fowler (1981), Jewish teenagers distinctly lack a belief in a personal relationship with God or in the paranormal (C. Smith, 2005). This likely ties back into the communal nature of the Jewish religion, which strongly deemphasizes the personal. In addition, the Jewish teenager learns that Jews are not responsible for the stereotypes of their people (MacDonald-Dennis, 2006).

Stage 3.5. At the interim transition stage, the beliefs of the young Jew become

less and less literal (Niebuhr, 2001) as he/she moves from unqualified relativism to probing commitment (S. Parks, 1986a, p. 95).

Stage 4. The young Jew may differ from the young Christian most at Stage 4, the typical college years. The Jew breaks further away from the family in terms of physical location (Sax, 2002) but becomes more focused on the community writ large (HERI, 2005; L. Miller & Lovinger, 2000), as private forms of worship decline and commitment to service increases. Religious experiences with smaller groups of chosen fellow believers take precedence over experiences with the established synagogue (Shire, 1987). The development of the self is not totally ignored, however, as young adult Jews are encouraged to "study and make personal decisions concerning their religious practice" (Einstein & Kukoff, 1991, p. 153) and the individual learns to find meaning for oneself (Sinclair & Milner, 2005). At this point, the Jewish young adult is aware of Christian dominance in society, and opposes it (MacDonald-Dennis, 2006).

Stage 5. For the Jewish adult, there are multiple reasons for religious motivation (Lazar et al., 2002). There is a return to ritual behavior (Shire, 1987) and a full living of the three core principles of Judaism: *Torah*, worship, and good deeds (Ackerman, 1990, p. 20). There is also the role of socializing youth into the religion. Christian hegemony is combated, along with other forms of societal oppression (MacDonald-Dennis, 2006).

Stage 6. Finally, the pinnacle of Jewish spiritual development is a fully realized partnership with God, a relationship that occurs through "experiencing immanence and transcendence in moments of *devekut* [mystical union with God]" (Shire, 1987, p. 19). One never abandons the present world for the world to come (Friedman, 1991) and one fully embraces life's goodness while "[augmenting] this joy by sharing it with God" (H.

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Smith, 1991, p. 302). Judaism does not expect self-sacrifice on behalf of God, but instead a full integration into the community of humanity.

In summary, the Jewish faith development trajectory differs from the Christian trajectory in the following significant ways: an early understanding that one's group of membership is a minority, which leads to an ambiguous identity; an obligation to participate in a group superseding one's individual growth; a greater focus on the world at large at a younger age; a focus on action over belief; and a commitment to community that does not include self-sacrifice.

Proposed Modifications for Muslims

Once again, proposing a developmental trajectory for Muslims is a creative endeavor. This is because only one researcher has specifically crafted an alternative model (Peek, 2005). As such, Peek's schema will be heavily used and combined with the other researchers and theologians presented above. The trajectory will assume an American born individual, not someone who has immigrated sometime during his/her life.

Stage 1. Just as with the Jewish child, Stage 1 will not differ for the Muslim child in structure. Only the contents of the religion will. This Muslim child learns early in life that submission to God is life's ultimate responsibility and honor (Coles, 1990).

Stage 2. By Stage 2, the older Muslim child may already be receiving conflicting images, from his/her parents and from the culture at large (Abu-Laban, 1991). Pressure to resolve a dual identity begins in the schools (Eck, 2001; Haddad, 1996; Pulcini, 1995; J. I. Smith, 1999; Wormser, 1994). The child understands family as the center of meaning, and begins a lifelong commitment to honoring parents (Norcliffe, 1999).

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Stage 3. An important task for the Stage 3 individual is an acceptance that one is in submission to God (Norcliffe, 1999). Despite this submission, the Muslim teenager does not think of him/herself has having a personal relationship with an anthropomorphic God (H. Smith, 1991). The serious Muslim practices her/his Islam "by regularly fasting, praying, attending mosque, and giving alms to the poor" (C. Smith, 2005, p. 315).

Confusion may be caused when parents conflict with other sources of authority the teenagers feels compelled to follow, such as non-Muslim peers (Barazangi, 1989). This stage can be particularly difficult on female, Muslim teenagers, many of whom have already begun to dress in a modest fashion (Wormser, 1994) and feel the pressure to live up to the religious and social images presented by the *hijab* (Ajrouch, 2004). The corresponding stage described by Peek (2005) is Religion as Ascribed Identity.

Stage 3.5. For Muslims in the transitional phase of young adulthood, the main developmental task is resolving the pull of the like-minded community, the "imagined *madrasa* [Islamic school]," (Hermansen, 2003, p. 312) and the embracing of the new context of secular higher education (Barazangi, 1991). The individual begins to connect with the religion in a personal way, rather than "just [as] a cultural affiliation or a family tradition" (Mubarak, 2007, p. 3).

Stage 4. The young adult Muslim remains quite devout in belief, observance, and commitment to family (Bryant, 2006; Mayhew, 2004) and does not take the prescribed step back from the community (Fowler, 1981). The individual is still besieged with pressures to resolve dual identities (Haddad, 1998) and must determine who he/she really is (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003). Peek's (2005) corresponding stage is Religion as Chosen Identity.

Stage 5. Peek's (2005) final corresponding stage is Religion as Declared Identity. According to this, the task of Muslim American adulthood is declaring identity in the face of obstacles.

Stage 6. While heeding Gabriel Moran's (1983) warning on the difficulty of grasping other traditions' visions of the ultimate, I posit that the following passage may be an image that can be used for the final stage of Muslim faith development:

> Islam takes a unified view of the temporal and spiritual aspects of life and rejects the traditional dualism arising out of the apparent conflict between the spiritual quest of the soul and the physical demands of the flesh. Islam looks upon them as the two faces of the same coin which complement and complete each other and constitute together a single integrated reality. They are inseparable and hold each other in balance through a feed-back mechanism activated by the physical urge of the individual on the one hand, and by his moral sense on the other. Even at the highest level of spiritual elevation, a human being does not and cannot sever links with his physiological being. There is no such thing as a superman. Man himself, with the pre-ordained dichotomy of body and soul, is God's supreme creation on earth. (Farooqui, 2000, p. 13)

In summary, the Muslim faith development trajectory differs from the Christian trajectory in the following significant ways: conflicting images of one's identity; a valuing of God's will over one's personal will; an absorption into one's community of membership, rather than a separation from it; a declaration of religious identity in the face of religious marginalization; and a balancing of the spiritual and the temporal, rather than an abandonment of the temporal.

Proposed Modifications for Atheists

Achermann's (1981) theory is the only available developmental framework for atheists. As such, it will be heavily used and combined with the other researchers presented above. Because there are so many spiritual paths available to those who do not believe in God (Billington, 2002; Van Ness, 1996), I will broadly refer to humanism

(placing the highest value on human life and attempting to live with meaning) with this trajectory.

Stages 1/2. It is difficult to speculate on the childhood years of atheists, as people come to disbelieve in (or not have belief in) God in so many different ways (Oser et al., 1994). Some children are raised within a religious system they later desert; others are Nash's (2003) apatheists, who have been raised with no religion and have no feeling for it. Either way, these children are being socialized in their families' belief systems in similar ways as Christians, Jews, and Muslims. This does not mean, however, that these children are not already interested in matters of spirituality (Coles, 1990).

Stage 3. At Stage 3, an individual atheist is possibly an adherent of what Fowler (1981) has called "a 'low' civil religion" (p. 249). Beliefs are tacit and passionately held. Personal responsibility for choosing and maintaining an unorthodox belief system does not yet exist (S. Parks, 1986a). The teenager is egotistical about his/her place in the world (Achermann, 1981).

Stage 3.5. The young adult transition may be the stage where those individuals who previously held theistic beliefs give them up for some reason, be it a disappointment in God or a rational conclusion that God does not exist. Sixty-six percent of atheists in one study said they did believe in God at one point in life (C. Smith, 2005, p. 86), and this seems like a logical point when that belief would be abandoned. The young adult is moving into a phase of "fragile self-dependence" (S. Parks, 1986a, p. 95) and may respond to doubt created by this new exploration by abandoning religion (Hunsberger et al., 1996). Individuals at this stage also begin to accept that events are out of human control (Achermann, 1981).

Stage 4. It is most possible to discuss Stage 4 atheism, as this is the stage of rationality and criticism (Fowler, 1981). The individual at this stage does have a personally crafted ideology around, including or supporting his/her atheism, likely featuring complex patterns of doubt (Hunsberger et al., 1993). This person probably has an active participation in some sort of rational/non-emotional community (Mischey, 1981/1992), such as higher education or business, and holds cerebral ways of viewing spirituality (Mayhew, 2004). He/she is not necessarily communally oriented (HERI, 2005).

Stage 5. The stage of adulthood is quite hard to characterize for atheists, due to the lack of literature. Achermann (1981) teaches that an individual sees him/herself in partnership with other human beings, and egotism has disappeared. If this is at all similar to the other three groups, then these values are held in balance with valuing the self.

Stage 6. Stage 6 is again difficult to identify for atheists, mainly because Fowler's (1981) description of this stage is highly theistic in nature. Although conceptualizing from the outside is always risky, the closest parallel within atheism seems to be secular humanism (Flynn, 2002; Nash, 2003) taken to full universality. In other words, this would entail the embracing of complete, unselfish partnership with all other humans in order to reach a fully achieved life for all.

In summary, the atheist faith development trajectory differs from the Christian trajectory in the following significant ways: a fundamental disbelief in a partnership with God; a likely break from one worldview due to a combination of doubt and disillusionment; and a valuing of humanity over any transcendent power.

Reconstructed Conceptual Framework

Taking the four trajectories together, it is clear that there are some minor nuances that distinguish the developmental paths of Jews, Muslims, and atheists from Christians, and that there are also some major differences. Figure 1 outlines the parallel developmental tracks for the four groups. In order to best understand the figure, please note the following: (1) the boxes for each group at the six stages and one transition include information on the main development work being conducted at each point in life, (2) the bolded boxes transcending more than one group's trajectory indicate an overlapping developmental task, (3) the vertical phrase running alongside each group notes the faith development objective for that group, which is determined by the values inherent within that belief system, and (4) dotted lines highlight an experience common within one or more of the groups that causes a particular developmental advance.

As clearly described by Fowler (1981) and Parks (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000), the developmental objective of Christianity is individualization. This is at the core of what the Christian is expected to accomplish through a fully realized developmental trajectory. All that he/she should be able to do, such as having a self to give over to God and acting even to the level of martyrdom for one's cause, is based upon this idea. For Jews the main developmental objective is communal obligation, for Muslims it is submission to God, and for atheists (of the secular humanist or social justice orientation [Nash, 2003]) it is partnership with humanity. These are the goals that theologians and theorists alike envision for these groups.

The main distinction between these theoretical developmental paths for Christians and non-Christians appears to be the balance between the individual and the communal.

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Figure 1. Faith development trajectories for Christians and Non-Christians

	Non-Christians		
Christians	Jews	Muslims	Atheists

Stage 1 — Truths received from parents; non-reflective, fantastical faith

Non-Mainstream Religious Education

Stage 2

Focus on religious community of membership (mainstream)	Focus on religious community of membership (non-mainstream)		Potential focus on religious community of membership

Rite of Passage — **Religious Dress**

Individualization — *Communal Obligation* — *Submission to God* — *Partnership with Humanity*

Stage 3

Personalized, rational, dogmatic	Communally obligated	Submissive to God, conformist	Tacit, egotistical

Disappointment with God

Stage 3.5 (Transition)

Choice of one's own authority figures	Less literalism of beliefs	Engaging with conflicting religious and secular identities	Abandonment of former beliefs

Stage 4

Internalized, critical, autonomous, sure, individualized	Shift from private to public, making individual meaning	Resolving dual identities with priority to religious	Doubting, rational, non-communal

Stage 5 — Paradoxical, relative, developing lack of self-centeredness

Balance between:

Self and God	Self and Community	Self and God	Self and Humanity

Stage 6 — Decentralization of the self to:

| God
Acting on behalf of God's Kingdom | Community
Fully embracing life and God | God
Unified temporal and spiritual life | Humanity
Acting on behalf of society |
|---|---|---|---|

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While in Christianity there is a focus on the personal relationship with God and redemption through Jesus Christ, in Judaism and Islam one's connection to God is mediated through communal participation. This is mirrored in the developmental processes outlined for these three groups. In Christianity, one becomes more and more autonomous, eventually realizing a true self that can be given over to God's cause. In Judaism, one becomes a full-fledged member of the community at age 13, and from that point onward must remain focused on humanity in order to maintain partnership with God here on earth. In Islam, one is always tied deeply to family and always submissive to God, and grows into fully embracing one's own humanity in honor of God's greatest creation. In addition, the tenets of Judaism and Islam both require obligation to God and communal rituals, which contrasts with more of a self-actualization focus within Christianity.

Atheists are the most unique group in question here, not surprisingly, as they have their lack of belief in God to set them apart from the religious believers. Plus, they may not engage in any formal religious education at all. Their trajectory is also the most difficult to characterize, as there are so many variations among the beliefs and values of people who do not believe in God. Just as with the religious, atheists can be at any stage of development, and they can be focused on themselves as individuals or on humanity as a whole. However, unlike with religions, which teach their followers specific guidelines on behaviors and understandings of the world, atheists are largely on their own to make these determinations. And so while Fowler is likely correct on the fact that they reach a rational-critical viewpoint more quickly than the religious do (Kuhmerker, 1978), it is less clear how they can develop from that point forward. While at Stage 5 they likely

hold the paradoxical values of self and humanity in that dialectic, much more needs to be known about their thinking.

One important similarity to note between all four groups is the implicit willingness to embrace development of the self and of cognition. Despite conservative Christians' opposition to this (i.e. Avery, 1990), the liberal and moderate branches of all three of these religious groups, and atheists, do seem to recognize this growth in human beings. It cannot be stated, however, whether this facilitates growth in faith or simply occurs alongside it.

Rather than concluding this analysis with the presentation of four separate developmental trajectories, I offer a reconstructed conceptual framework for FDT. It is possible to synthesize the trajectories depicted in Figure 1 into one visual (Figure 2). This framework does not contain the specific developmental tasks occurring for each group at every stage. Instead, it depicts the linear developmental trajectory from childhood faith through an actualized adult faith, as conceptualized by Fowler (1981) and updated by Parks (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000), accompanied by the major faith influence at each stage of life. These influences may be mainstream (emanating from the U.S. Christian mainline) or marginalized (emanating from any non-Christian religious group), and the natures of the influences impact the qualities of the faith stages themselves. Each influence will be addressed separately.

Religious Education

Religious education is the first faith influence in children's lives that is specific to

Figure 2. Conceptual framing of faith development trajectories

Developmental Objective

Faith trajectory	Young childhood faith	Older childhood faith	Teenage faith	Young adult faith	Adult faith	Mature adult faith	Actual-ized faith

Faith influences: Mainstream or marginalized		Religious education	Markers of religious identity	Young adult trans-ition	Resolu-tion of identity	Paradox-ical holding of values	Decent-ralization and resolution
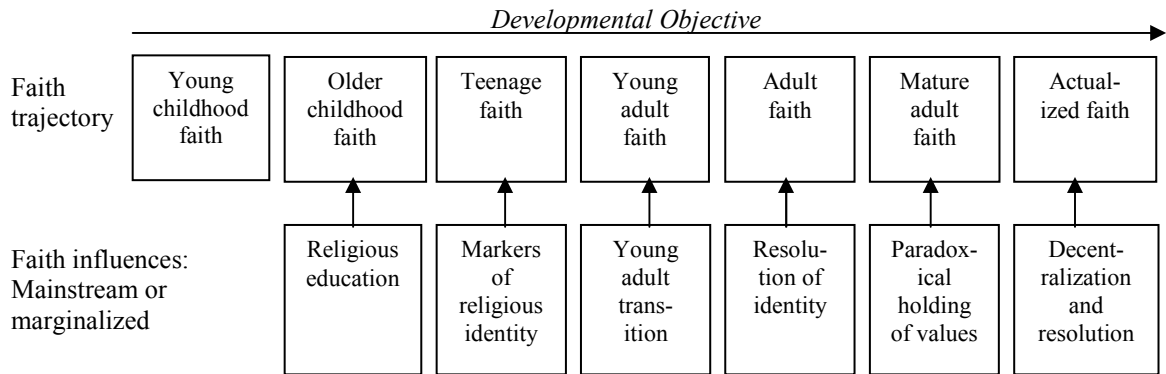
their religious community and not directly conferred by their parents. For Christian children, it reaffirms their status as members of the dominant culture. For non-Christian children growing up in a Christian culture, it is the earliest signal of their otherness. It begins their journeys as members of marginalized groups, ones that do not exist with free reign in this country. Certainly, marginalized status will become more noticeable in later years, but it will always shape non-Christians' conceptions about the world.

Markers of Religious Identity

Markers of religious identity are public representations of a young person's religious status. They are the next signals in marginalized teenagers' lives that they are not the same as those around them. These markers might set them apart ritually (with ceremonies), physically (with dress), or ideologically (with a professed non-belief in God, if it happens this early in life). Based on their public nature, society now understands these individuals' otherness. Marginalized youth, who are most comfortable with those like themselves, will cling tightly to the values of their group during this time of not fitting in. However, as it has been for their whole lives, teenagers in the mainstream are free to develop in their faith without this concern.

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Young Adult Transition

The young adult transition influences growth in faith as individuals begin to

internalize the values and beliefs of their membership groups and learn to trust

themselves as their own authority figures. Due to their marginalized status, the

worldviews being internalized by non-Christians are unsanctioned. Therefore, these

young adults must accept themselves as authorities, despite being conditioned by society

to think quite differently. A growing recognition of one's social status could propel one

forward developmentally, while an internal struggle against it could cause stagnation.

Christians are fully allowed to develop as personal authorities without this conflict,

because they are a part of the privileged culture.

Resolution of Identity

After the young adult transition and the internalization of externally-validated

ideologies, the faith influence of adulthood is the resolution of identity. This is the time

when non-Christians are most likely to fully embrace their position as marginalized

people in the Christian-dominant culture. This does not mean, of course, that there is an

acceptance of the injustice or bias in society, but rather clarity about how such disparities

impact people's lives. This may be the first point in time in which neither Christians nor

non-Christians feel as if they are living with dual identities.

Paradoxical Holding of Values

As the literature has shown, the time of mature adulthood sees a reconvergence of

structural similarities between the faiths of Christians and non-Christians. The major

developmental task of this time in life, the holding of seemingly paradoxical ideals in

dialectic, brings all the groups back alongside each other. This may make Stage 5, mature adulthood, the ideal time for ecumenical relationships, social justice activity, and cooperation, as Stage 6 still seems to be rarely attained.

Decentralization and Resolution

Finally, for those who reach the final stage of faith development, there is a decentralization of the self toward a higher cause, be it God, community, or humanity writ large. The paradox that was previously held has been resolved into a complete understanding of one's role as an individual within some greater schema. But, these actualized individuals have different objectives as they conduct their good work in the world. The object of each individual's act of decentralization is determined by the values originally inculcated in childhood, personalized during the teenage years, and internalized during young adulthood.

There are two notable differences between this conceptual framework and those established by prior theorists. First, it specifically avoids including any references to contents of faith, even going so far as to remove God from the equation. While this does leave the framework quite sparse, it moves faith development away from an arena that has heretofore been dominated by Christian thought. Second, because the framework makes use of the language of mainstream and marginalization, it can be transferred to other societies, without losing coherence. In a country such as Israel, where Judaism is privileged and Christianity marginalized, faith influences would inform developmental trajectories in qualitatively different ways, and this model could account for that situation.

Despite these important distinctions, this model clearly retains some of the

influences of prior theorists, such as linearity of stages and the rareness of Stage 6. That is intentional. It also implicitly groups individuals within the communities that surround them, similarly to Fowler's (1981) "average expectable stage of faith development" (Fowler, 1981, p. 161). Fowler and Parks (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000) have laid out the groundwork for this area of thought and are owed the debt of appreciation by future researchers. Also, like the previous models, this model does not delineate distinctions within mainstream or marginalized groups, such as gender and immigrant status, or other identities that differentiate people and impact levels of privilege. Future research will need to determine if these internal group differences influence faith development in varying ways.

For the study currently being pursued, both the detailed faith trajectories (Figure 1) and the synthesized conceptualization of faith development (Figure 2) have been used to frame research with four groups of traditional college students, Protestant Christians, Jews, Muslims and atheists. The attempt will not be made to empirically validate the conceptual framework, but to use it as the groundwork for examining the relationship between religious affiliation and spiritual identity. In addition, the framework will be utilized as a tool for viewing the ways individuals work in group settings to define their identities. Students from both mainstream and marginalized religious populations have been included, in order to shed light on the potential impact of this form of societal categorization.

Chapter 4:

Research Methods

This study was designed to bring students of similar and different religious backgrounds at a large, public research university together to create discourse around their spiritual identities. Twenty-one students from four religious groups, Protestant Christian, Jewish, Muslim and atheist, participated in two sets of focus group conversations. The first was religiously homogeneous groups; the second was religiously heterogeneous groups. An effort was made to be inclusive of other forms of diversity, particularly race and gender, as well as the different denominations within the religious groups themselves. Following the focus groups, students were asked to submit reflection documents designed to elicit their reactions to the study and to provide them with some personal processing of their experiences. Finally, eight students, one male and one female from each religious affiliation, were interviewed. Discourse analysis and qualitative coding techniques were utilized to develop an understanding of the interplay between religious affiliation and background and spiritual identity. They also shed light upon group-level identity construction.

Context

Data collection took place at a large, public research university located in the Midwest. In 2005, the university enrolled 25,467 undergraduate students and 14,526 graduate students (Campus Information Centers, 2006).

As a public institution, the university is, by definition, non-sectarian. Selecting a religiously-affiliated institution for this study would have afforded certain research opportunities, such as a selection of students highly committed to a particular faith community and participants possibly more conversant about their spiritual identities. However, choosing a non-sectarian university opened up the research to students from many more religious backgrounds and, potentially, a greater variety in their levels of sophistication regarding spirituality. Selecting this institution also provides the opportunity to inform the discourse on this topic at many more colleges and universities around the country, nearly 77% of which are public, non-profit institutions (American Council on Education, 2005).

Data on the religious backgrounds of all entering students at the university is collected annually through the CIRP and analyzed by the Division of Student Affairs. Figure 3 depicts the aggregated religious preferences for students who entered the university from 2002-2005. Roughly, this is the equivalent of the total students enrolled in the university during the 2005-2006 academic year, as first-year students in 2002-2003 would be in their fourth year in 2005-2006. Although this is not an entirely accurate accounting of these students, due to transfers in and out of the institution, it is the only representation available. The university does not collect religious background information for students other than during their entering year. In the figure, the category

Figure 3. Study university and national student religious backgrounds
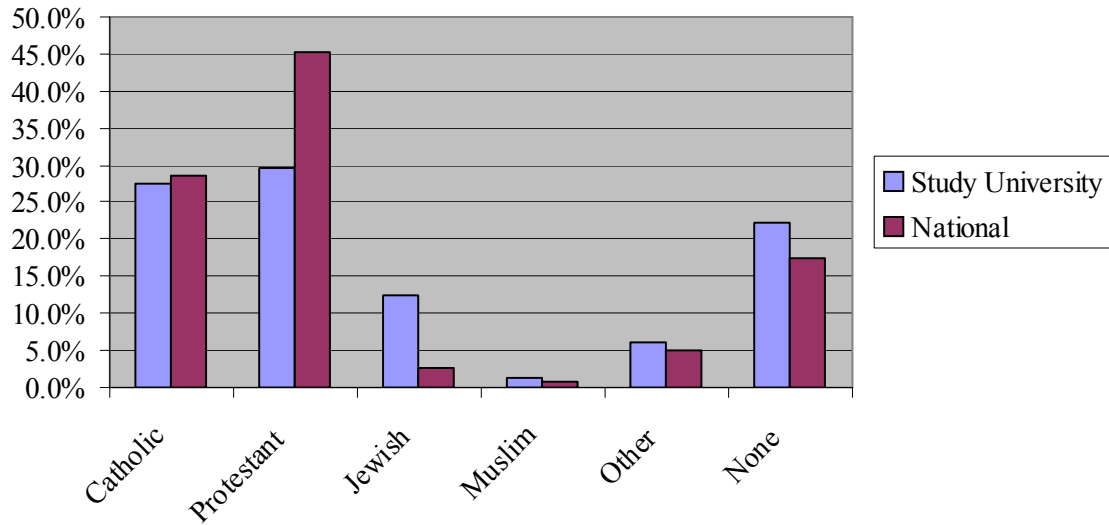
Data Source: Cooperative Institutional Research Program

"Catholic" is comprised of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox. The category

"Protestant" is comprised of Baptist, Church of Christ, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist,

Presbyterian, Unitarian, United Church of Christ, and other Christian. The category

"Other" is comprised of Buddhist, Hindu, LDS (Mormon), Quaker, and other religion.

The university's nondiscrimination policy, listed on its application materials, includes the

category of religion.

The figure also contains religious background information for students nationally

during the 2005-2006 academic year ("This year's freshmen at 4-year colleges: A

statistical profile", 2006), as a frame for comparison. Notably, the university has fewer

Catholic (1.1%) and many fewer Protestants (15.8%) than institutions nationally,

although more Jews (9.8%), Muslims (0.4%), other religion (1.0%) and no religion

(4.7%). Because of the greater prevalence of minority faiths at the institution than

nationally, this institution faces more interfaith complexities than most.

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Data Collection

Participant Recruitment and Selection

Participant recruitment was conducted through the Association of Religious Counselors (ARC) at the university. ARC is a "voluntary association of persons who are:

1. Advisors of recognized religious groups at the [university]

2. Staff persons of recognized religious organizations and campus ministries at the [university]

3. Leaders of congregations whose ministry relates to university faculty, staff and students

4. Persons in the [university] whose professional activity relates to ARC" (Association of Religious Counselors, 2005a).

The support of ARC members was initially sought through a letter, presented in Appendix A. In this letter I also sought input of ARC members on my research protocol, discussed below, so as to ensure a greater level of cultural competence in working with diverse students (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Any necessary follow up communications, such as to acquire students' names and contact information, was conducted through the publicly available e-mail addresses of the ARC members.

In addition to reaching out through ARC, I made contact directly with the student leadership of campus religious groups, including the Atheists, Agnostics, & Freethinkers club. Several groups forwarded my information on to their membership lists.

Recruitment focused on the following targeted religious populations that were analyzed during the conceptualization phase of the study: Protestant Christians, Jewish,

Muslim and atheist. Students held a variety of denominational affiliations within these groups. The decision was made, however, to delimit the study by excluding Catholics from participation. Although Catholic and Protestant beliefs do differ (J. R. Kelly, 1998), their overlap in many of the tenets of Christianity would have had the potential to skew conversations in favor of Christian perspectives if both groups of students were to participate.

The description of the project that was utilized to recruit participants is presented in Appendix B, along with the associated documentation. At the time of volunteering to enter the study, students were asked to fill out a consent form and a demographic information form that collected data on their gender, age, religious denomination, race/ethnicity, major, and anticipated graduation year. Students also received a reminder phone call or e-mail a few days before the sessions in order to help ensure turnout.

An offer of a $20 incentive for participation was made in the recruitment materials. This incentive was offered for three reasons: 1) to make sure that introverted as well as extraverted people participated (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996), 2) to help reduce any aversion potential volunteers may feel to participating in a somewhat time-consuming study (Korn & Hogan, 1992; Krueger & Casey, 2000), and 3) because incentives have been demonstrated to be effective when recruiting college students into research studies (Szelenyi, Bryant, & Lindholm, 2005). Although the incentive did not necessarily improve the quality of involvement among the students, it should have helped improve their participation throughout the duration of the study (Davern, Rockwood, Sherrod, & Campbell, 2003).

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Interestingly, a study conducted by HERI researchers (Szelenyi, Bryant, & Lindholm, 2005) showed that students who were more closely involved with a religious group were not more likely to respond to HERI's survey on religion and spirituality. This confirmed the researchers' findings on the importance of using incentives, even when participants care about the topic at hand:

> The absence of significant effects associated with the spiritual and religious orientation factors is a key consideration from the perspective of our study. Importantly, we expected these variables to significantly and positively predict survey response, given the high occurrence of spirituality and religion-related questions on the CSBV survey. However, the fact that similar percentages of students with varying levels of interest in these matters responded indicates that the sample we attained was not skewed in the direction of students with higher levels of religious and/or spiritual interests. (Szelenyi, Bryant, & Lindholm, 2005, p. 398)

Ultimately, 83 students volunteered to participate in the study. Of those, 46 provided the requested demographic information form. After receiving the responses from interested volunteers, students from each denomination were selected for participation, with at least two males and two females from each group represented. Selection was based on the additional following criteria:

1. Students both affiliated with a religious denomination and had some sort of involvement in that denomination during the academic year, either through a campus student group or through a nearby house of worship.

2. Students represented some amount of racial and ethnic diversity.

3. Students were not international students.

These three criteria were determined to ensure a level of equivalence in terms of religious experience, while aiming toward other forms of diversity. In addition to these, certain criteria were *not* be used to identify participants, namely: particular

denominational affiliation within the three target groups, relative conservative or liberal religious perspectives, and personality characteristics. This, too, aimed at bringing together students from a variety of perspectives.

Thirty-two students were offered spots in the study, a number which includes those who ultimately cancelled, did not appear at their first scheduled focus group, or were drawn from waiting list to replace the cancellations. Out of the 32, 21 students actually took part in the study, six Christians and five of each of the other three groups. Table 6, at the end of this subsection, contains demographic information about the final participants as well as the data provided by each one. The denomination, race and major information that is included is as entered by the participants themselves. The names listed are pseudonyms chosen to be culturally appropriate.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were convened to shed light on the teenage and young adult faiths of Christians, Jews, Muslims and atheists. According to the conceptual framework being used in the study, people at this age are concerned with markers of religious identity, the public representations of a young person's religious status, and the young adult transition, which influences growth in faith as individuals begin to internalize the values and beliefs of their membership groups and learn to trust themselves as their own authority figures. The focus groups offered the opportunity to hear what may be the commonalities within these students' experiences, as well as the distinct differences brought about by mainstream or marginalized status and varied development objectives.

Two sets of focus groups were conducted. The first set consisted of religiously homogeneous participants, one each for Christians, Jews, Muslims and atheists. These

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focus group conversations ranged in length from 66 to 90 minutes. One reason for conducting homogeneous groups was to allow students to begin thinking about their spiritual identities in the relatively safe space of a group with which they religiously affiliate. The intent was to ensure that "the participants in each group both have something to say about the topic and feel comfortable saying it to each other" (Morgan, 1997, p. 36). Although homogeneous groups are recommended in focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2000), this safety was considered relative in the study due to the fact that students from different sub-groups (such as Orthodox and Reform Jews) may perceive themselves as having quite dissimilar values and perspectives.

In order to bolster my ability to gather rich data from students from religions other than my own (Jewish), I included a co-facilitator to each of the three other homogeneous focus groups, Christian, Muslim and atheist. The co-facilitators affiliate with the religion at hand, as well as have familiarity with research protocols and focus group leadership. These additional researchers were empowered to ask students follow up questions or to focus the conversation on a particular topic, as well as act as symbols of my sensitivity to other religious ideas. The co-facilitators were briefed before the focus groups, and I gathered their reflections on the experiences afterwards. The co-facilitators were:

- Julie DeGraw, doctoral student in the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education, Christian

- Ethan Stephenson, doctoral student in the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education, atheist

- N'Mah Yilla, masters student in Modern Middle Eastern and North African Studies, raised Muslim and Christian, affiliates with Islam

Guiding questions for the round one focus groups centered around potential
similarities between participants, for example, asking about their religious backgrounds,
the relationship between that religion and their spiritualities, and their perceptions of their
religious group's status in society and the impact of that upon their lives. They also
addressed developmental objectives, faith trajectories, and faith influences (see Appendix
C; exact phrasing and order of questions varied by session).

An additional purpose of holding homogeneous groups was to get an
understanding of students' religious affiliations that was more nuanced than the
information they could provide on the demographic information sheet. In fact, the term
"homogeneous" was not entirely appropriate after intra-group diversity was accounted
for. This aided the research in the next step, organizing the participants into
heterogeneous focus groups.

The second set of focus groups consisted of the same participants as the first
round, but they were intermixed by their religious affiliation. During the second round,
five smaller groups were convened, lasting a range of 48 to 63 minutes. I was the sole
facilitator. Group consisted of three to five participants. Although the attempt was made
to have one from each religious group, due to scheduling conflicts, this ended up not
being possible. Ultimately, the organization was based on perceived personality
complementarities, participant scheduling availability, and as much similarity in age and
difference in religious affiliation that scheduling allowed.

The reason for conducting heterogeneous groups was to provide students with the
slightly more challenging experience of speaking about their spiritual identities among
people with varied religious affiliations. As this was their second time as interview

participants, they were prepared for this type of challenge (Krueger & Casey, 2000). In addition, it afforded the opportunity for students' comments to be heard in direct reaction to one another.

Guiding questions for the second round focus groups focused on potential differences between participants, for example, asking them to react to each other's provided definitions of "religious" and "spiritual" (see Appendix D). Like the first round, they addressed developmental objectives, faith trajectories, and faith influences. Although some of the questions were the same as they were in the first round of focus groups, it was anticipated that the varied religious affiliations of the participants would have impact on the responses they gave and the reactions they had to one another. It was explained at the outset of these groups that any repeated questions were designed so the participants were exposed to new perspectives. Special care was taken to heed the words of James L. Heft (2004), who describes the complexities of engaging in dialogue with Christians, Jews and Muslims:

> The discipline of interreligious dialogue includes not only intellectual, but also emotional and personal, dimensions. That there are deep hurts, both historically sustained by a tradition and personally absorbed by individuals, becomes clear when interreligious dialogue is honest. The pain must be acknowledged, and even embraced, worked through and not worked around, if it is ever to be transformed into energy for reconciliation. (Heft, 2004, p. 3)

Focus groups were selected for the main instrument of this study due to their unique capacity to provide participants the opportunities to react to each other, support each other, disagree with each other, and co-construct new understandings. As a researcher, I was in the unique position to observe interaction around this topic (Morgan, 1997). As well, previous research on students within campus religious groups found that the "focus group interview method may reveal shared meaning" (Mankowski & Thomas,

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2000, p. 520) between the students, which cannot be evidenced through individual interviews. In addition, involvement in a focus group may have actually assisted participating students in formulating their own tacitly or internally held beliefs in a way that could be expressed to others for the first time (Turner Kelly, 2003). As well, when participants speak in this public way, "the researcher witnesses the strength of the convictions held" (p. 51). Other advantages of focus groups:

> First, focus group interviews encourage interaction not only between the moderator and the participants but also between the participants themselves. Second, the group format offers support for individual participants and encourages greater openness in their responses. Third, focus group interviews allow – and even encourage – individuals to form opinions about the designated topic through interaction with others. (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996, p. 18)

In addition to highlighting the individual similarities and differences between individuals, the focus groups also emphasized group-level distinguishers. Each of the sessions featured an unique collection of personalities, values, and opinions. Although the questions asked in each round were closely aligned, the students' reactions differed, often on the basis on their conversation partners. The collective building of identity, which was examined in each of the analysis chapters, could only have been studied through the use of this type of interaction.

Although a limitation of focus group data was that group members could sway each other's opinions (Turner Kelly, 2003), leading to either conformity or polarization (Morgan, 1997), this phenomenon itself was worthy of analysis. According to the conceptual framework being utilized in this study, young adults are learning to trust themselves as authority figures. Some students exhibited signs of this stage, while others will demonstrate a high level of susceptibility to peer influence. In either case, the dynamic of the focus group itself created the circumstances for rich data (Merriam, 1998)

to emerge. Students' relative strengths of conviction were an important fact to note.

All focus group sessions were video recorded with audio recordings and hand-written notes used as backup. Video recording was particularly important, as auditory voice recognition of unfamiliar participants would not have been enough for identifying who was speaking at a certain moment.

Follow Up Writings

One week after the students' participation in a second round focus group, each was emailed a questionnaire to be used to evaluate their experience in the conversations. The week delay was provided to allow for some reflection time. Students were asked to provide their responses within two weeks time, via e-mail or in hard copy on the documents provided to them. The purpose of these documents was to provide the researcher with additional information on students' individual understandings of the research process, as well as to provide students the opportunity for personal reflection. Reflection, well-established as a pedagogical tool (Boud & Walker, 1998; Cowan, 1998), creates "situations in which learners are able to make their own meaning rather than have it imposed on them" (Boud & Walker, 1998, p. 199). Reflection happens when learners "analyse or evaluate one or more personal experiences, and attempt to generalize from that thinking. They do this so that, in the future, they will be more skillful or better informed or more effective, than they have been in the past" (Cowan, 1998, p. 17). Given time to look back on the conversations, students may have been able to articulate additional thoughts on what transpired and what they learned. The follow up questions are included in Appendix E.

Interviews

Although it was not the main intention of this research to conduct individual interviews with participants, it was determined that some students' talk or writing warranted additional probing. Therefore, students were asked on their reflection documents if they would be willing to be contacted for an additional individual interview. In order to flesh out the richest possible data, one male and one female from each religious affiliation were interviewed on a one-on-one basis. These conversations lasted from 14 to 38 minutes. The 14 minute conversation was a low outlier in length; unfortunately, multiple probes did not provoke that student into elaborating on her thoughts. Questions during the interviews focused on reactions to the study thus far, understandings of one's status in society, beliefs in God, truth claims, and strength of beliefs (see Appendix F; exact phrasing and order of questions varied by session).

Table 6 lists the participants, their demographic information, and the forms of data collection from each one.

Table 6. Final participant list and data sources						
Name	Sex	Age	Denomination	Race	Major	Data Sources
Brooke	F	19	Christian: Agnostic	African American	Anthropology/ Arabic Studies	Christian focus group Mixed focus group #5 Questionnaire
Carl	M	23	No affiliation	White	Biopsychology and Philosophy	Atheist focus group Mixed focus group #5 Questionnaire Interview
David	M	18	Christian: Lord of Light Lutheran	White	History, German	Christian focus group Mixed focus group #5 Questionnaire Interview
Inaara	F	18	Muslim: Sunni	Persian (from Afghanistan)	Sociology and Psychology	Muslim focus group Mixed focus group #5 Questionnaire Interview
Jada	F	23	Christian: Non- denominational	African American/ Native American	Dance	Christian focus group Mixed focus group #2 Questionnaire

Name	Sex	Age	Denomination	Race	Major	Data Sources
Jasmine	F	21	Jewish: Reconstructionist	White	Comparative Literature, Arabic & Islamic Studies	Jewish focus group Mixed focus group #3 Questionnaire Interview
Jesse	M	18	Jewish	White	Undecided, pre-law	Jewish focus group Mixed focus group #2 Questionnaire Interview
Joanna	F	20	Jewish: Cultural/ Atheist Jew, raised Reform	White	Atmospheric Science	Jewish focus group Mixed focus group #4 Questionnaire
Judy	F	18	Jewish: Conservative	White	Undecided, possibly Psychology	Jewish focus group Mixed focus group #5 Questionnaire
Karen	F	19	Christian: Methodist	White	Undecided	Christian focus group Mixed focus group #3 Questionnaire Interview
Kristin	F	20	Christian: Methodist	White	Undecided, pre-med	Christian focus group Mixed focus group #2 Questionnaire
Meghan	F	21	No affiliation	Mexican/ Chinese	English	Atheist focus group Mixed focus group #2 Questionnaire
Melanie	F	20	Unitarian Universalist	White	Cello Performance, Anthropology, Classical Archeology	Atheist focus group Mixed focus group #1 Questionnaire Interview
Misty	F	21	Agnostic / No religious affiliation	African American and White	Industrial Operations Engineering and General Studies	Atheist focus group Mixed focus group #3 Questionnaire
Rick	T	20	Druid, Unitarian Universalist, Secular Humanist, Zen	White	Sociology, Center for Afroamerican and African Studies	Atheist focus group Mixed focus group #4 Questionnaire
Sabur	M	19	Muslim	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Pre-Law/ Biology	Muslim focus group Mixed focus group #3 Questionnaire Interview
Sam	M	18	Jewish: Conservative	White	Aerospace Engineering	Jewish focus group Mixed focus group #1 Questionnaire
Shashi	F	18	Muslim	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies	Muslim focus group Mixed focus group #3 Questionnaire
Suha	F	19	Muslim	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Economics and South Asian Studies	Muslim focus group Mixed focus group #4 Questionnaire

Name	Sex	Age	Denomination	Race	Major	Data Sources
Will	M	26	Christian: Episcopalian	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Masters of Public Health	Christian focus group Mixed focus group #4 Questionnaire
Yusuf	M	19	Muslim	White	Undecided	Muslim focus group Mixed focus group #1 Questionnaire

Methodology

All focus group recordings and interviews were transcribed by the researcher, or by a hired transcriber and checked by the researcher, and entered into Atlas/ti qualitative coding software for analysis. A small amount of physical movements were noted, if these expressions helped to clarify a speaker's meaning. The participants' writings were also entered into Atlas/ti. Students' spoken and written words were marked with the pseudonyms listed above, in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

Qualitative Coding Analysis

Analysis of the data was conducted using thematic qualitative coding as well as various discourse analysis methodologies. For the first round of analysis, thematic coding was applied to the full data corpus. This coding was conducted in a "line-by-line" (A. Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 199) manner. Open codes (A. L. Strauss, 1987, p. 59) were created through a reading of the texts themselves, and not based on using "preestablished" categories of analysis (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 152). This helped to ensure that the coding was based upon what was actually said by the participants and not by the researcher's inherent biases.

After the initial coding process was completed, levels of broader or interrelated codes were be created. This series of axial (A. L. Strauss, 1987) or focused (Emerson,

Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) codes were used to categorize the open codes around important themes and relationships. These included:

- Challenges to one's religion

- Change in religion or spirituality over time

- Contested topics

- Definitions and aspects of "religious"

- Definitions and aspects of "spiritual"

- Definitions of self as religious and/or spiritual

- Definitions of source of beliefs

- Definitions of spirituality as shaped by religion

- Definitions of spirituality as shaped by society

- Future ideal as defined by religion

- God images and associations

- Reactions to focus groups

- Religious and spiritual practices

As helpful to answering the research questions of the study, the quotations for some of these axial codes were then generated as outputs from Atlas/ti, divided up by the religious affiliation of the speaker, and counted in order to develop totals of usages by group.

When these two levels of coding were complete, several types of analysis were conducted, in order to ascribe yet more meaning to students' spoken and written words. The Atlas/ti software provides the capabilities to examine the most important codes, based upon groundedness, the "number of text passages of a code or memo," and density,

the "number of other codes connected with a code" (A. Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 277).

Codes were also identified as neighbors to the participants who spoke or wrote them, and

therefore, comparisons could be made, for example, between what a student said in two

different focus groups. A code that made an appearance in one place and not the other

for the same student often received extra scrutiny to determine the reasons for this. All of

these analytic techniques enabled the development of a final layer of this analysis,

examinations of the most important codes for each group and those which held

significant variations between the groups.

Discourse Analysis

For the second round of analysis, discourse analysis, the "close study of language

in use" (Taylor, 2001, p. 5), was conducted on 12 transcript elements. The discourse

analysis techniques that were used in this study provided a window into the ways students

use language to define their spiritual identities. Discourse processing techniques have

previously been used with MDT, to provide a "finer-grained analysis of moral thinking

than the more global approaches (e.g., the DIT…)" (Narvaez, 1999, p. 390). It stands to

reason that they can provide insight into faith development, as well as moral

development. In fact, these techniques were previously used in a study that employed

discourse analysis to understand student spirituality (Small, 2007a).

It was the original intention of this study to analyze the homogeneous groups for

signs of the participants building a "discourse community" (Johnstone, 2002, p. 114), a

group which forms around similar ways of speaking about a particular topic, and how

they collectively "construct knowledge" (G. Kelly & Green, 1998, p. 146). It was also

the original intention to analyze the heterogeneous groups for signs that the students were

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negotiating their relationships with others, potentially in a negative way. However, it become clear through the first several passes through the data that these intended methods did not align with the talk patterns of the students who considered themselves to have religious identities. It appeared that these students, generally speaking, were more comfortable discussing religion and spirituality with those from different backgrounds from themselves, rather than with their own religious peers. The atheist students, however, did not follow this pattern; they were overwhelmingly comfortable in the all atheist focus group, and less uniform in opinion on the mixed group. The reasons why this may have occurred are discussed throughout the analysis chapters.

In order to back up this impression with data, I examined ten codes (established through the qualitative analysis described above) that related to the students' feelings about the focus groups. These codes were:

- Comfort with beliefs

- Competition over religious ownership

- Discomfort with interreligious

- Feelings from focus groups

- Learnings from focus groups

- People with different backgrounds agreeing

- People with similar backgrounds disagreeing

- People with similar beliefs

- Representing one's group

- Self-censoring

The quotations related to each code were culled through to remove those not relevant to the question at hand. The remaining quotations were divided up by religious students and atheist students. I then counted up the number of times students referred to the group in which they felt more comfortable. Neutral comments were not counted. The results of this process follow in Table 7.

Table 7. Count of positive and negative quotations about two focus group rounds, by religion				
Quotations by	Round 1 - positive	Round 1 - negative	Round 2 - positive	Round 2 - negative
Christian students	5	18	9	3
Jewish students	4	14	13	2
Muslim students	2	10	16	3
Atheist students	19	4	9	10

These numbers clearly demonstrate that the atheist students had a much stronger positive reaction to the first round focus group than did the students from any of the religious groups. They also had a stronger negative reaction to the second round groups. This pattern is opposite that of the Christian, Jewish and Muslim students.

In addition, a few representative quotes help to highlight the students' reactions to the two focus groups experiences:

> "*I felt extremely uncomfortable and threatened in the second focus group. But I absolutely loved the first focus group… I was surprised how people in my first focus group were proud to be who they were. I felt at home in mine.*" – Meghan (atheist), questionnaire

> "*I felt that my experience with Islam was very different then with my fellow Muslims. I felt more as though my peers responded as though they were on TV interviews saying, 'Islam is basically 1,2,3,…' I felt I related in a different way to those of the mixed religion identities in that I could speak more about the way religion or spirituality structures ones' life and also general beliefs. I feel that in the similar religious identities group, there was already some sort of unsaid 'agreement' about general beliefs so this could not be discussed. I appreciated that we could talk about it in the mixed group because it is the very core of the way I live my life as a Muslim. What was interesting, though, was that my beliefs were similar to those, especially many atheists, in the mixed group.*" – Suha (Muslim), questionnaire

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"I was much more at ease in the second group, and felt much more accepted as whatever I wanted to be… I felt a certain amount of exclusivity in the first group-even though people were really nice - and I'm sure this was coming from me too. A sort-of I'm-more-Jew-than-you attitude." – Jasmine (Jewish), questionnaire

"I found it most challenging to participate in the focus group with other Christians while some of their ideas differed some than my own and in some cases I was saddened by what they said because it appeared they had a religious experience with God and not a spiritual 'personal' relationship with God." – David (Christian), questionnaire

Based on these findings, I chose to mix up the analytic methods and utilize them on an as-needed basis. After selecting the 12 focus group segments that would be used, a process described below, the techniques included in analysis of them were:

- Identity and presentation of self: In looking at individuals within these groups, I examined how they constructed their identities and selfhoods. What I looked for in their interactions is best explained with the following paragraph:

  > Which particular aspects of identity – or particular combinations of them – will become salient within a given encounter is something that interlocutors point to behaviorally during the course of their interaction together and that others ratify in their reactions to the speak of the moment. (Erickson, 2004, p. 149)

- Solidarity and situational co-membership: Identities of multiple people came together as discourse participants realized their commonalities. They expressed this through solidarity and/or co-membership, "the revelation by interlocutors of some attribute of social identity that they hold in common" (Erickson, 2004, p. 150)

- Footing: Although not always negative, footing was seen as a contrast to solidarity and co-membership. Footing is a "participant's alignment, or set, or stance, or posture, or projected self" (Goffman, 1981, p. 128), and it is also

"the stance or alignment taken by participants to each other" (Erickson, 2004, p. 151). Discourse moves incorporating footing were always relational in nature.

