

Eastern Illinois University

The Keep

Masters Theses

Student Theses & Publications

Spring 2021

An Exploration of the Perception of Faith Development at a Midwestern Public Institution

Zachary Sandoval
Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), [Religion Commons](#), and the [Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sandoval, Zachary, "An Exploration of the Perception of Faith Development at a Midwestern Public Institution" (2021). *Masters Theses*. 4881.

<https://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/4881>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses & Publications at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

An Exploration of the Perception of Faith Development at a Midwestern Public Institution

Zachary Sandoval

Eastern Illinois University

Abstract

Despite research indicating benefits to religious or faith involvement, there is an increase in individuals that claim to have no religious affiliation. Additionally, most research that has investigated faith development of college students has been conducted at private religious institutions. This qualitative study utilized semi-structured interviews to examine students' perceptions of various interactions on their faith development at a public, rural Midwestern institution. Moreover, this study investigated how the institution of interest can better support spirituality on campus and the role student affairs can have on spiritual development. Thematic material was developed through Parks's (2000) theory of faith development. Results indicated a perceived level of institutional support for spiritual development as well as areas of improvement. Conversations about spirituality from student affairs professionals can be an important part of students' overall development. Additionally, spiritual resources should be promoted more frequently. The study concluded with a discussion on how spirituality can be integrated in to holistic wellbeing of students by student affairs professionals.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to any student that is currently navigating their spirituality or faith during their undergraduate or graduate careers. It takes courage to try and answer life's four great questions: Who am I? Where do I come from? What is my purpose? Where am I going after life? Talking about these questions with peers or mentors while sharing your own beliefs takes even greater courage. My hope for you all is to find answers to these questions that satisfy you intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.

Stay strong to your faith if it is significant in your life's journey. Take pride in your beliefs and share it with others! Be joyful and comfortable when you find others that share your faith. I challenge you to also have discussions with others that do not share your beliefs to learn from different perspectives that may influence your own values. Good luck on your spiritual journey- I have faith in you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my thesis advisor and the rest of my thesis committee. Dr. Roberts, Dr. Coleman, and Roy- thank you for all your support, feedback, and ideas to complete this work to get it completed. Thank you to all the faculty I have had during my time at Eastern Illinois University. I received encouragement and support from every single instructor during my graduate program, which I will always be thankful for.

Thank you to my close friends at Eastern Illinois University- Makenzie, Josh, Derek, Sophie, Catie, and Alexis. You all meant a lot to me through my graduate studies, and the encouragement in my schoolwork and thesis was greatly appreciated. Most of the best moments at EIU involved all of you spending time with me. I look forward to our lifelong friendships.

I would also like to thank my family members as well. Thank you for pushing me to complete the thesis, and constantly reminding me of how proud you are of my accomplishments. I cannot wait to spend more time with you all.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
Chapter I.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Purpose of the Study	3
Research Questions	3
Significance of the Study.....	3
Limitations of the Study.....	4
Definition of Terms.....	5
Religion.....	5
Spirituality.....	5
Support.....	6
Summary	6
Chapter II	7
Review of Literature	7
History of Religion and Higher Education	7
Spiritual Journey	9
Religion.....	10
Spiritual Development and the University Setting	11
Spiritual Development in the Workplace.....	13
Spiritual Development and Student Affairs.....	15

Theoretical Framework	17
Forms of Knowing	19
Forms of Dependence	19
Forms of Community	20
Chapter Summary	21
Chapter III.....	22
Methods.....	22
Design of the Study.....	22
Participants.....	22
Student B.....	23
Student C.....	23
Student D	24
Student E.....	24
Student F	24
Student G	24
Research Site.....	24
Instrument	25
Data Collection	26
Data Analysis.....	27
Treatment of Data	27
Chapter Summary	27
Chapter IV.....	28
Results.....	28

