Big Theological Questions:
Using Inquiry-Based Pedagogy in Teaching Theology and Religion to Undergraduate Students

by

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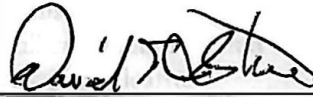A project thesis

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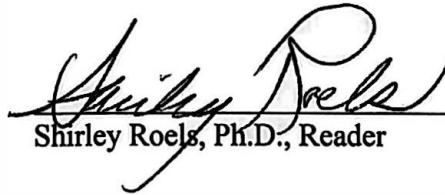in partial fulfillment of the requirements
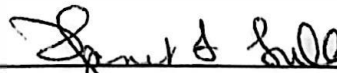
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to test whether or not using inquiry-based pedagogies, specifically big questions inquiry and appreciative inquiry, to teach Christian theology and religion in an undergraduate first-year seminar course would result in experimental group students reporting increased development of their inner lives and also greater advancements in interfaith understanding and bridge-building behaviors, regardless of the students' religious or non-religious affiliations, as opposed to comparison group students. This research was conducted over a two-year period, from the students' entry into college until the end of the students' sophomore year.

The quantitative results suggest that an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion can advance students' spiritual development or enhance their "inner lives" if spiritual development and inner lives are defined in the following ways: Being more aware of who I am, being able to clearly articulate my beliefs, increased curiosity, increased spiritual quest, increased happiness, increased satisfaction with self, finding a sense of what makes life meaningful, and finding a sense of purpose in life. The quantitative results also suggest that an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion can increase students' dispositions and behaviors related to what Alexander Astin, Helen Astin, and Jennifer Lindholm call "ecumenical worldview," and what Eboo Patel calls pluralistic bridge-building behaviors.

The qualitative results demonstrate that for quite a few students, the first year of college is crucial, almost a turning point between becoming articulate and confident in expressing worldview, finding purpose, and gaining skill to engage diverse religious and cultures on the one hand, and being inarticulate and unconfident in expressing worldview, feeling stuck and lacking purpose, and avoiding or disengaging from religion and religious people out of fear and discomfort on the other hand. Over the two years of the study, it was almost as if there were two pathways for the students, and these two pathways did diverge in very different directions. Moreover, the results of this research were consistent with the possibility of the existence in my institution of a null curriculum related to the advancement of students' inner lives and engaging the subjectivity of the learner.

The effectiveness of the inquiry-based pedagogy used in teaching theology and religion in the students' words seemed to center on holding the critical and appreciative in constant tension. Students valued the new cognitive knowledge as much as the personal contemplation of beliefs and values. They noted the importance of thinking critically, but also of digging deep in terms of the subjective—listening, questioning, valuing, appreciating, challenging, creating, and constructing.

As a result of this research, the national chaplains networks should consider possible student learning outcomes for student spiritual development, as well as standardizing some best practices for inviting students not only to learn facts about the religions of the world, but also for inviting students to reflect to on their own religious beliefs or non-religious philosophies, not just as systems or institutions of thought and practices, but also as personal theologies or philosophies of life.

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None of this would have been possible without the two most important people in my world, Kevin and Elysia Sadd, who gave me a Christmas present of time alone to finish the final draft.

Introduction: Context and Overview

Centuries ago, Tertullian asked: "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"[1] In Tertullian's time, Athens, the center of secular learning, and Jerusalem, the center of Christian thought and practice, were historically geographical centers. In the twenty-first century, Athens and Jerusalem are symbolic markers of the division between church and academy, theology and philosophy, reason and revelation.   What is the appropriate relationship between Athens and Jerusalem? In a secular democratic nation that even in the twenty-first century remains majority Christian, we wrestle again and again with this question. Moreover, insofar as Athens and Jerusalem symbolize centers not only education, but also personal beliefs or worldviews, Tertullian's question must be revisited again and again.

Context and Setting

As the chaplain and also as one who teaches in religious studies at a small church-founded but not church controlled college, I feel some days that the gulf between religion, or more particularly, theology, and higher education is very large—perhaps insurmountable. Elizabethtown College was founded in 1899 by the Church of the Brethren, a Christian denomination with historical and theological roots springing from Radical Pietism—a heritage we share with the Society of Friends—and Anabaptism, a shared heritage with Mennonites, Baptists, Amish, and others. The school continues to maintain a "covenantal relationship" with the founding denomination, by "honoring and giving witness to the tradition, spirit, and values" of the founding denomination.[2] The College maintains twenty

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[1] Tertullian, *Prescription against Heretics* 7.
[2]*Mutual Expectations Committee Basic Understandings*, Elizabethtown College and Atlantic Northeast District, Church of the Brethren, 1992, 1993, 2005, p. 1.

percent of its trustees from the denomination of the founders. A church-college relations committee meets twice per year, and the college employs an institutional chaplain and also a director of church relations, both of whom are members of the Church of the Brethren.

Here is what we say about Elizabethtown College on our press releases:

Elizabethtown College, in historic Lancaster County, Pennsylvania,
is a private coed institution offering more than four dozen liberal arts, fine and performing arts, science and
engineering, business, communications and education degrees.
Through personal attention, creative inspiration and academic challenge,
Elizabethtown College students are encouraged to expand their intellectual curiosity
and are given the opportunity to become a bigger part of the world
through experiential learning—research, internships and study abroad.
Elizabethtown College's overall commitment to Educate for Service
is fulfilled as students are taught intellectually, socially, aesthetically and ethically
for lives of service and leadership.[3]

If one traces the mission statements over the last thirty years, one can see in both mission statements and publicity that religion was replaced by spirituality, which was then replaced by a turn to the ethical, with no mention of religion or spirituality at all.

Religion, Theology, and Higher Education in the 21st Century

As with many small colleges and universities founded by Protestant denominations, Elizabethtown College has been deeply affected by larger societal change. I believe the College has been affected by what sociologist of religion N. Jay Demerath has dubbed the cultural triumph of liberal Protestantism. "Far from representing failure," he says, "the decline of Liberal Protestantism may actually stem from its success. It may be the painful structural consequences of [its] wider cultural triumph…Liberal Protestants have lost structurally at the micro level precisely because they won culturally at the macro level."[4]

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[3] Office of Marketing and Communications Media Release Statement, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA, 2013.

[4] Christian Smith with Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 287-288.

In the changing mission statements of my college over recent decades, one can see that spirituality and religion are no longer a central part of the College's mission statement, and the focus has become a set of ethics and values, which are neither uniquely Brethren nor even specifically religious, extrapolated from the founding denomination's heritage.[5] Although the institutional chaplain offers prayers at all large public occasions, the College requires no courses in theology or religion. However, religious studies courses are electives which students may choose as a part of the liberal arts and sciences core.

Robert Benne and others have studied colleges such as mine, which, while defining themselves as independent or loosely church-related, continue to talk about religious heritage or historic values from a religious tradition.[6] These schools may be characterized by the continuing presence of an institutional chaplain, while the religious studies department, including the teaching of biblical studies, has adapted its methodology to the style of the modern secular research university. Peter Hodgson and others have traced broader epistemological and cultural shifts that have resulted in a wall between theology and religious studies in many colleges and universities.[7]

To the extent that the College does have a "local theology," it is a theology that emphasizes the prophetic voice, social justice, intercultural communication, diversity, service, peace, nonviolence, inclusive community, and global engagement.[8] This local theology is

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[5] Here is a key section of the College's current mission statement: *Molded by a commitment to educate for service, Elizabethtown College is a community of learners dedicated to educating students intellectually, socially, aesthetically, and ethically for lives of service and leadership as citizens of the world...Founded by members of the Church of the Brethren, the College believes that learning is most noble when used to benefit others and affirms the values of peace, non-violence, human dignity, and social justice.*
[6] Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001).
[7] Peter Hodgson, *God's Wisdom: Toward a Theology of Education* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).
[8] Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1985).

present in many places, and most particularly in the chaplain's office, the religious studies department, the office of civic engagement and service-learning, the office of peace programs, the center for global understanding and peacemaking, the office of diversity, the office of international programs, the interdisciplinary peace minor, and even in the courses in the communications major. I call this a local theology, although one can argue that this is a philosophy, not a theology at all, and that these are simply the liberal humanistic values of twenty-first century secular higher education.

The mission statement of Elizabethtown College offers a firm foundation for constructive work related to religious diversity, or building what Interfaith Youth Core founder Eboo Patel calls a *Bridge* culture[9]:

> *Molded by a commitment to educate for service, Elizabethtown College is a community of learners dedicated to educating students intellectually, socially, aesthetically, and ethically for lives of service and leadership as citizens of the world...Founded by members of the Church of the Brethren, the College believes that learning is most noble when used to benefit others and affirms the values of peace, non-violence, human dignity, and social justice.*[10]

At the same time, many students will graduate from Elizabethtown College without engaging religious diversity, without being challenged to develop spiritually, and without gaining bridge-building dispositions and skills. Many also will graduate without taking a course in religious studies, let alone a course in theology that encourages them to engage personally, subjectively, and affirmatively, as well as critically their own beliefs and practices as well as those of others.

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[9] Eboo Patel, "Zabriskie Lecture 1: Acts of Faith: Interfaith Leadership in a Time of Religious Crisis," *Alumni Convocation*, reprint (Alexandria, VA: Virginia Theological Seminary, 2009). Patel says that people with bridge dispositions are opposed to discrimination and emphasize what their religion can contribute to diversity without losing the specific and unique identity of one's own religion.
[10] Elizabethtown College Mission Statement, http://www.etown.edu/about/mission.aspx, accessed June 1, 2011.

The Ministry Research Project

To some degree, this research was born from my sadness that religion has been relegated to the margins of the culture in many colleges and universities, and also that religious studies in the modern research university may preclude the discipline of theology. At the same time, a survey of the track record of religious denominations with education in America has been mixed.[11] On the one hand, the ecumenical Protestant Sunday School movement for the poor that became today's public education, and the Catholic contribution of classical education to even the poorest of students in its schools, both show that religion has had great positive impact on education, both public and private. On the other hand, the methods used by both Catholics and Protestants to educate students they believed to be born into original sin or depravity, and to produce obedience and reform in these students, seem to be things we would do best to learn not to repeat.

Finally, this research project also emerged from a concern that many strategies and tactics for fostering interfaith dialogue, understanding, and action rely on the presence of significant compositional diversity. Diana Eck says that diversity is "the existence of people from diverse religious, ethnic, racial, age, class, and geographic backgrounds, living in close quarters," and scholars such as Peter Berger and Anthony Giddens assume that there is a plethora of diversity everywhere.[12] In fact, in the United States in general, religious diversity may not be as prevalent as presumed, and in places like Elizabethtown, PA, more specifically, there just is not that much diversity of any kind in the way that Eck describes it. At Elizabethtown College, when the chaplain's office runs a spring break trip or the center

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[11] Amy Dyer, *Theology of Education* course notes (Alexandria, VA: Virginia Theological Seminary, July, 2011).
[12] Eboo Patel, "Zabriskie Lecture 1," pp. 7-8.

for civic engagement leads a winter break service trip, we cannot be certain that there will be any significant religious diversity, or even racial or international diversity. In 2013, at Elizabethtown College, in a student body of 1,866, we had 86 international students, and 146 students of African-American, Latino, Native American, and Asian-American backgrounds. We think of the racial, cultural and ethnic diversity of our campus as about 11%. Religious diversity is even less. In any given year, we have approximately twenty Jewish students, eight Buddhist students, and four Muslim students.

At the same time, I have continued to teach Christian philosophical theology in a modern department of religious studies for about a decade, and I have observed in students what I now call a "personal existential engagement" with religion in these Christian philosophical theology courses to a degree that I did not observe it in my more phenomenological-based religious studies classes, including my introduction to the world's religions course. Therefore, this research also developed from both my deep belief and also my anecdotal observations that teaching Christian theology (or perhaps any specific religious theology) in the context of big questions of life and meaning creates educational benefits that cannot be gained by other cognitive, phenomenological academic approaches to religious studies.

Synopsis of Core Thesis Statement

The primary claim of this study was that using inquiry-based pedagogies, specifically big questions inquiry and appreciative inquiry, to teach Christian theology and religion in an undergraduate first-year seminar course would result in experimental group students reporting increased development of their inner lives and also greater advancements in interfaith understanding and bridge-building behaviors, regardless of the students' religious or non-religious affiliation, as opposed to comparison group students.

<u>Key Themes of Research and Overview of Document</u>

The first chapter of this ministry thesis begins by outlining issues and opportunities, both in higher education in general, and in my specific college in particular. The two primary issues identified in Chapter 1 include: 1) The need for spiritual, religious, and worldview development of college and university students, and 2) The problem of trying to teach civic pluralism or interfaith action without significant compositional diversity on a small campus. The two primary opportunities identified in the first chapter include: 1) the possibility of theology and religion returning to the academy in new ways, both curricular and co-curricular, and 2) the opportunity to apply inquiry-based pedagogies used in a variety of ways elsewhere to the teaching of Christian theology and religion in a classroom setting.

Chapter 2 surveys interdisciplinary literature in both the humanities and the social sciences which might address the problems and opportunities named in the first chapter. The primary focus of this chapter is on theological, educational, and social science theory that might shed light on ways to engage students in the study of religion in the classroom in way that might advance their inner lives, or at the very least, engage not only the cognitive, but also the affective dimensions of their development. The literature review focuses on the primary theories that were applied in the ministry research project: transformative learning theory (Jack Mezirow et al), big-enough questions mentoring communities (Sharon Daloz Parks), big questions and ecumenical worldview development (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm), big questions inquiry, appreciative inquiry, pluralistic bridge-building behaviors (Patel), personal theologies (David Gortner), and Radical Pietism.

Chapter 3 describes the purpose, goals, and methods of the research. The purpose of the project included attempting to apply Parks' model in an academic classroom setting and to systematically analyze outcomes, which few scholars have done, and to attempt to

duplicate Astin and Astin's findings that engagement with big questions increases dispositions and skills related to students' ecumenical worldviews and behaviors of pluralistic bridge-building. I developed and tested an inquiry-based pedagogy designed specifically for teaching Christian theology and religion in an undergraduate classroom, with the goal of trying to discover the nature of any enhancement in students' spiritual development or inner lives that might come from engaging big questions in academic courses in theology and religion.

The ministry research project included 76 first-year undergraduate students in first-year seminar courses, with two experimental seminar courses taught using the inquiry-based pedagogy with the subject matter of Christian theology and religion, and three comparison group seminar courses taught with traditional pedagogies in the subject areas of math, science, and literature. A significant part of Chapter 3 is devoted to describing the big questions project, which included a community and individual mentoring component, as well as the appreciative inquiry journals and classroom process, which were the interventions developed from the literature review.

As explained in Chapter 3, one goal of this study was to administer a broad array of inventories and measures to see what might be happening to students in terms of spirituality, religiousness, curiosity, well-being, beliefs, epistemology, behaviors, and practices over the first two-years of college. To that end, I employed quantitative measures, including pre-course and post-course surveys, using both standard inventories and questions from other researchers, as well as custom-designed questions of my own.

For the quantitative results on standard inventories, my results in Chapter 4 were consistent with the possibility of the existence in my institution's honors first-year program of a null curriculum related to the advancement of students' inner lives and engaging the

subjectivity of the learner. Moreover, my results suggest that when this subjectivity and inner life engagement is brought into the explicit curriculum, there are significant benefits to students related to curiosity, happiness, satisfaction with self, finding meaning and purpose, and engaging in pluralistic bridge-building behaviors as compared to students for whom the subjectivity and existential elements remain in the null curriculum. These results were achieved by the teaching of Christian theology and religion using inquiry-based pedagogies, and not by the teaching of math, science, or literature using generally-accepted standard disciplinary pedagogies.

For the quantitative survey items custom-created to assess the perceived benefits of the first-year seminar experience related to the primary thesis claim, Pearson Chi Square results reported in Chapter 5 show statistically significant difference between experimental and comparison groups for eight of fourteen items ($\alpha=.05$). The benefits of the experimental seminar courses of statistical significance included: be more aware of who I am, state clearly what I believe, listen to others' points of view, appreciate what others believe, engage diverse religious and cultural viewpoints, treat others with respect, form friendships with people different than you, and initiate conversations with people of other religions and cultures. In addition, there were statistically suggestive post-course between groups differences for two additional items ($\alpha=.10$): have more clarity about what I should do with my life and have mutually rewarding conversations with friends.

The quantitative results in Chapters 4 and 5 suggest that an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion can advance students' spiritual development or enhance their "inner lives" if spiritual development and inner lives are defined in the following ways:

1. Being more aware of who I am

2. Being able to clearly articulate my beliefs

3. Increasing curiosity

4. Increasing Spiritual Quest (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm)

5. Increasing happiness

6. Increasing satisfaction with self

7. Finding a sense of what makes life meaningful

8. Finding a sense of purpose in life.

The quantitative results also suggest that in an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion can increase students' dispositions related to what Astin, Astin, and Lindholm call "ecumenical worldview," and what Patel calls pluralistic bridge-building behaviors. According to the surveys, students in the two experimental seminar groups scored statistically significantly higher on: ability to listen to others' points of view, appreciating others' beliefs, engaging diverse religious and cultural viewpoints, and engaging in conversations with people of other religions and cultures. In addition, there were statistically suggestive post-course between groups differences for three items ($\alpha=.10$): having mutually rewarding conversations with parents and family, and forming friendships with people different than you.

Chapter 6 focuses on qualitative results related to another goal of this study: To discover what happened to students' spiritual and religious development over the first two years of college in their own words, and to see what new themes or models might emerge. To that end, I employed grounded theory research on the pre-course, post-course, and final (end of sophomore year) interviews in an attempt to gain greater understanding about student spiritual development in the first two years of college, and also to create a conceptual

model for an inquiry-based pedagogy (both big questions and appreciative inquiry) applied to religious studies.

For the question related to what happens to student spiritual development over the first two years of college or university, the holistic coding, pattern coding, and focused coding, led to a possible diagram of a range of positive and negative outcomes related to students' spiritual development in the first two years of college. With regard to the question about how inquiry-based pedagogies impact students, for the first coding cycle, the outcomes of hypothesis coding supported or correlated with the findings from the quantitative data. Through focused coding based on frequency, significance, and/or saliency, a list of the most important positive outcomes of the inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion was created and is reported at the end of Chapter 6.

The concluding two chapters include my learning, my assessment of the project's impact and limitations, suggestions for future work, and finally, recommendations for professors, chaplains, and higher education administrators.

Chapter 1
Issues and Opportunities

The first chapter of this ministry thesis begins by outlining issues and opportunities, both in higher education in general, and in my specific college in particular. The two primary issues identified in Chapter 1 include 1) the need for spiritual, religious, and worldview development of college and university students, and 2) the problem of trying to teach civic pluralism and interfaith action without significant compositional diversity on a small campus. The two primary opportunities identified in the first chapter include 1) the possibility of theology and religion returning to the academic in new ways, both curricular and co-curricular, and 2) the opportunity to apply inquiry-based pedagogies used in a variety of ways elsewhere to the teaching of Christian theology and religion in a classroom setting.

Issue 1: Students' Spiritual, Religious, and Worldview Development

In many ways, this entire ministry research project began because of Eboo Patel's 2009 Zabriskie Lectures at Virginia Theological Seminary, in which he said that there were three tragedies in the story of a young undergraduate evangelical Christian student named April when she had to face the challenges of religious diversity: 1) the obvious tragedy of discrimination, 2) the somewhat hidden tragedy that "a diverse civil society too often tends towards conflict if cooperation isn't proactively built," and 3) the tragedy of religious identity—the fact that engaging diversity may be most difficult for those who have a strong religious identity.[13] According to Patel, in the story of the college student April, the problem was not a problem of the lack of a theology of pluralism within Christian tradition; instead, the problem was that a "bridge was not built for April during her time in faith formation."[14]

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[13] Eboo Patel, "Zabriskie Lecture 1," 1-2.
[14] Patel, "Zabriskie Lecture 1," 2-3.

Having worked with traditional-aged college students for more than a decade, I have observed that April's case is somewhat typical of a certain population of students who remain active with their Christian faith at my college. The students are clear about the basic evangelical theological formulations about Jesus and salvation, but formation through their local church education programs has not included big questions of meaning and purpose, issues of pluralism and civil society, or the breadth and depth of writings in both biblical and Christian theology.[15] In these instances, and in the case of April, Patel and I are talking about young adult Christians having such a strong religious identity that they cannot participate well in a diverse and civil society. The result is that at my college, we have Christian evangelical and fundamentalist ministries and student groups who would fall into a category Patel calls *Barrier*.[16]

In stark contrast, Kendra Creasy Dean, who coined the phrase "therapeutic moral deism," and who worked on the National Study of Youth and Religion writes: "American young people are, theoretically, fine with religious faith—but it does not concern them very much, and it is not durable enough to survive long after they graduate from high school." Sociologist Christian Smith summarized his research regarding the dominant outlook on religion held by emerging adults in America, as follows:

> *Not all emerging adults think about religion in the same way, but there definitely is a dominant outlook when it comes to religion. Most emerging adults are okay with talking about religion as a topic, although they are largely indifferent to it—religion is just not that important to most of them. So for the most part, they do not end up talking much about religion in their lives…Furthermore, among emerging adults, religious beliefs do not seem to be important, action-driving commitments, but rather mental assents to ideas that have few obvious consequences. What actually do have the power and authority to drive life instead*

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[15] Although I spend only two class periods during a semester-long course on Christianity and the World's Religions, I am amazed how the students are thrilled to discover the foundation for interfaith understanding found in some of the writings of Christian theology.

[16] According to Patel, the barrier position is not destructive or violent, but takes a view that the theologies of various religions are opposed to each other, and there are dividing walls to accentuate differences.

are the feelings and inclinations of the emerging adults themselves…So they themselves can pick and choose from religion to take or leave what they want. At the same time, the personal outlooks of most emerging adults are highly qualified—sometimes even paralyzed—by their awareness of the relativity of their own cultural and social locations. The latter tend to undercut any confidence they might have in the possibility of holding true beliefs, rendering valid judgments, making worthy commitments.[17]

Consistent with Smith's findings, I have found that the other large population of students on my campus is ambivalent, resentful, or indifferent to religious faith and practice. Some are truly atheist or non-religious. Still others are the unaffiliated, agnostic, or so-called "Nones." At the same time, in my experience, many of these students might be called liminals—students who are a bit "fuzzy" around the edges of belief and practice. Perhaps disenfranchised from a particular religious tradition (usually a Christian tradition), many of these students find the language of religion or faith does not engage them, or they have become weary trying to reconcile their parents being of different faiths or the tensions between their religious upbringing and their belief in science. They do not see any easy answer to the complexities of many religions, so they give up. This large group falls into Patel's category of *Blasé*.[18]

In my experience, students in this Blasé category often present like theological and philosophical relativists, but in reality they are more likely expressive of a social and emotional developmental phase in which emerging adults wish to think and do their own thing freed from the bonds of any authority figure or institution and without a need for accountability to anyone. Other possible reasons for the Blasé attitude might be found in the research of sociologist Smith, who notes the four pillars of the dominant life script of emerging adults in America:

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[17] Smith, *Souls in Transition*, 286-287.

[18] According to Patel, those with the blasé approach are too confused to put energy into thinking about religious diversity anymore.

- Focus on the most important things in life: having fun and building material success;

- Remember that strong beliefs, especially those related to religion and faith, are scary and problematic;

- Delay as long as possible answering the big questions of life;

- Stay neutral; don't commit; leave as much as you can up in the air. [19]

Most of these students do not have a strong religious identity, so theoretically, religious diversity may not pose a particular struggle for them, as Patel says it does for those with a strong religious identity. At the same time, if one is fuzzy, blasé, delaying commitment, or feeling angry at or disenfranchised from religion, then in reality, encountering religion of any kind might pose a struggle for these students.

One issue for students at my school, which may not be that different from other young adults in the nation, can be summarized in a two-fold way: Emerging adults at my college exhibit attitudes and behaviors related to religion that seem to be either exclusivist, intolerant, and bifurcated or relativist, apathetic, and blasé. Neither of these polarities is advantageous or useful in developing students' spiritual or inner lives, or in promoting positive engagement with religious and cultural diversity in our campus community and in the larger society.

Issue 2: Teaching Pluralism Without Compositional Diversity

Although my campus culture is not characterized by what Patel calls the *Bomb* response, (religious extremists who use violence), we definitely have *Bigotry* in our campus culture, with discrimination most often manifesting itself as stereotyping, inappropriate

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[19] Christian Smith, "Souls in Transition: The Quest for Faith and a Future Among Emerging Adults," Opening Plenary Lecture (Council of Independent Colleges Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education Conference, Indianapolis, IN, March 10, 2011).

jokes, and bullying among students. Unfortunately, my college was one featured in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* for bias-related incidents in September of 2013.

Another prevalent group at the College would fall into Patel's category of *Bifurcation,* and interestingly, this group that lives "two different lives…a faith life in church…and a worldly life in the world" includes not only students, but also faculty and staff.[20] Many students seem both adept at and satisfied with moving between two different silos of thought, belief, and practice. However, such bifurcation is not consistent with the holistic education of students about which higher education speaks in the twenty-first century.

The Church of the Brethren heritage of the college, a historically sectarian denomination, would have fallen at one time into Patel's *Bubble* category. While this sectarian theology is diluted in the denomination in general, to some extent we do have *Bubble* in our campus culture.

Of course, for Patel, the goal is what he calls a *Bridge* culture or approach. However, unfortunately, many so-called best practices related to pluralism and interfaith action rely on the presence of significant compositional diversity to foster what Patel calls positive provocative experiences that develop interfaith leaders. The religious demographics of our student body do not indicate significant levels of religious compositional diversity:[21]

- Full-time students: 1912
- Christianity – 1174
    - Protestant – 634
    - Roman Catholic – 527
    - Orthodox - 13
- Judaism – 29
- Buddhism – 10
- Unitarian Universalism – 6

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[20] Patel, "Zabriskie Lecture," 6.
[21] Report generated by Tracy Wenger Sadd from College's Jennzabar system, 2014. The College does not report this on an internal or external data reports or advertising that could be found by the author.

- Islam – 4
- No Preference or No Affiliation – 150
- No Response – 486
- Other – 53

Since I began this research, I have encountered peers and colleagues from across the nation who think in this twenty-first century of global engagement and citizenship, that there are no "non-diverse" places. I wondered: Is Elizabethtown College such a strange and unique place? Does this mean that we cannot educate for interfaith understanding and cross-cultural leadership? Even as I write this thesis, I expect critics to argue that I am just not in touch with the diversity around me. At the same time, when I look at demographics about religious diversity in America as a whole, I think it is fairly clear that it is not just my experience. There simply is not enough religious diversity to go around, if our institutions rely on demographic diversity to create provocative experiences that educate our students. According to religious demographic studies of the United States, 1.7% of the population is Jewish, 0.7% is Buddhist; Muslims comprise 0.6%, and Hindus, 0.4%.[22]

How much religious diversity (or other form of diversity—racial, ethnic, national, political, gender) is needed in order to make an impact just by the presence of the compositional diversity? At present, I have not found a source to cite in answer this question, but I have heard it estimated to be 30-35%. With smaller levels of compositional diversity, we may end up exhausting or exoticizing the students of minority religions.

At the College, we have tried interfaith prayer services. Students have told me that they do not like being used over and over again as the one and only representative of their religious or cultural tradition, and they do not feel qualified to represent their entire tradition

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[22] Pew Research Religion and the Public Life Project, "Religious Landscape Survey," http://religions.pewforum.org/reports, accessed February 12, 2015.

in educating the campus community. Students of gender, religious, and racial minorities are very sensitive to being asked to appear in every admissions brochure or at every interfaith or multicultural event, program, or service.

Therefore, to Patel's three tragedies related to religious diversity mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (discrimination, drift toward conflict rather than cooperation, and dilution of identity), I would add a fourth tragedy, and that is tokenism, or exoticization, by which I mean the excessive overutilization of one or two students from religious, racial, or cultural minorities in an effort to create a particular public image, to promote diversity, or to provide a diverse education for the majority, which results in discomfort, stress, or cynicism on the part of the minority students. In its campus and organizational training workshops, the Anti-Defamation League discusses a phenomenon called "cultural tokenism," and I believe that something called "religious tokenism" is possible, and not desirable.[23]

In Spring 2011, our campus participated in the Interfaith Youth Core Campus Spiritual and Religious Climate Survey, which discovered the following:

- Worldview majority students perceived more resources for the expression of their worldview than did worldview minority students (particularly the non-religious).

- Overall, students hold favorable views toward worldviews different than their own, including worldviews such as Muslim, Evangelical, Atheist, and Mormon.[24]

- Over 60% of students reported high levels of pluralism orientation, with worldview minority students having a significantly higher orientation toward pluralism than did worldview majority students.

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[23] Anti-Defamation League, "A Campus of Difference Workbook," p. 57.
[24] *Campus Spiritual and Religious Climate Survey (CSRCS) Report for Elizabethtown College* (Interfaith Youth Core: Chicago, IL, 2011-12), 7.

- Compared with those in the worldview majority and minority, non-religious students were significantly less likely to perceive acceptance of their worldview group.[25]

- Each group (majority, minority, and non-religious) reported similar levels of co-curricular engagement. Non-religious students reported the lowest level of co-curricular engagement related to religious and secular identity and diversity.

- Students from all three worldview groups reported similar levels of curricular engagement related to religious diversity (Low – 64.7%; Medium – 32%; High – 3.3%).[26]

- Approximately 70% of students across worldviews reported a "moderate" level of provocative experiences with worldview diversity.[27]

- Very few students reported having a high degree of provocative experiences.[28]

Part of our future strategy is to try to create more of these experiences utilizing the limited diversity we have on our campus, but in the end, there is not enough religious diversity to create the desired impact through methods that rely on composition diversity and student encounters with religious diversity outside the classroom.

So my questions remained: If there are places that do not have significant levels of compositional diversity, then how can we transform students into interfaith leaders and global citizens? Moreover, what subject matter and pedagogy can be shown to contribute to people changing their minds and their behaviors related to interfaith understanding and engagement?

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[25] *CSRCS Report for Elizabethtown College*, 9.
[26] *CSRCS Report for Elizabethtown College*, 10.
[27] *CSRCS Report for Elizabethtown College*, 8.
[28] *CSRCS Report for Elizabethtown College*, 10.

Issue Becomes Opportunity: Revisiting the Jerusalem and Athens Question

In 1912, Jane Addams' wrote that over time educational and other institutions might become bureaucracies "in danger of forgetting the mystery, and complexity of life, of repressing the promptings that spring from insight."[29] In 2007, Anthony Kronman argued in his book, which was hailed by the *Wall Street Journal* as "a passionate defense of the humanities," that higher education must address the unique question of what living is for—a question that is both personal and communal.[30]

Questions of the meaning of life and what really matters involve our ultimate commitments, and because these things relate to what we care about and value, they can never be answered with the fields of philosophy or objective moral reasoning. These questions raise our anxiety and remain with us throughout our lifespan, at certain times with more urgency than others. Kronman traces how the rise of secular humanism, the developing research ideal of the academy, and the dominance of the scientific method have eclipsed the understanding of the role of higher education in shaping the souls and spirits of students. Kronman passionately argues against Stanley Fish for a revival of the humanities to support students in learning how to address life's biggest and most important questions.

All of this may be noble and purposeful and good, but in the end, religion still is not mentioned; it is marginalized or has no real part. At the College, our Fall 2012 semester-long work with consultants from Interfaith Youth Core included some faculty and staff questionnaires and focus groups. The findings showed that faculty and staff reported being generally comfortable discussing religious identity with students, but reported low levels of actual engagement with this topic. Specifically, 36% of faculty are Uncomfortable discussing

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[29] Jean Bethke Elshtain, *The Jane Addams Reader* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002), 29-45.
[30] Anthony T. Kronman, *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

religion or religious identity with students <u>inside the classroom</u>; and 15% responded Not Relevant.[31]

Building on the ideas of both Addams and Kronman, I think there is a spiritual-existential aspect to education that has been lost in the turn toward the modern secular research and specialization ideal, and it has not been picked up completely by the disciplines of philosophy, psychology, education, or any other academic field. The fact that people in many classrooms do not talk in the classroom about personal beliefs that shape an entire way of being in the world does not mean that said beliefs are not present in the classroom. It just means they are not acknowledged as a presence or consciously brought into the classroom.

While I understand the dangers of education as indoctrination, I think this "not talking" about beliefs (religious, political, or otherwise) is akin to not talking about the elephant in the classroom. Then again, perhaps not, because the elephant in said colloquialism is seen, just ignored and not discussed. I wonder if beliefs are even seen (let alone talked about), so far have they been subjugated in some academic environments. I conclude that for all our talk in both private and public education about holistic learning, we have a lot of work to do before something truly worthy of such an adjective actually happens in our classrooms. While I agree that the use of academic classes by anyone to proselytize or present a triumphalist perspective of any political, religious, or philosophical view is undesirable and also may be unethical, I also think that the deleterious effects of excluding discussions about the personal or subjective aspects of religion, meaning, purpose, politics,

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[31] *Assessment Engagement Final Report for Elizabethtown College* (Interfaith Youth Core: Chicago, IL, January 2012), 11-13.

or ethics in academic classrooms have been noted by a number of scholars.[32] According to

the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), epistemological

frameworks are changing and need to change. While traditional frameworks for knowledge

emphasize Western, universalizing, detached, abstract, analytical, and value-neutral

approaches, the current global context has necessitated methods that are plural, situated,

relational, experiential, applied, and value-infused.[33]

Opportunity 1: Theology and Religion Return to the Academy in a New Way

In their historical survey on the relationship between religion and higher education,

Jake and Rhonda Jacobsen demonstrate that while at one time religion and the academy were

divorced from one another, in the last decade, religion has returned to college and university

campuses in new ways.[34] At a November 2013 gathering of college and university chaplains

to consider chaplaincy in the twenty-first century, Sharon Daloz Parks gave a keynote

address in which she stated that college and university chaplains have a certain immunity that

allows them to "pass freely between the tenacity of the mind and the freedom of the

heart."[35] In her view, college and university chaplains have specific immunity from what she

calls "the epistemological wound," the Jerusalem-Athens divide. Parks clearly suggests that

there are ways that college and university chaplains engage and intervene, both in the

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[32] Diane L. Moore, *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Studies Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). See also Brian T. Johnson and Carolyn R. O'Grady, editors. *The Spirit of Service: Exploring Faith, Service, and Social Justice in Higher Education* (Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Co., Inc., 2006), Elizabeth Kiss and J. Peter Euben, editors, *Debating Moral Education: Rethinking the Role of the Modern University* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), and Kronman.

[33] Carol Geary Schneider, "Project Leap Initiative," AAC&U Core Commitments Seminar (University of Vermont, Burlington, VT, August, Summer 2007).

[34] Douglas Jacobsen, and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen, *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[35] "Privileged Presence: Faithful Imagination at the Crossroads, the Edge…in the Gap," *College Chaplaincy in the 21st Century Conference*, Princeton Theological Seminary, November 8, 2013.

curriculum and the co-curriculum, in ways that other higher education administrators and faculty cannot. Unfortunately, she does not name the ways specifically and precisely.

Opportunity 2: A New Pedagogy for Teaching Christian Theology

As I perused several books in a series on signature pedagogies for specific academic disciplines, I was disappointed in the chapter on signature pedagogies in religion. Unlike some of the other academic disciplines, there are few, if any, clear signature pedagogies in religious studies or any of the humanities. To some extent, religion and religious studies seemed singularly lacking in so-called "signature pedagogies" when compared to other academic disciplines written about in this series.

Surveying the literature, it seemed to me that inquiry-based approaches have been used quite successfully in the sciences, but less so in the humanities.[36] At the same time, thanks to some Teagle Foundation grants, some schools have used inquiry-based pedagogies in several humanities disciplines. This was particularly interesting to me because having taught Christian philosophical theology for a decade to undergraduate students, my experiences suggested that Christian philosophical theology, taught not as parochial dogma, but as beliefs that shape one's entire way of being in the world and also in the classroom, is an important part of education, regardless of the religious or non-religious views of the students.

I had been searching for a pedagogy that might result in students' spiritual development in their inner lives, and also in their interfaith understanding and engagement. I knew such a pedagogy could not be what Parker Palmer calls the "sage on the stage" filling

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[36] Regan A.R. Gurung, Nancy L. Chick, and Aeron Haynie, editors, *Exploring Signature Pedagogies: Approaches to Teaching Disciplinary Habits of Mind* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2009), and Nancy L. Chick, Aeron Haynie, and Regan A.R. Gurung, editors, *Exploring More Signature Pedagogies: Approaches to Teaching Disciplinary Habits of Mind* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2012).

the "empty minds." Neither could it be what Sam Intrator calls "the recitation model,"
which includes teacher inquiry, student response, and teacher evaluation (IRE).[37] Intrator
notes that this "formulaic question-and-answer routine" characterizes the conversation in
most classrooms.[38]

The pedagogy for which I was searching had to engage students developmentally,
dealing with questions of identity and intimacy, allowing them to ask questions that are
relevant and interesting—big questions of life, meaning, and purpose. For my students over
the years, I had begun helping students to see Christian philosophical theology as one
people's attempt to address those questions. My first-year seminar on this topic always has
been a popular course that students report discussing with other students in their residence
halls and also with their parents and families at home. In addition to reading Christian
theology, I always include a section on the variety of stances toward religious diversity
(exclusivism, inclusivism, relativism, synthesis, and pluralism).[39] I began to wonder: What if
I really defined a careful pedagogy based on the questions approach? What might happen if
students had to engage in both appreciative inquiry and big questions inquiry in a formal way
throughout the entire course? What would happen if I intentionally engaged whatever
limited diversity was present in the classroom? Over the years, my students have reported
anecdotally quite frequently, that the greatest learning and challenge for them is Protestant-
Roman Catholic or Christian-Atheist understanding, dialogue, interactions, and relationships.

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[37] Sam Intrator, *Tuned In and Fired Up: How Teaching Can Inspire Real Learning in the Classroom* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 65.

[38] Intrator, 65. In my own teaching, the IRE model is my default mode or habit. I wonder what would happen in classrooms if we asked fewer yes-no questions, and began with the students' own experiences by asking them to write about the most spiritual experience they have ever had, how their godparents lived out the promises made to them at baptism, what helps them deal with difficult times, or what stories give their lives meaning?

[39] Julia Mitchell Corbett, *Religion in America* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1997), 2-7.

Concluding Thoughts

Sometimes theology seems like its own esoteric, private language that is disconnected from the reality of education in the twenty-first century. The ways in which theology may be perceived as esoteric have been illuminated to me in conversations with students over the years. I have heard students generally express the idea that theology is the authoritative views of what the church wants them to think. It is the in-language or code-language of older people. These students do not equate theological work with thinking for themselves or engaging a living, changing, growing tradition. They do not think of theology as a response to big questions. They do not think of theology as something that relates to the world today, or even less, to the issues and needs of their own lives. They do not see theology as something they do. They see theology as a tradition they receive—not something creative to be continually constructed, argued over, and re-constructed.

One of the reasons the teaching of theology and religion may have become primarily information transfer rather than engagement with questions of meaning and truth is the epistemological shift in the teaching of theology and religion at colleges and universities, which are part of larger cultural and epistemological shifts with the rise of the modern research university and the trickle-down effect on epistemology, content, and pedagogy even at small private colleges in the teaching of theology, bible, and religion. All these faculty teaching at the small private schools were trained at large research universities, where they were drilled in methodologies that discovered factual information about objective phenomena in ways that were observable and repeatable by other scholars—even in archival research and textual studies.

At the same time, I am concerned with one of the major issues Peter Hodgson and Edward Farley raise: the ghettoization of Christian theology or any theology in higher

education in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Theology has been defined in various ways, including questions about not only the content of theology, but also who should do theology. Some would say that theology is closely connected to doctrine and is the province of church tradition, church hierarchies, and church leadership. Others would say that theology is the world of scholars in the academy and the seminaries.

In the Anabaptist theology of the Church of the Brethren, theology is very closely linked to reading the Bible. Theology is the work of all of the people of God. At one level, all people are created by God and are therefore the people of God, so theology is the work of every human being. At another level, theology can be defined as the work of the people of God known as the church, including the structural hierarchy, which has special rights and authority for doing theology on behalf of the people. However, drawing upon the roots of Radical Pietism and its ideas of the true church as the invisible church (as opposed to the visible church of people we see gathering in a visible way on Sundays), we do not know who is in the true church, so again, I start with the assumption that theology is the work of every single human being.

At the same time, the Anabaptists had a clear recognition of church structure and the need for authority. Even the Radial Pietists had conventicles, sharing some similarities with the Jewish minyans. Historically, theology began as the attempts of leaders of the early church to answer questions—about the nature of God, the nature of Jesus, the process of salvation, and more. In my view, theology is in the work of individuals in conversation with the community of the church—both visible and invisible—over all time past and all time still to come. Theology done rightly, is an encounter with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which again, in my tradition, allows for "continuing revelation" beyond the biblical text or church tradition or doctrine.

I think that these thoughts about theology are the foundations for my first-year seminar course, in which students do individual constructive personal theology in conversation around a coherent and consistent set of questions with me, each other, the traditional and current voices of the church and the seminaries, and the voices of theologians of other religions and of no religion. Having taught Christian philosophical theology for more than a decade to undergraduates, many of whom are Christians, and some of whom are atheists, I have been convinced that moving students toward bridge-building behaviors or interfaith understanding and engagement cannot be done in a deep and lasting way without engaging students' personal theologies and epistemologies.

I have been concerned at many points along the way that my pedagogy would be suspect in an academy that not only marginalizes religion, but also continues to denounce the personal and subjective in favor of the "objective." However, I do not think significant progress can be made either on students' inner lives or in students' interfaith understanding and engagement until we begin to heal, in an individual academic course or in the entire academy, what Sharon Daloz Parks has summarized so articulately as "the epistemological wound," the Jerusalem-Athens divide. Parks' comments could be interpreted to suggest that chaplains have some sort of immunity status, and that there is territory they can enter that other professors cannot. Perhaps that is the case, but in this particular research study, a non-ordained, non-chaplain professor taught a first-year seminar in Bible using the inquiry-based pedagogies with strikingly similar results in terms of student outcomes to the course taught by the ordained chaplain.

At the same time, I do agree with Parks that chaplains often do straddle divides in their diverse ministry settings. I hear Parks calling not for chaplains to do what no other professor can do, but I hear her challenging chaplains from their unique institutional

positions to lead the way in beginning to solve an adaptive problem in higher education today—the divide between church and academy, theology and philosophy, reason and revelation, objective and subjective, head and heart. These are all dichotomies that in some ways make us divided within ourselves as human beings.

Chapter 2
Theological and Social Sciences Assessment of the Issue:
A Better Way, A Path of Transformation

The Problem…One More Time

One primary ministry problem and research question for this project is how to engage students in the study of religion in a way that might advance their inner lives. Another ministry and teaching question is how to invite students to engage in principled or civic pluralism when there is limited compositional religious diversity on a campus, a high degree of apathy toward religion among young adults in the nation overall, and the classroom may be one of the only places in which significant engagement of religion occurs.

In their landmark seven-year study on the spiritual development of college and university students and how colleges and universities affect students' spiritual development, Alexander Astin, Helen Astin, and Jennifer Lindholm discuss the role of faculty in encouraging and influencing students' spiritual growth, as does Sharon Daloz Parks. All four agree that the faculty role is crucial. While 81% of the faculty in Astin and Astin's study considered themselves to be spiritual, and 64% indicated that they were religious, in a follow-up study only 19% of college juniors indicated that faculty had frequently encouraged them to explore spiritual or religious matters, and 58% of juniors said that their faculty never encouraged them to explore spiritual or religious matters.[40]

Transformative educators Alan Mandell and Lee Herman discuss the idea that academicians might have a limited view of "the lifeworld," as compared to their students and

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[40] Alexander W. Astin, Helen S. Astin, and Jennifer A. Lindholm, *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 7.

the rest of the world. Mandell and Herman highlight both the connection with and

importance of the "subjective" in academic learning:

> *…And so often curiosity begins in our everyday lives, the lifeworld (Welton, 1995). For those of us who are academics, this likely includes the world of scholarship, but for nearly anyone else, the lifeworld means myriad instances and contexts in which we have to make decisions and accomplish things in order to get along and thrive…Learning from and for ordinary experience makes academic learning meaningful.*[41]

The minister and researcher for this current project has long been concerned with a

kind of fragmentation in higher education, which scholars such as Anthony Kronman have

traced to the rise and prevalence of the modern research university, a symptom of which is

the pursuit of objective, systematic, methodological research at the expense of questions of

values, meaning, purpose, and other personal existential concerns.[42] Astin and Astin

summarize their concerns in this way:

> *This kind of fragmentation is further encouraged by those who believe that higher education should concern itself only with students' "cognitive" development—thinking, reasoning, memorizing, critical analysis, and the like—and that the affective or emotional side of the student's life is not relevant to the work of the university. We do not believe that there is such a thing as "pure" cognition that can be considered in isolation from affect; on the contrary, it would appear that our thoughts and our reasoning are almost always taking place in some kind of affective "bed" or context.*[43]

Further clarity about the issue may be gained from Elliot Eisner's idea that there are

three curricula in any school—the explicit (named courses and subjects), the implicit

(expectations and values students learn in the subtext), and the null (what is not taught;

options students never have or know about).[44] While Eisner names intellectual processes

and subject matter as dimensions of the null curriculum, the one that most relates to my

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[41] Jack Mezirow, Edward W. Taylor, and Associates, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 81.
[42] Anthony T. Kronman, *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).
[43] Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, *Cultivating the Spirit*, 7.
[44] David J. Flinders, Nel Noddings, and Stephen J. Thornton, "The Null Curriculum: Its Theoretical Basis and Practical Implications," *Curriculum Inquiry,* Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring 1986), 33-42.

research is the null curriculum dimension of "affect." In much teaching, the cognitive is separated from the affective, and then the cognitive is named as the most important.

David J. Flinders and colleagues note a particular form of null curriculum that springs not from the explicit curriculum, but from the implicit curriculum (assumptions), and the particular example these scholars give is from the liberal arts view of education. Flinders and colleagues write: "…the 'best' refers to the trained intellect. This is explicit. This explicit belief, however, rests upon implicit assumptions which equate our 'highest human powers' with a traditional academic view of the intellect. It is well to ask whether or not the trained intellect is indeed the 'highest' of 'human powers.'"[45] The result is that institutions of liberal education create a null curriculum (options students never know about, things that are not taught) made up of anything that does not meet the implicit curricular assumption that the highest goal for humanity is the development of the trained intellect.

All curriculum development necessarily includes selection and rejection—no school can teach everything. At the same time, what is particularly concerning is when null curriculum emerges from implicit curriculum with no conscious discussion of connections between content, implicit assumptions, educational goals, and actual outcomes. Flinders and colleagues caution that the null curriculum is not appropriate subject matter for quantitative research, as the null curriculum cannot be operationalized or specifically pointed out or defined. At the same time, they note that qualitative research already has been done on the null curriculum. In response, they warn those who would do qualitative research to use caution, particular when engaging areas related to personal or passionate convictions.

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[45] Flinders et. al., 37.

Educational and the Social Sciences Perspectives for a Path of Transformation

Big Questions and Ecumenical Worldview Development

Astin and Astin (2012) found that service-learning, study abroad, interdisciplinary courses, philanthropic giving, interracial interaction, leadership training, and contemplative practices are highly correlated with college students' increased spiritual development. They also found that when students were encouraged and challenged to engage in big questions of life, meaning, and purpose, the students' scores in ecumenical worldview were higher.[46]

One way we might think about this relationship between big questions and ecumenical worldview might be partially explained by the work of Maxine Greene (1995), who emphasized the relationship of imagination to the process of constructing knowledge, and even further to the possibility that it is imagination that allows learners to understand different perspectives.[47]   Another way of thinking about the relationship between big questions and ecumenical worldview is offered by transformative educators Alan Mandell and Lee Herman:

> *Genuine dialogue means a surrender of authority to uncertainty. That is, the participants, including the teacher, collaborate with the acknowledgment that because 'there are no stupid questions or final answers' (Freire & Faundez, 1989, p. 37), all topics and questions become valuable…In order for the teacher to shift from expert to learner and for the student to shift from novice to competent participant, both must respect on another as fully autonomous collaborators (Habermas, 1993; Yorks & Marsick, 2000). This shift can be both cognitively and emotionally 'wrenching' (Kegan, 1994, p. 275). We are asking ourselves and our students to 'leave the mental homes [we] have furnished and made familiar' (p. 272).*[48]

In this view, learning becomes a collaborative experiment conducted under conditions of uncertainty.

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[46] Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, *Cultivating the Spirit*, 75-76.
[47] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 90.
[48] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 80-81.

Could it be possible that using an inquiry-based big questions pedagogy designed specifically for the teaching of religion and theology would yield greater gains on items related to what Astin and Astin have called students' ecumenical worldview and what Patel and Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) call bridge-building civic pluralism behaviors? If this were to be possible, what theories or models of young adult spiritual development would dovetail best with such an inquiry-based pedagogy?

Big Enough Questions and Parks' Faith Development Model

In her then ground-breaking book (2000), Sharon Daloz Parks moved beyond the theory of the times, that young adulthood was simply prolonged adolescence or a transition to true adulthood to focus on young adulthood as a significant developmental stage or era deserving focus and research. According to Parks,

> *Rather, the promise and vulnerability of young adulthood lie in the experience of the birth of critical awareness and the dissolution and recomposition of the meaning of the self, other, world, and 'God.' This work has enormous consequences for the years of adulthood to follow. Young adulthood is rightfully a time of asking big questions and discovering worthy dreams.*[49]

Parks went on to suggest that higher education has an important role as a commons, especially in the development of both critical thought and viable faith in young adulthood. Parks defines faith as "the activity of seeking and discovering meaning in the most comprehensive dimensions of our experience."[50] For Parks, faith is different from religion.