- Norms: One means for expressing solidarity and situational co-membership was through norms. Norms are the "commonplace" behaviors, the "socially standardized and standardizing, 'seen but unnoticed,' expected, background features of everyday scenes" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 36). They are also the "speech genre expectations in the air within each moment of a particular social encounter" (Erickson, 2004, p. 181). Norms in this study were often detected by someone who was a "stranger to the 'life as usual' character of everyday scenes" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 37) or who found him/herself outside that norm.

- Breaches: A "breach of the background expectancies of everyday life" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 54), is in a way the flip side of a norm. Breaches caused disconcertment among conversation participants, simultaneously helping to highlight the very existence of the norm. Breaches most often occurred in the focus groups as students attempted to locate themselves in relationship to each other.

- Hedges: Participants tried to separate themselves either from their speech moves or from each other in a situation of conflict. One method for doing this was hedging, "the use of strategies that distance the speaker from the meaning or the implications of an utterance" (Johnstone, 2002, p. 240).

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- Positioning: Individuals in conversation with others must determine their relationship through positioning. Students engaged in positioning when they were attempting to define someone else's identity. This type of move is "interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another" (Davies & Harre, 2001, p. 264).

- Face saving: An additional phenomenon that occurred during the discourse was the act of face-saving, both for oneself and for one's conversation partners:

> In trying to save the face of others, the person must choose a tack that will not lead to loss of his own; in trying to save his own face, he must consider the loss of face that his action may entail for others. (Goffman, 1967, p. 14)

The last two analytic techniques that were used require additional elaboration. After conducting the examination described above to determine which methods to apply to which sessions, I realized that many of the occasions in which students referred to themselves in relationship to their co-participants happened after the fact. For example, students described themselves as enacting what I coded as "self-censoring" during the first round of focus group 10 times. This means that they admitted later on in the study that they deliberately omitted facts or softened their opinions for their within-group peers.

The students also described the same type of behavior as having taken place during the second round groups 26 times. Eleven of these admissions of censoring took place during a focus group itself (i.e. Misty saying, "I'll try not to offend anyone" when she made a careful point in her mixed group), but 15 of them took place in the format of the questionnaire or interview. This, plus other similar patterns for related codes, shows that the students were more comfortable positioning each other outside of each others'

presences. As well, they saved face for themselves and others by not raising conflicting

points directly. I am therefore labeling these phenomena as "post-hoc positioning" and

"post-hoc face saving," and they will be discussed in the forthcoming analysis chapters.

Finally, there are two additional techniques that I used when examining the data.

These differ from the list above, because they are not types of discourse moves made by

the students. Rather, they are means I used for looking at and understanding the data.

- Conversation Analysis: The lens of Conversation Analysis provided insight as
  direct as possible into the motivations of the speakers in the focus groups.
  This is because Conversation Analysis examines "sequential patterns
  (regularities in what follows what) which are observable in the data being
  analyzed" (Cameron, 2001, p. 87). The approach assumes nothing beyond the
  words spoken as an influence on the next bit of talk. It was therefore used at
  the very micro-level in the analysis of interactions between participants.

- Restorying: "Restorying" is a process that was used to rearrange the order of
  the life details provided by students into a more coherent structure. This was
  necessary as speakers often did not present their ideas and experiences in a
  linear fashion. Restorying was conducted in this study in order to "identify
  themes or categories that emerge from the story" (Ollerenshaw & Creswell,
  2002, p. 332) of each of the participants. Although primarily a method of
  discourse analysis, restorying was also used with the qualitative coding and
  related analysis, in order to align students' stated identities with the
  conceptual framework of the study.

Data Selection

Table 8 outlines the data corpus for this study.

Table 8. Data corpus				
Data Collection	Includes Christian participants	Includes Jewish participants	Includes Muslim participants	Includes atheist participants
Focus Group Round 1	1 focus group of 6 participants	1 focus group of 5 participants	1 focus group of 5 participants	1 focus group of 5 participants
Focus Group Round 2	4 mixed focus groups	5 mixed focus groups	4 mixed focus groups	5 mixed focus groups
Follow Up Writings	6 Christian follow up writings	5 Jewish follow up writings	5 Muslim follow up writings	5 atheist follow up writings
Interviews	2 interviews	2 interviews	2 interviews	2 interviews

There were two processes for data selection from the corpus. For the first, I selected three transcript elements per religious group. At least one was drawn from the corresponding homogeneous focus group. At least one was drawn from a heterogeneous focus group featuring a student or multiple students from that affiliation actively demonstrating an important discourse move. The third segment was drawn either from the same homogeneous group or from a different heterogeneous group, depending on which better illustrated the story being told in the chapter. I also endeavored to keep some balance among the students, providing somewhat equal presentations of the experiences of each one. These main episodes were used to examine the ways the students framed their spiritual identities in conversation and how those descriptions changed depending on who they were talking to. The episodes were examined through discourse analysis.

In order to conduct the data selection, I selected qualitative codes that corresponded with the discourse analysis techniques being considered for the study and ran outputs of their quotations from the focus groups to determine when the types of discourse had taken place. For example, to locate examples of norming, I examined the

following codes, which represented instances of students working discursively to establish norms or of existing norms being acknowledged:

- Affirmation of other speakers

- Competition over religious ownership

- Everyone has the same beliefs

- Generalized agreement

- Persuading someone to agree

As a second means for pointing to potential segments, I reviewed the students' questionnaires and interview transcripts to determine the focus group conversations that they found concerning, enlightening, or stressful. I looked for discursive segments that represented a significant interaction between participants within a focus group, had an emotional resonance and related to theories-in-use. I also looked for the richest data elements (Merriam, 1998), those in which the students' language gave the most descriptive picture of their own ideas.

The second data selection process was based on the results of qualitative thematic coding of the data corpus. The coding was used to determine how students from disparate religious backgrounds similarly or differently expressed their spiritual identities. The coded categories emerged directly from the data. After all the transcripts and questionnaires were coded, selection from this pool of data was based on frequencies of codes being used, relationships between codes and religious ideology, and relationships between codes and the conceptual framework of the study.

Triangulation

The inclusion of the reflection documents and the interviews in the study allowed for triangulation of the data collected through the focus groups. According to Sandra Mathison (1988), triangulation of data may result in one of three outcomes: convergence, inconsistency, or contradiction (p. 15). In all three of these cases, the triangulation helps to build a more "holistic understanding of the specific situation and general background knowledge about" (p. 17) the research at hand.

In this study, convergent data was interpreted as confirmatory evidence for the specific claim under consideration. Data that did not converge was given additional examination in order to clarify the situation. I considered the possibility that inconsistent data from an individual may indicate some fluctuation or uncertainty of beliefs, and that directly contradictory data may indicate an unwillingness to share personally revealing information in one context or another.

Another way of thinking about the triangulation of the data is intertextuality, a discourse analysis term that refers to "the ways in which texts and ways of talking refer to and build on other texts and discourses" (Johnstone, 2002, p. 139). By using the lens of intertextuality, I was able to examine the ways in which the discourse of the focus groups came through, or did not come through, into students' written words and interviews. Intertextual comparisons provided insight into what the students were thinking, as well as if and how they elected to reveal their opinions to others.

Two other forms of triangulation informed this study. Triangulation of data methods (Krefting, 1991) refers to the use of both discourse analysis and qualitative coding to build upon each other and develop better results. Theory triangulation means

that I "examined how the phenomenon being studied would be explained by different theories" (R. B. Johnson, 1997, p. 266). This means that I revisited Fowler (1981) and Parks (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000), as well as Shire (Shire, 1987) and Peek (Peek, 2005), as I sought to clarify my findings. If any of these researchers' thoughts better described the phenomena being revealed by my study, they were called into service in Chapter 9.

<div align="center">Role of the Researcher</div>

According to Merriam (1998), there are several stances a researcher can take toward the subject of his/her research. In this study, the researcher was a "participant as observer" (p. 101) who convened a group with the advance understanding of the researcher role, a role that took precedence during the research proceedings. That being said, spirituality may be a sensitive topic for some students, and therefore I took the following precautions during my work with them:

1. I reviewed the informed consent paperwork at the beginning of all focus groups and inform them that their spoken and written words would be marked with pseudonyms, not their real names.

2. I informed students, particularly during the heterogeneous focus groups, that bringing together students from varied perspectives was being done with the intention of facilitating learning. It was not being done to test anyone or create conflict.

3. Although I encouraged students to comment on and question each others' statements during the focus groups, I planned to intervene if any interaction

seemed to be emotionally disturbing to a participant. Fortunately, this did not

end up being necessary.

Experts in the interaction between psychotherapy and religion suggest that there

may be certain conversation topics that are important for each group (Richards & Bergin,

2000). For Protestants, this might include salvation, grace, and forgiveness

(McCullough, Weaver, Larson, & Aay, 2000). For Jews, this might include the

complexities of a religious identity, rituals, and the interplay between belief and action

(L. Miller & Lovinger, 2000). For Muslims, this might include dual identities, conflict

with secular culture, and family relationships (Hedayat-Diba, 2000). Unfortunately, P.

Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin (2000) do not suggest what this might include for

atheists. I took care to listen for the presentation of these key topics, so I could ensure

that the students had the opportunity to discuss what is important to them personally.

Overall during the course of this study, I attempted to exemplify the Social

Constructivism paradigm, which defines meanings as being jointly created and contextual

(Creswell, 2003). In this paradigm, knowledge is viewed as "individual reconstructions

coalescing around consensus" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 170) and the researcher acts as

a "'passionate participant' as facilitator of multivoice reconstruction" (p. 171). This

paradigm is manifested in research in the following manner:

> Individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They
> develop subjective meanings of their experiences - meanings directed toward
> certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the
> researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings
> into a few categories or ideas. The goal of the research, then, is to rely as much as
> possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied. (Creswell, 2003,
> p. 8)

The following protocols were observed in order to honor this understanding of knowledge. During my facilitation of the focus groups, I attempted to avoid applying my lens to the data. In the focus groups, I asked questions that did not attempt to lead students to a pre-determined response. For example, instead of asking students if they agree that Christians, Jews, Muslims and atheists conceive of spirituality differently, I asked them how their personal spirituality interrelates with their religious life. It was up to the students to determine if they would frame their responses to the latter question in terms of their religious affiliations. I also encouraged the students to react to each other either in question or comment form, rather than solely reacting to me, or only expecting me to offer reactions. This way, they could take the conversations in directions they felt were interesting or important; certainly, many topics were raised through this avenue that would not have otherwise been discussed.

During the analysis phase of the study, my interpretations were be guided by the students' spoken and written words. True to the Social Constructivism framework, I began with their understandings of religion and spirituality, as co-constructed through the focus groups. Particularly during the qualitative coding process, I let my developing theory "emerge from the data" (A. Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 12). This meant that I first listened to how the students defined terms for and with each other, and used that as my starting point. This type of inquiry was possible because I am not attempting to empirically prove a theoretical construction; rather, I am trying to better understand it.

I anticipated that one difficulty I might encounter in maintaining the social constructivist stance was the fact that I identify personally with the Jewish religion. "Any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race,

and ethnicity," (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 19) and, presumably, religion. Certainly, as a Jewish woman, I hold certain internal beliefs. Due to the value I place on reflexivity (R. B. Johnson, 1997), I disclosed my religious affiliation, though no information about my actual beliefs and values, to the participants.

I conducted this disclosure in the introduction section of the first round of focus groups, before the questions began. My language roughly took the following forms. For the non-Jewish groups, I said: "Before we begin, I want to let you all know that I am Jewish. I have taken a lot of steps to make sure I understand the beliefs of [Christians, Muslims or atheists]. I don't think being Jewish will impact my research, and I hope it will not impact what you will say today." I also introduced my co-facilitator and explained the multiple reasons for his or her presence. For the Jewish group, I said: "Before we begin, I want to let you all know that I am Jewish. I have a lot of experience working with and interacting with Jews with all types of beliefs and commitment levels. I don't think this will impact my research, and I hope it will not impact what you will say today."

While not disclosing the fact of my affiliation to the research participants would have been an inappropriate act of omission, my sharing of the information may have shaped the dialogue of some of the students in the study. For example, non-Jewish students may have been wary of offering any criticism of the Jewish perspective, for fear of offending me, while Jewish students may have thought they had to prove themselves Jewishly, in order to live up to a certain standard. On the other hand, my status as a Jew may have freed the non-Jewish students to speak their minds around me without fear of

judgment (Haw, 1996). My disclosure, with full embracing of their religious differences from mine, was meant to limit these types of effects as much as possible.

Although I considered the possibility, gender and sex roles did not turn out to be a complicating factor in this study. I prepared for the fact that working with Jewish and Muslim men from conservative religious backgrounds (Hedayat-Diba, 2000; Rabinowitz, 2000) may have been complicated by the fact that I am a woman. However, no men of this background participated in the study.

A variety of literature weighs in on whether or not researchers, particularly white researchers, should study minority populations (i.e. Barton, 1998; Becerra, 1997a, 1997b; Chaudhry, 1997; de Anda, 1997; Haw, 1996; T. P. Johnson, O'Rourke, Burris, & Owens, 2002; Letiecq & Bailey, 2004). As a member of the Jewish faith, I am an "outsider" both to another minority religion, Islam, and to the religion of the majority, Christianity (Becerra, 1997b), and this may have had an impact upon communications elements such as self-disclosure (T. P. Johnson et al., 2002). Being an "insider" comes with its own set of issues (Chaudhry, 1997). However, "there appears to be a general consensus that the researcher's race – as well as his or her gender, class, and sexual orientation – matters and therefore should be a consideration when planning, carrying out, and disseminating evaluation research" (Letiecq & Bailey, 2004, p. 348).

So while I could never be an insider with all of the groups in my study, I could raise my awareness and engage in reflexivity, a "critical self reflection about [my] potential biases and predispositions" (R. B. Johnson, 1997, p. 284). As I have already described, one aspect of my study design, included in order to improve my cultural competence, was consulting with members of ARC on my focus group protocol. This is

in line with Rosina M. Becerra's (1997b) point that "the validity of any study instrument is critical to the research, not only with respect to the topic researched but with respect to the *group* being researched" (p. 112, italics in original). The following ARC members assisted in determining the validity of my protocol:

- Pastor Sue Sprowls, Campus Pastor, Lutheran Campus Ministry

- Rabbi Nathan Martin, Campus Rabbi, Hillel

- Michael Ohlrogge, Student Campus Ministry Organizer, Unitarian Universalist Campus Ministry

Unfortunately, even after multiple requests of several people, I was unable to find a Muslim clergy member or student leader to assist.

Trustworthiness

The value of qualitative research cannot be conceived of in the same way as the value of quantitative research methods (Krefting, 1991). Because of the assumption of more than one reality existing for the multiple research participants, qualitative research must represent "those multiple realities revealed by informants as adequately as possible" (p. 215). There are numerous strategies to assure trustworthiness and credibility in qualitative research (R. B. Johnson, 1997; Krefting, 1991; Mathison, 1988; Merriam, 1998), and they do not "have to be complicated to be reliable and valid" (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995, p. 885). The strategies I employed are listed in Table 9.

Table 9. Strategies for assuring trustworthiness and credibility	
Strategy	Means for assuring trustworthiness and credibility
Triangulation of data sources (Krefting, 1991; Mathison, 1988)	Examining data that is convergent, inconsistent, or contradictory
Triangulation of data methods (Krefting, 1991)	Utilizing more than one data analysis technique to better understand the phenomena
Triangulation of theory (R. B. Johnson, 1997)	Referring to more than one theory to explain the research results
Using rich description (Merriam, 1998)	Seeking data elements in which participants' language gives the most descriptive picture of their own ideas
Engaging in reflexivity (R. B. Johnson, 1997; Krefting, 1991)	Being critical of potential biases of the researcher
Conducting a peer review (R. B. Johnson, 1997)	Inviting additional researchers to determine their own research findings, for use as a comparison

Most of these strategies have been detailed previously in this chapter. One requires further elaboration. Peer review means "discussing your explanation with your colleagues so that they can search for problems with it" (R. B. Johnson, 1997, p. 287). The peer review process for this study entailed engaging in post-focus group reflection with the Christian, Muslim and atheist researchers who co-facilitated the homogeneous focus groups. After recording their sessions and transcribing the key themes and explanatory points they made, I utilized this information to help guide data selection and analysis in the study. I made the decision not to employ a co-facilitator for the Jewish homogeneous session, because I felt that I would not need assistance interpreting the comments of those participants.

In the next four chapters, I will offer analyses for each of the four groups of participants in this study. The two forms of analysis, discourse analysis and thematic coding, are brought together to synthesize all the data collected in the study. Each of the chapters will follow the same outline and will draw preliminary conclusions for the

students of that religious affiliation as well as for the religious group itself. This outline will include:

1. Three focus group transcript elements examined through discourse analysis. The results will provide insight into how students use language to create meaningful representations of their spiritual identities.

2. Elements from student questionnaires and interviews, which augment the focus group elements being analyzed. These elements were also utilized to help select the segments for item 1.

3. Qualitative coding findings that compare themes across and within groups. The results will be used to revisit the conceptual framework of this study, namely the developmental objectives of Christians, Jews, Muslims, and atheists, and the faith trajectories and faith influences of the teenage and young adult stages of people of those religious affiliations.

4. A summary of the chapter, which will present the findings brought forward for synthesis with the other three groups in the study.

Chapter 9 will offer the synthesis of those conclusions, bringing together the entirety of results for all of the students in the study. It will examine cross-cutting themes and similarities between the four religious affiliation groups, as well as consider the distinctions which make the groups unique. It will also reflect upon the conceptual frameworks at use in the study.

In addition, throughout Chapters 5-9, I will reference four areas of implication for my findings: morality/equity, model specification, research in higher education, and practice in higher education. These will act as guideposts throughout my analysis and

discussion. Finally, Chapter 10 presents each of these areas of implication and proposes

changes that need to made in higher education, and respective levels of importance and

trustworthiness of my claims.

Chapter 5:

Analysis – Christian College Students

"Um, I think that, like, uh, what the purpose of religion is, is to help us strive to being something better than what, you know, than what we are at this present moment. And um, you know, for myself, it's, it's striving to be what God wants me to be, and that is what, you know, in answer to your question, you know, does my belief structure, you know, lead me towards an ideal self, and the answer is yes, of course." – David, mixed focus group #5

"Well, I think it's pretty easy for me, especially, like, where, the town I'm from because, like, there's, like, nobody questions like, 'Oh, you're Christian?' Like, it's not a big deal. And nobody questions it and everybody almost expects it. And so, it's just, like, it's never really been, like, anything major. It's always just been, I'm Christian and that's it, whereas, I don't know, I guess it almost seems like, for other religions, it would be more of a defining feature of their, like, of their personality in a way, not personality but, like, about them because it's more like, 'Oh, really, you're Jewish' or 'You're Muslim' or whatever. And so, I don't know, I guess that's me just not really knowing because I've never been in the situation, but it seems like it's just kind of, like, you would get more, asked more questions about it if you're a minority religion or you would get questioned more about it or not accepted possibly, depending on where you're at." – Karen, interview

This chapter presents the analysis for the data derived from the Christian student participants. The conducting of both discourse analysis and qualitative coding will lead to results that speak to elements of the four areas of implication presented at the conclusion of the previous chapter. In particular, this data highlights the Christian privilege implicit in many students' lives (the morality/equity issue), a Christian-specific frame influencing their spiritual identities (model specification), the effectiveness of both discourse analysis and the application of a reconstructed conceptual framework (research

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in higher education), new understandings of the college campus as a potential catalyst for

positive identity growth (practice in higher education), and the challenges faced during

interfaith and intra-faith conversations (practice in higher education). Each one of these

implications emerges directly from the data and will be discussed in additional depth in

Chapters 9 and 10.

<div align="center">Results: Discourse Analysis</div>

In this section of Chapters 5-8, I will present three segments that illustrate the

types of discourse moves used by the religious group in focus, in this case the Christians,

as well as those from other religions with whom they spoke.

<div align="center">*Segment 1*</div>

This segment takes place in the Christian student focus group. Julie is the co-

interviewer for the session.

1	Jenny: Let's try to warm things up a bit more just talking about our own lives, so
2	um, since you guys all seem to have working definitions of what you think
3	"religious" means to you, can you talk about what a meaningful religious
4	experience has been in your lives? Or, if there hasn't been one, you can say that.
5	Yeah, go ahead.
6	David: Um, I think in the Christian experience, when you are a Christian, or if
7	you claim to be a Christian, I think the most religious experience for you is, well,
8	more of a spiritual significant time for you was when you decided to become a
9	Christian. Because in the Christian faith, it is you deciding to become a
10	Christian. And I don't know necessarily about other religions, but that, most
11	definitely in the Christian faith, it is one of the most significant days that we feel.
12	'Cause it's that day where we, where we realize that Jesus Christ was, you know,
13	our Savior who took away our sins so that we could, you know, be in heaven,
14	you know, for all eternity. And that, for me, you know, and I hope for all
15	Christians, is a very significant, you know, most religious time for us.
16	Will: Actually, many Mainline - that's probably true for almost all Evangelical
17	Christians, but many Mainline Christians are born into their, born into their
18	denominations. They probably grew up hearing about, they probably grew up

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19	around Christianity, so they may have, they may have had, they may have had an
20	experience like that at some point in time but they may not have, they may not
21	have used exactly the same language that you used. I, I actually grew up
22	Evangelical. I later became Episcopalian. Um, it was… So yeah, I would
23	characterize that as an awakening, but I, I would not use the same language that,
24	uh, Evangelicals use to describe it. It's just, it's kind of the same thing, but it's
25	different. So, it's like, yeah.
26	Julie: So what language would you use, just out of curiosity, for the more non -
27	Will: Well, I would, like I said I would, I would have characterized it as an
28	awakening, um yeah.
29	Julie: [to David] Can I ask one more clarifying question? When did you feel like
30	that experience happened for you? Was that like, when you were younger?
31	David: That was about when I was in tenth grade, um at church, one night at
32	youth group. I need to, um, yeah for me, I mean, I understand what you're
33	saying. I was raised in a Lutheran church and also in a Baptist church. My
34	parents both took me, my parents were separated and both took me. But anyhoo,
35	um, I know what you mean, you know, by being raised, in a, you know, in a
36	family of Christians. I understand where you're coming from. But would you
37	also agree with me that, you know, you kind of, you need that day, that, your
38	own, realization of that. I mean, you can go throughout life, you know, knowing
39	the Bible stories, and knowing, you know, the Bible through and through. You
40	know, kind of, um, knowing the stories and, you know, knowing the reasons and
41	knowing the workings of the faith, but *accepting* the faith for you own, wouldn't
42	you say that you kind of have to accept that?
43	Will: Um, for me it helped, definitely. Um, I don't know that I'd say - I mean,
44	for some people it may not be a, like, lightening strike kind of experience. It
45	may be, it may be more gradual. I mean, it's, it kind of depends on the person. I
46	agree.
47	David: Ok.
48	Will: I think we're talking about the same thing, just the specifics, you know, are
49	not really the same.
50	David: Ok, I agree with that.

Norm

   This interaction occurs extremely early in the Christian focus group. David leads

off the answers to my question by immediately declaring a standard for one to "claim to

be a Christian" (line 7), which is that one has had an experience of being born again, or having a personal realization that "that Jesus Christ was, you know, our Savior who took away our sins" (lines 12-13). In making this statement so boldly, David seems to assume that he is stating the obvious, and that his experience is normative for Christians. At the very least, he "[hopes] for all Christians" (lines 14-15) that this has happened. Julie, my co-interviewer in this session, had the following to say about this declaration after the focus group concluded: "You definitely saw at the very beginning the acting out of 'I'm an Evangelical Christian.' And what it means to be Christian to an Evangelical Christian is you have this conversion experience, where it's a personal relationship." However, not all students in the group are Evangelical, so the norm David attempts to establish never has chance to take root in the discussion.

Positioning

The next speaker is Will, who offers the clarification that Christians of "Mainline" (line 16) denominations are not required to have an experience of being born again in order to be considered Christian. Although the term "Mainline" does have an official definition as including specific Christian denominations (Roof & McKinney, 1987), its usage by Will has the effect of positioning Evangelical Christians as outside the main*stream* of U.S. Christianity. Will underlines this by pointing out that he "grew up Evangelical" and then "later became Episcopalian" (lines 21-22), presumably converting to a denomination more suited to his belief system. Although he takes the time to martial his thoughts through the use of several hedges (i.e., repeating "born into their" [line 17] and "they probably grew up" [line 18]), Will's turn has the dual effects of blocking David's attempt at establishing a norm for the group and positioning David's belief

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system as being on the fringes. Will's opposition to Evangelical Christianity is evidenced

more clearly in another text of study:

> "*I have a temptation to say nasty things around Christians who I perceive to be Evangelicals.*" – Will, questionnaire

Will, however, does not seem to hold on to any negative feelings from the

Christian group, which demonstrates his overall maturity and ability to explore

conflicting opinions in an open manner:

> "*I felt there was actually a fair bit of diversity of thought in the Christian group, so that was, that was some, that was good conversation …. But I just didn't feel that - we were all definitely Christians, but we didn't, you know, we came from, it is a big religion.*" – Will, mixed focus group #4

After Julie seeks minor clarification from Will, she turns to David to learn more

about his experience. Although her follow up question specifically addresses David's

personal story, he quickly turns to address Will's points. He begins by attempting to

regain some solidarity with Will, by trying to bridge the gap between their beliefs, saying

"I know what you mean" (line 35) and "I understand where you're coming from" (line

36). But, these hedges quickly lead to the "but," (line 36) where David attempts to use

that solidarity to convince Will to agree with him. At the conclusion of his turn, he also

turns the question back to Will, twice trying to persuade him to agree, saying "but would

you also agree with me that" (lines 36-37) and "wouldn't you say that you kind of have to

accept that?" (lines 41-42). This type of attempted persuasion only occurred 10 other

times across the nine focus groups, so it was a fairly rare form of interaction.

David also gets a final dig at positioning Will himself, by emphasizing the word

"accepting" (line 41) in his attempt at persuasion. In this way, he positions his version of

Christianity as higher, for by extension, Will's version does not go far enough beyond the

baseline "knowing the reasons and knowing the workings of the faith" (lines 40-41).

Will deftly defuses this, however, by saying that they are "talking about the same thing"

(line 48), even though their readings on the topic are quite different. David is left with

little more room in the discourse than to say that he agrees.

David retains the negative elements of his experience in the conversation with his

Christian peers, mentioning them later in other settings:

> *"I found it most challenging to participate in the focus group with other*
> *Christians while some of their ideas differed some than my own and in some cases*
> *I was saddened by what they sad because it appeared they had a religious*
> *experience with God and not a spiritual 'personal' relationship with God." –*
> David, questionnaire

> *"The one guy who sat to my left [Will], like I said, you know, it sounded to me that*
> *he accepted, you know, Episcopalian Christianity and he had, you know, no*
> *intention of creating his own, you know, belief about, you know, what's out*
> *there." –* David, interview

One reason why David may have been more affected by this experience with Will

may simply be age, as David was 18 at the time of the study, and Will 26 (and the oldest

participant).

Segment 2

This segment takes place in the Christian student focus group. Brooke is

responding to my question about how, if in any way, their religion and/or spirituality

have changed since high school.

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1 │ Brooke: … I mean, I just kind of felt like, I was reading the Bible, but I just
2 │ didn't, I just felt like none of this was applicable to my life.  And you know,
3 │ going to church I thought, "I'm not learning anything from this, and yeah, these
4 │ are stories, but they're not telling me how this relate to problems or, you know,
5 │ my real life experiences."  And so also, you know, I would go to church sermons
6 │ and they would say things like, you know, like, "The war at the end of the world,
7 │ and this is happening because of gay people and things like that" and I would
8 │ look at people and think, "How can you sit here and listen to this?"  And I would
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9 | just be completely appalled. And so then I was like just, "This doesn't apply to
10 | me." And I almost converted to Islam. […] But it was very much like, I had all
11 | of these questions, and I wanted to explore these different things, and my family
12 | was like, they made me go see *Passion of the Christ*, and I didn't cry and then
13 | my aunt was yelling at me and was like, "What kind of Christian are you?" And
14 | it was just all this stuff, and I was just like, "People are ridiculous." And I just
15 | didn't even care what they thought. I just didn't. And, I don't know, I just kind
16 | of, I guess I don't want to say I have a negative view of Christianity, because I
17 | don't. I mean, I still consider myself a Christian, but it's just like, all of these
18 | experiences, none of these contributed to me wanting to explore Christianity
19 | even more than I already had. But I mean, when I was young, you know, I
20 | memorized all the books of the Bible, and I went to Sunday school, and things
21 | like that. And then I got to college, and a lot of my friends and I, you know, we
22 | discuss religion. A lot of us are agnostic. A lot of us, well, I wouldn't say I'm
23 | necessarily there [lowered voice dramatically], but a lot of us are. […]

24 | Jada: Question. Um, have you ever, like, during your time from childhood to
25 | now, have you ever considered going to another type of church?

26 | Brooke: Um, I have been to several. I went to Episcopalian church a couple of
27 | times. My sister goes to a different church than my mom -

28 | Jada: Halleluyah! [points upwards]

29 | Brooke: - And I've been to two different churches -

30 | Jada: Because that one sounds like a nightmare. Ah! [sings]

31 | Brooke: - and it didn't really. I don't know. I just, maybe I just don't like
32 | church. I just didn't really identify with anything that was being said. I was just
33 | bored.

34 | Jada: You should come to my church.

35 | Julie: So where are you at right now, I mean, as far as like, you're hanging out
36 | with these friends, talking about it - is that basically happening here, or was that
37 | more in high school?

38 | Brooke: I mean, both, but in high school, it was more me discussing things with
39 | people who were, I don't know, Muslim. Most, a lot of my friends are Muslim,
40 | but who weren't really into it, like into the practice. Like, Islam and Christianity
41 | are really similar, actually. So I mean, I don't think it was that like weird, or out
42 | of context for me to be talking to them about it. But now, I don't know, a lot of
43 | my friends and I, no matter what our religious background is, a lot of us have the
44 | same opinion about religion in general. And you know, you know, we've all
45 | read *The Age of Reason*. I know a lot of us know about the history of the Bible

| 46 | and we like, debate things. I don't know, I'm not going to get into that right |
| 47 | now, but yeah. [laughter] |

| 48 | Jada: Is that like *The Da Vinci Code*? |

49	Brooke: No, no. Thomas Payne's *The Age of Reason* is a great book and it's not
50	allowed in my house. My mom won't let me bring that book in the house.
51	[laughter]

Positioning

This segment begins with a long narrative by Brooke (truncated for the purposes of succinctness in this analysis) declaring much of her animosity toward Christianity and her ongoing split with the religion of her upbringing. She lists several criteria for this disaffiliation, such as Bible stories not being "applicable" (line 2) to her reality and bigoted church sermons that leave her feeling "completely appalled" (line 9).

In this narrative she also engages in positioning the other members of her focus group, when she says, "I would look at people and think 'How can you sit here and listen to this?'" (lines 7-8) As all the other participants had previously made some sort of declaration of commitment to Christianity, they are, by association, positioned in the group of people Brooke is condemning for listening to those appalling sermons.

Brooke saves the least amount of sympathy for her own family. She illustrates her contempt for their beliefs and for their opinions about hers with her anecdote about *The Passion of the Christ*, a controversial 2004 movie. She places in opposition her family's act of valuing a movie, a form of received information, and her own preference for "[exploring] these different things" (line 11). Brooke clearly finds the situation she is describing and the people involved in it to be "ridiculous" (line 14). And through her moves, anyone in this focus group who thinks similarly to them is also positioned as ridiculous.

Face Saving

Brooke, being amongst a group of Christian peers, offers a few of her credentials as a legitimate Christian in what appear to be face saving moves. She declares that she "memorized all the books of the Bible, and … went to Sunday school, and things like that" (lines 20-21). She even states that she does not "have a negative view of Christianity" (line 16), although this statement is not backed up by strong evidence in her narrative or her following turns. It is possible that her face saving attempts are actually made, not for her own benefit, but so that those she is speaking with do not feel offended by her.

Brooke's final act in this narrative indicates just how far she has evolved from being a devoted Christian. Her friends in college are agnostic, and although she clearly labeled herself as such on the demographic form she provided prior to entering this study, she will not admit to her group that she is "necessarily there" (line 23). She delivers this phrase in a dramatically lowered voice, indicating agnosticism to be something looked upon askance by Christians. Perhaps it is due to this knowledge that agnosticism is not acceptable that she does not make her identity as clear to her peers as she did to me through her paperwork. After all, one who does not toe the appropriate line may be asked, "What kind of Christian are you?" (line 13).

Brooke's attempt at saving face may actually have the opposite effect than intended. Instead of buffeting her criticisms against Christianity, they may actually make them heard more painfully by the other participants. They are, after all, purportedly coming from a woman who "still [considers herself] a Christian" (line 17) and criticism from within one's group turns out to have been particularly harsh in this study. However,

although Jada's responses in this segment will be discussed shortly, no other members of the group commented on the potential insult, and a review of their other texts reveals no other evidence on the matter. It appears that the contention in this particular conversation rested solely between Brooke and Jada.

Footing

Jada tries several times during this interaction to gain footing with Brooke so that she has the authority to make suggestions to her for her reaffiliation with Christianity. Her initial question to Brooke about exploring different churches is fairly benign, and indicates that at this time, she accepts Brooke's statement that she is still a Christian. Jada's comment about Brooke's mother's church, "that one sounds like a nightmare" (line 30), is probably meant in some way to offer sympathy for Brooke's plight. Her delivery, however, of singing it and pointing upwards to God while announcing "Halleluyah!" (line 28) make the result anything but sympathetic. Instead, she sounds flippant toward the struggle over religion Brooke is clearly experiencing within her family. With these two comments, Jada loses any footing she had in the conversation, and Brooke does not even respond to Jada's suggestion that she attend her church.

Julie, the co-interviewer for this focus group, diffuses some of the tension by reverting the subject to Brooke's conversations about religion with her friends. However, the building antagonism between the two women is not reparable. Jada's off-the-mark question about *The Age of Reason* being similar to *The Da Vinci Code* sets Brooke off once more. Although Jada's personal opinion about *The Da Vinci Code* is not known, she may feel similarly to those Christians who experienced it as slanderous to their religion (Souza, 2007). Brooke, perhaps understanding this, finally terminates Jada's

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place in the conversation. The tone of her "no, no" (line 49) is quite harsh and the following sentences condescending. The interaction ends with Brooke's feelings about Jada clearly established. Excerpts from their mixed focus groups and questionnaires support this, and that the feelings were mutual:

> *"I felt like in our group, there were people, like, people who were very religious, and then people who weren't so religious, and also I feel like, with the, I feel like some of them assumed that because we were in the same group, like you were saying, there was, like, a basic understanding. But I felt like I didn't have the same basic understanding as a lot of people in the group and when, and I also feel like when they were talking about things, instead of, like, here, people say, 'I believe this' and 'I think,' it was very much like, someone in front of me kept saying, 'This is how it is' and you know, 'This is what God wants,' and just saying and, like, I don't know, it was just really, really frustrating and I just went to, I don't know, I just don't, I don't know, I just felt like, 'Stop assuming that we're all, that you know what I think or that we agree. Or stop, you know, forcing your beliefs on me.' ... I don't know, it was really intense. Well, one particular person in the group was just really intense."* – Brooke, mixed focus group #5

> *"It was challenging to sit through some of the bullshit other people were saying. Not only dealing with poor speaking skills in general, but the inability of people to think with a just mindset. It was annoying, not being able to contradict all the lies perpetuated by the Christians in my first group, lies based on the absurd book of absurd fairytales that is the bible. And the girl next to me kept preaching about the gospel and what God wants and expects from his followers - as if she knows. That girl was ignorant and I wanted to laugh in her face."* – Brooke, questionnaire

> *"Um, well I felt more comfortable in this group to be perfectly honest than the Christian group. I was a little traumatized by the Christian group - I was like, 'What is going on? Do you guys even like, have you even opened the Book or what?' You know, I was really, like, 'Where are these people getting this stuff from?' Like, the, I don't know, down in some deep, deep hole or something? ... And, um, just, like, just people were just completely miserable and, and I just, um, was, like, if, I mean, people who just hated Christianity but yet were Christians. I didn't understand that either. So, I felt a whole lot more comfortable here [she laughs] because, because it was a whole lot less drama."* – Jada, mixed focus group #2

> *"The girl who said she'd done all she needed to do was right in one sense, but she on the other hand is missing out on developing a stronger relationship with God. She's missing out on the Peace because she doesn't depend on Christ hardly ever, she is missing out on all of those things mentioned above in question one. She is*

choosing to stay a 'baby' Christian in that she is choosing not to exercise her faith, choosing to stay weak in her faith. Which is her choice, and of course she will still go to heaven if she truly believed with her heart and only she and God will know if she truly believed into Him or not... The only thing that was challenging for me was the feeling of heaviness afterward in my heart for the girl who was so angry and so gnarled up in bitterness toward her experience of humans twisting the faith. I will pray for her." – Jada, questionnaire

Segment 3

This segment takes place in mixed focus group #2 and also includes an atheist participant, Meghan. The session itself also included Jesse, a Jewish participant, who is not featured here. Jada's question references a statement made earlier by Meghan that her ideal way of living is to accomplish all of her goals.

1	Jada: I actually wanted to know, Meghan, um, what do you do once you
2	accomplish all of your goals? What if you fail?
3	Meghan: I always feel like there's just never ending, and even if you failed, then
4	I feel, like, that's just another, like, lesson you learn to just keep on trying, like,
5	I don't know, just to keep going so. Yeah. 'Cause I mean, like you said, you
6	know, you're a human being, you realize you're not perfect and like, you know,
7	I've realized the same thing, so. I feel like there are always going to be, like,
8	more, you know, um, just more mountains to climb and, like, you know, and
9	everything, so it's never-ending.
10	Kristin: Can I ask you a question too?
11	Meghan: Sure.
12	Kristin: So like, I don't know, 'cause I used to, um, I used to be a goal person
13	too before I was really…, like, I grew up Christian but, I, I wouldn't say that I
14	would actually *live* like a Christian until maybe my senior year in high school. I
15	didn't really understand what it was all about, um. And so I used to be, like, I
16	just had goals and I was one of those, like, powering through, like, life I guess,
17	like um, doing what I should be and, like, a goal was to come to the [University]
18	and now I realize that I'm so glad that's *not* what my life is about anymore
19	because, like, *here I am*, and it's *just* the [University] and it's, like, if this is all
20	there was to life, I wouldn't be fulfilled. I mean I don't see that could be
21	fulfilling. So, was that one of your goals once, was, like, to go to college and do
22	you find fulfillment in that? Like -

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23	Meghan: Yeah. I mean I, just like, when I get to that point, it's just like, oh ok,
24	so there's like, there's more options here, there's more goals to be made and
25	things to be done, so, you know, I'll just be taking that other step. So I mean
26	yeah, I do find fulfillment, I mean, in like, all the goals that I meet and
27	everything, and even if I don't make them, then, you know, that's just, it's time
28	for me to take that next step, and like, try a different road, and I think of that, if
29	it all happened for, 'cause it was supposed to, for I don't know, so yeah.

This segment demonstrates the pressure put on an atheist student in a mixed group setting. As will be shown in Chapter 8, it is in high contrast with the interactions that occurred in the homogeneous atheist group, in which the students shared a joint laugh about organized religion, Christianity in particular. In this interaction, two Christian women, Jada and Kristin, join together to question Meghan, an atheist, about her beliefs. Meghan's emotional reaction is of she is being ganged up on.

Positioning

Jada's initial question marks the first time Meghan's ideas are openly questioned in this focus group. She thus sets the stage for Kristin to follow up with a heavier critique. Although Kristin opens by inquiring if she can "ask [Meghan] a question too," she prefaces her actual question with her own story of being a reformed "goal person" (line 12). She sets herself up as being similar to Meghan, by using goal-related language such as "just had goals" (line 16), "powering through, like, life" (line 16), and "doing what I should be" (line 17).

While the use of this language could be seen as evoking solidarity with Meghan, it clearly functions instead as a set up, a way for Kristin to systematically knock down this type of belief as inadequate. Whereas before she may have been naïve or ignorant to a Christian reality, "now [she realizes] that [she's] so glad that's *not* what [her] life is about anymore" (line 18). In other words, the goals she used to hold as so important pale

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in comparison to "actually [*living*] like a Christian" (line 14). Kristin muses that she

"wouldn't be fulfilled" (line 20) if being admitted to a prestigious university was "all

there was to life" (lines 19-20). By setting this goal up as not fulfilling for herself, a

realized Christian, and then asking Meghan if she finds fulfillment in that goal, she leaves

Meghan little way out. This also recalls a statement she made earlier in the session,

where she said:

> "*… the more I grow as a Christian, the more my life becomes less about meeting and fulfilling my own needs and selfish desires, which I just, I don't think you can find fulfillment in seeking out those things in your life.*" – Kristin, mixed focus group #2

Through her assertions that she has moved beyond such "selfish desires," Kristin

positions Meghan as someone who finds fulfillment in something menial, or less than her

own Christian life.

Face Saving

Meghan's responses to both Jada and Kristin are to attempt to save face for

herself by mirroring the statements the other women used to bolster their religious

credentials. To Jada, she recalls Jada's previous statement much earlier in the focus

group, in which she said, "I realize that I'm not perfect." While Jada employs this to

explain her choice to "depend on Christ more," Meghan employs it to explain why she

"just [keeps] on trying" (line 4) because her quest for success is "never-ending" (line 9).

To Kristin, Meghan explains that her belief system provides her "more options"

(line 24) even in the face of failure. Her statement that she does "find fulfillment" (line

26) also mirrors Kristin, and is language more commonly associated with the spiritual

than the secular. In addition, when she says "if it all happened for, 'cause it was

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supposed to" (line 29), she seems to be referring to a concept of fate or predestination, which again is more commonly linked to spiritual understandings of reality. Later in this same focus group, there is additional evidence to support the idea that Meghan utilizes this language as a defensive mechanism, because she feels "pressure to kind of, like, have to be tied to something" religious.

Meghan's moves to save face by incorporating spirituality into a belief system that stands outside religion are not necessarily successful. Her turns are riddled with false starts and incomplete thoughts. Her response to Jada includes several instances of "like" and "you know." Additionally, her response to Kristin includes "I mean" (line 23), "just like" (line 23), "so, you know" (line 25), "so I mean yeah" (lines 25-26), "I mean, in like" (line 26), "then, you know" (line 27), "that's just" (line 27), and "for I don't know, so yeah" (line 29). These interruptions to her narrative do not serve her well, but make her appear nervous, flustered, and unable to present her thoughts clearly in the face of critique.

Later in the study, Kristin and Meghan reflect upon this interaction:

"I didn't like it when I was asked to be specific about anything in the second focus group because the other people were so driven by their own religions and very judgmental. I didn't like when one of the girls asked me about how I am goal driven. I really didn't like the second focus group." – Meghan, questionnaire

"It is also frustrating to try and express my passion for Christ without coming off as insulting to others; I felt that perhaps I insulted [Meghan] when I asked her about her goals and if she actually finds fulfillment in life - I wasn't trying to be rude or pretentious, but rather honestly wanted to know. As much as I don't like offending people, though, I do prefer to offer up my ideas, however unpopular or unpleasant they may seem… The other Christian girl [Jada] that I was with in the second study (I can't remember her name) seems to be so connected to Christ and spiritually alive; she inspires me to keep growing!" – Kristin, questionnaire

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Post-Hoc Positioning and Face Saving

As explained in Chapter 4, analysis demonstrated that important discourse moves were revealed when the students referred back to their actions in previous sessions of the study. In the mixed focus groups and in their questionnaires and interviews, students often described situations in which they had omitted information or softened their true opinions. When this occurred for the primary reason of continuing to define one another, I am calling the act "post-hoc positioning." When this occurred for the primary reason of protecting oneself and one's interests, or of not offending one another, I am labeling the move "post-hoc face saving." These instances are being discussed separately from the segments above because, by nature, they occurred outside of such interactions and were only revealed later on.

Instances of post-hoc discourse moves were actually not as prevalent for the Christians as they were for the other students in the study, as will be shown in the forthcoming chapters. Jada and Brooke both engaged in post-hoc positioning of one another, describing in their mixed sessions (and Brooke in her questionnaire) how wrong the other one had been in the Christian session. Although neither could hear the other's final digs, the women were still acting out the sore feelings that had developed between them. Will and Karen both had minor occasions of post-hoc face saving. Will's comment, presented above, about his "temptation to say nasty things" about Evangelical Christians, demonstrates how he saved face for himself and his peers by resisting the urge to be offensive. Karen indicated in her interview that she saved face for herself and others in her mixed focus group by not saying, "Oh you're wrong" to those of other religious affiliations.

Discussion of Discourse Analysis

The segments presented for discourse analysis in this chapter all demonstrate some form of contention between students participating in the study. David and Will talked through and around the differences between Evangelical and Mainline Christianity. Brooke and Jada developed a strong opposition to each other, fueled by disdain for one another's worldview. And Meghan was backed into a corner by Jada and Kristin, who critiqued her vulnerable outlook on what makes for a meaningful life. In post-hoc settings, Brooke and Jada continued to act out their feelings for one another, while Will and Karen revealed actions that saved face for themselves and their fellow participants.

What do these examples of interactions say about how Christian students use language to create representations of their spiritual identities? Firstly, it shows that in the Christian student focus group, it was much easier to locate instances of negative relationship building between Christians, than it was for positive ones. Secondly, there is evidence of students utilizing external sources (such as family or denominational members as a whole) as reference points, particularly to support classifying a fellow discourse participant in a less-than-kind manner. Thirdly, it demonstrates the ways students will feign agreement, only to illustrate later through other comments that true open-mindedness did not actually occur. These three findings lead to implications for the continued usage of discourse analysis in higher education as well as for better understandings of interfaith and intra-faith conversations that involve Christian students.

These findings also speak to a "Christian frame" at work in the students' discourse and co-constructed in their conversations. A frame, or framework, is defined

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by Erving Goffman to be a "schemata of interpretation … that is seen as rendering … the scene into something that is meaningful" (1986, p. 21). The Christian frame, through which they interpret and create meaning, includes the following features:

- Common understandings – the core ideologies of Christianity, influence of outside sources as validation

- Points of disagreement – literalism of beliefs, denominational distinctions and how those distinctions impact the truth of Christianity

- Faith specific issues that arise in dialogue – the legitimacy of non-Christian belief systems, a less-than-full sincerity in terms of open-mindedness toward others

Another way of thinking about the Christian frame is to consider it a group-level identity co-constructed by the Christian students through their interactions with one another during this study. As I have previously stated, I have been attempting to exemplify the Social Constructivism paradigm, which defines meanings as being jointly created and contextual (Creswell, 2003). This interpretation of the data extends to an understanding that the findings were based on the situation of the particular students in the room as well as the particular timing in their lives in which the study took place. The Christian frame co-created by them surrounds them all, yet with ample room for individual expression and viewpoints. The findings about the Christian frame, as well as from the discourse analysis, will be compared with the results of the qualitative coding analysis discussed at the end of this chapter. The frame also has profound implications for accurate specification of faith development models and how a modified conceptual framework can be applied in future research.

In addition to these findings about the Christian students, the final element of dialogue provides insight into the minds of atheist students, who may feel quite exposed in conversations with the religious, and who will be further explored in Chapter 8.

Results: Qualitative Coding

In this section of Chapters 5-8, I will provide the results of the qualitative coding process conducted on the data corpus. The results will address multiple angles on the data, including students' definitions of key terms, the themes and ideas they discussed most frequently, and the codes which relate back to the conceptual framework of this study. After discussing and summarizing these findings, I will compare them with the above findings on the Christian students' discourse analysis.