Spiritual Development Influences.....	28
Faith Builders.....	28
Independence and Accountability.....	30
Support from Faculty, Mentors, and Peers	33
Challenged by Others.....	36
Perceptions on the Institution and Spiritual Development	39
Spiritual Roadblocks.....	40
Ideas for Improved Support	45
Student Affairs and Spiritual Development.....	47
Chapter V.....	51
Discussion.....	51
Participants' Perceptions and Parks's Theory of Faith Development	51
Forms of Knowing	51
Forms of Dependence	52
Forms of Community.....	53
Support and Roadblocks for Spiritual Development	55
Implications and the Role of Student Affairs on Spirituality	57
Suggestions for Further Research	60
Summary	62
References.....	63
Appendix A.....	72
Appendix B.....	75
Appendix C.....	77

Chapter I

Introduction

Recent polls conducted within the United States has shown large changes in religious identity. Members of the Protestant and Catholic faiths are on the decline whereas non-Christian and unaffiliated faiths are growing (America's Changing, 2015; Cox & Jones, 2017).

Furthermore, church attendance is declining, and the number of people identifying as having no faith (commonly referred to by researchers as the "nones") is rapidly increasing (In U.S., Decline, 2019). On a global scale, the nones make up less than one percent of the population. In the United States, the nones stood at over 10 percent over a decade ago, but this population is well above 25 percent recently (Johnson et al., 2008; Pew Research Center, 2019). Because of this recent polling of religious demographics in America, religious leaders are expressing concerns about how to share the importance of faith and maintain high attendance within their congregations (Ammerman, 2019).

Religious leaders state that the rise of the nones is concerning as there are studies that have indicated the benefits of religion which include making meaning with identity, experiencing love, and partaking in personal growth (Ballard, 2016). In addition, there are studies that have examined the positive relationship of religion on health and happiness. One such study suggested that religious activity is linked to small boosts of well-being (Mochon et al., 2008). Other studies have evaluated the role of religion with positive correlations to longer life spans and preventative health factors (Meyers et al., 2017; Seybold & Hill, 2001).

Moreover, there has been research that examined the societal impact of religion beyond simply individual benefits. One study surveyed 53 countries and found that individuals who attended religious institutions volunteered more often, which included volunteering for secular

organizations (Ruiter & Graaf, 2006). Schumann (2020) suggested that religion encourages positive behavior such as compassion and forgiveness in communities. Other studies suggest similar findings, such as increased altruistic behavior and trust in communities that intertwines with respect and loyalty (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008). Also, in some communities, religion has helped people cope with exposure to violence and suicide (Barranco & Harris, 2019; Jocson et al., 2018).

These positive benefits have the potential to aid college students who are undergoing critical personal development at their institutions and suggest that religion can play a vital role to support their academic career. Unfortunately, as indicated, religious participation and religious identities are on the decline. Why is this decline occurring? One researcher suggested that this question is complex and needs much context to answer (Mochon et al., 2010).

University educators and student affairs professionals are in a position to support college students in their overall growth including spiritual development, yet they struggle to speak about religion with their students (Speck, 2005). Students receive emotional and academic support, yet they are left to their own devices when navigating their spiritual journey. Even without faculty or staff interaction, college students solidify their faith development through activities they are engaged in on campus. Students learn more about their faith on an individual level while understanding and accepting other faiths as they grow throughout their undergraduate experience (Hartley, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Since students learn more through exposure to different faiths and activities, it is vital that student affairs professionals learn the appropriate skills to encourage student growth in spirituality.

Furthermore, outside classroom experiences have the potential to imprint students' values and beliefs (Avina & Delaney, 2018). In order to support students fully, student affairs

professionals at college institutions should reflect on how they have the potential to impact spiritual development on their students with every interaction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the factors (faculty, peers, and involvement in religious groups) that shape a students' spiritual development during their enrollment at the institution of interest. Additionally, this study examined students' perceptions on how they can be better supported at their institution of interest.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. How do participants perceive their interactions with peers, faculty/mentors, and on campus involvement influencing their spiritual development?
2. How do participants perceive how their institution can better support their spiritual development?
3. What role does student affairs have in spiritual development?