The scholarly attempts to define religion, spirituality, faith, and related terms have been legion, and exploring them thoroughly could comprise an entire chapter or even an entire thesis. For the purposes of this project, two primary terms will be used: 1) "faith," as

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[49] Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 5.
[50] Parks, 7.

defined by Sharon Daloz Parks, and 2) spirituality, as defined by Astin and Astin. According to Astin and Astin:

> *Spirituality thus points to our inner, subjective life. It also involves our affective experiences at least as much as it does our reasoning or logic. More specifically, spirituality has to do with the values that we hold most dear, our sense of who we are and where we come from, out beliefs about why we are here—the meaning and purpose that we see in our world and our life—and our sense of connectedness to one another and to the world around us.*[51]

Another quote from Parks' book that is particularly relevant to understanding her thinking about faith development in the academic classroom is the following:

> *To become a young adult in faith is to discover in a critically aware, self-conscious manner the limits of inherited or otherwise socially received assumptions about how life works— what is ultimately true and trustworthy, and what counts—and to recomprise meaning and faith on the other side of that discovery.*[52]

In the previous quote, Parks speaks of what might be called both cognitive learning goals (e.g., critiquing assumptions and social conventions, pursuing truth) and also affective learning goals (e.g., awareness, self-consciousness, trust, valuing, determining what counts).

Parks draws upon many developmental theorists, and it is her interpretation of the work of Carol Gilligan that significantly shapes the foundation of her theory and provides elements most relevant to my project. Parks notes how Gilligan's work on human development focuses on "voice" in relationship rather than on Lawrence Kohlberg's moral reasoning and rights-orientation.

Parks has put forth a multidimensional and interactive spiral model focused on three interrelated aspects of faith development involving forms of knowing (cognition), forms of dependence, and forms of community.[53] In Parks' view, faculty are central in creating

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[51] *Attending to Students' Inner Lives: A Call to Higher Education* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Higher Education Research Institute, August 31, 2010), 3.
[52] Parks, 7.
[53] Nancy J. Evans, Deanna S. Forney, Florence M. Guido, Lori D. Patton, and Kristen A. Renn, *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 204-208.

communities of imagination which help students develop spiritually through both having their ideas alternatively supported and challenged. The role of mentoring is crucial in Parks' theory, and she laments the demise of the practice of mentoring and its attendant wisdom to the professionalism that is currently in vogue in many sectors of society.

In extrapolating from Parks' theory, I have identified the following elements which would be important in developing a classroom setting in which an inquiry-based big questions pedagogy were used to teach theology and religion:

1. *Attention to forms of knowing*: Learning activities that challenge students continuing in a pattern of what Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule have called "received knowing;" without pushing students into unqualified relativism, but more toward something that might be called "probing commitment."[54]

2. *Attention to forms of dependence*: Learning activities that encourage students toward a fragile inner-dependence or even a slightly confident inner-dependence, part of which includes development on Krathwohl's Affective Learning Taxonomy, and also a focus on the inner life or inner dialogue, reflection and contemplation.[55]

3. *Attention to the classroom as a network of belonging or a community with a trustworthy mentor*: Learning environment that focuses on belonging, dependable place, free space, and a mentor who is trustworthy, present, and caring.[56]

   a. A Network of Belonging

   b. Big Enough Questions

   c. Encounters with Otherness

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[54] Parks, 54-70.
[55] Parks, 73-87.
[56] Parks, 89-103.

d. Habits of Mind (Dialogue, Critical Thought, Connective-Systemic-Holistic Thought, A Contemplative Mind)

e. Worthy Dreams

f. Access to Images

g. Communities of Practice—the practice of the Commons.[57]

4. *Attention to the power of the imagination.* This is defined by educator, clinical psychologist, and theologian James Loder, as a "grammar of transformation" for the process of imagination. It includes five "moments": 1) conscious conflict (held in rapport), 2) pause (or interlude for scanning), 3) image (or insight), 4) repatterning and release of energy, and 5) interpretation or testimony (proving out).[58]

Parks recognizes the difficulties of pursuing these types of strategies in the environment of higher education, which has reigning epistemological assumptions that dichotomize the objective and the subjective, and define knowledge only as the objective. She summarizes the problem clearly when she writes:

> *To state the case most sharply, the domain of knowledge has been reduced to the domain of objective reality (understood as empirical fact and theoretical analysis abstracted from fact, standing in contrast to ultimate reality). This divorced the knowledge of the object that is known from its relationship to the subject who knows, thus diminishing the significance of emotion, intuition, the personal, the moral, and full engagement with the complexity emerging from the practice of lived experience, for all of these are difficult to apprehend empirically. Reason and knowledge, thus defined, are reduced to those processes that can be analyzed and replication—in short, produced and controlled.*[59]

It is perhaps for these reasons that Nancy J. Evans and others have noted that few researchers have applied Parks' (2000) theory, and those research studies which have been done have been outside the classroom.[60] At the same time, I applaud Parks' courage and

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[57] Parks, 127-157.
[58] Parks, 108-109.
[59] Parks, 160.
[60] Evans et. al, 208.

wisdom, and wholeheartedly supports Parks' when she calls the academy to accountability to

its own identity and mission by writing:

> *The academy's commitment to truth requires engagement with the whole of truth, the full*
> *scope of reality. In sum, a critical appraisal of the epistemological assumptions of the*
> *academy itself points toward a new reordering of the relationship among the academy, the*
> *young adult's search for faith, and the relationship between the academy and society.*[61]

Parks notes the interest of some in the academy in exploring "alternative epistemologies."[62]

This research project will focus on a new, more existential pedagogy that is openly affective

as well as cognitive.

<u>Classroom as Sanctuary for Transformative Learning</u>

The type of affective, personal, existential learning to which I aspire has been called

transformative learning. One particular form of transformative learning relevant to this

ministry research project involves creating learning sanctuaries. In her chapter in a book on

transformative learning edited by Jack Mezirow, Elizabeth Lange writes:

> *I believe that at its best, we create a learning sanctuary together—a place of immunity from*
> *the full weight of social forces. As the Oxford Dictionary (2007) suggests, a sanctuary is a*
> *special place set aside as a refuge of protection and shelter, enabling growth. Thus, to be*
> *transformative, adult education ought to provide a protective sanctuary for a deep encounter*
> *with self (mind, spirit, and body), social relationships, habits of thinking and living, and*
> *the conjoined individual and social myths that constrain human freedom and justice. This*
> *becomes a container for the dialectics between a pedagogy of critique and a pedagogy of*
> *hope.*[63]

In this process, the professor becomes teacher-participant and the students become

participant-teachers, and all learn together. Lange defines three key parts of creating a

"learning sanctuary":[64]

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[61] Parks, 163.
[62] Parks, 163.
[63] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 197.
[64] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 200-201.

1. As with all instructors, the teacher-participant desiring to create a learning sanctuary deliberately designs a pedagogy for the course, and at the same time, the teacher-participant recognizes that learning will occur beyond, around and beneath the direct intentions of any pedagogy. Sometimes this learning will be the deepest learning of all, as it is a collective impact caused by classroom experiences, relationships in and outside of the classroom, life events, etc.

2. To some extent, in creating a learning sanctuary, the teacher-participant understands that the complexity of people and the world is endless and infinitely nuanced. Simply by being—directly and intentionally—in these relationships over time can cause new worldviews and new ways of being in the world.

3. The final aspect of creating a learning sanctuary, according to Lange, is respect what each participant-learner has to offer, and to allow relationships to develop between all participants, including the instructor, in an egalitarian way.

Lange summarizes: "Thus, learning sanctuary honors participants; creates space for compassion and hope on the life journey; models relations of equality, responsiveness, interconnectedness, and depth; and engages the whole person."[65]

Lange uses this learning sanctuary approach in ecology and sustainability courses, and indicates that her approach challenges anthropocentric worldviews, creates a growth in literacy about the natural world, and creates nascent ethical sensibilities in participant-teachers. While her academic discipline is in the sciences, and this research project has to do with theology and religion, the desired outcomes for the learners are similar: challenge worldviews, improve literacy, and create new ways of being and acting in the world.

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[65] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 201.

Alan Mandell and Lee Herman note that the change of dynamics in a classroom, particularly the power dynamics from professor to facilitator or mentor, and from student who absorbs what is professed to full participant who has something to teach others does not happen automatically.[66] The traditional and customary academic roles in classrooms of higher education are persistent, and to change classroom habits to put students and their questions at the center, and to give faculty the role of mentors requires ongoing and intentional focus and effort.

If one is successful in creating a true learning sanctuary, then something that Lange calls "restorative learning" also might occur—reconnecting individuals to childhood dreams, healing them, and awakening submerged passions or latent knowledges. Lange finds that there is a predictable point in the course when everyone focuses and even projects the anxiety from the creative tension onto her. In the end, learners have hope for the future, but the process of getting there is risky and can be messy and unpredictable.[67]

Elizabeth J. Tisdell and Derise E. Tolliver, who have used transformative learning theory to create culturally responsive teaching offer a caution to those who would engage the whole student by attempting to build community in the classroom, engaging students' own stories, and creating experiences by which students, as Parker Palmer suggested, do not think their way into new kinds of living, but live their ways into new kinds of thinking. Students who have succeeded in classrooms primarily dominated by engaging cognitive rationality may feel vulnerable or even become overwhelmed. While Parks prescribes mentoring, Tisdell and Tolliver suggest that students be given options for as many assignments as possible.[68]

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[66] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 79.
[67] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 202.
[68] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 98.

Critiquing attempts to define transformative learning pedagogies, including creating

learning sanctuaries, too precisely or systematically, Elizabeth Lange writes:

> *Perhaps in naming elements of transformation, we disenchant the process or ignore the fruits*
> *of transformation. David Bohm (1994) posits that we do not take into account the*
> *complex, unbroken processes that underlie our experience of the world and how our thought*
> *patterns shape our images of reality. This is what I hope to convey through the concept of*
> *learning sanctuary: a protective space held open for bidden but unseen processes.*[69]

Therefore, classroom as learning sanctuary means that not only are the subjective and the

affective valued, but also the mystical.

Ideas of classroom sanctuaries where holistic and restorative learning occur are

important, but perhaps do not account for the needs of all learners. If we take seriously

Patel's categories of students whose inner scripts or cultural conditioning are Barrier, Blasé,

or even Bigoted, then we must broaden our understanding of sanctuary to be not only safe

space, but also something more. Sanctuary needs to be a safe space, a please of refuge, and a

place where one can be vulnerable. At the same time, sanctuary is a place of awe, of fear, of

challenge, and even of terror, where one stands in the presence of the holy of holies. In the

historical and deepest sense, sanctuary is the space where one encounters reality—both the

divine reality and the human reality to the fullest extent. At its best, sanctuary is a place that

functions like Ron Heifetz' crucible—a vessel that can hold together the massive energy that

is released or displaced when adaptive learning is done (rather than technical learning).[70]

Therefore, for the purposes of this research, a learning sanctuary is a place where the

appreciative and the critical are held in creative tension constantly. The goal is not to

develop students' affective appreciation of religion at the expense of their cognitive and

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[69] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 203.
[70] Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 1994.

critical capacities. The goal is not to develop students' logical and critical capacities to the exclusion of their affective affirmative and valuing capacities.

To the extent that students' cognitive or affective barriers already are clearly fixed, the big questions and appreciative inquiry may arouse disbelief, resistance, or anger. The learning sanctuary can be a place of refuge, but also a place of challenge, confrontation, and revelation. Theologically speaking, when the classroom is a sanctuary, the encounter is ultimately with God. As the biblical narrative illustrates, these encounters can be unsettling, and the cost of such deep existential engagement can be a scar that marks the healing or the transformation.

As this research unfolded in the classroom, this is precisely what happened. Sometimes intervention needed to happen when there were barrier or bigoted comments made. Sometimes just a pause afterwards with no response was enough—allowing the comment sit in the space. This would lead to the student revising his or her thoughts. Sometimes the instructor intervened to ask: What did you mean by that? What was your intention? Sometimes the instructor would say: Please listen to what you just said. Do you wish to ask yourself any questions? Over the semester, students became more careful about their own speech. They reported this in interviews, and it was observable in the classroom. There was something very powerful about practicing the habit or discipline of the appreciative and the critical in tension.

Applying Inquiry-Based Pedagogies to the Teaching of Theology and Religion

According to the *Exploring Signature Pedagogies* series, inquiry-based pedagogies are named as a signature pedagogy in biology and chemistry.[71] In this series of books on

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[71] Gurung, Chick, and Haynie, editors, 236-237, and Chick, Haynie, and Gurung, editors, 120-123.

signature pedagogies within the specific academic disciplines of higher education, inquiry-

based pedagogies are not listed among the signature pedagogies of theology and religion.

Moreover, in this series of books, inquiry-based pedagogies are not listed for the humanities

in general, with the possible exception of literary studies, where the pedagogy was

"unpacking conflicts, conversations, and questions."[72] While the work of Jerome Berryman

and Thomas Groome has influenced the teaching of theology and religion in seminaries and

in some denominationally-controlled colleges, their work has not been noted as "signature"

in large surveys of the general teaching of theology and religion in colleges and universities in

general.[73] With the support of the Einhorn Family Foundation, Hillel and collaborative

partners have created the *Ask Big Questions,* program and booklet, which now are featured on

more than fifty college and university campuses across the nation.[74] Most recently, the

Teagle Foundation has funded Harvard University's PAVE (Purpose and Values in

Education) Program. These programs on these campuses are lodged with various students

groups and administrative offices, and they remain in the co-curriculum, not in the

curriculum.[75]

Big Questions Inquiry

       Justification for a big questions approach comes not only from the findings of Astin

and Astin, as well as the developmental theory of Parks and her idea of big-enough

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[72] Gurung, Chick, and Haynie, editors, 46-51.

[73] See Jerome W. Berryman, *Godly Play* (Chicago, IL: Augsburg Books, 1995), Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999), and Groome, *Will There be Faith: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2011).

[74] *Ask Big Questions: Understand Others. Understand Yourself*, http://askbigquestions.org/, accessed April 20, 2015.

[75] Conversation with Jonathan Gruber, Campus and Community, Einhorn Family Charitable Trust, New York, NY, April 10, 2015.

questions, but also from transformative learning theory. Alan Mandell and Lee Herman write:

> *By making the occasion of the dialogue something that comes strongly from the students—that is, something they believe is important and are familiar with—they can then bring to the dialogue information, ideas, questions, and purposes that could not, by definition, come from the mentor alone…Moreover, since people learn best what they are about, centering the learning on students motivates and empowers them.*[76]

At this point, it might be useful to explore the connections and differences in the way various entities use terms related to big questions, including Sharon Daloz Parks, so-called "transformative educators," the Teagle Foundation, faculty using inquiry-based pedagogy, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Hillel and the Einhorn Family Foundation, to name a few. Parks' concept of big enough questions relates to narrative, to searching and finding worthy meaning and purpose. These questions connect to ideas of vocation. Moreover, for Parks, big enough questions may begin in the real work of individualism, modernity, and busyness, but inevitably, they involve faith, communities, and mentoring. Parks discusses the connection between big enough questions and theological exploration in the following way:

> *In almost every tension-filled context in which you and I move, it is appropriate to ask: What is the bigger question? And theological reflection requires hospitality to the biggest questions—questions of ultimate concern embracing all that is most ultimate and intimate—questions that evoke meaning-making in its most comprehensive dimensions, meaning-making for which we reserve the word faith. These are questions about what we can ultimately trust and depend on, questions about what we can ultimately hope for, and what ultimately counts in our ongoing dialogue between fear and trust, hope and hopelessness, power and powerlessness, alienation and belonging—questions of ultimate meaning and purpose that take us into the Mystery of the life and cosmos that we all share—the Mystery that in Western culture we reference with language of God, the Holy One, the Holy spirit, power moving unseen within us, among us, beneath us, and beyond us, the Void, the Abyss, a sense of sacred presence, a moral universe, love, consequences, covenant—a Mystery we apprehend but never fully comprehend. Many if not most of*

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[76] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 80-81.

today's emerging adults, whether they are among the most privileged or most impoverished,
have been fundamentally cheated because no one has honored them by inviting them into
sustained conversations where they can grapple with big enough questions.[77]

Perhaps this is one of the biggest differences between Parks' conception of big enough

questions and the Teagle Foundation's Big Questions and the National Endowment for the

Humanities idea of "Enduring Questions"—that is, the connection of big questions to life-

shaping narratives, faith, communities, and mentoring. In some ways, the Teagle curricular

big questions, the NEH enduring questions, and faculty inquiry-based pedagogies, can still

be pursued under a highly individualist, non-spiritual, cognitive, and objective (unsubjective

and non-personal) approach. Hillel and the Einhorn Family Foundation's co-curricular "Ask

Big Questions" programs share more similarities to Parks' big enough questions in both

content and structure. Both Parks and Hillel emphasize students in collaborative

conversation with mentors in communities which help students connect with and explore

subjective narratives.

Collaborative Inquiry

Another inquiry-based pedagogy possibly relevant to this ministry project is

Collaborative Inquiry (CI), an inquiry-based pedagogy in which learners collaborate in small

groups to address compelling, disorienting questions using a holistic epistemology. CI

includes both the affective and the cognitive/rational because of research citing of the role

of affect in truly transformative learning.[78] According to Lucia Alcantara, Sandra Hayes, and

Lyle Yorks:

> *Collaborative inquiry (CI) is a strategy for learning from experience that is derived from*
> *the seminal work of John Heron (1992, 1996) on personhood and cooperative inquiry.*

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[77] Sharon Daloz Parks, "Big Enough Questions? The Search for a Worthy Narrative—From Coffee to Cosmos," Indianapolis, IN: The Council of Independent Colleges Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education Keynote Address, March 2013.
[78] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 252.

Participants organize themselves into a small group to address a compelling question through repeated cycles of action and reflection for the purpose of creating new meaning….Collaborative inquiry is particularly appropriate for pursuing questions that are professionally and personally developmental or socially controversial or require social healing…Collaborative inquiry is a social process where the intention is to test systematically the assumptions and premises that the participants hold. New meaning is created through dialogue and critical reflection on experiences and actions taken out in the world.[79]

This model has much to recommend it, and the ideas of small groups addressing compelling questions, as well as reflection to make new meaning on difficult issues can be integrated into my pedagogy. However, I cannot simply apply a CI process into the ministry setting for several reasons, including the fact that class assignments for first-year seminars are not voluntary, learners are not professionals who will take specific action in the world upon which they will later reflect, and some of the questions of philosophical and Christian theology in the experimental course may not be compelling for each and every student.

At the same time, the following principles and tactics from the process of CI could help to undergird the creation of the new big questions pedagogy for teaching theology and religion:

1. Learners should be encouraged to pursue questions that are personally developmental and may be controversial and/or need healing either personally or socially;

2. Learners should have an opportunity to explore questions that are compelling and relevant;

3. Learners will collaborate with other learners as they engage these questions (which Parks calls "big enough" questions);

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[79] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 251, 254.

4. Learners engage the affective domain, and will not be forced to "privilege" or remain in the cognitive or rational domain;

5. Learners need to be taught that spending time defining, shaping, and naming the question are a crucial part of the process;

6. Learners are asked to test assumptions they hold;

7. Learners are expect to create knowledge; and,

8. Learners develop a final product of some sort to symbolize and "crystalize" the learning.[80]

Collaborative Inquiry (CI) may be facilitated in a hierarchical, cooperative, or autonomous mode. For the purposes of my project, the cooperative mode of facilitation fits the system and the setting best. Perhaps most importantly, the focus of both CI and of the proposed big questions pedagogy will be on "personal learning." According to Alcantara, Hayes, and Yorks, "The purpose of CI is for participants in the inquiry group to change themselves and how they are in relationship to the disorienting dilemma that is motivating their interest in the inquiry question."[81] This idea could be the foundation for an individual student culminating project on which the student works for the entire semester.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an inquiry-based strategy developed at Case Western Reserve University in the early 1980s by David Cooperrider and colleagues. Built upon the idea that human beings and organizations grow, develop, and succeed best in areas where we repeatedly ask questions and in areas where we continuously place positive focus. In

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[80] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 254.
[81] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 252.

contrast to the "problem-solving" approach, which focuses on "deficits," AI focuses on affirmation, strengths, capacities, values, hopes, dreams, and ideals.

Susan Donnan describes appreciative inquiry as being five-dimensional:[82]

1. Definition – Clarifying, Focusing, Affirming topic of choice;

2. Discovery – Appreciating the best of what is;

3. Dream – Envisioning what the world is calling for;

4. Design – Co-constructing what should be;

5. Destiny – Innovating, empowering, learning, improvising, adjusting.

Donnan also names Five Core Principles of Appreciative Inquiry:

1. The Constructionist Principle: Organizations are human constructions. What we believe to be true will affect the way we act and the way we approach change. Thus, the way we know is fateful.

2. The Simultaneity Principle: Change begins the moment we ask questions. The very first questions asked set the stage for what is "found" and what is "discovered". This data becomes the stories out of which the future is conceived, discussed, and constructed.

3. The Poetic Principle: Like a good poem, the organization's past, present, and future are endless sources of learning, inspiration, and interpretation. We can choose what to inquire and learn from.

4. The Anticipatory Principle: Our behavior in the present is influenced by the future we anticipate. The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present-day action.

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[82] "What is Appreciative Inquiry?" http://www.metavolution.com/rsrc/articles/whatis_ai.htm, accessed July 24, 2014.

5. The Positive Principle: The more positive the questions used to guide a change process, the more long lasting and effective the change.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) has been used in community-building, to facilitate organizational change, to solve conflict, and to transform relationships. The practical applications of AI that most relate to this research project are personal/relationship transformation, small group development, consciousness raising, leadership development, and capacity-building.

Appreciative Inquiry also is consistent with the Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) "Interfaith Triangle," of which Eboo Patel says:

> *Recent social science research on religious diversity illuminates the models that should guide interfaith programs, thus increasing their effectiveness. The model used at Interfaith Youth Core is called the interfaith triangle—the three sides being knowledge, relationships, and attitudes. Drawn from the findings of several studies on religious diversity, it is a model that emphasizes how facilitating positive and meaningful relationships between people of different communities, advancing appreciative knowledge of diverse traditions and improving attitudes toward various faiths and philosophies are deeply linked.*[83]

Patel and his staff of consultants continue to emphasize both appreciative attitudes and appreciative knowledge, as well as positive relationships. For the purposes of this new research project, it will be important to have a classroom strategy that fosters dispositions and habits not only of inquiry through big questions, but also habits of appreciation and positivity, drawn from methods of AI.

Theological Perspectives for a Better Way

The concepts of pluralism and religious diversity are broad terms that are used to describe demographic realities, create ethical ideals, name civic aspirations, categorize

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[83] *Principled Pluralism: Report of the Inclusive America Project* (Washington, D.C.: The Aspen Institute Justice and Society Program, 2013), 89.

theological or philosophical positions, or motivate people to action around a cause. At the same time, the words pluralism and diversity often seem to function as code-words or in some instances, as Jurgen Habermas' performative utterances, as if the words themselves do or accomplish something. In any case, when we use these words, we seem to believe that they are automatically recognized as substantive, meaningful, and clear. In reality, this is not the case. In the next section, I will explore the work of several scholars and scholar-practitioners around pluralism and diversity with the goal of finding commonalities and naming points where more discussion or clarity may be needed.

Pluralism: A Political Reality, a Philosophical Worldview, and a Christian Theology

One key to organizational change is knowing the goal. With regard to Christian theological positions toward religious diversity, Paul Knitter explores pluralism not as behaviors or ethics, but as "a significant fact of religious and cosmic life," which has evoked a continuum of different theological responses, ranging from the replacement model to the acceptance model.[84] The replacement model includes both full and partial replacement, and is similar to what other scholars such as John Hick and Julia Corbett have called exclusivism.[85] The acceptance model, a theological system or viewpoint called pluralism by others, is found in the work of multiple scholars, including S. Mark Heim, Francis X. Clooney, S.J., Paul Griffiths, and George Lindbeck.[86] Knitter creates his own personal constructive theology of acceptance or pluralism in his chapter entitled "An Inconclusive Conclusion," where he seems to make the theological claim that pluralism is God's creative purpose, will or design.[87]

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[84] Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 7-8.
[85] Knitter, 19-62.
[86] Knitter, 173-237.
[87] Knitter, 238-246.

Patel seems to want to promote pluralism as a theological or philosophical viewpoint, and at the same time, I am unclear to what extent Patel himself is a theological pluralist.[88] In some ways, he seems to be a dualist, defining reality as the battle between pluralists and extremists. Patel sees pluralism (or Knitter's acceptance model) not as the opposite of exclusivism (or Knitter's replacement model), but as the opposite of extremism (perhaps also fundamentalism) which often result in bigotry and violence in the name of religion. At the same time, I am unclear whether or not Patel relates extremist actions with exclusivist theology. Does Patel think exclusivism is bad theology? Many pluralists I have known seem to do so. In any case, whatever Patel's goals as a theologian or a philosopher, in the end, Patel is primarily a realist, a sociologist and activist, not a theologian or philosopher. For Patel, pluralism seems to be not so much a theological or even philosophical viewpoint, but a behavioral or ethical model. Patel understands pluralism to be "neither mere coexistence nor forced cooperation" but "a form of proactive cooperation."[89] Using Patel's framework, one may assume that one goal related to religious diversity is to have a *Bridge* culture permeating an institution (e.g., school, mosque, community, entire religious tradition) or society.

With regard to viewpoints toward diversity, I have great appreciation for Gustav Niebuhr's move toward complexity, nuance and subtlety when he suggests that theological exclusivity does not always have to be violence and bigotry, but can be identity forming and community creating.[90] A question that I often ask my first year students is whether or not

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[88] Interestingly, scholars like Julia Corbett classify Islam theologically as a form of inclusivism and in the VTS Convocation lectures, I think that Patel at some points seems to tow the line on theological inclusivism, and at other points, presses his theology further toward pluralism.

[89] Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2007), xv.

[90] Gustav Niebuhr, *Beyond Tolerance: Searching for Interfaith Understanding in America* (New York, NY: Viking, 2008), 22.

one can be a tolerant exclusivist or an intolerant pluralist. I personally think that it is

possible to be a tolerant exclusivist and an intolerant pluralist—a point with which many of

my colleagues disagree. I also question whether or not tolerance is a worthy goal.

Theologian Frederick Buechner writes:

> *Toleration is often just indifference in disguise. "It doesn't matter what religion*
> *you have as long as you have one" is apt to mean really, "I couldn't care less*
> *whether you have one or not"…My wife went to a college in the fifties which was*
> *so tolerant religiously that it wouldn't allow an ordained minister to conduct an*
> *informal discussion group on the campus.*[91]

Clearly, pluralism for Niebuhr is more than tolerance, which he notes can mean "to

endure."[92] Key words for Niebuhr are dialogue, constructive appreciation of differences,

and commitment to individual rights alongside commitment to the idea of a common life,

warm acceptance, neighborliness, and hospitality.[93] Then he says, "Why not set the bar

higher?" and tells stories of real people in real communities working and doing projects

together toward a civil society.[94] Niebuhr is not really doing theology, although he does talk

about absolutism and fanaticism which seem to be the enemies.[95] For Niebuhr, pluralism

has more to do with behavior and ethical action than philosophical or theological views. He

notes that the best of Pope John Paul's work was a pluralism "not about erasing differences"

or "meeting in the middle," so the goal is trying to understand and allow for differences.[96]

For Niebuhr, pluralism seems to be active bridge-building, including things like dialogue,

cooperation circles, neighborliness, festivals of faiths, and "creation of networks that reach

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[91] Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1993), 112-13.
[92] Niebuhr, 40.
[93] Niebuhr, 50, 51, 52, 56, 59.
[94] Niebuhr, 56.
[95] Niebuhr, xi.
[96] Niebuhr, xxiv.

beyond obvious boundaries" for a common life and a civil society.[97] I think Niebuhr is doing civic pluralism.

For both Niebuhr and Patel, the goal related to religious diversity seems to come down to getting people who are very different to interact in positive ways with each other. At the same time, the writings of Niebuhr, Patel, Moore, and others suggest many other possible goals: Creating peace, avoiding violence, increasing tolerance, bringing God's kingdom to earth, altering people's theologies, educating people, changing people's behavior, creating *Bridge* cultures in our organizations and denominations, building a civil society, and doing battle against violent extremists or fundamentalists in general.

While Patel's *Bridge* is a nice metaphor or image beginning with B to fit all his other B-words, when it comes to implementation in the real world, what is Patel's actual objective? In the Zabriskie Lecture, Patel addresses primarily religious communities, which my college is not. At the same time, his prescription is applicable in broad ways in a variety of settings and contexts. He says the means to the ends are the following:

1. *Redefining reality*: The correct view is not diversity as a clash of civilizations, but as a conflict between pluralism versus extremism. Defining reality is the job of a leader as defined by Edwin Friedman and Ronald Heifetz.[98]

2. *Expanding knowledge-base*: Find, use, and help others to find the positive theologies the world's religions have about diversity.

3. *Increasing skill sets*: Tell stories, teach listening skills, develop leaders, mentor youth and young adults, do interfaith service projects.[99]

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[97] Niebuhr, xxvii.
[98] Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994) and Edwin Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York, NY: Seabury Books, 2007).
[99] Patel, "Zabriskie Lecture 1," 7-8.

Most recently, and during the same years that this research project was taking place, Elon University, and Wofford College received a large grant from the Teagle Foundation, and with it, they developed a Pluralism and Worldview Engagement Rubric, following the model, style, and format of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) Rubrics. In the Pluralism and Worldview Engagement Rubric, they offer definitions, rationale and potential uses. Citing Diana Eck, the definition is as follows:

> *Pluralism, for the purposes of this rubric, involves a positive engagement with diverse religious, spiritual, and secular worldviews in order to gain understanding of differences. Pluralism requires neither relativism nor full agreement; rather it requires understanding and meaningful interaction among people with differing worldviews.*[100]

The Pluralism and Worldview Engagement Rubric defines worldview as "a commitment to a religious, spiritual, or secular tradition that informs an individual's tenets, values, and meaning making."[101] The rubric acknowledges that worldview is intentionally an extremely broad term that could include crossover between economic, political, social, and religious worldviews. The Rationale offered in the rubric includes the fact the while higher education has in recent years placed a strong emphasis on creating global citizens and building diversity on college and university campuses, many reviews of the higher education literature show that religion is an area of diversity that neither has been emphasized nor studied. The focus of diversity research, curricular, and co-curricular efforts have emphasized diversity in the categories of gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, sexual orientation, and disability.

The Pluralism and Worldview Engagement Rubric defines five areas of development, and student learning/projects, college or university activities/programs, and

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[100] Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) Pluralism and Worldview Engagement Rubric, 2.
[101] IFYC Pluralism Rubric, 2.

other things both can be evaluated and designed with these five areas in mind, as well as their corresponding rating categories from 1 (Benchmark) to 2/3 (Milestone stages) to 4 (Capstone). The five areas for student learning and development of Level 4 (Capstone) are:

- Knowledge of Own Worldview—Situates own evolving worldview within a pluralistic context;

- Knowledge of Other Worldviews—Articulates knowledge of multiple worldviews with appreciative and nuanced understanding;

- Attitudes Toward Pluralism—Committed to navigating complexities, ambiguities, and contradictions among worldviews, including own, with the goal of fostering pluralism;

- Interpersonal Engagement—Adept at interfaith dialogue among diverse participants. Able to navigate differences among participants to foster pluralistic ethos;

- Interfaith Action and Reflection—Creates and sustains formal and informal opportunities for ongoing interfaith action and dialogue. Ongoing reflection yields new insights for overcoming challenges to pluralism.

It has been my observation, and I have heard from other scholars and chaplains both in private conversation and at academic conferences that even now, it remains unclear if a student can reach Capstone 4 while still holding an Exclusivist or even Closed Inclusivist theology or worldview.

For the purposes of my ministry research project, the goal is not to inculcate in students a theological dogma or philosophical position of pluralism. At the same time, the goal will be to provide diverse theological sources and resources within Christian theology, as well as interpersonal pedagogical techniques, which may lead to students' developing

pluralistic citizenship and interpersonal behaviors. At the same time, the focus of this

research project is on the personal development of students.

<u>Personal Theology and New Forms of Evangelism</u>[102]

One assumption of this ministry teaching research project is that young adults need

appreciative understanding not only of the diverse other, but also of themselves. Thanks to

my advisor, David Gortner, I now have language for something I have been trying to

address with students for years. Gortner has demonstrated the existence of a phenomenon

called "personal theology." According to Gortner, neither social scientists nor theologians

have systematically studied the theologies of individual people—the beliefs and values that

help them make sense of the world, deal with tragedy, and determine relative priorities.

Gortner defines personal theology in this way:

> *...beliefs about the world, that is, the overarching assumptions, expectancies and ideals that
> deal with matters of being, purpose, ultimate causes and the good). It is these types of
> values and beliefs that comprise a 'personal theology'—a 'world concept' that, like a 'self-
> concept,' is an amalgamation of perceptions, expectations and goals. Unlike self-concept,
> which is a personal theory of other people's location vis-à-vis oneself), the world-concept of
> personal theology is an operating personal theory of the entirety of the world or cosmos in
> which one finds oneself.*[103]

Gortner notes that both anthropologists and sociologists might have scholarly concerns

about the word "personal," while theologians might express discomfort at the individualistic

implications of personal truths, as opposed to doctrinal or communal truth.

In some ways, the idea that personal theologies exist and matter is at the heart of

Protestant theology and its commitment to *sola fidei* and *sola scriptura.* This is nowhere more

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[102] David T. Gortner, *Varieties of Personal Theology: Charting the Beliefs and Values of American Young
Adults* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013).
[103] Gortner, 5.

clearly than in the historical movement and theology of Radical Pietism, the theology which

underlies my research study, and is explained in more detail in the next section.

In discussing his choice of young adults as research subjects on the topic of personal

theologies, Gortner writes: "It is precisely the volatile formative nature of this period of life

that may be most interesting for the study of personal theologies."[104] It follows logically that

if one wishes to intervene or impact the personal theologies of people, then young

adulthood is a significant point of entry. Moreover, Gortner's findings suggest "Educational

intensity and investment are among the most salient contributors to variation in personal

theologies and departure from cultural scripts."[105]

It is an assumption of this research that engaging and being both confident and

articulate about personal theology may have an impact on individuals' willingness and ability

to engage in citizenship and interpersonal bridge-building behaviors. Therefore, and with

consideration of the critiques and concerns, one of the methods of this study will be to

invite and challenge students to engage their own personal theologies in conversation with

systematic and philosophical theology. Gortner writes:

> *The beliefs and values comprising personal theologies are not random bits of passing thought*
> *or motivation, any more than they are simple recitations of cultural theological scripts.*
> *They are mental constructs shaped by and built from heritage and experience*.[106]

Radical Pietism

According to Dale W. Brown, Pietism is one of the least studied and least

understood theologies and practices in the history of Christianity. Paul Tillich wrote:

> *What is Pietism? The term is much less respectable in America than in Europe. There*
> *the words 'pious' and 'pietist' can be used of people, but hardly in America, because here*

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[104] Gortner, 21.
[105] Gortner, 313.
[106] Gortner, 313.

they carry the connotations of hypocrisy and moralism. Pietism does not necessarily have these connotations.[107]

Moreover, Radical Pietist belief and practice tend to be polarizing. People either idealize it or despise it. Of Pietists, Karl Barth was scathing: "Better with the Church in hell than with pietists, of higher or lower type—in a heaven which does not exist."[108] In response to this criticism, Brown has devoted significant parts of his scholarly activity to bringing historical accuracy, theological clarity, and fair-minded assessment to the study of pietism, and in particular radical pietism.

Pietism may be defined historically as a movement in the narrowest sense as centered on the Spener and Francke reforms which began in the late seventeenth century, or more broadly as a major Protestant movement related to a middle position between Luther and Calvin which was associated with dozens of theologians and a variety of Christian denominations from Lutheranism to English Puritanism to Dutch Reformed to Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, and Quakers. According to Brown, Pietism can be viewed sociologically as a moral reaction to a devastating war (the Thirty Years' War) and concerns about the prevailing ethos and climate within the Lutheran Church.[109]

One of the deepest concerns and dangers of Pietism, and especially Radical Pietism, is the focus on subjectivity. Brown explains subjectivism in the following way:

> *…the shifting of focus from outside of self to one's self…In this way revelation, tradition, and historical norms are minimized or replaced by moralism (the justification of self through works) or religious empiricism (the apprehension of God through feelings and experience). In any delineation of pietist characteristics, the appearance of terms such as personal, individualism, inwardness, heart, internalization, experience, feeling, emotion, mysticism, asceticism, separatism, and conversion points to subjectivism as one of the dominant themes and problems in the formulation of the theology of Pietism*.[110]

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[107] Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 11.
[108] Dale W. Brown. *Understanding Pietism, Revised Edition* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1996), 11.
[109] Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 18.
[110] Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 24-25.

Brown goes on to define the variety of "problems" that were associated with Pietist theology and practice, including anti-ecclesiastical tendencies, conventicle-like behavior, undermining hierarchical authority, private interpretations, works righteousness, self as god, Holy Spirit as mere projection of the self, and otherworldliness.

For the purposes of this study, the theology, or the primary beliefs and corresponding practices identified with radical pietism are the most relevant. The current research study is grounded theologically in the researcher's personal commitment to Radical Pietism and its unique combination of Christian theological themes, including the following which are most relevant for this study and offer significant connections to the theories of Sharon Daloz Parks, Elizabeth Lange, and a number of the transformative educators:

- the "theology of experience,"

- the importance of the authority of the "inner word" along with the outer word of scripture and doctrine,

- the support of others (communalism) even while maintaining commitment to the authority of the individual conscience,

- the emphasis on the primacy of the Holy Spirit in changing human lives, and finally,

- the "focus on subjectivity."[111]

Finally, the Pietist use of "conventicles" is another idea which will influence the design of this inquiry-based pedagogy to be applied to the teaching of theology and religion.[112] In the simplest terms, a conventicle is a small, unofficial meeting of lay people to discuss religious theology and practice in safety and intimacy. In *Pia Desideria*, the German

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[111] Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 22-24.

[112] Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 13, 16, 18, 22, 27, 29-30, 42, 44-45, 80, 91, 100.

Evangelical Lutheran Pietist movement, Philipp Jakob Spener called for such groups to form. Conventicles occurred in England as well as in Germany, and both the Lutheran Church and the Church of England denounced and condemned them as sectarian and subversive. For the purposes of the current research project, conventicles will be thought of in connection to the more positively viewed Jewish yeshivas or minyans.

Using Inquiry-Based Pedagogies to Teach Theology and Religion

Astin and Astin's research on student development outcomes demonstrates, Parks' faith development model suggests, and Ken Bain's research on what the best college teachers do all point toward engaging students in questions that are big, relevant and important to their own lives. Despite this, there has been limited use of inquiry-based pedagogies (including big questions approaches) in the humanities and social sciences, although seemingly used quite extensively in the hard sciences, as supported and documented by the Teagle Foundation.

For a number of years, I have been teaching a first-year seminar course called Big Theological Questions, which basically taught doctrinal Christian theology in conversation with philosophy of religion, using one big question per week to focus the class. My pedagogical approach has not been well-defined, and a number of benefits could come from a re-design of the pedagogy and content based on the literature cited above, followed by a systematic collection of data and assessment of outcomes.

Based on the work of Sharon Daloz Parks, Alexander and Helen Astin, and transformative learning theorists, such as Alan Mandell and Lee Herman, it seems there are several possible important elements in any inquiry-based pedagogy that might be applied to the teaching of religion and theology in a pluralistic world, including, but not limited to:

- Continuing a conversation-based class which highlights the diversity present within the classroom community;

- Creating a sanctuary space for each student to personally engage personal theologies;

- Developing a big questions project to fully reinforce uncertainty, limits of authority and dependence;

- Structuring classrooms sessions to teach appreciative inquiry skills, dispositions, and habits;

- Holding the appreciative and critical in constant tension;

- Designing class assignments to foster both personal spiritual identity and phenomenological, factual religious literacy.

Chapter 3
Project Purpose, Participants, Methods, and Intended Outcomes

This ministry research project included 76 first-year undergraduate students in first-year seminar courses, with two experimental seminar courses taught using the inquiry-based pedagogy with the subject matter of Christian theology and religion, and three comparison group seminar courses taught with traditional pedagogies in the subject areas of math, science, and literature. In this chapter, the project purpose, participants, research design, and timeline are described in detail. In addition, a significant section of the chapter is devoted to describing the big questions project, which included a community and individual mentoring component, as well as the appreciative inquiry journals and classroom process, which were the interventions developed from the literature review.

Project Purpose

Alexander Astin, Helen Astin, and Jennifer Lindholm have found that engagement with big questions increases dispositions and skills related to what they have called students' ecumenical worldview and what Eboo Patel and Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) call the interfaith triangle. Few scholars have applied Sharon Daloz Parks' big questions theory in an academic classroom setting and systematically analyzed the outcomes.[113] The primary purpose of this project is to develop and test an inquiry-based pedagogy designed specifically for teaching theology and religion in the classroom, with the goal of trying to discover the nature of any enhancement in students' spiritual development or inner lives that might come

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[113] Nancy J. Evan, Deanna S. Forney, Florence M. Guido, Lori D. Patton, and Kristen A. Renn, *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice, 2nd edition* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

from engaging big questions in academic courses in theology and religion. The four primary research questions for the study were:

1. Can an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion increase students' dispositions related to Alexander Astin , Helen Astin, and Jennifer Lindholm's ecumenical worldview and Eboo Patel's bridge-building behaviors?

2. Can inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion advance students' spiritual development or enhance their inner lives?

3. How does engaging with big questions change students' spirituality and/or students' worldviews, dispositions, or behaviors?

4. What happens to students' spiritual and religious lives over the first two years of college?

Hypothesis

The primary hypothesis of this study was that using inquiry-based pedagogies, specifically big questions inquiry and appreciative inquiry, to teach Christian theology and religion in an undergraduate first-year seminar course would result in experimental group students reporting increased development of their inner lives and also greater advancements in interfaith understanding and bridge-building behaviors, regardless of the students' religious or non-religious affiliation, as opposed to comparison group students.

Participants

Of the 76 participants who signed the consent forms to participate in some facet of the research, all were first-year college students who had turned 18 years of age before the study began. Students were predominantly Caucasian middle class students. Far more women were represented in this study than men. For example, 42 females and 7 males

completed the post-course survey.[114] Many academic majors were represented, including liberal arts and sciences as well as pre-professional programs.

The religious preferences of the 76 students who agreed to participate as research subjects in the surveys, observations, and interviews (if selected for interviews) were:

- Christians – 63 (Protestants – 39, Roman Catholics – 24)
- No Affiliation – 4
- Atheists – 3
- Other – 3
- No Response – 2
- Agnostics – 1

Research Design

The research study focused on applying inquiry-based pedagogies to the teaching of Christina theology and religion, most particularly appreciative inquiry and big questions inquiry pedagogy. The research involved five honors first-year seminar courses taught at Elizabethtown College, and was carried out from Fall 2011 through Spring 2013, from the time the students entered college to the end of the sophomore year. The first-year seminar course at Elizabethtown College is a four-credit academic course, with three credits focusing on a particular academic discipline, and one credit comprised of thirteen to fifteen intellectual engagement experiences (IEE) outside of regular classroom time.

When the research began in Fall 2011, it included one experimental section (EG Theology), and three comparison groups (EG Math, EG Science, EG Literature). The experimental section was taught by the ministry researcher, and the three comparison groups were taught by faculty in their academic disciplines. At the end of the first year of study, because preliminary results suggested some degree of between groups statistically significant

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[114] This is representative of the honors program for that year in terms of gender.

difference related to students' perceived benefits, a second experimental group (EG Bible) was added in Fall 2012, with a different instructor than the ministry researcher.

In the end, the research design included five honors first-year seminars—four taught in Fall 2011, and one taught in Fall 2012. All five included fourteen or fifteen students in the first semester of college. The experimental pedagogical methods were used in the experimental groups, but not in the comparison groups. The first-year seminars in this project included:

1. Experimental Group Theology, taught by a faculty person in religious studies, who is also that college chaplain, and who is also the researcher on this ministry of teaching experiment;

2. Experimental Group Bible, taught by a faculty person in religious studies, who is <u>not</u> the researcher on this ministry of teaching experiment;

3. Comparison Group Math, taught by a faculty person in mathematics and computer science;

4. Comparison Group Science, taught by faculty person in chemistry;

5. Comparison Group Literature, taught by a faculty person in English literature.

The research method and all related documents were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Subjects Research of Elizabethtown College, and also Virginia Theological Seminary. All students in EG Theology and EG Bible were included in the experimental pedagogy by virtue of their presence in those academic courses. The number of research subjects who responded to the surveys, and who participated in in-depth one-on-one interviews depended on how many students in each first-year seminar agreed to participate and signed the informed consent agreement. During the two-year course of the research, no adverse effects or complaints of any kind have been made to the researcher or

the IRB of Elizabethtown College. In fact, students particularly seemed to enjoy being interviewed four times over their first two years of college for this project. For a copy of the informed consent document, please see Appendix A.

Data were collected using the following methods:

- Pre-course and post-course surveys, given via Survey Monkey to all students who signed informed consent forms, administered at the beginning of the first-semester and end of the first semester of college;

- Four sets of individual interviews (pre-course, post-course, end of first-year, and end of sophomore year), including all the student subjects in EG Theology, and four or five subjects from each of the three comparison groups, CG Math, CG Science, and CG Literature. No subjects in EG Bible were interviewed.

Timeline

Summer 2011

- EG Theology syllabus and assignments related to big questions and appreciative inquiry pedagogies were created.

- Instructors for comparison group CG Math, CG Science, and CG Literature were asked to have their first-year seminar group students invited to participate.

- Human subjects research proposal written and submitted for approval to IRB of Elizabethtown College.

August-September 2011

- Pre-course surveys were administered via Survey Monkey to all students who have signed the informed consent agreements. Survey was kept open for the first ten days of class.

- Pre-course individual interviews of approximately forty-five minutes in length were held with thirty-four students, including every student in EG Theology, and four or five members of each of the three comparison groups.

- Pre-course observation ratings for one (1) experimental FYS and three comparison group FYS were collected. Data was incomplete, as one instructor did not turn in his ratings.

Fall Semester 2011

- EG Theology was taught by an instructor in religious studies, who is the researcher in this project on the ministry of teaching.

- CG Math, CG Science, CG Literature were taught by instructors in each of those three academic disciplines with no modifications or changes from previous years related in any way to this research.

- Amendments to the post-course survey questions and the first post-course interview scripts were submitted to the IRB of Elizabethtown College for approval.

December 2011

- Post-course surveys were administered via Survey Monkey to all students who have signed the informed consent agreements. The survey was kept open from finals week through the third week of January (when students returned for the Spring semester).

- First post-course individual interviews of approximately forty-five minutes in length were held with thirty-two students, including every student in experimental group EG Theology, and four or five members of each of the three comparison groups.

- Post-course observation ratings for one (1) experimental FYS and three (3) comparison group FYS were collected. Again, data was incomplete.

Spring 2012

- Amendments to the second post-course interview scripts were submitted to the IRB of Elizabethtown College for approval.

May 2012

- End of first year individual interviews of approximately thirty minutes in length were held with twenty-seven students, including every student in EG Theology, and four or five members of each of the three comparison FYS groups. In the end, these interviews were not used in data analysis due to both cost and time constraints.

Summer 2012

- Instructor in religious studies for the second experimental group who was not the researcher for this project was recruited.

- The researcher defined the big questions and appreciative inquiry pedagogies to the other instructor, and that instructor revised her syllabus to include the primary experimental pedagogical elements into the syllabus and assignments for EG Bible.

- Human subjects research proposal revised for a one-year extension and submitted for approval to IRB of Elizabethtown College.

August-September 2012

- Pre-course surveys are administered via Survey Monkey to all students who have signed the informed consent agreements in experimental EG Bible. Survey was kept open for the first ten days of class.

- Pre-course observation ratings for one (1) experimental EG Bible were collected.

Fall Semester 2012

- Experimental EG Bible was taught by an instructor in religious studies, who is <u>not</u> the researcher in this project on the ministry of teaching.

December 2012

- Post-course surveys were administered via Survey Monkey to all students who have signed the informed consent agreements in experimental EG Bible. Survey was kept open from finals week through the third week of January (when students returned for the Spring semester).

- Post-course observation ratings for one experimental FYS were collected.

April-May 2013

- Final individual interviews (end of sophomore year) of approximately forty minutes in length were held with twenty-four students, including every student in EG Theology, and four or five members of each of the three comparison groups.

The Pedagogy: A Brief Overview

<u>Big Questions Project</u>

In his book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, Princeton philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah posits that one of the necessary components for becoming a true cosmopolitan, or citizen of the world, is curiosity. Positive psychologist Todd Kashdan documents the importance of curiosity in psycho-social development, well-being, and learning, and Ken Bain, Sam Intrator, and others document the importance of a motivated and engaged student for deep learning.[115] To engage students' curiosity and motivate a

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[115] Todd Kashdan, *Curious? Discover the Missing Ingredient to a Fulfilling Life* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 2009), Ken Bain, *What the Best College Teachers Do* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

desire to learn, students named a big question that they wanted to explore and make progress on by the end of the semester. Each individual student completed a big questions project that included crafting a big question that was relevant and important to them, and which could not be researched or answered using a standard academic disciplinary methodology. In consultation with the instructor, students designed a creative way to explore and make progress on this big question, implement the exploration, and turn in a product for grading at the end of the semester. For the Big Questions Assignment and Grading Rubric, please see Appendix B.