Definitions and Aspects of "Religious" and "Spiritual"

Students were asked during both the homogeneous and heterogeneous focus group sessions to provide definitions for the words "religious" and "spiritual." Their responses to these direct questions are what I term "definitional." Students also discussed religion and spirituality in terms of many other concepts, such as culture, politics and diversity, and these codes are considered "aspects" of the terms.

Among the Christian participants, the four most discussed codes related to "religious" were aspects and not definitions. In order, with frequencies of use in parentheses, they were: "religious diversity" (19), "religious duty/obligation" (8), "religion and politics/government" (6), and "spirituality as discrete from religion" (6). The first three of these codes were among the six definitions and aspects of religious which received 20 or more mentions by all of the students in the study. The highest

definitional terms utilized by the Christians were coded "religion as attendance of house of worship" (5) and "religion as negative" (5). These students utilized a breadth of 14 definitions for the term "religious."

The Christian students were similarly broad in their discussion of the term "spiritual," using 13 distinct definitions. The most frequently used by far was coded "spirituality as connection to something greater" (16), a code which includes both specific mentions of God and vaguer senses of connectedness. It was also the most used by the Jewish and Muslim students and far and away had the highest total mentions. The other three codes which had high usage by the Christian students were "spirituality as personal" (9), "spirituality as exercising your spirit" (7), and "spirituality as discrete from religion" (6).

God Images and Associations

The Christian students in this study utilized 11 distinctly coded descriptors for their images of and associations with God. The four most common were: "God – personal relationship and qualities" (15), "God – statement of faith" (11), "God – depending upon" (8), and "God – is good, loving, understanding" (8). The first three were among the four with the highest total mentions within the study among all the participants (the fourth was "God – statement of disbelief or doubt").

A very interesting element of the Christian students' images of and associations with God was the use of uniformly positive descriptors. Some other students offered definitions of what God is *not* (i.e., Jasmine stating in her interview, "Um, I don't really, like, talk to God really, specifically, like, I can't imagine saying like, 'Please God save

me' or something.") The Christian students did not provide this type of negative definition even once during all of their combined dialogue.

What could the possible reasons be for the Christian students to be so uniformly affirmative in their understandings of God? One potential answer, based on the literature reviewed for this study, is that because Christianity is the mainstream religion in this country, their definition of the nature of God is also the mainstream. There is no alternative understanding of God's nature available in their consciousness, and therefore, nothing requires negation.

Even more interesting is the fact that the Muslim students shared in this phenomenon; they also did not use any negative definitions for God. (This situation did not occur with the Jewish or atheist students.) The reasons for this may differ from the Christian students, and will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Faith Influences, Faith Trajectories and Developmental Objectives

Returning to the conceptual frameworks for this study (both Figures 1 and 2 in Chapter 3), there were three elements of faith development that were distinguished for each of the religious affiliations. Each of these will be addressed, with codes developed in the qualitative analysis phase of the study used as evidence. In this section of Chapters 5 though 8, I will also engage in "restorying" (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, p. 330) narratives as provided by the students. This means that I may take discourse provided during disparate periods of time in the study and combine them together to provide a more linear description or analysis.

Faith Influences: Challenges to Religion and Relationship between Religion and Society

A window into the faith development of the students in this study is the faith influences that are currently at work in their lives. I attempted to draw this information out of them in the second round focus groups with the question, "On campus, have you encountered any situations which have tested your spiritual and/or religious beliefs or caused you to alter them from what they were in high school?" In their responses, I examined for evidence of markers of religious identity, young adult transition, and resolution of identity, the faith influences for stage 3, 3.5 and 4.

Not all students in the study provided concrete answers to this question, and one answer likely is not enough to make a determination about the faith influences at work in their lives. Therefore, for all students, I also considered the way they expressed their understandings of the relationships between their religious affiliations and the societal positions of their respective religious groups. This provided a second window into faith influences, and the results of this are included in the final statement(s) for each student.

- David has found himself being changed by exposure to other religions. For him, this took place in a religion course on campus that explored Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Through the class, David developed a greater understanding of the latter two, as well as what he termed the "*secular* view" (his emphasis) of Christianity. He is concerned, in this latter sense, with how others view his religion, and his current faith influence is the markers of religious identity. David is personally affected by the "battle" between Christians defending the "founding morals" of our country and those who wish to dismantle them by such actions as

"taking 'under God' out of the Pledge of Allegiance, and taking the Ten
Commandments … out of court houses."

- Jada represents her main challenge during college as a theological dilemma,
  based around conflicting definitions within Christianity of what it means to be
  "saved." In order to resolve the question, she spent time studying with a group of
  fellow students with whom she felt comfortable, and as she phrases it herself,
  "finally came to [her] own conclusion." As a result, she is potentially being
  influenced by the "average expectable stage of faith development" (Fowler, 1981,
  p. 161) of this student group. Her story evokes both markers of religious identity
  and young adult transition. Jada feels pressure to be "less vocal" about her beliefs
  so that she is not judged by society as being "some kind of horrible person" for
  believing in Biblical inerrancy.

- Kristin declares that there has been little during college that challenged her
  beliefs. However, she expresses frustration with the "the guy with the bullhorns
  yelling about Jesus" just at the edge of campus; he "just riles [her] up personally
  as a Christian because they're sending the wrong message." She exhibits
  concerns with markers of religious identity. Kristin claims she is not really
  affected by the social status of Christians, because she has chosen to "separate
  from that."

- Like Kristin, Brooke does not feel that college has challenged or changed her
  beliefs. Her main source of contention is the "ignorant" student body on campus,
  whom she feels does not know enough to engage in intellectual conversations
  about religion. She is in a highly judgmental phase of life, clearly having

transitioned into a self-authority role, but retaining anger and a critical stance on others that prevent her at this time from resolving her identity. In terms of her position on privilege, Brooke is surprised that other people feel "attacked" for being Christian, which leads to her further disillusionment with the religion.

- Karen portrays the situation that altered her beliefs to be exposure to a group of friends with a broader cross-section of religious identities. Coming from a town where, as she describes in her first focus group, one could "count the number of diversities … and, like, on one hand," religious diversity has been a positive revelation for her. Karen is not concerned with external validation of her religious beliefs; the faith influence present in her life is the young adult transition. Like Kristin, Karen does not think much about the social position of Christians, except when tuning in to the news. She considers it something that is "just kind of in the back drop of our country."

- Like Jada, Will describes a theological challenge that he faced in college, which began as interactions with "the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender community led [him] to think, led [him] to reconsider what [his] church originally taught [him] about homosexuality." This reconsideration of his church's position led to further exploration of alternative theologies and an eventual change in denominations to one that is more embracing of all people. During this experience, Will allowed himself to be open to powerful change and took a strong, personal stance to find a Christian movement that would affirm these beliefs. This demonstrates the faith influence of resolution of identity, as Will is beyond transitioning into the role of having authority in his own life. Will

opposes all forms of Christian privilege throughout the world and believes there has been a social confusion of Christian theology with "militaristic nationalism."

Drawing together the opinions of the students about the status of Christians in United States society, they reflect back upon the mainstream, or majority, position posited for this group in the conceptual work of this study. The comments made by David, Jada, Kristin and Karen all generally illustrate that, due to their majority status, they do not feel compelled to contemplate their social standing. In extreme cases, they even worry that being in the majority makes them the subject of unwarranted scrutiny. Of all, Karen expresses the most recognition (in her interview session) that being a religious minority in the United States makes one's life more complicated.

Brooke and Will's comments do differ from those of the other four, in that both call out Christian privilege. As already shown, Will has taken the strongest step toward dismantling it, converting to a Christian denomination that operates using "liberation theology." He also weathers a round of questions from his peers in the first round focus group about missionary work, which he believes is "fraught with problems of … cultural colonialism."

Faith Trajectories: Definitions of Self as Religious and/or Spiritual and Change in Religion and Spirituality over Time

The next element of the conceptual framework to be analyzed is the Christian students' faith trajectories, or their development over time. In order to examine this growth, I also considered their current definitions of self. During their round one focus group, four of the Christian participants defined themselves as both religious and spiritual: Kristin, Will, Karen, and David. Aside from segment 1 presented above, in

which Will and David negotiated their relative positions in the group, these four students represented the middle ground of Christian belief in the study.

On opposite sides of the four stood Jada and Brooke, who were miles apart in ideas for much of the study. Jada takes Christian teachings more literally than any of the others, while Brooke is ready to discard the Bible as an "absurd book of absurd fairytales." Interestingly, though, their definitions of self are quite similar. The reasons behind these classifications, of course, are very different. Brooke eschews any notion of herself as religious, but also has difficulty owning a self-definition as spiritual. She states that being spiritual is "implicit," and that "it doesn't even need to be affirmed" because of its very obviousness. However, with the amount of negativity Brooke expresses in the study toward established religious belief systems, the implicitness of her spirituality is likely anything but obvious to her fellow participants.

Jada also tries to distance herself from classification as religious, which she defines as the "fleshly part of [herself]" that struggles to wake up on Sunday mornings for church. Instead, she works toward the "challenging" goal of becoming "completely spiritual" in nature. To Jada, being spiritual is anything but implicit, as it is a state that requires constant "will power." Coming later in the session than Brooke's statement, it is possible that Jada is indirectly responding to Brooke and negating her conversational rival's understanding of the term.

After discussing the current statuses of their religious and spiritual identities, I asked the students to consider how these identities have changed over time, principally since high school. Because of the relative order of these questions, the students were likely to consider what experiences in the past have led them to where they are today.

Therefore, their responses can be viewed as a type of attribution, in which they "assign causal explanations to events, situations, and actions" (Edwards & Potter, 1993, p. 23). These reflections upon their own pasts, as well as my efforts to restory their narratives, help to define a faith trajectory for each student and for their Christian affiliation group as a whole.

The information on the students' perceived change over time is presented below, alongside a preliminarily assignment to a stage along the trajectory of the conceptual framework. This assignment is based on their discussions of growth, plus the faith influence analysis conducted above. In noting the stages where each of the students seem to fall, it important to point out that classification of this type is not concrete and is certainly not meant to box students in. In fact, several of the students in the study seem to cross categories, exhibiting traits from more than one. This demonstrates the essential fluidity of the conceptualization, which is envisioned as a path and not a series of stair-steps, as well as the complexity of identity. Arranged in groups by stage, the results of this analysis are:

- Stages 3/3.5 – David, age 18, is just beginning to move away from a faith wholly determined by outside authority figures. Since coming to college, he has found that he has to trust himself more and make his own decisions. He is ready for this challenge. His faith remains highly personalized. He is open to religious diversity, but remains disconcerted by internal Christian disagreements on truth. He does not recognize Christian privilege in American society, instead seeing Christians as being under attack.

  Jada, age 23, is the closest to being a fundamentalist in this study. She has had a

lifetime of exploring different churches, trying to find one that is sufficiently "operating in Spirit." She has sought out new authority figures to affirm her beliefs externally and does not fully see herself as one. Her faith remains highly personalized. She does not discuss the possibility of Christian privilege, like David feeling that Christians are on the receiving end of bias.

Kristin, age 20, had an awakening in her faith at the end of high school and has spent time in college finding a community to support her deepened interest in religion. She is beginning to determine her own beliefs and to turn away from her "own needs and selfish desires" in favor of a life dedicated to Christian values. She still retains some dogma and certainty that her own ideas are correct. She does not discuss the possibility of Christian privilege.

- Stage 3.5 – Brooke, age 19, has made a firm break with her initial authority group, her family and home church, but has taken on a new one, her friends. Although she has her own ideas, she retains a lot of anger that is preventing her from resolving her identity at this time. Her beliefs still exist very much in opposition to those of others. She is aware of, and dislikes, Christian privilege in this country.

Karen, age 19, is in the process of opening up to the ideas of those around her. She is somewhat susceptible to outside influence in terms of generating new knowledge about religion, but she makes her own choices about this. She is not dogmatic and is willing to learn. She retains a feeling of personal connection to God. She is aware of Christian privilege in the United States but does not think about it very often.

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- Stage 4 – Will, age 26, demonstrates a move from seeking out his own authority figures to making himself his own authority, with individual considerations about his beliefs. He has a strong sense of what key values are, but is open to interpretation on smaller issues. He opposes Christian privilege and is taking steps to dismantle it in America.

Developmental Objectives: Most Frequently Used Codes and Relationship to Religious Affiliation

The final element of the conceptual framework to be discussed in terms of the Christians is the developmental objective, the theme at the core of what someone is expected to accomplish through a fully realized developmental trajectory. Initially, I planned to use the code "future ideal as defined by religion" as a proxy for students' developmental objectives. This code was developed using students' answers to a direct question in the second round focus groups, "Do you feel that your belief system is guiding you toward some form of ideal way for how to live your life?" However, students of all four religious affiliations provided answers that were all over the map and did not coalesce into meaningful units. Therefore, I needed to find evidence of their developmental objectives in less direct sources.

As stated in Chapter 4, an important element of the design of this study was to listen to the participants and consider the topics that are important, contentious, or concerning to them. I made the determination to use that information in this section of analysis, because of the idea that a developmental objective is the message underlying all faith development. If the developmental objective truly is the driving force of religious and spiritual development, it should be clear in people's speech. This process operated at

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the group-level of analysis, wherein I attempted to use the breadth of their speech to make my determination.

In order to determine which topics to discuss, I totaled the number of instances of usage for each code in the study, by religious group, and created lists of their top 50 codes. To begin with, I looked at those codes which were utilized 20 times or more by each one of the groups. This list excluded those codes that were used to mark direct responses to questions. (For example, I used the code "challenges to one's beliefs" to mark all the answers to the eponymous question. Because of the generic nature of such codes, they were excluded for this purpose.)

The developmental objective for Christians, as determined by the literature review, was individualization. The codes, used 20 or more times by the Christian participants, and to be compared to this developmental objective (with frequency numbers) are:

- Jesus Christ (39)

- Critiquing someone's ideas (31)

- Attendance of house of worship (30)

- Acceptance of other religious groups (28)

- Bible (27)

- Questioning or not questioning beliefs (23)

- Religious diversity (20)

In addition to the codes with 20 or more uses, I also looked for codes with heavy usage that were uniquely utilized by one group. While these did have fewer than 20 mentions, they were still in the top 50 in usage by that group. This means that a code that

held some weight in the discourse of one group was completely irrelevant to the other three. This fact in itself reveals the importance of these codes, which for the Christians were:

- Anti-Christianity (15)
- Christianity and Western culture (8)

Finally, a few additional of the top 50 codes used by Christian are "codes of interest" in this study. I am considering these codes of interest those which were specifically related to that group via theological or cultural relevance. For the Christians, this means that in addition to the codes listed above, I am also giving weight to the code heaven/afterlife (11).

In order to truly determine if these codes represented the theme of individualization, I ran an output for all of the quotations of the codes above that were spoken by Christians. Then, I examined each one for positive or negative indication of individualization, or to determine if the codes were completely unrelated to that theme. While a negative relationship could still indicate the theme's importance, no relationship at all might signify either that the code was simply tangential, or that the developmental objective was not accurately specified.

This group of codes appears to speak to a mixed bag of individualization, rather than a strict indication of it. Three codes bear strongly on a positive sense of individuality in the speakers, with high percentages of their quotations indicating this relationship. Seventy-nine percent of the quotations for acceptance of other religions are positive indications of individualization, as are 70% of those for questioning or not questioning beliefs, and 67% of those for religious diversity.

For the quotations within these codes that were positively related to individualization, they were often students describing how they have rejected or liberalized the core beliefs of Christianity. An example of the latter, encompassing the Bible and religious diversity codes, comes from Will:

> "*I came in to college a Christian, and I will be leaving a Christian. However, I was a conservative Evangelical when I came in, and am now a liberal Episcopalian. I do not believe in Biblical literalism, and I do believe in universal salvation. My social positions are also typical of liberal Christians, such as belief in gay rights, including the right to marriage, belief in reproductive choice; I did not hold these positions previously because of my religious convictions. I have also come to realize that there is a diversity of opinion in Christianity; my previous church leaders presented Christianity as having a very narrow range of acceptable opinion.*" – Will, questionnaire

Three different codes bear strongly on negative indicators of individualization. Fifty-six percent of the quotations for Bible, 56% of those for Jesus Christ, and 55% of those for heaven/afterlife were negative indicators, usually meaning that they were high in conformity and blind faith in the beliefs of others. (Some of these quotations were references to past ways of thinking, so the percentages should not be taken as exact counts.) Belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, reading the Bible, and living one's life in order to reach heaven in the afterlife are all mandates and core observances within Christianity. For example, this quotation from Jada's questionnaire that contains three of these codes clearly depicts a conformist belief:

> "*The Bible clearly states many times that there is only one way to heaven and that is through Jesus Christ. Therefore the person who said that it doesn't matter is wrong. There is one exception in the Bible about people who have upstanding morals and who live out the Jewish law and are unaware of Christ. They will be judged by the law, but otherwise, if you have been told about Jesus, you have a choice to choose. And that's it. Just believe into Jesus.*" – Jada, questionnaire

One of the codes on the list, Christianity and Western culture, seems to have no relationship to individualization. Sixty-seven percent of the usages of it are neutral

toward it. Three additional codes, anti-Christianity, attendance of house of worship, and

critiquing someone's ideas, are completely mixed, with their quotations distributed fairly

evenly across positive, negative, and neutral relationships to individualization.

In all, there is a wide variety of relationships of the main codes used by Christians

to the conceptually posited developmental objective of individualization. Looking at the

six codes that did have positive or negative relationship to it, they indicate a compelling

conformist undertone to the theological underpinnings of Christianity. In other words,

without attributing any kind of causation, adhering to Christian teachings and conforming

to one's group go hand in hand. On the flipside, behaviors such as engaging in

questioning and respecting and accepting religious diversity are more related to thinking

for oneself and being an independent-minded individual.

A more accurate way, then, to consider the developmental objective of

individualization may actually be to utilize Fowler's (1981) concept of the diminished

power of religious symbols. According to his theory, young adults enter a

"demythologizing" stage, which "translates symbols into conceptual meanings" (p. 182).

In other words, symbols lose the awe that surrounds them for the young. Although

theologically quite important in Christianity, the Bible, Jesus, and heaven have lost some

of their potency for several of the less literal-minded students in this study.

In addition to relating to the developmental objective, this list of codes also

demonstrates the unique speech habits of the Christians in this study, and how a religious

understanding of the world permeates their talk. The Christian ideas which have

theological bases and prominence were spoken about freely and with the implicit

understanding that listeners would be in basic agreement with them. For example, this

excerpt of speech from Jada shows that she finds the traits of Jesus Christ to be so

obvious to her peers that they do not even require elucidation:

> "*... and you want to delve into the Word, to get more wisdom and to change and to, um, be more Christ-like, which is, you know, all those great, wonderful, you know, traits that everyone wants - caring, and blah blah blah.*" – Jada, Christian focus group

In contrast, the Christian students found themselves having to use much more

explanatory language in the mixed sessions in order to get their points across. For

example, Kristin felt that she had the responsibility for representing all of Christianity for

the students of other religious backgrounds.

The ease with which the Christian students used their own group's language in the

all-Christian setting demonstrates that there were multiple levels of discourse

communities being built during the study, despite the general protestations that the

students were more comfortable in the mixed settings. Although many of them did not

enjoy their experiences of talking with their fellow Christians, they were able to relate to

each other in a much more familiar manner.

Learning from and Feelings about Focus Group Experience

A final element of this analysis is a simple presentation of what the students

themselves stated that they learned and experienced emotionally through their

participation in the study. This will provide information about their frames of mind

(potentially enhancing the understanding of their developmental processes) as well as

knowledge about how involvement in intra- and intergroup dialogues affects students.

Jada found the Christian group "disturbing" and was "a little traumatized" by it,

but thought the mixed group was enjoyable. Kristin was slightly uncomfortable in both

settings, the first because the Christian students were not "all on the same page as far as [their] lives with Christ go" and the second because she felt obligated to "represent all of Christianity." Karen felt content in both settings, which she considered learning opportunities and a means to get "insight into the ideas of [her] peers and other religions/denominations." Will enjoyed both conversations, although he felt slightly challenged in both; in the first with being polite to Evangelical Christians, and in the second with explaining his experiences effectively. David described a many-faceted learning experience, on how one's religious upbringing has influence on people and how those other faiths "have come to interpret the world." Finally, Brooke's experiences in the two groups were quite dissimilar, with the first being "*really, really* frustrating" due to the assertions others were making about the nature of Christianity and the second comfortably "[presupposing] that we're all different." Comparing these statements with their developmental stages, most of them are fairly consistent, with those students with lower tolerance for diversity feeling more stressed out by their experiences.

Discussion of Qualitative Coding

Bringing together all of the findings of the qualitative analysis, a picture emerges of the Christian students in this study. They were consistent with the rest of the students in terms of their most used definitions of the words religious and spiritual. They found religion to be more institutional in nature, perhaps negatively so, with spirituality as separate and more personal. They also used descriptors for God that were consistent with the other religious students, and they coincided with the Muslims in using only positive ways of describing God. The latter may have to do with their religious views being mainstream in this country.

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The Christians in this study exhibit a range of understanding of how their privilege of religion operates in this country, from total lack of awareness to active opposition. This range fairly consistently mirrors the faith stages of the six students, as well as the shedding of conformity and blind following of doctrine that their stories illustrate as having taken place during the course of the young adult years. Their faith trajectories also present Christians as growing to make their own life choices, including greater acceptance of other religions. Positive growth can be catalyzed by constructive interactions in college, a finding which has implications for campus practitioners. Intolerance toward others groups and undirected anger toward one's own seem to hinder such growth. The analysis of the Christian developmental objective supports this presentation of the faith trajectories, showing conformity aligning with literalism of beliefs and independence aligning with constructive criticism of religion.

The qualitative analysis of the Christians' talk also revealed a high usage of theological ideas when speaking to one another. The contrast with the diminished usage of similar ideas when speaking with the other students indicates that they were able to build a community amongst themselves, even though it was burdened with more complex ways of relating to one another. Finally, the feelings left over from their participation and the lessons they learned also paralleled their stages of development.

The Christian students' development does seem consistent with the works of Fowler (1981) and Parks (S. Parks, 1986; S. D. Parks, 2000), modified by my own conceptual refinements. A particularly critical refinement is the inclusion of a scale of awareness of and opposition to Christian privilege, which neatly paralleled the stages of faith development of the students in this study. The positioning of Christianity as

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mainstream and privileged frames their faith development as a contextual and content-based process. This demonstration of Christian privilege among the students also has strong implications for the morality/equity issue that I will be discussing further in Chapters 9 and 10.

Finally, I offer a comparison between the original conceptual framework and faith trajectory for Christians with the findings determined through analysis of the Christian participants in this study. This comparison is presented in Table 10.

Summary

Bringing together the results of the qualitative analysis with those of the discourse analysis, the following can be said about the six Christian students that participated in this study: Their developmental trajectories and definitions of self are fairly consistent with the conceptual framework in use, with an expanded young adult transition phase that sees the students becoming more open to others and understanding of privilege. They embody the mainstream status of Christians in this country, demonstrated either by a lack of awareness of the situation or an understanding that responsibility and privilege go hand in hand. During the course of the study, they enacted their religious and spiritual identities through different forms of discourse moves and talk, depending on their audience. Conversations with each other tended to be complex, employing language of deep value, but containing a high risk of conflict, judgment and hurt feelings. This risk was sometimes averted through self-censorship, but more often approached directly, resulting in antagonism between students. Conversations with religiously diverse peers tended to be simple, forging broad connections across groups, but without much true

Table 10. Comparison of findings to conceptual framework, for Christians			
Stages of faith	Description from conceptual framework (CF)	Summative evidence from cases	Conclusion from comparisons
Stage 3	Stage 3 Christians feel ownership of their religion and are beginning to think rationally about it. They are devoted servants of their churches. They seek out role models and authorities and choose communities that will validate their views. Their beliefs are dogmatic, personalized and relational. They may believe that God has a preferential affinity for Christians.	Stage 3 Christians have a highly personalized and somewhat dogmatic faith. They seek a community that supports their existing understandings of religion. They feel uncomfortable with disagreements within Christianity. They do not recognize Christian privilege in American society, some even feeling that Christians are on the receiving end of bias.	The findings of the study are consistent with the CF. One addition from the study is the Stage 3 Christian's lack of awareness of their position of religious privilege in society.
Stage 3.5	Stage 3.5 Christians are working to become autonomous, choosing new authority figures, rather than accepting those who have always been there.	Stage 3.5 Christians trust themselves more to make their own decisions, although not fully. They still seek communities that will push them in safe ways and are susceptible to peer influence. They lose their dogmatic nature. They open up to religious diversity and understand the existence of Christian privilege. Anger or other negative emotions may prevent movement to the next stage.	The findings of the study expand the CF. Stage 3.5 Christians are moving toward self-authority and choose communities to stretch them, but in safe ways. They are more open to diversity and to understanding their own privilege.
Stage 4	Stage 4 Christians have an internalized commitment to Christian principles and a critical understanding of the religion. They rely more on an internalized faith and the ability to trust oneself than in faith in God. They may retreat from the community of believers. They are more autonomous, feel correct in their beliefs, and do not express much skepticism about those beliefs. Symbols are rationally separated from their meanings.	Stage 4 Christians make themselves authorities, with individualized beliefs and a strong sense of what key values are. They actively oppose Christian privilege.	The findings of the study are consistent with the CF, in terms of the internalization of one's core values. Other aspects of the CF were not supported by the evidence of the study, although there was only one Stage 4 Christian. One addition from the study is the active opposition of Christian privilege.

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extension of self. No criticisms of Christianity that were made during the study caused these students to reevaluate their beliefs.

There is a final key aspect of the Christian college students that can be described through weighing the Christian frame, established through the discourse analysis in this chapter, against the comparison of the conceptual framework to the qualitative analysis findings. The frame actually appears to be fluid and changeable. The common understandings that were listed above, the core ideologies of Christianity and the influence of outside sources as validation, remain foundational throughout this evolution. At the center of this frame, co-constructed through their group interaction, are Christian interpretations of the world and a community of like-minded believers that have an impact on how these interpretations are developed.

The changing nature of the frame, and its existence at the group-level of identity, leads to areas of disagreement between students, listed above as literalism of beliefs, denominational distinctions, and how those distinctions impact the truth of Christianity. These disagreements occur as some students are more confident in their own internalized beliefs, and are therefore more comfortable in taking Christian teachings less literally and in allowing for discrepancies between the Christian movements. Because others do not view their faith identities with the same assuredness, clashes can arise over degrees of orthodoxy in beliefs.

This fluidity in the Christian frame also leads to the kinds of faith specific issues that arose in the students' dialogue, the legitimacy of non-Christian belief systems and a less-than-full sincerity in terms of open-mindedness toward others. The former issue is consonant with the points of disagreement just discussed, as some students can make

allowances in their belief systems for other religions, and others can not. As for the latter, there are several possible interpretations, including a lack of full disclosure in order to protect one's vulnerable outlook, as well as a willingness to stifle one's harsher opinions in order to foster ecumenism.

Such a Christian frame that evolves over time can be described by using another term already in use in this study, the Christian faith trajectory. To offer a revised definition of the term, the faith trajectory is neither the Christian frame, nor simply change in faith over time, but it is *the change over time in the Christian way of framing the world through faith*.

The findings for the Christian students will be brought forward and compared with the other three groups in this study in Chapter 9. In addition, the conclusions drawn from this analysis begin to reference the four areas of implication for the study: (1) the morality/equity issue, by the presence (and lack of awareness) of Christian privilege implicit in many students' lives, (2) the model specification, by the determination that there is a Christian-specific frame influencing their spiritual identities, (3) research in higher education, by the discoveries made through the utilization of discourse analysis and by the application of the new conceptual framework, and (4) practice in higher education, by the new understanding of the college campus as a potential catalyst for positive identity growth and by the challenges faced during interfaith and intra-faith conversations.

Chapter 6:

Analysis – Jewish College Students

"I'm just, like, not a very political person. Um, really the only politics, like, I know nothing about American politics or anything, but the only things that I kind of do know about is Israeli politics and that's what I find to be most important for me to know about. But, so, I guess all of my politics have to do with being Jewish because I really don't know much about, and I'm not interested in knowing that much about American politics." – Judy, Jewish student focus group

"I mean, you see it in talking about World War II. The countries practically disowned Jews until the Nazis came after the country people too, and we had no where to go, we didn't have a country until Israel and I can empathize with all, with these parts of Judaism, this is all the cultural stuff. You don't have to bring any religion into it to feel this connection with Jews. Um, I can still feel that six million of my people *were murdered in the Holocaust. I can make that connection. The connection I can't make is, um, why are we* kosher*? It doesn't make sense to me. I'm not observant, pretty much at all."* – Joanna, mixed focus group #4

This chapter presents the analysis for the data derived from the Jewish student participants. The conducting of both discourse analysis and qualitative coding will lead to results that speak to elements of the four areas of implication presented at the conclusion of Chapter 4. In particular, this data highlights: Jewish students' concern over outsiders' perceptions of Judaism (the morality/equity issue), the determination that there is a Jewish-specific frame influencing their spiritual identities (model specification), the many similarities they demonstrate to the Christian faith trajectory (model specification), the effectiveness of both discourse analysis and the application of a reconstructed conceptual framework (research in higher education), new understandings of the college

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campus as a potential catalyst for positive identity growth (practice in higher education), and the challenges faced during interfaith and intra-faith conversations (practice in higher education). Each one of these implications emerges directly from the data and will be discussed in additional depth in Chapters 9 and 10.

Results: Discourse Analysis

As in Chapter 5, I will now present three segments that illustrate the types of discourse moves used by the Jewish students, as well as those from other religions with whom they spoke.

Segment 1

The Jewish student focus group began with a lot of agreement between the participants as they answered the first question, how they define the word "religious." Sam responded first and the others worked off his response, leading with phrases such as "I think also" (Joanna), "I kind of agree with" (Jesse), "…when you said that I was thinking" (Judy), and "It's interesting to hear you say" (Jasmine). The students seemed to be establishing a working discourse community (Johnstone, 2002, p. 114), a group which forms around similar ways of speaking about a particular topic. However, it only took until the second question for a division to appear between them:

1 | Jenny: Um, can you guys talk about a meaningful religious experience that
2 | you've had in your lives?

3 | Jesse: I'd say going to Israel was pretty powerful for me. Uh, I just felt really
4 | connected to everything 'cause everything is kind of, like, made for you when
5 | you're Jewish, and, like, visiting the Western Wall on *Shabbat* was just, like, an
6 | experience that I was happy for, like, everyone's all festive, and dancing around,
7 | and happy and so nice, and everyone's, like, "*Good Shabbos, good Shabbos!*"
8 | Perfect strangers and I were just all, like, coming together. It's really cool so.

9	Judy: Mine's just like that. Mine was actually *landing*, um, when the plane
10	landed when I went to Israel for the first time. I went with, like, a big mission
11	with my whole synagogue. And everyone on the plane was, like, singing and,
12	like, praying and, like, old women were, like, crying in the corner, and like, it
13	was just very emotional. But, that's what I thought of.
14	[whispers]
15	Sam: Um, I'm gonna use the Israel thing too. But mine was, I spent, like, we
16	spent a week on the trip I went on in the Israeli army and, like, probably the
17	tough, like, the most powerful religious experience I had was seeing on, like, on
18	from Friday night to Saturday night over *Shabbos* even the army stopped um,
19	like, the the the amount of people, the amount of people watching went down,
20	training stopped, it was just, even, even seeing, even the defense force of an, of
21	a, um, country stopped, like, out of respect for religion was a very powerful
22	religious experience for me.
23	Joanna: I don't consider myself religious at all. I consider myself Jewish
24	culturally, so I can't say I've ever really had a religious experience, um, at least
25	not from my perspective, but I also have gone to Israel and, um, something that
26	touched me as a witness was, um, well on Masada, we got there very early, just
27	in time to see the sunrise right over the Israeli flag and, um, and people just kind
28	of stopped in awe and, um, something about that.
29	Jasmine: Um I, at services every week, I definitely feel very - I mean, not every
30	single week, but definitely most weeks, I feel really connected to, um - I don't
31	know, I love the *Amidah*, so every week, I don't know, I feel really connected to
32	that. And in terms of, like, I don't know, well, I also really like studying *Torah*,
33	I don't read Hebrew, I mean I can read it but I can't understand all of it, so I,
34	like, reading it in English, its not quite the same but I really, like, feel really
35	connected in that way. And its interesting that you say that about Israel 'cause I
36	went to Israel and felt *absolutely* no connection, as a Jew, to Israel. I think,
37	being in Jerusalem, I was blown away, just 'cause of, like, there are so many
38	people that have lived there and so many that, like, have *loved* Jerusalem. But
39	Israel itself, I was just like - well I would love to go back but I was, like,
40	"Whatever, why are Jews all so obsessed with Israel?" [laughs]

Norm

In this segment, Jesse, Judy and Sam create a dominant norm by all naming Israel

as the location of their most meaningful religious experience. They use the words "pretty

powerful" (line 3), "very emotional" (line 13), and "very powerful" (line 21),

respectively, to describe the experience of traveling to Israel. Judy and Sam also express

their solidarity with the norm originally established by Jesse by stating "mine's just like that" (line 9) and "I'm gonna use the Israel thing too" (line 15).

Breach; Face Saving

Joanna's declaration of not having a religious identity is the first breach in the norm established by Jesse, Judy and Sam, who all had a powerful religious moment at the tip of their tongues, ready to provide. Her statement that she considers herself to be "Jewish culturally" (lines 23-24) is new information in the discussion. Joanna's presentation of self enables her less-than-powerful agreement with the others to be a bit padded. She is distancing herself from the need to have any kind of meaningful religious experience by placing her self-definition as non-religious first. In addition, stating the face saving phrase, "at least not from my perspective" (line 24-25), also offers permission for the others to come to their own conclusion about her religious experiences. She additionally saves face by succumbing to the norm, offering a trip to Israel as somewhat meaningful. She notes that there was "something about" (line 28) witnessing others' moment of awe, although she does not find words to express what that "something" actually means to her.

Jasmine's turn diverges from the norm much more dramatically, posing the first major breach in this discourse and establishing her footing in the conversation as someone who connects to her Judaism in a very different way from her peers. She begins by establishing her credentials as a Jew, by stating that she attends worship services weekly, referring to a prayer with a Hebrew name (*Amidah*, line 31), and mentioning her love of studying *Torah*. This all functions as a sort of preemptive face saving before she breaches the norm of deep religious connection with Israel. When she finally does

address Israel, she emphasizes her disagreement with the rest of the group, saying she has "*absolutely* no connection" (line 36) to the country. Then, she again tries to soften the blow of this breach by strongly indicating the she "*loved*" Jerusalem (line 38), just not the country as a whole.

That Israel is at the core of several of these students' identities is clear. Later in the focus group, 13 more comments related to Israel were made. Nine were made by Jesse, Sam, Judy and Joanna, and all related to supporting Israel politically. Sam backed his political stance by explaining that three of his cousins were killed in a terrorist attack in Israel. The other four comments were made by Jasmine, and were focused on the issue of Israel separating Jewish activists on campus from other students groups who are otherwise interested in the same political causes. Interestingly, and challengingly for Jasmine, these participants do not fully match up with national survey results on student support for Israel, in which it was found that "43% feel minimally connected to Israel; 23% feel moderately connected; and 34% feel strongly connected" (Sales & Saxe, 2006, p. 2).

Notably, Jasmine's laugh at the end of her final turn is not shared by the others in the session. She attempts to deflect from her breach by making a joke, but the humor is not mutual. Perhaps the others feel that she has positioned them as "obsessed" (line 40) with Israel, which may not play to them as a compliment. However, the lens of Conversation Analysis instructs that one cannot read an interpretation into the silence of the other students. Therefore, quotations from the students in other texts can provide some insight.

"I remember in the Jewish one, all of us basically said Israel and, like, going to the Western Wall and everything, so that was, that one was, like, very similar." – Jesse, interview

"The first group re-affirmed to me that Jews really are similar. I easily understood where everyone was coming from when they answered each question, and our experiences on campus seemed to all be fairly similar." – Judy, questionnaire

"The most challenging part of this experience was the first focus group. I felt like there was more to argue about and more to disagree upon among members of my own faith." – Sam, questionnaire

The questionnaires filled out by Jesse and Judy demonstrate their lack of reflection upon the differences demonstrated in the Jewish group, and neither mention at any point noticing that one member of their conversation does not believe in God and one does not support Israel politically. Although Sam does mention in passing during his mixed group that there had been a Jewish atheist in the first group, he makes no further comment about it.

Joanna reacts strongly to being so different from her Jewish peers, which she seems to have experienced much more so than did Jesse, Judy or Sam:

"In that setting it was four very Jewish students, they really valued their Judaism, they valued God, they valued going to Hillel and being active in Hillel and, and, um, and just this general, um, just this higher level of Judaism. And so even though I was raised Reform, which is the lowest level of Judaism, but still isn't atheism, I felt just so far apart from them, that I might as well have not been raised Jewish. And here, I actually feel more Jewish than I felt, then with those other Jewish students." – Joanna, mixed focus group #4

Jasmine also has a lot to say about the matter. She took me aside immediately after the focus group to confess how difficult it had been for her to admit her feelings about Israel. Additionally, her concern of being marginalized within the Jewish community stayed with her throughout the study:

"I don't need, like, I don't rely on Israel in terms of my, like, spiritual, like, that doesn't relate to how I'm religious. And to be in a room of Jews and to think that doesn't usually go over very well. [laughs] So I think people were being fine, like, I didn't feel threatened or anything, but I just felt, I feel much more comfortable talking about it with non-Jews than with Jews..." – Jasmine, mixed focus group #3

"In a conversation, those are not always things I think I would say to a group of Jews just because I, like, know, I always feel judged or, like, not as Jewish or, like I have to, like, make up for it in some way. You know and like, I think I, like, I'll feel myself, like, talking about, needing to, like, studying the Torah or something because I want to show that I still have a connection which is totally not...when I think about it rationally, it's not important to me, I don't feel like I have to be proven in somebody's eyes that I am Jewish. If I think I'm Jewish, I'm Jewish, you know, like, whatever." – Jasmine, interview

Segment 2

This interaction takes place toward the end of the Jewish focus group.

1 Jenny: The question was: um, how has, um, Jews' place or status in society, um,
2 impacted your Jewish identity or spirituality?
   …

3 Jasmine: Well before when you were asking me how does it relate to me when I
4 was talking about my family, I think I just connected it with what people were
5 just saying because I just, I think part of like - so my family came, I don't know
6 that much about it, but I know they started celebrating Christmas. We still
7 celebrate Christmas, but, like, in this really weird sort of Jewish way, [laughs]
8 because my great-grandparents had done it when they came here, because they
9 stopped celebrating all Jewish holidays. And um, I think, I think, so in some
10 ways I would identify, I'm almost more comfortable identifying as, like, White
11 American than as Jewish, and … Like, I don't celebrate holidays the same way
12 as my family's been celebrating forever because there was, like, this two
13 generation gap where, like, nobody celebrated any holidays and that makes me
14 really upset that, like, somehow, like, American whiteness and assimilation,
15 like, cut out, like, the authenticity of the tradition of my family in celebrating
16 Jewish holidays. So, I think maybe, I don't know if that answers the question,
17 but you're talking about privilege made me think of that.

18 Sam: Out of sheer curiosity, how does one go about celebrating Christmas in a
19 Jewish way? Just curious.

20 Jasmine: [Laughs] We have brisket. We have, like, I don't know…

21	Sam: A *Hanukah* bush and brisket instead of a ham and Christmas tree?
22	Jasmine: We don't have a *Hanukah* bush, we have a tree, but I don't know, all
23	of our ornaments are, like, Jewish things. I don't know, it's not, it's not really a
24	Jewish Christmas. I just think of Christmas as, like, a very American holiday.
25	Judy: My family celebrates Christmas too.
26	Jasmine: Do you?
27	Judy: We have Christmas dinner.
28	Jasmine: Yeah it's a funny thing, to me. I, like, realized in college, I had, like, a
29	lot of Christian friends that we didn't, that it was about Christ - like, I had no
30	idea. Oh this is, like, Christ's, like, birthday or wait, what is Christmas? I think
31	it is…Yeah. Anyway, so, I didn't know that. I just thought, like, all Americans
32	celebrated Christmas.
33	Joanna: The Long Island Jewish traditional Christmas is Chinese food and a
34	movie.
35	Sam: Yeah. That's all that's open, so. My dad has been trying to get my mom
36	to have a tree for as long as I can remember, and they almost had one this year
37	until I threatened to fly home and take care of it. [laughter]
38	Jesse: I could never have a tree in my house. Yeah. Not even a *Hanukah* bush. I
39	feel, like, that's still assimilating to the Christmas tree. That's just my personal
40	view. I'm not against - I don't judge you if you do, it's totally fine. [laughter]
41	Jasmine: 'Cause my parents are like, "You guys are old enough, we don't have
42	to have a tree anymore, right?" And I was like, "If you get rid of the tree, I'm
43	not coming home!" So. [laughter]
44	Sam: I'm with Jesse. I had to, like, almost book a flight for them to be like,
45	"Okay, fine." [laughter]

Hedges; Positioning

This segment presents one of the few times in the focus group that the students

took short, rapid turns, one right after another. As I commented at the time, their tones

even "perked up" quite a bit when they were discussing this seemingly off-topic matter of

the propriety of Jews celebrating Christmas or having Christmas trees in their homes.

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This interaction once again features Jasmine declaring her outsider status by bringing up her family's practice of observing Christmas in "this really weird sort of Jewish way" (line 7). Sam questions her on it, although he hedges twice to make it appear that he is merely "curious" (line 19) and not judging her. Jasmine tries to distance herself from Sam's implied judgment by labeling Christmas as "a very American" (line 24) holiday, as opposed to one that belongs solely to Christians. After a total of five turns between Sam and Jasmine, Judy finally comes to her aid by declaring her own family's observance of Christmas.

Jesse once again falls in line with Sam, while also hedging his comment so as to not seem as though he is "judging" (line 40) Judy and Jasmine by spelling out his "personal view" (lines 39-40). This "personal view" may be meant to be distinguished from some sort of institutional or authoritative view, which would by definition condemn the women for observing a holiday that Jasmine eventually admits is "about Christ" (line 29). Sam reaffirms the solidarity between himself and Jesse, by stating "I'm with Jesse" (line 44). By default, then, the others are *not* with him and Jesse, and arguably opposed to them. The effect of this statement of solidarity is that Sam and Jesse have positioned themselves on one side of an issue, with Jasmine and Judy on the other side. (Joanna remains neutral in the debate, tossing out a line about the Christmas practices of Jews living on Long Island and following it, after this segment, with an anecdote about religious symbols being displayed in public.)

The differences between Jasmine and Sam are emphasized at the conclusion of the interaction, as they each make a comment referring to returning to their parents' homes during the Christmas season. After Jasmine insists that she is "not coming home"

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(line 43) if her parents remove their Christmas tree, Sam declares the exact opposite

sentiment, that he would go as far as to "book a flight" (line 44) to prevent a tree from

going up in his house. He has abandoned the hedging of his speech, no longer covering

his true motivation in the conversation. Sam is able to do this discursively because of the

way he and Jesse have positioned themselves on one side of the issue. Now that their

position has been staked, there is no longer a need to disguise it.

This segment is peppered with laughter, seven separate instances of it. It is also

one of the rare rapid fire interactions that takes place during this focus group, with all five

of the students taking quick turns in succession. Although the laughter and the rapid fire

make the topic being discussed seem rather lighthearted, the stance the two men take

leaves a lasting impression of division. Comments from later in this study provide

evidence of this:

> *"I kind of felt like, more, like, compared to last week, I felt more opposition, like, last week I felt more, um, at the, I don't know if the session was last week, I felt more like, I felt, like, you know I got more annoyed with what other people were saying, I got, like, slightly more annoyed… I think it was a factor of when you put, um, like, when you put people of similar backgrounds together, they look, like, it seems to me they really look for ways to kind of differentiate themselves because if they're all of similar backgrounds…"* – Sam, mixed focus group #1

> *"I think there is such a need, for myself and within Judaism, of, like, Jews wanting to prove themselves as more authentically Jewish or, like, maybe not authentically Jewish but like, um, who's more of a Jew than another person. So I think in a group of other people makes me more comfortable."* – Jasmine, mixed focus group #3

Segment 3

This segment takes place in mixed focus group #2 and also includes Jada, a

Christian student. Kristin, a Christian student, and Meghan, an atheist student, were also

present in the session, though not featured here. The excerpts included here actually

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represent answers to three different questions asked of the students during this mixed

focus group. Tied together, they depict a thread of interaction between Jesse and Jada

that cropped up throughout the session on the topics of proselytizing by the Campus

Crusade for Christ and accepting Jesus as one's savior.

1	Jenny: Ok. Um, on campus have you encountered any situations that have tested
2	your beliefs or religious and or spiritual beliefs or caused you to alter them from
3	before you came to [the University]?
4	Jesse: I can think of one, like, really good. Um, I don't know, beginning of the
5	year, I, like, filled out a survey for Cru, the Campus Crusade for Christ, I didn't
6	even know it was Cru, they just had a bunch of candy bars and said fill out this
7	Bible question survey, so I was like, okay, I'm hungry, I want a candy bar, I'll
8	fill out this survey. And then, like, a couple weeks ago, I guess they still had my
9	name on some kind of list, and I found out that it was for Cru, which I definitely
10	would not be a part of just 'cause I'm a Jew. And they came knocking on my
11	door, and they started, like, talking to me and everything, and, like, asked me to
12	join and asked me like, why I'm Jewish and why I don't accept Christ, and all
13	these things. And I really like, I could have just slammed the door in their face,
14	which I kind of wanted to, but instead I, like, stood there for, like, fifteen-twenty
15	minutes arguing with them, defending my beliefs, kind of, like, finding loopholes
16	they have and more, like, the stronger points of my beliefs and I thought I did a
17	pretty good job of [he laughs], like, I don't know, debating my religion or
18	whatever for fifteen minutes and then, like, afterwards, they had this whole thing
19	saying that they think I'm going to go to hell 'cause I'm a Jew. And I'm like, oh
20	well - like they were trying to save me, and I was like, "Thank you very much
21	when I'm there, I'll think of you guys and know you were trying to save me, but
22	I don't believe in hell so, I don't really care right now, and thank you for your
23	time." And they were like, "Okay, you argued very well," and then they just left.
24	So. It's probably the best situation I can think of.
	…
25	Jenny: Ok, any reactions to offer to each other?
26	Jada: Hmmm. Well, I found it interesting that you debated with the Cru people
27	because I've actually been on the other side of the door with Cru. Of course I've
28	since then like, I'm not a part of Cru anymore, um, just because they tried to *take*
29	*over my life* or something, um, [laughter] but, they were like, "Okay we want,
30	um, Monday through Friday, 24-7, please." And I was, like, "No." Anyway, um,
31	but that was really interesting and I think it's. I think it's actually good, um, that,
32	um, you were honest and said what you thought, because a lot of the times when
33	I was on the other side people were like, "Oh yeah, well okay," but they were
34	just [Jesse: Just BS-ing you] not having it. Right. And so I think that was, that
35	was good. Because I don't know, I think it taught the Cru people something that

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36 they need to go back to the drawing board and, um, yeah, and re-evaluate, you
37 know, their thinking, read the Bible more, something. Um, you know, and also
38 you got a chance to hear what they had to say too.

39 Jesse: Right, I try to keep an open mind and, you know, I took a religion class
40 last semester and learned about, like, a bunch more stuff and I don't know, I just,
41 nothing really challenged my beliefs more than me just reaffirming my beliefs
42 and that's kind of what I saw myself doing. And I figured if I wasn't going to do
43 it, who else would, so.

44 Jada: And you got a free candy bar out of it.

45 Jesse: And I got a free candy bar, which is arguably the most important part of
46 the whole experience. [laughter]
    …

47 Jenny: Ok. Alright, this is the last time I'll ask you guys, do you want to, do you
48 have reactions to offer to each other?