As this is not a quantitative study, there is no specific hypothesis that will be guiding the study. I do propose, however, that interpersonal interactions with peers will be the largest influence on a student's religious development.

Significance of the Study

Research has suggested that socialization and interpersonal relationships can have a significant influence on religious activity (Cornwall, 1987; Erikson, 1992; Goodman & Dyer, 2019). However, educators have not been analyzing the question of *how* spiritual development occurs in students to help promote religious identity formation (Baltazar & Coffen, 2011). Most of the research that has been conducted on religious development has taken place at private,

religious institutions (Mayrl & Oeur, 2009). Research has yet to consider student populations from rural, public institutions. Research from multiple student populations is important because there is a wide range of changes that can occur in students' religious beliefs and development (Lee, 2002). There should be an examination of spiritual meaning making at various universities to more closely resemble the college student population.

The examination of *how* spiritual development occurs at the institution of interest will be important in assisting student affairs professionals, faculty, and educators to help the facilitation of spiritual identity development. Because the institution of interest is not a religious university, the institution does not have religious or spiritual development included in its core mission statements. Furthermore, tools to navigate spirituality are not included in curriculum or other regular processes students experience (orientation, advising, etc.). For students that do have a personal goal of creating or furthering their spiritual identity, educators at public institutions should be equipped and trained to support them along their journey. This research should help in the understanding of how students develop a sense of spirituality at a non-religious institution.

Limitations of the Study

The largest limitation of the proposed study is the possibility of a small sample size. It may be difficult for a student to discuss their spiritual development with a stranger, potentially discouraging student participation in the study. With a small sample size, the study has the potential to not be generalizable to the general population. Furthermore, small sample sizes can create false-positive results and incorrect associations (Hackshaw, 2008). Another limitation is that the largest faith population at the university is Christian. The largest ministries with the most student engagement are Catholic, Methodist, and non-denominational Christian. This may limit the study's generalizability to the experience of students practicing other non-Christian

Abrahamic faiths, such as Islam and Judaism. This also holds true for students who fit into the “none” category that was mentioned previously. I plan to mitigate these limitations by convincing students during recruitment that their voice can be heard in order to help support student spiritual growth for colleges in the future.

The main limitation of the study is the target class standing of the participants. The students that participate in the research will be junior and senior class standing students that attend an on-campus ministry. This research is limited because the questions being addressed in this study needs to be answered by students that have attended college for a few years in order to have had the opportunity to experience spiritual growth. This status will allow them to talk about their journey in depth, identify main factors that supported their growth, and share possible factors that hindered their growth. Additionally, a limitation of the study is that the selection of participants will come from volunteers. This will ensure that the interviews that take place will come from students who have a passion for the topic and are willing to discuss in depth their experiences at college pertaining to their faith.

Definitions of Terms

Religion

Religion is the tool in which one explores their spirituality. It provides direction and a formal structure for one’s exploration (Kale, 2004). At the institution of interest, the predominant religion is Christianity.

Spirituality

Spirituality will be defined as the internalized development one experiences as they are connecting themselves to others and making meaning of their own life (Love & Talbot, 1999).

Support

The word support will be defined as something that aids or assists a student in their growth. This can include words of encouragement or sharing an experience in a group setting as to not let the student feel alone in their faith (Saad & de Medeiros, 2016).

Summary

The proposed study will seek to investigate student perceptions of their interactions with peers, interactions with faculty or mentors, and their involvement in student organizations and how they think these interactions influence their spiritual development. The next two chapters will evaluate current research on this topic, how this proposed research will fit into the current literature, and how the research will be collected and analyzed.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

This chapter will review the literature around the issues of student development and spiritual growth including the history of religion in higher education, outline concepts of a person's spiritual journey, religion, and explore the influences of college affecting spiritual development. Additionally, Parks's theory of faith development will be discussed in order to provide a lens to analyze the data that will be collected in this study.