Appreciative Inquiry Journals

All students were taught methods of appreciative inquiry, and throughout the semester, each individual student attended 13-15 outside-of-class exploration and learning opportunities (lectures, arts and cultural events, civic engagement or service activities, field trips to museums or sacred spaces) of his/her own choosing and kept an appreciative inquiry journal throughout the semester. Each student wrote a journal after each event or program, using an appreciative inquiry set of questions as an outline (see Appendix C).[116]

Conversation-Based Class Community

The peer reference group was also important to holistic learning that is not bifurcated, so students would challenge and support each other through small group

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Press, 2006), and Sam M. Intrator, *Tuned In and Fired Up: How Teaching Can Inspire Real Learning in the Classroom* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

[116] This assignment constitutes the entire fourth credit of the first-year seminar. It used to be an independent one-credit common experience related to the College's mission and signature themes that was planned by a committee for all 550+ first-year students. This coming year, the fourth credit must remain related in some way to the College's mission, signature themes, and the goals of liberal education, and at the same time, it is to become part of each instructor's course, and is to be planned by them related to their own first-year seminar course content.

discussions about their own religious and spiritual autobiographies, and also their personal statements of what they believe.[117]

<u>Sanctuary Space: Teacher is the Content: A Way of Being in the Classroom</u>

Multiple books and studies have documented the transformative impact of experiential learning, and more specifically, service learning, so students participated in a service activity which involves encountering strangers and new contexts. According to Gustav Niebuhr's observations of moving beyond tolerance across America, this kind of real engagement and dialogue can move us beyond tolerance to building community.[118]

Detailed Description of Syllabus and Sample Class Session

The syllabus was organized around three major textbooks: one introduction to Christian theology, one upper level philosophy of religion textbook, and one book of fiction, with short stories relating to various world religions. Each week, the class members focused on one or two big questions framed by the instructor, including: Can religious faith be reasonable? Who is God? What does it mean to be saved? What about religions other than Christianity? For a complete copy of the syllabus, please see Appendix D.

I used the first class period of the semester to go over the syllabus, describe the required textbooks, review course assignments, make some general introductory remarks, and answer questions. At the end of the first class, I did what I continued to do at the end of each class, which was to give a brief introduction to the theologians, philosophers, and primary focus of each reading for the next class period. Each student volunteered to read

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[117] Interview with Michael Roy, Associate Professor of Psychology, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA, May 27, 2001, and Barbara Kellerman, *Followership: How Followers are Creating Change and Changing Leaders* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2005).
[118] Gustav Niebuhr, *Beyond Tolerance: Searching for Interfaith Understanding in America* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 2008).

between one and three readings, depending on which theologians, philosophers, or themes interested them. Therefore, in most class sessions, there was a common question, but no common reading.

<u>The Appreciative Inquiry Class Session Structure</u>

The Intellectual Engagement Experience (IEE) journal prompts were structured using an adaptation of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology. Moreover, in a typical class period, we followed a three-movement experience designed by me based on appreciative inquiry. Students would share with the class who they read and what the key points were, followed by naming several things they really appreciated about that theologian or philosopher's thoughts. Sometimes I asked them variations on this question: What really resonated with you? What will linger with you? What fit with your beliefs, values, or previous knowledge? Then, we would move into a time of critical thinking, in which students used logic, personal experience, knowledge from science or another academic discipline to critique the theologian or philosopher's work. Finally, students would share questions they would like to ask the person they had read, or what new thoughts they had because they had encountered this theologian or philosopher.

When I talked with my colleague who taught the other experimental first-year seminar, we both had the sense that for many of the students, the Appreciative Inquiry exercises started a pattern, and began to establish a habit of appreciative inquiry. This may or may not stay with all of the students, but even though my colleague did not structure her actual class sessions using AI as I did, she did observe that the process required in the IEE journals using Appreciative Inquiry carried over into class, especially in the middle to latter weeks of the semester.

Many times in my class, especially in the middle and latter part of the semester, this three-movement appreciative inquiry exercise would take the entire class, because the students would begin with the conversation between the theologians and the philosophers, but then would begin to own the conversation themselves, as they allowed their personal, familial, and religious or non-religious theologies to emerge, and then they would engage each other appreciatively. By the last four weeks of the semester, the students were listening intently to each other, asking clarifying questions of each other, back-tracking if they thought someone disagreed with them and they had not given them the chance to speak. What excited them most was discovering that they were bouncing their ideas off each other, and refining or re-constructing their own personal theologies based on not only the ideas of theologians and philosophers, but also the ideas of each other.

Although I based most classes on the previous structure, I would use variations in the class periods, especially at the beginning of the course, when the three-movement appreciative inquiry did not take up the entire class period. Many times, as listed in the syllabus, at either the beginning or the very end of class, I would ask the students to do a contemplative writing related to the question of the week. In a few class periods, I would ask students to come prepared to play the role of his/her theologian or philosopher during a portion of the class. Other times, students would be frustrated at how dense and difficult the readings were, and we would discuss possible strategies for when we encounter something that seems to be beyond our comprehension.

The Big Question Project Assignment Description

In Fall 2014, when I discussed further the Big Question Project with my colleague who taught the other experimental seminar, she said that the Big Question Project was the "big" one in terms of influence on her students. As a professor of biblical studies, she had

rarely, if ever, assigned a project that was not a research paper. The Big Question Project required her students to be creative and to think big. She said: "I was so explicit that they could not do research, or just go find out what 'authority' says [and then be finished], but I told them they had to think, to talk, to explore."[119] She went on to say that the Big Question Project required them to reflect on their own views, to seek other ways of seeing (including 'authority'), to consider, to deliberate, and then to create the end product. She concluded that it was not research, but it was more than just opinion.

In some ways, the Big Question Project is almost the opposite of a research topic. In research, we nearly always end up telling students: narrow it down, it is too big, refine it, it is not manageable, it cannot be done with standard disciplinary methods, or it has not been done by anyone before, so you cannot do it. With the big question project, we were always telling them to think even bigger, to look across disciplines, to look to wisdom outside the academy, to think of creative ways to make even a little progress on something so big, so complex, and quite possibly truly unanswerable. I had intended that the Big Question Project would take the entire semester, and for most students, it really did.

From the beginning, mentoring was a part of the Big Question Project—both peer-to-peer and instructor-to-student mentoring. Students were placed in Big Questions Small Groups and given class time to discuss what might constitute a truly big and worthy question. Students were not allowed to finalize a big question until week six in the semester, because I thought that the process of naming the question was as important as the search for possible answers. In his short introduction to philosophy, Terry Eagleton discusses different categories of questions, and I realized that I have taught the following question categories to

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[119] Christina Bucher, personal conversation, Wenger Building, March 25, 2015, Elizabethtown, PA.

students in many of my classes, and also in my pastoral care and counseling sessions with students:[120]

- Rhetorical questions – Do we want to win this game?

- Leading questions – Don't you think that we should all vote for Tom?

- Nonsense questions – What is the color of the number 42?

- Unanswerable questions – How many hairs did Napoleon have on his head?

- Existential questions – What is the meaning of suffering?

We required that students be patient and diligent both in framing their areas of interest or concern, and in finalizing the specific words of their big questions. We also emphasized that students only had to "make progress" on their big questions, not find answers.

In both experimental seminars, things unfolded as I thought with regard to the Big Question Project taking the entire semester. Students really struggled to find a big enough and worthy question. Many students started with questions that were rhetorical or leading. Some started to think they could not do the assignment. Some thought they could never even understand what they were being asked to do. Sometimes they mentored each other in big questions small groups. Other times they had individual consultations with the instructor. Sometimes when more than half of the class seemed to be struggling, the instructors said: Bring your current best big question(s) to class. We would spend an entire class period just discussing the questions, asking: What do you like about the current question? What makes you uncertain about his question? What other questions related to this question? What is the opposite of this question? How would someone else you know ask this question? Why does this question matter to you? We threw out a lot of questions

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[120] Terry Eagleton, *The Meaning of Life: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2008.

because the group helped various students to see that their questions could be answered by standard methods in the literature of some academic field or other.

When the Big Question Project was described to students at the beginning of the course, the students generally reacted with excitement and interest. They asked questions of clarification, and they wanted specific examples of questions and projects, which I was unable to give because I had never done this assignment before, and also because I thought that to give too many examples and answers would undermine or interfere with an integral part of the progress, which was struggle and personal ownership, or what some call self-authorship.

In the next several weeks, several students came to class and shared their question with some degree of satisfaction and triumph. Other students listened with envy. In general, their initial questions were not well-formed, were standard Sunday School questions, or had implied answers. Some of the questions were quite researchable using standard academic methodologies, such as archival research, conducting a social science survey, or writing a standard research paper. I was both surprised and annoyed by how many students wanted to just go around asking other people for opinions.

Each student entered panic at some point in the process. They panicked over whether or not they could come up with a question. Some really wanted me just to give them a question. Not surprisingly, students were very concerned about the letter-grade that they would receive for the projects. Initially, students felt the freedom of such a permission-giving project. As the weeks wore on, students felt the responsibility of such a project, and the responsibility of making their individual efforts worthy of their time and their unique personhood.

In the Big Question small groups, students got really good at both critiquing each other's questions and trying to be helpful in moving forward. The Big Question small groups created the possibility of caring and compassion, and moving beyond competition. I gained new hope for the relevance of this project when I heard Krista Tippett of National Public Radio's *On Being*, call for a rediscovering of questions as part of both spiritual disciplines and civil discourse. [121] To Eagleton's list of types of questions, Tippett added simplistic questions, simple questions, inflammatory questions, generous questions, and weapon questions. She noted that there is something life-giving about a really good question, and that animating, open, and generous questions are powerful, irresistible, revelatory, and dignifying. Walter Wink has noted that to any really good question, there are many really good answers. Tippett's thoughts support the big question assignment I give my class as she notes that a constant fixation on answers is problematic and limiting. She described American as a society obsessed with answers, and along with Rainer Maria Rilke, called for us to "love the questions themselves."

Both Dr. Bucher and I have continued to teach first-year seminar using the Appreciative Inquiry Methods and the Big Question Project. Every year, we have asked students informally which they prefer: the research paper or the Big Question Project. Although one or two each year say they prefer the research paper, everyone else overwhelmingly says they "love" the Big Question Project best. Why is this so? Some state that it is because no one else has ever asked them to think in this way. Others report that in high school for research papers, they were told to string together quotations and ideas from authoritative sources and then they would have a good paper. Other students say that the

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[121] Plenary Lecture, Conference of the Council of Independent College's Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education, St. Louis, MO, March 27, 2015.

Big Question Project was relevant to their lives. It mattered. The research paper often

involved carefully choosing or even just getting lucky with a topic that had lots of peer-

reviewed sources. For the big question project, my colleague and I tried to use Elizabeth

Minnich's criteria: It's not that you have to come up with an idea that no one has ever had

before, but an idea that reflects who you are.[122] The students had this same view of the big

question project. The project not only made them think, but also reflected who they were.

Brief Summary of Intended Outcomes and Methods of Evaluation

As previously noted, I have long been concerned with a kind of fragmentation in

higher education, which scholars such as Anthony Kronman have traced to the rise and

prevalence of the modern research university, a symptom of which is the pursuit of

objective, systematic, methodological research at the expense of questions of values,

meaning, purpose, and other existential concerns. Astin and Astin summarize their concerns

in this way:

> *This kind of fragmentation is further encouraged by those who believe that higher education should concern itself only with students' "cognitive" development— thinking, reasoning, memorizing, critical analysis, and the like—and that the affective or emotional side of the student's life is not relevant to the work of the university. We do not believe that there is such a thing as "pure" cognition that can be considered in isolation from affect; on the contrary, it would appear that our thoughts and our reasoning are almost always taking place in some kind of affective "bed" or context.[123]*

Building on previous research by Alexander W. Astin, Helen S. Astin, and Jennifer

Lindholm of UCLA Higher Education Research Institute, as well as the faith development

theory of Sharon Daloz Parks, the primary hypothesis of this study is that the creation and

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[122] Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich, "Teaching Thinking: Moral and Political Considerations," Change, September/October 2003, 18-24.

[123] Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, *Cultivating the Spirit*, 7.

use of a big questions inquiry-based pedagogy to teach theology and religion in an undergraduate first-year seminar course will result in:

- An increase in experimental group students' dispositions related to what Astin, Astin, and Lindholm call "ecumenical worldview," and what Patel and IFYC call the interfaith triangle as opposed to the comparison groups; and,

- An increase in the spiritual development of the students in the experimental groups as opposed to the comparison groups.

<u>Primary Research Questions and Methods of Evaluation</u>

1. Can an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion increase students' dispositions related to what Astin, Astin, and Lindholm call "ecumenical worldview," and what Patel and IFYC call the interfaith triangle?

My goal is to see to what extent I can find similar results to Astin and Astin, particularly that engaging big questions of life, meaning, and purpose can increase students' ecumenical worldviews through the structuring of a particular academic course as a mentoring community related to big questions of life, meaning, and purpose. This will be determined through a pre-and post-survey instrument with statistical analysis of custom-created questions related to ecumenical worldviews and inter-religious behaviors. Moreover, in an effort to answer this question, interview reports of students' interactions with religiously and culturally diverse peers will be analyzed.

2. Can an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion advance students' spiritual development or enhance their "inner lives"?

My goal is to determine whether or not experimental group students' inner lives changed more, equal to, or less than comparison group students, and also the extent to which

students changed, and in what categories the changes occurred. This will be determined through a pre-and post-survey instrument with statistical analysis of standard questions and inventories related to spirituality, religiousness, curiosity, well-being, hope, success, beliefs, epistemology, behaviors, and practices.

3. How does engaging with big questions change students' spirituality and/or students' worldviews, dispositions, or behaviors?

If there are significant changes in experimental group students as opposed to comparison group students on standard or custom-created measures, then my goal is to determine how students thought they changed as a result of the inquiry-based pedagogy, to what they attribute the change, and what categories and concepts best describe the changes that occurred in the students. This question will be answered using grounded theory to analyze pre-course, post-course, and end-of-sophomore year interview transcripts.

4. What happens to students' spiritual and religious lives over the first two years of college?

The goal is to find themes that emerge in the first two years of college related to spirituality and religion in both experimental and comparison group students. I hope to create a model or diagram that visually summarizes these themes. This will be studied by comments in the write-in boxes on the post-course surveys, and also using grounded theory to analyze pre-course, post-course, and end-of-sophomore year interview transcripts.

While some have criticized Parks' theory for claiming it is both cognitive and affective, while in reality it is only cognitive, I believe that Parks' model is affective, in that two of its three key elements are social-emotional (forms of dependence, forms of community). At the same time, the purpose of this ministry of teaching research is neither to advance nor refute this particular critique of Parks' model. However, I did design the

experimental inquiry-based pedagogy to include not only items related to Bloom's Learning

Taxonomy for the Cognitive Domain, but also included the following elements in the

experimental pedagogy, which are part of the Learning Taxonomy for Krathwohl's Affective

Domain: receiving, responding, valuing, organization, and characterization.[124]

In a general way, the methods of evaluation for this experiment in the ministry of

teaching focused on four levels of impact inquiry from Kirkpatrick's taxonomy: 1) Attitude

or gut-response, 2) Change in thinking, 3) Change in behavior, and 4) Larger/broader impact

and/or ripple effects.

Common Threads Between the Experimental FYS and the Comparison FYS Groups

All first-year honors students are invited to rank order their preferences for the topic

of the first-year seminar. As schedules are made, courses students need for the academic

major are put in the course schedule first, so depending on timing of courses, not every

student is placed in his/her first choice of first-year seminar.

All first-year honors students lived in an honors living-learning community, which

means that all the students in this research lived in the same residence hall and on the same

floor. They participated in joint co-curricular programming throughout the first year of

college. In addition, all honors first-year students participated in a service project, planned

by the students in the senior honors leadership class. All first-year seminar students wrote a

10-12 page research paper using the standard methodologies of the particular discipline of

the first-year seminar.

At the most macro-level, the students in the experimental groups and comparison

groups shared developmental concerns and tasks of the first-year. All students in the

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[124] Elizabeth F. Barkley*, Student Engagement Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 142-143.

ministry of teaching experiment saw themselves primarily as "students," and while honors students specifically tend to judge their success primarily by their academic performance, these students were overwhelmed by a plethora of concerns ranging from weight gain to homesickness to alcohol consumption to not finding friends.[125] In some ways, the first-year program, with its academic first-year seminar course, social events, and upper-class student peer mentors, functions as a quasi-culture for all first-year students. This is more pronounced in the honors first-year program.

Some particular shared themes that could affect the outcome of my ministry of teaching experiment include 1) the fact that first-year students may become more open to new ideas and people regardless of natural, holistic learning environment, 2) all four seminars will carry out the one-credit IEE related to the themes and values of the College, 3) honors students are a cohort with common educational themes, including interdisciplinary work and common social events, and 4) honors students talk about class content with each other outside of class, across seminars, which is what is intended to happen in the honors living-learning community. In fact, throughout the research, both experimental group and the comparison group students reported talking about questions and topics related to the EG Theology seminar in the residence hall living-learning community. Therefore, to some degree, CG Math, CG Science, and CG Literature were exposed to some of the ripple effects of the experimental pedagogy even if they were not in the experimental groups.

Changes and Surprising Outcomes

Initially, I included in my thesis the idea that teaching Christian theology itself was a key part of my research design. In other words, that it was in fact, not only the pedagogical

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[125] Bette LaSere Erickson, Calvin B. Peters, and Diane Weltner Strommer, *Teaching First-Year College Students* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006), 16-17.

method which would create results, but following Peter Hodgson's argument, that there was something specific to the teaching of the content and topic of Christian theology itself that did something that teaching comparative religions in a phenomenological way did not accomplish.

I also began with the idea, following Henri Nouwen, that one cannot disconnect the person of the teacher from what is taught (content) or how it is taught (pedagogical method). I assumed that no one else would be able to get the same results I got, because no one else is me.   However, I received quite strong challenges to truly test only pedagogical method and to create a design that would separate content/topic and also person/presence of the teacher from the research design. In the end, I designed the research to include comparison groups and variations to account for all of these cases, in an effort to examine the effect of the actual big questions pedagogical method used in the teaching of religion— not necessarily only Christian theology.

Students' Actual Big Questions and the Projects

While neither instructor kept a complete listing of either the big questions or the end products over the years, we did compile a list of a few that stuck out in our minds. One student, majoring in a pre-professional discipline, chose the question: What really happens when we die? This student created an imaginary persona, with a date of birth and death, as well as a biography, and then collected a scrapbook with journal entries about death and artifacts from different religious traditions, based on interviews, visits to sacred sites, and the students' own contemplation.

Another student, majoring in the natural sciences, chose the question: What is the consciousness of a rock? This student, a Christian student, engaged in meditation,

contemplation, journaling, conversation, and research. The student's final project was a profound and beautiful poem, a copy of which I asked for and retain.

Another student in a pre-professional science-related field, who was from a conservative, nearly fundamentalist Christian tradition took on a question: How can I claim to know anything for real? This student was haunted by something, but took several weeks longer than the other students to even name the big question, and drew upon mentoring from the instructor and peers quite heavily. This student really wrestled with philosophical logic, biblical authority, science, church tradition, and personal experience. In the end, the student created a Prezi presentation covering progress and insights, and stated that while no answers were found, the process of living into the question had enabled significant progress, both in mind and in spirit.

Students' Reflections on Learning

Both in her experimental 2012 seminar group and in later seminar groups, my colleague had students write a final essay on how their "mind" has changed. In general, she said that these essays continue to support the findings of my individual interviews with the first experimental group, for both the religious students and the non-religious students. Religious students became more articulate and confident, and at the same time, more understanding of other religious and non-religious people. Similarly, non-religious students reported that before the seminar, they thought of religion and religious people as limited or uninteresting, and wanted nothing to do with them, but at the end of the seminars, they reported more understanding and acceptance of religious people.

Chapter 4: Quantitative Outcomes – Between Groups

Alexander Astin, Helen Astin, and Jennifer Lindholm have found that engagement with big questions increases dispositions and skills related to what they have called students' ecumenical worldview and what Eboo Patel and Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) call the interfaith triangle. Few scholars have applied Sharon Daloz Parks' big questions theory in an academic classroom setting and systematically analyzed the outcomes.[126] The primary purpose of this project is to develop and test an inquiry-based pedagogy designed specifically for teaching theology and religion in the classroom, with the goal of trying to discover the nature of any enhancement in students' spiritual development or inner lives that might come from engaging big questions in academic courses in theology and religion. The four primary research questions for the study were:

1. Can an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion increase students' dispositions related to Alexander Astin, Helen Astin, and Jennifer Lindholm's ecumenical worldview and Eboo Patel's bridge-building behaviors?

2. Can inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion advance students' spiritual development or enhance their inner lives?

3. How does engaging with big questions change students' spirituality and/or students' worldviews, dispositions, or behaviors?

4. What happens to students' spiritual and religious lives over the first two years of college?

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[126] Nancy J. Evan, Deanna S. Forney, Florence M. Guido, Lori D. Patton, and Kristen A. Renn, *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice, 2nd edition* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

This study began in the August 2011. Over a two-year period, the research subjects included a total of 76 undergraduate students enrolled in honors first-year seminars: two experimental group seminars (EG Theology, EG Bible) and three comparison group first-year seminars (CG Math, CG Science, CG Literature). Data was gathered in the following ways:

- Surveys both pre-course and post-course for all five first-year seminars (pre-course n=51, post-course n=49);

- Observation ratings both pre-course and post-course observation ratings for all five first-year seminars;[127]

- Individual interviews pre-course, post-course, end of first-year, and end of the sophomore year for one experimental first-year seminar and three comparison groups from fall 2011 (pre-course, n= 34, post-course, n= 32, end of first-year, n=29, end of sophomore year, n= 24).

Specifically with regard to the first and second research questions, one tactic of this study was to administer a broad array of inventories and measures to see what might be happening to students in terms of spirituality, religiousness, curiosity, well-being, beliefs, epistemology, behaviors, and practices. To that end, I employed quantitative measures, including pre-course and post-course surveys, using both standard inventories and questions from other researchers, as well as custom-designed questions of my own.

Who Were the Students?

Of the 76 participants who signed the consent forms to participate in some facet of the research, all were first-year college students who had turned 18 years of age before the

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[127] For notes on the observation ratings, and why they were not used, please see Appendix E.

study began. Students were predominantly Caucasian middle class students. In an incoming class at Elizabethtown College in any given year, approximately 40% of the students in the incoming class are first-generation college students.[128] Nearly all of the students were from the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions of the United States of America. The students used in this study were all admitted into the College honors program, which selects students based not only on academic merit, but also on factors such as leadership, service, community engagement, and other forms of involvement in high school as criteria. Strictly speaking, the College's honors program is not an academic honors college.

Far more women were represented in this study than men. For example, 42 females and 7 males completed the post-course survey. This ratio of 86% female and 16% male is representative of the overall gender demographic of the honors program at the College. Many academic majors were represented, including liberal arts and sciences as well as pre-professional programs. The religious preferences of the 76 students who agreed to participate as research subjects in the surveys, observations, and interviews were:

- Christians – 63 (Protestants – 39, Roman Catholics – 24)
- No Affiliation – 4
- Atheists – 3
- Other – 3
- No Response – 2
- Agnostics – 1

Summary of Instruments, Measures, and Interview Questions

Survey Measures

Pre-course and post-course surveys, given via Survey Monkey to all students who signed informed consent forms, administered at the beginning of the first-semester and end

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[128] A first-generation college student is defined as the first person in his/her family to attend college or university.

of the first semester of college (pre-course n=51, post-course n=49). The surveys contained the following items:

- Indicators of Students' Spirituality: Alexander Astin and Helen Astin, 2003, from HERI/UCLA Study on the Spiritual Life of College Students, 6 questions, 7-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

- Indicators of Students' Religiousness: Alexander Astin and Helen Astin, 2003, from HERI/UCLA Study on the Spiritual Life of College Students, 6 questions, 7-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

- Religious Practices, from David Gortner, Personal Theologies, 1994, 3 questions, Multiple choice answers.

- Traditional vs. Existential/Fatalist Beliefs: GSS, Greeley, 1988:1992, 18 questions, 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

- Beliefs about Belief and Religion, adapted from Christian Smith, National Study of Youth and Religion—NSYR, 2002-2003, 2007-2008), 11 items, 4-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

- Indicators of Curiosity: Todd Kashdan, Curiosity and Exploration Inventory—CEI-T, 7 questions, (6 used in this study) 7-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

- Adult Hope Scale, C.R. Snyder, University of Kansas, 6 questions, 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

- Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS), Sonja Lyubomirsky, 4 questions, 7-point Likert scale with one item reverse scored.

- Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ), [Michael F. Steger, Patricia Frazier, Shigehiro Oishi, and Matthew Kaler, 10 items, 7-point Likert scale from Absolutely Untrue to Absolutely True, with one item reverse scored.

- Religious Literacy Questions: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey, 2010, 15 questions, multiple choice.

- Religious Knowledge, Tracy Wenger Sadd, 2011, 3 questions, 4-point Likert scale from Very Little to A Lot, and multiple choice.

- Beliefs and Epistemology, Tracy Wenger Sadd, 2011, 8 questions, 4-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, and multiple choice.

- Beliefs and Epistemology, adapted from Christian Smith, National Study of Youth and Religion—NSYR, 2002-2003, 2007-2008), 4 questions, 4-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

- Interfaith Actions, Adapted from Interfaith Cooperation on Campus student survey, Interfaith Youth Corps—IFYC, 2010, 15 questions, check all that apply.

- Perceived Benefits of First-Year Seminar, Tracy Wenger Sadd, 2011, 15 questions, Yes or No answers. (Post-course survey only)

For a complete copy of the survey questions, please see Appendix F: Pre-Course Survey and Appendix G: Post-Course Survey. For a list of survey questions by analytical category, please see Appendix H.

Interview Measures

Throughout the two years of the study, I conducted four sets of individual interviews. The first interviews occurred pre-course, within the first two weeks of students entering college (n=34). The second interviews occurred immediately post-course, within

the final two weeks of the semester (n=32). The third set of individual interviews were completed at the end of the students' first-year of college (n=29), and the fourth and final set of interviews were held at the end of students' sophomore year (n=24), including all the student subjects in EG Theology, and four or five subjects from each of the three comparison groups, CG Math, CG Science, and CG Literature. No subjects in EG Bible were interviewed. For a complete copy of the interview questions, please see Appendix I: Pre-Course Interviews, Appendix J: Post-Course Interviews, Appendix K: End of First-Year Interviews, and Appendix L: End of Sophomore Year Interviews.

Personal Measures—Between Groups Differences Pre-Course and Post-Course

<u>Desire to Study the Specific Topic of the Assigned First-Year Seminar</u>

Students rank their first year seminar topic choices early in the summer before matriculation, and at the same time, a student may or may not be placed in a first-year seminar which is the student's first or second choice of topic. Students' schedules are made by first placing students in all courses required for the intended academic major, which in the case of a Biology major, is three of the four courses taken in the fall semester and includes two five-hour laboratory sections with three hours of lecture. Students are then placed in their highest ranked first-year seminar that does not conflict with their needed academic courses.

In light of all of these scheduling complexities, many students do end up with a first-year seminar course in a topic which they desire to study. The chart below shows the students' pre-course survey responses regarding their desire to study the topic of the first-year seminar to which they were assigned.

Figure 4.1 Students' Desire to Take the Topic of the First-Year Seminar
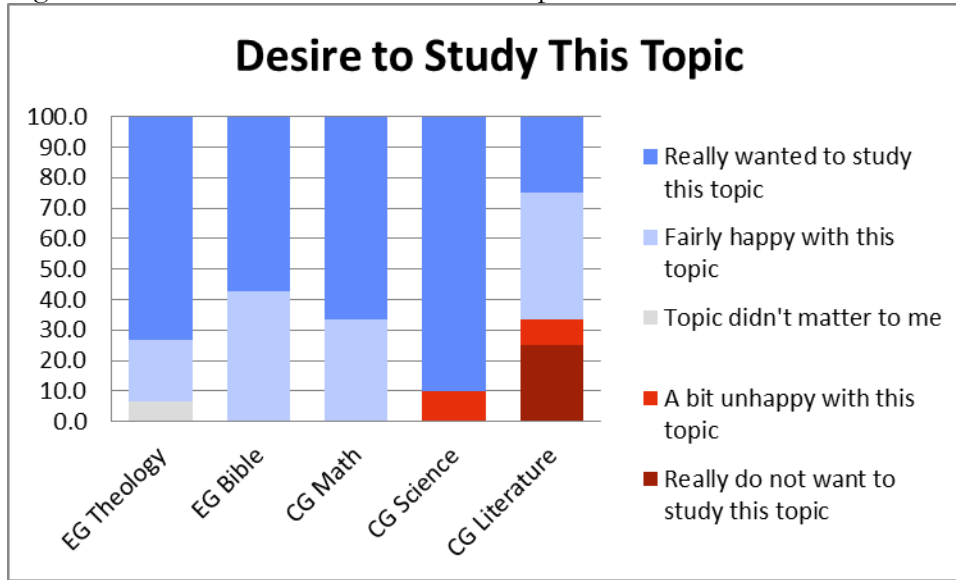
Pre-course survey, n=51

CG Science had the highest percentage of students who reported really wanting to study that topic. EG Theology and CG Math had the next highest percentage of students who really wanted to study that topic. Interestingly, EG Bible had the second lowest percentage of students who really wished to study the topic. The seminar group with both the lowest percentage of students having a strong desire to study the topic and also the highest percentage who really did not wish to study the topic was CG Literature. Only two of the seminars, CG Science and CG Literature, had any students reporting either that they were a bit unhappy with the topic or really did not want to study this topic.

On the Pearson Chi-Square Test, the differences between the groups was statistically significant (Asymp. Sig. 2-sided .023, α=.05). CG Literature was significantly different from the other groups on the desire to take or not take the assigned first-year seminar topic, and later results show that CG Literature was different from the other groups on a number of other measures.

<u>Indicators of Students' Spirituality</u>

Of the six items related to students' spirituality adapted from Alexander Astin and

Helen Astin, 2003, from HERI/UCLA Study on the Spiritual Life of College Students, the

findings showed no significant or even suggestive pre-course or post-course differences

between experimental and comparison groups for one item: I believe in the sacredness of

life. For the other five of these six items, the findings did show statistically significant

differences between experimental and comparison groups both pre-course and post-course.

Table 4.1 Indicators of Students' Spirituality (t-Test of Means)

Indicators of Students' Spirituality	EG Mean Pre-Survey	CG Mean Pre-Survey	t-score Pre-Survey	p-value Pre-Survey	EG Mean Post-Survey	CG Mean Post-Survey	t-score Post-Survey	p-value Post-Survey
I have an interest in spirituality.	4.3448	3.7647	3.136	.003	4.5652	3.8750	3.712	.001
I search for meaning or purpose in life.	4.2759	3.6176	3.197	.002	4.5652	3.6667	4.509	.000
My spirituality is a source of joy.	4.1379	3.5882	2.236	.029	4.3913	3.6250	2.748	.009
I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.	4.1724	3.4118	3.076	.003	4.3478	3.5417	2.961	.005
I have discussions about the meaning of life with friends.	2.6897	2.1471	2.942	.005	2.7391	2.2500	2.252	.029

Pre-Survey, n = 51
Post-Survey, n = 49

In summary, on measures of spirituality, the students in the experimental groups demonstrated statistically significant higher spirituality both pre-course and post-course than the students in the comparison groups before the first-year seminar courses and after the first-year seminar courses.

Of particular interest is the fact that for both experimental and comparison groups, the mean scores for all of the items related to spirituality increased from entry into college (pre-course) to the end of the first semester of college (post-course). This is consistent with the findings of Astin, Astin, and Lindholm that there are many curricular and co-curricular things that advance students' spirituality, including service, charitable giving, inter-racial engagement, reflection activities, etc. Moreover, my findings are consistent with Astin, Astin, and Lindholm's findings that over time, college and university students were twice as likely to increase than to decrease on Spiritual Quest, and that the college experience generally enhances not only Spiritual Quest, but most of the qualities they measure related to spirituality.[129]

Indicators of Students' Religiousness

For six items related to students' religiousness, adapted from Astin and Astin, the findings showed no pre-course or post-course statistical or even suggestive difference between experimental and comparison groups on two of the six items: I believe in God, and Religious beliefs provide strength, support, and guidance. Two of the items had both pre-course and post-course statistically significant differences between experimental and comparison groups. One item had pre-course between groups' statistically significant differences, but no post-course between groups' differences. One item had no pre-course

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[129] Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 85.

statistically significant differences, but the post-course between groups' differences were statistically significant.

Table 4.2 Indicators of Students' Religiousness (t-Test of Means)

Indicators of Students' Religiousness	EG Mean Pre-Survey	CG Mean Pre-Survey	t-score Pre-Survey	p-value Pre-Survey	EG Mean Post-Survey	CG Mean Post-Survey	t-score Post-Survey	p-value Post-Survey
I follow religious teachings in everyday life.	4.0000	3.2059	3.078	.003	4.0435	3.0833	3.374	.002
I attend religious services.	3.4483	2.6765	3.115	.003	3.2609	2.5833	2.114	.040
I have discussions about religion or spirituality with friends.	2.9310	2.2059	3.765	.000	2.8261	2.4583	1.563	.125
I have discussions about religion or spirituality with family.	2.6552	2.5294	.592	.556	2.9565	2.1250	3.780	.000

Pre-Survey, n = 51
Post-Survey, n = 49

In summary, on measures of students' religiousness, the students in the experimental groups were statistically significantly more likely than the comparison groups to follow religious teachings in everyday life and to attend religious services, both before the first-year seminar courses and also after the first-year seminar courses. Over the first semester of college, the experimental groups mean score for having discussions about religion and spirituality with friends decreased, while the mean score for the comparison groups for having discussions about religion/spirituality with friends increased. These students must not have been counting class discussions in the experimental groups. In contrast, the mean score for discussing religion and spirituality with family increased for the experimental group

over the course of the first semester of college, and for the comparison groups the mean score for discussion of religion/spirituality with family decreased.

While there is a slight decline in religious attendance for the experimental group students, in the end, the increase in these students talking with family about religious and spiritual matters is quite interesting. The experimental group parents and students were making meaning together. As my advisor Dr. David Gortner has said, "I think there's something here about students laying claim to their own powers of meaning-making – and thus daring to engage in big question discourse with their parents. This is maybe a more important measure of religious/spiritual identity than worship attendance."[130]

The increase across both experimental and comparison groups in discussing religion and spirituality with friends could be the influence of experimental group members on their comparison group members, all of whom lived on the same honors living-learning community residence hall floor. In addition, many experimental and comparison group students reported being roommates and friends.

At the same time, both experimental and comparison groups *decreased* in both belief in religious authority and attendance at religious services over the first semester of college. These results are consistent with other studies of college students, including Astin, Astin, and Lindholm's findings that Religious Engagement declines during the college years.[131]

Table 4.3 Items with Decreasing Mean for Both Experimental and Comparison Groups

	EG Mean Pre-Survey	EG Mean Post-Survey	CG Mean Pre-Survey	CG Mean Post-Survey
Religion holds a lot of authority for me.	3.90	3.81	3.37	3.25
I attend religious services.	3.46	3.34	2.69	2.62

Pre-Course Survey, n = 51
Post-Course Survey, n = 49

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[130] Gortner, Personal Written Correspondence, May 19, 2015.
[131] Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 85.

Attendance at Religious Services. On a survey question related to the religious practice of attending religious services, David Gortner (*Personal Theologies)*, the percentage of students who reported attending religious services at least twice per month on the pre-course survey was EG Bible – 92%, CG Science – 83%, EG Theology – 78%, CG Math – 67%, and CG Literature – 40%. On the post-course survey, the self-reporting for each seminar group on frequency of attendance at religious services was similar to the self-reporting on the pre-course survey. All seminar groups reported less attendance at religious services, but not a large percentage, and CG Math even reported a higher percentage of attendance. EG Bible – 90%, CG Science – 72%, EG Theology – 72%, CG Math – 72%, and CG Literature – 33%.

Reading Sacred Texts. On a survey item related to reading the Bible or other sacred text, the percentage of students who reported reading a sacred text at least once per week on the pre-course survey was EG Bible – 70%, EG Theology – 62%, CG Science – 33%, CG Math – 30%, and CG Literature – 22%. On the post-course survey, the scores remained basically similar, with some decline in frequency of Bible reading, which is interesting, considering that the one experimental group was required to read the Bible for class twice per week. EG Bible – 68%, EG Theology – 68%, CG Science – 38%, CG Math – 30%, and CG Literature – 10%.

Praying and Meditating. On the pre-course survey item related to the practice of prayer or meditation, the percentage of students who reported praying or meditating at least once per week was EG Theology – 93%, EG – Bible 85%, CG Science – 80%, CG Math – 75%, and CG Literature – 60%.   On the post-course survey for these items, all three comparison groups showed a decline of 40% or more, while EG theology show a decline of only 13%,

and EG Bible showed an increase of 5%. The actual percentage of students who reported

praying or meditating at least once per week on the post-course survey was EG Bible – 90%,

EG – Theology – 80%, CG Science – 35%, CG Math – 32%, and CG Literature – 20%.

<u>Types of Belief: Traditional vs. Existential/Fatalist Beliefs</u>

        Of the 18 questions related to types of belief, the results showed no statistically

significant between groups' difference for 15 of the items, either pre-course or post-course.

The results did show statistically significant between groups difference on three of the items.

For one item, "There is no God or Deity," there was pre-course but no post-course between

groups statistically significant difference. For two items, "Life is only meaningful if you

provide the meaning yourself," and "We each make our own fate," there was no pre-course

significant between groups difference, but the post-course between groups difference was

statistically significant.

Table 4.4 Types of Belief: Tradition Versus Existential/Fatalist (T-Test of Means)

Types of Belief	EG Mean Pre-Survey	CG Mean Pre-Survey	t-score Pre-Survey	p-value Pre-Survey	EG Mean Post-Survey	CG Mean Post-Survey	t-score Post-Survey	p-value Post-Survey
There is no God or Deity.	1.3793	1.8529	-2.047	.045	1.4348	1.6667	-.795	.431
Life is only meaningful if you provide the meaning yourself.	2.7931	3.0294	-.828	.411	2.6522	3.4783	-2.462	.018
We each make our own fate.	3.3793	3.5588	-.886	.379	3.0870	3.8750	-2.812	.008

Pre-Survey, n = 51
Post-Survey, n = 49

        Before the first-year seminar courses, there was a statistically significant difference

between the experimental group and the comparison group on the item "There is no God or

Deity," but by the end of the first semester at college, there was no between groups statistically significant difference. Two items related to existentialist belief systems showed no pre-course statistically significant difference between the experimental and comparison groups, but the post-course between group's differences was significant. The mean score for these two existentialist beliefs decreased for the experimental groups, and the mean score for these two existentialist beliefs increased for the comparison groups.

Beliefs about Belief and Religion

A t-test for equality of means for independent samples revealed that for the seven items adapted from Christian Smith's research related to the importance of believing, students' sense that religion conflicting with preferred lifestyles, science, known truth, religion conflicting with science, or students' feelings that religion provides comfort, stability, guidance, and/or makes them feel better about themselves, there were no pre-course or post-course differences between the experimental groups and the comparison groups of statistical significance on any of the seven items.

Even null findings can be significant and worthy of discussion. The results in the two sections of questions regarding beliefs support Christian's Smiths findings about the larger, longitudinal cultural and social forces which shape the beliefs of emerging and young adults. No one-semester course on Christian theology or religion is going to change or undo the cultural and social formation of students for over a decade.

Curiosity and Exploration Inventory—CEI-T

A t-test for equality of means for independent samples revealed that for the six items related to curiosity and exploration, there were no pre-course differences between the experimental groups and the comparison groups of statistical significance on any of the six

items. On the post-course survey, the findings on three of the curiosity and exploration items were statistically significant between the experimental groups and the comparison groups, with the experimental group members' ratings being higher than those of the comparison groups.

Table 4.5 Curiosity and Exploration—CEI-T (T-Test of Means)

CEI-T Item	EG Mean Post-Survey	CG Mean Post-Survey	t-score	p-value
I would describe myself as someone who actively seeks as much information as I can in a new situation.	4.4167	3.9583	2.256	.029
I frequently find myself looking for new opportunities to grow as a person (e.g., information, people, resources).	4.4583	3.9583	2.569	.014
Everywhere I go, I am out looking for new things or experiences.	4.2609	3.6667	2.448	.019

n = 49

The humanities and social sciences theory underlying the hypothesis stated that one necessary ingredient for engaging in bridge-building behaviors is curiosity, and that the use of inquiry-based pedagogies would increase students' curiosity. The results on the CEI-T Inventory do support the hypothesis in a statistically significant way.

It is surprising and disappointing that no curiosity items appeared to have a statistically significant increase in score within the experimental group from pre-course to post-course. At the same time, it is interesting to note that for these three items, the pre-to-post course means for the experimental groups increased, while the pre-to-post course means for the comparison groups decreased.

The Chronicle of Higher Education, the Mellon Foundation, the Teagle Foundation, and the Association of American Colleges and Universities, as well as faculties across the nation, have expressed concern over the possible decline or demise of the Humanities. At the same time, the results of this research suggest that even in a discussion-based course on

Shakespeare taught by a beloved and seasoned professor, the Humanities may not be engaging deeper dimensions of human existence that can be done through the engagement of theology, religion, and sacred texts.

Adult Hope Scale

On these six items related to getting out of jams, solving problems, and moving beyond discouragement, there were no pre-course or post-course differences of statistical or suggestive significance between the experimental groups and comparison groups or pre-course and post-course within the groups.

At the same time, it is interesting to note that both the experimental and control groups' mean scores increased for five of the six items on the Adult Hope Scale from the beginning of college to the end of the first semester. These results confirm students' self-reporting in the individual interviews. The first semester of college presented many unexpected challenges—academically, socially, emotionally, and ethically—and they were able to find support from peers in first-year seminar groups, from faculty advisors, and from friends. At the end of the semester, their stories and anecdotes reflected a sense of pride in independence and self-efficacy that had developed from encountering these challenges and dealing with them.

The one item on the AHS which was a notable exception was the item related to satisfaction with self. For this item, the pre-course to post-course mean score of the experimental group members increased, while the pre-course to post-course mean score of the comparison group members decreased. In fact, students in the comparison groups started the semester feeling more satisfied with themselves than students in the experimental groups, but by the end of the semester, the situation was reversed. In the interview reports, the students in the experimental group did share feelings of satisfaction with what they had

accomplished both academically and socially. They were able to make connections between things, and make sense of things. Even the things that remained unresolved or contentious, they felt would work out. Quite a few of the comparison group students expressed dissatisfaction with the first-semester of college, in many cases specifically related to feeling that their first-year seminar course was irrelevant, and had no benefits other than the discipline of learning to write a large research paper.

Table 4.6 Adult Hope Scale – Satisfaction with Self

	EG Mean Pre-Survey	EG Mean Post-Survey	CG Mean Pre-Survey	CG Mean Post-Survey
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	4.0345	4.7391	4.0882	3.8750

Pre-Survey, n = 51
Post-Survey, n = 49

Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)

On these four items related to feeling more or less happy or successful than peers, there were no pre-course or post-course differences either between or within the experimental groups and comparison groups. However, for two of the four items, the ones related to happiness, the mean score of the experimental groups was higher post-course than pre-course, and for the comparison groups, the mean score was lower post-course than pre-course for those same two items.

Table 4.7 Subjective Happiness Scale - Happiness

	EG Mean Pre-Survey	EG Mean Post-Survey	CG Mean Pre-Survey	CG Mean Post-Survey
In general, I consider myself: not a very happy person (1) – a very happy person (7)	5.7586	5.7826	5.9706	5.7500
Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself: less happy (1) – more happy (7)	5.3448	5.3913	5.2424	5.0417

Pre-Survey, n = 51
Post-Survey, n = 49

For the items related to success, both experimental and comparison group mean scores decreased from pre-course to post-course on seeing themselves as very successful people. Both experimental and comparison group mean scores increased from pre-course to post-course for feeling more successful than peers. Again, the individual interview reports deepen the understanding of the survey results. Over the semester, students had broaden, deepened, and raised their definitions of what constituted success, so they it makes sense that fewer of them would report feeling "very successful." At the same time, throughout the first semester, even in the honors program, the students saw a number of their peers withdraw from college and also returned home to visit with friends who had decided not to go to college, and so even though they had either raised their definition of what makes someone very successful, they also had seen that they were more successful than a number of their peers.

Table 4.8 Subjective Happiness Scale - Success

	EG Mean Pre-Survey	EG Mean Post-Survey	CG Mean Pre-Survey	CG Mean Post-Survey
In general, I consider myself: not a very successful person (1) – a very successful person (7)	5.8966	5.7826	5.8235	5.7917
Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself: less successful (1) – more successful (7)	5.2759	5.4783	5.4118	5.5833

Pre-Survey, n = 51
Post-Survey, n = 49

Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

For ten items related to seeking and finding meaning and purpose in life, there were no pre-course or post-course differences of statistical significance between the experimental groups and comparison groups on six of the ten items. For two of the items, there were no pre-course differences between groups, but there were post-course between groups

differnces of statistical significance. For two additional items, there were both pre-course

and post-course between groups statistically significant differences.

Table 4.9 Meaning in Life Questionnaire—MLQ (T-Test of Means)

MLQ Item	EG Mean Pre-Survey	CG Mean Pre-Survey	t-score Pre-Survey	p-value Pre-Survey	EG Mean Post-Survey	CG Mean Post-Survey	t-score Post-Survey	p-value Post-Survey
I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.	5.3103	4.6176	1.429	.158	5.9565	5.2083	2.043	.047
I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.	4.9655	4.6765	.628	.533	5.3043	4.3333	2.276	.028
I am always looking to find my life's purpose.	5.3103	4.3235	2.275	.026	5.8696	4.5833	3.523	.001
I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life.	5.3103	4.2941	2.332	.023	5.5652	4.3333	3.187	.003

Pre-Survey, n = 51
Post-Survey, n = 49

In summary, for two items related to looking for life's purpose and seeking mission

for life, the experimental and comparison groups were significantly different both before the

first-year seminar courses and after the first-year seminar courses. The mean score for the

experimental group for both of these items was higher than the mean score for the

comparison groups at the beginning of the semester at statistically significant levels. While

the mean scores of both the experimental and comparison groups increased for both items

over the semester, at the end of the semester, the mean score for the experimental group

remained higher than the mean score for the comparison group on these two items, at statistically significant levels.

For the two items related to searching for things that make life feel meaningful and significant, there were no pre-course statistically significant between groups differences, but the post-course between groups differences were statistically significant. The mean score for the experimental group increased for both items, and for the comparison groups, the mean score increased on the item related to meaning, but decreased on the item related to significance.

For the item "My life has a clear sense of purpose," the mean scores of both experimental and comparison groups increased from pre-course to post-course. Both groups also showed an increase pre-course to post-course for the item "I am searching for meaning in my life." Interestingly, the mean score on this search for meaning life increased nearly one-half a point for the comparison group, and only about one-tenth of a point for the experimental group.

This makes more sense if we look at patterns for four other MLQ items for which there were no statistical or suggestive differences. While the experimental group's mean score for "I understand my life's meaning" increased from pre-course to post-course, the comparison group's mean score for this item decreased. Perhaps the comparison group students had a greater increase in reporting of search for meaning because unlike the experimental group students, they could not report an increased understanding of life's meaning at the end of their first-year seminar courses. Moreover, for two other items, "I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful," and "I have discovered a satisfying purpose," the experimental group mean score increased from pre-course to post-course, while the comparison group mean score decreased. The reverse scored item "My life has no

clear sense of purpose," confirmed these results, with the experimental group members reporting a decreased mean score for this item, and the comparison group members reporting an increased score for this reverse scored item.

What we have then is a picture of experimental group students who came to college with statistically significantly higher levels of seeking, searching, and looking for meaning and purpose than comparison group students on only about half of the related items. By the end of the semester, the experimental group students had statistically significantly higher levels of seeking and searching on nearly all the related items.

Perhaps most interesting is the fact that pre-course, there was two-tenths or less difference between experimental and comparison group students on three items related to finding what makes life meaningful, what makes a satisfying life purpose, and actually finding clear purpose. However, post-course, the mean scores of the experimental group students had increased, and the comparison group mean scores had decreased. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this study to determine statistically how much of that change is attributable to the students' pre-dispositions to search, and how much is attributable to the impact of the first-year seminars in theology and religion taught with the big questions pedagogy. I wonder what would have happened if I had additional students who reported lower search pre-course in my first-year seminar group? During the individual interviews, quite a few comparison group students did indicate a wish that they could have been in my first-year seminar.

Religious Literacy Questions

On fifteen questions from the Pew Forum's U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey (2010), the findings on the Pearson Chi-Square Test showed statistically significant difference between the Experimental Group and the Comparison Group on only two of

fifteen items—one question about the biblical figure associated with remaining obedient to God despite suffering and one question about the religion of Joseph Smith.

Table 4.10 Pew Religious Knowledge Questions (Pearson Chi-Square Test)

Pew Religious Knowledge Question	EG % Correct	CG % Correct	p-value
Led the biblical exodus	100%	100%	n/a
Mother Teresa's religion	100%	88%	0.080
Not one of 10 Commandments	88%	88%	0.957
Jewish Sabbath begins	67%	64%	0.845
Ramadan is	83%	60%	0.071
Catholic teaching on communion	75%	60%	0.263
Religion of Vishnu & Shiva	96%	88%	0.317
Biblical figure of faithful suffering	96%	64%	0.006
Joseph Smith's religion	96%	60%	0.003
Public school teacher lead class in prayer	88%	96%	0.277
Public school teacher read Bible as literature	83%	68%	0.212
Religion of most Pakistanis	92%	92%	0.966
Leader of Protestant Reformation	92%	92%	0.966
Goal of this religion is nirvana	92%	80%	0.243
Figure of 1st Great Awakening	75%	72%	0.812

 Post-Survey, n = 49

Religious Knowledge of Self and Other

Students reponsded to self-reporting items related to perceptions of their knowledge of their own religions and the religions of others. Nearly all students in all groups reported knowing "some" or "a lot" about their own religion or non-religious worldview. About 20% of students in EG Theology and CG Literature reported knowing only a little, and nearly 20% of students in one comparison group CG Math reported knowing "almost nothing" about their religion or non-religious worldview.