49 Jesse: I kind of thought of something that's going to sound really bad and really
50 controversial [he laughs].

51 Jenny: Go for it.

52 Jesse: This is going to sound really bad, but it's something that came to my
53 mind, something, I don't know, like, a smartass comment, but when you said you
54 wanted to ascribe to be, like, exactly like Jesus, the first thing that came to my
55 mind was, Jesus was Jewish [he laughs, then laughter by group], so like. If that's,
56 like, the goal of, if that's your goal then it's just, like, the, I don't know, I don't
57 know where I was really going with that.

58 Jada: And actually he, I mean, well I actually agree with you because, um, Christ
59 basically lived out the law and um, so yeah, he was the perfect Jew. [Laughter]

60 Jesse: Yeah, so I was just…

61 Jada: But the thing is is that, you know, I'm not a Jew, I'm a gentile, you know,
62 what I mean, I mean I need a solution and that's Christ. So that.

63 Jesse: And I respect that. I was just, that was the first thing that came to mind.
64 [laughter]

65 Jada: Either that or marry a Jew. No, I'm just kidding. um, actually, yeah so
66 there's a new, there's a new solution, so, but yeah you're right.

67 Jesse: Alright.

Positioning

Jesse's narrative describing his experiences with the Campus Crusade for Christ (Cru) marks the opening of this interactive thread. Cru is not a group that he takes too seriously, for he initially accepted an interaction with them in exchange for a candy bar. Although he "definitely would not be a part of" (lines 9-10) their group and nearly "slammed the door in their face" (line 13) when they came to his home, he depicts in triumphant terms how he convincingly argued with them. He recalls pointing out the "loopholes they have" (lines 15-16) in their own beliefs, which compared unfavorably with "the stronger points of [his] beliefs" (line 16), sending his would-be converters away unsuccessful.

In this narrative turn, Jesse creates an image of a certain type of Christian, one he perhaps does not expect to be present in a interreligious focus group where people are calmly sharing stories about their personal experiences. In his story, Jesse has positioned the Cru members as proselytizers who are not interested in open conversation.

Face Saving

Jesse's flippancy about Cru is somewhat risky, given that he has no way of knowing if either of the two Christian women in this session are members of the student group. Indeed when I ask the students for their reactions to each others' answers, he learns how close to the mark he has hit. Jada reveals that she has "actually been on the other side of the door with Cru" (line 27). However, she saves Jesse too much embarrassment at this point by back-pedaling and explaining that she is "not a part of Cru anymore" (line 28). This could be read as an act of saving face for Jesse, since she seems to have some feeling still invested in the success of Cru. She hopes they will learn from

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the experience by "[re-evaluating] … their thinking, [reading] the Bible more" (lines 36-37), and perhaps, by extension, becoming more successful at converting Jews like Jesse. Jada also places value in the message Cru tried to deliver, even if she finds some fault in their methods, since the interaction provided Jesse "a chance to hear what they had to say too" (line 38).

Jesse responds to Jada's face saving move by mirroring it. Although he previously made it clear that the Cru members made little impact on his beliefs, he here allows that he likes to "keep an open mind" (line 39). Then again, this challenge and other experiences with learning about other religions merely serve to "[reaffirm his] beliefs" (line 41). Despite what he says to Jada, he is never going to allow his beliefs to actually change in response to this type of challenge.

Jada seems to accept his attempts to avoid insulting her and lets him off the hook with a further face saving act. Jesse agrees that the candy bar was "arguably the most important part of the whole experience" (lines 45-46) and their accord leads the rest of the group into laughter.

Hedges; Footing

Although the discussion of Cru and the "most important" candy bar leaves Jesse and Jada in relative discourse harmony, Jesse lobs another thinly veiled criticism of Christianity out into the group. In this final element of interaction, he brings up a topic that he readily admits is "really bad and really controversial" (lines 49-50), so much so that he follows that introduction with a nervous laugh. He hedges several times, with "this is going to sound really bad" (line 52), "it's something that came to my mind" (lines 52-53), and "a smartass comment" (line 53), before finally getting to the point that the

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topic is that "Jesus was Jewish" (line 55). He again laughs nervously, which the group rescues him from by joining him in the laughter.

It is hard to know Jesse's motivation in raising this topic, if perhaps it is some sort of delayed response to the conversion attempt made on him by Cru. Whatever it is, he immediately loses any type of footing he has in the interaction with Jada, when she agrees with him and raises his statement a degree. In fact, she turns Jesse's own religious affiliation somewhat against him, by pointing out the Jesus was something that Jesse himself could never be, "the perfect Jew" (line 59). Not only that, but Jada has "a solution" to that imperfection, "and that's Christ" (line 62). By implication, Jesse, who admitted earlier in the focus in the focus group that he is "not a perfect person, [he does] bad things," requires a solution as well.

Jesse's three final turns reveal his footing in the interaction to be much less steady than Jada's. He insists that he has "respect" (line 63) for Jada's answer, despite having raised the idea that Christian beliefs are faulty. In addition, he is forced to concede, "alright" (line 67), that Jada's logic has defeated his own. Unlike with the Cru members, he has not "argued very well" (line 23).

Later in the study, Jesse and Jada both make reference to the interaction or the related experiences:

> "...on the surface the messianic religions are very similar and in general all are trying to reach AAAAAAA spirit, but it is not the right spirit unless it is the Holy Spirit which God has given to us to testify of the things of Christ. That's the only true spirit." – Jada, questionnaire

> "One experience, which I described in the group, was when the members of the Campus Crusade for Christ knocked on my door and I stood my ground for ten minutes debating religious beliefs and ideas a well as proving their views 'wrong.' This helped me affirm my religious beliefs and has had a lasting impact on me." – Jesse, questionnaire

Despite their protestations of being open-minded and their affirmations that the other has a right to his/her beliefs, it is clear that neither one has allowed this other to alter their beliefs in any true way.

Post-Hoc Positioning and Face Saving

The final element of discourse analysis for the Jewish students is to consider their acts of post-hoc positioning, for the reason of continuing to define one another, and post-hoc face saving, for the reason of protecting oneself and others. The Jewish students had three instances of post-hoc positioning and 11 of post-hoc face saving. Jasmine made all three of the positioning moves, working in her later turns to define her fellow Jewish participants as an exclusive, competitive group that hold "a sort-of I'm-more-Jew-than-you attitude." This positioning in turn protected her from the judgment she felt from them; if they were discredited, she potentially would feel their criticism less sharply.

The 11 face saving turns were distributed among four of the Jewish students. Five of these were again employed by Jasmine, primarily expressing how she attempted to soften her minority opinion on Israel so that she would not be judged harshly by her peers. Jesse, Judy and Joanna all described after the fact instances during the study in which they saved face for themselves and others by not expressing potentially offensive opinions.

Discussion of Discourse Analysis

In the first two segments presented, several of the students demonstrate taking relative risks with their status in the conversation (and potentially the larger community of their religion) by revealing beliefs and practices that are outside common Jewish life.

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Jasmine and Joanna make relatively dramatic breaks with the normative behavior and beliefs of the group. Jasmine continues raising the stakes on her break, with Judy coming to her defense and Sam and Jesse standing opposed to her. Finally in the third segment, Jesse takes his own risks by defining certain faults he finds within Christianity. His stance has the opposite intention, to secure the place of Judaism relative to another religion. In the post-hoc moves, Jasmine works to solidify her own position in the group, while Jesse, Judy and Joanna reveal face saving moves that had kept conversations less conflict-ridden.

What do these examples of interaction say about how Jewish students use language to create meaningful representations of their spiritual identities? Although they are not illustrative of all Jewish college students, they do demonstrate a level of internal struggle within the Jewish campus community, as students work to figure out what are acceptable beliefs and what are too far outside the norm to be considered tolerable. They also show a level of concern for the judgments of those outside the faith, and particularly if and how Judaism is perceived and legitimized by Christians. These findings lead to implications for the continued usage of discourse analysis in higher education as well as for better understandings of interfaith and intra-faith conversations that involve Jewish students. In addition, they lead to implications surrounding the moral and equitable treatment of Jewish students on college campuses.

These findings also speak to a "Jewish frame" at work in the students' discourse and co-constructed in their conversations. The Jewish frame, through which they interpret and create meaning, includes the following features:

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- Common understandings – the traditional boundaries of Jewish beliefs and practices, the minority position of Jews in society

- Points of disagreement – acceptability of breaking with normative Jewish behavior, the place of certain beliefs in the core of Jewish ideology

- Faith specific issues that arise in dialogue – negotiation of the places of self and others in the Jewish community, negotiation of the legitimacy of Judaism in a Christian-dominated culture

Another way of thinking about the Jewish frame is to consider it a group-level identity co-constructed by the Jewish students through their interactions with one another during this study. The findings were based on the situation of the particular students in the room as well as the particular timing in their lives in which the study took place. The Jewish frame co-created by them surrounds them all, yet with ample room for individual expression and viewpoints. The findings about the Jewish frame, as well as from the discourse analysis, will be compared with the results of the qualitative coding analysis discussed at the end of this chapter. The frame also has profound implications for accurate specification of faith development models and how a modified conceptual framework can be applied in future research.

In addition to these findings about the Jewish students, the final interaction offers additional insight into Jada, who is more open here about her experience with proselytizing than she was in the Christian student focus group. She has revealed a bit more about her identity, perhaps because it serves the specific purpose of exposing Jesse's faulty beliefs. In addition, she is potentially more secure in this setting, because

most of the others do not have a complex understanding of the various forms of Christianity.

Results: Qualitative Coding

As in Chapter 5, I will now provide the results of the qualitative coding process conducted on the data corpus. The results will address multiple angles on the data, including students' definitions of key terms, the themes and ideas they discussed most frequently, and the codes which relate back to the conceptual framework of this study. After discussing and summarizing these findings, I will compare them with the above findings on the Jewish students' discourse analysis.

Definitions and Aspects of "Religious" and "Spiritual"

Students were asked during both the homogeneous and heterogeneous focus group sessions to provide definitions for the words "religious" and "spiritual." The Jewish students in this study were unique from the other three groups of students, in that they were more internally aligned with the definitions and aspects of "religious" and "spiritual" they offered. Their ranges of responses to the questions on these topics were narrower.

For "religious," the students provided nine distinctly coded responses. The first and third most used by them were not definitional: "religion and culture" (20) and "religious diversity" (10). The second most used, and by far the most frequent definition of the term across the study, was "religion as ritual or observance level" (16). All three of the codes were among the six which received 20 or more total mentions by the students in the study.

For "spiritual," the Jewish students utilized 10 separately coded definitions. As with the Christian and Muslim students, the most frequent was "spirituality as connection to something greater" (12). The other code ranking highly on their list was "spirituality as discrete from religion" (7). One additional code was utilized a moderate amount, "religious and spiritual as the same/linked" (5); this code is particularly interesting due to its complete exclusivity from the idea of spirituality and religion being discrete phenomena. The prominence of this pair of codes demonstrate an internal differences in thought within this group, with Sam falling squarely on the side of them being the same.

God Images and Associations

In terms of God images and associations, the Jewish students were very different from the Christian participants in this study. They utilized 14 distinct definitions for God. The most frequently used was "God – source of tests – 'God's will'" (7), which was a code that encapsulated the idea that God creates challenges and barriers for humans to overcome, the reasons for some of which are beyond our ability to comprehend. Just shy of the same level of usage was "God – all powerful and/or all knowing" (6). "God – personal relationship and qualities," which was the most frequently used by Christians, also received six mentions by the Jewish students; however, two of these mentions were in the negative form. Finally, the Jews made several comments pertaining to another highly ranked code among Christians, "God – depending upon." This code was also the most highly used among Muslims; again, however, three of the four mentions of this idea by Jews were made in order to negate it. These last two codes were among the three highest God images and association in the study, other than the statements of disbelief and doubt made by the atheists and agnostics.

In addition, there were 12 statements of disbelief or doubt in God's existence. While eight of these were made by Joanna, the self-designated Jewish atheist in the study, four were not. These were made by Jasmine, who described in her interview a period of time during middle and high school when she did not believe in God. During this time, she did not abandon her religious community, and she currently maintains ties with her home synagogue, even as her beliefs have returned in a more complex form. As Joanna explained in the mixed group, Judaism is a multifaceted faith that incorporates religion and ethnicity; doubt and disbelief are therefore do not result in immediate exclusion from the community.

Faith Influences, Faith Trajectories and Developmental Objectives

Returning to the conceptual frameworks for this study (both Figures 1 and 2 in Chapter 3), there were three elements of faith development that were distinguished for each of the religious affiliations. Each of these will be addressed for the Jewish students, with codes developed in the qualitative analysis phase of the study used as evidence.

Faith Influences: Challenges to Religion and Relationship between Religion and Society

To examine the faith influences at work in the lives of the Jewish students, I again considered their answers to the question in the second round focus groups, "On campus, have you encountered any situations which have tested your spiritual and/or religious beliefs or caused you to alter them from what they were in high school?" In addition, I had asked the Jewish students, "How do you find the environment at the [University]?" in their first round focus group. I used their responses to these questions to indicate the faith influences of markers of religious identity, young adult transition, or resolution of

identity. As with the Christian students, I also examined the students' understandings of the relationships between religion and societal standing, and included that information at the end of each of their paragraphs.

- Although Sam insists that his beliefs have not changed during college, he lists three situations that have challenged his faith. These are: examinations that are scheduled on *Shabbat*, the global political situation, and encounters with Christian missionaries on campus. Sam's concerns all tie in on some level with the rights and legitimacy of Jews and Judaism, or the faith influence of markers of religious identity. In regards to his opinions on privilege, Sam is more connected to stereotypes faced by Jews around the world than locally and feels the need to "prove them wrong." This is likely because he lost three cousins to a terrorist act in Israel.

- Like Sam, Judy expresses that very little has changed within her identity since entering college. Her biggest challenge has been answering questions people have about her beliefs, but she does not find that strenuous in any way. Likely, this is because of her explanation that, on campus, "every out of state Jew will find each other, and mush together," and because she has joined a sorority that is nearly 100% Jewish in membership. Judy has not sought to individualize her religious identity in any way. She too is influenced in faith by the markers of religious identity. She deems herself affected by stereotypes of wealthy suburban Jews, although does not specifically address what that has done to her life.

- Joanna has been challenged on campus by having to face and interact with people of varied religious identities, including her Christian roommate, a Cru member

who places "all these little Christian things all around the house" and has made Joanna realize that her tolerance for religious beliefs is not as strong as she had once thought. She does not identify with the Jewish community on campus, and finds it preferable to shut out conversations about religion rather than engage in them productively. Joanna seems to be influenced by both markers of religious identity, wherein she desires to separate herself from those with other beliefs, and the young adult transition, wherein she is comfortable with an authority role in her own life. Joanna believes herself to have been strongly aversely affected by stereotypes of Jews, because of how "shocked" people were that her Jewish parents divorced. She also accepts the stereotype of Long Island Jewish girls as truth, saying that "*most* of the Jewish girls I knew at home fit the stereotype."

- Jesse's main challenge, discussed above, was his encounter with Cru. Despite this negative, he finds the religious diversity of the campus to be a positive inspiration, where students are told, "Make up your own decision based on what these books say." Jesse is experiencing the young adult transition, in which he comes to embrace his own internal authority. Jesse feels proud of the status of Jews in America, that they are stereotyped as being successful and well-adjusted.

- Jasmine's main challenge has also been discussed above. This is her realization that she is a rare Jew that does not support Israel politically. Jasmine feels that the politics of Israel prevent other student groups from including Jews in their campus coalitions. Instead of feeling at home in an environment with so many other people of her religion around, she thinks, "Oh my God, there's so many Jews, what am I going to do?" Jasmine's concern evokes the young adult

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transition. Jasmine has trouble articulating an ideal Jewish social status. She considers herself to be more "White American" than Jewish and feels that Jews are highly assimilated in United States culture.

The Jewish students' talk about how social status is related to the perceptions other people have of Jews is interwoven with their identities and their development. The idea of stereotypes is high in their consciousness, despite the fact that such stereotypes tend to depict Jews as wealthy and positively assimilated into American culture. The Jewish students perceive themselves to be marginalized; however any details about the realities of this status are hard to locate in this study.

Some of the students are content to blend in with their minority crowd, particularly Jesse and Judy in their Jewish Greek houses. Sam and Joanna dislike their perceived status and both harbor some anger about what they feel are the effects of it. Jasmine experiences her status within the Jewish community as more questionable than Jews' status in America, which she feels has been eased by assimilation. None of the students present a compelling understanding, let alone an empowered embracing, of Jews' social status in the United States.

Faith Trajectories: Definitions of Self as Religious and/or Spiritual and Change in Religion and Spirituality over Time

The next element of the conceptual framework to be analyzed is the Jewish students' faith trajectories, or their development over time. In order to examine this growth, I also considered their current definitions of self. At this time, the Jewish students have the following self-definitions of being religious and/or spiritual. Judy explains that there are both spiritual and religious aspects to her Jewish activities.

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Jasmine defines herself as religious through Judaism, but finds her spirituality to be more universal in nature, a feeling of connection that is "something meaningful but not Jewish." Sam considers the terms religious and spiritual to be one and the same, with himself identifying as both. Jesse comes down somewhere in between Sam and Jasmine, having trouble differentiating between his religious and spiritual identities, but also finally defining his religion as being through Judaism and his spirituality "more common."

Joanna, obviously an outlier in this group, is the most clear about her identity. She does not consider herself to be religious or spiritual, instead labeling herself as "Jewish culturally." In that classification, she is even dissimilar to many of the atheist participants, who consider themselves to be spiritual.

As for the paths the Jewish students have taken in their religion and spirituality since high school, I have again included information from their narratives in a preliminary stage assignment. These assignments also reflect upon the faith influences in their lives discussed above.

- Stage 3 – Sam, age 18, has made very few changes in his beliefs since coming to college and has worked to prevent change from taking place. His participation in the focus groups, however, has introduced him to some new ideas that have caused some reconsideration. This may lead to a young adult transition. Sam's position on privilege is that Jews are victimized abroad, but he has little to say about how this may operate in the United States.

  Judy, age 18, came to college with the realization that she had to better embrace her religious identity, so that others would recognize it. She has chosen a Jewish

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peer group to support her growth. Her motivation is a mix of internal and external. She does not consider herself an authority figure. She feels a vague negative impact of Jewish social status.

- Stages 3/3.5 – Joanna, age 20, grew up in an environment where religion was not discussed much, and is facing new confrontations over religion. Although she resists any modifications in her own ideas, she is often reactionary to the practices of others. She feels a certain amount of anger toward the religious and is caught between her two forms of identity. Joanna feels herself to be negatively influenced by Jewish social status, receiving no apparent potential benefits.

- Stage 3.5 – Jesse, age 18, has been driven to rethink his identity since his participation in the study began. He has done personal exploration of Judaism to determine what he believes. Although he is not fully settled on all his values and expresses some doubt, he is confident in himself as an authority, to the point of rejecting the legitimacy of Jewish leaders. Jesse does not put forth any negatives having to do with Jewish social status, but sees some empowerment within it.

- Stages 3.5/4 – Jasmine, age 21, is dealing with the experience of having minority beliefs within her own religious group. While she is confident in her beliefs and has thought them through, she is still influenced by the judgments of those around her and has not been able to take those beliefs into the public realm. Jasmine believes it is a mixed blessing that Jews have been easily able to assimilate into American culture.

Developmental Objectives: Most Frequently Used Codes and Relationship to Religious Affiliation

The final element of the conceptual framework to be discussed in terms of the Jews is the developmental objective, the theme at the core of what someone is expected to accomplish through a fully realized developmental trajectory. Again, the "future ideal as defined by religion" code has been scrapped as a proxy for this. However, it is interesting to note that two codes related to the future ideal conversation received three mentions each by the Jewish students, these being "marrying within one's religion" and "raising children within one's religion." Perhaps the cultural imperative of producing future generations of Jews resonates with them.

As I did in Chapter 5, I considered the topics that are important, contentious, or concerning to the Jewish students. This process operated at the group-level of analysis, wherein I attempted to use the breadth of their speech to make my determination. To do this, I turned to the method of analysis replacing "future ideal as defined by religion," the determination of the codes that were used 20 times or more by the Jewish students. These were:

- Hebrew word or phrase (41)

- Israel (34)

- Student religious group (28)

- Acceptance of other religious groups (21)

- Family member's religious practice (20)

- Religion and culture (20)

In addition to the codes with 20 or more uses, I looked for codes with heavy employment that were unique to the Jews. While these did have fewer than 20 mentions, they were still in the top 50 in usage by that group. For the Jews, the codes were:

- *Rosh HaShanah* and/or *Yom Kippur* (13)

- *Shabbat* (9)

Finally, there were two "codes of interest" which related to Judaism via theological or cultural relevance. They were:

- Dietary restrictions (12)

- *Torah* (11)

The developmental objective for Jews, as determined by the literature review, was communal obligation. As done with the Christian students and the developmental objective of individualization, I looked at the quotations for the Jewish students' most important codes and compared them to the theme of communal obligation. I considered a negative relationship between a quotation and theme to be present when the quotation indicated an obligation to a specific something else, such as oneself, American society as a whole, etc. A lack of specified motivation, or no relationship at all, was considered neutral.

The results of this process were much less confirmatory than they were for the Christians. In fact, there was very little relationship between any of the codes and the posited developmental objective of communal obligation. Only 19 of the 182 total quotations were considered to exhibit a relationship, for example, in the positive direction:

> "*Um, I agree with everything Jesse just said, and, um, about the fact that that's as far as political view points are concerned, my Judaism makes me very, very*

Zionistic, and everything I can to support Israel, that I feel like its an obligation almost even like, almost even I feel, like, it's almost a religious obligation, um, to be supportive of Israel and to be supportive of the Jewish homeland." – Sam, Jewish student focus group

The code *Shabbat* had the only significant percentage of quotations having a relationship to communal obligation, with 33% being negative. Still, that compared to 56% being unrelated. Several of the codes were 95-100% neutral: acceptance of other religions, Hebrew word or phrase, and family member's religious practice. The one code in the study that spoke directly to communal obligation, at least in the definitional sense, was religious duty/obligation. However, this code was only used twice by Jewish students, and so clearly is not of great import to them.

One area of overlap between the conceptual framework and these results that should be pointed out is that the specific Jewish concepts predominantly discussed by them are all practice-based, as opposed to belief-based. Supporting Israel (or not), observing the High Holidays and *Shabbat*, keeping *kosher*, and reading the *Torah* are all actions. These are all items Jews are responsible for doing, and their internal beliefs about them are theologically secondary. Students may value these behaviors due to a sense of obligation without actually stating that connection explicitly. In terms of mandates upon belief, such as in monotheism or human's obligation to partner with God, none actually show up in the list of most important codes. This, at least, is consonant with Jewish ideology.

However, what is there to make of this near-complete lack of consonance between the theoretically and theologically defined developmental objective of communal obligation and the ideas which make up the main body of the Jewish students' talk in this study? Several explanations are possible: 1) that the objective has been incorrectly

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identified through the literature review, 2) that the concept of developmental objective itself is faulty, or 3) that because the students are in the midst of their own growth, they are unable to articulate an end point that they cannot fully envision themselves. Each of these alternatives will be discussed further in later chapters. In particular, the first explanation may be valid for the Jewish students, as a potential motivator for them may be association or involvement in the Jewish community, rather than obligation toward it.

Because of this lack of tangible evidence for communal obligation as the Jewish developmental objective, I also examined the quotations of the most important codes to individualization, the posited mainstream developmental objective. Three of the codes had a high level of neutral quotations, family member's religious practice, Hebrew word or phrase, and *Rosh HaShanah* and/or *Yom Kippur*. All of the other codes were more evenly distributed across positive, negative and neutral relationships, though each with a plurality of quotations aligned neutrally. The highest non-neutral percentages were religion and culture, 40% negative, acceptance of other religions, 29% negative, and Israel, 29% positive.

This evidence does not point conclusively to the Jewish developmental objective being individualization. It is certainly less confirmatory than the analysis was for the Christians, and is only marginally more so than the analysis was for the communal obligation objective.

In addition to being used as evidence about Jews' developmental objective, these results also further illuminate their discourse patterns. Much like the Christian students, the Jewish students talked easily about their beliefs and practices when they were in their homogeneous focus group session. For example, the vast majority of their uses of

Hebrew took place in that session or in the one-on-one interviews with me (who, again, they know is Jewish). The same was true for four of the other codes on the list with 20 or more usages (the exception being Israel). The frequency of all of these codes dropped dramatically in the mixed sessions; for example, Hebrew was used 28 times in the Jewish student focus group and only seven times total in the five mixed groups. Again, like the Christian students, this evidences some form of discourse community being formed in the session, despite some of the students' later declarations that they felt uncomfortable there.

The topic of Israel is a bit different, because as demonstrated by Jasmine's experience, it is a contested topic even within religious groups. In fact, in this study the contention between the Jews was the only one that existed. Although Israel also came up in four of the mixed focus groups, it sparked no political discussions between Jews and Muslims, as it easily might have done in other circumstances.

Learning from and Feelings about Focus Group Experience

The final information to share about the Jewish students is what they stated they learned or experienced emotionally during their participation in the study. This will provide information about their frames of mind as well as knowledge about how involvement in intra- and intergroup dialogues affects students.

Sam found the first focus group challenging, due to there being "more to argue about and more to disagree upon" than within the mixed group, where he was pleased to discover "similarities" on how people approached spirituality. Jasmine had much to say about the high level of discomfort she felt in the Jewish student group, whereas she found herself to be "much more accepted as whatever [she] wanted to be" in the mixed group. Joanna felt herself on the outside of the others in the Jewish group, where "their ideals

were mostly the same and [she] *wasn't*." In the second group, she felt "more Jewish" and able to "represent both sides" of her Jewish atheist identity. Judy found both experiences enjoyable, in the first talking on a "deeper" level and in the second connecting "more broadly." Jesse also enjoyed both groups, although was more comfortable in the first, where everyone is "kind of the same as you." Jesse also described a process of religious exploration that he feels the study has inspired him to take. Unlike with the Christian participants, these reflections do not neatly parallel the developmental stages of the students. Instead, they seem more related to their personalities and those of the students with whom they interacted.

Discussion of Qualitative Coding

Bringing together all of the findings of the qualitative analysis, a composite picture of the Jewish students emerges. They were similar to the other students in more frequently describing religion in terms of its related aspects and defining it as ritualistic. Like the other religious students, they consider spirituality to be a connection to something greater, although they differed within their group as to whether or not spirituality and religion are discrete. The Jewish students were distinct from all of the others in terms of their descriptions of God. Unlike the Christians and Muslims, they provided many statements of what God is not. Generally, they conceive of God as an all powerful and/or all knowing entity that devises tests for humans to overcome.

As with all students in the study, the Jews exhibit a range of awareness of religious privilege in this country. They perceive themselves to be marginalized, but fail to carry this reading of social status through into their actions. Unlike with the Christian students, then, social status understanding does not neatly parallel the Jewish students'

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faith trajectories. However, these trajectories can be characterized as a growth over time in personal interpretations of Judaism matched with a separation from wholly Jewish peer groups and the unquestioned influence of parents. While this reading does seem consistent with the developmental objective of individualization, analysis of that concept yielded little evidence of either individualization or communal obligation being the overriding goal of Jewish faith development. The similarities with the Christian faith trajectory have implications for future model specification, and the understanding that positive growth can be catalyzed by constructive interactions in college has implications for campus practitioners.

The Jewish students fit the general study pattern of speaking in more familiar language when with other Jewish students, despite not necessarily being as comfortable in that setting. They were split over finding their mixed focus groups a more pleasant experience, and differed from the Christians in that these emotions did not necessarily match their developmental stages.

Finally, I offer a comparison between the original conceptual framework and faith trajectory for Jews with the findings determined through analysis of the Jewish participants in this study. This comparison is presented in Table 11.

<center>Summary</center>

Bringing together the results of the qualitative analysis with those of the discourse analysis, the following can be said about the five Jewish students that participated in this study: Their lives have followed a developmental trajectory that is consistent with the Christian students, in terms of differentiating oneself from external authority figures

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Table 11. Comparison of findings to conceptual framework, for Jews			
Stages of faith	Description from conceptual framework (CF)	Summative evidence from cases	Conclusion from comparisons
Stage 3	Stage 3 Jews have entered a stage of obligation to the community. They remain unlikely to fully act upon their beliefs. They are heavily influenced by parents and friends, find much power in symbols and in the worship community, especially when it is filled with role models. They do not believe in a personal relationship with God.	Stage 3 Jews retain beliefs uncritically. They choose communities that will support their existing views. They do not consider themselves to be authority figures. They feel a vague sense of marginalization with no detailed understanding of how this is operationalized.	The findings of the study are not fully consistent with the CF. The findings show Stage 3 Jews existing within communities that support their beliefs, but do not demonstrate a sense of communal obligation. An addition to the CF is their awareness of marginalization.
Stage 3.5	Stage 3.5 Jews hold less literal beliefs as they move toward commitment to their own interpretations.	Stage 3.5 Jews are more aware of conflicting views on religion. They engage in a personal exploration of Judaism and are settling on individualized beliefs. They begin to see themselves as authorities. They may be reactionary to the practices of others or influenced by judgments made about them. They are acutely aware of their social status, but without taking action around it. Anger or other negative emotions may prevent movement to the next stage.	The findings of the study expand the CF. Stage 3.5 Jews are developing their own interpretations, which coincides with being more reactionary toward others. An addition to the CF is an understanding of marginalization, although without corresponding action.
Stage 4	Stage 4 Jews become more focused on the community, as private forms of worship decline and commitment to service increases. They work to personalize their own beliefs and find meaning for oneself.	Stage 4 Jews accept that there may be differences within the Jewish community. They are confident in their beliefs, which they have carefully thought through. They are acutely aware of their social status, but without taking action around it.	The findings of the study confirm the internalization of beliefs presented in the CF. However, there is no evidence of a heightened communal obligation. An addition to the CF is an understanding of marginalization, although without corresponding action.

and becoming more individualized in one's beliefs. While their talk, especially amongst each other, is heavily laden with references to Jewish obligations and ritual practice, the objective of their development does not contain a specific characteristic that distinguishes them from their peers. They do keenly feel themselves to be separate from the mainstream religiously, although ironically, this distance seems to enable them to speak more freely when among non-Jews. It is their Jewish conversation partners that carry the potential of calling them out for straying too far from the condoned path or making them feel as if they do not belong in their own community. As outsiders to Judaism, their religiously diverse peers have less influence on how the Jewish students understand their own identities.

There is a final key point about the Jewish college students that can be made through weighing the Jewish frame, established through the discourse analysis in this chapter, against the comparison of the conceptual framework to the qualitative analysis findings. Similar to the Christian frame, the Jewish frame also seems to be fluid, evolving as a person moves along a Jewish faith trajectory. There are common understandings shared between all the Jews, listed above as the traditional boundaries of Jewish beliefs and practices and the minority position of Jews in society. The latter coincides with the strand of marginalization awareness running through the conceptual framework.

Aside from these common understandings, however, contentions arise as dialogue occurs between people at different stages. The points of disagreement that were raised through the discourse analysis were the acceptability of breaking with normative Jewish behavior and the place of certain beliefs in the core of Jewish ideology. These are tightly

linked, as one who is more tolerant of breaks in normative behavior will also be more accepting of breaks in normative beliefs. Disagreements about these breaches make sense in terms of the Jewish faith stages. Those at Stage 3 who retain their beliefs uncritically, or at Stage 3.5 who are reactionary toward others, may not feel comfortable with someone who has internalized a faith identity that is individualized and therefore not wholly consistent with literal, dogmatic religious teachings.

Other faith issues will arise in dialogues between Jewish young adults at different points in their development. Concern for the places of oneself and others within the Jewish community may be important to those who are moving from considering one's authority figures to be one's parents and high school peers to them being oneself and one's college peers. Such students are negotiating their positions relationally, and relational work is potentially conflict-ridden. Similar can be said for those concerned with establishing the place of Judaism in a Christian-dominant society, especially at a time when a Jewish student is learning that one can be an authority figure who stands up for the rights of one's group.

As with the Christian frame, a Jewish frame that evolves over time can be described as a Jewish faith trajectory. The faith trajectory is neither the Jewish frame in itself, nor simply change in faith over time, but it is *the change over time in the Jewish way of framing the world through faith*.

The findings for the Jewish students will be brought forward and compared with the other three groups in this study in Chapter 9. In addition, the conclusions drawn from this analysis continue to reference the four areas of implication for the study: (1) the morality/equity issue, by the students' concern over outsiders' perceptions of Judaism,

(2) the model specification, by the determination that there is a Jewish-specific frame influencing their spiritual identities as well as by the many similarities to the Christian faith trajectory, (3) research in higher education, by the discoveries made through the utilization of discourse analysis and by the application of the new conceptual framework, and (4) practice in higher education, by the new understanding of the college campus as a potential catalyst for positive identity growth and by the challenges faced during interfaith and intra-faith conversations.

Chapter 7:

Analysis – Muslim College Students

"Like Sabur was saying basically, like, we haven't been acting right, like, our community hasn't, and I guess maybe in selfish ways for example so, uh, I don't know, it makes me feel like we have to, like, change ourselves first, we have to, like, start acting right, start having, like, love for each other and thinking about each other, like, one, basically, one saying that I feel, like, is missing is saying that the Prophet Mohammed is, like, 'One does not believe until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.' Which means like, one is not, like, truly Muslim until he is unselfish basically and that's missing a lot as we can see, like, in the Arab world." – Yusuf, Muslim student focus group

"Right, so the questions are like, why would it benefit me to believe in God? What is God to me if I can't touch God? Like, I love science, and that's probably what I'm going to major in. So a huge thing in science is, like, concrete belief, but like, how, and I don't believe there's, like, really concrete proof of God, other than if you believe that God created the earth and that would be a concrete proof. But that still takes a leap and bounds for beliefs, like, that's still blind faith, and um, like, I've always questioned, like, why have blind faith? And um, like, I find it, I find it easier and more relaxing to believe in something greater than you, and not believe that you are the greatest thing, because I follow the belief that there's always something better than you out there." – Sabur, interview

This chapter presents the analysis for the data derived from the Muslim student participants. The conducting of both discourse analysis and qualitative coding will lead to results that speak to elements of the four areas of implication presented at the conclusion of Chapter 4. In particular, this data highlights: the students' understanding of Muslims as a marginalized religious population (morality/equity issue), the determination that there is a Muslim-specific frame influencing their spiritual identities (model specification), the effectiveness of both discourse analysis and the application of a

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reconstructed conceptual framework (research in higher education), new insights into a heretofore understudied student population (research in higher education), new understandings of the college campus as a potential catalyst for positive identity growth (practice in higher education), and the challenges faced during interfaith and intra-faith conversations (practice in higher education). Each one of these implications emerges directly from the data and will be discussed in additional depth in Chapters 9 and 10.

Results: Discourse Analysis

As in the previous chapters, I will now present three segments that illustrate the types of discourse moves used by the Muslim students, as well as those from other religions with whom they spoke.

Segment 1

It was more difficult to select of a segment to analyze from the Muslim student focus group than from any of the other eight focus group sessions. After reading through the transcript and reviewing the coding several times, I realized that this was due to the extreme delicacy utilized by the students who disagreed with the normative behavior that was occurring. A quotation from Shashi reflecting back upon this delicate performance later on in the study helps elucidate the situation:

> *"I myself didn't really want to voice my frustration because I guess I, I don't know, these are the people you see occasionally at MSA events, so I don't want them talking about me, like 'There's the girl who hates MSA but she's still here.' Um, and also, like, one of the people that was here [Inaara], like, she's the sister of the president, so." – Shashi, mixed focus group #3*

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On a campus where there are fewer than 300 Muslims, Shashi is wary of becoming ostracized by her religious community. Based on this understanding, the following segment was selected.

1 Jenny: Do you guys consider, currently consider yourselves to be religious or
2 spiritual or both or neither?

3 Sabur: Alright. I got you. [laughter] Um, I don't think of myself as a very
4 religious person or a very, ok - this is going to sound - alright, I don't have a
5 definition for spiritual, so I'm going to leave the spiritual out of this, just
6 because I have a lack of definition for it. For religious in my mind, I don't find
7 myself a religious person in Islam. I don't, I don't pray nearly enough, and I'm
8 not - I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't do those things. I don't eat pork. But
9 that doesn't make me a religious person. I find that to be religious, I need to go
10 through the daily grind as being a Muslim. I don't do that nearly enough to be
11 considered a religious person. But I find myself to be a good person. I don't find
12 myself to want to harm anybody, but I live by the tenants of my religion
13 however I don't really, I don't find myself practicing the religion nearly as much
14 as I should. That's how I look at it.
15 …

16 Inaara: Um, I guess I would *not* define myself as religious or spiritual, but
17 rather, just God conscious. Um, just, like, this constant remembrance of God
18 and that you know, like, sometimes we let that go when we get caught up in so
19 many other things, but, like, at the end of the day, you come back to that. Or,
20 like, during the five daily prayers. I remember, "Oh wait a minute, hold on,
21 rewind, you know, um, let's just get back to me and God and that whole
22 relationship real quick." And I guess religious, um, when I think of religious I
23 think of the example of the prophet Mohammed, and you know kind of
24 epitomizing the *Koran*. And I obviously don't even come close to epitomizing
25 that at all. And it's, like, this constant struggle, so I wouldn't necessarily say
26 that I'm religious, but at least that I attempt to try to always be in remembrance
27 of God and that, um, I have all these inner struggles and everything in
28 overcoming that is you know going to take a long while. But, um, religious, I
29 don't - I wouldn't really use that label, I don't, I wouldn't like to use that label.
30 It's kind of, like, a dangerous term to just shove onto someone.

31 Yusuf: Well, I guess I've kind of felt what Inaara was saying about it being
32 relative, like, comparing yourself to the Prophet, who was, like, obviously the
33 epitome of religious, or, like, perfect man. But, like, I guess I compare myself
34 to, like, friends I know or people from community who are, like, or who I define
35 as religious, and, like, the stuff they do compared to the stuff I do, which, like, I
36 don't. So I guess, but then you compare yourself the people that aren't, the
37 people who might not pray or, like, fast or, like, have God consciousness, so I

38	mean, it's really hard to define, like, yourself as religious. Or, I mean, I don't
39	know, it's very, it might even be arrogant in a sense, to say "Yeah I'm
40	religious." Oh, 'cause religions or religious, I guess, depending on who you ask
41	would have, like, a positive connotation. So, I don't know, you'd be, like,
42	attributing to yourself a quality which by doing might be, like, considered
43	arrogant and therefore you wouldn't be religious. Know what I mean? I don't
44	know if that makes any sense but, yeah, so. [Laughter]
45	Suha: Yes, that does.
46	Shashi: I like the way that Inaara actually put it, being God conscious. Um, I
47	myself am not, um, religious in the sense that I also go through what Sabur had
48	mentioned. You know like, I don't pray five times a day. I try to, like, I do
49	pretty much everything else. I fast during *Ramadan*, I try to pray at least once a
50	day. Um, but I don't go to the Friday prayer, that kind of thing. Um, but at the
51	same time, I keep God in my mind throughout the day, to some extent for selfish
52	reasons when I am in a tough spot. Um, I remember God, I pray, um, you know,
53	"Help me through this." Um, it's probably not the best thing because you
54	probably should remember Him regardless, but um, yeah so dare I say I'm
55	selectively spiritual? I don't like that term though because of what it, the
56	connotation it has.

Identity and Presentation of Self; Norm

In this segment, the students are performing what they perceive to be the complicated task of defining their religious and spiritual identities for their interviewers and for each other. In the first place, several of them push back against the very terms "religious" and "spiritual," which we had just worked on defining through previous questions: "I don't have a definition for spiritual, so I'm going to leave the spiritual out of this" (Sabur, lines 4-5), "It's kind of, like, a dangerous term to just shove onto someone" (Inaara, line 30), "it might even be arrogant in a sense" (Yusuf, line 39), and "I don't like that term though because of what it, the connotation it has" (Shashi, lines 55-56). After these succeeding dismissals of the main terms in use during the study, it seems quite difficult for any of the Muslim students to use them with implicit confidence.

However, each student is then able to take his/her replacement term for religious

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or spiritual and provide a definition of self based upon this. Sabur does not "find [himself] a religious person in Islam" (lines 6-7) because, while he does observe some of the necessary behavior restrictions, he does not adequately perform the "daily grind as being a Muslim" (line 10). Sabur does not specify exactly what identity he is utilizing while performing that daily grind, but if that identity is not as a Muslim, one possibility is that he considers his daily life to be secular in nature.

Inaara, quite opposed to utilizing the "dangerous term" (line 30) to describe herself, instead selects "God conscious" (line 17) as being more appropriate. She is much more comfortable owning her description, as she tries "to always be in remembrance of God" (lines 26-27). This is clearly a statement of a religious identity, even if the label has been modified. Inaara also declares that she models her religious life after the Prophet Mohammed, which sets a high bar for the students who speak after her turn.

Yusuf tags on to Inaara's turn by supporting her idea of comparing oneself to Mohammed; however, he lowers the stakes by comparing himself to members of his community, the religious and "the stuff they do compared to the stuff [he does]" (line 35) as well as "the people who might not pray or, like, fast or, like, have God consciousness" (lines 36-37). The latter is a list of tasks likely considered definitional for being religious. Yusuf finds himself somewhere in the middle of the continuum.

Shashi moves through several potential definitions of her religious and spiritual identity before settling on one. She first tries out ideas presented by others. Her definition of "being God conscious" (line 46) is a bit more utilitarian than Inaara's, as she admittedly relies on her relationship with God get her through when she is "in a tough spot" (line 52). The "sense" (line 47) she uses to determine her religiosity is based on

what Sabur had said, and she agrees that she is not religious, because of the things that she does not do. Finally, after some hedging, "it's probably not the best thing" (line 53) and "so dare I say" (line 54), she defines herself as "selectively spiritual" (line 55), despite her lack of affinity with the word. At the end of her turn, despite all the covers she has taken under others' definitions and her own hedges, Shashi finds her own voice, albeit one she is quick to say she does not readily embrace.

The norm in this sense becomes defining oneself in comparison to something, a living role model, Mohammed, or some sort of ultimate standard of what one is supposed to be – and clearly cannot achieve. The norm is to depict oneself as humble.

Footing

The students each make moves to determine their footing relative to each other during this interaction. Although Suha's narrative was somewhat out of synch with the rest (and thus not excerpted here), the others all cover similar bases in a pattern: redefinition of "religious" or "spiritual," statement of role model or idea catalyst, and declaration of one's identity in relation to the new definition and model. When examined through the lens of this outline, one can more readily identify Inaara as the strongest embracer of a religious identity, with Shashi and Sabur distancing themselves from that world, and Yusuf falling somewhere in between.

In addition to Inaara being somewhat more willing to declare herself religious than the others, Yusuf and Shashi also both refer back positively to Inaara in their turns. Inaara, who wears the *hijab* head covering and is the younger sister of the campus MSA president, may have occupied a seat of certain respect during the session. Incidentally, she is also acquaintances with N'Mah, the co-interviewer for the session; although

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N'Mah is a graduate student, they had taken a course together entitled "Muslims in Black America." These factors potentially combined together to make the others even more careful of what they said around Inaara.

Sabur and Shashi, who were actually good friends before taking part in the study, share similar experiences of having their religious commitments diminish in college, but they are very careful about how they express this within this Muslim focus group. The following statements come later in the session than the segment presented above. They are in response to how their religious and spiritual lives have changed throughout high school and college:

> "*This is very, it's very low key spirituality now, whereas before [in high school] I was always questioned so I tried to provide an answer, and I was always an example. Here, there are so many Muslims here that I'm just lost in a crowd. A lot of people don't even know I'm Muslim.*" – Sabur, Muslim student focus group

> "*Um, and the conversations we had amongst ourselves [in high school] um, like, questioning parts of our faith, um, or just bringing up topics about Islam, um, that's one thing I haven't been able to find here. Um, like, I go to the MSA mass meeting but I'm not that active in the Muslim community here and the fact that there's so many, like Sabur said, you get lost in a crowd… So, I guess how I define my religious life is now a lot, yeah, like Sabur said, very low key, you know, going through the motions…*" – Shashi, Muslim student focus group

It is likely that the delicate steps Shashi and Sabur took to protect their identities were noticed by other Muslim participants in the study. Suha felt something was amiss in the answers of her peers:

> "*In the non-mixed group I learned that many Muslim students present Islam how I used to in high school, as though they are very formally answering basic questions about the religion. This manner of explanation involves explaining concepts in words that are familiar to others, or dancing around their words in a way.*" – Suha, questionnaire

Segment 2

This excerpt takes place during mixed focus group #3, with segments of it occurring at disparate times in the session. In addition to Shashi, it also includes Jasmine, a Jew, Misty, an agnostic, and Karen, a Christian. Sabur was also present in the focus group, but is not featured here.

1 | Jenny: … What do the words religious and spiritual mean to you?
2 | …

3 | Jasmine: [Inaudible] I remember I said spirituality is really wishy-washy. I
4 | remember I said that before too. But, I don't know if I agreed with myself by the
5 | end. But I still think that.

6 | Jenny: Oh really?

7 | Jasmine: I think people have spiritual moments but, like, people who are, like,
8 | "Well I'm not religious, I'm spiritual," that always I'm like, "Whatever," but
9 | that's not nice so.

10 | Shashi: I hate to say it, but I'm actually the same way too. Like, um, anytime
11 | anyone says, like, "Oh I'm just spiritual," I think "Okay, hippie," like. But yeah,
12 | I kind of associate it with, like, 1970, when spiritual was *the thing*. So.
13 | …

14 | Karen: I think that as different as, like, you think of religion and spirituality,
15 | like, you think that everybody used it in a different way but I think it's just kind
16 | of interesting how, like, how alike people see it as I guess. 'Cause it seems like
17 | it's such a differing view and everybody has, like, a different opinion on it, and,
18 | like, in a way they do but on the broad definitions we all seem to be kind of in
19 | agreement. So, that's just kind of interesting.

20 | Jasmine: […] Here, we're, like, we sort of know, I mean I don't actually know
21 | who's what but I know that they believe something different from myself, so, or
22 | I'm assuming. So, I mean, different in terms of the label, so I don't, I think that
23 | maybe we, like, unconsciously think to make, we sort of, like, take a step back
24 | and make it broader just because we know, like, I don't know, like, seek to find
25 | consensus in a group or something even if, I don't know if that's necessarily
26 | true, but in another group where, you know, everyone is the same, you consense
27 | on other things. You make the consensus on more specific things, but in a more
28 | broader group, 'cause yeah we sort of, like, we took two seconds and we all
29 | agreed, it was okay, so.

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| 30 | Jenny: Well, does everyone agree with the thought that spirituality on its own is |
| 31 | kind of wishy-washy? |

| 32 | Jasmine: Oh that's not fair, that's true. |

33	Misty: No. I'm the agnostic one, um, take out my card. [laughter] Um, I'm
34	actually - [laughter, comments] - I guess it's, like, the stereotype that I think that
35	people think of, but it's kind of interesting, like, in our group, like, everyone
36	kind of went around and said that and we all, like, *knew*, but I don't know, I'm
37	not sure we'll get into this in the video. Um, as, like, why, I don't know, not you
38	representing everyone, but, like, why that view would exist, of people who are
39	not necessarily religious. Because to me, religious is just, you're following
40	doctrine or, like, an established organization, whatever that may be.
41	…

42	Jenny: Were there things that we, if I brought them up tonight, would have been
43	more controversial or less comfortable or found less common ground between
44	you guys? […]

| 45 | Misty: Oh no, I was going to say that your guys' comments, was it you two who |
| 46 | said that "I don't have religion, oh but I'm spiritual" is a hippie thing? |

| 47 | Shashi: Yeah, that's another thing I wanted to say. I hope I didn't offend you by |
| 48 | saying that. |

| 49 | Misty: No you didn't. Actually that's, like, one of the biggest thing, there's so |
| 50 | many misconceptions about atheists and agnostics but that's understandable. |

51	Shashi: Well, and I think that's one thing that's, you know, like, just as an
52	American culture we've grown to associate with that era - you know, pot
53	smoking, and peace signs.

| 54 | Misty: Oh communists, and yeah. |

| 55 | Jasmine: Communists. [Laughter] |

| 56 | Shashi: Yeah, exactly. I mean, the fact that it's so ingrained in our culture now, |
| 57 | that's what first comes to mind. So. |

| 58 | Misty: I'm not a communist. [laughter] Just so you guys know. |

Norm

During the very first question of the session, Jasmine and Shashi begin to

establish a norm, that spirituality without a basis in religion is "really wishy-washy" (line

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3), deserving of a "whatever" (line 8), and reserved for the "hippie" (line 11) segment of the population. As well, it is out-dated, because it had its heyday in "1970, when spiritual was *the thing*" (line 12). This denigrated view of spirituality is likely what Jasmine is referring to when she asserts, a short while later, that they "all agreed" (lines 28-29) on the topic.