Beliefs and Epistemology

On responses to rating scales about epistemology and beliefs, the results for five items showed no pre-course or post-course between groups' differences of statistical

significance. For one item, "I find religion and spirituality interesting," there was both pre-course and post-course statistically significant difference between groups. For one item, "The best way to learn about a 'subject' is to remain a detached, neutral observer or experimenter," there was no pre-course between groups difference, but there was post-course between groups statistically significant difference.

Table 4.11 Beliefs and Epistemology (T-Test of Means)

Beliefs and Epistemology	EG Mean Pre-Survey	CG Mean Pre-Survey	t-score Pre-Survey	p-value Pre-Survey	EG Mean Post-Survey	CG Mean Post-Survey	t-score Post-Survey	p-value Post-Survey
I find religion and spirituality interesting.	4.5357	3.8235	3.712	.000	4.4783	3.9167	3.080	.004
The best way to learn about a "subject" (math, a Shakespearean play, another person, the self (yourself), an addiction, or God) is to remain a detached, neutral observer or experimenter.	1.9655	2.3235	-1.624	.110	1.8696	2.5417	-2.571	.014

Pre-Survey, n = 51
Post-Survey, n = 49

I had suspected that some sort of epistemological shift might be related not only to students' spiritual development, but especially to increased interfaith understanding and interfaith engagement through bridge-building behaviors. However, I found no statistically significant between groups difference for any of the items that might be related to a fallibilist view.

At the same time, I have stated that part of the underpinning of the experimental pedagogy was an attempt to engage students at the level of what Howard Gardner has posited might be called (inconclusively, in his view), existential intelligence.[132] I think the statistically significant between groups differences post-course, but not pre-course, on the item related to the best way to study a subject, does suggest that something about the big questions and appreciative inquiry changed the experimental group students' epistemology at an existential level. For this item, on the post-course survey, the experimental group students' mean score decreased from the pre-course survey, and the comparison group students' mean score increased for this item on the post-course survey.

One of my goals at the beginning of this research was to apply the imperatives of Radical Pietism, of Sharon Daloz Parks, and also of Alexander Astin, Helen Astin, and Jennifer Lindholm, to engage the so-called "subjective." I think that the outcome on this particular item indicates that the subjectivity of the learners was engaged in an impactful way by the inquiry-based pedagogies used to teach Christian theology and religion. Teaching theology and religion in a transformative way may mean moving beyond the objective phenomenological approaches which seem to reign in the discipline of Religious Studies in the modern academy.

Theological and Philosophical Views Toward Religious Diversity

A Pearson chi-square test revealed post-course differences of statistical significance between groups on theological/philosophical views toward religious diversity (p=.010). On the post-course survey, the experimental groups had significant higher views of inclusivism (one religion is true, but all other religions have truth) and Relativism/Atheism (No religions

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[132] Howard Gardner, *Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People's Minds* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2006).

are true). The comparison groups had significantly higher relativism/apathy (any religion may be true; doesn't really matter) and pluralism (All religions are true).

Comparing the experimental and comparison groups within groups, pre-course and post-course, one finds that exclusivism, pluralism, and relativism declined in the experimental groups, while inclusivism increased by almost twenty percent in the experimental groups, and relativism/atheism increased as well. In the comparison groups, from pre-course to post-course, theological/philosophical views toward religious diversity remained remarkably similar across categories.

Table 4.12 Theological or Philosophical Stance Toward Religious Diversity

Theological or Philosophical Stance Toward Religious Diversity	Pre-Course % of EG Students	Pre-Course % of CG Students	Post-Course % of EG Students	Post-Course % of CG Students
Only one religion is true	14%	11%	8%	8%
Only one religion is true, but all other religions have truth	55%	30%	71%	32%
Any religion may be true; does not matter	17%	38%	8%	36%
All religions are true	10%	22%	4%	24%
No religions are true	3%	0%	8%	0%
n=	29	37	24	25

My goal was never to make every student in the experimental groups a theological or philosophical pluralist, and I did not. Moreover, I did not think a conversion to a pluralistic theology or philosophy was a necessary precursor to enhancing students' engagement in pluralistic bridge-building behaviors. In the end, it was the case that experimental group students did report enhanced engagement in pluralistic bridge-building behaviors despite some of the students reporting that they remained exclusivist or inclusivist in theological or philosophical belief.

Religion and Authority

Of these four items, adapted from Christian Smith's research, the results showed one item with statistically significant results. The results showed both pre-course and post-course between groups statistically significant differences for this item.

Table 4.13 Religion and Authority (T-Test of Means)

Religion and Authority	EG Mean Pre-Survey	CG Mean Pre-Survey	t-score Pre-Survey	p-value Pre-Survey	EG Mean Post-Survey	CG Mean Post-Survey	t-score Post-Survey	p-value Post-Survey
Religion holds a lot of authority for me.	3.8966	3.3529	2.202	.031	3.7826	3.1667	2.060	.045

Pre-Course Survey, n = 51
Post-Course Survey, n = 49

Both before and after the first-semester course, the experimental groups held religion in higher authority than the comparison groups. Interestingly, both the experimental group students and the comparison group students had a decrease in religion holding a lot of authority for them.

Interreligious/Intercultural Measures—

Between Groups Differences Pre-Course and Post-Course

Experiences with Diversity Before College

Pre-course surveys indicated no major differences between the five seminar groups in terms of engaging religious diversity. In fact, the five groups were strikingly similar, in having had very high engagement in a variety of ways, both positively (eating with, sharing a friendship with) and negatively (having open conflict with) Christians and Atheists. All five groups also were similar in having had little-to-no positive or negative experience with

people of the major world religions. In each seminar, one or two students reported contact with people of one or two other religions, but there were no consistent pattern of which religions, and there were very few students who reported such engagement.

The survey results are consistent with the students self-reporting in the in-depth pre-course individual interviews. Very few students in any of the five seminar groups reported having known or being able to speak articulately about Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, or others. The most common answer to the interview questions related to this were: "I can't say, I've never met any" or "I have no idea." This is consistent with the fact that the small private college used in this study is in a rural area and a majority of the students come from suburban and rural areas, and that one of the issues in this research was how to teach bridge-building behaviors with limited demographic religious diversity.

Experiences with Diversity During Semester

In terms of positive interactions, the post-course surveys indicate that the two experimental groups had notably higher levels of positive engagement with Atheists, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and "Other Religions." Most notable was the degree to which the two experimental seminar groups scored higher on the "advocate for" category. On post-course surveys, the comparison group seminars indicated slightly higher positive interactions with Christians, Humanists, and Jews.

Data from the final interviews (end of sophomore year), indicate that the experimental seminar group students continued to surpass the comparison group students in engaging religious diversity—even through the sophomore year.

As for negative interactions, the experimental groups on average reported more tension with Atheists and Muslims than the comparison groups on the post-survey. The comparison groups reported more negative engagement with Atheists and Christians than

the experimental groups, and the comparison groups reported significantly more tenseness, negative interactions, and even open conflict with Jewish students than the experimental groups. Unfortunately, there was one Jewish comparison group student who became a polarizing figure not only in the student's first-year seminar, but particularly on the honors living-learning community floor. In the individual interviews, students in both experimental and comparison groups brought this up, and the general consensus was that while they were respectful of this student's religion and religious expression, this student was trying to stop their religious expression.

Figure 4.2 Interview Reports of Engaging Diversity
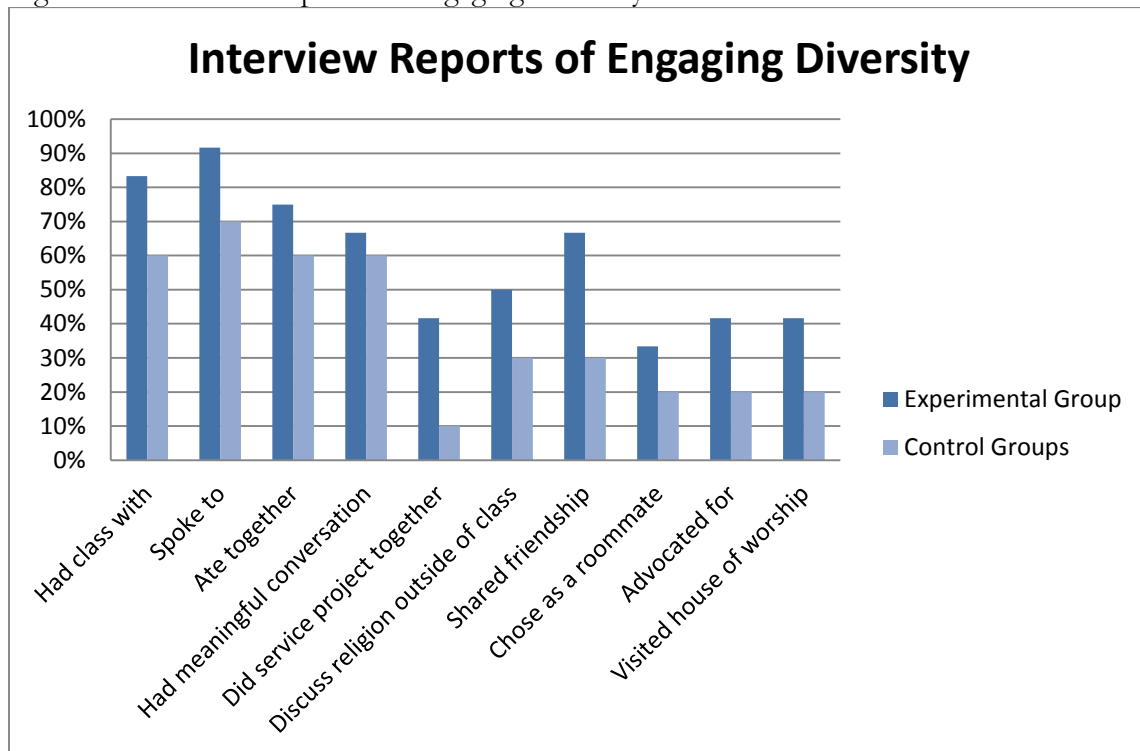
Post-Course Interviews, n = 32

A Pearson chi-square test on students' interview reporting of engagement with diversity after the first-year seminar course and through the sophomore year of college shows that there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental and comparison group students.

Table 4.14 Interfaith Engagement by Type of Action (Pearson Chi-Square Test)

Interfaith Engagement Action	EG Students % Yes	CG Students % Yes	Asymp. Sig. 2-sided
Had class with	83%	60%	0.221
Spoke to	92%	70%	0.190
Ate together	75%	60%	0.452
Had meaningful conversation with	67%	60%	0.746
Did service project together	42%	10%	0.097
Discussed religion outside of class	50%	30%	0.342
Shared friendship	67%	30%	0.087
Chose as a roommate	33%	20%	0.484
Advocated for	42%	20%	0.277
Visited a house of worship	42%	20%	0.277

Post-Course Survey, n = 32

In some ways, this is not surprising, because for many students, in both the experimental and comparison groups, the demographic diversity of the College was lower than in their high schools. So even if students in the experimental group reported statistically significantly higher benefits from the first-year seminar related to conversing with and engaging people of diverse religious and cultural views (which they did, see next chapter), then they may have had difficulty finding this diversity on our campus.

At the same time, there is statistically suggestive difference (α=.10) for two items: Did service project together, and share friendship. This is consistent with narrative interview data. Students in a certain major from both the experimental group and the comparison group reported having classes in this major with a Muslim student. During the interviews, students in the comparison group reported things such as: She wears something on her head, so I know she's Muslim or Sikh, or We eat together to study, and we talk about the course and the exams. Students in the experimental group in this certain major course, when they spoke about this in the interviews, reported: I know the student is Muslim. We talk about it and other things. She is my friend.

On another post-course survey item related to the number of friendships with people of other religions and cultures since coming to the College, a T-test for difference in means showed statistically significant differences between experimental and comparison groups.

Table 4.15 Friendships with People of Other Religions & Cultures (t- Test of Means)

Friendships	EG Mean Post-Survey	CG Mean Post-Survey	t-score Post-Survey	p-value Post-Survey
Religion holds a lot of authority for me.	3.9130	2.9545	2.188	.034

Post-Course Survey, n = 46

Within Group Changes: Pre-Course to Post-Course

Experimental Group Changes from Pre-Course to Post-Course

A t-test of means for independent samples show no statistically significant differences between groups when the two groups were the pre-course experimental group and the post-course experimental group. At the same time, four items showed statistically suggestive change from pre-course to post-course (α=.10). One item was from the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ), [Michael F. Steger, Patricia Frazier, Shigehiro Oishi, and Matthew Kaler; one items was related to beliefs and epistemology, adapted from Christian Smith, National Study of Youth and Religion—NSYR, 2002-2003, 2007-2008); one items was from Traditional vs. Existential/Fatalist Beliefs: GSS, Greeley, 1988:1992; and one item was from Indicators of Students' Spirituality: Alexander Astin and Helen Astin, 2003, adapted from HERI/UCLA Study on the Spiritual Life of College Students.

Table 4.16 Experimental Group Changes Pre-to-Post (t-test of Means)

	EG Mean Pre-Survey	EG Mean Post-Survey	t-score	p-value
I understand my life's meaning.	4.0345	4.7391	-1.691	.097
Science holds a lot of authority for me.	3.1379	3.5217	-1.639	.108
The course of our lives is decided by a Deity.	2.7586	2.1739	1.842	.071
I search for meaning/purpose in my life.	4.2759	4.5652	-1.865	.068

Pre-Course Survey, n = 51
Post-Course Survey, n = 49

There were no pre-course or post-course significant differences between the experimental and comparison groups on the item related to understanding life's meaning, but the increase in the mean score of the experimental groups from pre-to-post-course was statistically suggestive, and the mean score of the comparison groups for this item decreased from pre-to-post-course. For the item related to epistemology and science, there were no pre-course or post-course significant differences between the experimental and comparison groups for this item, and the affirmation of the authority of science increased for both groups, but it was only statistically meaningful in the experimental groups. For the item related to fatalist beliefs about a Deity, there were no pre-course or post-course significant differences between the experimental and comparison groups on this item, but the pre-to-post-course decrease in affirmation of this belief were statistically suggestive. The mean scores of the comparison group pre-to-post course remained the same. For the item related to spirituality and search for meaning/purpose, there were both pre-course and post-course statistically significant differences between the experimental and comparison groups. The mean score for the experimental groups increased in a statistically suggestive way from pre-to-post-course, and the mean score for the comparison groups remained the same.

The significant increase for the two items related to life's meaning and search for purpose demonstrate that the experimental group students, who already had high scores on these spiritual quest items, benefitted greatly from the content and pedagogy of the course. The significant increase in the experimental group students' affirmation of the authority of science is consistent with Gortner's findings related to education and science, and seems to be a standard outcome for students in higher education.

The statistically significant decrease in the experimental group students' belief that life is controlled by a Deity could be the result of a number of factors, including an increased sense of independence, self-efficacy, or sense of insecurity from the first-semester of college. It also might indicate a deeper and larger understanding of what God might be beyond some kind of master puppeteer.

Comparison Group Changes from Pre-Course to Post-Course

A t-test of means showed two statistically significant differences between the comparison group pre-course and post-course. For one item, there was pre-to-post-course suggestive difference in the comparison group.

Table 4.17 Comparison Group Changes Pre-to-Post (t-test of Means)

	CG Mean Pre-Survey	CG Mean Post-Survey	t-score	p-value
There are subtle, yet important differences between what religions believe and what they teach about acting ethically in the world.	3.3030	3.7917	-2.286	.026
I have discussions about religion/spirituality with family.	2.5294	2.1250	2.041	.046
We each make our own fate.	3.5588	3.8750	-1.775	.081

Pre-Course Survey, n = 51
Post-Course Survey, n = 49

The mean score of the comparison group increased significantly pre-to-post-course in affirmation of the statement that there are subtle, but important differences between what religions believe and what they teach about acting ethically in the world. This is what I would have expected in the experimental groups, and not in the comparison groups. I had thought this question related to students gaining deep knowledge about the details and nuances of various religious traditions, rather than lumping all religions together in a moral therapeutic deism. However, as I have discussed this question with a number of people, some have suggested that the question could be interpreted as a question of the hypocrisy of religions (e.g. There is a difference between what religions teach and how religious people act ethically in the world).

The other statistically significant change pre-to-post-course in the comparison group was the decrease in mean score for having discussions about religion/spirituality with family. Not only was there a statistically significant decrease in mean score within the comparison group itself, but at the same time, the mean score within the experimental group increased for this item. Moreover, there was no pre-course difference for this item between the experimental and comparison groups, but there was post-course statistically significant difference between experimental and comparison groups on this item.

For the statement related to making our own fate, there was statistically suggestive difference between the pre-course comparison groups and the post-course comparison groups. The comparison group members reported increasing belief that we each make our own fate.

It is interesting to note that for all three of these items, the mean score of the comparison group moved in the opposite direction of the mean score of the experimental group. At the same time, the comparison group members' significant increase in the

affirmation that we each make our own faith runs parallel to the experimental group members' significant decrease in claiming that a Deity controls our lives.

Summary and Conclusions

Before the first-year seminar courses, the experimental and comparison group students were very similar on most of the standard items, including belief in God or Deity, types of beliefs, beliefs about religion, and measures of happiness and hope, curiosity, epistemology, and interfaith actions. At the same time, both before and after the first-year seminar courses, the experimental group students were more spiritual and more religious than the comparison group students in a statistically significant way.

After the first-year seminar courses, there were statistically significant differences between experimental and comparison groups on curiosity, search for meaning and significance, epistemology, talking to family about religion/spirituality, and interfaith actions. The experimental and comparison groups both included Christians, atheists and those with no religious affiliation.

<u>Spirituality, Religion, and the Search for Meaning and Purpose</u>

Consistent with the findings of Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, I found that college experiences in general enhance the development of Spiritual Quest in college students in the first semester of college. In fact, my interviews showed that the encounter with difference in the residence halls and student clubs and the higher level cognitive questions in coursework contributed to the higher mean scores for spirituality across all measures for both experimental and comparison groups.

Also consistent with the findings of Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, as well as others such as Christian Smith, I found that Religious Engagement declined on average for both

experimental and comparison group students during the first semester of college. Moreover, consistent with Christian Smith's findings about beliefs of young adults, I found no significant changes in types of belief or beliefs about religion in either the experimental or comparison groups.

All of these findings suggest to me that the larger, longitudinal cultural and social forces which shape the beliefs of emerging and young adults can be changed through one pedagogical intervention. No one-semester course on Christian theology or religion is going to change or undo the cultural and social formation of students for over a decade.

Students in the experimental groups about Christian theology and religion showed a statistically significant increase in talking with parents and family members about religious and spiritual matters, compared to the students in the comparison groups who showed a decrease on this item from the beginning of the first-year to the end of the first semester of college.

With regard to meaning and purpose, the experimental group students came to college with statistically significantly higher levels of seeking, searching, and looking for meaning and purpose than comparison group students on only about half of the related items. The comparison group students had high scores for searching for meaning and purpose on quite a few items. However, by the end of the semester, the mean scores of the experimental group students had increased while the mean scores of the comparison groups actually decreased on three other items related to finding what makes life meaningful, discovering what makes a satisfying life purpose, and actually finding clear purpose. Although these last results were not statistically significant, it is interesting to note the pattern of difference on finding and naming things related to meaning, satisfaction, and purpose, combined with the engagement with parents in conversations about religion and

spirituality. Parents and students in the experimental groups were making meaning together over the semester.

Eudemonia, Self-Efficacy, and Well-Being

The mean score for all students in both experimental and comparison groups on five of the six items on the Adult Hope Scale (AHS) increased from the beginning of college to the end of the first semester. During the end of the semester interviews, the students' stories and anecdotes reflected a sense of pride in independence and self-efficacy that had developed from encountering these challenges and dealing with them.

The one item on the AHS which was a notable exception was the item related to satisfaction with self. For this item, the pre-course to post-course mean score of the experimental group members increased, while the pre-course to post-course mean score of the comparison group members decreased. Quite a few of the comparison group students expressed dissatisfaction with the first-semester of college, in many cases specifically related to feeling that their first-year seminar course was irrelevant, and had no benefits other than the discipline of learning to write a large research paper.

With regard to happiness, the experimental groups' mean scores for happiness increased over the semester, while the comparison groups' mean scores decreased over the first semester of college. Related to success, students in both experimental and comparison groups both increased from pre-course to post-course in reporting being more successful than their peers. At the same time, students in both experimental and comparison groups decreased in likelihood of reporting that they themselves were "very successful," than they had at the beginning of college (pre-course).

In summary, all students in the study increased in many measures of hope and self-efficacy over the first semester of college. However, the experimental group students also

increased in sense of satisfaction with self, and happiness throughout the first semester of college, while the comparison group students decreased in satisfaction with self and happiness.

Curiosity and Exploration

Quite possibly the most significant finding of the broad range of standard inventories and measures were the findings related to Todd Kashdan's Curiosity and Exploration Inventory. As previously mentioned, the many have expressed concern about the possible decline and even demise of the Humanities and/or the Liberal Arts and Sciences for a number of reasons, including content, methodology, pedagogy, and perceived utility in real-world economically viable careers.[133] The results of this research related to curiosity and exploration would reinforce concerns about the Liberal Arts and Sciences. Students in the comparison groups (Math, Science, and Literature) did not show significant increases in curiosity and exploration to the extent of the students in the experimental courses (Christian theology and religion) did. Even in a discussion-based course on Shakespeare taught by a beloved and seasoned professor, the Humanities may not be engaging deeper dimensions of human existence that can be done through the engagement of theology, religion, and sacred texts.

Theology, Epistemology and Pluralistic Bridge-Building Behaviors

I had suspected that some sort of epistemological shift might be related not only to students' spiritual development, but especially to increased interfaith understanding and interfaith engagement through bridge-building behaviors. For one item related to

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[133] National Endowment for the Humanities, The Chronicle of Higher Education, Association of American Colleges and Universities, The Teagle Foundation, Anthony Kronman.

epistemology, there was no pre-course difference between experimental and comparison groups, but there was post-course difference of statistical significance between the experimental and comparison groups. Students in the experimental groups decreased pre-course to post-course in thinking that the best way to learn about a "subject" is to remain a detached, neutral observer or experimenter.

In contrast to my belief in the importance of an epistemological shift, I did not think a conversion to a pluralistic theology or philosophy was a necessary precursor to enhancing students' engagement in pluralistic bridge-building behaviors. In the end, it was the case that experimental group students did report enhanced engagement in pluralistic bridge-building behaviors despite some of the students reporting that they remained exclusivist or inclusivist in theological or philosophical belief.

On a range of behaviors that might be described as pluralistic or bridge-building (speaking to, eating together, doing service project together, sharing a friendship with, advocating for), a higher percentage of the experimental group than comparison group students reported doing these things in every category.

In some ways, this is not surprising, because for many students, in both the experimental and comparison groups, the demographic diversity of the College was lower than in their high schools. So even if students in the experimental group reported statistically significantly higher benefits from the first-year seminar related to conversing with and engaging people of diverse religious and cultural views (which they did, see next chapter), then they may have had difficulty finding this diversity on our campus.

The two categories of statistical or suggestive difference between experimental and control group students were sharing a friendship and doing a service project together. Again, the interviews shed some light on this. Students in the comparison groups could

check off ate with or had class with, but when asked to elaborate, they often would report an obvious way of knowing the person was of a different religion or culture, which was enough for them to check the box on the survey. In the interviews, they could not answer further questions about the person, because they did not engage beyond doing our study group together or just knowing a person of difference was physically present in the same classroom.

In the interviews even through the end of the sophomore year, the experimental group students reported pushing themselves to ask questions, to engage more deeply, to try to build relationships, to create a friendship with people of different religions and cultures.

Conclusion for Quantitative Results on Standard Inventories

I think my results are consistent with the possibility of the existence in my institution's honors first-year program of a null curriculum related to the subjectivity of the learner and the advancement of students' inner lives. Moreover, my results suggest that when this subjectivity and inner life engagement is brought into the explicit curriculum, there are significant benefits to students related to curiosity, happiness, satisfaction with self, finding meaning and purpose, and engaging in pluralistic bridge-building behaviors as compared to students for whom the subjectivity and existential elements remain in the null curriculum. These results were achieved by the teaching of Christian theology and religion using inquiry-based pedagogies, and not by the teaching of Math, Science, or Literature using generally-accepted standard disciplinary pedagogies.

Chapter 5
Quantitative Results – Students' Perceived Benefits

The primary purpose of this project is to develop and test an inquiry-based pedagogy designed specifically for teaching theology and religion in the classroom, with the goal of trying to discover the nature of any enhancement in students' spiritual development or inner lives that might come from engaging big questions in academic courses in theology and religion. The three primary research questions for the study were:

1. Can an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion increase students' dispositions related to Alexander Astin, Helen Astin, and Jennifer Lindholm's ecumenical worldview and Eboo Patel's bridge-building behaviors?

2. Can inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion advance students' spiritual development or enhance their inner lives?

3. How does engaging with big questions change students' spirituality and/or students' worldviews, dispositions, or behaviors?

4. What happens to students' spiritual and religious lives over the first two years of college?

Specifically in relation to the first three research questions of the study, I employed custom-designed questions of my own, the results of which are reported in this chapter. The post-course survey included fourteen questions that I created to measure participants' perceived benefits and outcomes personally, interpersonally, and interculturally after their respective first-year seminars, so there is no pre-post comparison.

Has your first-year seminar affected your ability to do the following (Yes or No):

1. Deal with stress?

2. Be more aware of who I am?

3. Have more clarity about what to do with my life?

4. State clearly what I believe?

5. Be self-confident?

6. Listen to others points of view?

7. Appreciate what others believe?

8. Engage diverse religions/cultures?

9. Be civil and kind?

10. Treat others with respect?

11. Initiate conversations with people of other religions/cultures?

12. Form friendships with people different than you?

13. Have mutually rewarding relationships with parents and family?

14. Have mutually rewarding relationships with roommate or friends?

Figure 5.3 Student Reported Benefits of First-Year Seminar Items 1-7 (n=49)
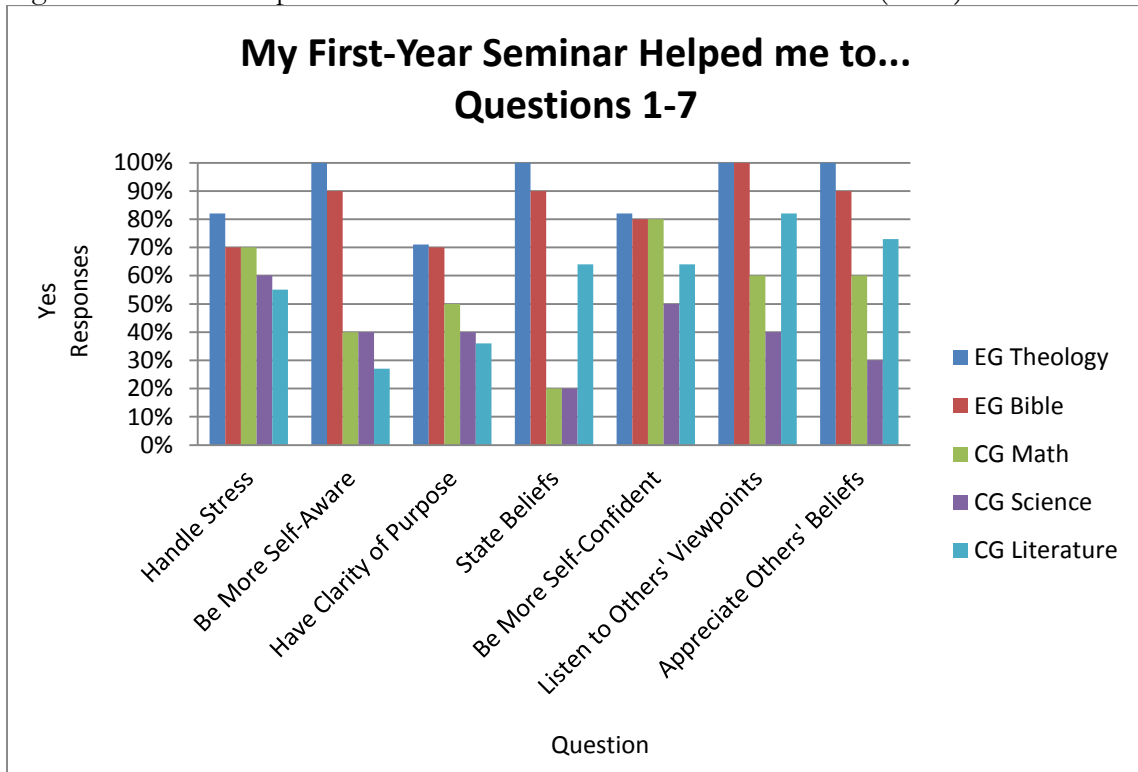
Post-Course Survey, n = 49

Figure 5.4 Student Reported Benefits of First-Year Seminar Items 8-14 (n=49)
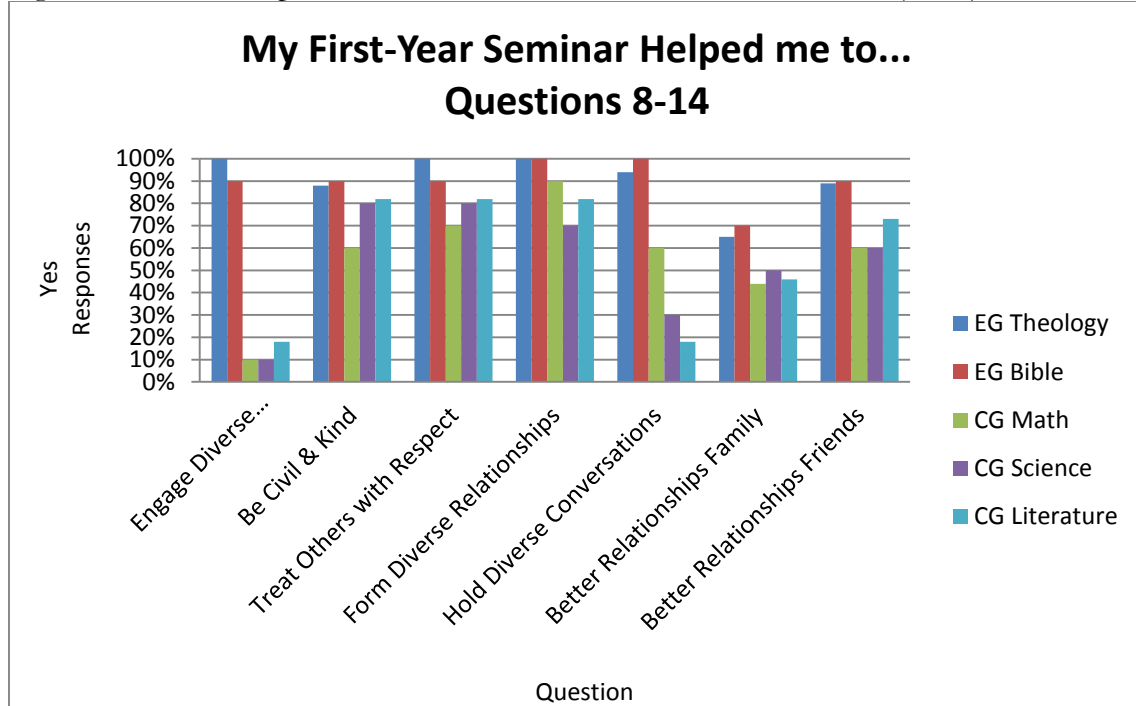
Post-Course Survey, n = 49

Summary and Discussion of Significant Results

For the quantitative survey items custom-created to assess the perceived benefits and outcomes of the first-year seminar experience related to the first three research questions and the primary thesis claim, Pearson Chi Square results showed statistically significant difference between experimental and comparison groups for eight items (α=.05):

1. Be more aware of who I am

2. State clearly what I believe

3. Listen to others' points of view

4. Appreciate what others believe

5. Engage diverse religious and cultural viewpoints

6. Treat others with respect

7. Form friendships with people different than you

8. Initiate conversations with people of other religions and cultures.

In addition, there were statistically suggestive post-course between groups differences for two additional items (α=.10):

1. Have more clarity about what I should do with my life

2. Have mutually rewarding conversations with friends.

Table 5.18 Student Reported Benefits of First-Year Seminar (Pearson Chi-Square Test)

Benefits of FYS	EG % Yes	CG % Yes	Asymp. Sig.
Deal positively with stress	75%	64%	0.404
Be more aware of who I am	96%	36%	0.000
Have more clarity about what I should do with my life	71%	44%	0.058
State clearly what I believe	96%	36%	0.000
Be self-confident	80%	64%	0.240
Listen to others' points of view	100%	60%	0.001
Appreciate what others believe	96%	52%	0.001
Engage diverse religious and cultural viewpoints	96%	16%	0.000
Be civil and kind	88%	72%	0.178
Treat others with respect	96%	76%	0.047
Form friendships with people different than you	100%	80%	0.021
Initiate conversations with people of other religions and/or cultures	96%	32%	0.000
Have mutually rewarding conversations or relationships with parents and family members	67%	48%	0.187
Have mutually rewarding conversations or relationships with friends	88%	64%	0.056

Post-course survey, n=49

In the next section of the paper, the eight statistically significant items highlighted above will be categorized and discussed under three types of benefits or change:

1. Personal change

2. Interpersonal change

3. Intercultural change

Personal Outcomes: Enhanced Student Spiritual Development

One of the primary research questions for this study was: Can an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion advance students' spiritual development or enhance their "inner lives"? Two statistically significant self-reported outcomes by the students on the post-course surveys may correlate to personal spiritual development: 1) Increase self-awareness and 2) Increased ability to state beliefs clearly. One statistically suggestive item also may correlate to personal spiritual development: Increased clarity about what to do with my life.

Increase in Self-Awareness

In answer to the question, My first-year seminar helped me to be more aware of who I am, students' reporting of perceived benefits was statistically significantly higher for the experimental groups than the comparison group students. When the data is disaggregated, we can see that both EG Theology and EG Bible reported yes more frequently than the each of the comparison groups—CG Math, CG Science, and CG Literature.

Figure 5.5 Self-Awareness   Figure 5.6 Self-Awareness by First-Year Seminar
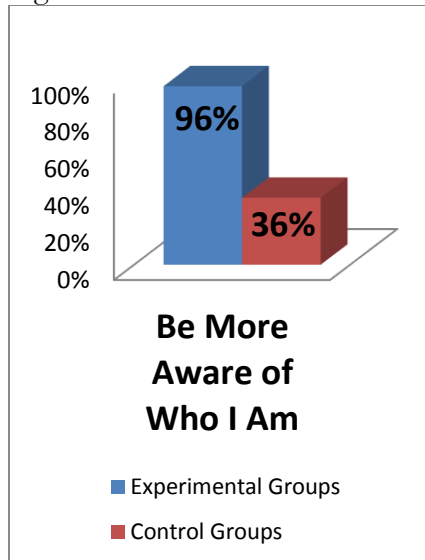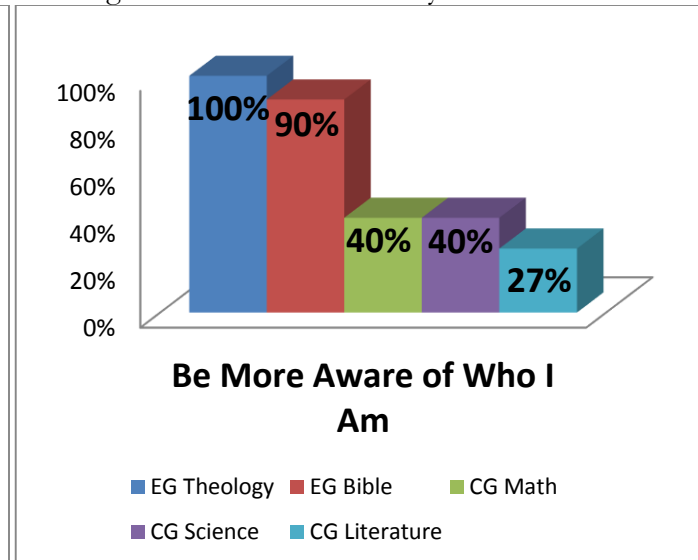
Pearson Chi Square (Asymp. Sig. 2-sided) = 0.000
Post-course survey, n=49

Students taking the survey were invited to write additional comments. Students in the experimental groups wrote:

- *They [my beliefs] haven't changed but increased my trust in what I believe and value. I have gained confidence and better understand why I believe what I believe.* (EG Bible)

- *I think that I am more able to explain my personal beliefs, whereas before I just knew I believed in a religion.* (EG Bible)

- *I think the main thing that has changed as far as my beliefs go is that I have found where I fit in more. I feel like now I understand better my relationship to God, and how my beliefs and morals affect my daily life.* (EG Theology)

- *I am more able to specifically say what I believe, rather than just stating a whole religion or belief.* (EG Theology)

- *I have become more comfortable just talking about what I believe to anyone and everyone. I want to tell people how I think and feel about things more and more now.* (EG Theology)

The possible connection between being self-aware and learning to clearly articulate personal beliefs was highlighted in several comments by students in the experimental groups:

- *Being in a class where discussion of my personal beliefs is key to participating has helped me to learn how to clearly explain what I believe.* (EG Theology)

- *I better understand why I believe what I believe. Therefore, I am better able to explain to others what and why I believe what I do.* (EG Bible)

How did this happen? Students in both EG Theology and EG Bible wrote about the importance of class discussion and deep thinking about personal beliefs. One student in EG Bible summed things up: *Talking about the Bible so much in class helped me to develop and organize the beliefs I had versus the beliefs of some of my other classmates.*

<u>Ability to State Beliefs Clearly</u>

In answer to the question, My first-year seminar helped me to clearly state my beliefs, the reporting of perceived benefits was statistically significantly higher in EG Theology and EG Bible than in the comparison groups.

Figure 5.7 Clearly State Beliefs   Figure 5.8 Clearly State Beliefs by First-Year Seminar
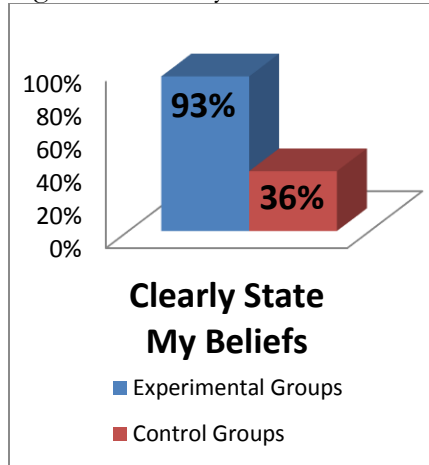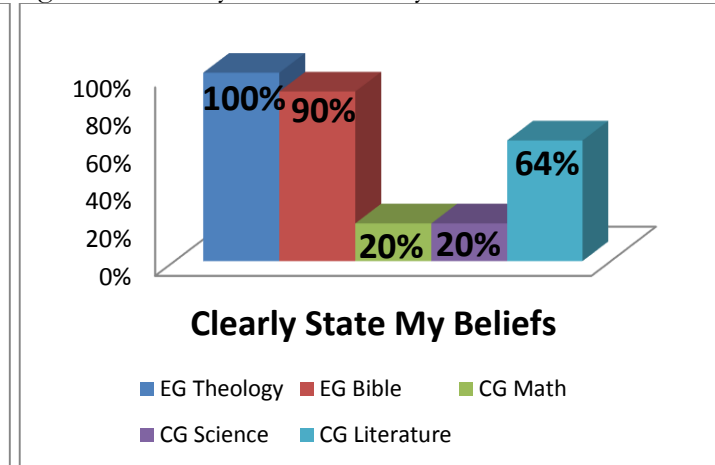
Pearson Chi Square (Asymp. Sig. 2-sided) = 0.000
Post-course survey, n=49

Experimental groups wrote the following on the post-course survey write-in boxes:

- *While doing my research paper, I chose a topic that made me challenge my own Catholic beliefs, and from the experience, I feel that I better understand who I am as a faithful person.* (EG Bible)

- *I feel as though they [my beliefs] have been strengthened. For example, I've always believed in miracles, but now I've realized that they can be both good and bad.* (EG Theology)

- *I just became more firm in what I believe and am better able to express my beliefs.* (EG Theology)

- *They [my beliefs] have not necessarily changed in substance, because I still hold the same core beliefs, but they have changed in strength, because having my opinions questioned and challenged forced me to defend them.* (EG Theology)

- *Knowing the other opinions out there allows me to better articulate what my beliefs are.* (EG Theology)

- *This class has given me the knowledge that allows me to put into words the beliefs that I have that I was unsure of how to articulate before.* (EG Theology)

- *Before starting the first-year seminar, I had always been shy about expressing my opinions about my faith. I was often embarrassed to admit that I was a Roman Catholic. I am now comfortable expressing that I do not believe everything that the Bible says, and that I am liberal in my beliefs.* (CG Bible)

Comparison group students wrote the following in response to a post-survey, regarding how the first-year seminar increased the ability to articulate beliefs or ethical commitments:

- *We never really talked about our own lives in our FYS. We focused on the fact and only interacted when asked questions or when trying to explain the scientific concepts of other peers. Our conversations rarely, if ever, ventured outside of class material, which was strictly biochemistry.* (CG Science)

- *We were able to discuss the ethics of some drugs (illegal or no) and how they were used in society.* (CG Science)

- *Math concepts like what we covered in crypto just weren't very ethical topics…* (CG Math)

- *Our FYS didn't really discuss anything about beliefs or ethical commitments. It taught purely factual information.* (CG Math)

Despite the fact that 64% of CG Literature reported that their first-year seminar helped their ability to express beliefs clearly, one student wrote:

- *In the class, we mainly discussed Shakespeare and his plays, so that did not leave room for much discussion of our beliefs/ethical commitments.* (CG Literature)

Despite the fact that that 100% of EG Theology reported that their first-year seminar helped their ability to express beliefs clearly, the course was not a panacea or quick-fix. One student explained:

- *I still have problems communicating effectively with other people and have difficulty finding the right words I want to use.* (EG Theology)

<u>Have more clarity about what I should do with my life</u>

For the item, My first-year seminar helped me to have more clarity about what I should do with my life, the reporting of perceived benefits was statistically suggestive. The experimental group students reported yes much more frequently.

Figure 5.9 Clarity about Vocation   Figure 5.10 Clarity about Vocation by First-Year Seminar
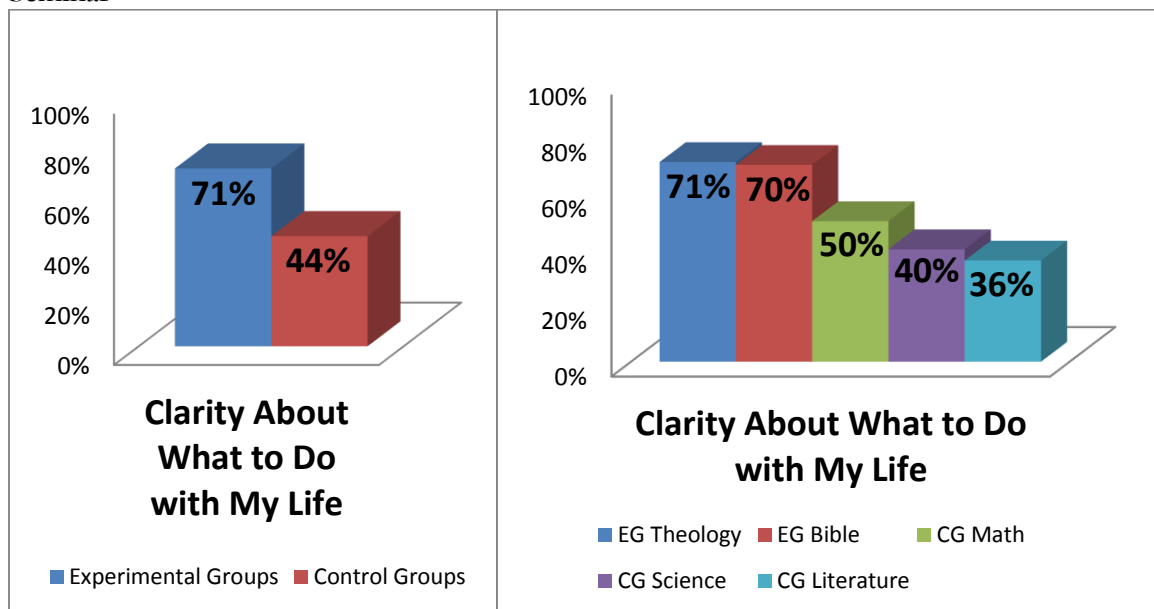
Pearson Chi Square (Asymp. Sig. 2-sided) = 0.058
Post-course survey, n=49

Ecumenical Worldview and Bridge-Building Behaviors

Another primary research questions for this study was: Can an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion increase students' dispositions

related to what Astin, Astin, and Lindholm call "ecumenical worldview," and what Patel and IFYC call the interfaith triangle?_Four items on the post-course surveys showed statistically significant between groups differences for interpersonal and interreligious/intercultural outcomes that may correlate to ecumenical worldviews and bridge-building behaviors: 1) ability to listen to others' points of view, 2) appreciating others' beliefs, 3) engaging diverse religious and cultural viewpoints, and 4) engaging in conversations with people of other religions and cultures. (α=.05) Two additional items showed statistically suggestive between groups' differences: Have mutually rewarding relationships with parents and family, and Form relationships with people different than you. (α=.10)

Interpersonal Outcomes

Listen to Others' Points of View

In answer to the question, My first-year seminar helped me to listen to others' points of view, students' reporting of perceived benefits was statistically significantly higher for the experimental groups than the comparison group students.

Figure 5.11 Listen to Others   Figure 5.12 Listen to Others by First-Year Seminar
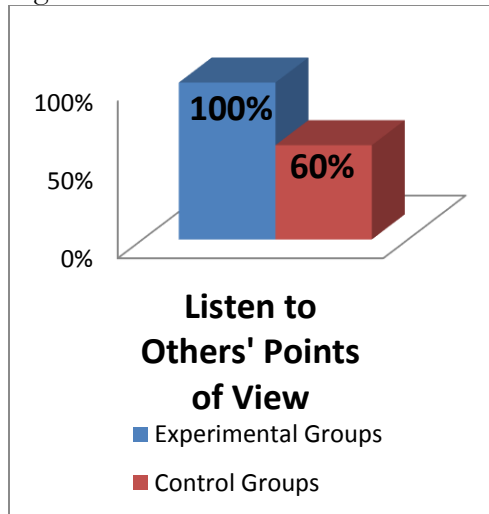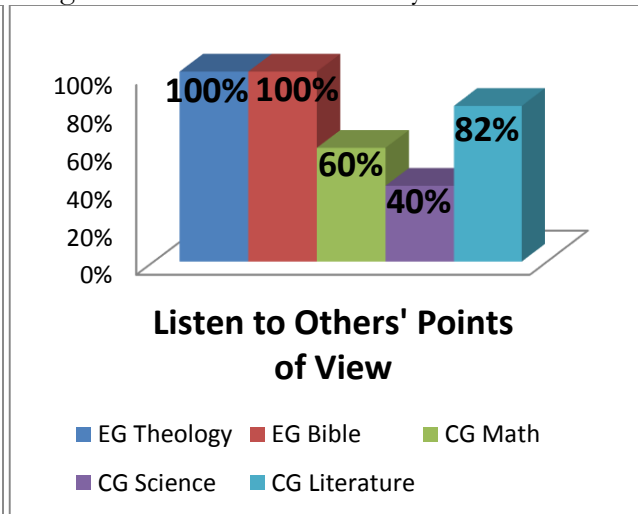
Pearson Chi Square (Asymp. Sig. 2-sided) = 0.001
Post-course survey, n=49

When the data is disaggregated, we can see that both EG Theology and EG Bible reported yes more frequently than two of the comparison groups—CG Math and CG Science. At the same time 82% of CG Literature students reported that their first-year seminar helped them to listen to others' points of view. This finding is supported by the CG Literature students' interview reports, in which several of them stated the discussion-based class did bring out diverse interpretations of things such as Iago's motives, and they often were surprised how others in the class had different interpretations of Iago.

In response to the post-course survey write-in box related to this question, student in the experimental groups wrote:

- *During our final class, we presented our 'Big Questions' and everyone truly opened up their hearts and shared things about their personal lives. It was very rewarding to hear from everyone and learn where they are on their personal journeys.* (EG Bible)

Appreciate Others' Beliefs

In answer to the question, My first-year seminar helped me to appreciate what others believe, students' reporting of perceived benefits was statistically significantly higher for the experimental groups than the comparison group students. When the data is disaggregated, we can see that both EG Theology and EG Bible reported yes more frequently than two of the comparison groups—CG Math and CG Science. At the same time 73% of CG Literature students reported that their first-year seminar helped them appreciate others' beliefs.

This finding is somewhat illuminated by the CG Literature students' interview reports. For some of them, belief was not much different than a point of view or opinion, and if one bothered to listen, one did appreciate, so if they answered "yes" to the previous

question, then answering "yes" to this question logically followed. At the same time, one or two students did report that discussing characters in Shakespeare's plays with peer in class who had divergent interpretations did help them apply or transfer than idea to religious and cultural beliefs, worldviews, and practices.