Karen, perhaps the least confrontational and most agreeable member of the study, actually precedes Jasmine's sweeping comment and makes her own statement bringing the views of the group together. Although she is aware that each person represents "a different opinion on it," she is also comfortable to point out that "the broad definitions" (line 18) line up with each other. Likely, this statement is easy to make when the group has exhibited very little in the way of conflicting viewpoints up through this moment in the session.

Breach

Finally, after I call the question of whether or not spirituality truly is viewed universally as wishy-washy, Jasmine backs down, realizing that it is "not fair" (line 32) how she has generalized everyone. She does not, however, get a free pass. The group's generalized agreeability ends with Misty's first turn included in the excerpt, because this is the moment in which the other members of the group are faced with the realization that their efforts to "seek to find consensus" (lines 24-25) have not been entirely successful. The breach that occurs is not in itself the fact that Misty "[takes] out [her] card" (line 33) as an agnostic, but instead that she calls Karen and Jasmine out on making an assumption about the nature of their discourse community. That faulty assumption is "how alike people see" spirituality (line 16).

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In this turn, Misty points out the differences in the experiences of the atheist students in their homogeneous focus group and in the mixed settings. In the former, "everyone kind of went around and said that and we all, like, *knew*" (lines 35-36); in other words, they all understood each other and where they were coming from. That is in high contrast to the current setting, where Jasmine asserted "we all agreed" (lines 28-29) without first even determining that to be true. In addition, Misty points out that not everyone thinks so highly of religion, which without spirituality is "just" (line 39) an institution that people follow.

However, other than this incident, the students in this focus group have a relatively high level of openness to other religious perspectives, mentioning nine times that they are accepting of other religions. Only mixed focus group #5 had a higher prevalence of this code, with 11 mentions. The students agreed with Misty's assessment that their ease in talking to each other was because they are not "more conservative," as perhaps other students in the study are.

Face Saving

Shashi gets her chance to save face on her potential insult of Misty toward the end of the focus group, when I ask them to discuss what they think would be controversial topics in an interreligious dialogue. Misty brings up the previous comment, and Shashi effectively offers an apology, saying immediately, "I hope I didn't offend you by saying that" (lines 47-48). Unfortunately, Shashi's interjection of this cuts off whatever it was that Misty "was going to say" (line 45). The lens of Conversation Analysis instructs that one cannot read insinuation into a phrase if the sentiment is not openly expressed.

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Therefore, when Misty asserts that Shashi did not, in fact, offend her, we are left wondering if that is really the case.

Misty's questionnaire provides insight into how she was feeling during this focus group. Interestingly, it appears that she was more concerned over insulting others than she was in being offended by misunderstandings of her beliefs. The latter is not even mentioned by her.

> "*As the non-religious representative in the mixed group, I felt especially guarded in my responses as to not offend anyone. I found this difficult because I find my agnosticism to have two parts. One is the 'spiritual' side which was well described in the interviews in the atheist/agnostic group, and the second is a disassociation with organized religion… So the second side I don't think I really even mentioned anything about because it would have absolutely offended people.*" – Misty, questionnaire

The session ends somewhat on a light note, with the three women joking about atheism being equivalent to communism. The breach from earlier in the hour seems to be somewhat repaired, as Misty participates in the humor as equally as the other two. The possible association between atheism and the other cultural markers named by Shashi, "pot smoking, and peace signs" (lines 52-53) is not specifically addressed, so again, Misty's specific reaction is unknown.

Segment 3

This session takes place during mixed focus group #4 and includes Suha and Rick, an atheist student. The strands of the conversation weave through the entire session. Joanna, a Jewish student, and Will, a Christian student, were also present but not featured here.

1 | Jenny: So the, uh, first question is, what do the words religious and spiritual
2 | mean to you?
3 | …

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4   Rick: I guess speaking as an atheist, when I think about how I think of myself
5   spiritually, it really has nothing to do with a God but yet, I still consider myself
6   a spiritual person and I think that comes about through being able to slow down
7   and notice what I'm doing and an idea of being present in what I'm doing. I
8   think it's a lot easier for me to sort of rush through my life, especially as a
9   student, and not really ask, "How does this fit into the larger human structure?" I
10 guess I talk about my spirituality as "humans designed in human image," and
11 that sort of has evidence of a God to it, but I don't intend it that way. I intend it
12 as we continually make ourselves, and we continually create something, and
13 that's nothing to do with a God for me. I'm not really sure how to - I don't
14 understand myself to be a religious person I guess, mostly because I grew up
15 Roman Catholic hearing that the idea of a God is necessary to be religious, so
16 it's never really been an identity that I could internalize.
17 …

18 Suha: I wanted to respond to Rick's comment.

19 Jenny: Sure.

20 Suha: Because you said, like, what I thought was really interesting, you said that
21 it's kind of like, as a human we're constantly creating things, and kind of, am I
22 maybe quoting you right, that as a human being we are constantly creating
23 things, and for that reason, we have to be kind of knowledgeable of our action,
24 is that what you said?

25 Rick: Yeah.

26 Suha: So, I, like, I reacted really strongly to that because I actually, I'm Muslim,
27 and I went to Catholic school in high school. So that was, like, the place where I
28 was able to reflect a lot on my own beliefs and kind of see what other people
29 believed about their, about Catholicism and their idea of God, and just different
30 viewpoints. So, one thing that my mother always tells me is that um, I'm very,
31 very conscious of my actions and almost, like, to an obsessive point, that I'll
32 feel guilty if I even, like, I'll obsessively think about every single action I do,
33 because I think very much that it's important as a human being to, you know,
34 act in a proper way, moral proper way. So when you said as a human being
35 creating something, the guilt I feel if I create something that's maybe negative
36 towards other people, there's just, like, an *obsession* with that, and I internalize
37 it, and it becomes, like, a spirituality for me. But then again, if it's negative, you
38 know, it's not, which it has been in the past, I'll internalize it and it will get to
39 me. Um, that's something that I really reacted to because that's how I, I feel a
40 lot of the time. Like, when you create something, it's, you have to have
41 complete ownership over it and be very responsible. It puts yourself in a lot of
42 responsibility. So that's something I thought about when you said that.
43 …

44	Jenny: Ok.
45	Rick: I was surprised that we could connect in that way in that I found out
46	through the focus group, the first time here, just how much not believing in God
47	was important to me, and so the idea that I put something forth that, I guess I
48	don't want to assume necessarily that God may be your [Suha] driving force,
49	but just the idea that since we come from such a different understanding about
50	maybe why it's important to take responsibility for our actions that I just find
51	myself surprised that we could understand that together.
52	Suha: Yeah, and I think a lot, I was trying to think about why that is, so much
53	that I notice actually ever since I sat here and you've been asking these
54	questions, I didn't say God once, even though I'm very much a believer in
55	monotheist, monotheism, and that there is one God behind everything and that
56	we must submit solely to Him. But that's not a complete, like, I don't view it as
57	a completely singular view, I feel like my view and how I take Islam is very,
58	like, it's not, like, this, but it encompasses a lot, so that's the way I see my
59	religion…

Solidarity and Situational Co-Membership

One of the most surprising connections to be established between two participants in this study was the one between Suha, a Muslim woman, and Rick, a transgender student who described his religious identity as "Druid, Unitarian Universalist, Secular Humanist, Zen" on the demographic form. In their mixed focus group setting, the pair utilize several long turns to address one another.

The initial turn made by Rick that inspires this thread of conversation to run through the focus group contains somewhat of a provocative declaration, that Rick thinks of spirituality as "humans designed in human image" (line 10). This is provocative because it modifies the monotheistic religions' ideology that humans are designed in God's image. However, several turns are taken by others before this idea is addressed.

Suha initially suggests that Rick's comment is "really interesting" (line 20),

although as she clarifies her understanding of the idea, it is unclear whether this interest

is being experienced positively or negatively by her. When she states that she "reacted

really strongly" (line 26), it is still not clear. However, Suha then provides a lengthy

background narrative to explain why, in fact, she did receive Rick's sentiment positively

because it is "how [she feels] a lot of the time" (lines 39-40). Suha takes Rick's beliefs

as evidence of a certain type of moral reasoning, one that leads followers to "act in a

proper way, moral proper way" (line 34).

This last point is critical in establishing her rapport with Rick. The atheist

students in this study were somewhat concerned by what they feel is society's erroneous

judgment that, because they do not believe in God, they also do not live by a moral code.

This was raised by them five times in the study, as compared to a total of four times by

all of the other participants in the study. It is perhaps due to this concern that Rick is

pleasantly "surprised" (line 45) to find that he and Suha "could connect in that way"

(line 45) over taking responsibility for one's own actions. Perhaps because of his

upbringing in a Catholic family, Rick utilizes religious speech to address Suha, musing

briefly on the idea that "God may be [her] driving force" (line 48). He is, however, quite

careful not to "assume necessarily" (line 48) the nature of her identity, which exhibits

respect toward her.

In her final turn, Suha realizes that she has modified her speech in order to make

it mirror those around her in the discussion. In her own words, she is "very much a

believer in monotheist, monotheism, and that there is one God behind everything and

that we must submit solely to Him" (lines 54-56). Despite this, she has left God out of

the conversation. She has done this because of her knowledge that her own beliefs are not "a completely singular view" (line 57), and likely, in order to speak effectively with someone of different beliefs, she has had to change her own talk in order to access those other existing viewpoints.

Suha and Rick both felt a lasting impression from their talk:

"What was interesting, though, was that my beliefs were similar to those, especially many atheists, in the mixed group... Hearing others talk about their experience with religion and spirituality is always something I want to learn from. In the focus groups, especially the mixed one, I learned a lot about how atheists' very different beliefs. This helped me think about my spirituality in a similar way and relate to them because I know for sure, as illustrated by my experience in the Muslim group, that my beliefs are similar in general terms to a Muslim, but more minute spiritual and philosophical related things may be different." – Suha, questionnaire

"In the mixed-religion setting, I was much more polite, but authentically so. I was surprised that the Muslim woman found commonalities in our spiritual experience, even though I come to religion without god. Our commonalities focused around the importance of self-reflection and mindfulness in daily life. I found this situation much more exciting to be in." – Rick, questionnaire

Post-Hoc Positioning and Face Saving

The final element of discourse analysis for the Muslim students is to consider their acts of post-hoc positioning, for the reason of further defining one another, and post-hoc face saving, for the reason of protecting oneself or others. The Muslim students had four instances of post-hoc positioning and nine of post-hoc face saving. The positioning codes were distributing among Inaara, Sabur and Suha. Sabur and Suha positioned the other Muslim students in a similar way, as people who are judgmental and do not allow dissenting opinion to be expressed. Inaara positioned the students in the mixed group as being "politically correct" and "walking around glass" to the point of ineffectiveness in dialogue. The instances of post-hoc face saving were all employed by Sabur and Shashi,

who describe protecting themselves by not revealing the true nature of their feelings about the MSA in the Muslim student focus group.

Discussion of Discourse Analysis

The interactions presented here work together to depict the differences in comfort the Muslim students in this study felt during the two types of focus groups they participated in. During the homogeneous session, the students struggled to define themselves within the concepts generally at use in the study. Instead, they worked to pinpoint very specific ideas of their identities, as means for distinguishing themselves from each other and coming out looking both humble and appropriately concerned about proper behavior and representation of Muslim life.

During the heterogeneous groups, the students were markedly more casual in presenting themselves and their ideas. The two segments included here show Shashi accidentally insulting someone with her flippancy (something she steadfastly avoided in the first focus group) and Suha surprising herself by connecting with someone with decidedly opposed religious beliefs. In post-hoc moves, Inaara, Sabur, Shashi and Suha each reveal information on their true feelings about other students, having hidden these sometimes for self-protection and sometimes to avoid causing offense.

What do these three examples of interaction say about how Muslim students use language to create meaningful representations of their spiritual identities? For one, they show a greater level of concern for one's reputation among peers who have high potential for being seen again and impacting one's status in the community. They also demonstrate the variety of discourse forms available to students when speaking about their religious and spiritual identities. The students can speak using the language and

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references of their religion, or they can utilize common, secular words. The choice

depends on who the listeners are. These three findings lead to implications for the

continued usage of discourse analysis in higher education as well as for better

understandings of interfaith and intra-faith conversations that involve Muslim students.

In addition, they lead to implications surrounding the moral and equitable treatment of

Muslim students on college campuses.

These findings also speak to a "Muslim frame" at work in the students' discourse

and co-constructed in their conversations. The Muslim frame, through which they

interpret and create meaning, includes the following features:

- Common understandings – the inaccuracy of using standard terms to describe
  one's identity, the importance of humility and proper behavior

- Points of disagreement – the priority of having a religious life in a secular society,
  the value of a spiritual identity

- Faith specific issues that arise in dialogue – the significance of peers in the
  securing of one's place in the Muslim community, modifying one's language in
  order to reach understanding with non-Muslims

Another way of thinking about the Muslim frame is to consider it a group-level

identity co-constructed by the Muslim students through their interactions with one

another during this study. The findings were based on the situation of the particular

students in the room as well as the particular timing in their lives in which the study took

place. The Muslim frame co-created by them surrounds them all, yet with ample room

for individual expression and viewpoints. The findings about the Muslim frame, as well

as from the discourse analysis, will be compared with the results of the qualitative coding

analysis discussed at the end of this chapter. The frame has profound implications for accurate specification of faith development models and how a modified conceptual framework can be applied in future research. It also gives initial insight into Muslim college students, a heretofore understudied student population in higher education.

The two atheist students who also appeared in these segments, Rick and Misty, will be discussed further in the following chapter. It turns out that Rick's experience of connecting with Suha is actually a major exception to the general rule evidenced by the study, that the atheist students were much more comfortable talking amongst themselves than they were with the members of the other religious groups. Misty's experience was more representative of that pattern.

Results: Qualitative Coding

As in the previous chapters, I will now provide the results of the qualitative coding process conducted on the data corpus. The results will address multiple angles on the data, including students' definitions of key terms, the themes and ideas they discussed most frequently, and the codes which relate back to the conceptual framework of this study. After discussing and summarizing these findings, I will compare them with the above findings on the Muslim students' discourse analysis.

Definitions and Aspects of "Religious" and "Spiritual"

Students were asked during both the homogeneous and heterogeneous focus group sessions to provide definitions for the words "religious" and "spiritual." The Muslim students in this study were similar to the other three groups of students, in that they more frequently discussed the aspects of "religious" than the definitions of it. Their

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two most commonly used codes were "religious duty/obligation" (10) and "religion and politics/government" (9), which were both among the six codes for religious mentioned at least 20 times in the study. In terms of their definitions, they utilized a total of 13, and three ranked highly: "religion as linked to morality" (7), "religion as ritual or observance level" (6), and "religion as daily life" (6), with the first two again getting more than 20 total mentions. Interestingly, the link between religion and morality, while hardly of note to the Christians and Jews (with two comments each) was also considered important among atheist students, who used the related code nine times.

In terms of spirituality, the Muslim students again used 13 definitional codes. Only two carried any real weight of numbers: "spirituality as connection to something greater" (8) and "spirituality as fuzzy, New Age, hippie" (5). These two codes are somewhat oppositional in nature, one expressing a positive connotation to the term and the other dismissing it. This can be explained by noting that Shashi provided four of the five quotations about spirituality being fuzzy, with Sabur providing the fifth, while quotations about spirituality as connection were more distributed – Yusuf had four, Suha had two, and Inaara and Shashi each had one. Ten of the other options for the definitions of spirituality were in the 1-2 range, with one code at three uses.

God Images and Associations

Within the study, the Muslim students were unique in that the students of this affiliation alone expressed no doubt in God's existence. In addition, as mentioned in Chapter 5, the Muslim students did not have any negative definitions of God. The latter phenomenon exactly matched with the Christian students. In addition, many of their positive God images and associations also paralleled those of the Christians. Despite the

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differing theological constructions in the ways Muslims and Christians relate to God, the God concept itself is highly overlapping.

The Muslims utilized 13 discrete images of and associations with God, four of which ranked highly or moderately: "God – depending upon" (10), "God – statement of faith" (7), "God – personal relationship and qualities" (5), and "God consciousness" (5), the last of which, while not definitional, was important for the students' identities, as discussed above. The other three codes were the top three images and associations employed across the study.

Faith Influences, Faith Trajectories and Developmental Objectives

Returning to the conceptual frameworks for this study (both Figures 1 and 2 in Chapter 3), there were three elements of faith development that were distinguished for each of the religious affiliations. Each of these will be addressed for the Muslim students, with codes developed in the qualitative analysis phase of the study used as evidence.

Faith Influences: Challenges to Religion and Relationship between Religion and Society

To examine the faith influences at work in the lives of the Muslim students, I again considered their answers to the question in the second round focus groups, "On campus, have you encountered any situations which have tested your spiritual and/or religious beliefs or caused you to alter them from what they were in high school?" I then looked at these responses for evidence of markers of religious identity, young adult transition, or resolution of identity. To further consider the faith influences in these

students' lives, I also include their expressions of the relationships between religious affiliation and social status.

- As mentioned before, Shashi is not comfortable in the MSA and is disappointed to find she is no longer being noticed for having unique and interesting religious beliefs. Her story centers on markers of religious identity, as she is concerned with external validations of her faith. In terms of Muslims' social position, Shashi ironically feels a sense that she "[wields] this power" by being a Muslim when Muslims are being so closely examined. She uses her "religion as kind of a political … sword" to stand up for herself and other Muslims.

- Like many others in the study, Sabur's biggest influence for change on campus has been interactions with religiously diverse peers. Ironically, the presence of a larger Muslim community than in his high school has caused him to draw back from religious practice, for as he says, his "horizon's really limited inside the Muslim Student's Association." His faith influences are both markers of religious identity, as he is concerned with his ability to merge with his community, and young adult transition, learning to trust himself as an authority. Sabur is very influenced by African-American Muslims and the fight for freedom in the African-American community.

- Unlike some of the others in her group, Inaara has found it a positive experience to be in a larger Muslim community than she was in high school. She has also enjoyed learning from religiously diverse peers in dialogue groups, although she has not opened herself up to truly having her beliefs changed by them. She is influenced in faith by the markers of religious identity, which encourages her to

hold tightly to her core beliefs, as well as her young adult transition. Inaara does not consider herself affected by social status, only fortunate that she has been exposed to other belief systems.

- Yusuf indicates that he has not been challenged by anything taking place specifically on the college campus. As he points out during the study, he is still living with his parents off campus, and so has had less exposure to many of the situations that encourage identity development. His biggest concern is the current world political situation for Muslims. Yusuf is still influenced by markers of religious identity, but is beginning to break the tacitness of his beliefs and confront a young adult transition,. Yusuf believes that Muslims "are very victimized in American society," and that he has a responsibility for modeling the positive ways of acting as a good Muslim because Muslims are "under a microscope" right now.

- Suha also finds the MSA more denominationally partisan than she would prefer, but is more generally challenged by students on campus being "devoid of thinking" when it comes to matters of religion and spirituality. She has also taken courses on the religions of southeast Asia, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, and has been influenced by them to think more critically about the classifications people make based upon religion. Suha's faith influence is the resolution of her religious identity. She feels encouraged that her parents were able to immigrate to America so she can "enjoy this privilege" of living in a place in which Islam can be analyzed, rather than completely subsuming the culture.

Looking at the discussion of Muslims' social status in America as a strand of development, a surprising pattern emerges. Yusuf, Shashi and Sabur talk about some of the struggles and negative impacts of marginalization facing their community, while Suha and Inaara do not seem particularly affected by this. As Suha and Inaara are generally more aware of and resolved in their identities than the others, it may be that they have already come to understand the place of Muslims in society and have turned it into a positive catalyst for growth. On the other hand, it may be that Yusuf, Shashi and Sabur are somehow blocked developmentally by their negative perceptions of Muslims' social status. Of course, there is a third possibility, which is that faith development and understandings of privilege and marginalization are not related.

It is important to revisit the fact that the conceptual work of this study framed the ideas of mainstream and marginalization around Christianity as the privileged religion in this country. However, the Muslim students generally do not express their understanding of social status in terms of Christian privilege. Rather, they seem to see their community as being scrutinized by all other Americans.

Faith Trajectories: Definitions of Self as Religious and/or Spiritual and Change in Religion and Spirituality over Time

The next element of the conceptual framework to be analyzed is the Muslim students' faith trajectories, or their development over time. In order to examine this growth, I also considered their current definitions of self. The Muslim students' self-definitions during their round one focus group are covered in detail in segment 1 presented above. Inaara refuses to use the labels religious and spiritual in favor of her own "God conscious." Sabur does not address a spiritual side of his identity, but refutes

the idea of himself being a religious Muslim. Similarly, Yusuf and Shashi resist any form of labeling, with Shashi memorably conceding herself to be "selectively spiritual." Suha, in describing her self-understanding, uses the word "faith" in addition to "spirituality," but does not employ the word "religious" in any way.

The usage of definitions that defy exact classification makes tracing the students' faith trajectories since high school a bit complicated. However, clues in other elements of their speech, plus the faith influences discussed above and their own statements about change, led to the following preliminary faith stage categorizations:

- Stage 3 – Shashi, age 18, has let her religious life recede in college. Without a community around her, she does not give it as much attention or thought. She has stated that participation in the study has given her renewed interest in her religious life, and so may begin a young adult transition. She is aware of Muslims' place in society, seeing them as negatively marginalized. She feels a vague sense of empowerment due to this, but does not necessarily act upon it.

- Stages 3/3.5 – Sabur, age 19, has given religion less priority since being in college and is concerned about this. Without his community and authority figures, he has not been able to find a way to successfully express his religion. Although he has many interpretations of the meaning of his religion, he does not tend to act on them. Sabur's awareness of Muslim marginalization has some complexity to it, as he also considers the role played by race.

  Inaara, age 18, is the student who has given priority to her religion in the most publicly visible way. She has found a way to shape her life to keep both the secular and religious elements of it progressing. Her actual beliefs and ideas have

not changed very much over time and she may not begin identity resolution until she opens herself to true learning from others. She does not display a complex understanding of Muslims' as a minority in the United States. However, she does express concern that the Muslim political focus is confined to world issues such as Iraq and tends to overlook "America's third world."

Yusuf, age 19, has experienced his development to be gradual, because he still lives at home with his parents. He has made individual determinations about religion and tends to use religion both to serve his life and to live out his responsibilities. Yusuf is aware of the negative elements of Muslims' social status and uses them to motivate him toward positive action.

- Stage 4 – Suha, age 19, has developed a complex religious identity that is informed academically and through experiences with family and peers. She considers herself a pluralist and is open to rethinking her ideas and continuing to grow. She is comfortable with living her religious life in a secular world. She expresses concern for the denominational divisions and violence within Islam, seeing the social position of Muslim as internally complex.

Developmental Objectives: Most Frequently Used Codes and Relationship to Religious Affiliation

The final element of the conceptual framework to be discussed in terms of the Muslims is the developmental objective, the theme at the core of what someone is expected to accomplish through a fully realized developmental trajectory. Again, the "future ideal as defined by religion" code has been scrapped as a proxy for this. As I did in previous chapters, I instead considered the topics that are important, contentious, or

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concerning to the Muslim students. This process operated at the group-level of analysis, wherein I attempted to use the breadth of their speech to make my determination. To do this, I determined the codes that were used 20 times or more by the Muslim students. These were:

- Prayer (32)

- Acting right or proper (30)

- Representing one's group (23)

- Questioning or not questioning beliefs (21)

In addition to the codes with 20 or more uses, I also looked for codes with heavy employment that were unique to the Muslims. While these did have fewer than 20 mentions, they were still in the top 50 in usage by that group. For the Muslims, the codes were:

- Anti-Islam (17)

- Arabic word or phrase (16)

Finally, there were several "codes of interest" which related theologically or culturally to Islam. They were:

- Dietary restrictions (10)

- Immigration and immigrant status (9)

- Drinking, smoking (8)

- Race and racial identity (7)

- War (7)

The developmental objective for Muslims, as determined by the literature review, was submission to God. As done in previous chapters, I looked at the quotations for the

Muslim students' most important codes and compared them to the theme of submission to God. I considered a negative relationship between a quotation and theme to be present when the quotation indicated an obligation to a specific something else, such as oneself, one's community, or one's religious tenets in the broad sense. A lack of specified motivation, or no relationship at all, was considered neutral.

Just as with the Jewish students, the developmental objective for the Muslim students was not clearly depicted through their most important codes. Only three codes were above 20% positive or negative: questioning or not questioning beliefs, 27% positive; acting right or proper, 24% negative; and prayer, 22% negative. The other eight codes were between 87-100% unrelated to submission to God. This low level of relationship could be due to the fact that much of the time students were talking they did not ascribe a motivation to their behaviors, God or otherwise. With no stated reason for their refraining from drinking, for example, I could not ascribe that to God submission. An example of a quotation that did meet the standard is:

> *"But, like, my belief in God is that, I pray to God and I ask Him for things and God makes the decision whether or not those things are granted to me. Like, I don't, like, if I ask Him for something, it's, like, up to God to give it to me or not, and then I know I have to work hard to get it. Like, I think, when I do pray or do something ritualistic, I seem to be a lot calmer, that I know, like, the sense of God is, like, looking over me."* – Sabur, interview

Again, I am left to ask what impact this finding has upon the theoretical and theological understanding that the developmental objective of Islam is to grow in one's submission to God. Is it possible that, as Suha explained in her mixed session, references to God were just left unstated, despite their importance? Or do the students feel more obligated to their own personal growth in faith, as posited for the Christians, or the thriving of their community, as posited (and somewhat negated) for the Jews? In order to

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help answer these questions, I conducted two additional analyses upon the top codes for the Muslims.

Three of the codes had a high percentage of quotations with a positive relationship to individualization, questioning or not questioning beliefs, 90%, representing one's group, 65%, and race and racial identity, 57%. Five had relationships that were over 70% neutral, anti-Islam, Arabic word or phrase, dietary restrictions, drinking and smoking, and prayer. None had significant negative relationships.

In the second analysis, fully 100% of the quotations for war related positively to communal obligation. In other words, the students felt that they were required to take certain positions on various wars and conflicts around the world due to their identification as Muslims. Two additional codes had moderate relationships with communal obligation, race and racial identity, 43% positive, and acting right or proper, 43% negative. Two codes, immigration and immigrant status and questioning or not questioning beliefs, were fairly distributed among the three types of relationships. The rest of the codes had strong neutral relationships with communal obligation.

This mix of two alternative developmental objectives having some consonance with the Muslim students' discourse creates an even more confusing picture than did the analysis for the Jewish students. In Chapter 6, I listed three possible explanations for a lack of agreement with the conceptual framework, which were: 1) that the objective has been incorrectly identified through the literature review, 2) that the concept of developmental objective itself is faulty, or 3) that because the students are in the midst of their own growth, they are unable to articulate an end point that they cannot fully

envision themselves. With two religious affiliations now having such dubious results for this analysis, the existence of any true developmental objective is cast further into doubt.

Although the insight into Muslims' developmental objective is somewhat jumbled, this analysis does further illuminate their discourse patterns. The codes with 20 or more mentions are a particularly interesting set of themes that speaks profoundly about the Muslim students in this study and the ways they conceptualize their religious identities. The codes describe five young Muslim adults who are concerned with behaving in ways that are fitting for their religious group. They believe that they are to live their lives according to the guidelines of the religion. This includes both personal acts, such as frequently praying to God, as well as the public acts of demonstrating to society the types of people that Muslims truly are. In mixed focus group #1, Yusuf explains the latter point to his fellow participants:

> "*And then I guess an ideal, like, as a member of the Muslim community, like, helping, like, just enhancing the community, uh, especially here in America where there's so much bad PR for Muslims, like, um, it's really emphasized, like, as a responsibility of every Muslim to, like, be a good image, like, to the world around, like, act right, don't be disrespectful, know that you're like, that you can, like, affect how people perceive your religion, like. That's how it relates to my religion a lot because, like, I said, especially in this time there's so much bad PR that you have to, like, do every little thing to, like, bring out the positive.*" – Yusuf, mixed focus group #1

As for their discussion of whether or not they do and should question the beliefs handed down to them through Islamic theology, the students are in favor of it, especially during these politically trying times:

> "*Um, before then you would go to Islamic school on Sunday, just take in all the information you got, you know, blindly accept it, but, um, with 9-11 you were forced to not only defend yourself, but also know exactly what you thought and where you stood.*" – Shashi, Muslim focus group

Although this code did not make the top 50, it is important to note that the Muslim students mentioned the events of September 11th and its aftermath six times during the study. Although this is not a large number in itself, when accompanied by codes related to immigration, race and war, one can clearly see that Muslim students are thinking quite heavily about their status in society. Interestingly, none of the students mentioned any incidents of being on the receiving end of prejudice after September 11th. They were much more circumspect about the impact of that day upon their lives:

> "*…the beginning of my freshman year was when 9-11 happened, … So, how we talked about, like, the way we talked about Islam would be a lot of the time students in the class asking me specifically questions, 'So what do –' A lot of, um, our topics would be women and Islam. So, this is a really interesting topic to talk about and I like to you know... 'Cause I was well-liked in high school and it was nice that I felt good that my peers could be able to talk to someone, um, about, you know, 'I'm seeing this kind of stuff on the TV and why is it that you're so different?'*" – Suha, Muslim focus group

Finally, just as with the Christian and Jewish students, those codes which are so related to the Muslim worldview were much more prominently featured within the homogeneous session than they were in the mixed sessions. For example, Arabic words or phrases were utilized 11 times in the Muslim focus group, but only four times across all of the heterogeneous groups. The Muslim students referenced prayer 19 times in their session and five times the mixed sessions. As with the other students of religious backgrounds, they may have felt more comfortable being open in the mixed setting, but they were more easily able to build communities of shared discourse with other Muslims.

Learning from and Feelings about Focus Group Experience

Finally, I turn to the reactions of the students to their experiences in the focus groups. This will provide information about their frames of mind as well as knowledge

about how involvement in intra- and intergroup dialogues affects students.

Yusuf gained a general learning from the study, which he describes as coming to understand "the universal nature of spirituality." Suha did not enjoy the first session very much, because she felt the others were too busy "explaining" themselves to share much about their identities. The second session was a learning experience for her, including a positive connection with an atheist student. Inaara was comfortable in both environments, finding them "essentially really similar." Sabur felt there was a pressure to "prove" himself to the other Muslims, while the members of the other religious groups did not "automatically judge" him. Shashi also found the mixed group more comfortable than the Muslim group, in which she felt she "had to prove myself in some way." Additionally, Shashi left the study feeling that it was time to: "confront myself and my religious views- how I am less practicing as I used to be, and my 'plans' to learn more about the history of my faith have remained unfulfilled." As with the Jewish students, there is not necessarily a direct parallel between their reflections on the study and their developmental stages. However, their comments do illuminate certain paths to further growth.

Discussion of Qualitative Coding

Bringing together all of the findings of the qualitative analysis, a composite picture of the Muslim students emerges. Like the rest of the students in the study, they heavily discussed the related aspects of religion. However, they defined it somewhat differently, as the manifestation of daily life and a moral imperative, in addition to the standard understanding of it as ritual or observance level. Their definitions of spirituality incorporated the usual connection to something greater, as well as the less favorable

labeling of it as fuzzy. Like the Christians, they described God in wholly positive terms as one they depend on, have faith in and a personal relationship with, and who remains in their thoughts constantly.

The Muslim students seem to be the most highly attuned to the fact that they reside in two distinct worlds, the religious and the secular, or they at least have the strongest perception that this duality exists. All of them distinctly experience their minority status, although those with a less complex outlook on their faith see this status more strongly and usually more negatively. Their developmental trajectories incorporate bypassing this negativity, while also bringing the secular and the religious into harmonious balance and thinking critically about one's own faith identity. The goal of these trajectories, the developmental objective, presents as a mix of individualization and communal obligation, and not the submission to God originally posited. Positive growth can be catalyzed by constructive interactions in college, a finding which has implications for campus practitioners.

The Muslim students are, however, quite concerned with living their lives according to their religion. Like the other religious students in the study, they more easily discuss this lifestyle amongst each other, rather than in the mixed focus group settings. While personalities are a stronger factor than developmental stage in determining the students' reactions to the study, this information does highlight the ways such an intervention can encourage further growth.

Finally, I offer a comparison between the original conceptual framework and faith trajectory for Muslims with the findings determined through analysis of the Muslim participants in this study. This comparison is presented in Table 12.

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Table 12. Comparison of findings to conceptual framework, for Muslims			
Stages of faith	Description from conceptual framework (CF)	Summative evidence from cases	Conclusion from comparisons
Stage 3	Stage 3 Muslims feel that they are in submission to God, although they do not necessarily embrace a personal relationship with God. They observe Islam by fasting, praying, attending mosque, giving to charity, and potentially taking on Muslim dress. They are sometimes confused by conflicting authority figures.	Stage 3 Muslims have difficulty balancing the sacred and secular, often letting religious life recede. They do not place themselves in a community that will push them to give it attention and do not generate new ideas about religion. They may understand the negative aspects of Muslims' place in society, but do not necessarily act upon it.	The findings of the study confirm part of the CF, the religious life of Stage 3 Muslims. However, an addition is the difficult balance with a secular life, which may be the priority at this time. As well, they have an awareness of their marginalization, but without corresponding activity.
Stage 3.5	Stage 3.5 Muslims work to resolve the conflict between the sacred and the secular.	Stage 3.5 Muslims have made individual determinations about religion. They keep a better balance between the sacred and the secular, and value both. They have a more complex understanding of the marginalization of Muslims and may use it to motivate toward positive action.	The findings of the study confirm the balancing out of the sacred and secular from the CF. They also add an awareness of marginalization for Stage 3.5 Muslims, potentially corresponding with action against it.
Stage 4	Stage 4 Muslims remain devout in belief, observance, and commitment to family and remain connected to the community. The individual is still besieged with pressures to resolve dual identities and the conflicting sacred and secular worlds.	Stage 4 Muslims developed a complex religious identity that is informed by many outside sources, but also internally. They are open to religious diversity and keep a balance between the sacred and the secular. They understand the complexities of Muslims' social status and may use this as empowerment.	The findings of the study show a more confident Stage 4 Muslim than the CF, one that can withstand pressures from the sacred/secular balance struggle. An addition is making Muslims' social status a tool for empowerment.

Summary

Bringing together the results of the qualitative analysis with those of the discourse analysis, the following can be said about the five Muslim students that participated in this study: They exhibit a clear developmental trajectory, from highly conformist, with either the sacred or the secular element of their identity overshadowing the other, to more individualized, with the sacred and the secular in greater harmony. While submission to God does not come through their talk as a developmental objective, the strands of individualization and communal obligation both do, paralleling their ongoing act of balancing the components of their identities. These students are highly aware of their societal status, no surprise given the influences of immigration, war and terrorism upon lives of Muslims around the globe. A negative fixation on this status, however, can mean a lack of developmental progress. It is perhaps due to this heightened awareness of religion and status that makes talk amongst Muslim peers more tense, as the students risk alienation from the group if they overstep commonly agreed upon boundaries around belief and practice. Yet this situation also offers high reward, as they are able to utilize the familiar language of their people. In a diverse setting, alternatively, the students are free to put forth their secular selves alongside their religious selves.

There is a final key point about the Muslim college students that can be made through weighing the Muslim frame, established through the discourse analysis in this chapter, against the comparison of the conceptual framework to the qualitative analysis findings. The Muslim frame also seems to be fluid, evolving as a person moves along a Muslim faith trajectory. The common understandings, listed above as the inaccuracy of using standard terms to describe one's identity, the importance of humility and proper

behavior, remain foundational elements of the faith identity.

As with the Jewish and Christian frames previously discussed, points of disagreement arise between Muslims at different stages of faith development, because their frames are slightly out of synch. The balance of the sacred and the secular is a key point of change between Stages 3, 3.5 and 4, and this translates into the varied priorities of having a religious life in a secular society and the contested value of a spiritual identity. Dialogue participants disagree with each other on these questions because they are in disparate places in their own understandings of the issues.

Other faith issues will arise in dialogues between Muslim young adults at different points in their development. Although the consideration of authority figures is not as central to Muslim faith development as it is to that of Christians and Jews, the very nature of the evolving sacred-secular balance determines which students will be more influenced by their peers in the securing of their places in the Muslim community. The same can be said for modifying one's language in order to reach understanding with non-Muslims; young adult Muslims will have different motivations for this, either conforming to the secular norms around them or the more complicated choice to present oneself in a diplomatic manner that better facilitates conversation.

A Muslim frame that evolves over time can be described in other terminology as a Muslim faith trajectory. The faith trajectory is neither the Muslim frame in itself, nor simply change in faith over time, but it is *the change over time in the Muslim way of framing the world through faith*.

The findings for the Muslim students will be brought forward and compared with the other three groups in this study in Chapter 9. In addition, the conclusions drawn from

this analysis begin to reference the four areas of implication for the study: (1) the morality/equity issue, by the understanding of Muslims as a marginalized religious population, (2) the model specification, by the determination that there is a Muslim-specific frame influencing their spiritual identities, (3) research in higher education, by the discoveries made through the utilization of discourse analysis and the application of the new conceptual framework, as well as by the new insights into a heretofore understudied student population, and (4) practice in higher education, by the new understanding of the college campus as a potential catalyst for positive identity growth and the challenges faced during interfaith and intra-faith conversations.

Chapter 8:

Analysis – Atheist College Students

"Um, I'd say that, like, since I've been in college, I feel a lot more comfortable in, like, my own spirituality and my, like, how I've kind of, you know, thought it all up in my head or whatever. Because, um, just as long as I can remember, like, all through school, um, everybody was tied to a religion. There was not one person that was like, 'Oh I don't believe in God or whatever.' Everyone had one, so I always felt so pressured that like, you know, I need to belong to some certain religion." – Meghan, atheist student focus group

"Yeah, I don't really, I wouldn't say I was spirit-…the only way I would define myself as spiritual is when I'm defending myself against my mother when she says that I have no religion, that I'm going through a phase. So I had to come up with something to kind of counteract that." – Misty, atheist student focus group

This chapter presents the analysis for the data derived from the atheist student participants. The conducting of both discourse analysis and qualitative coding will lead to results that speak to elements of the four areas of implication presented at the conclusion of Chapter 4. In particular, this data highlights: the understanding by atheist students that they are a marginalized population (morality/equity issue), the knowledge that the use of typical language around religion and spirituality is inappropriate for them (morality/equity issue), the determination that there is an atheist-specific frame influencing their spiritual identities (model specification), the effectiveness of both discourse analysis and the application of a reconstructed conceptual framework (research in higher education), new insights into a heretofore understudied student population (research in higher education), new understandings of the college campus as a potential

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catalyst for positive identity growth (practice in higher education), and the challenges faced during interfaith and intra-faith conversations (practice in higher education). Each one of these implications emerges directly from the data and will be discussed in additional depth in Chapters 9 and 10.

<div align="center">Results: Discourse Analysis</div>

As in the previous chapters, I will now present three segments that illustrate the types of discourse moves used by the atheist students, as well as those from other religions with whom they spoke.

<div align="center">*Segment 1*</div>

This segment takes place in the atheist student homogeneous focus group. Ethan is the co-interviewer for this session.

1	Jenny: Well, we have a few minutes left. Is there anything else that you guys
2	wanted to say or is there anything that you didn't have a chance to say about
3	spirituality or your belief systems or how things have changed over time?
4	Melanie: We've made references to people's backgrounds, but I mean,
5	obviously full disclosure's unnecessary, but it would just be interesting to know
6	like, where we're coming from so that I could get the impression that there's
7	like... I don't know about you, but the rest of you came from Christian families.
8	Carl: Yeah, I mean I was raised Roman Catholic, um, you know, I did my first
9	communion and then after the first communion, I couldn't find my parents and I
10	started crying. My grandparents decided I was crying because, you know, Jesus
11	was making me cry. [laugher] Um, but, you know, by the time I got around to
12	confirmation, I was doing the confirmation because not doing the confirmation
13	would make my mother cry. [laughter] It was a little different that time. Um,
14	but, yeah, I mean, I was raised Catholic, fell away from that.
15	Rick: I quit right at the time of my confirmation, like, one day before I was
16	supposed to go through with it I was, like, "No."
17	Carl: See, I just did, the part where you're saying, "I do" to all the tenets of
18	belief, and I just said, "I don't." [laughter] Nobody listens.

19	Misty: Um, I guess my dad wasn't really religious but my mom, um, is, like,
20	Dutch Reformed, like, from Grand Rapids and those that are from Michigan are
21	probably familiar with that side of the state. So she, I don't know necessarily
22	how religious she was but it was always, it's very much part of the tradition,
23	you go to church every Sunday. And my dad would only go on Christmas, but
24	then he would always get into a fight with my mom about how Jesus was Black
25	and he wasn't blond haired and blue eyed and that would just piss her off to no
26	end. [laughter] It was really funny. Um, and I guess I'd, yeah, I would always
27	go but I never really, I just liked the music, that's why I went. But, and my
28	mom I guess turned - my dad died when I was about fifteen, so then my mom
29	turned more religious after that, and then she started asking, "Misty, why don't
30	you go to church with me, you know, are you religious, blah blah."

| 31 | Melanie: Well, I'm a third generation U.U., so I didn't really - |

| 32 | Ethan: Unitarian Universalists, for those who don't know. |

33	Melanie: Yeah, Unitarian Universalists, which is basically, because I only have
34	two seconds, "Believe what you want" [laughter] and I'll just, I mean,
35	obviously it's not that, but that's another one of those half hour things, so. Um,
36	and, uh, so yeah, like, my uncle who I mentioned is kind of, like, the odd one
37	out and my, um, grandma, neither of my grandmas really seem to care.
38	Actually, my grandma wrote me a Christmas card, wrote us a Christmas card
39	this year that had like, she needed to use up religious cards that she had received
40	so she had this one with a Bible quote and then said "Yeah right!" And I was
41	like, "Grandma!" [laughter]

Identity and Presentation of Self

This interaction takes place at the end of the atheist focus group. Melanie, having

discussed personal issues with the others for an hour, seeks out additional information

about their identities, wanting to know "where we're coming from" (line 6) religiously.

As part of my research design, I had not asked the students for "full disclosure" (line 5)

within the sessions about their religious and spiritual identities, so that they would be able

to decide how much or how little they were comfortable telling each other. Melanie

perhaps asked for additional information because she found this focus group to be a

learning experience, which she later explained in her heterogeneous session:

"I think in a lot of ways since I'm still searching, um, the first focus group was really helpful, in that, like, I could kind of take the ideas I and be like, 'Do I like that?' Like, it was more of a learning." – Melanie, mixed focus group #1

The others respond to Melanie's request to describe their identities with similar presentations of growing away from a Christian upbringing. Carl says that he "was raised Catholic, fell away from that" (line 14). Rick, also raised Catholic, "quit right at the time of [his] confirmation" (line 15). Misty, who described herself on her initial demographic paperwork as "agnostic/no religious affiliation" discusses how she maintained her participation in Christianity in order to appease her mother. She would "always go [to church]" but did not get anything more out of it than "just [liking] the music" (lines 26-27). Melanie, uniquely in this group raised in the Unitarian Universalist faith, presents herself as well. Her explanation is brief, and her belief system summarized as "believe what you want" (line 34).

Meghan's explanation of her religious upbringing comes later in the discussion, and was not included here as it turns the group's conversation in a new direction. Her story is of being enrolled a Jewish private school by her lapsed-Catholic father so that she would get a leg up on "[going] to Harvard one day or whatever." Her family put on the trappings of Judaism to fit in with the school community, and Meghan emerged as a young adult without interest in organized religion.

At the end of all of their turns, they have presented themselves in similar manners, as people who realized at a certain point in life that religions with dogmatic or illogical belief systems are to be abandoned without remorse. This is despite the fact that each of these five students, at least once during the study, described a time when he/she had

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wanted to have a religious identity, usually in order to fit in with peers. At this point in their lives, that desire no longer resides within any of them.

Solidarity and Situational Co-Membership; Norm

As shown in Table 9 in Chapter 4, the atheist students depicted a high level of solidarity with each other throughout their homogeneous session and a greater level of comfort and enjoyment than did the students from the other religious groups. In this interaction, the students' presentations of self lead to a further building of the solidarity they had established throughout their session.

This solidarity is based upon a shared disregard for Christianity. Some had abandoned it; in Melanie's case, it had been a topic for mockery within her family. The first to establish this norm is Carl, who jokes about his grandparents erroneously thinking that "Jesus was making [him] cry" (lines 10-11). In a different setting, where students who believe in the divinity of Jesus were present, this statement might not be received positively; here it invokes laughter among the others. They continue to laugh as Carl mocks his mother's potential distress if he abandoned the faith prior to his confirmation ceremony.

Rick supports this norm, by showing solidarity in rescinding Catholicism at the point of confirmation into the religion. This move allows Carl to continue his ridicule of the belief system they both abandoned, revealing another act that would have been insulting to some Christians, saying "I don't" (line 18) during a sacred religious ceremony.

During Misty's turn, she responds to the request for presentation of identity and then takes up the joking about Christianity and Jesus. In a twist on the narrative, she

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reveals her father's irreverent teasing of her mother about Jesus' racial identity. Misty tolerated her mother's requests to accompany her to church, while maintaining her distance from the beliefs; however, since her father's death she has not been on track with her mother. Her final comment, reducing her mother's imploring her to attend church to a "blah blah" (line 30), indicates that the trappings of religious observance continue to have very little meaning to her.

Melanie, differing from the others in her religious upbringing, is able to close the circle in the situational co-membership by joining in on the mockery of Christianity. She also reveals that her grandmother is actually in on the joke, having written "Yeah right" (line 40) over a Bible quote on a Christmas card. In retelling this incident, Melanie is able to bridge the gap between herself and religiously unaffiliated in her focus group.

The peppering of laughter throughout this interaction was typical of the entire session. The atheist focus group as a whole had the highest number of laughs by participants or shared laughter within the group, with 47 distinct episodes. The next highest were mixed focus group #3, with 27 episodes, and mixed focus group #2, with 25 episodes. The next highest count among the homogeneous groups was the Jewish focus group, with only 23. Evidence from other texts support how comfortable the atheist students felt in this session:

> "...*that same you know warm, squishy feeling of being in a room with a whole bunch of other atheists*." – Carl, mixed focus group #5

> "*The all atheist/agnostic group was a kind of reassuring experience... With the homogenous group, people were going off other's responses and there was more of a natural conversational flow*." – Misty, questionnaire

This comfort would not continue for the atheist students in the mixed group, perhaps in part because their shared irreverence toward religion could no longer be shared outwardly:

> *"I was afraid to express my full religious views in the second, especially any biases I had towards the other two religions. I avoided bringing up feminism or problems I see in the legitimacy or holiness of the texts. There are some things in their holy books I sharply disagree with, but I was more comfortable highlighting the similarities, especially because the other two interviewees were really nice."* – Melanie, questionnaire

Segment 2

This segment takes place in mixed focus group #1 and includes all three participants present, Melanie, Sam and Yusuf. The multiple segments of the session presented were selected because the solidarity built upon within this group is subtle. After counting all the codes referring to negative interactions in the focus groups, this session came out with an exceedingly low count (5, as compared to the rest which ranged up to 26). It also came out with a middle ranking of positive interactions (23, on a range of 16 to 27). However, there was no one segment that could tidily represent the mood and main focus of this group.