At the same time, the EG Theology students clearly reported in the interviews that they learned to appreciate personal religious and non-religious beliefs and practices even though they were diametrically opposed to their own. Christian students reported appreciation of atheists' worldviews, and atheists reported appreciating the religious beliefs of Christians in the class, and while they themselves would not become religious, they could now see some value for religion in people's lives and in the world.

Figure 5.13 Appreciate Others' Beliefs Year Experimental vs. Comparison
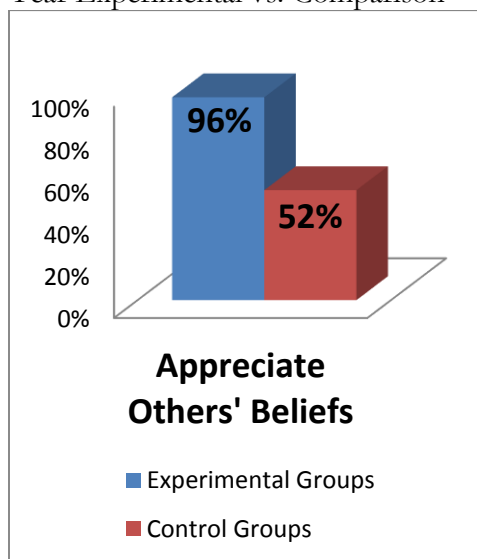
Figure 5.14 Appreciate Others' Beliefs by First-Seminar
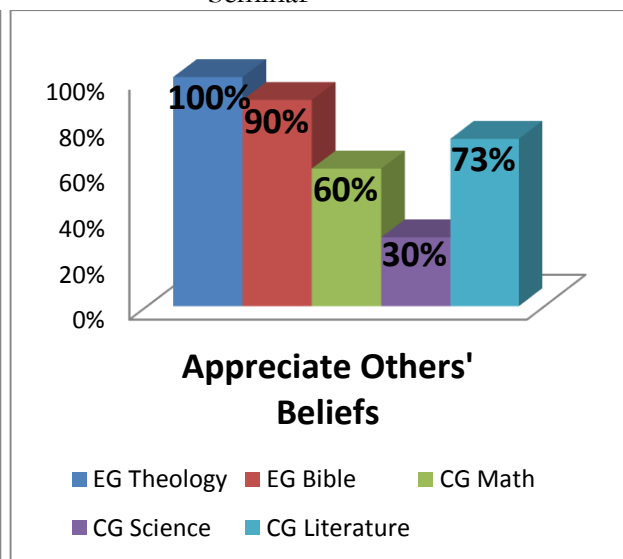
Pearson Chi Square (Asymp. Sig. 2-sided) = 0.001
Post-course survey, n=49

In response to post-survey write-in box, experimental group students wrote:

- *We had to discuss differing opinions and beliefs as a part of our seminar. Therefore, we had to learn to be clear and concise, and we had to learn to talk about them accurately, or discussions would*

go awry. The practice was quite helpful for explaining and defending my beliefs outside the

classroom. (EG Theology)

- *We gave [big questions] presentations and they enabled me to be more comfortable sharing what my beliefs are. It was also nice to know that many people feel the same way as I do, and that they welcome hearing what I think.* (EG Bible)

Treat Others with Respect

In answer to the question, My first-year seminar helped me to treat others with respect, students' reporting of perceived benefits was statistically significantly higher for the experimental groups than the comparison group students. When the data is disaggregated, the results seem less clear, and we can see that while both EG Theology and EG Bible reported yes more frequently than the each of the comparison groups, CG Math, CG Science, and CG Literature students reported the benefit of treating others with respect from their first-year seminars at a high frequency.

Figure 5.15 Treat Others with Respect Year Experimental vs. Comparison
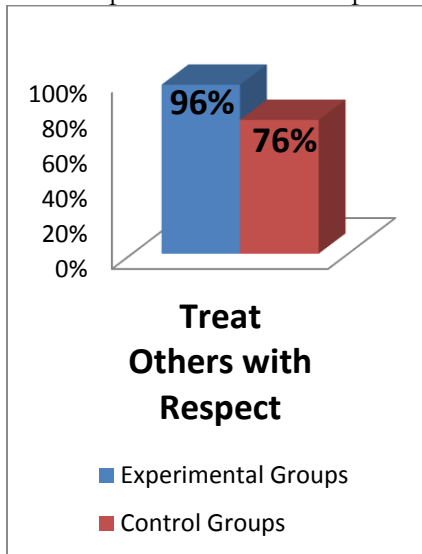
Figure 5.16 Treat Others with Respect by First-Seminar
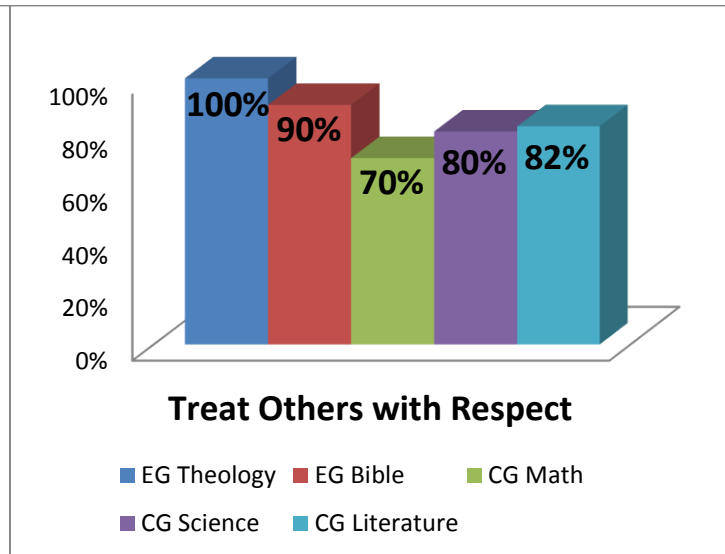
Pearson Chi Square (Asymp. Sig. 2-sided) = 0.047
Post-course survey, n=49

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<u>Have mutually rewarding conversations and relationships with friends</u>

In answer to the question, My first-year seminar helped me to have mutually rewarding conversations and relationships with friends, students' reporting of perceived benefits showed statistically suggestive between groups' difference, with the experimental groups reporting "yes" more frequently than the comparison group students. When the data is disaggregated, we can see that both EG Theology and EG Bible reported yes more frequently than two of the comparison groups—CG Math and CG Science. At the same time 73% of CG Literature students reported that their first-year seminar helped them have mutually rewarding conversations and relationships with friends. Again, these results for CG Literature were confirmed through interview reports that the humanities, discussion-based class had benefits related to conversational skills and forming relationships with friends.

Figure 5.17 Rewarding Conversations and Relationships with Friends
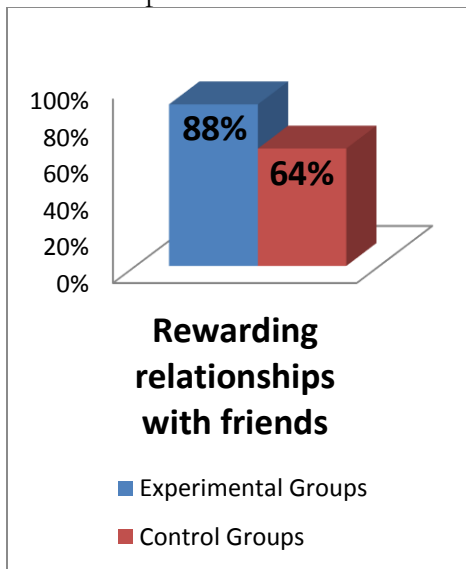
Figure 5.18 Rewarding Conversations with Friends by First-Year Seminar
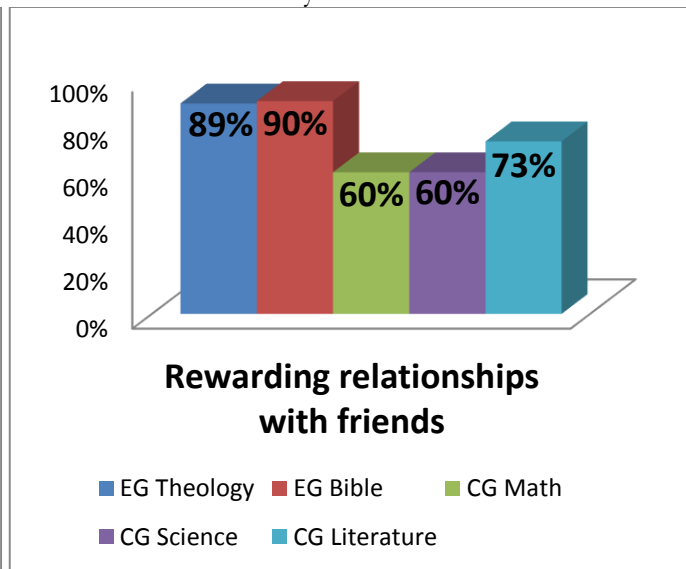
Pearson Chi Square (Asymp. Sig. 2-sided) = 0.056
Post-course survey, n=49

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Interreligious and Intercultural Outcomes

Engage Diverse Religious and Cultural Viewpoints

This was perhaps the most striking result of the entire study. In answer to the question, My first-year seminar helped me engage diverse religious and cultural viewpoints, 96% of experimental group students responded "yes," while only 16% of comparison group students responded affirmatively.

Figure 5.19 Engage Diverse Religious and Cultural Viewpoints
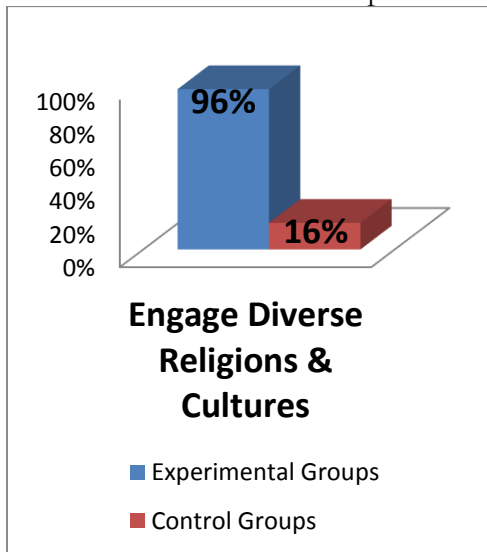
Figure 5.20 Engage Diverse Religious and Cultural Viewpoints by First-Year Seminar
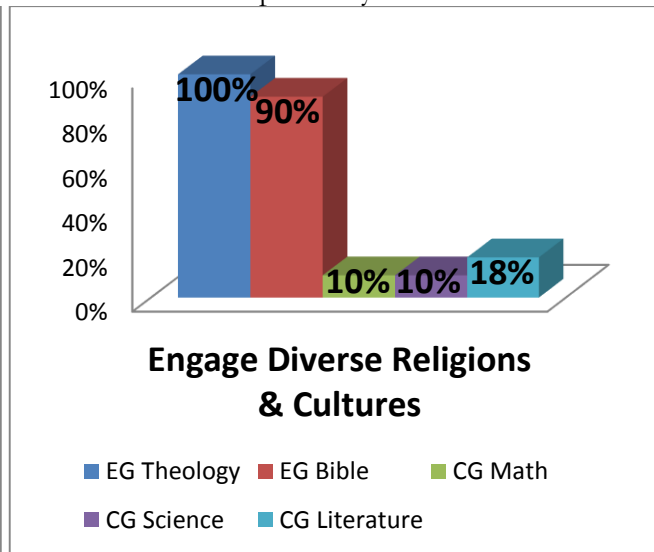
Pearson Chi Square (Asymp. Sig. 2-sided) = 0.000
Post-course survey, n=49

In response to the post-course survey write-in box related to this question, experimental group students wrote:

- *During my FYS as a part of my Big Question Project, I visited a Baha'i gathering. Before this semester, I didn't even know what the Baha'i faith was. The people were a warm, welcoming bunch, and I was very happy to have made their acquaintance. Thought I don't agree with their view of God, I am more enlightened about other beliefs and ultimately feel stronger about my own belief in Christ.* (EG Bible)

- *I became more pluralistic.* (EG Theology)

- *[I am] more open to other religions and viewpoints.* (EG Theology)

- *I am more accepting of other cultures and religions.* (EG Theology)

Some might question whether or not this emphasis on pluralism diluted the students' own religious faith or non-religious belief? This was not the case.

- *My faith has become even stronger than it was before. I am a better Christian because of it.* (EG Theology)

- *After finishing my FYS, I can now assert that learning about other religions and belief systems helped to reaffirm my own faith. It has also made me more self-aware and better suited to articulate myself in an intellectual conversation about religion.* (EG Theology)

- *They [my beliefs and values] haven't changed, just been strengthened.* (EG Bible)

- *I have become more accepting to controversy of my beliefs. I do not necessarily have a different belief from what I used to believe, however, I do not shut out questions about God or the Bible.* (EG Bible)

- *I feel better able to explain why I put my trust in Jesus Christ than when I first started and I have a better understanding of the Biblical text.* (EG Bible)

Other critics might wonder whether or not all of this emphasis on Christian theology just made everyone feel like they had to be Christian. This was not the case. One student noted:

- *I find myself attracted to no religion in particular. This was cemented after a trip to a synagogue this semester [for my chosen Big Questions Project] and hearing two speakers (one Muslim, one Hindu).* (EG Theology)

<u>Initiate Conversations with People of Other Religions and Cultures</u>

In answer to the question, My first-year seminar helped me to initiate conversations with people of other religions and cultures, 96% of experimental group students responded "yes," while only 32% of comparison group students responded affirmatively. The 60% of students in CG Math who reported "yes," is not born out by CG Math instructor's assessment of the content of the class, by the CG Math students' interview reports of what happened in the class, or CG Math students' reports of their own behaviors and actions with regard to engaging religious and cultural diversity during the semester. At the same time, the students did live in an honors living-learning community, and one way to understand these perceived benefits related to initiating conversations with people of other religions could have occurred as a result of their being roommates with or conversing in the residence hall with students in the experimental group or with the Jewish student in the living-learning community.

Figure 5.21 Initiate Conversations with People of Other Religions and Cultures
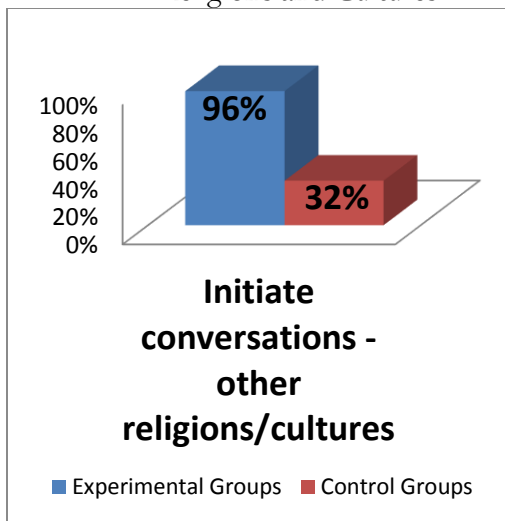
Figure 5.22 Initiate Conversations with People of Other Religions and Cultures by First-Year Seminar

Pearson Chi Square (Asymp. Sig. 2-sided) = 0.000
Post-course survey, n=49

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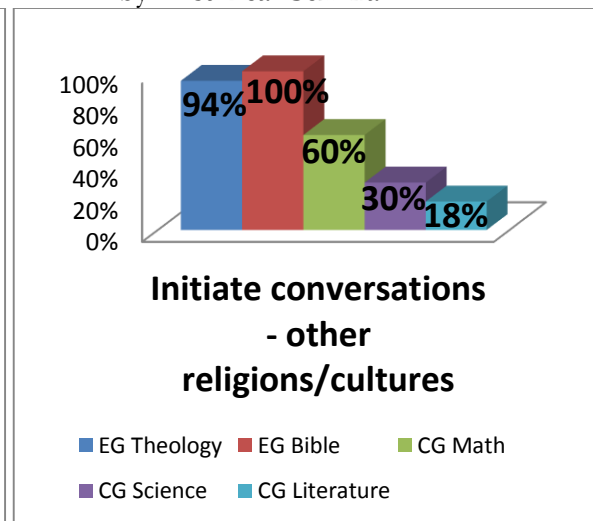
In response to post-survey question related to this item, experimental group students wrote:

- *I now feel comfortable articulating my beliefs in a group where I know not everyone shares those same beliefs. I know that it is okay to be different, and that my beliefs will be respected.* (EG Theology)

- *It feels as though I can better articulate my beliefs to people with different beliefs.* (EG Theology)

- *I feel more confident explaining my beliefs now. Before I would stutter and stop defending what I believed, but now I can civilly and competently engage in an argument.* (EG Bible)

Form friendships with people different than you

In answer to the question, My first-year seminar helped me to form friendships with people different than me, students' reporting of perceived benefits showed statistically significant between groups' difference, with the experimental groups reporting "yes" more frequently than the comparison group students.

Figure 5.23 Form Friendships with Different People Different than You
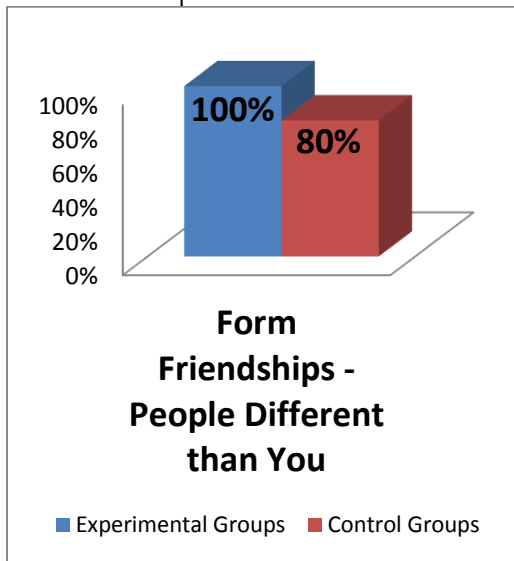
Figure 5.24 Form Friendships with People than You by First-Year Seminar
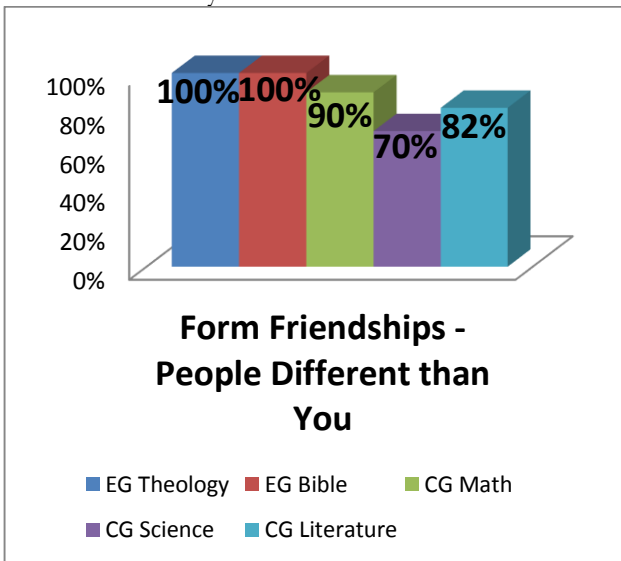
Pearson Chi Square (Asymp. Sig. 2-sided) = 0.021
Post-course survey, n=49

When the data is disaggregated, we can see that both EG Theology and EG Bible reported yes more frequently than all of the comparison groups. At the same time, 90% of CG Math, 82% of CG Literature, and 70% of CG Science students reported that their first-year seminar helped them form friendships with people different than them.

These disaggregated results are not surprising, in the sense that one of the goals of first-year seminar courses and programs nationally is to promote students' social integration into the college or university. The first-year seminar advisor and peer mentors plan social events for the students throughout the semester, and mentor the students socially as well as academically.

Data from the third post-course interviews (end of sophomore year), indicated that the experimental seminar group continued to surpass the comparison groups in engaging religious and cultural diversity in terms of forming friendships at a statistically suggestive higher level.

Summary of Quantitative Outcomes Related to Primary Research Questions

In this section, I will attempt to summarize the quantitative outcomes from the last chapter and this chapter, specifically related to two of the four primary research questions. One question related to big questions and inquiry-based pedagogy advancing students inner lives, and the second question related to such a pedagogy advancing students ecumenical worldview and/or bridge-building behaviors. In general, the hypothesis was supported for both of these items. A Pearson chi-square test revealed statistically significant post-course between groups differences on two intrapersonal, two interpersonal, and two interreligious/intercultural items (n=48; α=.05), and statistically suggestive post-course between groups differences one personal, one interpersonal, and one interreligious/intercultural item. (α=.10)

Research Question 1: Pluralistic Bridge-Building Behaviors

Can an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion increase students' dispositions related to what Astin, Astin, and Lindholm call "ecumenical worldview," and what Patel calls bridge-building behaviors? Yes. The quantitative results also suggest that in an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion can increase students' dispositions related to what Astin, Astin, and Lindholm call "ecumenical worldview," and what Patel calls pluralistic bridge-building behaviors. According to the surveys, students in the two experimental seminar groups scored statistically significantly higher on: ability to listen to others' points of view, appreciating others' beliefs, engaging diverse religious and cultural viewpoints, and engaging in conversations with people of other religions and cultures. In addition, there were statistically suggestive post-course between groups differences for three items ($\alpha=.10$): having mutually rewarding conversations with parents and family, and forming friendships with people different than you.

According to the surveys, students in the two experimental seminar groups scored significantly higher on: 1) ability to listen to others' points of view, 2) appreciating others' beliefs, 3) engaging diverse religious and cultural viewpoints, and 4) engaging in conversations with people of other religions and cultures. In addition, there were statistically suggestive post-course between groups differences for three items ($\alpha=.10$): 1) Have mutually rewarding conversations with parents and family, and 2) Form friendships with people different than you.

Data from the final post-course individual interviews (end of sophomore year), indicate that the experimental seminar group continued to surpass the comparison groups in engaging religious diversity. Interview coding for the final set of interviews for continuing

application of skills and engaging in activities and relationships involving religious and non-religious diversity show that two years after the first-semester seminar, students in the experimental seminar had higher levels than students in the comparison first-semester seminar in all areas.

In two areas of interfaith engagement or bridge-building behavior, there was a statistically suggestive between groups' difference at the end of the sophomore year (α=.10): 1) Doing service project with and 2) Sharing friendship with a person of another religious or non-religious worldview or practice. In terms of behavioral outcomes four months after the end of the course, in the end-of-first-year interviews, the following was found:

- Two experimental group students reported becoming friends with a Muslim student in their academic major. Interestingly, students in the comparison groups in the same academic major did not report making friends with this student.

- One experimental group student reported becoming a diversity advocate for the office of diversity.

- One experimental group student reported choosing to be an interfaith leader for the chaplain's office.

- Several experimental groups' students reported group friendships between Christians and atheists in which they actually continued to talk about religious and non-religious worldviews, in addition to doing things college friends normally do. They also reported that prior to the first-year seminar, they had not believed this to be possible or of value or of importance.

In the interviews, some comparison group students reported some interreligious/intercultural behavior. Some of this might have come from the comparison group students residing in the honors living-learning residence hall community with the

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experimental group students. Moreover, as previously noted, all honors first-year students participated in an exploratory learning experience called the Intellectual Engagement Experience (IEE). Moreover, Astin and Astin's evidence suggests that a variety of college activities contribute to less conservatism, increased tolerance, caring, and increased connectedness to others. Astin and Astin report that college and university students in general move in this direction over the four years of undergraduate education.

Therefore, we would find it strange if there were no reporting of engagement with diversity in the comparison group students, especially after the final interviews (end of sophomore year). Moreover, Astin and Astin's findings of college just sort of does this to all students may make the results of this study even more striking.

Research Question 2: Enhancing Students' Inner Lives

Can an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion advance students' spiritual development or enhance their "inner lives"? Yes. For the quantitative results on standard inventories, my results in Chapter 4 were consistent with the possibility of the existence in my institution's honors first-year program of a null curriculum related to the subjectivity of the learner and the advancement of students' inner lives. Moreover, my results suggest that when this subjectivity and inner life engagement is brought into the explicit curriculum, there are significant benefits to students related to curiosity, happiness, satisfaction with self, finding meaning and purpose, and engaging in pluralistic bridge-building behaviors as compared to students for whom the subjectivity and existential elements remain in the null curriculum. These results were achieved by the teaching of Christian theology and religion using inquiry-based pedagogies, and not by the teaching of Math, Science, or Literature using generally-accepted standard disciplinary pedagogies.

For the quantitative survey items custom-created to assess the perceived benefits of the first-year seminar experience related to the primary thesis claim, Pearson Chi Square results reported in Chapter 5 showed statistically significant difference between experimental and comparison groups for eight of fourteen items (α=.05). The benefits of the experimental seminar courses of statistical significance included: be more aware of who I am, state clearly what I believe, listen to others' points of view, appreciate what others believe, engage diverse religious and cultural viewpoints, treat others with respect, form friendships with people different than you, and initiate conversations with people of other religions and cultures. In addition, there were statistically suggestive post-course between groups differences for two additional items (α=.10): Have more clarity about what I should do with my life and Have mutually rewarding conversations with friends.

The quantitative results in Chapter 4 and 5 suggest that an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion can advance students' spiritual development or enhance their "inner lives" if spiritual development and inner lives are defined in the following ways:

1. Being more aware of who I am

2. Being able to clearly articulate my beliefs

3. Increased curiosity

4. Increased Spiritual Quest (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm)

5. Increased happiness

6. Increased satisfaction with self

7. Finding a sense of what makes life meaningful

8. Finding a sense of purpose in life.

According to the surveys, students in the two experimental seminar groups scored significantly higher on "being more aware of who I am," and "being able to clearly articulate my beliefs." Moreover, it is interesting to note is that some students in the comparison seminars reported no change whatsoever with regard to spirituality, religious or non-religious worldviews, and engagement with religious and non-religious diversity. On the other hand, all students in the experimental seminar, even at the end of the sophomore year, reported change and or continued engagement with these things (in a variety of ways). Many students in the experimental seminar noted how they had generalized the dispositions and skills practiced in the big questions/appreciative inquiry pedagogy into co-curricular leadership, academic major, and other pursuits in the sophomore year. Nearly all comparison group students reported no use of or transfer of learning from their first-semester seminar into the sophomore year, except very few who mentioned the importance of being forced to write a research paper in the first semester of college. One surprising result, not directly related to the hypothesis was the statistically suggestive difference between groups on the issue of developing clarity about what to do with my life. A tentative new hypothesis emerged: Teaching Christian theology and Bible helps students gain clarity about vocation, purpose, and mission.

A fuller discussion of the impact, outcomes, and limitations of this study may be found in Chapter 7. Many questions will be addressed, including the following:

- Why did EG Math and EG Literature Have Moderately High Results on Several Items?

- What was the Impact of the honors first-year living-learning Community?

- What about Social Demand Effects?

- Were Students in Two Experimental Groups Just More Religious Than in Comparison Groups?

Conclusions

On the one hand, it is ridiculous to state the one course can undo an entire cultural milieu, as documented by scholars such as Stephen Prothero, Christian Smith, David Gortner, and others. On many standard measures, the experimental group students declined in areas such as religious practice, in the same ways as the control group students, which would support the findings of Christian Smith. On other standard survey items, even in the experimental first-year seminars, there was no positive change in the students. Moreover, one can argue that the experimental groups were self-selecting to some degree, and these students already had higher interest in spirituality and religion. At the same time, every year, many students not in this first-year seminar tell me how much they wish they were in it. Sometimes they say this just because they ranked it high and did not get placed in it, while others report that they have heard from students what is going on in this first-year seminar and they want to be a part of it.

At the 2015 National Association of College and University Chaplains (NACUC) in Nashville, TN, plenary speaker Christian Smith called for experimentation in methods that might help young adults to move beyond their view of religion as a moderating, privatizing, generalizing "elementary school for morals"?[134] While I cannot claim that one course can undo a whole cultural conditioning that has created religiously illiterate moral therapeutic deists, an intervention of the right kind at the right time can be powerful. This research was

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[134] Christian Smith, plenary lecture, National Association of College and University Chaplains, Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, February 22, 2015.

an attempt to carry out such an experiment, and to find some clues upon which future possibilities might be further explored.

As I conclude this research, I think that the first-year is the right time for such an intervention. The Appreciative Inquiry, the Big Question Project, the engagement with personal theology or Christian theology would not have had the same effect in the sophomore, junior, or senior year. I think that the first-year is a tipping point in which patterns of identity and intimacy are shaped, formed, determined for at least the next five years or so. John Courtney Murray has said that we learn to converse differently so that we can live together differently. My colleague and I believe that we observed Appreciative Inquiry helping to bring about the difference between conversation and debate, or the more percussive "discussion."

Statistically significant change occurred in the experimental groups related to curiosity, and Princeton philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah heavily influenced my initial thoughts about the pedagogy used in this research. Appiah says that cosmopolitanism or being a citizen of the world begins with both curiosity and compassion. Change always begins with the human heart. He advocates conversation in the old fashioned sense, entwined with cultivating the virtue of hospitality. I originally dropped the idea of hospitality because Eboo Patel and Interfaith Youth Core generally question the adequacy of theologies of hospitality, as they imply there is a host and a guest, and they imply that the host is the original inhabitant or own, and therefore has more rights than the guest.

Chapter 6: Qualitative Outcomes:
Grounded Theory of In-Depth Interviews

The primary purpose of this project is to develop and test an inquiry-based pedagogy designed specifically for teaching theology and religion in the classroom, with the goal of trying to discover the nature of any enhancement in students' spiritual development or inner lives that might come from engaging big questions in academic courses in theology and religion. The three primary research questions for the study were:

1. Can an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion increase students' dispositions related to Alexander Astin, Helen Astin, and Jennifer Lindholm's ecumenical worldview and Eboo Patel's bridge-building behaviors?

2. Can inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion advance students' spiritual development or enhance their inner lives?

3. How does engaging with big questions change students' spirituality and/or students' worldviews, dispositions, or behaviors?

4. What happens to students' spiritual and religious lives over the first two years of college?

In order to try to explore the third and fourth research questions, I employed grounded theory of transcripts of individual interviews of students in both the experimental and comparison groups to see what new themes or models might emerge. With regard to the question about how inquiry-based pedagogies impact students, for the first coding cycle, the outcomes of hypothesis coding supported or correlated with the findings from the quantitative data. Through focused coding based on frequency, significant, and/or saliency, a list of the most important positive outcomes of the inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion was created.   As a result of the grounded theory work, this

chapter ends with a conceptual model for an inquiry-based pedagogy (both big questions and appreciative inquiry) applied to religious studies. For the question related to student spiritual development over the first two years of college or university, the holistic coding, pattern coding, and focused coding, led to a possible diagram of a range of positive and negative outcomes related to students' spiritual development in the first two years of college.

Interview Methodology

Throughout the two years of the study, I conducted four sets of individual interviews. The first interviews occurred pre-course, within the first two weeks of students entering college (n=34). The second interviews occurred immediately post-course, within the final two weeks of the semester (n=32). The third set of individual interviews were completed at the end of the students' first-year of college (n=29), and the fourth and final set of interviews were held at the end of students' sophomore year (n=24), including all the student subjects in EG Theology, and four or five subjects from each of the three comparison groups, CG Math, CG Science, and CG Literature. No subjects in EG Bible were interviewed.

Reasons for Grounded Theory Approach

Following the survey and interview research, several items both lingered with and haunted the researcher.

- Prior to coming to college, a majority of the students had never met a Muslim, let alone a Hindu or a Buddhist. There are many non-diverse places, and for many of the students Elizabethtown College seemed highly diverse.

- At the same time, some of the students did come from high schools that were more diverse than our college, but even in these cases, students didn't talk about religion in

high school, even if they were in lab groups or other teams with students of different religions or cultures. "They're just like us."

- For many of the students, the Christian-Atheist gap seemed to be more challenging and significant that the Christian-other world religion gap.

- The Catholic-Protestant gap was considered significant by many of the students.

Students in both experimental and comparison groups showed pre-to-post-course increased means on many items related to spiritual quest and search for meaning. Students in both the experimental and comparison groups expressed enjoyment of being interviewed about these topics, and many reported looking forward to the next interview. Even some comparison group students who were not selected to be interviewed shared disappointment that they were not selected to be interviewed.

At the same time, I noticed the degree to which students in the comparison groups who also did not report being in any religious studies course over their first two years of college said that they just ignored religion, but they did not always seems happy, satisfied with that, or able to engage effectively on our campus.

Students in the experimental seminar groups were excited and positive about the Big Questions Project. Yet, the interviews revealed that it was not only students in the experimental groups that had questions and were searching. One comparison group student, who shared in an interview that one parent was Muslim and the other was conservative, evangelical Christian, reported having many unanswered questions. Another comparison group student reported trying to find the answers too many profound spiritual and cosmological questions online, and that it was not satisfactory.

I began to wonder whether or not the first and second year of college actually might be turning points for college students in terms of spiritual development, and that while some

students advanced, other students stagnated or regressed. In the interviews, some students in the comparison groups seemed to fit the phenomenon Tim Clydesdale has named as "the "identity lockbox."[135] The students had put their pre-college identities on hold and annexed religion and spirituality as one of the things that could be dealt with later, which is similar to Christian's Smith's findings related to emerging adults delaying important matters and decisions that could be put off or did not seem urgent.

I decided to use a Grounded Theory approach to try to see what was happening to experimental groups as opposed to comparison groups as reported in the rich detail of their own words, descriptions, and stories.

Focus of Grounded Theory Work

As a result of this, the researcher decided to conduct some grounded theory research on the pre-course, post-course, and final (end of sophomore year) interviews in an attempt to gain greater understanding about student spiritual development in the first two years of college, and also to create a conceptual model for an inquiry-based pedagogy (both big questions and appreciative inquiry) applied to religious studies.

The primary focus of the grounded theory work was centered on developing themes and perhaps theoretical models related to the following questions:

1. What happened to these students' spiritual development over the first two years of college?

2. How does engaging with big questions change enhance students' spirituality and or change students' worldviews, dispositions, behaviors, etc.?

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[135] Kendra Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 161.

Because little research has been done in this area, in order to answer this question, the researcher used a grounded theory approach, a qualitative research design that focuses on new categories, models, and theories generated from or grounded in responses from participants.

Type of Grounded Theory Method Utilized

Historically, grounded theory developed within the social sciences, specifically related to tensions within sociology between quantitative and qualitative research. According to Kathy Charmaz, "Grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves.[136] In general, the grounded theory research process is one of discovery, and the goal is to created new theories or models that are "grounded" in the qualitative data. Grounded theory began with the more systematic, analytical procedure originally developed in 1967 in sociology by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, and later modified (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 1998). The method can include theoretical sampling, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, with the goal of finding an explanatory narrative statement, a visual model, or a series of hypotheses or propositions.[137] My use of grounded theory will move beyond traditional grounded theory, which has been criticized for its positivist assumptions, and this study will include elements of a more social constructivist approach (Charmaz 2005, 2006). The constructivist approach to grounded theory will emphasize 'diverse local worlds, multiple realities, and the complexities of particular worlds, views, and actions."[138] The following guidelines will be used in the current research:

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[136] Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory, 2nd edition*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014), 1.

[137] John W. Cresswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, *2nd edition*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 63-65.

[138] Cresswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design,* 65.

1. Method is a flexible guideline, and the researcher may emphasize views, values, beliefs, and assumptions even if there is a tradeoff with strict methodology;

2. Theory may be influenced by researcher's view, as well as hidden networks, invisible and visible hierarchies of power;

3. Jargon, diagrams, conceptual maps, and systematic approaches may detract from real grounded theory and may be attempts to gain power by those who invoke them;

4. When coding, it is important to use active codes, gerund-based phrases such as "building a personal theology";

5. Researchers make decisions, bring questions to the data, advance personal values, experiences, and priorities;

6. All conclusions developed are "suggestive, incomplete, and inconclusive."[139]

Outline of my Grounded Theory Process

At one level, I constructed the interview questions with many open-ended questions, covering a wide range of topics related to beliefs, knowledge, motivations, and actions of the young adult students in my study. I paralleled the approach of the survey questions because despite the fact that I had a hypothesis based on theory, not much research had been completed and published in this area when I began my research. To some degree, I could not narrow down possible areas in which I might find change or significance very far. In that sense, I wanted to remain in the background while exploring the students' beliefs, experiences, and actions to find any emergent areas which might be of future interest that I had not thought of when generating my hypothesis.

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[139] Cresswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design,* 66.

At another level, I constructed the interview questions with some questions focused on specific items related to my hypothesis. To the extent that I already had generated a hypothesis, I also constructed the interview questions with some tentative categories based on recurring conversations and observations that I had with students over my years of teaching first-year seminar.

I did not take a strictly linear approach, in which the iteration and incremental advancement occur over time within the research design and implementation, which is often depicted in diagrams and textbooks about grounded theory. My approach moved back and forth in the same interviews between the open-ended questions often found in initial phases of interviewing in a grounded theory research design, and also more focused questions often found in theoretical sampling interviews done in the final stages of grounded theory. All four sets of my interviews with students over the two years of the study were both exploratory and theoretical at the same time.

For the question related to what happens to student spiritual development over the first two years of college or university, I carried out holistic coding, which can be characterized by lumping rather than splitting line by line, in an attempt to discover basic themes. According to Charmaz, this type of coding is appropriate for beginning qualitative researchers, and when the researcher has some ideas of what to chunk and lump together. Perhaps most importantly, holistic coding can be very useful for researchers who have large amounts of data. As a second cycle coding method, I employed pattern coding to try to discover emerging themes and search for causes.[140]

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[140] Johnny Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers, 2nd edition* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013, 142-144, 209-212.

With regard to the question about how inquiry-based pedagogies impact students, for the first coding cycle, I used hypothesis coding related to the impact of the big questions and appreciative inquiry pedagogies. I was analyzing the qualitative data (interview transcripts) with specific categories in mind. These predetermined categories were based on my hypothesis about applying inquiry-based pedagogy to the teaching of theology and religion, and also the bridge-building behaviors that I posited as outcomes. As a second cycle of coding, I used focused coding based on frequency, significant, and/or saliency.[141]

Holistic Coding for Student Spiritual Development in the First Two Years of College

Holistic coding with the broad framing question "What happened to students in the first two years of college?" resulted in the emergence of the following themes and ideas: moving from dependence to independence, encountering difference, questioning beliefs, considering changing beliefs and behaviors, and not focusing on religion or spirituality because it can be put off.

Moving from Dependence to Independence: Social Networks and Mentors

When asked about beliefs and worldviews, many student responses related to the idea of becoming more independent after coming to college. For some, the change forced them to depend a lot more on God because they were on their own. Others reported still believing, but just not as strongly, and even questioning the existence of God. Still others reported that their beliefs were stronger, because of stress of adjusting to college and new people, because of the bad choices other peers were making, or because of having to think more deeply about beliefs due to first-year seminar. Another set of students reported that

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[141] Saldana, 147-150, 213-217.

religion was not relevant to their lives, and that they did not have religious conversations with other students at all.

Another common theme across all students interviewed was how much the first-year seminar helped them to make friends and how much the first semester of college was focused on making friends and also how much the first-year seminar greatly helped in finding a social network.

In the first semester of college, some students reported finding a mentor who had great positive impact on their lives. Many students did not report finding a mentor. Here are some sample comments:

- *Our Shakespeare FYS professor was like, yeah, you can ask me anything;*

- *I remember the professor, who advised me academically during a difficult decision about dropping a course; I remember the FYS professor, not the course;*

- *I was raised Roman Catholic, but I'm questioning the existence of God. I'm reading about the origins of the universe independently without a mentor, and I have not found any answers.*

Beliefs, Worldviews, and Ethics Did Not Change, But Some Students May Change Religion

The most common response among nearly all students in the post-course interviews was that their beliefs and worldviews had not changed over the first semester of college. Students also overwhelmingly reported that their morals and ethics had not changed. Some students reported that there was a bit of gradual change, mostly due to just growing up. Others reported a real issue with religion and science. Others reported replacing the "religious and spiritual thing" (their wording) with what they were meant to do after college. Despite the fact that nearly all students reported no change in beliefs and worldviews, a

number of students reported that after one semester of college, they thought that they might change religions. Here are some sample comments:

- *I may change from Roman Catholicism because our priest is and has been horrible [mean, rigid], and I now know Christianity is bigger than Roman Catholicism, and I'm really good friends with two Protestants in my first-year seminar;*

- *It took me a long time to decide I'm agnostic, atheist really, but atheist has social baggage and upsets people.*

Some Precipitators of Positive Religious and Non-Religious Worldview Outcomes

In the final post-course interviews, the researcher did not ask directly a question about what caused any perceived positive religious or non-religious worldview outcomes. At the same time, many students mentioned the precipitating factors as they discussed positive outcomes. The items mentioned included: Big Theological Questions First-Year Seminar, adapting to college and just living in a dorm, a philosophy or ethics course, death of a family friend, meeting lots of new and different people at college.

Pattern Coding for Student Spiritual Development in the First Two Years of College

Pattern coding helped me to see that the changes the students reported were either cognitive or affective, and could be viewed as either more desirable or less desirable.

Table 6:19 Pattern Coding for Outcomes—Final (End of Sophomore Year) Interviews

	More Desirable	**Less Desirable**
Cognitive Outcomes	More educated views of religions	Ignorant - Lack of knowledge
	Solidified beliefs	Could not defend myself or my beliefs
		Cannot compare/contrast worldviews at all
	Thought more about my beliefs	
	Open-mindedness	Inarticulate
		Don't even know how to describe my own worldview
	Open to thinking more	
	Less concerned with dogma	

Affective Outcomes	More aware in a religious sense	Impatience with people not engaging religious experience as valid
		Stuck in high school in terms of views of religion, spirituality, belief
	Evolved as a person	
		Negative reactions to religion in general, and Judaism in particular
	Comfortable with self	
	Confident in self	Less happy than ever after SY with RC
	Participate in conversations and actually know things	Uncomfortable talking about religion, spirituality, belief
	Curiosity about beliefs, worldviews, religions	
		Feel everything is meaningless
	Started to care about religion (didn't when I came to college)	Disengaged
		Not really into the whole RC thing like my roommate
	Looked inside	
	Questioned personal values	Non-Christians need to come to grips with discrimination
	Dug deeper	
	Decide to stay with my own religion after not really caring about religion at all	
	Hearing many different religious views while solidifying my own	
	Able to say controversial things in a civil way	
	Initiate conversations about beliefs and worldviews	
	Make myself listen	
	Try to understand	
	Feel difference, but can connect on some level	
	Cannot stereotype anymore	
	Don't close yourself off	
	Don't make blanket statements about religious groups	

	Committed to high ideal of diversity	
	Re-commitment to inter-religious and cross-cultural engagement	
Community-Oriented Outcomes	Bounced ideas off each other	Flee when there is tension
	Built on each other's ideas	Never talk to anyone about what I believe or what they believe
	Got to know each other	Won't discuss religion
	Advocated for others	Talked about religion first-year, but not sophomore year
	Open discussions	I don't know what other religions believe or do, but we're all just the same
	Not being afraid to say controversial things	I won't push my beliefs on you; don't push yours on me
	Improved ability to be a leader on campus as a sophomore	Religion and culture are interchangeable, just use culture

Pattern coding also revealed student-named precipitators of desirable and undesirable

change in the first two years of college.

Table 6:20 Pattern Coding for Precipitators of Change—Final (End of Sophomore Year)
Interviews

Precipitator of More Desirable Change	**Precipitator of Less Desirable Change**
More open-minded people to talk to	Arguing about religion in a high school class
Curiosity, adventure	Arguing and debating with atheists
Sophomore Year	Arguments with Catholic roommate or boyfriend
Muslim woman who babysat him as a child	Not something I talk with others about
Rape & discrimination incidents on campus & diversity event	Bias incidents on campus
Dharma Traditions religion class	Don't have strong affiliation-not really relevant

One or two religion classes Shakespeare FYS	We're all the same; we have the same morals; we just use different names for the gods
Space to contemplate, dig deep	Everyone is spiritual; all the religions; let's leave it there; all under the same hood
Being less sheltered and exposed to more on campus	Not into it; not relevant; it's all about me and what I want and desire
Just life experience and growing up	It's something you can just put off and deal with later; other things are more pressing
Illness and tragedy	Dharma traditions class
Conversations or issues with friends	Sophomore Year
Muslim/Christian dialogue event	When you really understand things, it can be very difficult to talk about
Practice in or habit from my religion FYS; FYS helped me sort it all out	Went to wedding with RC boyfriend and was not allowed to take communion
Economics classes and the way professor addressed global issues	Chose small, private liberal arts school like ours
Having course on that religion rather than just having met a Hindu in high school and laughing at what she believed	
Conversations with video store owner; only mentor subject can find; doing basically what mentor did; move from RC Literature classes	

Focused Coding for Student Spiritual Development in the First Two Years of College

In order to yielded fewer categories for both Outcomes, and also Student-Identified

Precipitators of Outcomes, I carried out Focused Coding using the following four criteria:

1. The number of students who mentioned something or the frequency;

2. Items that might be credible to certain audiences;

3. The uniqueness of any category that should not be lost;

4. All areas of inquiry not previously or otherwise recognized.

Table 6.21 Focused Coding for Spiritual Development after Two Years of College

More Desirable	Less Desirable
- Increased knowledge - Better skills as listening, understanding, connecting - See commonalities as well as difference - Increased awareness of self and other - Transformation as a person - Increased articulation and confidence - Identity as a global citizen - Curiosity - Thinking Religion is Relevant - Leadership development - Open-mindedness and tolerance - Bridge-Building Behaviors	- Being Stuck - Feeling More Negative about Religion in General after two years of college - Lacking Meaning - Avoiding Religion Altogether - Experiencing Discomfort Talking about Religion - Religion is Irrelevant to my Life - Difference is Irrelevant - Exhibiting Inarticulateness of Personal Theology

Table 6.22 Focused Coding for Precipitators of Spiritual Development Outcomes

Precipitator of More Desirable Change	Precipitator of Less Desirable Change
- Big Questions FYS - Other Religion Classes - Shakespeare FYS - Other Humanities Classes - Economics classes and the way professor addressed global issues - Normal Development - Illness, tragedy, bias incidents - Conversations - Interfaith Events - Curiosity, adventure	- Arguments and Conflicts—Past or Present - No Strong Affiliation ("Nones") - Academic Study of Religion - Sophomore Year

One of my stated goals was to compile the themes generated from the grounded theory into a diagram of what happened to these students' spiritual development over the first two years of college. From the interviews and the grounded theory work, it seems to me that in terms of spirituality and religion, the first two years of college are critical, and students almost seem to choose one of two different paths, and these paths diverge greatly.

Illustration 6.1
Changes in Worldviews and Related Behaviors
Over the First Two Years of College

Desired Outcoems

Knowledge about Religion	Stuck
Articulateness about Belief	Inarticulate about Belief
Confidence in Participating	Lacking Meaning
Skills for Participating	Discomfort Discussing
Seek Diversity	Avoid/Disengage
Religion is Relevant to Global Citizen	Feeling Religion is Negative and Irrelevant
Bridge-Building Behaviors	Don't Offend Anyone

Undesired Outcomes

Hypothesis Coding for Inquiry-Based Pedagogy Applied to Teaching Religion

This study focused on testing an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion with the hypothesis that such a pedagogy would increase students' spiritual development and bridge-building behaviors. Hypothesis coding specifically for items related to big questions and appreciative inquiry yielded the following themes:

Increased Religious Knowledge

Thirteen of fifteen students in the experimental first-year seminar reported knowing more about religions in general without being specifically asked that question. They also reported that just knowing more about religions in general was not only interesting, but also empowering. More than one-third of the students in the comparison group seminars

reported knowing nothing about Muslims or Hindus. Of the two-thirds who gave answers, many stated incorrect facts or answers to questions. Here are a few things the students in one of the experimental seminar groups reported learning:

- *I learned Muslims believe in the same prophets as Christianity;*

- *I can distinguish between varieties of Christianity (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, and Fundamentalist).*

- *I've always lumped Hinduism and Buddhism together and I now know they are very different.*

In the post-course interviews, comparison group students became easily flustered when asked what they thought of Hindus, Christians, and Muslims. They confused Hinduism with Islam, and could not really name specifics with regard to beliefs, symbols, dress of women, sacred texts, or places of worship. Students said things like, Well, Muslims believe in reincarnation and believe in karma—no wait, that's Buddhism, isn't it?

A Christian student in the experimental first-year seminar stated that she still believed in salvation through Jesus Christ, and that other religions are wrong, but feels she is a little more open-minded and is more tolerant of other religions after the EG Theology first-year seminar.

> *I think it was because I didn't know a whole lot about the other religions and now I do. I think I had a lot of misconceptions that have been corrected in my mind. Like, I didn't know that Hindus believed that they had a pluralist view I guess I don't know what I thought they believed but that really kind of surprised me. And that the similarities between Muslims and Christianity, which I kind of knew, but that they are so similar in a lot of ways, I guess.* ID# 88244293

Think Critically about Religion

Students reported that just taking a course in religion in which they gained cognitive knowledge and also thought critically about doctrine and practice was helpful. Four students

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in the experimental seminar group said that reading the theology book and all the readings about religion was impactful. Four students said that having to discuss, compare, and contrast was impactful. Here are some quotes from students that illustrate the importance of thinking critically about religious belief:

> *I think this class along with my philosophy class helped me just to keep a critical eye and question things in that regard. I really appreciate it if someone makes a claim, like sometimes I find myself asking my mom or sisters if they say something [and it] just seems like they don't really have any backing for it. I'm willing to ask them why. ID# 27663281*

> *The opportunity to study it [religion] more academically makes you think really differently rather than [when you think about it] just emotionally… ID# 17863889*

Another student reported feeling that the only change in her beliefs and ethics was that she does not feel like she only has the option to follow the Roman Catholic Church. She reported feeling like her religious belief and tradition was hers and she could take charge of it.