1 | Jenny: … Okay, so I'll open it up again to your reactions.
2 | …

3 | Melanie: […] But um, in terms of, like, campus climate, like, sometimes, I mean,
4 | its kind of sad, like, the most frequent thing I run into is just, like, the Campus
5 | Crusade for Christ and like, first of all, I find that, like a very offensive name, and,
6 | like, and they'll be, like, giving out granola bars at the bus stops and getting me to
7 | fill out surveys that are always, like, "Are you interested in Bible school?" "No."
8 | Like, I'm usually, like, such and such. And then I, like, I'm always like, "Should I
9 | feel dirty for eating this granola bar?" [laughter] And I don't know.

10 | Sam: I eat their granola bars and they think I'm going to hell. [Laughter]

11 | Melanie: That's the thing, like, should I let this group nourish me? I don't know,
12 | and I guess it just makes me a little bit uncomfortable but, but I don't think it has
13 | anything to do with, like, *maybe* strengthening my own beliefs but not like - it
14 | puts me in the position where I'm not able to really think of what I believe in a
15 | productive way. So.
16 | …

17 | Jenny: You didn't offer anything in the reactions.

18 | Yusuf: Reactions. [Jenny: Yeah.] I guess I feel what you guys were saying a lot,
19 | like, especially about feel, like, you get disrespect from other groups or, like, a lot
20 | of imposition from other people's beliefs, uh, I really have no idea where I'm
21 | going with this.
22 | …

23 | Melanie: I guess it's one of my ideals and guess they might be different from
24 | others of my group, but, uh, the, like, I think that inner peace is really an
25 | important part of my spirituality like, um, someone said something to me once
26 | that sparked in me, like, "You know you can go out and rally or whatever but,
27 | like, are you being a symbol of what you want to see?" It's the Gandhi quote, like,
28 | "Be what you want to see in the world." So, um, that's important to me, where,
29 | and I think that's maybe what you're saying to a certain extent, like. If you're
30 | letting, maybe what you're putting in the hand of God, I'm putting in the hands
31 | of, like, I guess just being peaceful. That didn't quite connect as a, as a
32 | comparison.

33 | Yusuf: Yeah, but I understand.

34 | Sam: I think it made sense, it's different means with the same end, kind of the,
35 | like, the ability to, like, accept things that you really can't change and you know
36 | allow yourself to be at peace or allow yourself to believe that God has a higher
37 | plan, like, it's, it's a different explanation of it, but it's the same end, kind of
38 | being at peace with what I, what you can change and *doing* something about the
39 | stuff you can.

40 | Yusuf: Yeah, and kind of, I guess you do kind of derive inner peace from, like,
41 | accepting maybe you can't do something, 'cause otherwise you'll, like, work so
42 | hard to do it and it is just not happening, so maybe that's, like, in that context you
43 | have to accept that you can't do anything about it, just to, like, grant yourself
44 | some peace. Otherwise you might be like, "I'm inadequate for this" or just, like,
45 | tell yourself or attribute it to, like, other factors that, like, make you more stressed
46 | out and not peaceful. I guess if you attribute it, like, this is the way it is supposed
47 | to be, that gives you inner peace, which I guess can be perceived as just not
48 | making an effort, but I don't know.

Solidarity and Situational Co-Membership

This segment marks the second time that the Campus Crusade for Christ (Cru) has been featured in an important interaction. Unlike the conversation between Jesse and Jada, discussed in chapter 6, Cru serves as a means for two participants to build solidarity with each other. Their stories are similar to Jesse's, in that they chose to interact with Cru in order to receive the free granola bar. They are, however, even more dismissive of the student group than Jesse is. Melanie turned them aside with just one word "No" (line 7), although the interaction left her pondering a new way of "strengthening [her] own beliefs" (line 13). Sam, inciting laughter, is not visibly concerned that "they think [he's] going to hell" (line 10), and will "eat their granola bars" (line 10) without a second thought.

The ways in which Sam and Melanie bond through their shared opposition to Cru is also quite reminiscent of how the atheist students found solidarity in bashing Christianity with each other. Indeed, Sam even notes at one point in the session how the conversation would have been different "since kind of Christianity isn't represented" (due to the vagaries in assigning students to the mixed focus groups). Likely, they would have had to think more carefully about their critiques of Cru. Yusuf, although he does not comment on Cru itself, is understanding of the experiences that Melanie and Sam have described; he joins in the solidarity by saying, "I guess I feel what you guys were saying a lot" (line 18).

However much the participants may have enjoyed their agreement during the discussion of Cru, the topic is not all that personal and the solidarity built through it probably not that strong. Later in the group, though, the students make a visible effort to

cross the religious divides between them. As a participant Melanie is unique, due to

being an atheist who was raised in a religious tradition, Unitarian Universalism.

Therefore, she is able to utilize religious language to connect with the others. In her turn

beginning at line 23, she stretches the talk of her goal of experiencing "inner peace" (line

24) to meet what she understands to be the trust Sam and Yusuf are "putting in the hand

of God" (line 30).

Although Melanie admits that her analogy "didn't quite connect" (line 31), Sam

and Yusuf validate her effort. Both offer that to "accept things that you really can't

change" (line 35) or "accepting maybe you can't do something" (line 41) is something

that does not require God. Sam suggests that one can "allow yourself to be at peace or

allow yourself to believe that God has a higher plan" (lines 36-37), which implies that

choosing peace without God is perfectly acceptable. Yusuf is even more oblique with his

reference to a higher power, with the statement about accepting that "this is the way it is

supposed to be" (lines 46-47). Presumably, this implies some sort of generalized being

that defines what should and should not happen. However, Yusuf definitely does believe

in God, as evidenced by statements made at other points during the study, such as:

> "… *and having faith in God and, like, just turning to God for help when you need it*." – Yusuf, Muslim student focus group

Sam's belief in God playing a role in his life is a bit less clear, as shown in this

statement made just before the final segment excerpted above:

> "*That's a strange concept to me that I will never understand, but… Like, the kind of not believing in some kind of higher power whether it's the higher power that comes from the good in people or whether it's the higher power that comes from God - that's an extremely strange concept to me*." – Sam

Despite their differences, both make room for Melanie's belief system in the conversation, instead of labeling God as a source of calm in their lives.

Sam feels high solidarity with his co-discussants, so much so that he feels that he has had a sweeping realization about the nature of religious diversity. Six times he declares a version of what I have coded "everyone has the same beliefs," in four of which he mentions "different means with the same end" (line 34) in those exact, or similar, words. He explains what he calls this "cool realization" at the end of the session:

> *"Religion seems to be more of the means, you know, whatever your customs are, whatever your um, whatever, whatever means that you can find to get to - and spirituality is more of the ends, spirituality is more of the being at peace with yourself, and being at peace with what's going on, appreciating the beauty in things regardless of what you attribute that beauty to - whether it's God, whether it's nature, whether it's whatever - whether it's the good in people, whatever you want to attribute that that beauty to, um, I feel like, again, religion gives you that thing to attribute it to, and spirituality is kind of the end that we all seem to share, kind of those shared morals and shared ethics and shared appreciation for, like, things that are beautiful."* – Sam

Led by Sam, the focus group has a total of nine instances of the code "everyone has the same beliefs," which ranks considerably higher than the mixed focus groups with the next highest prevalence, groups #2 and #5, each with four. These three students were working hard to build feelings of co-membership during this mixed focus group situation.

Melanie reports later that the focus group was a lot more pleasant than she had been expecting:

> *"Well we did, it was different than I expected. I thought it was going to be just divisive kind of thing, but it ended up being very much, like, 'Let's see what we have in common.'"* – Melanie, interview

This interaction takes place in mixed focus group #5 and actively includes all five participants present: Carl, David, Inaara, Brooke and Judy.

1	Jenny: Well, you guys have had a high level of agreement tonight, or at least
2	saying, "Yeah that's not surprising," or "I totally expected you to say that," or
3	maybe you are just kind of sleepy, maybe it's the rain, but, um, why do you
4	think that the conversation has gone so smoothly? Or someone can say, "I
5	believe my religion is the ultimate truth" and nobody really blinks at that, and
6	yet you're pretty much all from very different backgrounds. Why so many
7	common answers?
8	Carl: We're trying to play nice with the other kids.
9	Jenny: Is that really what it is?
10	Carl: I guess.
11	David: We're not aggressive people. We don't believe in violence. [laughter]
12	Inaara: I guess my whole thing is - go ahead.
13	Brooke: Um, I just, I mean, I didn't come here to argue or debate anyone. I just
14	kind of whatever everyone says, I just think, "Oh it's different," but I wouldn't
15	go, you know, "*What*?" I don't, I don't know. I feel like the questions aren't so,
16	like, the questions are pretty even. I don't feel like they are geared towards any
17	one, specific religion, so I feel like it's kind of hard, I don't know if it's hard,
18	but I'm not surprised the answers are common.
19	Carl: And there's a lot of common psychological ground underlying them
20	which doesn't necessarily have to do with your particular faith, whereas, you
21	know, if we were each given a minute to defend our position, *go*, um, that
22	would be a different discussion. [laughter]
23	Jenny: Right. That's true.
24	David: I think it's just an understanding that, because, um, in just the way I am
25	with being at the university and, you know, coming from my background, I just
26	understand people, and I don't want to immediately just, you know, outright
27	believe, you know, that well Judaism and Islam is wrong. I don't do that. I'm
28	not, I'm not a fundamentalist. I'm not saying that, you know, their religion is
29	wrong, I can't say that. Um, but so that's, you know, the reason why I don't
30	blink and why I don't, and I am understandable of their answers and it's not
31	surprising to me but just, I think, like he said, it's just a common ground

| 32 | amongst all of us, you know, it's the psychological factor, you know. I mean |
| 33 | we're all human, it's just we have a faith. |

| 34 | Jenny: Inaara, were you starting to say something? |

35	Inaara: Yeah, well, you guys kind of basically just said it, that I mean, it's not
36	so much playing nice, I guess, but, um, I figure that we all just have this
37	common understanding and respect for each other and it's not, I mean,
38	nobody's trying to force their beliefs on anybody else, it's more of a, we just
39	understand where everybody else is coming from and that's respectable.

| 40 | Jenny: Want to add anything? |

41	Judy: Um, no, I definitely just agree. I don't think that I'm right and I don't
42	think that other religions are wrong. I just think that my religion's right for me,
43	and it could be just because I was brought up that way and was taught that,
44	like, these specific beliefs are *good* and they should be valued and so I do. But,
45	I've also been taught that everyone else has been brought up, like, in very
46	different ways than I have and it's not a means to, like, judge them by or
47	criticize them. It's just different and how they were brought up.

48	Jenny: I mean, it sort of sounds like you're saying "Anything goes. It's all up
49	to you, whatever what you want to do is fine with me. I don't really care." Is
50	that sort of an accurate or semi-accurate reading of what you guys are saying?

51	Judy: I think as long as I don't, as one religion or one person doesn't take their
52	religion to go against another person or another group, I think it's great that
53	there are different religions, so there can be different views and different ideas
54	and beliefs, and that once one is targeting another and saying "They're wrong"
55	or that "They shouldn't exist" or, then I think there's a problem.

56	Brooke: Yeah, I feel like, I mean if you asked the question, "What do you guys
57	think of Islam?" then I feel, like, that's *different*, but if you're just asking
58	people, you're asking us about our personal beliefs, so it's, like, how I can I
59	argue with someone else and say, like, I mean I don't even understand, I don't
60	see the room, I understand that there could be, but here I just don't feel like
61	there would be much confrontation because it's not, I feel like it's not my place
62	to tell someone what their personal beliefs should be or shouldn't be, like, and
63	I feel like the questions haven't been geared towards that at all, so.

Norm

The final focus group session of the study, mixed group #5, was marked by a

distinctly high level of agreement between the students and a lack of questioning or

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critiquing one another. Unlike the excerpt featuring Melanie, Sam and Yusuf presented above, the students did not make great efforts to connect with each other. Many of their answers were brief and reactions to each others' comments were minimal. As the interviewer, I could tell at the time that the tone of the group was very different, and that there was some sort of norm in effect that prevented the students from truly speaking their minds.

Coding evidence analyzed after the fact supports my supposition. This session showed the highest levels of four types of negative interactions of the five mixed sessions:

- Critiquing someone's ideas (8, other groups ranging from 1-8)
- Declaring one's religion as ultimate truth (7; other groups ranging from 0-3)
- Persuading someone to agree (8; all other groups 0)
- Self-censoring (5; other groups ranging from 1-5)

In addition, mixed focus group #5 showed the lowest or middle levels on two positive types of interactions:

- Affirmation of other speakers (8; other groups ranging from 5-19)
- Commenting that people with different backgrounds are in agreement (0; other groups ranging from 1-7)

Finally, and somewhat discrepantly, the students in this session mentioned 11 times their acceptance of other religions, compared to a range of 3-9 for the other groups. This does complicate a reading of their tone as a group, although it may indicate a difference between what students said and what they were actually feeling.

Based on my reading of the situation at the time, I chose to ask the students about the situation, to hear why they thought it was happening. The initial responses provided by Carl set the tone for the segment, as he suggests that the students were merely putting on a façade of agreement, or "trying to play nice with the other kids" (line 8). Although he admits "I guess" (line 10), that this may not be accurate, the rest of the segment demonstrates just how difficult it was for me to get the students to say anything even remotely critical of one another in an overt way. David and Brooke both also support Carl's claim, with their own statements that they are "not aggressive people" (line 11) and "didn't come here to argue or debate anyone" (line 13).

Although many of my questions incited deeper analysis in the other focus groups, in the current one the students attribute their agreeability to what Carl calls the "common psychological ground underlying them" (line 19). The others confirm this understanding. As David says, "I mean we're all human, it's just we have a faith" (lines 32-33). Of course, Carl, in labeling himself "a thoroughgoing materialist" to me in his questionnaire does not actually meet David's definition of faith, but David does not know this.

Although the students were not equipped with the language of norms during the focus group, they were aware of the effects of the discourse situation. Some of the comments the participants made about their unwillingness to criticize one another are actually in conflict with their own statements elsewhere, while others compare more favorably. Table 13 presents a comparison of relevant excerpts.

Table 13. Comparison of quotations from students in mixed focus group #5	
Excerpt from mixed focus group #5	Excerpt from additional text
"…there's a lot of common psychological ground underlying them which doesn't necessarily have to do with your particular faith…" – Carl (lines 19-20)	"I think I talked about this a little bit in the group, just at a, you know, at a level of, you know, theological truth of propositions, right, you know, there are people making statements that I believe to be *completely, completely* false, right, you know, where you're saying, you know, 'Islam is the path and the way,' or 'Jesus is our Lord and Savior,' any of these things, you know, I'm going to look at that and I'm going to say 'No. no.' And, you know, that, especially, you know, being outside of the framework of organized religion altogether, right, it's easy just to criticize all of the them." – Carl, interview
"… we just understand where everybody else is coming from and that's respectable." – Inaara (lines 38-39)	"…you know my conviction and my faith are so strong, and I believe it's, like, the ultimate truth." – Inaara, mixed focus group #5
"I don't think that I'm right and I don't think that other religions are wrong." – Judy (lines 41-42)	"In the second group I learned that people can be sensitive to others and people fear bringing up potentially uncomfortable conversation topics in order to dissuade an argument." – Judy, questionnaire
"I'm not saying that, you know, their religion is wrong, I can't say that." – David (lines 28-29)	"I just can't believe that. I mean, you know, if all these three main religions in the world, you know, are all preaching semi-the-same, you know, if you get down to just a very, you know, core of each of the three you realize that, you know, I just think that when, you know, I interact with a Jew or a Muslim or, you know, any of that, I have, it's just that, you know, they're a person with a faith, you know, who can act the same as I can, with respect, you know, to their elders, with a love, you know, to the, you know, to the handicapped, with a love, you know, to persons of other religions." – David, interview
"…so it's, like, how I can I argue with someone else and say, like, I mean I don't even understand, I don't see the room, I understand that there could be, but here I just don't feel like there would be much confrontation because it's not, I feel like it's not my place to tell someone what their personal beliefs should be or shouldn't be, …" – Brooke (lines 58-62)	"The second group experience simply reaffirmed my thoughts about spirituality transcending religion and being a universal concept that can apply to anyone." – Brooke, questionnaire

This table demonstrates that Carl and Inaara especially glossed over their true

opinions when commenting on other people's faith. Judy's statements show that she was

aware of the norming effect, though she was unwilling to name it at the time. David's

comments are fairly well aligned in both settings.

As for Brooke, she seems to both accept the legitimacy of other religions and

understand that they might be dismissed by others. The interaction in this focus group

ends with her describing the difference between what the participants might "think of"

(line 57) each others' religions and feeling as though one has the "place to tell someone

what their personal beliefs should be or shouldn't be" (lines 61-62). Reading between the

lines, Brooke knows that people have negative opinions about each others' beliefs, but

she draws a line at offering any public critique of them. Remembering her extremely

vocal critiques of Christianity in her homogeneous focus groups, this courtesy only

extends to those from other religious affiliations. Indeed, she later commented:

> "*My experience in the first group was definitely more enlightening - and annoying - than my experience in the second group. Because we were all supposed to be of the same religious sect, each person gave their perspective on the same thing, and it was easier to feel ownership rights and criticize others' opinions - because it felt like a direct 'assault' on my own beliefs.*" – Brooke, questionnaire

Post-Hoc Positioning and Face Saving

The final element of discourse analysis for the atheist students is their acts of

post-hoc positioning and post-hoc face saving. The atheist students had two instances of

post-hoc positioning and five of post-hoc face saving. Carl and Meghan, engaged in the

two acts of positioning, made fairly opposite moves, with Carl painting his mixed session

peers as "respectful of each other to a fault" (a similar move to that made by Inaara about

the same group), perhaps an indictment of a lack of critical thinking. Meghan instead

pinned her dialogue partners as "very judgmental." The five face saving moves were

made by Melanie and Misty, both concerned that they would have offended religious students if they had expressed their full opinions of the others' beliefs.

Discussion of Discourse Analysis

The interactions presented here depict the range of freedom the atheist students felt in speaking their minds during the study. In the homogeneous group, they happily joined together and shared laughter in bashing Christianity. In the first mixed group presented, Melanie's discourse moves to find common ground with Yusuf and Sam are representative of how many of the atheist students needed to bridge a wide gap to make connections with the religious students. The second mixed group presented, however, shows that atheists and the religious are not so different in the means they will use to conceal their true thoughts to avoid offending one another or fostering conflict. Post-hoc moves further brought this fact to light.

What do these three examples of interaction say about how atheist students use language to create meaningful representations of their spiritual identities? One result is to emphasize again the unique reaction of atheist students in this study, that they found it a meaningful, reassuring experience to converse with like-minded thinkers. They minimized any differences within their group and perceived a large span between them and the religious. However, once interacting with those religious peers, they tended to dampen the critiques and mockery they feel for those religions in favor of avoiding overt conflict. These findings lead to implications for the continued usage of discourse analysis in higher education as well as for better understandings of interfaith and intra-faith conversations that involve atheist students. In addition, they lead to implications surrounding the moral and equitable treatment of atheist students on college campuses.

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These findings also speak to an "atheist frame" at work in the students' discourse and co-constructed in their conversations. The atheist frame, through which they interpret and create meaning, includes the following features:

- Common understandings – a disdain for Christianity, the place of atheists as a minority in a religious society

- Points of disagreement – willingness to allow for the value of religion in people's lives

- Faith specific issues that arise in dialogue – stretching beyond one's comfort zone to connect with religious students, concealing one's true opinions in order to avoid conflict

Another way of thinking about the atheist frame is to consider it a group-level identity co-constructed by the atheist students through their interactions with one another during this study. The findings were based on the situation of the particular students in the room as well as the particular timing in their lives in which the study took place. The atheist frame co-created by them surrounds them all, yet with ample room for individual expression and viewpoints. The findings about the atheist frame, as well as from the discourse analysis, will be compared with the results of the qualitative coding analysis discussed at the end of this chapter. The frame also has profound implications for accurate specification of faith development models and how a modified conceptual framework can be applied in future research. It also gives initial insight into atheist college students, a heretofore understudied student population in higher education.

In addition to the findings about the atheists, the interactions offer additional insight into students from the other religious backgrounds, Sam and Yusuf in segment 2 and David, Inaara, Brooke and Judy in segment 3. Sam and Yusuf were members of a mixed group that worked diligently to bridge differences in their religious beliefs and come to a mutual understanding. The others were in a mixed group that professed total acceptance of each other, while perhaps harboring divergent thoughts internally. At the very least, they did not strive to connect at the same level as Sam and Yusuf (and Melanie) did. Such different outcomes may likely be attributed to personality factors not within the scope of this study.

Results: Qualitative Coding

As in the previous chapters, I will now provide the results of the qualitative coding process conducted on the data corpus. The results will address multiple angles on the data, including students' definitions of key terms, the themes and ideas they discussed most frequently, and the codes which relate back to the conceptual framework of this study. After discussing and summarizing these findings, I will compare them with the above findings on the atheist students' discourse analysis.

Definitions and Aspects of "Religious" and "Spiritual"

Students were asked during both the homogeneous and heterogeneous focus group sessions to provide definitions for the words "religious" and "spiritual." Similar to the religious students in this study, the atheist students also tended to discuss more frequently the aspects of "religious" rather than its definitions. Three of the four most commonly used codes among them were: "religion and culture" (10), "religious

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diversity" (8), and "religious conversion" (6), the first two being among the top six codes in this category for the study. Although the atheists provided 12 total discrete definitions for religious, the only one they used with any frequency was "religion as linked to morality" (9), likely because they are highly concerned with what they feel is an erroneous connection between the two:

> *"And I mean, I would say, right, right, so you got the main point there which is the ethical code, you know, does not, you know, in any way tie to religious beliefs or lack thereof, right… Um, but, um, yeah, you know, secular humanists, right, you know, the idea is that you believe to lead a good life and do good without a promise of reward in the afterlife, right."* – Carl, interview

The atheist students differed distinctly from the religious students when it came to defining "spiritual." While students from the other three affiliations heavily defined spirituality as a connection to something greater, this idea only came up twice among all of the atheist students. Instead, they tended to view spirituality as more of a grounded event having to do with one's mindset or way of life. They used the following codes: "spirituality as self-reflection" (7), "spirituality as noticing or being aware" (5), and "spirituality as outside the everyday" (4). Carl personally also mentioned four times his own idea of "religion and spirituality as brain function," which makes the phenomena easily explained away through the use of biopsychology, Carl's major. In all, the atheist students discussed 16 different definitions for "spiritual."

God Images and Associations

The atheist students in this study differed most obviously from the others based on their lack of belief in God. Overall, they mentioned this doubt or disbelief 35 times. Three other codes received passing attention, mostly of the negative variety: "God – source of tests – 'God's will'" (5 total, 4 negative), "God – depending upon" (4 total, 2

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negative), and "God – creator" (3 total, 2 negative). Across the study, the atheists only

made six comments that reflected some sort of positive understanding or affirmation of

God. These comments were not nearly as strong as those in the negative. The following

is an example of a positive, though hypothetical, description of God as a source of tests:

> "*… but if I were to just think, like, all the time, 'This is what God has in mind for me.' Like, if such and such happened, if I, you know, didn't study hard enough for a test, like, probably that's not usually the case, but, like, if it were these larger scale pictures, um, like, so-and-so died but, like, that was what just had to happen, God willed it to be so, or I don't even know what people think, that's the problem. [Jenny: Right.] If that were the case, um, I think that would be really comforting, and really, like, maybe need to live more empowered lives, simply, like, okay, then I could get over it and be who I am right now. So, I guess the fact that I see that value, some people would question the value of that.*" – Melanie, interview

Faith Influences, Faith Trajectories and Developmental Objectives

Returning to the conceptual frameworks for this study (both Figures 1 and 2 in

Chapter 3), there were three elements of faith development that were distinguished for

each of the religious affiliations. Each of these will be addressed for the atheist students,

with codes developed in the qualitative analysis phase of the study used as evidence.

*Faith Influences: Challenges to Religion and Relationship between Religion
and Society*

To examine the faith influences at work in the lives of the atheist students, I again

considered the challenges they have faced in their religious and spiritual lives since high

school, as provided by them in the second round focus groups. In addition, I had asked

the atheist students, "How do you find the environment at the [University]?" in their first

round focus group. I examined their answers for evidence of the markers of religious

identity, young adult transition and resolution of identity faith influences. Again, I also

include here the students' understandings of the relationships between religion and societal status.

- Meghan has taken courses on religion and found them a positive learning experience. She is also open to conversations with religiously diverse peers. However, she seems to keep herself quite distant in these situations, as if to prevent any change from occurring. The main effect for her has been in dispelling the stereotypes she has had of the religions. Meghan is concerned with external markers of religious identity, as well as the young adult transition into self-authority. Meghan is one of the three students in the atheist group who offers very little direct talk about societal influences. Meghan attributes her identity development as solely being influenced by her father.

- Rick has experienced a familiar challenge on campus, that of interacting with Christian missionaries. He finds that he cannot bring himself to be open to conversation with "someone who has directly approached [him] with the intent to" convert him. Rick does find it a positive experience to be among religiously diverse peers who do not have such intentions. His faith influence is the young adult transition. Rick has developed greater sense of identity and morality through interacting with diverse individuals.

- The initial challenge faced by Misty upon arriving at college was the discovery that students tended to find friends and communities through their religious and ethnic identities, something that was not possible for her personally. She felt forced to ask herself, "Oh, well, what am I?" and even considered becoming a Jew. Since that time, however, she has embraced herself for who she is, and no

longer feels that pressure for conformity. She is beginning to move from young adult transition to the resolution of identity. Like Rick, Misty also refers to interactions with individuals as being more influential than atheists' social status.

- Melanie has experienced two of the common challenges to her beliefs during college, interaction with missionaries and academic courses on religion. While she is more open to missionaries getting her to reflect more deeply on her own beliefs than is Rick, her threshold for openness to them is still fairly low. However, when information on the monotheistic religions was delivered to her through academic means, she found herself able to have an "appreciation" for the existence of those religions. Melanie is influenced both by solidifying her own authority role and beginning to resolve her religious identity. Melanie feels that she has developed an internal "moral compass" shaped by her own spirituality, although she realizes this probably has to do with her cultural surroundings.

- Carl's main challenge has been interacting with people of religious convictions, and realizing that faith and intelligence are not mutually exclusive character traits. Carl has been quite open to his growth in tolerance, despite the steadfastness of his own beliefs. He is confident of his own voice and is at the phase wherein resolving his identity is his current faith influence. Carl admittedly still views the world somewhat through a Christian framework, due to which he is "very concerned with the assigning of blame and with making judgments."

The discussion by the atheist students about social position is quite varied. Although Carl comments in the atheist student focus group that there is "such a strong *stigma* against the word atheist," [his emphasis] the others do not have a large amount to

say on that angle of the topic. Carl is also the student that raises (twice) the Pledge of Allegiance and how it relates to atheism and religion in this country. The others seem to have a lot more to say about the role religion has had, particularly as a negative force, on shaping their identities. For example:

> "*And I guess, I always, I end up talking about God as a deficiency model, somehow, like, it's because of lacking something. And I think that's probably still a reaction to being told, not even that I need God, but God must exist for you. And so, I talk about it still with a little bit of harshness when all I really mean to say is that, I think that I can find more strength and more obligation to behave in a way that I consider responsible without a God.*" – Rick, atheist student focus group

> "*Um, and then, I guess getting to college, I think, then I started, you know, the kind of hypocrisy of all the beliefs and stuff with most religions. I just started to kind of really hate that and that's when I started thinking more about, 'Oh it's okay if I don't believe in God. There's a lot more people here that don't and it's okay.' Um, I'm not quite to the maturity point of being accepting that people are religious, but I think that definitely being here [on campus], where most of the population is pretty liberal and some of those that are religious, you know,* do *think about things, they don't take the Bible literally or whatever they believe in.*" – Misty, atheist student focus group

The atheist students perceive that the religious are privileged in society, although some express a more nuanced understanding of this than others. These nuances will be described in the next subsection.

Faith Trajectories: Definitions of Self as Religious and/or Spiritual and Change in Religion and Spirituality over Time

The next element of the conceptual framework to be analyzed is the atheist students' faith trajectories, or their development over time. In order to examine this growth, I also considered their current definitions of self. Not surprisingly, during their round one focus group, none of the atheist students were willing to define themselves as religious. Melanie came the closest to employing the label, calling herself "a little bit of

a nomad religiously" because of her background as a Unitarian Universalist. As for utilizing the term spiritual, the students fell along a continuum. Carl was the most opposed to it, preferring to think during potential spiritual moments that, "Ah! Oh my mid-lobe is firing a lot." Meghan was on the opposite end of the spectrum, as she "definitely would consider [herself] spiritual." Melanie, Misty and Rick employ the term as more of a convenience, as it is readily accessible to and relatable by those of religious backgrounds, although none find it to be an exact descriptor of their identities. In this way, the atheist students somewhat resemble the Muslim students, in the assertion that the standard terms and definitions of the study are inaccurate for them.

The following are the preliminary faith stages determined for the atheist students in the study, including their statements of change since high school and reflective of the information on their faith influences presented above:

- Stage 3 – Meghan, age 21, is beginning to develop a full set of beliefs, but many of them remain tacit and not well understood by her. She knows she only needs to validate herself and is working to build her confidence. However, she is easily influenced and feels pressured by her peers. She experiences the religious as having power in society, although her understanding of how this works is not complex.

- Stage 3.5 – Rick, age 20, is beginning to move past the anger that often characterized his relationship with religion. As he does that, he is able to offer internal validation to his beliefs, which often do not receive that from the external. He has made the choice of a new community wherein he can express

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his opinions comfortably. He opposes the various forms of privilege, including that of the religious, but is not always willing to engage with the system.

- Stages 3.5/4 – Misty, age 21, accepts that she can develop her own form of spirituality that is free from religion. She is also letting go of her anger and is accepting that religion may be right for other people. She is still learning much from atheist peers about potential beliefs that are available to her and will likely soon be ready to fully embrace her adult faith identity.

Melanie, age 20, has a religious and spiritual life that she is comfortable with. She has developed her understandings over time and is still open to learning. She is used to thinking of herself as an authority who makes her own decisions. She is still somewhat susceptible to peer influence and therefore is not wholly settled in her identity. Melanie opposes the privilege of the religious and the other forms of discrimination that are tied in with it. She sees power in holding a minority position, explaining that "the person who is … in the minority is empowered to be the spokesperson for that." She is not, however, always willing to use this to work against privileges in her own surroundings.

- Stage 4 – Carl, age 23, is settled in an identity as a science-based and humanistic atheist. He has comes to terms with the religiosity of others and accepts the potential benefits of such a life. His thinking about his own identity is complex, and much has been shaped by his religious upbringing, but he no longer experiences doubt or confusion about his beliefs. He is opposed to religious privilege, but also prefers to avoid direct confrontations surrounding it.

Developmental Objectives: Most Frequently Used Codes and Relationship to Religious Affiliation

The final element of the conceptual framework to be discussed in terms of the atheists is the developmental objective, the theme at the core of what someone is expected to accomplish through a fully realized developmental trajectory. As I did in previous chapters, I instead considered the topics that are important, contentious, or concerning to the atheist students. This process operated at the group-level of analysis, wherein I attempted to use the breadth of their speech to make my determination. To do this, I determined the codes that were used 20 times or more by the atheist students. These were:

- God – statement of disbelief (35)

- Family member's religious practice (20)

In addition to the codes with 20 or more uses, I also looked for codes with heavy employment that were unique to the atheists. While these did have fewer than 20 mentions, they were still in the top 50 in usage. For the atheists, the codes were:

- Wanting to have a religious faith or belief in God (10)

- Art and music (8)

Finally, there were several "codes of interest" which related theologically or culturally to atheism. They were:

- Minorities or minority status (11)

- Avoidance of religion or religious conversations (10)

- Goals and dreams (10)

- Disassociating with one's religion (9)

- Use of 'atheist' label (9)

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The developmental objective for atheists, as determined by the literature review, was partnership with humanity. As done in previous chapters, I looked at the quotations for the atheist students' most important codes and compared them to the theme of partnership with humanity. I considered a negative relationship between a quotation and theme to be present when the quotation indicated the student's motivation to be attributed to something other than humanism. A lack of specified motivation, or no relationship at all, was considered neutral.

Just as with the Jewish and Muslim students, the posited developmental objective is not evidenced in the quotations for the most important codes. The only code with a high percentage of quotations relating to the theme was goals and dreams, with 60% relating negatively. The code art and music had a 25% positive relationship, although with only eight total quotations, this is only minimally meaningful. In total, only 15 out of 119 quotations had any relationship at all. This again may be due to the high standard set for declaration of a relationship, that the students either had to reference a belief in humanity somewhat or reject it. Two examples of relevant quotations were:

> "*I think about the lack of God as also necessitating agency in my own life, a lot more than I think a lot of my family does and a lot of people I've met do. But I also think, because I don't believe in God, I need to have a lot more faith in people.*" – Rick, mixed focus group #4

> "*But what do I reject, if I reject anything? Yeah, so I think it's like, I guess I reject the notion that humans aren't big enough to have done this and, like, nature isn't grand enough to just have been or to be becoming something new.*" – Melanie, interview

What does it mean that there was such little consonance between the atheist students' talk and the information gathered from the literature about their developmental objective? Although humanism is the code that most directly aligns with a partnership

with humanity, it was only referenced three times by the atheist students. This could be due to Nash's (2003) point that there is a wide variety of belief systems that incorporate a lack of belief in God, and these students are just that mixed. Misty and Meghan sound like Nash's "spiritual atheists" (p. 9) and agnostics, who are still "[searching] for spiritual or transcendent truths" even without a core belief in God. Melanie, Rick and Carl all seem to incorporate bits of secular humanism, in which people believe that "we alone, are responsible for ourselves and others" (p. 11) and "social justice" atheism, a belief system which advocates "that humanistic values can easily replace traditional religious values in promoting human welfare and rights throughout the world" (p. 15). Carl also references his grounding in science, which Nash explains as fueling skepticism when religious teachings come into "conflict with the teachings of science" (p. 15).

Before making a final determination about atheists' developmental objective, I again compared the quotations of the top codes for the atheists to the mainstream developmental objective, individualization. In this analysis, three of the codes were 70% or higher neutrally related, family member's religious practice, minorities or minority status, and art and music. Wanting to have a religious faith or belief in God was 70% negatively related to individualization, and disassociating with one's religion was 67% positively related. The other four codes had mixed relationships. As with the Jewish and Muslim students, the mainstream developmental objective did relate more closely to the atheists' talk than the objective originally posited for them. But this relationship was not overwhelmingly evident. Again, I am left with no stronger conclusion as to the reasons behind the weakness of the developmental objective analysis; I will speculate further about this in Chapter 9.

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Unlike with the Muslim students, whose codes I checked against the developmental objective of communal obligation, I will not conduct the same analysis with the quotations from the atheist students. The reason for this is that the atheist students in this study, with the possible exception of Melanie, do not belong to a religious community to which they would feel such obligation. Their community, so to speak, is to humanity writ large. As that developmental objective analysis did not yield compelling results, there is no reason to rehash it.

In addition to using the atheists' top codes to examine their developmental objective, they can also further illuminates the students' discourse patterns. Their speech patterns differed from the three groups of religious students, in that they did not reserve the majority of their talk on within-group themes to their homogeneous focus group. While the Christians spoke most frequently of Jesus Christ during their session, the Jews in Hebrew during their session, and the Muslims of proper behavior in their session, the atheists were more evenly divided in the settings in which they spoke of some of their core beliefs. For example, their disbelief in God was mentioned 10 times in their homogeneous group, and an additional 10 more times in the mixed sessions. Avoidance of religious conversations and wanting to have a religious faith were brought up five times each in the atheist group and two and three times, respectively, in the mixed groups. Not all of their main codes fit this pattern. For example, they spoke of minority status four times in the homogenous group, but did not address the topic in the heterogeneous groups. This reversal of the pattern, though not perfect, shows once again just how different the atheist students are from the Christians, Jews and Muslims in this study.

The most important codes to the atheists also demonstrate the nature of atheists coming together in community. From this list, it is pretty obvious that the main theme which connected the atheist students was their constant referencing of their lack of belief in God's existence. However, the secondary themes flesh out that main story and illustrate the complexities within it. The atheist students in this study have disassociated with, or made very strong breaks from, the religions of their families. In addition, they continue to keep a safe distance between themselves and the religious establishment. This avoidance is conducted as an act of self-preservation. Depending on the intensity of this behavior, it has been shown that it can be related to a delay in the resolution of a student's spiritual identity.

A reason for the students' continued avoidance of the religious is because they perceive themselves to be minorities in a country full of religiously committed people. This acknowledgment of their minority status is intriguing when coupled with their thoughts on using "atheist" as a label to describe themselves. In combination, they illustrate that atheism truly is not an organized body of believers, or even non-believers, but instead a category of convenience used both by the religious, to set them apart, and atheists themselves, to band together in support. In the following quotation, Meghan explains the "atheist" label:

> "*Ok, yeah, in terms of, like, putting a label on it. I'll say just, like, you know agnostic/atheist whatever, but I don't know, I don't really, like, have a name for, like, my own, like, spiritual thing. It's just, it is what it is. Like, I'll just say it because it's easier for people. They're just, like, 'Oh, ok.' Instead of sitting there you know thirty minutes later, 'Oh ok, so that's what it is.'*" – Meghan, atheist student focus group

The two codes listed above that remain to be discussed are goals and dreams and wanting to have a religious faith or belief in God. The former describes Meghan's

description for her spiritual life and was heavily discussed in her mixed focus group setting. The latter is an interesting insight into the growth of these students, who describe high school as a time when they tried to fit in religiously, but found that they could not simply will themselves to believe in God. This passage from Carl is amusing on the surface, but describes a multifaceted internal battle:

> *"I've had friends tell me that for someone who says he's an atheist I really seem to believe in God a lot. That, um, you know, especially back in high school, um, you know, I would, you know, curse God for not letting me believe in Him. Right, that I pretty much wanted God to exist but, you know, I simply, you know, exactly what you're [Melanie] saying, you can't just say that I believe in God, you actually have to believe in God. [laughter] That's it's two completely different things. It seems to me to undermine the, the whole free will argument for condemning people to hell, I didn't freely choose to reject God, I tried to believe in God, He just didn't let me. [laughter] But I guess in terms of how I've changed over college, um, I mean, you know, one thing is that I've mellowed out and I am not so angry at the God I don't believe exists anymore."* – Carl, atheist focus group

Learning from and Feelings about Focus Group Experience

Once again, the final element of analysis for the atheist students is their reactions to the experiences of the focus groups. This will provide information about their frames of mind as well as knowledge about how involvement in intra- and intergroup dialogues affects students.

Melanie preferred the first session, in which she could "take the ideas" and determine if they would be useful for her life. In the second, she was more cautious, afraid to offend others with her standings on issues. Meghan's position has been well-discussed already. In sum she says, "I felt extremely uncomfortable and threatened in the second focus group. But I absolutely loved the first focus group." Misty found the atheist group as "reassuring" as her peers did, and the mixed group a learning experience

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that "[drove] home the point that every religious group would like to count itself as the voice of the religion and you must be careful not to generalize." Rick found himself highly "worked up" by the first group, which "generated a lot of bobble-heading." In the second group, he was pleasantly surprised at the way he could make connections across religious diversities. Finally, Carl had a great deal more to say about the atheist session, which helped him to develop "a greater understanding of the various bases that can support a person's leap into the chasm of unbelief." The atheist students were more similar to the Christian students, in that their reactions to the study seem to parallel their faith development, than the Muslims and Jews, whose reactions seem better explained by personality factors.

Discussion of Qualitative Coding

Taking the results of the qualitative analysis as a whole, the atheist students in this study appear to be distinctly different from the three groups of religious students, yet a group without much internal coherence tying them together. Their shared bond of disbelief in God and being religious minorities was strong in the moments of the interactions. However, without many options of existing communities of like-belief on campus, these connections are unlikely to bring them together again in the future.

The atheist students are similar to the others in more frequently describing religion through its related aspects than by definition. The only definitional association they frequently discussed was a negative one, its link to morality. Their understanding of spirituality is quite different, not a connection to something greater or out of the ordinary, but instead a manifestation of living one's daily life in a heightened manner. They reject nearly all understandings of God. Their unique interpretations of the typical terms

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surrounding religion and spirituality have implications for the moral and equitable application of language and definitions on college campuses.

The atheists in this study keenly feel religion as a negative force in their lives, although not all describe this force as permeating their place in society. As they develop along their faith trajectory, they do seem more aware of the complexity of the situation. Their development also incorporates a growing self-confidence in one's own ideas, a diminished reliance on others for ideological support and an eventual acceptance of the lifestyles of the religious. While the objective of this growth appears to be complicated by the nature of each student's atheism, a weak form of individualization does seem to occur during the young adult years. Positive growth can be catalyzed by constructive interactions in college, a finding which has implications for campus practitioners.

The atheist students differ from the religious in this study in their patterns of discourse usage. They more evenly distributed their core ideals throughout all of their focus group sessions, despite the high pull of self-preservation they experience when surrounded by believers. Their reflections upon participation in the study demonstrate that, like the Christians, the emotional experience was colored by their developmental stage. Those atheist students who have already abandoned their anger toward religion and who try to understand a religious way of life generally found the study to be a more positive chance for learning.

Finally, I offer a comparison between the original conceptual framework and faith trajectory for atheists with the findings determined through analysis of the atheist participants in this study. This comparison is presented in Table 14.

Table 14. Comparison of findings to conceptual framework, for atheists			
Stages of faith	Description from conceptual framework (CF)	Summative evidence from cases	Conclusion from comparisons
Stage 3	Stage 3 atheists hold tacit, though passionate, beliefs. They do not feel responsible for choosing this unorthodox belief system. They are egotistical about their place in the world.	Stage 3 atheists hold tacit beliefs. They also lack confidence and so are easily influenced by their peers. They feel vaguely marginalized in a religious society.	The findings of the study confirm the tacitness and fragility of the Stage 3 atheist's beliefs presented in the CF. An addition is a vague feeling of being a religious minority.
Stage 3.5	Stage 3.5 atheists are likely to be disappointed in God or to have come to a rational conclusion that God does not exist. They are learning to trust themselves and may feel doubt about abandoning religion. They begin to accept that events are out of human control.	Stage 3.5 atheists believe that they are free to embrace a spirituality outside religion and that they can validate themselves internally. They may choose a community to support these beliefs and teach them about new ones. They oppose the privilege of the religious, but not in an active way.	The findings of the study are slightly discrepant from the CF. They show Stage 3.5 atheists as more confident in their own spirituality and engagement with a community of like-minded thinkers. There is also the addition of an intellectual opposition to religious privilege.
Stage 4	Stage 4 atheists are rational and critical. They have a personal ideology around their atheism. They participate in a rational/non-emotional community. They hold a cerebral way of viewing spirituality.	Stage 4 atheists accept that religion may be right for other people. They think of themselves as authorities and make their own decisions about beliefs. Being a minority no longer causes doubt. They oppose religious privilege, but also not in an active way.	The findings of the study confirm the CF in terms of confidence in an internalized belief system. There is an addition of an acceptance of religion in the lives of others, as well as a continuation of the opposition to religious privilege.

Summary

Bringing together the results of the qualitative analysis with those of the discourse analysis, the following can be said about the five atheist students that participated in this study: They are distinguished from their religious peers by more than just their disbelief in God. Their discourse patterns, feelings of comfort in dialogues, and their basic definitions of religion and spirituality are all unique. They share in no community of

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like-minded thinkers, and therefore have no refuge of familiar language to employ when alone with each other. However, they much prefer this to the pressures that come with being a minority. They perceive that minority status as having a negative impact upon them; however, those that retain too strong an anger toward the religious are unable to use their social status as a form of empowerment. One element of atheist identity that does play out similarly to the religious students is their developmental trajectory, which is colored by individualization and incorporates a movement from reliance on others to reliance on self.

There is a key final point about the atheist college students that can be made through weighing the atheist frame, established through the discourse analysis in this chapter, against the comparison of the conceptual framework to the qualitative analysis findings. The atheist frame also seems to be fluid, evolving as a person moves along an atheist faith trajectory. This evolution explains the students having a point of disagreement over their relative willingness to allow for the presence of religion in people's lives. The vulnerable Stage 3 atheists have trouble with the type of allowances made by those with a more confident, internalized faith system, because they feel that their own worldviews are threatened by the religious.

The faith specific issues that arise in dialogue between atheists are stretching beyond one's comfort zone to connect with religious students and concealing one's true opinions in order to avoid conflict. The former is particular to atheist students, who even in a mixed religious setting, remain outsiders. Some students will find this easier than others, depending again on confidence levels and how well internalized one's beliefs are. For the latter, young adult atheists will have different motivations for this, either

conforming to the religious norms around them or the more complicated choice to present oneself in a diplomatic manner that better facilitates conversation.

Despite the changing nature of the frame, two common understandings remain at the core of the atheist faith identity, listed above as a disdain for Christianity and the place of atheists as a minority in a religious society. The former may seem inconsistent with the growing willingness to accept religiosity in others; however, it seems that through Stage 4 atheism, at least, there consistently remains an undercurrent of contempt toward Christianity, the religion of the majority. Unsurprisingly then, the understanding of the marginalization of atheism also remains present, although it also grows in complexity.

An atheist frame that evolves over time can be described in other terminology as an atheist faith trajectory. The faith trajectory is neither the atheist frame in itself, nor simply change in faith over time, but it is *the change over time in the atheist way of framing the world through faith*.

The findings for the atheist students will be brought forward and compared with the other three groups in this study in Chapter 9. In addition, the conclusions drawn from this analysis begin to reference the four areas of implication for the study: (1) the morality/equity issue, by the understanding of atheists as a marginalized population and by the knowledge that the use of typical language around religion and spirituality is inappropriate for them, (2) the model specification, by the determination that there is an atheist-specific frame influencing their spiritual identities, (3) research in higher education, by the discoveries made through the utilization of discourse analysis and by the application of the new conceptual framework, as well as by the new insights into a

heretofore understudied student population, and (4) practice in higher education, by the

new understanding of the college campus as a potential catalyst for positive identity

growth and by the challenges faced during interfaith and intra-faith conversations.

Chapter 9:

Discussion

This chapter will tie together the results presented for each religious group in Chapters 5 through 8. Each of those chapters ended with the conclusion that a faith trajectory is *the change over time in the religious (on nonreligious) individual's way of framing the world through faith.* This statement implies both a specific, unique worldview for each group, the way of framing the world, as well as something they all share in common, faith. This tension between the universal and the particular, exhibited during these young adult years, contradicts other researchers who posited its existence only at the final stages of development (i.e. Kohlberg, 1984).

In this chapter, I will make sense of both of these phenomena, the unique and the common. To do so, I will examine the similarities between the experiences of the students in the study as well as the unique features that make their stories distinctive. Then, I will return to the original theories and conceptual framework around which this study was designed, in order to discuss any modifications brought on by this new research and to propose a model to be used in the future. As I discuss my findings, I will begin to broaden my reference point from just the 21 students who took part in this study to their membership groups and the campus community. Although I cannot generalize to all college students based upon their talk, I can use the data to suggest which issues are critical for researchers and practitioners to consider.