> *I think just being exposed to so many different views in my first year seminar because there are so many people from different traditions and some that have none at all and I'm just hearing how other people answer questions and how they interpreted the readings, how some of the readings challenged things from the Catholic Church. I really liked seeing that and not hearing, I grew up with a mom who was a cradle Catholic and everything that the nuns and priest told was basically what they believe and she didn't say that to me but that's kind of how she was so seeing that I don't have to be that way. So changes from just hearing other people and reading. ID# 88910122*

Opportunity to Build Positive Relationships

As previously noted, students from all first-year seminar groups reported in interviews that one of their primary (and from the comparison group seminar groups nearly the only two gains ever mentioned) from the first-year seminar course and experience were 1) ability to write a research paper, and 2) making friends and finding a social network.

At the same time, in the experimental first-year seminar groups, in both the interviews and on the surveys, students reported a different kind of relationship and sense of

community. Students in the experimental Big Theological Questions seminar group reported the following four themes numerous times:

- People in the first-year seminar had strong religious and non-religious worldviews and we still became friends;

- Students reported making a lot of friends in the experimental first-year seminar, and that it was a really good class to help students make friends;

- Students reported talking to parents, friends at home, religious leaders from home, and many others about what was discussed in Big Questions first-year seminar;

- Multiple students reported discussions often carried on after class and then involved other students in the honors living learning community (the comparison group seminars).

Here are direct quotes from students expressing deeper nuance about the relationships within the experimental first-year seminar:

> *I think they're [the other students] good at listening to me. I think because they have the experience of other people listening to them they are more willing to listen to other people…I think we're always good at listening to each other but I think maybe our questions have gotten a little better because we know each other better now…we know a little bit more about each other's personalities, which not just general questions that really can ask anyone, I think we care more about each other than we did coming in because of the shared experience. ID# 27663281*

> *I was actually kind of nervous about our seminar because I'm not very religious. I didn't really want my throat jumped down. I knew I would feel uncomfortable talking about religion, but I don't really know what my beliefs are and I'm just not very religious but I actually feel pretty comfortable now so I could talk about it with people which I would have been afraid too before, afraid to have the conversation…I am more comfortable voicing my own opinions, which I was definitely nervous to do especially at the beginning when I realized that I'm sitting in a room of people who, for the most part, our rather strongly believing Christians and I am not and I don't really want to open my mouth and get stomped on. That is not good. [Names a student] is very blunt and just sort of puts her faith out there which I actually think it's really helped me, well, she strong enough to do it why aren't I? I'm a lot more comfortable of these voicing my own opinions, I think if it got down into a debate, I'd still be uncomfortable but I'm generally uncomfortable around people. With the comparison of then and now I'm much more comfortable now….*

Obviously I made a lot of friends in there. It's a rather good class to make friends in. It sounds kind of strange. ID# 17863889

This same student went on to say that she feels more skilled now at articulating her own worldview and beliefs and could also back up her non-religious views much more because of the Big Theological Questions experimental course. She also noted that when they did speak in class she did not feel like she got stomped down.

Big Questions Allow for Contemplation of Beliefs in Sanctuary Space

Students reported that because of the Big Theological Question seminar, and the Big Questions approach, they had to contemplate beliefs, and at the same time, a certain type of space was created. Others reported that the Big Theological Questions was the most relaxed class. It recharged them, and at the same time, they learned as much or even more than in other classes. Students reported that the Big Questions and Appreciative Inquiry conversations and questions carried over outside of class and even just when they were doing other things, in a really good way. The following quotes from three different students illustrate these points more clearly:

And it's, I feel like our seminar is a really comfortable…like it's just, like it's almost like a little [family vacation] like you know that once you get in there you can take a breather, you are with people who you know you can laugh with and not just be rigorous. You're going to blow your mind on this class, it just causes a lot of thought and you're definitely doing work but it's not, it's not scary. You can have a conversation and have it be a legitimate conversation and have it be about intellectual things as well. ID# 50136132

I felt my first year seminar awesome for freshmen to have, like I definitely, it was one of those classes I could enjoy reading something [mumble] and it's hard to describe like it was definitely class I looked forward to. It definitely kind of recharged myself in a way. I didn't have too many classes that were very discussion-based where we [the students] led the conversation and that definitely helped students with other classes… I think that when you discuss something like that in class you can have a discussion outside class sometimes by yourself when you're doing homework where you can think about it or you can question like that. You are doing your own questions as well or maybe like in class you think about the

questions you might have like you want to discuss and then you can ask that during class and just get a better knowledge. ID# 66447576

It was most relaxed class, I could really talk and like, learn from other people rather than just doing math problems or writing equations down, kind like all the other classes. So it was a nice break from the math and science but at the same time like, I learned just as much, if not more, like in the end like doing classes are important but it's the real-world impact our class, like we did, we did the service project, we did all the IEE's which were not just in class it was out of class room, which I feel are the more valuable. I mean, just like becoming more open-minded and just like relaxed, translated into everything else. ID# 60958206

Big Questions and Appreciative Inquiry Engaged Subjectivity: Personal Theology; Religious or Non-Religious Identity

Many students reported that the Big Questions and Appreciative Inquiry format of the experimental first-year seminar engaged not only their minds, but also their hearts (emotions and motivations). They made progress on identity and clarity about what they valued and why. Here are quotes from several students:

One of the things I've realized was that one of my problems has always been there like formulating my own thoughts even knowing what I'm thinking and then being able to actually[mumbles] them. I still, I don't know if you've noticed some times, I stutter when I go to talk because I can't formulate my thoughts a lot. But I realized it's okay, everyone's always going to have different beliefs I think I've always thought that I can't have an opinion I was always unsure because there are so many different opinions but it's okay to formulate beliefs and I think, what works for you can be true for you if that makes sense? And I think just knowing that will help me be able to articulate my thoughts better."
ID# 95133171

I definitely changed completely not so much religiously but like mentally I definitely figured out a lot of problems that were kind of like sitting there and I didn't really know what to do with them and first-year seminar has kind of giving me tools, so I'll be like okay, this is what I'm questioning so that's what I'm going to do for my research paper or this doesn't make sense so this is what I'm going to do for my basic theological question like, I feel like it really gave me the opportunity to be creative and start understanding myself instead of just like learning facts. ID# 63972652

I guess I'm more like figuring that out [what I believe]. But I'm not. I think of sort of come to terms [with the fact] that I'm not just a very religious person. I would side more with spirituality yeah, and morals. Morals are good but if you don't find them through a religion that's okay. I only knew one legitimate atheist at home and I don't think he did a very good job of portraying atheists. ID# 17863889

I feel like, it's helped me get to know myself a little better and reading the works by different theologians has helped me to, hearing about some of the different ones help me decide exactly what I believe about each of these topics which is basically which religions I agree with, why, and importantly why I agree and it's made me justify my feet to myself, which I think has been helpful. I'm a little more comfortable with myself and with what I believe and was saying what I believe.

I think [change happened] just through conversations with everybody, I know [names student] and I have had intellectual conversations. I know our friend, [name student], and so we have all talked about it and like, it's important to have healthy conversations about it. I think I have talked to my pastor, talked to my mom, God, I even talked to my little sister with my big questions. I think…just listening, like I am really glad that [names Muslim student] and Dr. [names Hindu professor] came to class. ID# 79593952

At first it [my big question] wasn't religious but then after talking to people, I realized that it was a religious question and it had a religious answer. And so my big questions really helped me value everybody no matter what religion there from because I used to just think like, I mean, like I used to view society there are some people that are more important and that's just the way it is, I knew that that wasn't right, but that was just kind of like how I felt. After my big questions I realized that you really need to be aware of like, how you are making other people feel, like if everyone [mumbles]… The readings, because there were some readings that I thought were like absurd, were completely wrong, I don't like what they are saying and that helped me to know what I don't believe in. Then there were also some readings that I was like oh, that's a point like I can appreciate that. It helped me think about it some more. ID# 79593952

Curiosity and a Hunger for Lifelong Learning

In the post-course interviews, students in the experimental seminar group answered questions in a way that indicated developing and even increased curiosity. Here are the types of things students were curious about:

- *[Even after the Big Theological Questions first-year seminar], I wish I knew more about Hinduism;*

- *I would like to know more about Muslims and Hindus;*

- *Even though I'm not a religious person, my big questions project came from my decision to visit a synagogue [as part of my Appreciative Inquiry Experiences and Journal];*

- *I plan to study abroad, travel the world.*

The students in the Big Theological Questions showed increased curiosity on the survey results, and in the interviews, even though they reported knowing more after the first-year seminar, they also reported realizing how much more there was to know and wanting to know it.

> *I definitely became more interested in hearing other people's opinions and having conversations with other people. I realized there is a lot, a lot out there to learn, I've always known that but…our text…with huge readings and writings [put a lot of] information out there. In terms of my outside life, I guess one [outcome] was wanting to have more conversations with people. Even though I did learn a lot there still a lot left to learn."*
> *ID# 95133171*

> *I'm just like, I don't know I've had several conversations with my dad about stuff like this. We just like talk about things like that in general but just like questions about things. He is a Christian too, we have a lot of the same beliefs but I don't know, like we talk a lot about different things were doing in class or all bring up something that someone said or something that happened or how I felt about it…He came to get me to go to lunch one day and we ended up talking about stuff on the drive to and from like, I don't know like, it's just interesting because like you want to know more even if it's like, I'm a very stubborn person, so I feel like open me up a lot more to be like I want to learn more about what they're actually saying instead of just saying like, like the fact that you ask what Hindu was I don't necessarily know the answer to that and that kind of actually bugs me now a lot more than it did before because now it's like oh I want to meet someone and talk to them more about what they think to learn more about it.   ID# 97165762*

Skill Development: Speaking, Listening, Appreciating, Valuing

Students reported skill development as significant, related to the continuing practice of listening, gaining clarification, and practicing appreciative inquiry throughout the entire semester. Students reported that you can listen better if you know first what you believe. Interestingly, and not totally surprisingly, a number of students in the comparison group Shakespeare reported skill development related to listening and group processed developed over the semester. Students reported learning how to listen well, ask clarifying questions, and really trying to understand the other. They noticed increasing skill over the semester.

One student in the experimental first-year seminar said that all the students were challenged to listen to others, and stated that it was interesting to watch people listen, and

observe when other students clearly wanted to talk but were trying as hard as they could to

be good listeners and letting other people speak their opinions first. The student continued:

> *People seemed engaged and actually interested in what other people were talking about….*
> *Just listening and being open to what other people are saying even if it's really frustrating*
> *like time so part of its I'm trying to take minutes as secretary and such, in that situation,*
> *that probably helps a lot, like I know several times I just stopped and listened to what they*
> *were saying and then tried to figure out how to summarize it afterward because I would like*
> *be focused on what they were saying. ID# 97165762*

> *[One useful thing from first-year seminar was the] learning how to properly hold discussions*
> *aspect. There was definitely an evolution. At the beginning [of the course] none of us really*
> *talked and at the end, we were like bouncing ideas off of each other and everything. So just*
> *like learning how to work in our groups that had so many different views and make it*
> *cohesive and find answers together. And even though we started out with so many different*
> *viewpoints we were able to combine the ideas were just reached a point where it all made*
> *sense to all of us. That kind of thing." ID# 27422648*

For some students in the comparison group seminar Shakespeare in Text & Film,

this type of skill development happened. It was not reported as widely as in the Big

Theological Questions group, but several students mentioned it. Here is a quote from one

student in the comparison group Shakespeare:

> *I think in my first year seminar everyone was really respectful to each other. The way our*
> *class was set up was kind of a seminar where we would all take the lead and talk about*
> *our different ideas basically and what we were reading about. And everyone was really*
> *respectful and if they disagreed they would be in a kind way it was never putting someone*
> *down or their thoughts down…A lot of times I would know, especially who was engaged in*
> *the conversations, if someone wasn't engage in the conversation obviously they weren't*
> *listening but, a lot of times they would look as I'm talking they would raise their hand to*
> *talk and I would know that there was going to be a response to something I was saying.*
> *ID# 28946028*

Perhaps it was the content of religion rather than literature, or perhaps it was the

focus on big questions and appreciative inquiry, but the quality of the effect was different in

the Big Theological Questions experimental seminar group:

> *I thought it was really interesting to hear what different people had to say. I think*
> *sometimes things had to be clarified and that could be frustrating. People came in with*
> *generalizations, I mean I did too, about different religions and sometimes we need to make*
> *sure that we clarified with each other, like, that's not actually what we believe that's just a*
> *stereotype. ID# 88910122*

Students reported that by the end of the semester, they were listening to each other and building from what each other said—constructing new ideas, new possibilities, and new questions.

> *I think that we were pretty good to begin with but as the semester progressed people got better. We learned the whole discussion style a little bit, we figured it out…It takes practice. You need to know when to listen and when to speak…help people understand when it was appropriate to talk and when it was appropriate to listen. It's important to realize the situation and know when you should be listening…having people that [are willing to] question, you kind of learn more about your religion, especially if you can have a discussion that's not like an argument…especially discussions if you talk about what you believe in and you hear what others have to say…and sometimes you do end up questioning your own religion but the better part is sometimes you hear or get a better understanding out of that you realize more about what your religion is about by learning about others. ID# 66447576*

> *[In Big Theological Questions] people were listening and didn't have the risk of being completely disregarded or interrupted. It was a good environment for feeling comfortable speaking and knowing other people would hear you…A lot of times it would spur off into different discussions and people would ask for clarification…They were paying attention enough to realize that they didn't really understand things so, there would always be someone searching for more after you would say something instead of just you saying it end up being dropped. There was always like a condition or question or clarification to show that there was attention being put onto it. ID# 27422648*

Can No Longer Assume or Stereotype: More Open-Minded and Tolerant

Students in the experimental group reported in the interviews that exploring religion challenged some stereotypes with which they had been operating throughout high school. Atheists reported being less stereotypical and judgmental about religious people, and religious people reported being more open and seeing things in a bigger way. Some talked of being less judgmental toward particular groups, including atheists, religious people, Roman Catholics, and Muslims. One of the best quotes to illustrate this theme came from a non-religious student:

> *Before the seminar I would've said people were [only] spiritual because they are raised that way after the seminar doesn't really feel like that's the case…Feel like after the seminar lots of kids are asking questions to help them determine their beliefs. It's easy to judge a*

<u>Seminar in Religion Helped Them Encounter Diversity on a Not-to-Diverse Campus</u>

Students across all seminars reported generally that their high schools were not very diverse places. In very few instances, a student or two reported that their high school was more diverse that the college. Nearly all students reported encountering very little religious diversity in the first semester of college, and what they did encounter was through required activities of courses. Students in the experimental group reported that having a course in religion helped them encounter diversity they had not experienced in high school, and would not have otherwise found on campus. At the same time, a few students in the comparison groups reported engaging diversity because of the IEE requirement for all first-year seminars. When asked to describe Muslims, but not asked if they had ever known a Muslim, seven students in the experimental first-year seminar reported that because of the experimental first-year seminar they now had met a Muslim person for the first time ever. Students in the comparison seminar groups mostly answered the question either I don't know anything about Muslims, or I've never met any, or I only know what I see on the news.

Here are some quotes from students in the experimental first-year seminar group that illustrate how the seminar helped them to experience diversity they might not have otherwise encountered on a rather non-diverse campus:

Well, [because of Big Theological Questions] I've met a total of one [Muslim] now. I don't
know if she speaks, well she can't speak for everybody but I really liked her. I suppose like
Americanized one I just think it's kind of a shame that everybody kind of rags on them,
that's terrible, not all of them are like, she showed that video everybody's like personal
[mumbles] like I am a Muslim but like, here's something else about me. They are a lot
like us, I found it really interesting that they believe in all of the prophets, I didn't know
that. And it's just I don't anybody knows that [mumbles] they are really not that different,

they are people too. Yes, you're wearing a headscarf, you know if you are wearing a hat does that make you that different? You have a cross around your neck, are you unapproachable? I don't really understand. People are people. ID# 17863889

[Because of my Big Theological Question first-year seminar, I] now know people who are agnostic or atheist. I would not have known that before. ID# 63972652

Even in just our seminar there are different sects of Christianity that believe different things like there's, there's almost like a total different ends of the spectrum within Christianity so it's a wide range so it's hard to even try to describe it because there's the different types so I don't know even how to really describe it anymore because there is so many different views like a huge umbrella over all these different ones it's kind of like you almost have to describe all the other ones underneath it to understand Christianity as a whole, like, a definitely feel like, it's a lot harder for me to say okay what is Christianity because looking at it now from like all the different perspectives even just coming from different churches that do different things you have very similar beliefs but like, you have different things to your service and stuff like that and even ones that are really close not even far[mumbles] ones there's still a lot of differences different things you do so it's very hard to generalize you'd have to like sit and go through like this is evangelical Christians and this is what a traditional type Christians like this is what a Roman Catholic Christians like, there are so many different ones that it really hard to do anymore. ID# 97165762

This happened for students in the comparison group seminars only when they specifically sought it out, and a few reported that they did. One students reported that because of a broad requirement of her comparison-group first-year seminar, she elected to attend a cultural diversity workshop which will help with her major.

Discovering Religion is Relevant and Matters

A number of the students in the interviews across all experimental and comparison groups discussed how religions was really quite irrelevant to the life of people in 21ˢᵗ century America. At the same time, this quote from a student in the experimental big questions and appreciative inquiry seminar group is illustrative of what can happen to students in terms of discovering that religion is relevant and does matter:

Before BQ FYS, I just kind of disregarded religion and what people believe as not mattering; now I think it's a pretty big deal.

It is something I have thought of before but never really paid attention to it so I sort of read the textbook like yeah, yeah, I know. And now like after the seminar I'm like, oh that's

probably a big deal [religious belief and practice] I should do something about that. I guess in a way it's help me explore my own beliefs as well. Even though my belief hasn't really changed all that much it made me question it and like, think about other things as well. I think I have more questions and more thought about it. ID# 50136132

I often find myself thinking, like something will happen in a presentation and I'll think, we talked about that in FYS. Or just like talking about things like does God exist, I know whenever I go to like a different service I'll be thinking about the basic theology of things in there. I understood, I think about how they believe or how they worship and it's just definitely more questioning or more trying to understand as well. ID# 66447576

Willing to Share Worldviews Openly

What the researcher heard many times in the interviews with all subjects was how religion was just not discussed or dealt with in high school—not in the classroom, not in the lunch room, not in conversations with friends, and not even when visiting a Muslim or Sikh friend's home. Students reported that when religion did come up in high school, it was associated with open conflict, usually between evangelical Christians and atheists or agnostics.

In the post-course interviews, students in the experimental seminar group reported a greater willingness to share and converse about religions and non-religious worldviews and practices openly, because it was interesting and could even be fun. Here is a quote from one student in one of the experimental groups:

> *I was actually kind of nervous about our seminar because I'm not very religious, I didn't really want my throat jumped down, I knew I would feel uncomfortable talking about religion but I don't really know what my beliefs are and I'm just not very religious but I actually feel pre-comfortable now so I could talk about it with people which I would have been afraid to before, afraid to have the conversation…*

Bridge-Building Behaviors

When students responded to a question about change in beliefs or ethics by saying that they had become more open, tolerant, curious, a follow-up question regarding what

caused that change elicited from eleven of fifteen experimental group subjects interviewed

that it was either the Big Questions First-Year Seminar or the Big Questions Project. One

student reported doing the research paper for the course on Hinduism, even though she is

an exclusivist. A Christian student reported being able to talk with her atheist cousin about

beliefs without fighting, which is something that they always had done when religion came

up. A non-religious student chose to go to synagogue on her own. Others reported

continuing to seek out diversity, but that it was hard to find on campus.

> *I don't know if I seek it out so much as it tends to happen and I appreciate it so, but I think I be more likely to seek it out now. Normally I don't think I would've gone to a synagogue, but I'm so glad I went it was a really interesting experience just to be there and go to their service with them, glad I had that opportunity…[I find] listening to people of other cultures and religions even more fascinating. Like going into the synagogue which was fascinating because I hadn't heard even Jewish people before so it was interesting…They were so kind and were really welcoming they were happy to have us there. It was so funny, after down and eat with them and one of the older ladies, it was very funny, she said, you guys have to eat or it's not a Jewish event. ID# 27663281*

Here is a quote that illustrates some amazing Christian-Atheist bridge-building that

occurred within the experimental seminar itself.

> *I've been trying to figure out who I am for quite a while, I don't really know. I mean I've, if you look at me through high school I've changed a lot. And, and basically now that I look back just trying to become more comfortable with myself, who is myself. I already[mumbles] this is who I am even belief systems like especially, all of my really Christian friends at home our seminar just made me really comfortable with my, I guess not really lack of beliefs, but maybe different from a lot of people. I'm surprisingly a lot more comfortable with it than I thought I would be. It's got to have something to do with our class because there is no way I could have made this much progress without it. I can't specifically say this is what we did that made me feel like this but as a whole it have to be that because it's been like four months and there is no way that on my own I would have felt this much more comfortable with my belief system in four months, you just don't come to that…I'm comfortable but I feel grounded and feeling more grounded and even [mumbles very fast]… Am I supposed be talking to God, I don't know, I don't really do that, I just kind of talk to myself like I'm trying to achieve peace some way[mumbles] it was just completely scatterbrain and then there were times just sitting on my bed thinking and I can even use that to clear my mind and other people too and that would definitely help, it just makes the decision to sit down and say okay, this is what I believe so, if I look at my choices, I actually find it a lot easier to break things down to decide what is really important to me. ID# 17863889*

One of the main things is I want to really like visit other places now even, like even go to Africa now, go to Asia and see like, different religions like, what it's like when that's the mainstream idea. See how they do their religion on a daily basis, how they keep like a good religious perspective on life. At the same time, like serve other people more. I definitely want to help people out and do as much as I can because I think that's one of the keys, not just a religion but to living a good life in general…. I think that was reinforced through the class. ID# 60958206

I think that it [this class] opened up opportunities to have some interesting conversations with people from back home especially my cousin who…is an atheist. He always fights me on religion…[Recently] he wasn't ganging up on me as much but he was kind of willing to talk it out more…I think I had more to back up my beliefs now, whereas before I was kind of like can you just [mumble] no, I actually had some support now. ID# 88910122

This student concluded by saying that the conversation was an improvement as they were both more willing to listen to each other.

Focused Coding for Inquiry-Based Pedagogy Applied to Teaching Religion

I used focused coding based on frequency, significant, and/or saliency to generate a list of the most important positive outcomes of the inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion was created. I also rated the likelihood of these outcomes resulting in any other religion or any other first-year seminar course.

In response to the aforementioned concerns, I have created a table below summarizing the outcomes for the experimental courses, which applied an inquiry-based pedagogy to the teaching of theology and religion. I then estimated the likelihood of each of those outcomes in any theology or religious studies course using traditional pedagogies, or in any first-year seminar course using generally accepted first-year seminar pedagogies.

Although I suspect that using the inquiry-based pedagogy for the teaching of theology and religion creates outcomes not found simply in the teaching of any theology and religion course, my study cannot rule that out as a possibility. In the future, I think it would be interesting to study the outcomes of a course in theology and religion taught using the

inquiry-based pedagogy, compared to a theology and religion course taught without using

the inquiry-based pedagogy. Unfortunately, this was not possible in this study, because the

only religion courses our department has that would meet this criteria would not be taught to

first-year students.

Table 6.23 Summary of Outcomes with Experimental Pedagogy in Theology and Religion
Compared to Likely Outcomes of Any Religion or First-Year Seminar Course

Summary of Outcomes from This Study of Inquiry-Based Pedagogy Applied to Teaching Theology and Religion	Outcome of Inquiry-Based Pedagogy Applied to Theology & Religion	Is this a Likely Outcome of Any Theology or Religious Studies Course Using Traditional Pedagogies?	Is this a Likely Outcome of Any First-Year Seminar Course Using Generally Accepted Pedagogies?
Increased religious knowledge	X	X	
Think critically about religion	X	X	
Build positive relationships with peers	X	?	X
Contemplation of beliefs and worldview in a sanctuary space	X		
Engaging subjectivity--the students' personal religious and non-religious identities	X		?
Curiosity and a hunger for lifelong learning	X	?	?
Skill development--speaking, listening, appreciating, valuing	X	?	?
Encounter diversity on a not-so-diverse campus	X	?	
Discovering religion is relevant and matters	X	?	
Willing to share worldviews openly	X		
Resulted in bridge-building behaviors	X	?	

Model for Inquiry-Based Pedagogy for Teaching of Theology and Religion

Another research question of this study was: What might be the features of a signature or high-impact pedagogical elements of an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion? The diagram below represents visually what has emerged from the theological, social sciences, and educational theory from Chapter 2, as well as comments in the write-in boxes on the post-course surveys completed by the experimental group and also through grounded theory using pre-and post-course interview transcripts.

Illustration 6.2
Model of Signature Inquiry-Based Pedagogy
for the Teaching of Theology and Religion
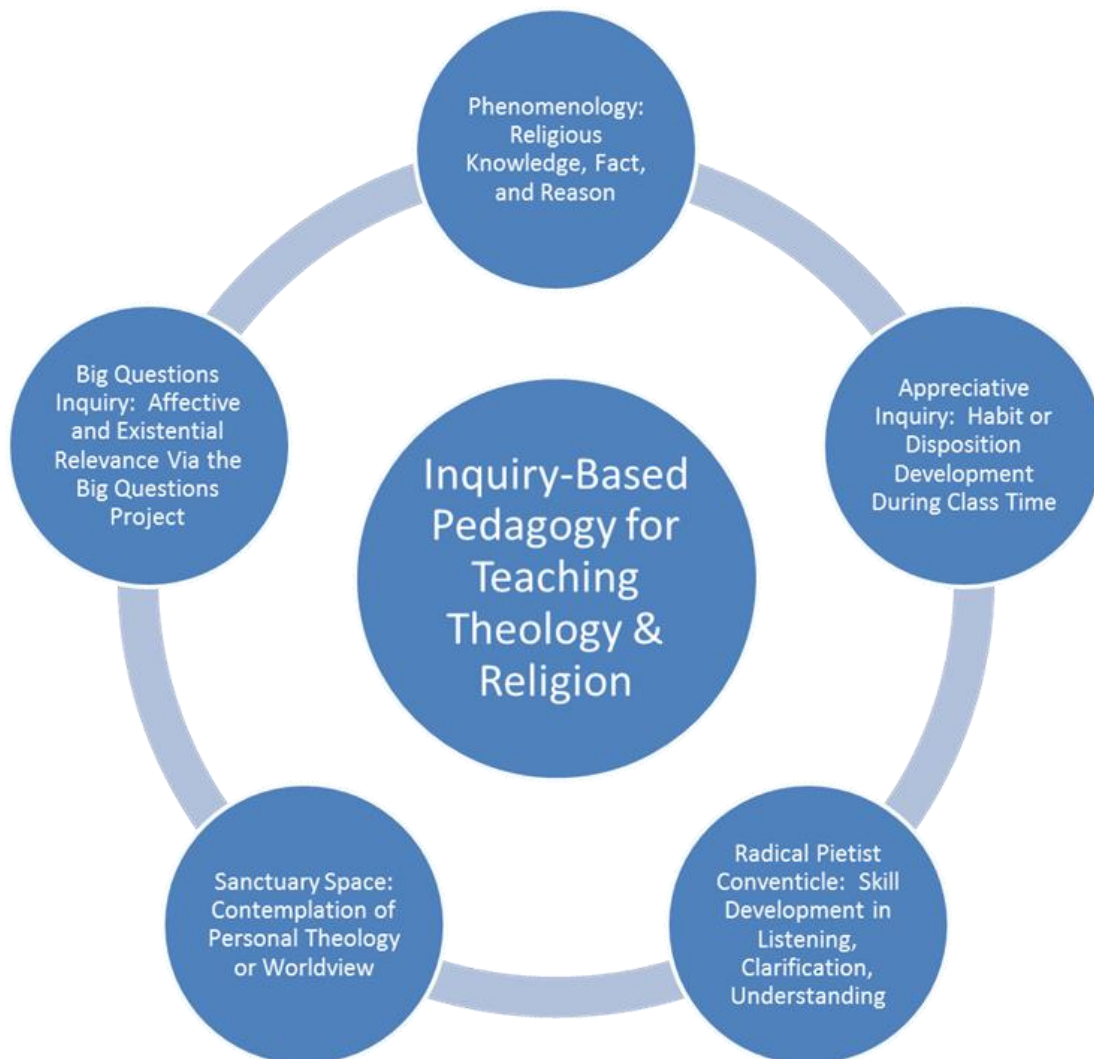
Summary of Qualitative Outcomes

In their research, Astin, Astin, and Lindholm named ten measures of spirituality and religiousness:

1. Spiritual Quest is related to students' searching for, finding, and developing a sense of purpose and a meaningful philosophy of life, as well as inner harmony;

2. Equanimity involves the degree to which students feel centered and positive both in times of hardship and in terms of his/her life's direction;

3. Ethic of Caring includes students' commitment to making the world a better place through things such as helping others and challenging injustice;

4. Charitable Involvement measures students' helping behaviors, both giving to charity and doing service projects;

5. Ecumenical Worldview related to students' seeking to understand other religions, cultures, and also believes in and feels connected to all of humanity;

6. Religious Commitment is the degree to which students follow religious teachings, and derive strength and joy from religious beliefs and practices;

7. Religious Engagement measures how much students attending religious services, pray, and read sacred texts;

8. Religious/Social Conservatism indicates how much students proselytize nonbelievers, oppose casual sex and abortion, or see God as male;

9. Religious Skepticism reflects the degree to which students disbelieve in life after death, and believe in fate, chance, and science.

10. Religious Struggle measures the extent to which students question religious beliefs, feel unsettled or disagree with family about religion, or feel alienated from God.[142]

According to Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, many of these measures are correlated with each other either positively (Spiritual Quest and Ethic of Caring) or negatively (Religious/Social Conservatism and Religious Skepticism). Interestingly, the one item of the ten that shows no real relationships with the other nine measures is Religious Struggle.

At the same time, it is my experiences, and I think this is supported by the research of Tim Clydesdale, Christian Smith, David Gortner, Kendra Creasy Dean, Sharon Daloz Parks, and others, that young adulthood is a time when a majority of students are having what Astin, Astin, and Lindholm call Religious Struggle. One of the goals of this study was to connect elements of Spiritual Quest with Religious Struggle, Religious Skepticism and Religious Commitment in a classroom setting within a mentoring community—instructor mentoring the group, instructor mentoring individuals, and peers mentoring each other.

The third and fourth research questions of this study focused on how engaging with appreciative inquiry and big enough questions change students' spirituality and/or students' worldviews, dispositions, or behaviors, and what happens to students' spiritual and religious lives over the first two years of college.

Grounded theory for themes related to the inquiry-based pedagogy reveal the following student self-reported outcomes:

- Increasing religious knowledge

- Thinking critically about religion

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[142] Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, p. 20-22.

- Building positive relationships with peers

- Contemplating beliefs and worldviews in a sanctuary space

- Engaging subjectivity—the students' personal religious and non-religious identities

- Increasing curiosity and hunger for lifelong learning

- Developing skills in speaking, listening, appreciating, valuing

- Encountering diversity on a not-so-diverse campus

- Discovering religion is relevant and matters

- Being willing and able to share worldviews openly.

- Engaging in bridge-building behaviors.

One item the experimental group students named again and again, which relates to Astin, Astin, and Lindholm's framework, is how much they appreciated the first-year seminar course in theology helping them connect religious skepticism/struggle with spiritual quest and developing religious commitment and ecumenical worldview.

Both the quantitative and qualitative results of my research suggest that the first year of college is a time of searching for meaning, purpose, identity, and community for all students, not just the experimental group students, and not just the Christians. The atheists and the comparison group students also were searching. The grounded theory revealed that some students will not change basic beliefs, but some will even change religions. Some, including atheists, will change rather dramatically in their attitudes toward religion and religious people.

This research suggests that the first year of college is a turning point time for many students religiously and spiritually. The results of the grounded theory of interview transcripts also affirms the ideas of both Eboo Patel and Sharon Daloz Parks and Eboo

Patel that who meets you at the crossroads, who mentors you during these crucial moments may have a great impact.

The grounded theory work also revealed that a wide variety of factors affected the development of students in the first two years of college, including dealing with the death of a friend or family member, rooming with or living on the floor with different people, making new friends, adjusting to independence and being away from home. Coursework and relationships with faculty did matter.

For quite a few students, it seemed that the first year was crucial, almost a turning point between becoming articulate and confident in expressing worldview, finding purpose, and gaining skill to engage diverse religious and cultures on the one hand, and being inarticulate and unconfident in expressing worldview, feeling stuck and lacking purpose, and avoiding or disengaging from religion and religious people out of fear and discomfort on the other hand. As I think back on the interviews and the individual students over the two years of the study, it was almost as if there were two pathways for the students, and these two pathways did diverge in very different directions (see previous Illustration 6.1).

In summary, the effectiveness of the inquiry-based pedagogy used in teaching theology and religion in the students' words seemed to center on holding the critical and appreciative in constant tension. Students valued the new cognitive knowledge as much as the contemplation of beliefs and values. They noted the importance of thinking critically, but also of digging deep in terms of the subjective—listening, questioning, valuing, appreciating, challenging, creating, and constructing (see previous Illustration 6.2).

Chapter 7
Theory and Analysis

Project Purpose

Alexander Astin, Helen Astin, and Jennifer Lindholm have found that engagement with big questions increases dispositions and skills related to what they have called students' ecumenical worldview and what Eboo Patel and Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) call the interfaith triangle. Few scholars have applied Sharon Daloz Parks' big questions theory in an academic classroom setting and systematically analyzed the outcomes.[143] The primary purpose of this project was to develop and test an inquiry-based pedagogy designed specifically for teaching theology and religion in the classroom, with the goal of trying to discover the nature of any enhancement in students' spiritual development or inner lives that might come from engaging big questions in academic courses in theology and religion.

Primary Research Questions

There were four primary research questions for the study. In some ways, all four questions were both theological and educational, and at the same time, one might say that the first research question was primarily an educational question, and the last three research questions were primarily theological questions:

1. Can an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion increase students' dispositions related to what Astin, Astin, and Lindholm call "ecumenical worldview," and what Patel and IFYC call the interfaith triangle?

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[143] Nancy J. Evan, Deanna S. Forney, Florence M. Guido, Lori D. Patton, and Kristen A. Renn, *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice, 2nd edition* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

2. Can an inquiry-based pedagogy applied to the teaching of theology and religion advance students' spiritual development or enhance their "inner lives"?

3. How does engaging with big questions change enhance students' spirituality and or change students' worldviews, dispositions, behaviors, etc.?

4. What happens to students' spiritual and religious lives over the first two years of college?

Summary and Discussion of Evidence of Impact of Project

<u>Using the Diversity in the Classroom to Teach</u>

Steven Prothero has documented the lack of religious knowledge of Americans, not only about other religious traditions, but also about their own religious traditions. Christian Smith's studies of youth and emerging adults have come to related conclusions, especially about Christian emerging adults' lack of knowledge and understanding of Christian faith and practice. The assumption seems to be that teaching "about" religion will produce the results we want in terms of students' own religious identity and development, as well as their ability to effectively engage the other. While teaching "about" religion may be all that is allowed in the public schools of America, the private institutions of higher education have an opportunity to move in a different direction, including affective engagement. When I began this study, one of the few books I could find on pedagogy related to interfaith engagement was a book of case studies from the work being done at the seminary level.[144] Part of my approach in this study has been allowing students, whether religious or non-religious, to learn with each other, not about each other.[145]

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[144] David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell, *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue* (Hartford, CT: Hartford Seminary, 2009).
[145] Mary C. Boys and Sara S. Lee, *Christians and Jews in Dialogue: Learning in the Presence of the Other*. (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths, 2006).

The work of Patricia Gurin and colleagues as University of Michigan found that use of diversity within a classroom can lead to significant cognitive and affective learning outcomes, as students learn not only from the content of the course, but also from each other.[146] This research project sought to capitalize on the limited diversity within the classroom on my not-so-diverse campus, and also to leverage it for the greatest outcomes, while teaching the content primarily of only one religious tradition in conversation with philosophy and other religious voices. The post-course interview responses and survey write-in comments of students from EG Theology and to a lesser extent, students in CG Literature affirmed the results of Gurin et. al. When an instructor teaches in a way that allows the diversity within the classroom to be integrated with the academic content, students experience not only cognitive, but also affective learning outcomes.

Curiosity Does Matter

In Catherine Cornille's book on effective interreligious dialogue, she explores humility, commitment, interconnection, empathy, and hospitality. At the same time, my reading of Princeton philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah's book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* challenged me to think that curiosity needed to be a part of this list, and it could be especially important for undergraduates. The importance of curiosity for undergraduates has been an important finding of sociologist Tim Clydesdale. In his research with college freshman, he has named a phenomenon he calls the "identity lockbox."[147] This phenomenon occurs when entering college or university students set aside their previously

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[146] Patricia Gurin, Eric L. Dey, Sylvia Hurtado, and Gerald Gurin, "Diversity and Higher Education: Theory and Impact on Educational Outcomes," Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 72, No. 3, Fall 2002, accessed at
http://www.temple.edu/tlc/resources/handouts/diversity/Gurin_and_Hurtado.pdf
[147] Dean, 161.

developed identities, and/or put on hold identity development. Only one in seven first-year students in Clydesdale's research had the three items required to stay out of the identity lockbox: intellectual curiosity, creative engagement, and social awareness. So according to Appiah, curiosity matters for being a cosmopolitan or a citizen of the world. According to positive psychologist Todd Kashdan, curiosity matters for well-being, and according to Clydesdale, it matters for the development of students' mature self-awareness, identity formation, and reflexivity.

The quantitative results of this study showed that the experimental group students had an increase on three of six items of Kashdan's Curiosity and Exploration Inventory, while the comparison group students decreased on these three items. Before the course, the between groups' difference was not statistically significant, but after the course the between groups' difference was statistically significant. Moreover, the experimental groups had greater positive engagement with religious and non-religious diverse than comparison groups students. Overall, the results of my study do support Appiah and Clydesdale's views about the importance of curiosity both in continuing identity development and becoming a more engaged citizen of the world.

Reflexivity, Decentering, and the Use of Inquiry-Based Pedagogy

According to theologian Kendra Creasy Dean, "reflexivity" is a process similar to detachment, which allows us to have an awareness of self and a view of others from a new space, so we can imagine new possibilities. "Decentering" is one transformative educational process by which educators can promote the growth in maturity, cognition, and consciousness that leads to reflexivity. She writes: "In the church, decentering practices

eject us from our existential comfort zones and bring us to a new place (often symbolized by physical relocation) from which we can reconsider God's action in the world and in us."[148]

My research aimed at a decentering pedagogy, through the use of big questions, to help students enter a sanctuary space where the encounter with others could lead to transformative learning. According to the account of both experimental group instructors, as well as in-depth interviews with both the experimental group and comparison group students, this happened in nearly all of the experimental group students, but only in some of the comparison group students. Again, the between groups differences—personally, interpersonally, and inter-religiously/inter-culturally—were statistically significant.

According to Dean, this change happens because disorienting dilemmas cause us to critically reflect on prior assumptions, and name new insights through discourse with others. Dean connects transformative learning theory to not only the work of the Holy Spirit, but also the Greek *paideia* of the church's early educational endeavors. According to Dean, the *morphosis* of this kind of pedagogy is existential and epistemological so that what is changed is not just what the learner knows, but the learner him or herself.[149] Again, my results support Dean's ideas, in that one of the items of between groups difference that was statistically suggestive was related to an epistemological change in the experimental group students.

Students' Perceived Great Benefits

Possibly the most significant results of the study were the benefits students perceived from the first-year seminar courses in theology or biblical studies that used the inquiry-based pedagogy. Students reported perceived benefits including personal items, interpersonal items, and interreligious and/or intercultural outcomes. Experimental group students

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[148] Dean, 160.
[149] Dean, 172.

reported statistically significantly more benefits in eight areas, and statistically suggestive higher benefits in two areas.

Some Concerns

This study has revealed possible places in which we might begin to do further research, but the results of the overall study itself are suggestive only. The answer to one of Astin and Astin's key questions remains elusive: What precipitates positive religious struggle as opposed to negative religious struggle or skepticism? While there were a number of between groups differences in this study that were statistically significant post-course, but not pre-course (e.g., curiosity), in the end, the within groups pre-course and post-course differences did not necessarily or clearly support or reinforce the between groups results.

Another concern is how enduring the effects actually were. On the one hand, interviews over the two-year period of the study suggest that the religious knowledge of the experimental group students became fuzzy over time. On the other hand, the final interviews, completed at the end of the sophomore year, did reveal a high degree of engagement in religious diversity of the experimental group subjects, with less engagement by the comparison group subjects.

Another concern is the limitations of trying to teach these things only in the classroom. The work of Patricia Gurin and colleagues as University of Michigan clearly found that when use of diversity within a classroom was added as a comparison, the impact of informal diversity encounters was great.[150] Gurin's study points to the importance of co-curricular engagement with diversity. In my study, one comparison group subject from CG Math did become highly involved in Interfaith Better Together activities campus. Clearly, in

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[150] P. Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and G. Gurin (2002).

the end, especially with issues as complex as spiritual development and inter-religious and inter-cultural engagement, a multi-pronged approach is most efficacious.

Theological, Educational, and Social Sciences Assessment of Impact

Inquiry-Based Pedagogy and Students' Spiritual Development

Both of the two inquiry-based methods applied to the teaching of theology and religion were impactful, according to student reports on both the surveys and the in-depth individual interviews. Students mentioned the big questions inquiry project more frequently and directly than the appreciative inquiry work. The big questions project made theology and religion seem relevant to the students' lives. Students mentioned the appreciative inquiry pedagogy less frequently and less directly. At the same time, students who did talk about the appreciative inquiry pedagogy, described how it helped them to develop habits and dispositions of thought, conversation, and engagement of the other.

Greatest Gains in Personal Understanding. Part of this study was based on the ideas of Sharon Daloz Parks that engaging big questions would foster students' spiritual development, and advance their inner lives. The results of this study did show that experimental group students perceived personal benefits related to self-awareness, ability to articulate beliefs, and clarity vocation at levels that were statistically significant or suggestively higher than those of the comparison group students.

In response to the question about whether or not the first-year seminar helped the student "be more aware of who I am," the two experimental groups had much higher affirmative responses (100%, 90%) than the three comparison groups (40%, 40%, 27%). The same was true for the question regarding whether or not the first-year seminar had helped the student "clearly state my beliefs," with the two experimental groups reporting 100% and 90%, and the three comparison groups reporting 64%, 20%, 20%.

Important Gains in Interpersonal Understanding. In response to the question about whether or not the first-year seminar helped the student "listen to others' points of view," the two experimental groups had somewhat higher affirmative responses (100%, 100%) than one comparison group (EG Literature, 82%), and much higher than the two other comparison groups (60%, 40%). The same was true for the question regarding whether or not the first-year seminar had helped the student "appreciate others' beliefs," with the two experimental groups reporting 100% and 90%, and the three comparison groups reporting 73%, 60%, 30%.

Engaging the Subjectivity of the Subject is Key to Transformative Education. Parks notes that education has an important role as a commons, especially in the development of both critical thought and viable faith in young adulthood. According to Parks, faith is different from religion, and one of the key tasks of faith development in young adults is something that seemed to happen to students in the experimental seminar groups, and to none of the students interviewed in the comparison seminar groups. Parks writes:

> *To become a young adult in faith is to discover in a critically aware, self-conscious manner the limits of inherited or otherwise socially received assumptions about how life works— what is ultimately true and trustworthy, and what counts—and to recomprise meaning and faith on the other side of that discovery.*[151]

Astin and Astin define spirituality as necessarily including subjectivity:

> *Spirituality thus points to our inner, subjective life. It also involves our affective experiences at least as much as it does our reasoning or logic. More specifically, spirituality has to do with the values that we hold most dear, our sense of who we are and where we come from, our beliefs about why we are here—the meaning and purpose that we see in our world and our life—and our sense of connectedness to one another and to the world around us.*[152]

An obvious question is whether or not this could happen in any world religions or religious studies course. Theoretically, it could. In reality, I think it does not happen for a majority of

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[151] Parks, 7.
[152] Astin and Astin, *Attending to Students' Inner Lives*, 3.

students. In Table 6.1, I have summarized the specific outcomes found in the experimental group students from grounded theory focused coding of interview transcripts, and then I have suggested that at least three of those outcomes would not happen in a typical religious studies course:

- Contemplation of beliefs and worldview in a sanctuary space

- Engaging subjectivity--the students' personal religious and non-religious identities

- Willing to share worldviews openly

I also have suggested that it was questionable whether or not the following outcomes would occur in a traditional religious studies course:

- Build positive relationships with peers

- Curiosity and a hunger for lifelong learning

- Skill development--speaking, listening, appreciating, valuing

- Encounter diversity on a not-so-diverse campus

- Discovering religion is relevant and matters

- Resulted in bridge-building behaviors.

Inquiry-Based Pedagogies, Ecumenical Worldview, and Increased Engagement

Astin and Astin found that service-learning, study abroad, interdisciplinary courses, philanthropic giving, interracial interaction, leadership training, and contemplative practices are highly correlated with college students' increased spiritual development. They also found that when students were encouraged and challenged to engage in big questions of life, meaning, and purpose, the students' scores in ecumenical worldview were higher.[153]

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[153] Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, *Cultivating the Spirit,* 75-76.

The most striking between groups' differences were found between the experimental group and comparison group students related to confidence, motivation, and willingness to initiate engagement with diverse religious and cultural viewpoints, including the development of friendships. My study supports the findings of Astin and Astin in terms of the relationship between big questions and ecumenical worldview, as well an increase in actual behavioral engagement. Interview reports of frequency of engaging diversity showed that the experimental group had higher levels of engaging diversity in ten of ten areas. The types of engagement included having class with, speaking to, eating with, having meaningful conversation with, doing service project together with, discussing religion outside of class, sharing a friendship, choosing as a roommate, advocating for, and visiting a house of worship.

In terms of personal theologies and philosophies, the interview transcripts revealed that students in the experimental groups changed in different ways. Not everyone moved beyond therapeutic moral deism, but some did. Not everyone became Christian, but the atheists reported more ability to speak about who they were and what they believed. While most experimental group students engaged in bridge-building behaviors across religions and cultures, not everyone became a theological or philosophical pluralist.

An interesting future study would include case studies of selected individual experimental and comparison group students written up from the four sets of interview transcripts conducted over their first two years of college. The reasons I did not complete that for this study were three-fold: 1) time limitations, 2) concerns that these students would not be seen as representative with so few males and so littler religious and racial diversity, and 3) lack of clarity about how I could keep the students non-identifiable in such a small group at a small college.

Parks speaks of what might be called both cognitive learning goals (e.g., critiquing assumptions and social conventions, pursuing truth) and also affective learning goals (e.g., awareness, self-consciousness, trust, valuing, determining what counts). I think the academy in general, and religious studies in particular needs to infuse more of the latter into the curriculum, and yet, I think there is resistance in many parts of the academy.

Limitations of Study

Flaws in Research Design

A number of problems existed with the research design, including my inability to include a first-year religious studies course taught without an inquiry-based pedagogy. Moreover, while it was important to include a first-year seminar course in religion not taught by the instructor, the part of the hypothesis related specifically to the teaching of Christian theology changed in year two to "the teaching of Christian theology or Bible," when the second experimental group, which was not taught by me, was added and the topic was Bible.

Looking back, one limitation to my grounded theory approach was the fact that I did not build into my design and seek IRB approval to use additional forms of qualitative data for my grounded theory, including the appreciative inquiry journals and also the big questions final projects.

Social Demand Effects and the Role of the Instructor

Social demand effects always have to be considered in a research design in which the students know that they are participating in research, and they even know the hypothesis. At the same time, one key social demand effect in this study was the desire to please the instructor, which happens in any academic course, and especially with honors students. Honors students at our college are generally people-pleasing high achievers who want to put

their best foot forward on everything, and this would have been consistent between the experimental and comparison groups. While the researcher's experimental students (EG Theology) responded to the survey in higher numbers than any of the other groups, CG Literature had a higher percentage of respondents than EG Bible.

Furthermore, the disaggregated results of EG Theology and EG Bible confirmed each other, and the researcher only taught one of those two experimental groups. At the same time, there were differences in outcomes between on several items for EG Theology and EG Bible. In some cases, outcomes in EG Theology (taught by the researcher) were more impactful, and in a few cases, outcomes in EG Bible students were higher. While this could have been due to the difference in course content, in the end the reasons for this are not clear and are beyond the scope of this study.

Students Who Choose Religion Courses are Just More Religious

Both pre-course and post-course, students in the two experimental groups did score higher on a number of items related to degree of spirituality and religiousness than two out of three of the comparison groups. One could say that the two experimental groups were clearly both more spiritual and more religious than CG Literature, and possibly also CG Math. However, CG Science cannot be said to have a significant difference in degree of spirituality and religiousness than the experimental groups. Moreover, EG Theology had two of the three atheists in the entire study, and one of the few Nones in the study.

On the one hand, one could argue that the statistically significant outcomes related to interfaith engagement were simply due to the fact that the students in the experimental groups were more religious and spiritual than the students in the comparison groups. On the other hand, some have argued, including Eboo Patel, that positive engagement with those with differing worldviews is often most difficult for those who are deeply religious or

have a strong religious identity or commitment. If that is the case, then the interfaith engagement outcomes for the two experimental groups, who were more religious and spiritual than the comparison groups, were even more remarkable.

Impact of the Honors Living-Learning Community

Because the experimental and comparison group students all lived together in a residence hall living-learning community, with associated programs and events, it is possible that the results of this study are stronger than they actually appeared. In the interviews, experimental group students would talk about bringing up topics from class to discuss with everyone in the living-learning community floor. Comparison group students reported now and again getting engaged in a conversation because of a roommate or friend in the experimental group. For example, one student in CG Math wrote in a text box on the post-course survey: "This past semester, I made some friends who have very strong religious backgrounds. I've learned a lot about why they have such strong faiths, and it has inspired me to do a lot of thinking about my own faith, possibly strengthening it." There was no real religious diversity within CG Math, so perhaps the student was encountering this on the living-learning community floor or in co-curricular programming.

Additional Limitations of Study

- The number of males in the honors program is low, and therefore, too few males participated in the study.

- The student pool in general lacked racial and religious diversity, which was part of the reason for this particular pedagogical approach in the first place.

- Generalizing this study's results to young adults in general might be difficult, as this study included only college students, and honors students in particular.

- Parks has been criticized for failing to acknowledge the role of ethnicity in faith development, and also for basing her work on stage theory, which implies Western cultural assumptions, including individualistic and independence.[154]   My research would be open to the same criticisms.

Summary of Overall Significance of Study

In general, this study has shown suggestive results that inquiry-based pedagogies applied to the teaching of theology and religion can lead to positive changes in students related to curiosity and lifelong learning, search for meaning and significance, epistemology, and talking to family about religion and spirituality, regardless of whether or not the students were Christians, atheists, or those with no religious affiliation. The results of this study did show that experimental group students perceived personal benefits related to self-awareness, ability to articulate beliefs, and clarity about vocation at levels that were statistically significant or suggestively higher than those of the comparison group students.

The study also confirmed elements of Sharon Daloz Parks' theories, and found similar results to Astin, Astin, and Lindholm related to engaging big questions and students' personal spiritual development, ecumenical worldview, and interreligious/intercultural engagement. One particular item for further study is the statistically significant difference between experimental and comparison group students talking with their parents and families about spirituality and religion. Pre-course, there was no significant difference, and post-course, the experimental group students' scores had increased, and the comparison group students' scores actually had decreased.

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[154] Evans, et. al., 209-210.

The fact that the humanities seminar (CG Literature) had the third highest results on a number of items, (following the two experimental groups) could be significant for the humanities. These results would be supported by Anthony Kronman's arguments in his book about the role of the humanities. My results also support theories about the power and role of stories, and even the meeting of fictional characters, in promoting personal change, which has been noted by Jeffrey A. Kottler.

For quite a few students, it seemed that the first year was crucial, almost a turning point between becoming articulate and confident in expressing worldview, finding purpose, and gaining skill to engage diverse religions and cultures on the one hand, and being inarticulate and unconfident in expressing worldview, feeling stuck, lacking purpose, and avoiding or disengaging from religion and religious people out of fear and discomfort on the other hand. As I think back on the interviews and the individual students over the two years of the study, it was almost as if there were two pathways for the students, and these two pathways did diverge in very different directions (see previous Illustration 6.1).

In summary, the effectiveness of the inquiry-based pedagogy used in teaching theology and religion in the students' words seemed to center on holding the critical and appreciative in constant tension. Students valued the new cognitive knowledge as much as the contemplation of beliefs and values. They noted the importance of thinking critically, but also of digging deep in terms of the subjective—listening, questioning, valuing, appreciating, challenging, creating, and constructing (see previous Illustration 6.2).

Chapter 8
Thesis and Future Directions

Significant Evidence Does Support Hypothesis

The primary hypothesis of this study was that using inquiry-based pedagogies, specifically big questions inquiry and appreciative inquiry, to teach Christian theology and religion in an undergraduate first-year seminar course would result in experimental group students reporting increased development of their inner lives and also greater advancements in interfaith understanding and bridge-building behaviors, regardless of the students' religious or non-religious affiliation, as opposed to comparison group students. In general, both quantitative and qualitative data from this study support the hypothesis. However, even with some statistically significant results as well as supportive qualitative data, we cannot say that the problem has been fully solved. However, the inquiry-based pedagogy could be one additional tool in a toolbox.

My Learnings as an Educational Leader, Teacher, and Minister

I have always thought that the so-called "sage-on-the-stage" pedagogy is problematic, as is the "edutainment" phenomenon. This project has caused me to think more deeply about the most accurate metaphors for the relationship of the teacher to the learner and the learning: Co-learner and participant? Facilitator of learning process? Ambassador with exciting communication (subject matter) that requires a response? Provocateur and evocateur?

I do like the metaphor of teaching as an art, in which case, the teacher is an artist. I like this idea very much more than the idea of teaching as a science or the classroom as an assembly line for production of a certain product (e.g., type of student). As with all

metaphors, they break down at a certain point, and we work with living clay, rather than brown inert clay. At the same time, doing this project has helped me to affirm that teaching is an art, and that being a transformative educator is part of my identity and my calling. Before this project, I did not even know that such a term existed. I thought everyone did what I aspired to do.

Impact I Have Had

During the course of this project, I had the opportunity to integrate elements of this project into the following:

1. An individual conference presentation at the Global Conference of Chaplains in Higher Education at Yale University;

2. Two panel presentations at the Council of Independent Colleges NetVUE Conferences on enhancing institutional chaplaincies;

3. A proposal for an Interfaith Youth Core/Teagle-funded grant to create an interdisciplinary minor in the nascent field of Interfaith Studies. (Note: I received the grant, and our proposal for a new interdisciplinary major and minor in Interfaith Leadership Studies was approved in February 2015 for launch in Fall 2015).

I am deeply grateful to my department chairperson, Dr. Christina Bucher, who agreed to use the inquiry-based pedagogy in her first-year seminar, so that I could try to isolate the method from me as the instructor. As a result of her engagement in the project, and the benefits to students that she perceives, she has continued to use the inquiry-based pedagogy in her first-year seminar. Moreover, we plan to write a paper for the Wabash Center on Teaching Religion in 2015. This paper would include a rubric for grading the big questions projects, developed by Dr. Bucher.

Thoughts about my Future Teaching

As stated in a previous chapter, both I and my colleague who taught the other experimental first-year seminar continue to teach their first-year seminars using the appreciative inquiry methodology and also the Big Question Project, and I have integrated appreciative inquiry and contemplative writing into another course.

What might change or not change in my future teaching? My colleague devoted three hours of class time at the end of the semester to have students in her seminar present their Big Question Projects and then write a reflection on learning thereafter. I gave a much more limited time to the Big Question Projects, and the students wrote a reflection on learning with prompts that were much more specific than my colleagues were for her students. I was disappointed in my students' ability to articulate their learning, while my colleague's student responses were in a number of cases quite profound. I already have moved to devoting more significant time to presentations of the Big Question Projects and will use my colleague's more open-ended reflection on learning prompt.

While Millennials like to be pushed, they also need to be encouraged to slow things down. In the original 2011 course, I remained very focused on packing a lot of information/content in the course, but over the last several years, I have increased the quantity of contemplative writings, ranging from two-minute centering writings to 15-minute writings on a particular question. Other ideas include giving students more leadership of the class, naming and calling out the fears and anxieties in the room, and encouraging more combative conversations. However, at this point, I have concluded that these things might be more appropriate for an upper level class, I plan to revise my syllabus for a 200-level course Theology Through Film to include more combative conversations related to question of economic injustice and violence in the world and in our lives.

Suggestions for Future Theory and Practice

In this study, I used a broad range of instruments, and in the end, some of the quantitative results seem to be mixed or difficult to interpret. I intentionally made the search broad, and I really did not expect definitive quantitative results. When I began this study, I thought that what was needed was broad exploratory work, with a primary focus on grounded theory to possibly find new or additional categories to use in defining and measuring college students' spiritual development. While I was most grateful for the ground-breaking work of Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, I was not satisfied with what I found to be the generic student affairs language of categories such as spiritual quest. At the same time, when I began this research, relatively little information was available to deepen my understanding of their categories, as neither their book *Cultivating the Spirit* nor Jennifer Lindholm's book *A Guidebook of Promising Practices* had been published. After *Cultivating the Spirit* was published, I became concerned about the lack of relationship between Religious Struggle and any of the other spiritual and religious measures. To me, Religious Struggle, Religious Skepticism, Spiritual Quest, and Religious Commitment go together.

As I finished editing my bibliography and wrote the final two chapters, I was struck by how much has been written and published in areas related to my thesis in just the last three years. Four years ago, when I outlined and defended my project thesis research proposal, I felt as though I was pulling together disparate strands of ideas from many places that did not always seem to fit together, especially if you were not a higher education "insider." I struggled to convince my project thesis approval committee that there was a problem, need, or issue. At that time, none of the following scholars had published their recent and highly relevant work: Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, Jacobsen and Jacobsen, Rockenbach and Mayhew, or Gortner.

In the years I have been working on this research, one exciting development has been the degree to which scholars are focusing not only on the religious and spiritual development of college and university students for a civil society and the common good, and also the degree to which scholars are focusing on the "inner lives" of college and university students. Of particular interest is the Rockenbach and Mayhew edited volume contains the results of eight studies funded in recent years to advance the work of Astin, Astin, and Lindholm.[155]

In the end, my goal with both the qualitative and quantitative research was to try to discover what specific change was happening to students which had over the years been something that I intuitively labelled as "spiritual development." I hope from this study that I might become part of a conversation about possible student learning outcomes for college student spiritual development, which might be collaboratively developed and vetted. Even now, my reading of Lindholm's wonderful book is a popcorn-like reporting of promising practices on hundreds of campuses, with the focus being on effective and diverse programs and services, rather than on well-defined student learning outcomes. Moreover, to the extent that there is conversation about student learning outcomes, the themes are more closely connected to the themes of liberal education for civil society or student affairs best practice for student wellness than to anything I truly might call student spiritual development.

Nevertheless, I do recognize the difficulties in setting student learning goals in spiritual development when some loud and influential voices are materialists or physicalists who would refuse to acknowledge the reality of anything "spiritual" at all. In a practitioner

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[155] Alyssa Bryant Rockenbach and Matthew J. Mayhew, *Spirituality in College Students' Lives: Translating Research into Practice*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013).

reflection on recent research studies emerging from the original Astin, Astin, and Lindholm study, student affairs professor Kathleen M. Goodman in "Deliberate Campus Practices to Foster Spirituality, Purpose, and Meaning" writes the following:

> *To be clear, I whole-heartedly agree with the concept of holistic development, and I believe that colleges and universities must be attentive to students' inner lives. However, to suggest that values, meaning, and life purpose equate to spirituality for all students is a form of privilege that must be dismantled. Spirituality, religion, and secularity are three distinct pathways to values, meaning, and life purpose…To try to force "spiritual development" on these [secular pathway] students, and insist that spirituality is an inclusive term, further marginalizes a group that already exists on the periphery of society.[156]*

Clearly, Goodman rejects any notion that all students are spiritual, even in the broadest possible terms, in opposition to models such as Parks' or Astin, Astin, and Lindholm.

At the same time, Alyssa Bryant Rockenbach and Matthew J. Mayhew studied the development of ecumenical worldview and found that for non-religious students, neither challenging co-curricular experiences (study abroad, discussing religion with friends, eating with someone of another racial/ethnic group) nor the salience of spirituality and religion in the classroom (professors encouraging discussion of religion) increased the non-religious students ecumenical worldview, as these things did for religious students. In fact, what increased ecumenical worldview for non-religious students was the presence of religious reinforcers (attending religious services, spending time with people who share one's religious views), which were the very things that decreased ecumenical worldview for religious students.[157]

Rockenbach and Mayhew conclude that their findings about the development of ecumenical worldview in non-religious students defies all theoretical models and needs further research. Peter C. Hill, Keith J. Edwards, and Jonathan P. Hill suggest that more

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[156] Kathleen M. Goodman in Rockenbach and Mayhew, 64.
[157] Rockenbach and Mayhew, 99-102.

research on non-religious students' needs to be done using qualitative methods.[158] In

qualitative research on interviews with non-religious students, I found that the non-religious

students reported the encounter with religious students and religious voices of history in a

sanctuary space that was both appreciative and critical helped them to develop what these

researchers would call a more ecumenical world view.

As I previously stated, one significant limitation to my grounded theory approach

was the fact that I did not build into my design and seek IRB approval to use additional

forms of qualitative data for my grounded theory, including the appreciative inquiry journals

and also the big questions final projects. Future grounded theory research on the

appreciative inquiry journals and the big questions final projects could yield a possible list of

categories or a rubric related to student spiritual development. At the very least, it would

enable me to determine to what extent students had fulfilled these desired outcomes of

inquiry-based pedagogy:

1. Learners should be encouraged to pursue questions that are personally

    developmental and may be controversial and/or need healing either personally or

    socially;

2. Learners should have an opportunity to explore questions that are compelling and

    relevant;

3. Learners will collaborate with other learners as they engage these questions (which

    Parks calls "big enough" questions);

4. Learners engage the affective domain, and will not be forced to "privilege" or remain

    in the cognitive or rational domain;

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[158] Rockenbach and Mayhew, 109.

5. Learners need to be taught that spending time defining, shaping, and naming the question are a crucial part of the process;

6. Learners are asked to test assumptions they hold;

7. Learners are expect to create knowledge; and,

8. Learners develop a final product of some sort to symbolize and "crystalize" the learning.[159]

Implications for Higher Education

I think that many current best practice approaches in the area of interfaith work focus on the public nature of religion, and are focused on social, political, and civic goals. While these efforts seem to be engaging and successful, I already have stated their possible limitations in settings which are neither urban nor suburban. Moreover, the underlying assumption of social and civic models, (or if not an assumption, a piece that is often underemphasized or gets lost) is the fact that many students in America do not have a strong religious identity, an articulate personal theology (or non-religious personal philosophy), or a clear commitment to specific religious practices. On the one hand, if one believes that most young adults do not have strong religious identities (Smith), then participation in all the social and civic focused models most likely will school them only in the beliefs and practices of civil, democratic society—not in articulate personal theologies or philosophies and corresponding practices. On the other hand, if one believes that young adults do have articulate personal theologies, then the issue is how to mentor, teach, and guide them during this unique developmental period when they are celebrating freedom from authority, and becoming adult.

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[159] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 254.

In either case, I think that discussing religion in academic classes matters. Learning at colleges and universities needs to be holistic, which must include the personal, emotional, moral, ethical, and worldview development of students. Theological coursework and particular pedagogical approaches can illuminate and strengthen the more holistic goals of learning and formation in collegiate institutions. We can have an impact even with very little compositional diversity, and we can use whatever diversity we do have within the classroom.

One of the advantages of the academic model, over the practice of bringing students of different religions or different religious groups together for service or other activity, is the ability to use a pedagogy that is both affirmative and critical in thinking about, valuing, and evaluating the beliefs, values, and practices of the individual student. Students need to feel confident about their own belief systems and practices. They do not need to be arrogant or triumphalist. They do not need to lose their faith, become religious, or never question their belief or non-belief. I heard this repeatedly in the interviews with the experimental group—the increased confidence they felt about their own religion or non-religion (Christianity or atheism) from have explored the issues with both affirmation and critique. This made the students want to talk about things in the future; it made them want to engage the other and the stranger.

One might posit that the civic, social, and service-learning best practice models of interfaith engagement tend to emphasize the affirmative at the expense of the critical. Academic courses in general emphasize the critical at the expense of the affirmative, and the critical thought is usually focused at the "object" of study. What I tried to do in this course was to emphasize the both the affirmative and the critical.

I think something happens when we teach religion existentially and not just religion as phenomenology from the perspective of facts or knowledge. We need to teach theology

and religion with the understanding that religious and non-religious beliefs and practices connect to ultimate mysteries and something that Howard Gardner has said he does not yet have enough evidence yet to prove—a ninth intelligence, existential intelligence. Furthermore, big questions approaches need to be based on the big questions of students— not the big questions of a religious tradition or of a certain academic discipline—relevance is key.

Christian Smith's research reveals what I think is a sad reality when we do not engage our young adults in their big questions of meaning and purpose:

> *Finally, and overarching all of these assumptions and outlooks, most emerging adults are stuck at the place of thinking that nobody ultimately really knows what is true or right or good. It is all so relative and impossible to know in a pluralistic world with so many competing claims. Best, then, they suppose, to remain tentative, to keep options open, to not get too committed, to push dealing with religious matters off to some future date when through marriage and parenting it becomes more practically important. In the meanwhile, emerging adults have self-sufficiency to achieve, materially secure lifestyles to secure, and fun to be enjoyed.[160]*

The Jacobsen's, Kronman, and others have traced the marginalization of theology and religion in higher education since the rise of the modern research university. At the same time, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* bemoans the HERI (Higher Education Research Institute) study on college students' instrumental, economic, and materialistic views of education. Quite possibly this instrumentalist view has been helped in its development as Kronman describes, because colleges and universities gave up on the meaning of life. Colleges and universities put their trust in modern, empirical research methodologies. Not only the social sciences turned completely to these methodologies, but even many of the disciplines in the humanities subjected themselves to the dominance of so-called objective empiricism and the phenomenological. In many colleges and universities, modern religious

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[160] Smith, *Souls in Transition*, 287.

studies pushed out the study of theology or religion in any of the Greek *paideia* forms. Unfortunately, it was these very forms that engendered existential, epistemological, and holistic transformation.

Possible Student Learning Outcomes Related to Spiritual Development

A plethora of possible student spiritual development outcomes could be drawn from both the quantitative outcomes chapters as well as the many charts of themes from the qualitative grounded theory chapters. Nearly all of these outcomes connect in some way to Astin, Astin, and Lindholms' ten measures of the spirituality and religiousness of college and university students. As I previously have stated, I think one of my next steps is to try to engage one of the national chaplain's networks in conversation about naming outcomes for student spiritual development.

At the same time, the following student spiritual development outcomes are the ones that I think are the most lacking in higher education today, and might be the most impactful, both personally and societally:

1. Students are knowledgeable about religious and non-religious worldviews;

2. Students are appreciative, articulate, confident, committed, and critical about both their own personal theologies or philosophies of life and those of others;

3. Students have skills in speaking, listening, appreciating, valuing, and engaging religious and non-religious diversity, including fundamentalism, conservatism, and liberalism;

4. Students can articulate why religion is relevant and matters;

5. Students can make connections between religious beliefs, the history of ideas, and current issues and events in the world.

Is the Academy Ready for This?

Many will say that what I did has been going on at Roman Catholic universities, Christian Consortium colleges, and seminaries for decades. It is my understanding that many Roman Catholic and Evangelical colleges and universities have expressed concerns and even resistance to current best practice interfaith models and organizations. I have heard expressed a number of concerns, ranging from skepticism that these models are a cleverly disguised imposition of liberal Christian theology or Democratic Party political agendas to fear that the result of current interfaith work will be a least common denominator or compromise theology and practice, which becomes its own religion.[161] Whether or not these concerns are valid or real is beyond the scope of this paper, and in some ways, it is too soon to tell.

At the same time, the positive side of these arguments, as I have heard them, is that if we teach our students to be the best Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, Muslims, etc. that they can be, then interfaith understanding and engagement will follow as an imperative and with more integrity from both the student and the religious tradition. To a certain degree, I think that this research project and its results suggest that the positive side of this argument is correct.

However, I do wonder to what extent what I did actually qualifies as higher learning in the modern research-based university or the independent small private college? Stanley Fish probably would look at my plan for natural, holistic learning environment, especially the mentoring and personal development pieces, and ask: Can this type of work truly qualify as

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[161] Sort of in the way nondenominational Christianity becomes a denomination over time.

academic learning? Should talk of values and beliefs really be going on in the classroom?

How can mentoring qualify as an academic enterprise?[162]

Moving forward, I wonder to what extent can holistic learning outcomes be

academically respectable in the world of higher education in the twenty-first century? At

what point does the instructor cease to become professor, teacher, or academic advisor, and

become personal mentor or pastor? If the instructor becomes personal mentor, pastor, or

chaplain, is that a problem? Any yet, what does it mean to be a professor—to profess?

One might asked why so few have tried to apply Parks' theory in the classroom.

Parks herself recognizes the difficulties of pursuing these types of strategies in the

environment of higher education, which has reigning epistemological assumptions that

dichotomize the objective and the subjective, and define knowledge only as the objective.

Parks writes:

> *To state the case most sharply, the domain of knowledge has been reduced to the domain of objective reality (understood as empirical fact and theoretical analysis abstracted from fact, standing in contrast to ultimate reality). This divorced the knowledge of the object that is know from its relationship to the subject who knows, thus diminishing the significance of emotion, intuition, the personal, the moral, and full engagement with the complexity emerging from the practice of lived experience, for all of these are difficult to apprehend empirically. Reason and knowledge, thus defined, are reduced to those processes that can be analyzed and replication—in short, produced and controlled.*[163]

It is perhaps for these reasons that Nancy J. Evans and others have noted that few

researchers have applied Parks' theory, and those which have been done have been outside

the classroom.[164] At the same time, I applaud Parks' courage and wisdom, and

wholeheartedly support Parks' when she calls the academy to accountability to its own

identity and mission:

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[162] Stanley Fish, *Save the World on Your Own Time* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[163] Parks, 160.
[164] Evans et. al, 208.

The academy's commitment to truth requires engagement with the whole of truth, the full scope of reality. In sum, a critical appraisal of the epistemological assumptions of the academy itself points toward a new reordering of the relationship among the academy, the young adult's search for faith, and the relationship between the academy and society.[165]

Kendra Creasy Dean summarizes both a problem within higher education and a challenge to higher education in the United States:

The developmental theorist Jeffrey Arnett reminds us that becoming adult requires coming to terms with questions that address our place and purpose in the cosmos, and that evoke a governing ideology that gives life meaning. Whether young people view themselves as "religious" or not, human beings "invariably address religious questions as part of our lives," writes Arnett. "Forming religious beliefs appears to be a universal part of identity development."[166]

Implications for Institutions of Higher Education

<u>Some New Insights on Student Development</u>

I asked my colleague, who has taught in higher education for decades, and also has served as a dean of faculty and senior cabinet level administrator: What if students in your first-year seminar did the Big Question Project and no research paper? First, let me be clear that this is an imagination exercise, because one requirement for a first-year seminar in any discipline taught by any faculty is a research paper. At the same time, I did ask the question, and my colleague and former dean, responded: "I'd like it better. It would really break them from a high school mentality. Tell me how many sources I need? How many footnotes? The BQ project helps them become independent thinkers, and then they would write better research papers later." In the end, her recommendation was that fall-semester first-year seminars require Big Question Projects, and spring semester English writing and language courses require a research paper.

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[165] Parks, 163.
[166] Dean, 8.

At the beginning of and during this study, I had a number of conversations with colleagues who thought that the appropriate place for development of inter-religious and inter-cultural knowledge, dispositions, and behaviors was the sophomore year, as first-year students already have so many developmental issues on which to work. Indeed, sophomore-year research has identified the sophomore year as the year of questioning, searching for meaning and purpose. What I now think is that the first year is the appropriate time for both big theological questions and also inter-religious engagement. This is supported by Erik Erikson's developmental theory to the extent that first-year students are working on identity (who am I?) and intimacy (who do I relate to?) issues. Big questions, personal theology, and inter-religious engagement all help students to resolve Erikson's stage continuums in positive ways. Moreover, at a January 2014 gathering at New York University (NYU) of colleges and universities who might apply for Teagle-funded grants to propose interdisciplinary academic majors and minors, NYU's social scientist Matthew Mayhew reported that what is now known in student development is that there is a lot of change in the first-year, a bit into the sophomore year, and then not much at all—perhaps a bit at the end of the senior year.

We ask first-year students: What will you major in? What career or profession do you wish to enter? How do you define success and what pathway do you see? What do you want to do with your life? Based on sophomore-year literature, my own experience of teaching first-year students and doing this research, I have changed my view to think that questions of vocation, meaning, and purpose are to some degree first-year questions, but are primarily sophomore-year questions. Students need to know if they are called to education, engineering, or occupational therapy in the first-year or they will be on a five-year plan, but even those students, as sophomores have told me of moments of needing to revisit that

choice to be confident they want to invest two-and-a-half more years in that field. I am convinced that the first year is the year for big theological questions and developing interfaith dispositions and behaviors.

Chaplains Need to be Teaching in First-Year Programs…and Beyond

As this research project ends, I strongly recommend that institutional chaplains in higher education should be allowed to teach in departments of religion and religious studies, and especially in first-year programs. Thanks to one of my readers, I have been challenged to reflect on why the chaplain at this college has been able to teach in religious studies, and not only to teach, but also to teach philosophical theology. In 2001, when then President Theodore Long, whose brother is a Lutheran Bishop, created the new full-time position for chaplain and director of religious life, the responsibilities included teaching one course per semester in the religious studies department, and two members of the religious studies department and one at-large humanities faculty served on the search committee for the chaplain. Since that time, both the chaplain's office and the religious studies department have shared a commitment to maintain a bridge between the academic study of religion and the experience and practice of religion.

The significant positives and the periodic difficulties along the way could be the subject of another paper or presentation, but through this research and my reflection upon it, I have developed the understanding that my colleagues, our previous president, and I share an assumption that I am not certain we have ever articulated: one cannot study religion with integrity unless one takes seriously both people who practice religion (even if one does not practice religion) and also people who do not practice religion (even if one does practice religion).

Recommendations for Chaplains and Directors of Religious Life for the Co-Curriculum

At the same time, I have known some chaplains who do not wish to teach, and I also have known some chaplains whose institutions might do away with the institutional chaplaincy long before they would ever allow a chaplain to teach. I think that my research does suggest many things outside the classroom that these chaplains can do. Moreover, these co-curricular possibilities are important also for chaplains like me who do teach, in our work in co-curricular programming:

1. Conduct an inventory of religious life programs, and try to make sure that they balance the critical with the appreciative and also the cognitive with the affective;

2. Implement World Café model programming—a systematized, easy-to-follow way to develop large-group dialogue;[167]

3. Develop five-minute big question interventions for faculty, staff, coaches, supervisors of student employees, administrative assistants;[168]

4. Create a brochure of ways to reframe advising questions as big philosophical and theological questions. What do you wish to be in the world and why does it matter? What stories of religious or non-religious development as a child still pull you forward?

5. Design big questions mini-modules that can be inserted into any class;

6. Integrate big questions into religious life mission and service trips. How do we reconcile the existence of God with the suffering in the world? Does God have a preference for the poor?

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[167] The World Café Method, http://www.theworldcafe.com/method.html, accessed March 29, 2015.
[168] Adapted from Jeffrey Brantley, M.D., the *Five Good Minutes* series of books, as well as a program being done at Nebraska Wesleyan University.

7. Claim grace-filled big questions and generous conversation as areas of spiritual calling for chaplains and develop special knowledge and expertise in these areas.

8. Purchase and give out T-shirts with big theological questions on them, and a question mark on the back. No answers—just questions;

9. Focus all chaplaincy work on questions and conversation that keep students, faculty, and staff from having to get into defending or explaining mode, and allow imagination, vision, and vocation to emerge;

10. Create public spaces for big questions and conversation about spiritual, religious, and existential issues. What does it mean if America thinks of itself as a Christian nation? Hillel's Big Question booklet provides a program and process model for this, although I think that chaplains might do well to revise the questions to create a space where spiritual and religious beliefs, values, and practices can be easily surfaced and openly included and engaged.

Recommendations for Faculty

1. Find the courage to slow yourself down, cut some content and information from your syllabus, and provide some space for students' questions—not about what is going to be on the exam, but about what all this means, why it matters, and where the knowledge or information has been used for ill rather than good;

2. Think carefully about what your goals are with student learning and what risks you need to take personally as an instructor-mentor-scholar-facilitator to make that learning happen;

3. Think of advising as mentoring for life's big questions of spirituality, meaning, and purpose.

1. Become aware of the ways in which you can integrate big questions into the programs you already lead;

2. Become aware of ways in which you can use a small gateway question to lead to a big question conversation in just a few minutes.

New Areas for Further Work

I have stated that "something happens" when we teach religion and theology existentially rather than phenomenologically. While I think I am a little closer to understanding what the something is that happens, further study would need to be done on a much larger scale to develop any truly conclusive results.

I am interested to find ways to think more carefully about how to assess student coursework that relates to the development of their "inner lives." I would enjoy collegial conversation and advancement in this area. One question that continues to bother me from this study is to what extent these results were due to the inquiry-based pedagogy, and to what extent just taking a course in religious studies brings about these results. Unfortunately, I could not test this because over the two years of my research, there was no other first-year seminar in religious studies in a non-Christian tradition, or in comparative religion, or even religious ethics.

One of my observations about higher education after reading Louis Menand's historical and current analysis is how much at various points in history, higher education re-shaped itself to serve the pressing needs of society at the time. What does society need from higher education today? I continue to wonder about how colleges and universities

might conceive of themselves less as ivory towers and more as social settlements.   What would happen if we took the inquiry-based pedagogies, both big questions and appreciative techniques into churches, Sunday schools, and temples in the surrounding area?

Summary and Conclusion

According to National Public Radio's Krista Trippett, the way we did tolerance in the late twentieth century was to bracket things of conflict from the common public life (such as religion), and the resulting discourse is impoverished. One contention of this project is that religious conversation has been bracketed out of one significant part of public life—education. One of the mistakes made by the academic study of religion has been to not allow students to be who they are (holistically) in the classroom. If you are an evangelical Christian, then you better keep your ideas to yourself. If you are Muslim, then that's a personal thing. In the religious studies classroom, think like a scholar.

The tossing out of the teaching of theology and Bible from departments of religious studies in some segments of the academy has resulted in something being lost. Learning is not memorizing what other authorities have said. Learning in religious studies is looking at people from a distance as if they were cells under a microscope. Learning in religious studies must include the subjective, the personal, and the existential. In the end, I do believe in what Howard Gardner has posited as a ninth intelligence, existential intelligence, even though he cannot locate it in the brain, as he can locate the other intelligences.

We need venues for people of faith and of no faith have the opportunity to be in groups where they are intelligently discussing their religion or sacred text with someone who is not of that community. I taught Christian theology because it is what I am trained to do, and it is the tradition in which most of my students were raised. In the end, I think similar,

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and quite possibly even more powerful results would happen if the course were taught using inquiry-based pedagogies with the topic being Islamic theology or Jewish theology.

In summary, I think a key issue at many colleges and universities such as mine is how we might do what Sharon Daloz Parks calls us to do: to invite students not only to learn facts about the religions of the world, but to invite students to reflect to on their on religious beliefs or non-religious philosophies, not just as systems or institutions of thought and practices, but also as personal theologies.

In 1971, about 73% of first-year students said that developing a meaningful philosophy of life was "essential" or "very important," and 38% said that becoming very well off financially. In 2011, 82% percent of students said that becoming very well off financially was "essential" or "very important," and 45% said that developing a meaningful philosophy of life was "essential" or "very important."[169]

S. Alan Ray, president and professor of religion and society at Elmhurst College, summarizes the situation quite well:

> *After all, we do not ask students to accept the natural world as they understood it at age 7, or appreciate only the music they loved as middle schoolers. Neither should we assume that a grade-school religious education satisfied the intellectual and emotional needs of young adults.[170]*

In the end, this research focused on what Jack Mezirow and others would call a transformative pedagogy. Transformative education can occur in math, science, and pre-professional disciplines, and at the same time, one affirmation of this study is the contribution that theology and religion can make in developing curiosity, personal theologies, dispositions and habits of civic discourse.

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[169] Freshman Survey, Higher Education Research Institute, University of California at Los Angeles.
[170] S. Alan Ray, "A Call to Worship, and to Educate," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 20, 2015.

At the same time, transformative pedagogy is not necessarily amenable to quantitative research, or even qualitative methodologies with highly structured processes. Elizabeth Lange, a self-described transformative educator, illustrates this quite accurately when she writes:

> *While describing my facilitation of a transformative pedagogy, I am also resisting the modernist approach of instrumentalist prescriptions for effectiveness and linear technicist (that is, an educator as a technician) descriptions of theory into practice. Rather, I hope you will read this in the spirit of how creative potential can be unleashed through a deliberative pedagogy while recognizing the ultimate indeterminacy of educational work.*[171]

In conclusion, scholars, teachers, and researchers, including myself, would do well to be reminded of Lange's warning about the dangers of trying to name the elements of transformation and then conducting modern, empirical research with linear assumptions on such transformative pedagogies and experiences. Such research can disenchant the true process or not give enough credit to the underlying, unseen processes and relationships that truly cause transformation. To me, as both a professor and a chaplain, education is not only an artistic, but also a spiritual process, and this unseen element is the power of the Holy Spirit.

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[171] Mezirow, Taylor, and Associates, 194.

Appendix A:
Informed Consent Form

Title of Project: Big Questions Pedagogy Research Project

Description of Research

The purpose of this research is to study teaching Christian philosophical theology through a big questions pedagogy as a method for increasing bridge-building knowledge, skills, and behaviors, with voluntary student subjects from the four (4) Honors first-year seminar classes, and will last about 20 months (until the mid-point of the students' sophomore year). The basic research design is that my honors first-year seminar will be taught using a big questions pedagogy (as it always has been), and it will be the experimental group. The other three honors first-year seminars will not be taught using a big questions pedagogy (as they always have been), and they will be the comparison groups.

You are being asked to complete two questionnaires on survey monkey—one at the beginning and one at the end of the semester—which should take about 40 minutes each time.

Student subjects in the first-year seminar Big Theological Questions are being asked to participate in four interviews from now until the middle of their sophomore year: before first-year seminar, at the end of first-year seminar, at the end of first year of college, and at mid-point of sophomore year (45 minutes each time for each student subject individually with principal investigator). The results of the questionnaires will be confidential.

Selected students from the other three (3) first-year seminars (5-6 students per seminar) are being asked to participate in four interviews from now until the middle of their sophomore year: before first-year seminar, at the end of first-year seminar, at the end of first year of college, and at mid-point of sophomore year (45 minutes each time for each student subject individually with principal investigator). The results of the interview will be confidential.

Students in all four honors first-year seminars will be observed by their instructors and given ratings on several skill and behavioral measures related to the study (no student time involved beyond class time). The observations will be made by the first-year seminar instructors, Dr. XXX XXXXX, Dr. XXXX XXXXX, Dr. XXXX XXXXX, and Rev. Tracy Wenger Sadd. Each instructor will make ratings for his/her own students. The ratings will be confidential and will be used for Sadd's research purposes only. They will not affect any student's grade for the course.

Risk or Discomforts to the Subject or Others

This study has been categorized by both Elizabethtown College and Virginia Theological Seminary as being of no apparent risk or of minimal risk to any student subjects who participate, or to any student subjects who do not participate. According to federal guidelines (45 CFR 46.102), "Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of

harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests."

Benefits from Participating in the Study

Some benefits to you from participating in this study:
- First-hand experience of how both survey, interview, and observational rating research are carried out in a college setting;
- Opportunity on both the survey and in the interviews to tell me about yourself. Mostly, I will just listen.
- Access to the results of my research, particularly pre-course and post-course surveys, which will benchmark students' responses against some national tests and will also assess learning related to some outcomes common to all first-year seminars;
- Opportunity to discuss my doctoral research with me, which is based on an interdisciplinary action research methodology;
- For students in all four first-year seminars, you will get to think about and talk about some interesting things as you take both of the surveys and also participate in the interviews;
- For students in my first-year seminar, you will experience a big questions pedagogy, and if my hypothesis is correct, then you will have increased skills, knowledge, and behaviors for bridge-building to different kinds of people, and being a better citizen.
- Finally, as a thank you for your time and participation, students who participate in the study will be entered into a lottery to win a Kindle or Nook.

Confidentiality of Study

This study is confidential, but not anonymous. Because I want not only to create tables or charts of aggregate data anonymously by first-year seminar group, but also to track the deeper and more nuanced development of individual students by confidential identification number, known only to the student and myself.

I will record all data/responses anonymously by confidential ID# only—never by student name. However, I need to keep a separate file that links your name to your study ID# in case you lose your study ID# over the length of this study (from the beginning of your first year of college to the middle of your sophomore year).

This research will be presented at the defense of my doctoral thesis, most probably at academic conferences, and it may be published in articles and books. Any such usage or presentation of data would be anonymous (e.g. information will be given in a way that would not allow anyone to identify you as a particular subject). Even if you tell me stories in the interviews, I will change any personal information (e.g. where it happened) so that no one could figure out who you are.

At each interview, I will ask your permission to record the interviews (audio only, no video). These tapes will be kept until my thesis is published, and only I will have access to them. Although I may use anonymous quotes in my printed work, I will not use these recordings for anything other than as a memory aid when summarizing or illustrating my findings in my written work (e.g. I will not play them at a presentation). I will create paper transcripts of the tapes, and I will keep them in locked files in my office until I think they will no longer be needed for future reference or defense of my data.

Your first-year seminar instructor will make observational ratings of you in several areas related to both the specific interests of my study, and also common student learning outcomes that we expect for students in first-year seminars. These observational ratings will be given to me and will be used only for research purposes. They will not affect your grade in your course. You will be graded only on the items listed in your first-year seminar syllabus.

Contact Information for Questions or Concerns

If questions arise about the research, your rights as a subject, or any other concerns, then please discuss them with me, Rev. Tracy Wenger Sadd, Brossman 253, x1261, saddt@etown.edu. If you feel that talking to me has not met your concerns, then you may contact Dr. Dana Mead, Director of the Honors Program, Wenger Center, x3758. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Elizabethtown College Institutional Review Board at sheesleyd@etown.edu or 717-361-1492. This study has been approved by both Elizabethtown College and Virginia Theological Seminary.

Voluntary Participation/Discontinuation of Participation

You do not have to participate in this study—it is voluntary. If you refuse to participate, there is no penalty. If you participate, you may discontinue participation at any time. You do not have to answer any question, either written or in person that you do not feel comfortable answering. You must be 18 years or older to participate in this research study. If you agree to complete the questionnaires and the interviews, then please print your name, sign your name, and fill in the date below.

_____   _____   _____
    Student Name (Print)   Student Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____
  Researcher's Name (Print)   Researcher's Signature   Date

You will be given a copy of this consent for your records.

Appendix B:
Big Questions Project Assignment

The Project

1. <u>Name a Big Question</u>

   Each student in the class will name a big question about faith, existence, meaning, purpose, or life in general that he or she wishes to explore (finding an "answer" may or may not be possible).

2. <u>Create Big Question Small Groups</u>

   Students will divide into small groups, called Big Question Groups, and will meet throughout the semester on selected Wednesday at 11 times and also other times:

   a. To help each other think creatively about how one might go about finding an answer to this question, or at least "make progress" on the big question;

   b. To use appreciative inquiry as an approach to each person in the group as a person, and also to each person's big question;

   c. To help each other to make a plan for exploring the big question (including an in-depth interview with a "big questions expert" from either on-campus or off-campus, making a field trip to a sacred place or museum related to one of the world's religions, watching movies or reading poetry that deals with his/her big question, etc.).

3. <u>Consult with Professor (or Not)</u>

   The professor for the class is available for either small group or one-to-one consultation and advising on possible things to do to explore each student's big question.

4. <u>Carry Out Your Exploration Plan (Either Individually or in Groups)</u>

5. <u>Produce a Final "Product" that Relates to Your Big Question</u>

   This might be a journal, autobiography, essay, short story, performance, play, proposal for an event or program in the future, video, poster presentation, poem, etc.

6. <u>Write a Report on Learning</u>

   Each student will write a report of learning, 4 pages, double-spaced:

a. From interviews, research, and experiences related to his/her big question;
b. From others in the group;
c. From using the Appreciative Inquiry Method.

The Grading Rubric

To get an "A" on the Big Questions project and experience, a student will:

1. Demonstrate that you made progress on the big question (this does not necessarily mean, and probably does not mean, finding an answer). Where were you at the beginning of the semester with this question? Where are you after the "project" and the "small group" support?

2. Write 4 pages of essay on the big questions experiential learning, including:
   a. 1 page of Concrete experience: Who? What? When? Where? Why?
   b. 1 page of Reflective observation: Stepping back from the whole experience, what reflections and observations do I have about the process and the learning?
   c. Abstraction Conceptualization: What scholarly theories, concepts, conversations with experts, social science experiments informed my process and content?
   d. Active Experimentation: What will I think or do differently as a result of this big questions experience and process? What new ideas, skills, behaviors, habits, and disciplines will I "experiment" with as a result of doing this project?

3. Produce a journal, autobiography, essay, short story, performance, play, proposal for an event or program in the future, video, poster presentation, etc.

Appendix C:
Engagement Experiences and Appreciative Inquiry Journals

1. <u>Participate in Fifteen (15) IEE Activities</u>

   - IEE stand for Intellectual Engagement Experience and it is something that is built into all first-year seminar courses.

   - The learning outcome expected is that students will "relate their intellectual engagement experiences to their academic and personal development."

   - Eleven (11) IEE Activities will be done by our class as a group.

   - Four (4) IEE Activities are up to your free choice.

2. <u>Write a Journal Throughout the Semester Using Appreciative Inquiry</u>

   Each student will write a journal throughout the semester dealing with the following questions:

   a. For each of the 15 IEE experiences, write a 1-2 page journal about:
      i. What you think the presenter(s) really wanted you to think about learn, know, or understand.
      ii. Something that surprised you, made you curious, or made you wonder. Perhaps something that you would like to ask questions to gain a deeper understanding of things.
      iii. Something you appreciated and valued about each of the experiences.

   b. For all of the IEE experiences together as a whole, please answer the following in 3-4 pages. How did these experiences help you think about:
      i. What it means to be a well-educated person?
      ii. What the values and mission of Elizabethtown College are?
      iii. What it means to live the good life or a life well-lived?

Appendix D:
Syllabus for Experimental Group Seminar

Big Theological Questions
First-Year Seminar (FYS 100 HB)
Elizabethtown College

Fall 2011   Chaplain Tracy Wenger Sadd
Wenger Center 001   Office Hours: WTh 9:30 – 10:50 a.m.
TTh 2:00 p.m.-3:15 p.m.   Brossman Commons 253
W 11:00-11:50 a.m.   E-mail: saddt@etown.edu
4 credits   Phone: x1261

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course introduces students to the fields of systematic and philosophical theology by placing phrases from the Christian creeds in the context of larger philosophical questions. This course explores questions about the existence and nature of God, the problem of evil, the doctrine of salvation, the divinity and humanity of Jesus, the relationship of Christianity to other world religions, and more. At the same time, this course is neither a philosophic defense of Christian belief, nor a discourse solely from the theistic tradition. In addition to reading apologetic and philosophical texts, students will be challenged with the diverse human dimensions of religious belief and encounter alternative views through reading short stories by writers from religious traditions including Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Confucianism. Granting significant attention to analyzing arguments made by scholars who hold opposing theological and philosophical positions, this course challenges students to debate controversial issues in theology and to begin to articulate their own constructive arguments.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of the academic expectations of college life
- Demonstrate critical thinking skills
- Demonstrate improvement in communication skills
- Discuss the central ideas of a particular body of knowledge or discipline
- Locate information and evaluate its accuracy, quality, timeliness, and usefulness
- Exhibit intellectual curiosity
- Write an appropriately researched and documented academic paper
- Relate their intellectual engagement experiences to their academic and personal development.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

This class will operate under the standards of integrity. Students are expected to uphold the College's standards of academic integrity, as outlined in the booklet *Academic Integrity at Elizabethtown College.* Any assignment (exam, group work, written work, presentation) that meets the conditions for academic dishonesty will be graded with a zero. Plagiarism on any

assignment will result in a grade of zero for that assignment and may result in failure of the entire course.

TEXTBOOKS:

<u>Required</u>**:**
Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings (4th Edition). Michael Peterson, editor. Oxford University Press, 2010.
Theology: The Basic Readings. Alister McGrath, editor. Blackwell Publishers, 2011.
Faith Stories: Short Fiction on the Varieties and Vagaries of Faith. C. Michael Curtis, Ed. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003.

<u>Optional:</u>
Keys for Writers (4th Edition). Ann Raimes. Houghton Mifflin Company. 2011.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:

Participation in Class Conversations and Role Plays	15%
IEE Appreciative Inquiry Journals	15%
Big Question Small Groups and Report on Learning	20%
Honors Program Community Service Project	10%
Research Paper	25%
Final Exam	15%

GRADING SCALE:

A	93-100	B-	80-82.9	D+	66-69.9
A-	90-92.9	C+	76-79.9	D	63-65.9
B+	86-89.9	C	73-75.9	D-	60-62.9
B	83-85.9	C-	70-72.9	F	Below 60

POLICY REGARDING LATE WORK:
You are expected to hand in all assignments on time. You will lose at least 5% for each day that an assignment is late. If you have an emergency or other extraordinary circumstance, you may notify the instructor as soon as possible and negotiate a new timeline to avoid the penalty.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Participation in Class Conversations and Role Plays (15%)
You are graded on being there and being prepared. *Being There:* Only *unexcused* absences will count against a student's grade. *Excused* absences are those that are communicated *in advance* to the instructor via e-mail or telephone (except in the case of an emergency) and are for reasons judged to be acceptable by the instructor (e.g. medical appointments, travel with a College musical group or sports team, etc.). The way in which we carry out the

conversations in class, and also the role plays that we do in class are an important part of practicing the skills and learning the knowledge required in this class.

Appreciative Inquiry Journals for Intellectual Engagement Experiences (IEEs) (15%)
Students will participate in a small group for exploration of special topics and experiences outside the class time. Each student will keep a semester-long journal to reflect on what happens in the Appreciative Inquiry Groups, as well as for all intellectual engagement experiences outside the classroom. (See separate handout for details on IEE Appreciative Inquiry Journals assignment).

Big Questions Small Group and Report on Learning (20%)
Each student in the class will name a big question about faith, existence, meaning, purpose, or life in general that he or she wishes to explore (finding an "answer" may or may not be possible). Students will divide into small groups, called Big Question Groups, and will meet throughout the semester to help each other think creatively about how one might go about finding an answer to this question, or at least "make progress" on the big question and to help each other make a plan for exploring the big question (including an in-depth interview with a "big questions expert" from either on-campus or off-campus, making a field trip to a sacred place or museum related to one of the world's religions, watching movies or reading poetry that deals with his/her big question, etc.). Each student will write a report of learning. (See separate handout for details on the Big Questions Group and Report assignment).

Honors Program Community Service Project (10%)
All Honors First-Year Seminars participate in a service project. Students from FYS HB will participate in the Office of Religious Life Rice for Refugees service project. Students will learn about traditions of food and hospitality in the religions and cultures of the most recent groups of refugees that have been resettled in our region by Church World Service. Students will create sample hospitality and food "baskets" for refugee families of each religious and cultural tradition research. (Monetary funds for any purchases will be provided by the Chaplain's Office). Students will write about their experiences as part of their IEE Appreciative Inquiry Journals (see earlier assignment).

Research Paper (25%)
Students will write a research paper, formatted to acceptable style guidelines. The paper must have a thesis related to issues discussed in this course. For this Honors course, students will not only write a research paper, but also argue a mini-thesis. The first draft of the paper counts as 5% of the paper grade, and the final research paper counts as 20% of the paper grade. (See separate handout for research paper assignment).

Final Exam (15%)
Missed exams can be made up later by arrangement with the instructor. However, except for very serious cases (e.g. death in the family), this will result in a deduction of points (in fairness to those students who did their work on time).

POLICY REGARDING LATE WORK:
You are expected to hand in all assignments on time. You will lose at least 5% for each day that an assignment is late. If you have an emergency or other extraordinary circumstance,

you may notify the instructor as soon as possible and negotiate a new timeline to avoid the penalty.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Elizabethtown College welcomes otherwise qualified students with disabilities to participate in all of its courses, programs, and activities. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations to access course material, activities, or requirements, you must:
1.) Contact the Director of Disability Services, Lynne Davies, in the Center for Student Success, BSC 228, by phone (361-1227) or email daviesl@etown.edu.
2.) Meet with me, the instructor, within two weeks of receiving a copy of the accommodation letter from Disability Services to discuss your accommodation needs and their implementation.

COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to Change)

Week 1: What is Faith? What Do You Believe?

Tuesday, 8/30/11
Introduction to Course and Presentation of Syllabus
Create Big Question Small Groups

Tuesday, 8/28/07
IEE Convocation Ceremony in the Dell (4:00 p.m., Picnic following)

Wednesday, 8/31/11
IEE Read Aloud and Discuss Walt Whitman's "Song of the Open Road"

Thursday, 9/1/11
What is Faith? What Do You Believe? (Select 2 readings from below)
Read: McGrath, *Theology*, from Ch. 1 "Faith"
1.3 John Calvin on the nature of faith
1.4 Karl Barth on revelation and the Word of God
1.5 Emil Brunner on revelation and reason
1.6 Paul Tillich on the nature of theology
1.7 C.S. Lewis on myths in theology
1.8 John Paul II on faith and reason
In-Class Contemplative Writing: "What I Really Believe is…"

Week 2: Can Religious Faith Be Reasonable?

Tuesday, 9/6/11
Reason Confronts Faith; Science Confronts Religion
Read: Curtis, *Faith Stories*
"The Mark of Vishnu" by Khushwant Singh

Wednesday, 9/7/11

        Big Questions Small Groups: What Makes a Question Big? Worthwhile? Relevant?

Thursday, 9/8/11

        Reason and Religion (Select 2 readings from below)

                <u>Read</u>: Peterson, *Philosophy of Religion*, from Part Three: Faith and Reason

                        "The Wager" by Blaise Pascal

                        "The Ethics of Belief" by William Clifford

                        "Truth is Subjectivity" by Soren Kierkegaard

                Handout, "The Harmony of Philosophy and the Qur'an"

                        by Ibn Rushd

Week 3: Who is God? What is Theology?

Tuesday, 9/13/11

        Theology is Thinking, Talking, and Writing about God

                <u>Read</u>: McGrath, *Theology*, Ch. 2 "God"

Wednesday, 9/14/11

        IEE Activity: Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry

Thursday, 9/15/11

        The Attributes of God (Select 2 readings from below)

                <u>Read</u>: Peterson, *Philosophy of Religion*, from Part Four: The Divine Attributes

                        "Negative Theology" by Moses Maimonides

                        "God Is Timeless" by Boethius

                        "God Is Everlasting" by Nicholas Wolterstorff

                        "Atman Is Brahman" from *The Upanishads*

                <u>DUE</u>: Topic for Research Paper and Five (5) Scholarly Sources

Week 4: Can We "Prove" God Exists?