Finally, throughout the chapter, I will continue to reference the four major areas of implication of the study: morality/equity, model specification, research in higher education, and practice in higher education. Within Chapters 5 through 8, I pointed out how findings from each of the student groups relate to subsets of those areas. The following is a recapitulation of those items, grouped by theme:

1. Morality/equity

   a) The presence of Christian privilege in the lives of the Christian students

   b) The Jewish students' concern over outsiders' perceptions of Judaism

   c) The understanding of Muslims and atheists as marginalized religious populations

   d) The knowledge that the use of typical terms describing religion and spirituality is inappropriate for atheists

2. Model specification

   a) The determination that there are faith-specific frames influencing the students' spiritual identities

   b) The many similarities between the Jewish and Christian faith trajectories

3. Research in higher education

   a) The discoveries made through the utilization of discourse analysis

   b) The application of the new conceptual framework

   c) The new insights into two understudied student populations, Muslims and atheists

4. Practice in higher education

a) The new understanding of the college campus as an opportunity for positive

    identity growth for students of all faiths

b) The challenges faced during interfaith and intra-faith conversations for

    students of all faith backgrounds

The elements of overlap within each of the areas, as well as the distinctions that

separate one or two of the groups from the others, will be explored in this chapter and

then further explicated in Chapter 10.

Cross-Cutting Themes and Similarities Between Religious Affiliations

Perhaps by virtue of the ages of students in this study, the fact that they attend the

same university, or the parameters of the study itself, many similarities exist in the

findings for all four religious affiliations. Other common themes connect two or three of

the groups, or individual students of disparate backgrounds.

Perspectives on Christian Privilege and Societal Status

The first cross-cutting theme of the study is the students' perspectives on

Christian privilege. In examining the faith influences in the lives of the students in

Chapters 5-8, I determined that part of the way that they conceptualize their own

religious identities is through their groups' social statuses in this country.

According to the students' understandings, there seems to be a three-tier structure

of privilege and power in society. At the top of the structure are the Christians, who are

the mainstream religious faith in this country. In the middle are the other religious

groups, who fit in with a religious society but differ from the dominant ideology. At the

bottom are the atheists, who do not concur with the highest value of those religions and generally do not participate in the organized institutions of religion.

This perceived hierarchy impacts interactions between people at disparate levels. For example, in mixed focus group #1, which did not include a Christian participant, the atheist student was able to join with the Jew and the Muslim in criticizing Christianity. However, in other settings where Christian students and students from other religions discussed their faiths in a shared positive manner, the atheist students were left on the outside of that talk. The fact that Jews and Muslims are able to straddle privilege and disadvantage, depending on the context, puts them in a boundary-spanning role in a diverse community.

Two interpretations of these findings are available. On the one hand, this indicates a dominance of Christianity in American society, as students perceived their place at the top of the structure as a fixed fact of life. On the other hand, Christianity was the overwhelming target of criticism in the study, and the critique itself brings about an important balance with that dominance. The students from religious minorities are not necessarily complacent about their marginalized statuses in society, and their growing understanding of it enables them to empower themselves to act against it.

These perspectives on power, privilege and religious marginalization in society will be revisited later in the chapter, as I discuss how the evolution of them relates to the broader development in faith over time. In addition, they pertain to the morality/equity implication area which I will discuss in Chapter 10.

Discrepancies between Students' Talk and Their Meanings

A second similarity shared by students of all four affiliations was their tendency to keep their true feelings and opinions inside. While the segment from mixed focus group #5 presented in Chapter 8 was an example of discussing this overtly, the phenomenon also occurred more discretely.

For example, the codes examined for the analysis of post-hoc positioning and post-hoc face saving indicate this. Although the students did not express feeling competitive over religion in the mixed groups, they also expressed that they censored themselves from saying what was really on their minds 26 times during those sessions. This was compared to 10 instances of such censoring in the homogeneous groups. So despite the lower level of competition in the mixed sessions, which also corresponded with a slightly lower perception of being judged, the students felt compelled to gloss over or conceal their true opinions. They were more comfortable "[working] around" than "[working] through" (Heft, 2004, p. 3) their interreligious issues.

This finding is not necessarily surprising, given the difficulty research subjects often have with reporting on their own development (Craig-Bray & Adams, 1986). It takes a certain amount of self-awareness to understand how one has grown and changed over time. By definition, those whose understandings of self are tacit and unexamined will have a very difficult time doing this. Therefore, this notion of a talk/meaning discrepancy is quite consistent with the findings on faith development discussed later in the chapter. An additional implication of this situation for the study itself was the extra level of difficulty in answering certain elements of the research questions, such as which forms of discourse mark the developmental objective, because the analysis had to happen

through less direct channels. This will be discussed further in Chapter 10 as a component of the implications for practice in higher education.

Discourse Communities versus Familiar Communities

The third cross-cutting theme references the students' experiences in the study. In the three homogeneous focus group sessions held for the religious students, the participants' ease of use with phrases, and even foreign languages, associated with their own group was obvious. This facility is not wholly consonant with the students' own assertions that they preferred the heterogeneous sessions or with the broader, more generic language they had to employ when speaking with diverse peers.

While the ability to conduct dialogue in favored terms cannot be equated with emotional contentment, it does signify a connection existing at a certain level between people who share similar beliefs. The religious students may have had more success creating discourse communities (Johnstone, 2002) in the second round focus groups, but they existed in what I am calling "familiar communities" in the first round. These familiar communities feature shared terminology, shorthand descriptions for foundational concepts, and more detailed presentations of beliefs. They are familiar because they resemble the students' self-selected religious groups. The familiar communities also helped to create and offer supporting evidence of the existence of faith frames, discussed below.

These familiar communities were powerful enough that they extended even to the handful of students who consistently broke with the norms of their religious groups. Jasmine, with her opposition to political support of Israel, and Joanna, with her disbelief in God, both conversed with equal facility using the key terms of Judaism. Brooke,

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questioning God and Christian theology, also employed Christian language with ease. In this sense, the familiar community is a very robust concept, because it transcends the particularities which distinguish believers even within their religious affiliations. It will be discussed further in the implications for practice in higher education, particularly as it relates to intra-faith dialogue and identity building.

Differing as they so often did throughout the study, the atheist students displayed a more mixed pattern, balancing their talk on their most important codes evenly between the two settings. They did not reserve their favored language for fellow atheists. As discussed in Chapter 8, this break in the pattern set by the rest of the participants may have to do with atheism not being a specific entity, but rather the opposite of one. Though these students share an absence of belief in God, this feature does not define them enough to bind them together into a coherent group. Therefore, although the community established in their first round focus group was pleasant and enjoyed by all, it does not meet the definition of a familiar community, which represents a theological and linguistic home base for the religious students.

Students Bridging Groups

A fourth cross-cutting theme relates to the unique experiences of a small selection of the students. Three of the students in this study did not fit exactly into the four designated religious affiliations being analyzed, or by extension, into the homogeneous focus groups into which they were assigned. Joanna defines herself as a Jewish atheist, which is actually a self-definition shared by up to 25% of all Jewish college students (Sales & Saxe, 2006, p. 17). Brooke considers herself to be an agnostic Christian. Melanie is affiliated with Unitarian Universalism, which although does not feature a

belief in God, is a religious movement. She therefore has interacted with institutionalized spirituality during young adulthood in a way quite different from the other atheists in this study, all of whom abandoned religion much earlier in life.

These students' definitions of self made my analyses of their talk somewhat artificial, in that I was forced to group them into categories of convenience. Looking at their data, each one is slightly discrepant from that reference group. For example, Joanna does not feel that her responsibilities in the world have anything to do with extending God's work, and therefore she has a lot in common with the atheist students who believe that social justice transcends association with God. Brooke's near break with Christianity in high school and her continued questioning of it resemble the disappointment with God included in the atheist developmental trajectory and the resultant doubting, rational and non-communal Stage 4 I posited for that group. Melanie, on the other hand, is highly communal in orientation due to her affiliation, which gives her similarities with the religious students.

One consequence of these three students' identities is that they may have confounded the analysis on faith trajectories and developmental objectives. Perhaps, for example, communal obligation would have been recognizable as the Jewish developmental objective had Joanna not been a complicating factor. Only redoing a large chunk of this study, moving the women into different groups for analytical purposes, would clarify this question. In lieu of this, however, they make the collective stories of Jews, Christians, and atheists richer, and the richer the data the better "readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred" (Merriam, 1998, p. 211).

This characteristic of not quite fitting in with one particular group also enables all three of these women to speak across the usual boundaries of religious affiliation. Brooke, once considering a conversion to Islam, has a strong understanding of the commonalities between that religion and Christianity. Joanna explained in mixed focus group #4 that she can "represent both sides" of her dual identity. Melanie exhibited similar skills in her mixed session, employing religious language with Sam and Yusuf that differed markedly from her talk in the atheist student focus group. In real life circumstances, students with these types of dual or boundary-spanning identities may be able to help facilitate effective interfaith dialogue. This will be discussed further in the implications for practice in higher education.

This bridging does not always occur with the greatest ease. Dual identities can also correspond with vulnerability or a reactionary attitude. Such students may be forced to confront their own beliefs earlier in life, yet take longer to internalize and resolve them confidently. Therefore, they occupy tenuous yet valuable positions within their faith communities and within college campus communities. They have the ability to speak across difference, as long as they feel that their unique perspectives are respected.

Impact of College Environment on Religious and Spiritual Identities

The final cross-cutting theme pertains to the setting of this study, a prestigious, 4-year public institution of higher education. A premise of the study design was that higher education itself has an impact on faith development, and that students would be able to identify this process at work in their own lives. Working through students' faith influences and the aspects of campus life that they believe have fostered change in their identities, the following catalysts for growth were recognized by more than one student.

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Each item also includes the count of students who specifically noted it as an influential element of campus life.

- Interactions with religiously diverse peers (7) – This type of experience seems to be the most common and also effective means for engendering genuine respect toward other religions. If the individual is open to it, development toward plurality occurs. The students in this study who have embraced these interactions are Rick, Carl, Misty, Jesse, Sabur, Will and Karen. Those who have not embraced it, but merely tolerate such encounters as an inevitable element of campus life, have not evidenced such growth. That situation is discussed below.

- Academic courses on religion (5) – David, Melanie, Meghan, Inaara and Suha have all taken classes that instruct on religion. Suha is unique, having taken courses on Eastern religions, while the others all studied the monotheistic religions of the West. In each case, however, the students experienced a marked growth in understanding, tolerance and openness to other religions, and sometimes even gained greater knowledge of their own religions.

- Differentiating oneself from the ideals of one's affiliate group (4) – This situation tends to reflect more on a potential for growth, rather than growth achieved. In the case of Jasmine and her lack of political support for Israel, it has forced her to constantly evaluate her identity and the circumstances under which she will discuss it. Suha also is highly critical of the status quo in Islam, including the microcosm of it contained within the campus MSA. She spends a lot of time analyzing Muslim life from an academic standpoint. Both she and Jasmine have used their statuses as relative outsiders to shape their individuality. However, in

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the cases of Shashi and Sabur, who do not find themselves fitting in with the MSA, a greater level of independent thought about what they *do* believe (as opposed to what they do not believe) is needed before additional development can take place.

- Theological influences (2) – Will and Jada both encountered situations on campus that caused them to update their interpretations of Christian theology. For Will, the cause was understanding the experiences of LGBT students, and for Jada it was joining a student group that had a different outlook on a key Christian teaching. Although the degrees of change varied, both made modifications to their internal belief structure based on these outside influences.

These four motivators for progressive growth share a common theme of the students being faced with constructive challenges to the tacit, familiar beliefs they brought with them to college from high school and their home communities. In each case, the students were forced to reflect upon themselves in comparison to some other, be it new friends, a student religious group, or a faculty member presenting academic information. Students who embraced this and were willing to be flexible grew in positive ways.

In addition to situations that catalyzed positive growth, the students also identified those that tended to stifle change and development. These were:

- Avoiding interactions with religiously diverse peers (9) – For several of the students in this study, this is a standard mode of operation. Joanna, Rick, Melanie, and Sam all described some degree of discomfort in these type of situations, which they are likely to turn away from rather than take on. Brooke

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and Suha, who were prone to dismissing the ideas of others as ignorant and unthinking, respectively, and Inaara and Meghan, who will listen without willingness to change, also fall somewhat into this category. This also extends to the case of Yusuf, who is not necessarily avoiding interactions, but merely experiences fewer of them, due to living at home.

- Withdrawing from one's religious community (4) – Jasmine, Brooke, Shashi and Sabur have all stepped away from their religious communities during college, while simultaneously still feeling themselves to be affiliated with them. Jasmine considers Hillel incomparable to her home synagogue. Brooke has disassociated from her family's religion, though still believing herself to be a Christian. Shashi and Sabur both desire a Muslim community on campus that is more liberal than the MSA. Each of the four is similarly at sea and feeling the need to reconnect in some capacity in order to facilitate growth. For all of them, this reconnecting will look different than their original attachments to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

- Falling in with a group of like-minded peers (3) – Judy, Jada and Kristin have all chosen to establish friendship networks with people of similar backgrounds and ideals to themselves. Judy is a member of a Jewish sorority. Jada sought out Christians on Campus, a student group that can both teach her and confirm the values she already has. Kristin, newly committed to Christianity, looked for a community that would enhance her growing beliefs, and not challenge them. While others in the study have had similar experiences, they differ from these three, who describe them as central influences on their identity. For example, Jesse, who belongs to the same fraternity as did his father, wishes it had more

non-Jewish members. He is critical of received Jewish truth, perhaps due to his positive interactions with diverse peers.

In contrast with the previous list, the common thread running through the experiences that stifled growth during the college years is a deliberate avoidance of interactions that encourage constructive introspection. In each case, the students walked away from diversity or from the challenges that emerged from within their own religious communities, seeking the familiar, the like-minded, or the undemanding. Students who did this retained their current ways of viewing the world through their faith.

Finally, there were experiences that students cited as precursors to change, but that revealed no evidence of positive or negative effect. These include:

- Focusing on the world political situation of one's religious group (2) – Sam and Yusuf both have a high level of concern for their people's place in the world political system. Although each described this as being critical to his religion, no development was evidenced in their discussions of it. The exception to this rule is Jasmine, for her wrestling with the issue of Israel is very localized and impacts her daily life and identity. This influence, therefore, instead falls under the previously discussed category of positive change, differentiating oneself from the ideals of one's affiliate group.

- Feeling concerned about the misrepresentation of one's group on campus (1) – Kristin describes a level of unease about the actions taken by street-corner preachers in the name of Christianity. This discomfort has not led her to take any action or change her beliefs in any noticeable way. Likely, this is due to her

general immersion in a like-minded community, which does not require her to rise to the challenge.

Unlike with the first two lists, a common theme between these two neutral influences is not readily apparent. Therefore, to summarize, those influences of positive change and stagnation each have a common thread. Those experiences which promoted growth pertained to critical self-reflection in the face of constructive, challenging interactions. Those experiences which did not promote growth, or even stifled it, pertained to avoidance, withdrawal and a protection of the status quo within comfortable surroundings. The distinction between engaging with difference and acting like it does not exist has clear implications.

One experience that highlights this difference, as well as cross-cuts both students' tendency to reflect and grow and their tendency to stagnate, is interacting with Christian missionaries on campus. For Jesse, who chose to engage in the conversation, it has been a learning experience that deepened a belief system. For those who chose to ignore the proselytizers, while simultaneously disparaging them, such as Sam, Rick, Meghan and Melanie, it has been a block to acquiring a better understanding of self. Interestingly, Rick has both avoided *and* interacted with religiously diverse peers, and those experiences have each affected him in the respectively defined ways.

These results about choosing to engage with difference is an important point that can inform the practice of higher education professionals. They will be discussed further in the implications for practice in higher education in Chapter 10.

Unique Faith Frames

Although the previous section presented many similarities which bind together all of the students in this study, I cannot make the leap to conclude that spirituality and faith identity are universally experienced in the same way. A major finding supports the original supposition of this research, that there are frames through which the students see the world, which they use to make meaning, and which allow room for growth over time. I was able to witness the co-construction of the students' understandings of these frames due to the group interaction fostered through the focus groups. The idea of a frame of worldview, in itself, is consistent with previous literature, for example:

> Faith traditions provide all-encompassing frameworks of belief for the people who adopt them. They shape the ways their members see and interpret events and give a sense of direction and purpose to the ways in which believers engage in the world as their lives unfold. (Fried, 2007, p. 1)

Within each of Chapters 5-8, I presented a faith frame for each of the religious, and nonreligious, groups in this study. These frames were drawn from the discourse analysis findings and described the common understandings, points of disagreement, and faith specific issues that arise in dialogue. In order to compare and contrast them, I bring them together in Table 15. I also include their most important codes in descending order of usage, as determined by the qualitative coding. As the students obviously do not think in terms of "codes," I have renamed these "themes and ideals."

Table 15. Four faith frames, compared				
	Christian frame	Jewish frame	Muslim frame	Atheist frame
Common understandings	The core ideologies of Christianity Influence of outside sources as validation	The traditional boundaries of Jewish beliefs and practices The minority position of Jews in society	The inaccuracy of using standard terms to describe one's identity The importance of humility and proper behavior	A disdain for Christianity The place of atheists as a minority in a religious society

	Christian frame	Jewish frame	Muslim frame	Atheist frame
Points of disagreement	Literalism of beliefs Denominational distinctions and how those distinctions impact the truth of Christianity	Acceptability of breaking with normative Jewish behavior The place of certain beliefs in the core of Jewish ideology	The priority of having a religious life in a secular society The value of a spiritual identity	Willingness to allow for the value of religion in people's lives
Faith specific issues that arise in dialogue	The legitimacy of non-Christian belief systems A less-than-full sincerity in terms of open-mindedness toward others	Negotiation of the places of self and others in the Jewish community Negotiation of the legitimacy of Judaism in a Christian-dominated culture	The significance of peers in the securing of one's place in the Muslim community Modifying one's language in order to reach understanding with non-Muslims	Stretching beyond one's comfort zone to connect with religious students Concealing one's true opinions in order to avoid conflict
Most important themes and ideals	- Jesus Christ - Critiquing someone's ideas - Attendance of house of worship - Acceptance of other religious groups - Bible - Questioning or not questioning beliefs - Religious diversity - Anti-Christianity - Heaven/afterlife - Christianity and Western culture	- Hebrew word or phrase - Israel - Student religious group - Acceptance of other religious groups - Family member's religious practice - Religion and culture *Rosh HaShanah* and/or *Yom Kippur* - Dietary restrictions *Torah* *Shabbat*	- Prayer - Acting right or proper - Representing one's group - Questioning or not questioning beliefs - Anti-Islam - Arabic word or phrase - Dietary restrictions - Immigration and immigrant status - Drinking, smoking - Race and racial identity - War	- God – statement of disbelief - Family member's religious practice - Wanting to have a religious faith or belief in God - Minorities or minority status - Avoidance of religion or religious conversations - Goals and dreams - Disassociating with one's religion - Use of 'atheist' label - Art and music

Fowler's (1981) original theory focused on the structures of people's faith as they developed over the lifespan. As discussed in Chapter 2, he did not include the contents of

those faiths, such as the spiritual paths, beliefs and values inherent in religious and nonreligious faith systems. However, in the context of the current study, these contents are actually quite relevant and illuminating about the students' spiritual identities. Although these frames are quite multifaceted, it will be helpful to have a working summary of each one to utilize in future discussion. As well, when they are compared directly with each other, each one's distinctions become clear:

- The Christian frame is concerned with the tenets of Christian ideology, discrepancies in beliefs and practices surrounding them, and Christianity's relationship with other world religions. Embedded within this frame is the implicit understanding of Christianity's dominance, although this is somewhat tempered by the apprehension of trampling other religions.

- The Jewish frame is focused on religious rituals and the choices people make to practice them or not, as well as Judaism's place in the world in comparison to other religions. Embedded within this frame is a sense of insecurity, as though Jews are not entirely established in society and that deviation in practice may weaken the group's solidarity and strength.

- The Muslim frame centers around living a religious life in a secular world, including the distinguishing of Muslim conceptions of spirituality from the beliefs of other religious groups, as well as a focus on fundamental ritual practices. Embedded within this frame is an awareness that Islam must be in dialogue with other religions in order to be accepted and understood.

- Finally, the atheist frame is concerned with the core disbelief in God, mixed emotions about religion, and the exploration of alternative avenues for spiritual

expression. Embedded within this frame is a deep insecurity over atheists'

position in society, which is actualized by conflicted interactions with religious

others.

Figure 4 presents the four elements of the frames graphically, in a general form.

In reality, the bubbles represent sets of points that are unique to each of the groups.

Together, they combine to form the frames just discussed. The frames truly represent a

group-level of identity. However because they are multifaceted, they also allow room for

the natural variations of individual people.

Figure 4. Frame of worldview
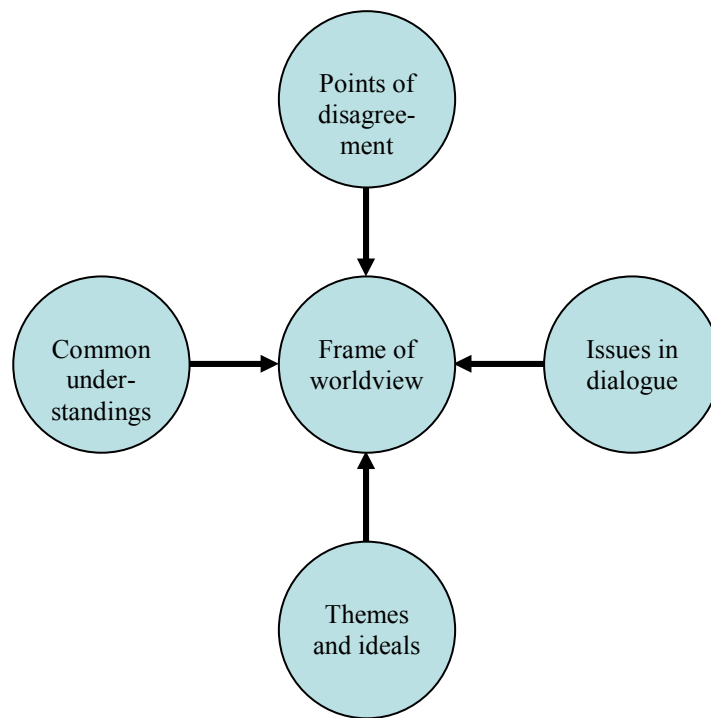
This figure is comparable to Figure 1 in Chapter 3, the original, detailed

presentation of side-by-side faith trajectories for the four groups in question in the study.

Clearly, the two figures bear no structural resemblance to each other. They both,

however, focus in on the contents of faith and religion which have an unquestionable influence on the rate and shape of structural development. Certain sub-elements may change over time, such as a person's perspective on issues commonly disagreed upon. In addition, the presence of the frames helps clarify the existence of the familiar communities that students in the study built during the homogeneous focus group sessions.

Reflecting back to Figure 1, a key component of that model was the developmental objective, which ran throughout the stages for each religious group. A possible outcome of this synthesis of the information is that the frame is a different way of viewing this concept. For example, for Muslims, the pieces of the frame revolve around the core focus of successfully living a Muslim life while remaining integrated with secular society. In other words, they see the world through the frame of the sacred/secular balance and achieving that balance is their developmental objective. In the next subsection of this chapter, I will reconsider that model, and whether or not the developmental objective is represented in this work by another construct, perhaps these faith frames.

<center>Conceptual Framework Revisited</center>

Turning away now from the unique frames of the groups, I examine the commonalities in the students' faith development. In the summary of the chapter, the frames and the structure of faith development will be brought back together. Table 16 presents a synthesis of stage definitions. These were determined by combining the definitions of the stages that were established for each religion through the analysis of the

Table 16. Synthesis of stages as determined by study	
Stage	Synthesis
3	Stage 3 faith is characterized for all by a lack of critical self-reflection and a reliance on external authorities. Communities are chosen based on comfort value. Understandings of power and privilege tend to be vague. Muslims and atheists both have distinctive experiences that set Stage 3 apart for them from the others; Muslims are addressing the sacred/secular balance and atheists lack confidence in their faiths.
3.5	Stage 3.5 faith is characterized by greater self-authority and more individualized views. Understanding of power and privilege is stronger, although little action is taken. Muslims and atheists both have distinctive experiences that set Stage 3.5 apart for them; Muslims continue to address the sacred/secular balance and atheists begin to embrace their nonconformity. Anger at internal group differences and other negative emotions are more characteristic of Christians and Jews.
4	Stage 4 faith is characterized by internalized beliefs and an acceptance of diverse others. Reactions to religious privilege vary, with Christians and Muslims opposing most actively. The Stage 4 faiths are more closely aligned than were those of Stages 3 and 3.5.

students in the study. They do not include the classifications determined in previous

literature or the original conceptual framework.

Reviewing this synthesis, the study found great areas of overlap in each of the

three stages among the four participating groups. The common elements pertain to

choice of authority, awareness of privilege, acceptance of others and internalization of

beliefs. Interestingly, these have little directly to do with religion. There are a variety of

topics in students' lives over which authorities have jurisdiction, there are many other

forms of privilege in society, and beliefs exist about important topics other than religion

and spirituality. Yet because these elements came out through discussion of religion and

spirituality, they must relate to these parts of the students' identities.

Just as with the frames, the unique elements of the religions at each stage pertain

to religion-specific content. At Stages 3 and 3.5, the Muslims and atheists are addressing

key issues of their frames, while the Jews are not at all distinguishable from their

Christian counterparts. The latter two groups, in fact, are strongly aligned throughout the

stages, with the exception of the Christians showing a bit more interest in actively opposing privilege in Stage 4.

These likenesses of the Christian and Jewish stages raises the question of how far from the mainstream Jews really are, at least when examined through the type of lens at work in this study. Although some of the Jewish students perceived themselves to have a negative minority status in society, not all of them did. Several were hard pressed to provide examples of how marginalization had affected their day-to-day lives. Certainly, their experiences with society's perceptions of their religion were nowhere near as intense as those of the Muslims in this post-September 11th world. Jasmine's understanding that Jews have been completely assimilated into the dominant culture in the United States may be accurate, and so their development may not be greatly influenced by a marginalized position.

Another finding that must be synthesized at this point is the stage by stage comparisons of the differences between the original conceptual framework of this study and the findings determined through the analysis of the students' talk. This must be done as a way of bringing this work full circle and triangulating the conceptualization with the findings. This is presented in Table 17.

Reviewing this synthesis, the conceptual framework was close to the reality of some of the elements of the students' lives. However, it was also overly abstract, in terms of the positing of the developmental objective. As well, it lacked some of the specific nuances of development that were undoubtedly made real by the particular life experiences of the study participants.

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Table 17. Synthesis of modifications to stages in conceptual framework	
Stage	Synthesis
3	For Stage 3, the CF was confirmed by the findings for Christians and atheists. For Jews, there was a lack of evidence for the developmental objective. For Muslims, there was the addition of the sacred/secular question. For all four groups, the awareness of marginalization was a new addition.
3.5	For Stage 3.5, the CF was confirmed by the findings for Muslims. For the Christians, there was the addition of choosing one's community. For Jews, there was an expansion to include reactionary attitudes toward others. For atheists, there was a modification to include their growing self-confidence. For all four groups, the understanding of marginalization, without corresponding action, was a new addition.
4	For Stage 4, the CF was confirmed by the findings, in part for Christians and Jews. For Christians and Jews, there was a lack of evidence for the full CF. The Christians did not exhibit a retreat from community, a lack of skepticism, or a rationalization of symbols. The Jews did not exhibit a focus on community. For Muslims, there was a modification to present more self-confidence. For all four groups, the opposition to marginalization, through thought or action, was a new addition.

Of course, the biggest oversight in the conceptual framework was the students' relative awareness levels of religious privilege and marginalization in society. Although I had posited that the social status of religious groups affects people's development, I failed to consider how they would respond to this. After all, mainstream and minority status in society are not invisible. Noticing it as I have a researcher, I should have expected at least some of the students to notice it as well.

The differences otherwise continue to support several of the additional findings of the study, that awareness of marginalization is key in development, that Muslims are highly influenced by the sacred/secular balance, that Jews are fairly similar in growth to Christians, and that Muslims and atheists both have the ability to confidently embrace their minority status.

Now that the results for the stage definitions have been provided in the previous two tables, it is possible to deconstruct that synthesis into its component parts,

irrespective of specific religious backgrounds. This deconstruction will lead back to a

comparison with Figure 2 in Chapter 3, the original content-free conceptual framework

used in this study. This is critical to the question of whether or not religious affiliation

impacts spiritual development.

Looking at both the synthesis of the stages and the students' restoryed narratives,

the main determinants of the students' positions along the developmental trajectories

were locus of authority, internal struggle/acceptance, dogmatism/ecumenism and

religious marginalization awareness. These four themes applied to all four of the

religious groups in the study.

Locus of Authority

The first significant feature of the students' developmental trajectories was their

locus of authority. Parks (1980) offers a definition of this phrase which resonates

accurately with this study:

> I am suggesting that we hypothesize the movement in the locus of authority as
> follows: In adolescence authority is outside the self and assumed. Then, as valued
> authorities come into irreconcilable conflict, or as experience conflicts with
> prevailing authority, "validating internal authority" must begin to emerge. ...
> However, it is not necessarily the case that one becomes immediately independent
> of authority "out there." Rather the emerging "fragile" self may still very much
> feel the need for outside authority, but cannot now avoid the awareness that "I am
> choosing which 'authorities' I shall trust or not trust." Therefore, indeed, a
> significant charismatic person or group may serve as the locus of one's emerging
> internal authority; such an authority may serve the function of "calling out" that
> emerging self which takes account of its own experience vis-à-vis established
> norms. (S. L. Parks, 1980, pp. 135-136)

Parks's explanation is clearly applicable to all of the students in this study and

their negotiations with authority. Sam, Judy, Shashi and Meghan still rely almost entirely

upon external sources of authority. David, Jada, Kristin, Joanna, Sabur, Inaara, Yusuf

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and Rick are experiencing the emergence of their own internal authorities, although with the expected hesitancies. Brooke, Karen, Will, Jesse, Jasmine, Suha, Misty, Melanie and Carl have moved in varying degrees beyond this fragility, which is a tenuous and impermanent state. Therefore, I am comfortable stating that this study confirms Parks's assertion of the changing locus of authority across the young adult years. Religious affiliation does not seem to have any impact in these circumstances. In this research, Stage 5 is speculative; however, extrapolation indicates that the Stage 5 adult should be able to reintegrate external authorities and their ideas, opening oneself to true ecumenism and the possibility of being changed by others.

Level of Internal Struggle/Acceptance

The second noteworthy feature of the students' developmental trajectories was their relative levels of internal struggle and acceptance. Students initially holding beliefs tacitly without much internal analysis. They then enter a period of fragility, struggle or self-analysis during the young adult transition. This may also feature the anger and resentment evidenced by some students in this study. Finally, as the resolution of identity occurs, ideals are internalized and the stress over determining them diminishes. Stage 5 is speculative at this point; however it seems likely that internal struggle will once again increase as the individual makes a genuine effort to integrate the valid beliefs of others into a pluralistic worldview.

Dogmatism/Ecumenism Trends

The third significant distinguisher between locations along the faith trajectories was the relative weights of dogmatism and ecumenism in the students' belief systems.

Dogmatism, defined here as a literalism in beliefs and a conviction of the inerrancy of one's favored ideology, tends to correspond with a reliance on external authority figures, a lack of critical self-awareness, judgmental attitudes toward others, and a straightforward reading of how the world works. Ecumenism, defined here as the embracing of diverse worldviews and a flexibility (not vulnerability) of beliefs, tends to correspond with open-mindedness, a willingness to change, and a complex reading of the world that allows for alternative versions of truth. Students in this study fell into both categories and along all the points in between them. Through the current research, Stage 5 and beyond must remain speculative; however, the levels of these traits seem to be trending in straight paths which are likely to continue.

Religious Marginalization Awareness Scale

A major addition both to the conceptual framework of this study and the literature body on the religious and spiritual identities of college students is the growing awareness of religious privilege and marginalization in society that I was able to document in the study participants. Table 18 presents this finding by both religion and stage.

The relationship between stage and awareness level is not exactly perfect, due to the variability of the speed through which the individual participants reached the point of opposition. However, a general trend from lack of awareness, though developing understanding, and to an intellectual (if not always active) opposition to the marginalization of certain religious groups in society was clear. Due to the age limitations of this research, Stage 5 and beyond are purely speculative. However, it can be extrapolated based on the next natural step in development as well as the literature foundation of this research, which supports a life stage of true ecumenism.

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Table 18. Perspectives on Christian privilege, by religion and stage				
Stage	Christian	Jewish	Muslim	Atheist
3	They do not recognize Christian privilege in American society, some even feeling that Christians are on the receiving end of bias.	They feel a vague sense of marginalization with no detailed understanding of how this is operationalized.	They may understand the negative aspects of Muslims' place in society, but do not necessarily act upon it.	They feel vaguely marginalized in a religious society.
3.5	They understand the existence of Christian privilege.	They are acutely aware of their social status, but without taking action around it.	They have a more complex understanding of the marginalization of Muslims and may use it to motivate toward positive action.	They oppose the privilege of the religious, but not in an active way.
4	They actively oppose Christian privilege.	They are acutely aware of their social status, but without taking action around it.	They understand the complexities of Muslims' social status and may use this as empowerment.	They oppose religious privilege, but also not in an active way.

In addition to the four defining features of the developmental trajectories at Stages 3, 3.5 and 4 (and an anticipated Stage 5), this research uncovered general findings about the nature of faith development. These will be discussed here, along with comparisons with the literature that was originally used to frame this study.

Fluidity in Stage Correspondences

As first noted in Chapter 5, the assignments made for the students to stages along the developmental path were oftentimes quite fluid. Nine students exhibited traits from more than one stage, either teenage faith and young adult faith, or young adult faith and adult faith. Compared to those nine, 12 students were located in one of Stages 3, 3.5 or 4. Table 19 presents the final list of classifications, with average age for each stage.

Table 19. Final faith stage classifications.		
Stage(s)	Students	Average Age
3	Judy, age 18	18.8
	Sam, age 18	
	Shashi, age 18	
	Meghan, age 21	
3/3.5	David, age 18	19.6
	Inaara, age 18	
	Sabur, age 19	
	Yusuf, age 19	
	Joanna, age 20	
	Kristin, age 20	
	Jada, age 23	
3.5	Jesse, age 18	19.0
	Brooke, age 19	
	Karen, age 19	
	Rick, age 20	
3.5/4	Melanie, age 20	20.7
	Jasmine, age 21	
	Misty, age 21	
4	Suha, age 19	22.7
	Carl, age 23	
	Will, age 26	

The average age of Stages 3/3.5 looks to be out of place in terms of an uninterrupted upward progression of age over the course of the five stages. However, closer inspection reveals that it is actually Jada, at age 23, who is an outlier. If she was not included in her category, the average age for Stage 3/3.5 would be 19.0, and the average ages across the five categories would increase chronologically. Figure 5 presents these two versions of the data graphically, both including and excluding the outlier point. The figure demonstrates an upward slope of age corresponding to the progression of the stages.

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Figure 5. Average age of students by stages
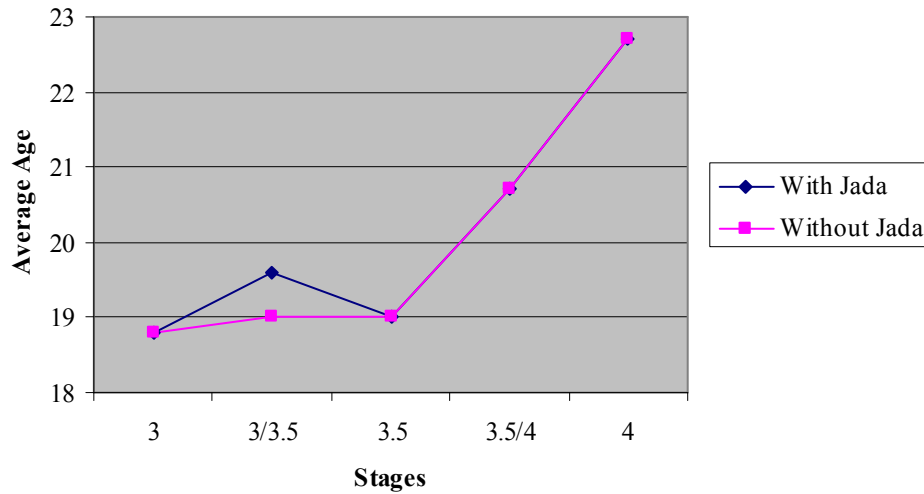
This increasing chronology raises the question of whether or not there is any true external cause of faith development, such as college enrollment, or if it naturally occurs through aging. As this study did not include a sample of students not enrolled in college, it is impossible to say one way or the other. Certainly, the influences the students label as the sources of their growth are integral features of campus life, and students encounter more of them as time passes. Unfortunately, this question will have to remain unresolved at this point.

On another note, it is once again important at this time to remind that stage classifications are meant neither to be prescriptive nor to be conclusive, bounded definitions of who these individuals are. The students' growths are truly fluid in nature.

Developmental Objectives

I turn to the final element of the conceptual framework that was examined in relation to the study data. The developmental objectives of the four religious groups turned out to be significantly more difficult to identify in the data than others of the

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important elements. It now seems possible, however, that the distinctions between the groups I was trying to concretize through this concept may actually be better explained through the new notion of the faith frames. The frames are the filters through which the students see the world, at least in terms of their religious and spiritual lives, and they likely act as lenses through which they make certain of their life choices. This is consistent with the notion of the developmental objective, which is the underlying motivation for growth in faith.

Beyond this, there are several possibilities as to why the developmental objectives, as originally conceptualized, were not evidenced by the data. The first is that the literature used to construct the framework was mainly conceptual and/or theological, and not necessarily based on or tested upon research subjects. This could lead to a possible misspecification of the objectives, such as if a more accurate description for the Jewish students was communal association, rather than communal obligation. The second is that, because of the students' ages as young adults, we can only view a snapshot of the lifespan. The end result of their development may only be viewed in hindsight, rather than as a forecasted goal. The third is that the interview questions used in this study did not effectively tap into the contents of the students' faith experiences well enough to distinguish across religious lines. Because the study design did not include observation of the students within their religious communities, I may have missed an opportunity to witness some elements of their identities. Finally, the fourth possibility is that Fowler (1981) and Parks (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000) were correct, that the goal of faith development is universal and unaffected by religious affiliation and background.

To conclude, the common underlying structures of faith development must be reassembled. Therefore, I can present Figure 6, which is a new visual representation of the developmental trajectories of the students in this study. It also includes a representation of the ages of the students at each stage. Noticeably, this model remains content free, speaking mostly to structural growth.

Figure 6. Combined elements of faith development trajectories
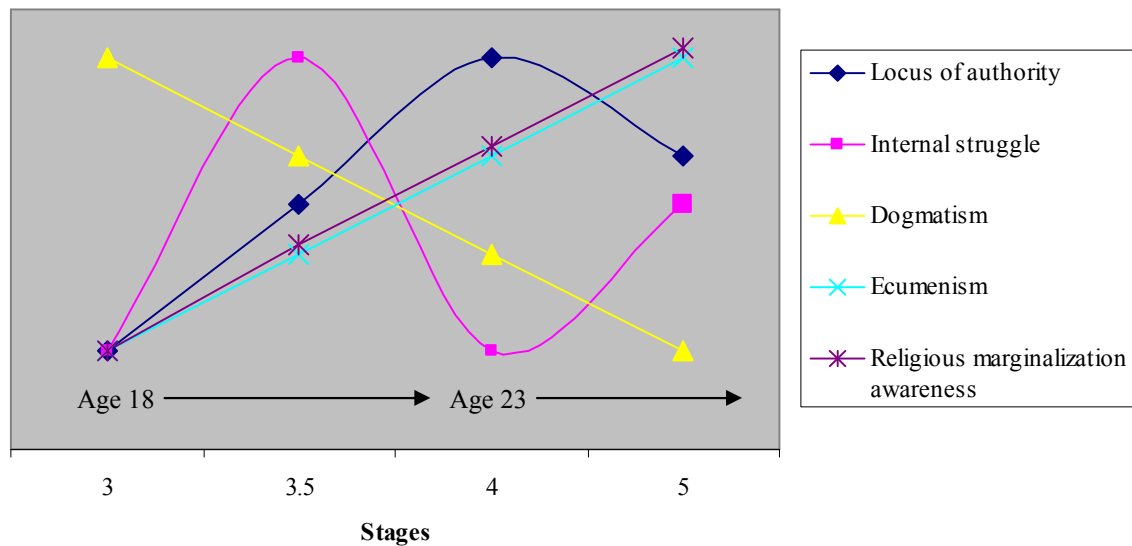
There is an additional layer of information that needs to overlay this graphic, and that is the faith frames that were developed through the analysis in this study. This is required because, despite common structural changes, people of different religious affiliations do view the world in distinctly varied ways. Although no one image could perfectly capture the complex nature of a developing identity, Figure 7 attempts to represent this with the faith frame superimposed upon the various lines of change within the faith trajectory. The basic idea behind this complicated figure is, in fact, quite simple:

Figure 7. Combined faith trajectories and faith frames
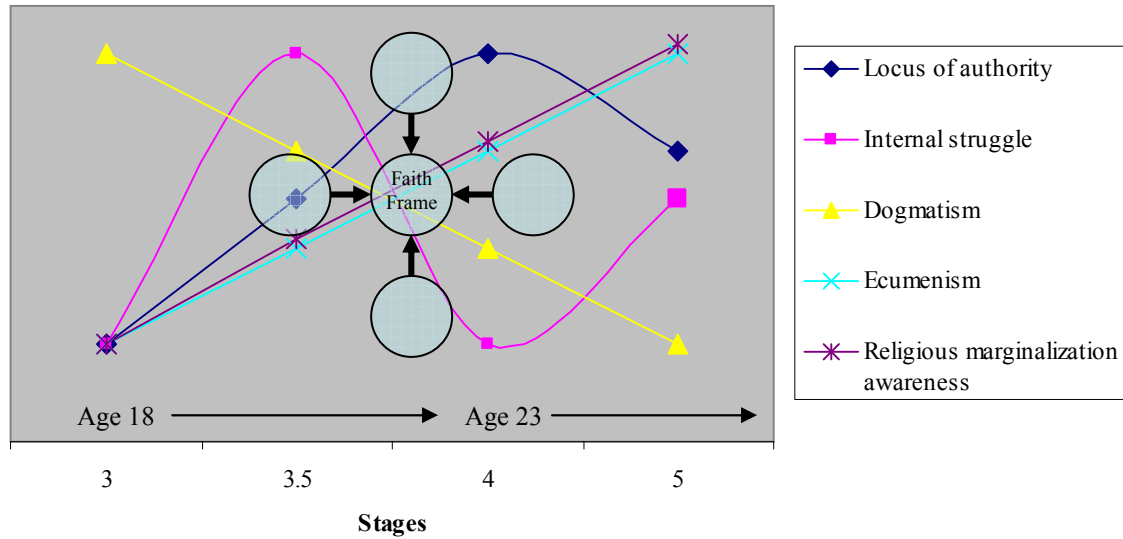
one's worldview, established through the faith frame, acts as a constant lens through which are filtered the structural changes in faith inherent in living, relating, and growing in society. The model can be specified to include the details of each frame.

Employing this type of stage model does raise the concern brought up by other researchers about the judgment inherent within developmental stages theories and the cautions against using them to define students (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Kuh, Whitt, & Shedd, 1987; Stamm, 2006; Winkle-Wagner, 2007). Can we even look at one element of a student's identity without considering the other parts of it (S. R. Jones & McEwan, 2002)? Erica Burman (1994) points out that "we talk in terms of 'progressing', 'advancing' from one stage to the next" (p. 182), the implication of which being that those at lower stages or somehow lesser-than as people. Such criticism of stage theories was an undercurrent which led to Gilligan's (1982/1996) feminist revision of Moral Development Theory. Certainly, the analysis in this study also makes clear an inherent

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conceptual bias within the theory in use against religious conservativism and fundamentalism, which are encompassed by earlier stages in the trajectory.

Rachelle Winkle-Wagner (2007) makes a compelling argument against over-reliance on psychologically based developmental theories. One of her concerns relates to qualitative research, in that researchers tend to "[fit] the data to particular stages in the developmental process" (p. 11) instead of letting the categories emerge naturally from the data itself. Admittedly, the current research does not completely circumvent this problem, based as it is on a stage model conceptualization. The inclusion of the frames which emerged solely from the data, however, does allow the findings of the study to move beyond this limitation. Winkle-Wagner also pushes for the inclusion of sociological theories in higher education, in order to "[emphasize] the process and interaction between the individual (self), the larger society, and the college campus" (p. 14). A particularly useful theory is by Sheldon Stryker and Peter Burke (2000), who explain how "identities may or may not be confirmed in situationally based interaction" (p. 289).

As the information gathered from the students in this study shows, context is critically important to how they view their changing identities. The faith frames allow for description of individual differences between the people who hold them, as well as for people to change their perspective on complicated issues (perhaps based on the context of the conversation). In addition, because this research was based on the understanding that some religions are privileged in society, while others are marginalized, it can speak to other societies where the places of specific religious groups are reversed. In turn,

however, the frames would have to be modified to speak to different social realities. The findings of this study are not meant to be universally applied.

The question also remains as to whether or not this graphical representation of a developing faith identity is useful. Does this complex figure differ from the original table constructed by Fowler (1981) to describe his theory, or from Parks's (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000) revisions? Are changing levels of locus of authority, internal struggle, dogmatism, and ecumenism already represented by their works? When compared with Table 4 in Chapter 2, locus of authority is essentially the same in both, and dogmatism and ecumenism are similar to Fowler's bounds of social awareness. Internal struggle resembles Parks's metaphorical notion of "shipwreck," which she describes as experiences that "can suddenly rip into the fabric of life, or … may slowly yet just as surely unravel the meanings that have served as the home of the soul" (S. D. Parks, 2000, p. 28).

One line of the figure that is certainly new is the religious marginalization awareness scale, which is quite different from the conceptualizations of Fowler and Parks. This is a major revision that takes in to account the social situation of the person in question, and therefore ascertains that a person's identity is not being described solely by his/her internal understandings of self. An individual's place in society, as related to a religious affiliation or a lack of one, has a bearing on growth over time, and this element of the figure demonstrates that.

The second major revision to previous FDT models is, of course, the frames. The finding of the faith frames through this study confirms the supposition that religious background and affiliation *do* impact worldview, and that this cannot be discounted when

examining development. And yet, the frames speak more directly to one's way of seeing the world at a particular moment in time.
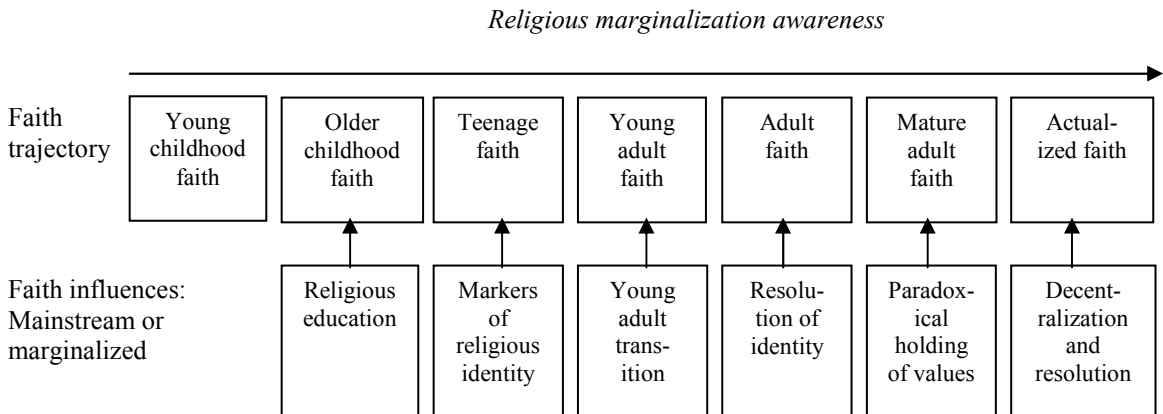
One solution to the question of what should be considered supportive of Fowler's (1981) and Parks's (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000) original theories and what should be considered conflicting or new is to break the two pieces apart, and consider them models of two elements of spiritual identity. To do so would mean to describe a faith frame as the means for viewing life at a particular moment, and as a border around structural growth, which is represented by the straight and curved lines on the above figure.