Tuesday, 9/20/11

        "Proofs" for God and Challenges to Theism (Select 2 readings from below)

                <u>Read</u>: Peterson, *Philosophy of Religion*, from Part Five: Arguments About

                    God's Existence

                        "The Classical Ontological Argument" by Saint Anselm

                        "A Contemporary Modal Version of the Ontological

        Argument"

                                  by Alvin Plantinga

                        "The Classical Cosmological Argument" by Thomas Aquinas

                        "The Analogical Teleological Argument" by William Paley

                        "Moral Arguments for God's Existence"

                            by Robert Merrihew Adams

Wednesday, 9/21/11
> Big Questions Small Group Meeting Time

Thursday, 9/22/11
> The Limits of Language (Select 2 readings from below)
>> <u>Read</u>**:** Peterson, *Philosophy of Religion*, from Part Nine: Religious Language
>>> "The Falsification Debate" by Antony Flew
>>>> and Basil Mitchell
>>> "Religious Language as Symbolic" by Paul Tillich
>>> "Sexism and God-Talk" by Rosemary Radford Ruether
>> Handout, "The True Tao is Unspeakable" by Lao Tsu
>> <u>In-Class Contemplative Writing</u>: Respond to any of the readings for today:
>>> What do you appreciate? What bugs you?
>>> What questions remain for you?

Week 5: Who is Jesus?

Tuesday, 9/27/11
> The Divinity and Humanity of Jesus
>> <u>Read</u>: McGrath, *Theology,* Ch. 4 "Jesus"

Wednesday, 9/28/11
> IEE *Explore the Core*: Thinking Globally with Religion and International Studies
>> Leffler Chapel

Thursday, 9/29/11
> Jesus in Fiction
>> <u>Read</u>: From Curtis, *Faith Stories*
>>> "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings"
>>>> by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
>>> "The Welcome Table" by Alice Walker
>> <u>In-Class Contemplative Writing</u>: Who is Jesus?

Week 6: Catch Up and Fall Break

Tuesday, 10/4/11
> IEE Discover Your Strengths

Wednesday, 10/5/11
> IEE Spiritual Types Inventory

Thursday, 10/6/11   No Class – Happy Fall Break!

Week 7: What is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Trinity?

Tuesday, 10/11/11

The Word "Trinity" is Not in the Bible: Church Councils

Read: McGrath, from Ch. 6, "Trinity" (Select 2 readings from below)

6.1 Irenaeus of Lyons on the Trinitarian faith
6.3 Henry Barclay Swete on the Holy Spirit and the Trinity
6.4 Karl Rahner on the economic Trinity
6.5 John Macquarrie on the function of the Trinity

Wednesday, 10/12/11

IEE Introduction to Rice for Refugees Service Project

Thursday, 10/13/11

Continuing Revelation and Religious Experience (Select 2 readings from below)

Read: Peterson, *Philosophy of Religion*, from Part Two: Religious Experience

"Religious Experiences" by Saint Teresa of Jesus
"Religious Experiences as Interpretive Accounts"
by Wayne Proudfoot
"Critique of Religious Experience" by Michael martin
"A Phenomenological Account of Religious Experience"
by Merold Westphal

DUE: First Draft of Research Paper (5%)

Week 8: Are Evil and God Compatible?

Tuesday, 10/18/11

The "Problem" of Evil

Read: Peterson, *Philosophy of Religion,* from Part Seven: The Problem of Evil
(Select 2 readings from below)

"Evil Makes a Strong Case Against God's Existence"
by David Hume
"Best of All Possible Worlds Theodicy" by Gottfried Leibniz
"Evil and Omnipotence" by J.L. Mackie
"The Free Will Defense" by Alvin Plantinga
"Soul-Making Theodicy" by John Hick

McGrath, *Theology,* from Ch. 3, Creation
3.6 Dorothy L. Sayers on creation and evil

Curtis, *Faith Stories*
"God's Goodness," Marjorie Kemper

Wednesday, 10/19/11

IEE Lecture in Leffler
Mark Doty, Poet and activist for equality issues, see
http://www.markdoty.org/

Thursday, 10/20/11

The Reality of Evil and Religious Accounts
<u>Read</u>: Peterson, *Philosophy of Religion,* from Part Seven: The Problem of Evil
"Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God"
by Marilyn McCord Adams
Curtis, *Faith Stories*
"The Third Generation" by Tova Reich
<u>In-Class Contemplative Writing</u>: How do you make sense of the bad things
that have happened in your life and to others in the world?

Week 9: What Does it Mean to be Saved? What about Heaven?

Tuesday, 10/25/11

What Does It Mean to be "Saved"?
<u>Read</u>: McGrath, *Theology,* Ch. 5 Salvation
"Saved" by Elizabeth Cox (Curtis, *Faith Stories*)

Wednesday, 10/26/11

Department Day for Academic Advising

Thursday, 10/27/11

Resurrection, Heaven, and Life Eternal
<u>Read</u>: McGrath, *Theology,* Ch. 9, Heaven

Week 10: What About Religions Other Than Christianity?

Tuesday, 11/1/11

Life After Death
<u>Read</u>: Peterson, *Philosophy of Religion,* from Part Eleven: Life After Death
(Select 2 readings from below)
"The Soul Survives and Functions After Death" by H.H.
Price
"Problems with Accounts of Life After Death" by Linda
Badham
"Resurrection of the Person" by John Hick
"Buddhist View of Rebirth" by Anonymous Author
"Rebirth" by Sri Aurobindo

Wednesday, 11/2/11

Lecture in Leffler
Out Beyond Ideas: Right-Doing and Wrong-Doing
Barbara Gottschalk**,** Vice-President, *Seeds of Peace*
Gottschalk is executive vice president of Seeds of Peace, an organization
that brings together young people from Israel, Palestine, and other
troubled areas for the experience of living together peacefully. Seeds of
Peace has a summer camp in the United States and a Center for

Coexistence in Jerusalem. More than 2,000 participants have graduated from the camp in Maine and then returned to their regions for regular meetings and coexistence programs.

Thursday, 11/3/11

Exclusivism Versus Pluralism

Read: Peterson, *Philosophy of Religion,* from Part Thirteen: Religious Diversity
(Select 2 readings from below)
"Buddhism and Other Religions" by Dalai Lama
"The Uniqueness of Religious Doctrines" by Paul J. Griffiths
"Religious Inclusivism" by Karl Rahner
"Religious Pluralism" by John Hick

Week 11: Is the Christian Church Universal?

Tuesday, 11/8/11

Is the Church Catholic (i.e. Universal)?
Read: McGrath, from Ch. 7, The Church

Wednesday, 11/9/11

Big Questions Individual Meetings with Instructor

Thursday, 11/10/11

Mission Theology and its Effects
Read: "Fishers of Men" by Amy Tan (Curtis, *Faith Stories*)
In-Class Contemplative Writing: What does it mean to be "saved"?

Week 12: What About Science and Religion? What About Miracles?

Tuesday, 11/15/11

Religion, Science, and Creation
Read: Peterson, *Philosophy of Religion,* from Part Twelve: Religion and Science
"Two Separate Domains" by Stephen Jay Gould
"Science Discredits Religion" by Richard Dawkins
"At the Mercy of Chance" by Phillip Kitcher
"The Universe as Creation" by John Polkinghorne
"Reflections on the Intelligent Design Debate" by John
Lennox
McGrath, *Theology,* from Ch.3, Creation
3.2 Jonathan Edwards on the beauty of creation
3.4 John Henry Newman on natural religion
3.5 G.K. Chesterton on the doctrine of creation

Wednesday, 11/16/11

    IEE Lecture in Leffler

        Ellen O'Grady, artist/social activist, see http://ellenogrady.com/

Thursday, 11/17/11

    What is a Miracle? Do Miracles Make Sense? (Select 2 readings from below)

        <u>Read</u>: Peterson, *Philosophy of Religion,* from Part Eight: Miracles

            "Is It Possible to Know That Jesus Was Raised from the Dead?" by Stephen T. Davis

            "The Evidence for Miracles is Weak" by David Hume

            "Miracles and Historical Evidence" by Richard Swinburne

        Curtis, *Faith Stories,* "The Prophet's Hair" by Salman Rushdie

        <u>DUE</u>: Research Paper (20%)

Week 13: Should We Even Discuss Things Like We Do in This Course?

Tuesday, 11/22/11

    Divine Power and Divine Action (Select 2 readings from below)

        <u>Read</u>: Peterson, *Philosophy of Religion*, from Part Six: Knowing God Without Arguments

            "The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology"

                by Alvin Plantinga

            "The Case of the Intellectually Sophisticated Theist"

                by William Hasker

        Peterson, *Philosophy of Religion*, from Part One: The Nature of Religion

            "Buddhist Nonrealism" by The Buddha

Wednesday, 11/23/11Friday's schedule of classes!

Thursday, 11/24/11   No Class! Thanksgiving Break!

Week 14: How Do We Talk to People of Different Religions and of No Religion?

Tuesday, 11/29/11

    The Challenges of Communication Between Different Faiths and Different Cultures

        <u>Read</u>: "Cello" by Rémy Rougeau (Curtis, *Faith Stories*)

        <u>In-Class Contemplative Writing</u>: What does it mean to be "saved"?

Wednesday, 11/30/11

    Big Questions Small Group Meeting Time

Thursday, 12/1/11

    Guest Speaker: Islam

        <u>DUE</u>: Big Question Final "Products" and Report on Learning (20%)

Week 15: Revisiting Appreciative Inquiry

Tuesday, 12/6/11
Guest Speaker: Hinduism

Wednesday, 12/7/11
IEE Make-Up for Students Who Do Not Have 15 Experiences

Thursday, 12/8/11
Big Questions Project Presentations
DUE: IEE Appreciative Inquiry Reflection Journal (15%)

Week 16: Final Exam

Thursday, 12/15/11   Final Exam (15%)

Appendix E:
Explanation of Non-Use of Observation Ratings by Faculty

Each of the five faculty instructors for both the experimental and comparison seminar groups, including the researcher, were asked to make pre- and post-course observational ratings on twelve items for his or her students, using a custom-designed rubric for the following areas, with a score of one being the benchmark, two and three being milestones, and four being a capstone level:

1. Embracing Contradictions

2. Innovative Thinking

3. Student's Position

4. Conclusions and Related Outcomes

5. Knowledge of Cultural Self-Awareness

6. Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks

7. Skills of Empathy

8. Skills of Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

9. Attitudes of Curiosity

10. Attitudes of Openness

11. Diversity of Communities and Cultures

12. Civic Identity and Commitment

In addition, the two faculty for the experimental first-year seminar groups were asked to make ratings for the following six items:

13. Discomfort Versus Ease with Guest Speakers

14. Anxiousness Versus Relaxation with Class Members

15. Leading or Open Questions of Guest Speakers

16. Judgmental or Appreciative Questions of Guest Speakers

17. Leading or Open Questions of Class Members

18. Judgmental or Appreciative Questions of Class Members

Data from the pre- and post-course observation ratings of the faculty are limited in a number of ways:

- The instructor from CG Math determined that he had no basis (NB) for making either pre- or post-course ratings for his students based on both the academic content and the pedagogical strategies employed in his class. He stated that his academic subject area (mathematics) simply does not deal with any of the twelve categories.

- The instructor from CG Science completed post-course ratings but not pre-course ratings.

- Inter-rater reliability using rubrics is known to be highly inconsistent, and proved to be the case in this study. Despite clear descriptions of what constituted benchmark, milestones, and capstone for each of the twelve areas, it seemed that what one instructor thought was capstone was not the same as what another instructor thought was capstone. This unreliability between raters was confirmed in student interviews. The best example of this is a certain instructor whose average scores in quite a few areas were second level milestone, approaching capstone, while students were clear in interviews that they were not developing or learning in these areas. Another example is the instructor who gave NB (no basis) scores for every one of the twelve observational items, when student interviews and survey results did

indicate student development and change in these areas. That said, it is possible that the student development and change occurred as a result of activities outside the classroom and the resulting development was never visible in the classroom.

Appendix F:
Pre-Course Survey Questions

1. ID# for this study:_____

2. My gender: _____Male   _____Female

3. Title of my first-year seminar:
_____Big Theological Questions
_____Cryptologic Mathematics
_____Gotta Have It: Exploring the Science of Addiction
_____Shakespeare: Text and Film

4. My desire to take this specific topic for my first-year seminar:
_____1   _____2   _____3   _____4   _____5
Very   Somewhat   Somewhat   Very
        Low   High

5. The religious, spiritual, or philosophical tradition(s) I was raised in:
    (check as many as apply)
        _____Atheism   _____Judaism
        _____Buddhism   _____Unitarian Universalist
        _____Christianity   _____Wicca
        _____Hinduism   _____Other_____
        _____Humanism   _____None
        _____Islam

    If Christianity, which type?
        (check as many as apply)
        _____Church of the Brethren   _____Pentecostal
        _____Episcopal   _____Presbyterian
        _____Evangelical   _____United Methodist
        _____Lutheran   _____Roman Catholic
        _____Mennonite   _____Other_____
        _____Orthodox

6. The best category for describing my current religious, spiritual, or philosophical
    preference is:
    (Check as many as apply)
        _____Atheism   _____Hinduism
        _____Buddhism   _____Humanism
        _____Christianity   _____Islam

_____Judaism   _____Other_____
_____Unitarian Universalist   _____None
_____Wicca

If Christianity, which type?
(check as many as apply)
_____Church of the Brethren   _____Pentecostal
_____Episcopal   _____Presbyterian
_____Evangelical   _____United Methodist
_____Lutheran   _____Roman Catholic
_____Mennonite   _____Other_____
_____Orthodox

Curiosity

7. What big questions do you have about religion, spirituality, and/or life?
   _____

[Todd Kashdan, Curiosity and Exploration Inventory—CEI-T]

Using the scale shown below, please respond to each of the following statements according to how you would usually describe yourself. There are no right or wrong answers.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Strongly Agree

_____ 8. I would describe myself as someone who actively seeks as much information as I can in a new situation.

_____ 9. When I am participating in an activity, I tend to get so involved that I lose track of time.

_____ 10. I frequently find myself looking for new opportunities to grow as a person (e.g., information, people, resources).

_____ 11. I am not the type of person who probes deeply into new situations or things.

_____ 12. When I am actively interested in something, it takes a great deal to interrupt me.

_____ 13. My friends would describe me as someone who is "extremely intense" when in the middle of doing something.

_____ 14. Everywhere I go, I am out looking for new things or experiences.

Indicators of Students' Spirituality

(2003, from HERI/UCLA Study on the Spiritual Life of College Students)

_____ 15. I believe in the sacredness of life
_____ 16. I have an interest in spirituality
_____ 17. I search for meaning/purpose in life
_____ 18. I have discussions about the meaning of life with friends
_____ 19. My spirituality is a source of joy
_____ 20. I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually

Indicators of Students' Religiousness (2003, from HERI/UCLA Study on the Spiritual Life of College Students)

_____ 21. I believe in God
_____ 22. I attend religious services
_____ 23. I have discussions about religion/spirituality with friends
_____ 24. I have discussions about religion/spirituality with family
_____ 25. Religious beliefs provide strength, support, and guidance
_____ 26. I follow religious teachings in everyday life

27. Which word best describes your views about spiritual/religious matters?

_____Conflicted
_____Doubting
_____Not Interested
_____Secure
_____Seeking
_____Other_____

(From Gortner, Personal Theologies, 1994)

28. How often do you attend religious services?
_____/week - month - year (fill in number and circle one word)

29. How often do you read the Bible or other sacred text in the last year?
_____/week - month - year (fill in number and circle one word)

30. How often have you prayed or meditated in the past year?
_____/week - month - year (fill in number and circle one word)

31. Are you involved in any religious or spiritual groups? ____Yes _____No
What are the most important things you get or learn from them?
    1._____
    2._____

(Sadd, 2011)

32. The number of courses I have had previously in Christian theology and/or religious studies is: _____1 _____2 _____3 _____More than 4

33. List who you think of when you think of the "other" or the "stranger."
    1. _____ 2._____ 3. _____

34. List your top three favorite ethnic foods:
    1. _____ 2._____ 3. _____

35. To what extent have you encountered religious and/or cultural diversity before you came to E-town's campus?
_____

36. Before you came to E-town, how many friends did you have who are of a different race, religion, nationality, or cultural background?
    _____0 _____1 _____2 _____3
    _____More than 4

37. If you have interacted with people of different cultural or religious traditions before on E-town's campus, then how comfortable were you in talking with them?
    _____1 _____2 _____3 _____4
    Very Uncomfortable   Very Comfortable

(Sadd, 2011, Adapted from Interfaith Cooperation on Campus student survey, Interfaith Youth Corps—IFYC, 2010)

Before you came to E-town's campus, which of the following had you done with which type of people?

	Atheist	Buddhist	Christian	Hindu	Humanist	Muslim	Jewish
38. Had class with							
39. Visited house of worship							
40. Spoke to							
41. Ate together							
42. Had meaningful conversation							
43. Did service project together							
44. Hung out with							
45. Discussed religion (not in class)							
46. Shared friendship							
47. Chose as a roommate							
48. Advocated for							
49. Dated							
50. Felt tense							
51. Had negative interaction							
52. Engaged in open conflict							

53. Would you marry someone of a different religious tradition/belief system?
   _____Yes _____No
   Why or why not? _____

Beliefs and Epistemology

54. I find religion and spirituality interesting.
   _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4
   Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

55. I know and can state to others what I believe.

     _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

56. Describe what you believe

_____

_____

(Sadd, 2011, adapted from Christian Smith, National Study of Youth and Religion—NSYR, 2002-2003, 2007-2008)

57. It is important to believe things.

     _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

58. It is important to believe things strongly.

     _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

59. Religion conflicts with the lifestyle I want to live.

     _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

60. Religion provides stability, support, and/or guidance for my life.

     _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

61. Religion conflicts with what I know is true.

     _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

62. Religious conflicts with scientific facts.

     _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

63. Religion makes me feel better about myself.

     _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

(From Gortner, 1997)

64. What do you consider your most important experience with religion, the experience that has brought you to your current feeling about religion?

_____

(From Gortner, 1994)

65. How did you come to believe as you do?
    _____I have always believed as I do/I was taught a strong system of belief
    _____I came to a point where I just knew it was true
    _____I changed slowly to a new way of looking at life
    _____I had an experience that changed my life
    _____I was convinced by the truth of this system's arguments
    _____I saw how people who believe this way are different
    _____Other_____

[Traditional vs. Existential/Fatalist Beliefs: GSS, Greeley, 1988:1992]

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
66. There is a Deity who is concerned with every person.	1	2	3	4	5
67. There is little that people can do to change the course of their lives.	1	2	3	4	5
68. Life is meaningful only because a God exists.	1	2	3	4	5
69. Life does not serve any grand purpose beyond living.	1	2	3	4	5
70. The course of our lives is decided by a Deity.	1	2	3	4	5
71. There is no God or Deity.	1	2	3	4	5
72. Life is only meaningful if you provide the meaning yourself.	1	2	3	4	5
73. We each make our own fate.	1	2	3	4	5
74. Any God or Deity is remote, far from our daily lives.	1	2	3	4	5
75. There is a Devil / a spiritual force of Evil.	1	2	3	4	5
76. There is a Hell / spiritual state of punishment or isolation.	1	2	3	4	5
77. If there were a God, life would not be so tragic for so many.	1	2	3	4	5
78. I am very religious.	1	2	3	4	5
79. Right and wrong are not usually a simple matter of black and white; there are many shades of grey.	1	2	3	4	5
80. Those who violate a Deity's laws will pay a personal price.	1	2	3	4	5
81. Wrong or immoral actions by a single person can corrupt society in general.	1	2	3	4	5
82. I often have felt angry at God.	1	2	3	4	5
83. There is some kind of life after death.	1	2	3	4	5

(Sadd, 2011)

84. All religions believe basically the same things.

_____1   _____2   _____3   _____4
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

85. All religions teach basically the same things about how to act ethically in the world.

_____1   _____2   _____3   _____4
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

86. Which of the following most expresses your view?
_____All religions are true.
_____Only one religion is true.
_____Only one religion is true, but all religions have some degree of truth.
_____Any religion may be true; it does not really matter which one.
_____No religions are true.

87. The humanities (literature, religion, history) teach opinions while science (psychology, biology, physics) teaches factual knowledge.

_____1   _____2   _____3   _____4
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

88. The best way to learn about a "subject" (math, a Shakespearean play, another person, the self (yourself), an addiction, or God) is to remain a detached, neutral observer or experimenter.

_____1   _____2   _____3   _____4
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

89. All knowledge is constructed by human beings.

_____1   _____2   _____3   _____4
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

(Sadd, 2011, adapted from Christian Smith, National Study of Youth and Religion—NSYR, 2002-2003, 2007-2008)

90. Science holds a lot of authority for me.

_____1   _____2   _____3   _____4
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

91. Religion holds a lot of authority for me.

     _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4

     Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

92. My intuition and my personal experience hold a lot of authority for me.

     _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4

     Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

93. There are subtle, yet important differences between what religions believe and what they teach about acting ethically in the world.

     _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4

     Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

Religious Knowledge

94. How much do you know about your own faith tradition or philosophical/ethical belief system?

     _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4

     Very little   A lot

95. How much do you know about other religious traditions and belief systems?

     _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4

     Very little   A lot

(Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey, 2010)

96. Which Bible figure is most closely associated with leading the exodus from Egypt?

    ____Job   _____Elijah   _____Moses   _____Abraham

97. What was Mother Teresa's religion?

    ____Catholic   _____Jewish   _____Buddhist   _____Mormon

    _____Hindu

98. Which of the following is NOT one of the Ten Commandments?

     _____Do not commit adultery

     _____Do unto others as you would have them do unto you

     _____Do not steal

     _____Keep the Sabbath holy

99. When does the Jewish Sabbath begin?

_____Friday   _____Saturday   _____Sunday

100. Is Ramadan…?

_____The Hindu festival of lights

_____A Jewish day of atonement

_____The Islamic holy month

101. Which of the following best described the Catholic teaching about the bread and wine used for Communion?

_____The bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus Christ

_____The bread and wine are symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ

102. In which religion are Vishnu and Shiva central figures?

_____Islam   _____Hinduism   _____Taoism

103. Which Bible figure is most closely associated with remaining obedient to God despite suffering?

____Job   _____Elijah   _____Moses   _____Abraham

104. What was Joseph Smith's religion?

_____Catholic   _____Jewish   _____Buddhist   _____Mormon   _____Hindu

105. According to rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court, is a public school teacher permitted to lead a class in prayer, or not?

_____Yes, permitted   _____No, not permitted

106. According to rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court, is a public school teacher permitted to read from the Bible as an example of literature or not?

_____Yes, permitted   _____No, not permitted

107. What religion do most people in Pakistan consider themselves?

____Buddhist   _____Hindu   _____Muslim   _____Christian

108. What was the name of the person whose writings and actions inspired the Protestant Reformation?

_____Martin Luther   _____Thomas Aquinas   _____John Wesley

109. Which of these religions aims at nirvana, the state of being free from suffering?

_____Islam   _____Buddhism   _____Hinduism

110. Which one of these preachers participated in the period of religious activity known as the First Great Awakening?

_____Jonathan Edwards _____Charles Finney _____Billy Graham

(Sadd, 2011)

111. What are the religious or scriptural reasons a Christian could give for supporting Muslims in the community whose mosque has been burned down by those who hate Islam?

_____

112. What are the religious or scriptural reasons Muslims could give for participating in a service project with Hindus?

_____

Self-Efficacy and Well-Being
[Adult Hope Scale, C.R. Snyder, University of Kansas]

		Strongly Disagree	Neutral		Strongly Agree	
113.	I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.	1	2	3	4	5
114.	There are lots of ways around any problem.	1	2	3	4	5
115.	I meet the goals that I set for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
116.	I can think of many ways to get things in life that are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
117.	Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
118.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4	5

[Sonja Lyubomirsky, Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)]

119. In general, I consider myself:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not a very   A very
happy person   happy person

120. Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Less happy   More happy

121. In general, I consider myself:

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

    Not a very   A very

    very successful person   successful person

122. Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

    More successful   Less successful

    than my peers   than my peers

123. What role might religion and/or spirituality play in dealing with the problems in your life?

_____

124. We can change the world. _____Yes _____No

    Why or why not? _____

125. We are responsible for each other. _____Yes _____No

    Why or why not? _____

126. Do you have a vision or a dream for what you will achieve in life?

    _____Yes   _____No

    What is it?_____

    What will help you most in achieving this dream?_____

Life Meaning and Purpose

127. What is your view of the meaning and/or purpose of life?

_____

128. What things do you believe in that give meaning to your life?

_____

129. What is living for and what is your life for?

_____

130. What is your education for?

_____

1 = Absolutely Untrue
2 = Mostly Untrue
3 = Somewhat Untrue
4 = Can't Say True or False
5 = Somewhat True
6 = Mostly True
7 = Absolutely True

_____ 131. I understand my life's meaning.

_____ 132. I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.

_____ 133. I am always looking to find my life's purpose.

_____ 134. My life has a clear sense of purpose.

_____ 135. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.

_____ 136. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.

_____ 137. I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.

_____ 138. I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life.

_____ 139. My life has no clear purpose.

_____ 140. I am searching for meaning in my life.

Appendix G:
Post-Course Survey Questions

1. 1. ID# for this study:_____

2. My gender: _____Male   _____Female

3. Title of my first-year seminar:
_____Big Theological Questions
_____Cryptologic Mathematics
_____Gotta Have It: Exploring the Science of Addiction
_____Shakespeare: Text and Film

4. The religious, spiritual, or philosophical tradition(s) I was raised in:
   (check as many as apply)

_____Atheism	_____Judaism
_____Buddhism	_____Unitarian Universalist
_____Christianity	_____Wicca
_____Hinduism	_____Other_____
_____Humanism	_____None
_____Islam	

If Christianity, which type?   (check as many as apply)

_____Church of the Brethren	_____Pentecostal
_____Episcopal	_____Presbyterian
_____Evangelical	_____United Methodist
_____Lutheran	_____Roman Catholic
_____Mennonite	_____Other_____
_____Orthodox	

5. The best category for describing my current religious, spiritual, or philosophical
   preference is:
   (Check as many as apply)

_____Atheism	_____Judaism
_____Buddhism	_____Unitarian Universalist
_____Christianity	_____Wicca
_____Hinduism	_____Other_____
_____Humanism	_____None
_____Islam	

If Christianity, which type? (check as many as apply)

_____Church of the Brethren   _____Pentecostal

_____Episcopal   _____Presbyterian

_____Evangelical   _____United Methodist

_____Lutheran   _____Roman Catholic

_____Mennonite   _____Other_____

_____Orthodox

6. Have your beliefs and/or values changed as a result of taking your first-year seminar?
    _____Yes   _____No
    If yes, the please give examples: _____
    If no, then why not? _____

7. Has your ability to express your beliefs and ethical commitments changed as a result of your first-year seminar?
    _____Yes   _____No
    Why or why not? _____
    Any stories you want to share? _____

8. Has your first-year seminar affected your ability to do the following:

    a. Deal with stress?
        _____Yes   _____No
        Any stories you would like to share? _____

    b. State clearly what you believe?
        _____Yes   _____No
        Any stories you would like to share? _____

    c. Be more aware of who you are?
        _____Yes   _____No
        Any stories you would like to share? _____

    d. Be self-confident?
        _____Yes   _____No
        Any stories you would like to share? _____

    e. Appreciate what others believe?
        _____Yes   _____No
        Any stories you would like to share? _____

f. Engage diverse religions/cultures?

_____Yes   _____No

Any stories you would like to share? _____

g. Listen to others points of view?

_____Yes   _____No

Any stories you would like to share? _____

h. Be civil and kind?

_____Yes   _____No

Any stories you would like to share? _____

i. Treat others with respect?

_____Yes   _____No

Any stories you would like to share? _____

j. Initiate conversations with people of other religions/cultures?

_____Yes   _____No

Any stories you would like to share? _____

k. Form friendships with people different than you?

_____Yes   _____No

Any stories you would like to share? _____

l. Have mutually rewarding relationships with parents and family?

_____Yes   _____No

Any stories you would like to share? _____

m. Have mutually rewarding relationship with roommate or friends?

_____Yes   _____No

Any stories you would like to share? _____

On the Post-Course Survey, Questions 9.-143. will be Questions 7. – 140. from the Pre-Course Survey.

Appendix H:
Survey Questions by Analytical Category

Indicators of Students' Spirituality: Alexander Astin and Helen Astin, 2003, from HERI/UCLA Study on the Spiritual Life of College Students, 6 questions, 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

- I believe in the sacredness of life
- I have an interest in spirituality
- I search for meaning/purpose in life
- I have discussions about the meaning of life with friends
- My spirituality is a source of joy
- I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually

Indicators of Students' Religiousness: Alexander Astin and Helen Astin, 2003, from HERI/UCLA Study on the Spiritual Life of College Students, 7-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

- I believe in God
- Religious beliefs provide strength, support, and guidance
- I follow religious teachings in everyday life
- I have discussions about religion/spirituality with friends
- I have discussions about religion/spirituality with family
- I attend religious services

Which word best describes your views about spiritual/religious matters?
_____Conflicted   _____Secure
_____Doubting   _____Seeking
_____Not Interested   _____Other_____

Religious Practices, from Gortner, Personal Theologies, 1994, 3 questions, Multiple choice answers.

28. How often do you attend religious services?
_____/week - month - year (fill in number and circle one word)

29. How often do you read the Bible or other sacred text in the last year?
_____/week - month - year (fill in number and circle one word)

30. How often have you prayed or meditated in the past year?
_____/week - month - year (fill in number and circle one word)

Religious Formation, from Gortner, Personal Theologies, 1994, 3 questions, Multiple choice answers.

(From Gortner, 1994)

31. Are you involved in any religious or spiritual groups?   ____Yes   _____No
What are the most important things you get or learn from them?
   1._____
   2._____

(From Gortner, 1997)

64. What do you consider your most important experience with religion, the experience that has brought you to your current feeling about religion?
_____

(From Gortner, 1994)

65. How did you come to believe as you do?
   _____I have always believed as I do/I was taught a strong system of belief
   _____I came to a point where I just knew it was true
   _____I changed slowly to a new way of looking at life
   _____I had an experience that changed my life
   _____I was convinced by the truth of this system's arguments
   _____I saw how people who believe this way are different
   _____Other_____

Traditional vs. Existential/Fatalist Beliefs: GSS, Greeley, 1988:1992, 18 questions, 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

	Strongly Disagree				*Strongly Agree*
84. There is a Deity who is concerned with every person.	1	2	3	4	5
85. There is little that people can do to change the course of their lives.	1	2	3	4	5
86. Life is meaningful only because a God exists.	1	2	3	4	5
87. Life does not serve any grand purpose beyond living.	1	2	3	4	5
88. The course of our lives is decided by a Deity.	1	2	3	4	5
89. There is no God or Deity.	1	2	3	4	5
90. Life is only meaningful if you provide the meaning yourself.	1	2	3	4	5
91. We each make our own fate.	1	2	3	4	5
92. Any God or Deity is remote, far from our daily lives.	1	2	3	4	5
93. There is a Devil / a spiritual force of Evil.	1	2	3	4	5
94. There is a Hell / spiritual state of punishment or isolation.	1	2	3	4	5

95. If there were a God, life would not be so tragic for so many.	1	2	3	4	5
96. I am very religious.	1	2	3	4	5
97. Right and wrong are not usually a simple matter of black and white; there are many shades of grey.	1	2	3	4	5
98. Those who violate a Deity's laws will pay a personal price.	1	2	3	4	5
99. Wrong or immoral actions by a single person can corrupt society in general.	1	2	3	4	5
100. I often have felt angry at God.	1	2	3	4	5
101. There is some kind of life after death.	1	2	3	4	5

Beliefs about Belief and Religion, adapted from Christian Smith, National Study of Youth and Religion—NSYR, 2002-2003, 2007-2008), 7 items, 4-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

_____1   _____2   _____3   _____4
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

- It is important to believe things.
- It is important to believe things strongly.
- Religion conflicts with the lifestyle I want to live.
- Religion provides stability, support, and/or guidance for my life.
- Religion conflicts with what I know is true.
- Religion conflicts with scientific facts.
- Religion makes me feel better about myself.

Indicators of Curiosity: Todd Kashdan, Curiosity and Exploration Inventory—CEI-T, 7 questions, 7-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

- I would describe myself as someone who actively seeks as much information as I can in a new situation.
- When I am participating in an activity, I tend to get so involved that I lose track of time.
- I frequently find myself looking for new opportunities to grow as a person (e.g., information, people, resources).
- I am not the type of person who probes deeply into new situations or things.
- When I am actively interested in something, it takes a great deal to interrupt me.
- My friends would describe me as someone who is "extremely intense" when in the middle of doing something.
- Everywhere I go, I am out looking for new things or experiences.

Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS), Sonja Lyubomirsky, 7-point Likert scale with one item reverse scored.

In general, I consider myself:

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

      Not a very   A very

      happy person   happy person

Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

      Less happy   More happy

In general, I consider myself:

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

      Not a very   A very

      very successful person   successful person

Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

      More successful   Less successful

      than my peers   than my peers

Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ), [Michael F. Steger, Patricia Frazier, Shigehiro Oishi, and Matthew Kaler, 10 items, 7-point Likert scale from Absolutely Untrue to Absolutely True, with one item reverse scored.

      1 = Absolutely Untrue
      2 = Mostly Untrue
      3 = Somewhat Untrue
      4 = Can't Say True or False
      5 = Somewhat True
      6 = Mostly True
      7 = Absolutely True

I understand my life's meaning.
I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.
I am always looking to find my life's purpose.
My life has a clear sense of purpose.
I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.
I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.
I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.
I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life.
My life has no clear purpose.
I am searching for meaning in my life.

Adult Hope Scale, C.R. Snyder, University of Kansas, 6 questions, 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

		Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
113.	I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.	1	2	3	4	5
114.	There are lots of ways around any problem.	1	2	3	4	5
115.	I meet the goals that I set for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
116.	I can think of many ways to get things in life that are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
117.	Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
118.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4	5

Religious Knowledge, Tracy Wenger Sadd, 2011, 3 questions, 4-point Likert scale from Very Little to A Lot, and Multiple Choice.

How much do you know about your own faith tradition or philosophical/ethical belief system?

_____1   _____2   _____3   _____4
Very little   A lot

How much do you know about other religious traditions and belief systems?

_____1   _____2   _____3   _____4
Very little   A lot

The number of courses I have had previously in Christian theology and/or religious studies is:

_____1   _____2   _____3   _____More than 4

Religious Literacy Questions: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey, 2010, 15 questions, multiple choice.

96. Which Bible figure is most closely associated with leading the exodus from Egypt?
____Job   _____Elijah   _____Moses   _____Abraham

97. What was Mother Teresa's religion?
____Catholic   _____Jewish   _____Buddhist   _____Mormon
_____Hindu

98. Which of the following is NOT one of the Ten Commandments?
_____Do not commit adultery
_____Do unto others as you would have them do unto you
_____Do not steal
_____Keep the Sabbath holy

99. When does the Jewish Sabbath begin?
   _____Friday   _____Saturday   _____Sunday

100. Is Ramadan…?
   _____The Hindu festival of lights
   _____A Jewish day of atonement
   _____The Islamic holy month

101. Which of the following best described the Catholic teaching about the bread and wine used for Communion?
   _____The bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus Christ
   _____The bread and wine are symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ

102. In which religion are Vishnu and Shiva central figures?
   _____Islam   _____Hinduism   _____Taoism

103. Which Bible figure is most closely associated with remaining obedient to God despite suffering?
   ____Job   _____Elijah   _____Moses   _____Abraham

104. What was Joseph Smith's religion?
   _____Catholic   _____Jewish   _____Buddhist   _____Mormon   _____Hindu

105. According to rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court, is a public school teacher permitted to lead a class in prayer, or not?
   _____Yes, permitted   _____No, not permitted

106. According to rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court, is a public school teacher permitted to read from the Bible as an example of literature or not?
   _____Yes, permitted   _____No, not permitted

107. What religion do most people in Pakistan consider themselves?
   ____Buddhist   _____Hindu   _____Muslim   _____Christian

108. What was the name of the person whose writings and actions inspired the Protestant Reformation?
   _____Martin Luther   _____Thomas Aquinas   _____John Wesley

109. Which of these religions aims at nirvana, the state of being free from suffering?
   _____Islam   _____Buddhism   _____Hinduism

110. Which one of these preachers participated in the period of religious activity known as the First Great Awakening?
   _____Jonathan Edwards   _____Charles Finney   _____Billy Graham

Beliefs and Epistemology, Tracy Wenger Sadd, 2011, 8 questions, 4-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

- I find religion and spirituality interesting.
- I know and can state to others what I believe.
- The humanities (literature, religion, history) teach opinions while science (psychology, biology, physics) teaches factual knowledge.
- The best way to learn about a "subject" (math, a Shakespearean play, another person, the self (yourself), an addiction, or God) is to remain a detached, neutral observer or experimenter.
- All knowledge is constructed by human beings.
- All religions believe basically the same things.
- All religions teach basically the same things about how to act ethically in the world.
- Which of the following most expresses your view?
  - _____All religions are true.
  - _____Only one religion is true.
  - _____Only one religion is true, but all religions have some degree of truth.
  - _____Any religion may be true; it does not really matter which one.
  - _____No religions are true.

Beliefs and Epistemology, adapted from Christian Smith, National Study of Youth and Religion—NSYR, 2002-2003, 2007-2008), 4 questions, 4-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

_____1	_____2	_____3	_____4
Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree

- Science holds a lot of authority for me.
- Religion holds a lot of authority for me.
- My intuition and my personal experience hold a lot of authority for me.
- There are subtle, yet important differences between what religions believe and what they teach about acting ethically in the world.

Interfaith Actions, Adapted from Interfaith Cooperation on Campus student survey, Interfaith Youth Corps—IFYC, 2010, 15 questions, check all that apply.

Before you came to E-town's campus, which of the following had you done with which type of people?

	Atheist	Buddhist	Christian	Hindu	Humanist	Muslim	Jewish
38. Had class with							
39. Visited house of worship							
40. Spoke to							

41. Ate together							
42. Had meaningful conversation							
43. Did service project together							
44. Hung out with							
45. Discussed religion (not in class)							
46. Shared friendship							
47. Chose as a roommate							
48. Advocated for							
49. Dated							
50. Felt tense							
51. Had negative interaction							
52. Engaged in open conflict							

35. To what extent have you encountered religious and/or cultural diversity before you came to E-town's campus?
_____

36. Before you came to E-town, how many friends did you have who are of a different race, religion, nationality, or cultural background?

  _____0   _____1   _____2   _____3   _____More than 4

37. If you have interacted with people of different cultural or religious traditions before on E-town's campus, then how comfortable were you in talking with them?

  _____1   _____2   _____3   _____4

 Very Uncomfortable   Very Comfortable

53. Would you marry someone of a different religious tradition/belief system?
  _____Yes _____No
  Why or why not? _____

Perceived Benefits of First-Year Seminar, Tracy Wenger Sadd, 2011, 15 questions, Yes or No answers.

2. Have your beliefs and/or values changed as a result of taking your first-year seminar?
  _____Yes _____No
  If yes, the please give examples: _____
  If no, then why not? _____

3. Has your ability to express your beliefs and ethical commitments changed as a result of your first-year seminar?

      _____Yes   _____No

      Why or why not? _____

      Any stories you want to share? _____

Has your first-year seminar affected your ability to do the following:

    4. Deal with stress?

          _____Yes   _____No

          Any stories you would like to share?_____

    5. State clearly what you believe?

          _____Yes   _____No

          Any stories you would like to share?_____

    6. Be more aware of who you are?

          _____Yes   _____No

          Any stories you would like to share?_____

    7. Be self-confident?

          _____Yes   _____No

          Any stories you would like to share?_____

    8. Appreciate what others believe?

          _____Yes   _____No

          Any stories you would like to share?_____

    9. Engage diverse religions/cultures?

          _____Yes   _____No

          Any stories you would like to share?_____

    10. Listen to others points of view?

          _____Yes   _____No

          Any stories you would like to share?_____

    11. Be civil and kind?

          _____Yes   _____No

          Any stories you would like to share?_____

    12. Treat others with respect?

          _____Yes   _____No

          Any stories you would like to share?_____

    13. Initiate conversations with people of other religions/cultures?

          _____Yes   _____No

          Any stories you would like to share?_____

14. Form friendships with people different than you?
  _____Yes   _____No
  Any stories you would like to share?_____

15. Have mutually rewarding relationships with parents and family?
  _____Yes   _____No
  Any stories you would like to share?_____

16. Have mutually rewarding relationship with roommate or friends?
  _____Yes   _____No
  Any stories you would like to share?_____

Unclassified Questions

(Sadd, 2011)

33. List who you think of when you think of the "other" or the "stranger."
  1. _____ 2._____ 3. _____

34. List your top three favorite ethnic foods:
  1. _____ 2._____ 3. _____

Appendix I:
Pre-Course Interviews

<u>Introduction</u>

[Adapted from Gortner, Personal Theologies, 1994]

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me. I really appreciate it.

This interview will take about 45 minutes, and I am going to be asking you about your philosophy of life -- what you believe, what's important to you, what you have thought about in terms of your sense of purpose and where you fit in the world. These are some of the big questions that any of us may think about from time to time. So just relax, and try to imagine that we are having this conversation with close friends late at night. It's really important that you be yourself and answer honestly.

We'll start with some easier questions. Besides your beliefs and philosophy of life, I'm also going to ask you questions about how you think about and interact with people who think, believe, and live differently than you do.

[From Gortner, 1994]

1. What are your religious and spiritual beliefs, briefly? In what ways are your beliefs different from people you know? How have your religious and spiritual beliefs change in the last four years?

2. Have you shifted in your outlook on life or your belief-system in the last four years? How? What happened?
    i. Probes: Have you experienced a "turning point" in your life in last…?
    ii. Probes: Have you had to face any situations that made you reconsider your ethical and moral principles? Or rethink your entire outlook on life? How did you feel before this change? What led up to this change? How did you feel when this shift happened?

[Sadd, 2011]

3. How good are you at listening to others?
    i. Probe: What about listening to people of different religions? Of different cultures?

4. Name people or groups that have very different viewpoints than you. What is the value of their viewpoints?

5. How would you describe Christians? Muslims? Hindus?

6. In what ways do you seek involvement with people different than yourself?

7. What are some good reasons for building bridges to people of other religions/cultures?

8. If you have a religious tradition or philosophical belief system, what does your religious or non-religious tradition or belief system say about building bridges to people of other religions and cultures?

9. Have you challenged prejudice or unjust behavior toward others?

10. How comfortable and skilled are you at initiating conversations with people of other religions/cultures? Please give examples.

[David T. Gortner, Young Adult Ministries Project, 1997]

11. Say something bad—terrible—happens in your life, or to someone you know. Anything like that happen in the recent past? How do you understand or make sense of life when things are not going well?

12. Think for a minute about the world as you know it. How do you make sense of the world? What kind of a place is the world, in general, to you?

13. How do you fit into the world? What do you see as your place in the world?

14. What is the most important value or belief in your life? Is there a principle by which you try to live your life?

Appendix J:
Post-Course Interviews

<u>Introduction</u>

[Adapted from Gortner, Personal Theologies, 1994]

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me again. I really appreciate it.

This interview will take about 45 minutes, and I am going to be asking you about many of the same things we talked about before: your philosophy of life -- what you believe, what's important to you, what you have thought about in terms of your sense of purpose and where you fit in the world. So just relax, and try to imagine that we are having this conversation with close friends late at night. It's really important that you be yourself and answer honestly.

We'll start with some easier questions. Besides your beliefs and philosophy of life, I'm also going to ask you questions about how you think about and interact with people who think, believe, and live differently than you do.

1. What are your religious and spiritual beliefs, briefly? In what ways are your beliefs different from people you know? How have your religious and spiritual beliefs change since you began your first-year seminar?

2. Have you shifted in your outlook on life or your belief-system since you began your first-year seminar? How? What happened?
    i. Probes: Have you experienced a "turning point" in your life in last…?
    ii. Probes: Have you had to face any situations that made you reconsider your ethical and moral principles? Or rethink your entire outlook on life? How did you feel before this change? What led up to this change? How did you feel when this shift happened?

3. How good are you at listening to others?
    i. Probe: What about listening to people of different religions? Of different cultures?

4. How good are others in your first-year seminar at listening to you?

5. How would you teach someone to be a better listener?

6. Name people or groups that have very different viewpoints than you. What is the value of their viewpoints?

7. How would you describe Muslims? Hindus? Christians?

8. In what ways do you seek involvement with people different than yourself?

9. What are some good reasons for building bridges to people of other religions/cultures?

10. If you have a religious tradition or philosophical belief system, what does your religious or non-religious tradition or belief system say about building bridges to people of other religions and cultures?

11. In what ways have you challenged prejudice or unjust behavior toward others? Why or why not? What experiences have you had that relate to this question?

12. How comfortable and skilled are you at initiating conversations with people of other religions/cultures? What experiences have you had that relate to this question?

13. How have you used the learning from your first-year seminar in your life this semester?

14. What problems or obstacles have you faced this semester?

15. What are the things that most helped you successfully solve these problems or overcome these obstacles?

16. How has your first-year seminar course helped in solving those problems?

[Ask these questions ONLY for students in experimental class]

17. How have you felt about the conversations with our visiting lecturers of different religions and cultures?

18. How would you teach another person to appreciate the religion and/or culture of a stranger in your neighborhood? On our campus?

19. How would teach another person to positively engage a person of another religion and/or culture in your neighborhood? On our campus?

Appendix K:
End of First Year Interviews

<u>Introduction</u>

[Adapted from Gortner, Personal Theologies, 1994]

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me again. I really appreciate it.

This interview will take about 45 minutes, and I am going to be asking you about many of the same things we talked about before: your philosophy of life -- what you believe, what's important to you, what you have thought about in terms of your sense of purpose and where you fit in the world. So just relax, and try to imagine that we are having this conversation with close friends late at night. It's really important that you be yourself and answer honestly.

We'll start with some easier questions. Besides your beliefs and philosophy of life, I'm also going to ask you questions about how you think about and interact with people who think, believe, and live differently than you do.

1. What are your religious and spiritual beliefs, briefly? In what ways are your beliefs different from people you know? How have your religious and spiritual beliefs changed this semester?

2. Have you shifted in your outlook on life or your belief-system since the beginning of college? How? What happened?
   i. Probes: Have you experienced a "turning point" in your life in last…?
   ii. Probes: Have you had to face any situations that made you reconsider your ethical and moral principles? Or rethink your entire outlook on life? How did you feel before this change? What led up to this change? How did you feel when this shift happened?

3. In what ways do you seek involvement with people different than yourself?

4. In what ways have you challenged prejudice or unjust behavior toward others? Why or why not? What experiences have you had that relate to this question?

5. How comfortable and skilled are you at initiating conversations with people of other religions/cultures? What experiences have you had that relate to this question?

6. How have you used the learning from your first-year seminar in your life this semester?

7. What problems or obstacles have you faced this semester?

8. What are the things that most helped you successfully solve these problems or overcome these obstacles?

[Questions 9-12 from David T. Gortner, Young Adult Ministries Project, 1997]

9. Say something bad—terrible—happens in your life, or to someone you know. Anything like that happen in the recent past? How do you understand or make sense of life when things are not going well?

10. Think for a minute about the world as you know it. How do you make sense of the world? What kind of a place is the world, in general, to you?

11. How do you fit into the world? What do you see as your place in the world?

12. What is the most important value or belief in your life? Is there a principle by which you try to live your life?

13. What matters to you and why does it matter?

14. What constitutes the good life or a good life?

15. How has one year of college affected your beliefs about life, the world, people?

16. At this point in your college experience, what do you think of as your life work? How has that changed since you began college?

Appendix L:
End of Sophomore Year Interviews

<u>Introduction</u>   [Adapted from Gortner, Personal Theologies, 1994]

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me again. I really appreciate it. This interview will take about 15 minutes, and I am going to be asking you about many of the same things we talked about before: your philosophy of life -- what you believe, what's important to you, what you have thought about in terms of your sense of purpose and where you fit in the world. So just relax, and try to imagine that we are having this conversation with close friends late at night. It's really important that you be yourself and answer honestly.

1. What are your religious and spiritual beliefs, briefly? Have you shifted in your outlook on life or your belief-system since the beginning of college? How? What happened?
    i.   Probes: Have you experienced a "turning point" in your life in last…?
    ii. Probes: Have you had to face any situations that made you reconsider your ethical and moral principles? Or rethink your entire outlook on life? How did you feel before this change? What led up to this change? How did you feel when this shift happened?

2. How would you describe Christians? Muslims? Hindus? Atheists? In what ways are your beliefs different from people you know?

3. In what ways have you engaged people of other religions or of no religion in the past two years? Probes: Had class with, Spoke to, Ate together, Had meaningful conversation, Did service project together, Discussed religion outside of class, Shared friendship, Chose as a roommate, Advocated for, Visited house of worship?

4. In what ways have you felt tense with, had a negative interaction, or engaged in open conflict with someone of a different religion or of no religion?

5. What are some good reasons for building bridges to people of other religions?

6. How have you used the learning from your first-year seminar in your life as a first-year student? As a sophomore?

[Questions 7-8 from David T. Gortner, Young Adult Ministries Project, 1997]

7. How do you fit into the world? What do you see as your place in the world?

8. What is the most important value or belief in your life? Is there a principle by which you try to live your life?

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