Structural Faith Development

The concept of the faith trajectory, from my conceptual work, and the four strands of it discussed above, were most consonant with the original FDT, and help to explain how that type of framework is actualized for non-Christians. Fowler's (1981) and Parks's (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000) theories cannot stand untouched, however, due to the clear indication that certain elements of it are biased against non-Christians, especially non-believers. In addition, they lack the important inclusion of societal status, as well as individuals' awareness of those statuses.

For these reasons, the original content-free model proposed in Chapter 3 remains a stronger representation of the phenomena witnessed through this study, because it incorporates the impact of mainstream and marginality. The figure is included again here as Figure 8, with slight modifications. The modifications are to remove the developmental objective, which does not hold up well for this model, and to add the

Figure 8. Content-free model of faith development trajectories

Religious marginalization awareness

Faith trajectory	Young childhood faith	Older childhood faith	Teenage faith	Young adult faith	Adult faith	Mature adult faith	Actual-ized faith
Faith influences: Mainstream or marginalized		Religious education	Markers of religious identity	Young adult trans-ition	Resolu-tion of identity	Paradox-ical holding of values	Decent-ralization and resolution

religious marginalization awareness scale, which also transcends specific religious affiliation.
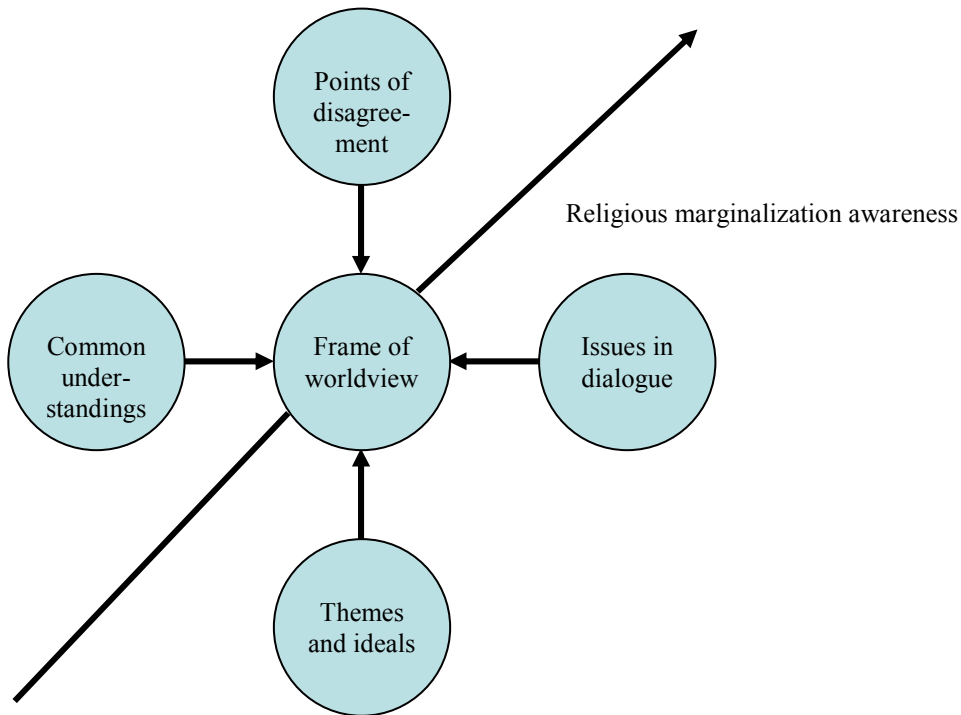
Faith and Religious Marginalization Awareness Frame

The elements that were developed through this study, the religious marginalization awareness scale, combined with the faith frames, can also be combined into a separate model, one that reflects the original conceptualization of this study and steps away from a stage model of development.

This new model, which I will give the distinctive name of the Faith and Religious Marginalization Awareness Frame, subsumes two of the original terms of the study, the developmental objective and faith influences, as those are elements of how people of different religious and non-religious backgrounds view the world and are changed by it. At the conclusion of this study, those terms turned out to be means and mechanisms for understandings the participants, and not an end in and of themselves.

The Faith and Religious Marginalization Awareness Frame is presented in Figure 9. It includes the depiction of the frame as well as an arrow demonstrating the increasing

Figure 9. Faith and religious marginalization awareness frame

awareness of religious marginalization that exists in society. Each of the bubbles, again, represents the collection of points and ideas listed in Table 17, and so a distinctive model could be presented for each unique faith group. In addition, specific stage labels are no longer included, as the frame itself can not be said based on this study to develop over time, although an individual's stance on a point of disagreement might itself change. The level of awareness does generally rise over time, and the frame moves with it.

One benefit of focusing in on frames, as opposed to a scale model of development, is that this can avoid the criticisms of such models (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Kuh, Whitt, & Shedd, 1987; Stamm, 2006; Winkle-Wagner, 2007). It does not list a series of tasks that individuals must pass through, and it does not imply that those at earlier stages of development are inferior to those who are at later ones. It

concedes that there are multiple influences on identity, although there are likely certain fundamentals that remain consistent over time. It also concretizes an understanding that identities are constructed within groups, and that individuals necessarily diverge in some respect with their groups of membership. It also demonstrates that people will be changed through interactions with others.

A final point to make about this new model, and the updated model originally used as the conceptual framework for the study, is that by nature they will always appear to essentialize or oversimplify peoples' identities. That, however, is not the intention. Instead, these models are designed to provide a window into identity and ways of being in the world. As such they are meant to be a tool for understanding, and not a classification system. They may also be used in tandem, or separately, depending on the situation requiring understanding by a researcher or practitioner.

The utilization of these two models, one new and one revised, as appropriate descriptors of the findings for this study has major implications in three of the four areas being discussed in Chapter 10: (1) the morality/equity issue, as they recognize the bias inherent in employing a supposedly universal model, in particular one that does not recognize religious privilege, (2) the model specification, comprehensively speaking, and (3) research in higher education, as the models must continue to be tested and additional research applied to marginalized religious populations and students' multiple identities.

Theory Triangulation

In Chapter 4, I referenced the idea of theory triangulation, which meant that I would revisit previous related theories as I synthesized my findings in this study. As described, engaging in theory triangulation ensures that the data of this study is explained

by the best available theory. The faith development theories utilized as the major

underpinnings of the conceptual framework of this study were established by Fowler

(1981) and Parks (S. Parks, 1986a; S. D. Parks, 2000), with considerable attention also

given to Achermann (1981; as cited in Oser, Reich and Bucher, 1994, p. 47), Peek

(2005), Shire (1987), and MacDonald-Dennis (2006). While Fowler and Parks have been

discussed heavily throughout this work, the other four theorists require some

reexamination. In paying due respect to previous researchers, it is important to consider

whether or not their theories and models better explain the phenomena observed in a new

study.

Looking at each researcher, there are definitely some overlaps with my findings.

Shire's (1987) revision of Fowler's (1981) stages to include Jewish content holds up in

this study, where the faith frames of Judaism and Christianity differed significantly, but

the structures of their development did not. MacDonald-Dennis's (2006) theory on Jews'

developing understanding of anti-Semitism was applicable, though more generalizable to

other groups than he intended. It did, however, only address one portion of religious and

spiritual identity. Peek's (2005) understanding that young adult Muslims had to reach the

point of declaring their own identities in the face of religious marginalization aligns well

with the dual secular and sacred identities with which I found the students wrestling. As

well, her understanding that this marginalization affects their growth is also consistent

with the study. Achermann's (1981) model is perhaps more sparse than is needed with

such rich data from the students; however, his positing that an atheist will come to

understand that some events are outside of human control is consistent with this study.

Each one of these theories has some alignment the findings from this study and the models being developed from it. However, this new model attempts to describe the experiences of people from all the religious groups, yet without reducing them to only their areas of overlap with each other. Therefore, it makes sense to continue using their theories as informative background pieces, while embracing this new model as more explanatory.

Summary

In this discussion chapter, I focused on three core areas within the study findings, the cross-cutting themes between the groups and individual students, the faith frames, and the revision of the conceptual framework into two more descriptive parts, the content-free model of faith development trajectories and the Faith and Religious Marginalization Awareness Frame.

The cross-cutting themes included a relationship between the students' religious identities and their groups' social statuses in this country. The students described a perceived hierarchy, with Christianity at the top and atheism at the bottom. The non-Christians often spoke against Christianity, perhaps as a way of balancing against that religions' dominance. An additional theme was a gap between students' talk and their meanings, a theme which closely related to the distinctions found between discourse communities and familiar communities. Although the religious students expressed themselves to be more comfortable in the discourse communities of the heterogeneous focus groups, they were more linguistically and theologically compatible with the familiar communities of the homogeneous groups. The next cross-cutting theme was the students who bridged groups, by virtue of their dual identities, and who potentially have

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the ability to bring together discourse and familiar communities in dialogue. Finally, the last theme was the many influences on students' growth in faith during college. The positive influences tended to incorporate responding to challenges, particularly surrounding religious diversity, with the negative ones related to avoiding them.

The faith frames were unique features of each of the groups which set them apart from one another. The Christian frame was concerned primarily with ideology and the relationship with other world religions, the Jewish frame with ritual behavior and the relationship with other world religions, the Muslim frame with the sacred/secular balance and the uniqueness of Muslim spirituality, and the atheist frame with disbelief in God, mixed feelings about religious institutions, and alternative spiritual expression. Each frame also included a perspective on the privilege or marginality of the respective group. Embedded within the frames was room for individual opinion and growth over time.

The establishment of the frames and the religious marginalization awareness scale led to the development of two new conceptual models, a content-free model of faith development trajectories and the Faith and Religious Marginalization Awareness Frame. The former represented an individual's structural development in faith, including the influence of a mainstream or marginalized religious affiliation and the growing awareness of that influence. The latter represented a way of viewing the world in light of a religious affiliation, or lack of one, and again, the growing awareness of one's group's social position.

This study has made several contributions to the literature of higher education. First, it has presented an in-depth analysis of students from three religious minority groups that have had minimal representation in previous research. Second, it has

demonstrated that people from diverse religious backgrounds do have differing visions of spirituality, and that the unique perspectives that people gain from their cultural and religious upbringings influence their worldviews. Inherently biased universal conceptions of faith and spirituality are made more equitable through religious and nonreligious frames. Third, it has concretized a previously theoretical claim that social position as mainstream/privileged or marginalized/minority impacts spiritual identity. In addition to these contributions, the work has implications for future research and practice in higher education. Chapter 10 will discuss these and other implications, grouped into the four major implication areas, and conclude the study.

Chapter 10:

Conclusion and Implications

Throughout Chapters 5-9, I referenced four areas of implication for my findings: morality/equity, model specification, research in higher education, and practice in higher education. In this chapter, I will revisit all of these areas and refer to them to propose changes in the ways students' religious lives and spiritual identities are understood and supported in higher education settings. I will also discuss which of my claims are most critical, based on the trustworthiness of my findings.

Review of Purposes and Research Questions

Before I move in to the discussion, I would like to refer back to my original purposes for conducting this study. As a graduate student and professional in the field of higher education, I had come to believe that the lack of consideration of minority religious voices was a critical social justice issue that was being overlooked. Treating all students in a just manner, one that honors their individual needs as learners and community members, has been a focus of many researchers and practitioners in higher education. Yet the call to consider the impact of religious diversity on campus, which I referenced in Chapter 1, has not been satisfactorily addressed.

On an academic level, I had seen that the conception of faith development existing in the literature and practice arenas was biased toward the Christian perspective

and was lacking in any comprehensive understanding of other ways of being in the world. Beyond the moral problems with this condition, this misconception was leading to faulty research assumptions and incomplete practices on campus, which I have addressed in the literature review portions of this dissertation.

Both of these purposes for this research were supported by the words of the participating students themselves, and they demonstrate the need for continued development of this line of research as well as practice reflecting the newfound information. I will address these original purposes as I move through the implications and conclusions of the study.

As a final introduction to this chapter, I would like to revisit the research questions and sub-questions for the study. For each one, I will provide a summary of my learning and will suggest how the new understandings lead to one or more of the four implication areas being discussed below.

Do existing faith development theories accurately reflect the experiences of Christian, Jewish, Muslim and atheist college students? I began to answer this first research question through my examination of the literature and the design of a modified conceptual framework. Through this method of analysis, my primary discovery about previous models was that they did not take in to account the marginalized social status of non-Christian religions or the privilege benefiting Christians themselves. This contention was supported by the dialogue of the students who participated in the study and illuminated divergent ways of viewing the world through faith. These faith frames were explicitly formed and influenced by the contents of students' faith, which were not considered in previous faith development theories.

How do Christian, Jewish, Muslim and atheist college students similarly or differently express their spiritual identities? When expressions of the four types of students were compared, it was determined that similarities existed across groups in the structural change over time in their faiths, while differences existed between groups in the ways they currently view the world through their frames. In addition, there were noticeable gaps between the experiences of the Christian students and the other three groups of students and between the experiences of the atheist students and the religious students. These gaps pointed to the presence of Christian privilege as well as to bias against the non-religious in our society. They have strong implications for all areas being discussed in this chapter, most particularly the morality/equity issue.

What forms of discourse mark the spiritual developmental objectives, faith trajectories, and faith influences of Christian, Jewish, Muslim and atheist college students? The college students in this study expressed their spiritual identities through preferred terminology, by describing definitions of the terms religious and spiritual and of the concept of God, through themes and ideals that are important to them, and by telling the stories of their own spiritual lives. The faith trajectories and faith influences of markers of religious identity, young adult transition and resolution of identity were notable as the students discussed the changes in their religious lives and spiritual identities since high school and the challenges they have faced on campus. Throughout the entire study, students employed various discourse moves in order to both find common ground with one another and to distance themselves from unpalatable ideals. The concept of developmental objectives did not come to fruition in the data. The

answers to this research question have implications for model specification and research and practice in higher education.

How do students frame or conceptualize their spiritual identities in the ways they talk to other students and write about the topic? Differences were found in the ways students spoke about their spiritual identities and the ways they wrote about them. This went beyond the predictable increased level of formality and proper speech that was present in their writing. It included the fact that students were more direct with me in their written pieces than they always were with each other in their speech. It also included the presence of post-hoc discourse moves used in the writing as final attempts to position themselves in relation to others in the study. These conclusions relate most directly to implications for practice on campus.

Do students' expressions of their spiritual identities change depending on who they are speaking to, and if so, how? The religious students noticeably differed in their speech patterns between the discourse communities of the heterogeneous focus groups and the familiar communities of the homogeneous focus groups. The atheist students did not fit with this pattern, instead they were more even with their usage of core terms throughout the breadth of the study. In addition, students often employed post-hoc discourse tactics to protect themselves or others from potentially painful interactions. These findings have implications for practice in higher education as well as for researching understudied religious populations.

After discussing their religious affiliations and spiritual identities, how do students express their understandings of these experiences and how they may or may not have been shaped by them? There were a variety of responses by the students to their

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participation in the study. Several indicated that it had reawakened within them the desire to continue on a spiritual journey. Others admitted to being forced to consider new perspectives that they had previously ignored or not been aware of. A few found elements of their participation highly distressing, due to tension with fellow focus group members or pressure to articulate otherwise tacit beliefs. Significantly, the atheist students frequently expressed appreciation to me that they were being included in a study about spirituality and that they were being given a chance to share their perspectives. These conclusions have implications for the morality/equity issue and practice in higher education.

In all, the study was successful at eliciting desirable new knowledge from the students. Each of the research questions was answered, some in revelatory ways. Notably, many of the findings of the study actually did not result from specifically addressing a research question. Because of my usage of a social constructivist paradigm, I was able to learn many things from the students that I had not realized at the outset would be critical to them. As I am well-versed in the literature concerning college students' religious identity, this discovery in itself is a testament to how little was previously known about the spiritual identities of college students. This new knowledge also leads to several implications for future research in higher education, research which can specifically extend these findings.

Implications

As previously stated, the four areas of implication for my findings were: morality/equity, model specification, research in higher education, and practice in higher education. These themes were determined through categorization of the discussion

within Chapter 9. While each of the elements of Chapter 9 will be reconsidered here in light of their implications, they will not be re-listed in the same order but instead interwoven through the broader categories. Within the areas, the implications are listed by order of the trustworthiness of the findings. This means that those findings which came through the study most clearly and have the most import for the lives of students will be presented first. In each case, I will mention my level of assuredness for the finding, labeling it an assertion, a speculation, or a question raised.

Morality/Equity

In Chapter 1, I introduced the idea that demonstrating simple tolerance for people of differing religious backgrounds through research and practice in higher education does not go far enough in terms of a moral stance. The viewpoints and needs of non-Christian students can no longer be ignored by educators who purport to treat all students equitably. Theories and practices which heretofore have claimed to be universal in nature, but which truly operate from a Christian perspective, must be replaced by those which are inclusive of all faiths, religious or otherwise. In this section, I assert three avenues in which the morality and equity in the application of FDT should be improved.

Recognition of Diverse Faith Frames

The most critical assertion of this study is that individuals' faith frames make a difference in their spiritual identity development. Formalized as the Faith and Religious Marginalization Awareness Frame, frames are a strong determinant of how people view the world and interact within it. They are co-constructed at the group-level of identity and demonstrate that people of the same faith share some elements of their outlook,

which vary markedly from those of differing faiths. They help to explain why a Christian-centric perspective in research and practice is inappropriate for addressing the needs of non-Christian students.

Because of the understanding that the faith frames were developed situationally among the specific participants in the study, it must be further understood that they should not be interpreted as constant or static. In fact, different participants most likely would have led to the emergence of slightly varied frames. However, this condition does not diminish the assertion of this finding in any way; rather, it emphasizes the fact that people truly do see the world through their own lenses. Lumping all people together into a supposedly universal system does a disservice to each person. It even detracts from the Christian perspective, as it brands it as neutral or baseline, stripping it of its true meaning. Allowing for a Christian frame honors Christian students as having a specific developmental path of their own.

The implications of the faith frames upon morality and equity are profound. In order to act morally as educators, we must no longer overlook vast swathes of our student population. In order to treat all students equitably, we must be willing to open our awareness to ways of being in the world that do not operate out of a place of Christian privilege and dominance. The substantial repercussion of this most vital finding is that higher education leaders, researchers and other professionals must drastically change their understanding of faith and spiritual identity. The moral imperative insists that we must no longer be complacent in the arena of religious diversity.

Language Usage

A second significant assertion I can make based on the findings of this study is that the language used to describe students' spiritual identities should be modified. As I originally raised in Chapter 2, "religious" belief is an inadequate way of describing the growth in faith of atheists, non-believers, and the religiously unaffiliated. This was reaffirmed by the atheist and agnostic students who participated in this study, as they pushed back against the societal privilege of the religiously affiliated. At times the barrier between them and the other three groups of students was acutely felt.

Rather than saying that what distinguishes people from each other is religion and non-religion, terms inadequate to describe the full life experiences of atheists, I suggest that it is diversity of faith that matters. While Fowler (1981) defines faith as one's "ultimate environment" (p. xii), I will define it in a more conventional way as *one's way of understanding the world through religion, spirituality, and/or other forms of meaning-making*.

This language alteration affirms the fact that while all humans hold belief systems that guide their views of the world and their development over time, not everyone subscribes to a religious or spiritual belief system. It also allows for the replacement of the terms atheist and non-believer, which imply an absence of something in their lives, with terms that invoke a presence of what they do have: complex and complete ways of framing the world through faith.

In addition, my understanding of inter*faith* dialogue differs from inter*religious* dialogue, because the latter is limited to the religiously affiliated. Interfaith dialogue evens the ground somewhat by positing through its label that everyone shares in faith and

that everyone can engage in dialogue on the basis of that faith. The term is certainly less encumbered than those proposed by other researchers, such as an "all-inclusive religious-non-religious dialogue" (Nash, 2003, p. 20). Although interfaith dialogue will not necessarily sound like a new type of intervention, the findings of this study give it a more nuanced meaning than ever before.

Challenging Christian Privilege on Campus

A third finding that fits into this area is more speculative in nature, but still important. It is that according to the students' understandings, there seems to be a three-tier structure of privilege and power in society. Although none of the students individually spelled out the whole structure, their dialogue together combined to describe a hierarchy featuring Christianity at the top and atheism at the bottom. The implication of this findings upon morality and equity is that it is real-enough in the minds of students to be detrimental to their feelings of well-being and respect on campus. When people feel marginalized in their surroundings, they may be less likely to engage in positive interactions with others.

As traditional-aged college students develop their awareness of religious marginalization, they are likely to begin seeking out ways to make their campus environments more equitable for religious minority groups. Campus professionals have the responsibility for creating opportunities for such activism and for supporting the actions of students, as well as for raising their own awareness of how Christian privilege permeates college campuses. This type of activism lags far behind the diversity initiatives surrounding race and gender: "The issue of Christian privilege and the struggle

to create religiously, spiritually, faith-based, and secularly inclusive communities are still relatively new areas of diversity-related learning and action" (Clark, 2003, p. 48).

Interestingly, being of a marginalized religion may actually pose some benefit to students as well. In a longitudinal study, Alyssa N. Bryant and Helen S. Astin (in press) found that struggling spiritually correlated with a growth in tolerance toward other religions and that those students who adhere to minority religions, such as Islam and Unitarian Universalism, exhibit higher levels of struggle. They explain this as being due to the fact that "being a member of a minority religious group may present challenges that those identifying with majority traditions do not typically face" (p. 19). The findings of the current, though much smaller, study support this understanding, because non-mainstream religious followers are more frequently forced to confront their beliefs than are those of the dominant religion in society. Therefore, although practitioners should be careful not to think of religious minorities as helpless victims of societal circumstance, they should be considerate of the struggles and challenges they face on a daily basis.

In addition, this examination of Christian privilege will benefit Christians themselves (Seifert, 2007), who will receive the opportunity to learn from diverse peers and gain a fuller understanding of their own religion. Once again, however, caution must be used, so that Christian students are not left feeling attacked on campus.

Model Specification

A second important purpose for conducting this study was to determine if the original Faith Development models being heavily utilized in higher education settings, and which held inherent claims of universality, were applicable to the lives of non-Christian college students. The outcomes of the current research have demonstrated that

two new models are required, one that describes a content-free structural faith development and one that describes group-level faith frames combined with the growing awareness of religious marginalization in society.

Faith and Religious Marginalization Awareness Frame

As discussed within the Morality/Equity section, the strongest assertion to be made through the findings of this study is for the presence of the Faith and Religious Marginalization Awareness Frame. This model represents a way of viewing the world in light of one's faith frame and the growing awareness of one's group's social position. Group-constructed identity and individual understandings work in tandem. Identity does not exist in a vacuum.

Clearly, the development of the Faith and Religious Marginalization Awareness Frame also has strong implications for model specification and usage of Faith Development Theory by researchers and practitioners. It directly contradicts the notion that growth in faith is universal and unaffected by religious ideology. The Frame purposively incorporates the spiritual paths, beliefs and values inherent in religious and nonreligious faith systems, rather than dismissing them as byproducts of structural change.

The implication of the Faith and Religious Marginalization Awareness Frame upon the specification of the faith development model is that future refinements and reconceptualizations of the model must incorporate the contents of faith. Excluding them produces results that do not represent full faith stories. These contents must be used in tandem with a model that describes structural faith development.

Structural Faith Development

A second important assertion that falls into this category of model specification is the modification to structural faith development, which I present as a content-free model of faith development trajectories. The main determinants of the students' positions along the developmental trajectories were locus of authority, internal struggle/acceptance, dogmatism/ecumenism and religious marginalization awareness. The addition of the last determinant was a major modification to existing models, and one that should change the outlook of researchers and practitioners in this field.

By insisting that faith development research requires a stringently content-free model, I am directly challenging the notion that FDT, as it previously stood, was able to make an appropriate claim of universality. Fowler (1981) stated that his model was universal, while simultaneously operating from a Christian perspective. By this combination of actions, he both disenfranchised non-Christian faiths, by ignoring the repercussions of their divergent faith frames, and failed to address how social position interacts with development. The implications of my findings clearly indicate that Christianity should no longer be allotted a privileged position in future model specifications. In order to ensure this, the contents of all faiths should be addressed in a separate model, with structural growth being considered on its own through the window of mainstream and marginality.

Research in Higher Education

This study has begun to fill a gap in the existing literature by challenging a widely accepted conceptual framework for its presumption of commonality between all faith groups. It has also broken ground on the consideration of understudied religious

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populations, and has utilized an inventive methodology in order to do so. In this

subsection, I consider implications for future research on religion, faith and spirituality in

higher education. Researchers who consider of these implications would have a better

understanding of the religious and spiritual identities of future research participants.

Dissemination of related research findings should be presented in the journals and

conferences of the field, as well as through graduate student coursework.

All of the implications discussed in this sub-section are considered speculative in

nature, some implying critical questions that have yet to be asked through this line of

research. Until such research is conducted, we can only speculate on what contributions

such research can make.

Utilizing Discourse Analysis in Higher Education

A significant discovery I made during this study surrounded the employment of

discourse analysis as a tool for understanding group-level interactions and faith identity-

building among college students. Discourse analysis has infrequently been employed in

higher education research[9], and this study has demonstrated its inherent value. Identities

are subjective and are developed in situated moments; they do not exist or grow in a

vacuum. Discourse analysis, with its emphasis on the way language passes between

speakers, is uniquely able to capture that development, as identities are expressed and

refined contextually.

One reason why the focus group form of interaction, coupled with discourse

analysis, was so effective in this study relates back to the experiences that promoted

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[9] An initial review of four major journals in the field of higher education (*The Journal of College Student Development*, *The Journal of Higher Education*, *Review of Higher Education*, and *Research in Higher Education*) found only 13 articles making use of discourse analysis techniques since 2001.

positive development in the students. Open, encouraging interactions with diverse others on campus helped the students to expand their worldviews. In the setting of the study, the same phenomenon occurred. In this respect, the method of my interaction with the students was also an intervention in their lives, one that caused just as much reexamination of their beliefs as did other situations. Although it had not been my specific intention to catalyze this type of growth, it was a constructive consequence. In the future, researchers in higher education who are interested in examining the interplay of identity at the individual and group levels should seriously consider an application of discourse analysis. Bringing these techniques into the mainstream of the field could yield revealing new findings.

Research on Marginalized Religious Populations

As indicated in the literature review for this study, research considering the spiritual identities of religious minorities is quite sparse, particularly when it comes to Muslim and atheist students. This study opens avenues for exploration of these students' identities. With Muslim students, future research could study their issues with sacred/secular balance, their understandings of religious marginalization in post-September 11th America, the relationship between immigrant status and identity, and the importance of being able to enact their ritual practices on college campuses. With atheist students, future research could study their feelings on being minorities in a religious society, their spiritual explorations outside traditional religious institutions, and the various influences (such as science and humanism) that inform their faith framework.

In addition to this speculation, questions remain about the many religions not included in this study. Future researchers exploring the topic of faith and spiritual

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identity development should also strive to include members of religious groups that were not included in this work, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. In particular, polytheistic believers may have quite different frames for understanding the world than do the followers of the monotheistic religions who participated in this study.

Research on Students' Multiple Identities

Questions were also raised throughout the study on the interaction between faith and other forms of identity. Students did not come to this study identifying singularly as religious and/or spiritual individuals. Often, their races, ethnicities, sexual preferences, political viewpoints and nationalities influenced their interactions with others. There were several clear instances of students' other identities having an impact on the dialogue. Jada and Brooke, two African-American Christian women, engaged in often contentious talk with one another, calling on value-laden family and community anecdotes to bolster their arguments. Rick, a transgender student, openly expressed how his marginalized sexual identity directly influenced his breaking with Catholicism and becoming an atheist. Inaara, born in Afghanistan, holds political beliefs that are complicated by her immigrant status as well as her ethnicity. These students may not be "living comfortably with multiple identities," (S. R. Jones & McEwan, 2002, p. 168), but they are certainly experiencing the interactions of those identities in profound ways.

Due to the limitations of my protocol, I was unable to deeply analyze the roles these multiple identities played in the study. In addition, having only 21 participants meant being limited in how much data could be collected on these identities. The study included only small subsets of non-White races and ethnicities (Brooke, Jada and Misty identify as fully or partly African American; Sabur, Shashi, Suha and Will identify as

Asian/Pacific Islander; Meghan labels herself Mexican/Chinese; Inaara labels herself Persian). Rick was the only student who openly discussed a minority gender identity. Finally, although several of the students (most significantly within the Muslim group) are first or second generation Americans, they hail from different countries and did not often talk about the nuances in belief to which this may have led.

Future research pieces should consider the other forms of identity students hold, such as race, gender, sexual preference, and nationality, and how they interact with religion and spirituality over a lifetime of identity growth.

Testing Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework utilized for this study was constructed through the comparing and contrasting of previous theories with other literature bodies. The research then conducted with the student participants further elaborated, as well as modified, significant portions of it. Now that this initial refinement has been completed, the two new and revised models must be tested through a larger study designed specifically for that purpose. This will provide stronger validation of the framework as a research tool and allow for future researchers to employ it with confidence. This is especially critical given the criticism about developmental theories in general (Winkle-Wagner, 2007), and about Fowler's (1981) work in specific (Broughton, 1986), that qualitative data should not be made to fit into pre-designed notions of stages.

Additional Research Possibilities Based on Current Data Corpus

The full data corpus generated for this study was not employed during the current presentation. The reasons for the selections I made related directly to the research

questions I chose to ask. Data that was intriguing but tangential was left out in favor of a more focused work. Therefore, there remains the following data that may be utilized in future studies:

- The remainder of the focus group transcripts not selected as one of the 12 segments analyzed, as well as the full interview transcripts and questionnaires, which were mainly used in this format as supporting evidence. These could be used to examine the lives of individual students more closely, or to tell a deeper story about one of the four represented groups.

- The full list of 352 open and axial codes, which could be the focus of a phenomenological study.

Finally, in addition to delving deeper into the remaining data, further publications based upon the current study could include the implications of employing discourse analytic methods as well as a guidebook for higher education practitioners.

Practice in Higher Education

Student affairs practitioners and other higher education administrators already make use of developmental theory in their work, and "student affairs practice without a theoretical base is not effective or efficient" (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p. 19). By extension, reliance on incomplete or, more dangerously, incorrect theory may damage practitioners' abilities to effectively work with certain student populations. Issues related to religion and spirituality do arise on campus, and professionals must be versed in the unique perspectives of individuals within religious groups in order to appropriately respond. When more campus administrators and associations for student

affairs professionals become better educated on the varied needs of religiously diverse students, campuses can be made into more welcoming places that serve their needs.

In this subsection, I consider implications for practitioners in higher education who work with religiously diverse communities. Methods for informing and training campus professionals about their needs can include: presentations during campus staff meetings, in-service workshops and retreats, reading groups on selected studies and opinion pieces, and sessions during regional and national student affairs conferences.

The College Environment as a Catalyst for Growth in Faith

Based on the narratives of the students, I am able to assert that the campus environment has the potential to be a catalyst for positive growth in faith by college students. The experiences which promote growth pertain to critical self-reflection in the face of constructive, challenging interactions. Although this type of growth has previously been demonstrated regarding the presence of racial diversity of campus (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002), the literature base in higher education lacks attention to the impacts of religious diversity. The current study has indicated that students are often confronted with religiously diverse others in the campus setting, and that the quality of those interactions plus the students' own attitudes determine the inherent growth potential.

The implications of this finding upon practice in higher education are that student affairs professionals must develop tools for encouraging students to engage in constructive interactions. Such interactions may take place in the classroom or in specifically designed interventions, such as the interfaith and intra-faith dialogues discussed below. While professionals are never going to be able to completely shield

students from negative encounters, nor is that a requirement of their jobs, they can work to ensure that students know how to react in such situations.

The question does remain as to *why* exactly identity changes when in interaction with others. The answer to this may be found in the psychological literature or in research specifically focused on this question.

Interfaith Dialogue

A second assertion I can make in the area of practice in higher education is that interfaith dialogue can be a positive channel for growth within individual students. It can also lead to increased tolerance between groups. Although this study was not designed specifically as an intervention to foster understanding between students from different religious backgrounds, it does offer insight into considerations that must be taken during such interactions. The first lesson is that students who are interested in talking about religion and spirituality may genuinely be willing to hear the opinions and viewpoints of others. Secondly, however, conversations between these students may be plagued with playing nice, speaking in broad universalisms, or exhibiting a general unwillingness to come into direct conflict. It may require sustained contact between students from diverse faiths for any true breaking down of assumptions and stereotypes to occur. Such hard work, however, will have great benefit, as previous research has shown that "discussing religion has an impact on developing students' overall cultural awareness" (Bryant, 2007, p. 10).

The biggest gap to bridge may be between religious students and nonreligious students. As shown in this study, there is quite a division along the lines of affiliating with a religion and/or believing in God. Unaffiliated atheist or agnostic students do not

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perceive members of non-Christian religions, such as Jews and Muslims, to be compatriots in their position as religiously marginalized. Instead, they tend to lump all religious believers into one large group of others, whom they do not regard as very understanding or sympathetic to their view of the world.

One of the findings discussed in Chapter 9 was that three of the students in this study did not fit exactly into the four designated religious affiliations being analyzed. This characteristic enabled them to speak across the usual boundaries of religious affiliation. A tool campus leadership may consider utilizing to facilitate effective interfaith dialogue would be to locate similar students who have experience with multiple religious identities, or in spanning the religious and the nonreligious, as they may be important to enabling other students to develop appropriate dialogue skills. In addition, sustained dialogue along lines of faith diversity should include multiple atheist and/or agnostic students, so that individuals do not feel alone in a group of believers. If dialogue leaders are attempting to truly bridge the believer/nonbeliever divide, then the two groups should be represented in equal numbers, regardless of the variety of religious affiliations represented on the believer side. Students must be encouraged to "[work] through" interfaith difficulties in order to achieve "reconciliation" (Heft, 2004, p. 3).

Intra-faith Dialogue and Identity Building

The last assertion to be made within the area of practice in higher education incorporates the concept of familiar communities, which featured shared terminology, shorthand descriptions for foundational concepts, and detailed presentations of beliefs. Due to my use of focus groups and discourse analysis and elements of my method which highlighted the group interplay involved in identity building, I was able to discover

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multiple, complex features within these familiar communities. I therefore am calling for a movement toward intra-faith dialogue on college campuses. By this I mean addressing students within their faith communities of choice and with their fellow community members.

Working with students within their self-selected religious communities may be outside the purview of many campus professionals; on secular campuses in particular, this task may be considered solely the responsibility of ministry staff. However, both ministry and other student affairs staff members should be aware of the difficulties students find with speaking to members of their own communities, and indeed the insecurities they feel over being deemed lesser-than members of their own identity groups. In this study, this became most clear through the students' post-hoc positioning moves, which highlighted the defense mechanisms students would use in order to protect their religious reputations. Practitioners working with multiple members of the same religious community (perhaps on an issue facing their group, such as the installation of a prayer space for Muslim students in a student center building), should keep themselves attuned to forms of religious competition that might raise individuals' insecurities.

Besides working with members of religious communities, campus professionals must seriously consider finding a way to reach out to students who do not affiliate with a religious group, do not believe in God, or are questioning the role of religion and God in their lives. These atheist and agnostic students likely have a personal spirituality to which they are attached and which helps provide direction in their lives during the college years. But because these students are unlikely to be found in traditional religion-based student groups, professionals must locate them elsewhere. Possibilities may

include groups focused on social justice, humanism, philosophy, New Age spirituality, or even one similar to the one located for this study, the Atheists, Agnostics, & Freethinkers club.

In addition to these forms of intra-faith dialogue, student affairs professionals frequently interact with students on a one-on-one basis, and chances are good that most of these students hold religious and/or spiritual components to their identities. Practitioners should not underestimate how critical such identities may be during times of personal crisis, during selection of career/vocation, and with interpersonal relationships. The ways students view the world through their faith frames affect their beliefs and actions, and professionals should make themselves comfortable with discussing those views. The outcomes of such one-one-one conversations are more speculative in nature than broader intra-faith dialogue, because the impact of individual interviews was not a central focus of this study. In addition, direct work with students is complicated by the finding that participants' talk and their meanings did not always align.

Conclusion

This study has many implications for future research and practice in higher education, as well as for our understandings of what makes for moral/equitable campus environments and usage of faith development models. Certainly, the four areas of implication are somewhat artificially bounded. There especially is overlap between the model specification and future research areas, and the morality/equity issue underscores everything that has been said.

This study demonstrated that faith does affect the ways students view the world and the ways they discuss their identities with diverse peers. Although certain elements

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of development in faith over time are structurally consistent across the groups included in this study, the contents of faith, belief, and identity show enough meaningful differences to be of importance to educators' work with these students, and to the students themselves. One's worldview, established through the frame of faith, acts as a constant lens through which are filtered the structural changes in faith inherent in living, relating, and growing in society. In addition, awareness of religious marginalization grows throughout the lifetime for individuals of all religious affiliations.

From this point forward, research on college student religion and spirituality should include all three elements of these findings: structural similarities across religious groups, content distinctions between them which profoundly affect worldview and interactions, and the growth in awareness of religious marginalization. As well, the practice of working with religiously diverse college students incorporates similar imperatives to honor the unique contributions of a myriad of faith perspectives and to dismantle the continued social injustice of Christian privilege on college campuses.

Appendices

Appendix A: Letter to the Association of Religious Counselors

Dear ARC member:

I am writing to seek your support for my dissertation research in the area of college student spirituality. In my study, I plan to examine the relationship between religious affiliation and spiritual identity. The study is being conducted for a dissertation in the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education, at the University of Michigan School of Education.

I seek six students from each of the following religious denominations for participation: Protestant Christian, Jewish, Muslim and atheist. I am looking for a diversity of race, gender and age from within those groups. In addition, students can span a range of involvement with their campus religious communities.

If you would be willing to supply some names and contact information for potential student volunteers, please contact me at jlsmall@umich.edu. Please know that all information provided by students will be kept completely confidential.

In addition to your support in recruiting student participants, I am seeking members of ARC who would be willing to examine my draft of the focus group interviews to ensure that I am asking questions that are culturally appropriate for all students who participate: Christians, Jews, Muslims, and atheists. The insight of ARC members will be invaluable to me as I seek to develop a research protocol that will truly allow me to hear the voices of students from diverse religious backgrounds.

If you would be willing to review my interview protocol, please contact me at jlsmall@umich.edu. You may also reach me with any questions at (734) 255-0420.

Thank you for your willingness to support this study.

Sincerely,

Jenny L. Small
Doctoral Candidate
Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education
University of Michigan School of Education

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Dear student:

You are invited to participate in a research study examining the relationship between religious affiliation and spiritual identity. The study is being conducted for a dissertation in the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education, at the University of Michigan School of Education.

All students who participate in this study will join in two focus group conversations. The first focus group will last one and a half hours, and the second will last one hour. You will also be asked to complete a short reflection document at the conclusion of the focus group period. This document should not take you more than 20 minutes to complete. Some students who say they are willing may be contacted for an additional individual interview.

All students who participate will receive a small monetary compensation of $20 for their participation in this research study. The compensation will be provided after completion of the reflection document.

Information provided during this study will be kept completely confidential. Please see the attached consent form for a more detailed explanation of how your information will be kept private. We will discuss the consent form at the first focus group, and you will have the opportunity to ask questions about it.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please complete the attached demographic form and the consent form and return them to:

Jenny Small
2339 School of Education Building
Campus Zip 1259

If you have any questions about this study, you may e-mail me at jlsmall@umich.edu or call me at (734) 255-0420.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Jenny L. Small
Doctoral Candidate
Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education
University of Michigan School of Education

Religious Affiliation and Spiritual Identity Study
Participant Demographic Form

Name⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ Date of Birth⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

E-mail⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ Phone⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

Mailing address (to receive compensation for participation)

Street⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

City⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ State⎯⎯⎯⎯ Zip⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Transgender

Religion: (check one)

☐ Christian ☐ Jewish ☐ Muslim ☐ I do not affiliate with any religion

Do you identify with more than one religion? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you consider yourself an atheist? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please specify:⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

If you would like to provide a more detailed description of your religion (i.e. Sunni

Muslim, Reform Jew, Methodist Christian) please do so:⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

Race/Ethnicity:

☐ African-American/Black (not of Hispanic origin)

☐ Asian/Pacific Islander

☐ Caucasian/White (not of Hispanic origin, but having origins in any of the

original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East)

☐ Hispanic/Latino (Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race)

☐ Native American/Alaskan

☐ Race not included above. Please specify:⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

Are you multi-racial or multi-ethnic? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please specify:⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

Are you an international student? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Major⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

What year did you enroll in the university?⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

What year do you anticipate graduating from the university?⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

<u>Consent Form</u>

1. **Title of the research project:** Religious Affiliation and Spiritual Identity Study

2. **Name of the researcher**
   Jenny L. Small
   Doctoral Student
   School of Education, University of Michigan

3. **Description of the research**
   The aim of this study is to find out how students from varied religious backgrounds conceive of their spiritual identities.

4. **Description of involvement**
   You will participate in two focus groups, one with students from the same religious background as you, lasting an hour and a half. The other will be with students from different religious backgrounds from you, lasting one hour. Focus groups will be video and audio recorded for accuracy. You will also be asked to complete a brief reflection document at the conclusion of the study. On the reflection document, you will be asked if you would be willing to be contacted for an additional individual interview, should I wish to continue talking with you. You may decline this interview.

5. **Length of participation**
   Focus groups will be held during the Fall 2006 and Winter 2007 terms.

6. **Risks and discomforts of participation**
   The risks of participating in this study are minimal. Some participants may feel challenged by the process of examining their inner spirituality, and may feel discomfort if others disagree with them.

7. **Measures to be taken to minimize risks and discomforts**
   In order to minimize the risks and discomforts associated with participation in this study, I will: (1) review the procedures to ensure your confidentiality before each focus group, (2) remind all participants that bringing people from different religious groups together is designed to facilitate learning, not instigate conflict, and (3) intervene if any interaction seems to be emotionally disturbing to any participant.

8. **Expected benefits to subjects or to others**
   Some people may feel participation to be beneficial because it gives them a chance to talk about things that matter to them. Although you may not receive direct benefit from your participation, others may ultimately benefit from the knowledge obtained in this study.

9. **Payments to subject for participation in the study**
   Participants in this study will be compensated $20 each after the conclusion of the study. Only students who participate on both focus groups and submit a reflection document will be compensated.

(over)

10. **Confidentiality of records/data**
Only I will have access to the tapes and transcripts of the focus groups. In addition, only I will have access to your reflection document. After you submit your reflection, I will match your statements from the focus groups with your paper; after that match is made, I will remove your name from the documents. All information about you that is used will be anonymous. You will not be identified in any reports on this study or in any future study using this data. Records will be kept confidential to the extent provided by federal, state, and local law. However, the Institutional Review Board, or university and government officials responsible for monitoring this study may inspect these records.

11. **Availability of further information**
If significant new knowledge is obtained during the course of this research which may relate to your willingness to continue participation, you will be informed of this knowledge.

12. **Contact Information**
Jenny Small, (734) 255-0420 or jlsmall@umich.edu.
Project Advisor: Dr. Edward St. John, (734) 764-9472 or edstjohn@umich.edu

13. **Required IRB Contact Information**
Should you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board, Kate Keever, 540 E. Liberty Street, Suite 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933, e-mail: irbhsbs@umich.edu

14. **Voluntary nature of participation**
Your participation in this project is voluntary. Even after you sign the informed consent document, you may decide to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled.

15. **Documentation of the consent**
One copy of this document will be kept together with the research records of this study. Also, you will be given a copy to keep.

16. **Audio and video recording**
Audio and video recording devices will be used during the focus groups. Upon completion of the study, the tapes will be archived.

17. **Consent of the subject:**

ADULT SUBJECT OF RESEARCH

_____
Printed Name   Consenting signature
DATE: _____

18. **Consent to be audio and video taped:**

_____
Printed Name   Consenting signature
DATE: _____

Appendix C: Protocol for First Round Focus Groups

1. Tell me about your religious upbringing.

2. What did you like about your religious life growing up?

3. What did you dislike about your religious life growing up?

4. What does the word "religious" signify to you?

5. What has been the most meaningful religious experience you have had?

6. What does the word "spiritual" signify to you?

7. What has been the most meaningful spiritual experience you have had?

8. Do you currently consider yourself to be religious, spiritual or both? Why?

9. How does your spirituality interrelate with your religious life?

10. How has your religious background impacted your view of spirituality?

11. How has your religious life and/or your spirituality changed since high school or been impacted by being in college?

12. How has your religious life and/or your spirituality been impacted your religious group's status in society?

13. Is there anything more that you would like to add about how you think about your religious life or spiritual identity?

Appendix D: Protocol for Second Round Focus Groups

1. What does the word "religious" signify to you?

2. What are your reactions to the responses of your co-participants to the previous question?

3. What does the word "spiritual" signify to you?

4. What are your reactions to the responses of your co-participants to the previous question?

5. How does your spirituality interrelate with your religious life?

6. What are your reactions to the responses of your co-participants to the previous question?

7. Do you feel that your religion is guiding you toward some form of ultimate identity? If so, please describe this.

8. What are your reactions to the responses of your co-participants to the previous question?

9. After hearing the responses of your co-participants to the past four questions and getting a chance to react to them, what are your thoughts about the differences or similarities between your views on religion and spirituality? Why do you think there may be differences and similarities between you?

Appendix E: Follow Up Reflection Questionnaire

Dear student:

Thank you for your participation in this research study. I would now like to collect some final reactions and thoughts from you about your experiences with it. After you complete this form (please see both sides), you will receive your $20 compensation for participation. You may either e-mail your responses to jlsmall@umich.edu or mail a hard copy to:

Jenny Small
2339 School of Education Building
Campus Zip 1259

Thank you very much for your time. Your contributions have been invaluable.

Sincerely,

Jenny L. Small
Doctoral Candidate
Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education
University of Michigan School of Education

1. Would you be willing to be contacted for an additional individual interview? Yes No

2. Please reflect on your time in these focus groups. What did you learn from your experiences in the focus groups?

3. What about your experiences in the focus groups did you find challenging?

4. How, if in any way, have your experiences in the focus groups influenced the way you think about your spirituality?

Appendix F: Protocol for Individual Interviews

1. Let's talk about your experiences in the focus groups. Reflecting back on the discussion you had in the first group, with all **(Christian, Jewish, Muslim, atheist)** students, how did your experiences with religion and spirituality compare with the others?

2. How do you see your religious and spiritual identity in relationship to (**the larger Christian, Jewish, Muslim community / atheists in general**) in this country?

3. Reflecting back on the discussion you had in the second group, with students from mixed backgrounds, how did your experiences with religion and spirituality compare with the others?

4. **Jews/Muslims/atheists** are a minority group in the U.S., with Christians as the dominant religious group in society. OR

   Christians are the dominant religious group in the U.S., while the others you interacted with in the mixed sessions are minorities.

   How do you think being **out of/part of** this mainstream religious group impacts you personally?

5. **For Christians/Jews/Muslims**: How do you reconcile your religious life with the secular aspects of your life, such as being in college?

   For atheists: How do you reconcile not having a religious life, when so many people around you do?

6. **For Christians/Jews/Muslims**: What ritual observances do you practice in your life at this time?

For atheists: What practices do you have in your daily life to live out your belief system and morality in the world?

7. There is one subject that I haven't asked you about directly yet, although many people have referenced it in the focus groups, and that is God.

    For Christians/Jews/Muslims: Could you talk about your belief in God and what role God plays in your life? How does this impact the way you live your life?

    For atheists: Could you talk about whether or not you have a definition of God and if you ever had a belief in God that you later rejected? Or did God never play a role in your identity? How does this impact the way you live your life?

8. How do you understand the multiple truth claims made by people who come from different religious backgrounds or don't ascribe to a religion? How do these other claims impact your own beliefs?

9. Do you feel as though your religious and spiritual identity is settled at this time, or that it is still growing and developing?

10. How strongly do you hold to your beliefs?

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