History of Religion in Higher Education

The founding of higher education in the United States has its roots as far back as the Puritans, where the first colonists of Massachusetts desired to establish a system of educating young men. The education consisted of a combination of what was "pagan" knowledge (ancient teachings from Aristotle) and Christian (Marsden, 1994). The teaching of mathematics and logic was deemed necessary, but the strong Christian influence on the education was used to intentionally contradict the practice of schools in Europe steering away from Christian dogma. The first pre-revolutionary universities had a priority in teaching and training students in becoming clergy members (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). Not all students were expected to become members of the clergy, but founders emphasized the importance of Christian doctrine. This was because the teachers at the first schools were clergymen.

By the mid-1800s, there were other educational goals driving higher education but there was still a large desire to use higher education institutions to train new clergymen and religious teachers. A main measure of success that was used at colleges at that time were the amount of revivals and conversions by students that had enrolled (Findlay, 1977). This focus of education

was due to Christians at the time who believed that Christianity was the main tool to uplift society and bring about successful change (Findlay, 1977).

The direction of education and religion started to shift in the 1900s, as people started to believe that adhering to religious beliefs and practices contradicted rationality and science (Campbell, 1971). An example of this relating to Christianity is the growing acceptance of evolutionary theory. Darwin's theory contradicted much of the Biblical teachings of a literal young earth and a six-day creation. As Darwin's theory gained popularity, there were arguments on whether science could agree with Christian teachings (Gray, 1880). Common views in the literature at this time regarding religiosity and higher education was that higher levels of education achievement leads to individuals leaving their religion (Albrecht & Heaton, 1984). This notion was thought to be due to priorities of intellectualism overriding priorities of religion and higher powers while students attend college. Not all scholars believed in this phenomenon, however. Some proposed that leaving religion was not a cause of attending higher education, but rather a co-existing event that took place when students tried to find other ways of meaning making through intellectualism (Greeley, 1964).

However, despite secularization, it has been argued that leaders on college campuses are influenced by Protestant religion (Eisenmann, 1999). This is important in understanding religion in campus cultures since objectivity and science has been mainstreamed recently. Additionally, there is the belief in the separation of church and state, which influence higher education leaders to exclude the topic of religion in discussions. Furthermore, some educators are not prepared to discuss these topics with students (Speck, 2005). This secularization took place from the 1860-1940s (Hartley, 2004).

However, research is now on the rise in determining how students navigate religion and spirituality (Hartley, 2004). Unfortunately, most literature that discusses religion on college campuses are focused on private, Christian schools. Studying the phenomenon of spiritual development on college campuses need samples from various schools.

Spiritual Journey

One of the main ideas that is included in faith development of college students is the concept of a spiritual journey, sometimes called a spiritual struggle (Estanek, 2006). Before defining what spiritual journeys are, it is important to describe what the term spirituality is. It is argued that spirituality does not have a common definition since many people perceive it to be different from their individual perspective (Estanek, 2006). However, three common themes have been described to be associated with the word spirituality. These themes in spirituality include it being considered a discourse and ever changing, it being used more often and in the place of religion, and it being considered more developmental and a process rather than a standalone concept like religion (Estanek, 2006). Similarly, Love and Talbot (1999) have provided a popular definition for spirituality that stated it is developing a sense of connectedness to others and deriving meaning in one's life through an internal process. Additionally, it involves a developing relationship with a higher power beyond human comprehension (Love & Talbot, 1999). With these definitions in mind, spirituality will be defined as a meaning making process individuals undergo while exploring a relationship with a power beyond themselves.

With regards to the concept of a spiritual journey, Bryant and Astin (2008) described it as being an experience where a student finds life meaning and considers concepts such as good, evil, suffering, and death.

Religion

Another important concept to investigate for this research is religion. Religion has been expressed as a tool to explore spirituality and provide direction for individuals to explore their spiritual development (Elkins et al., 1988). Additionally, spirituality and religion have been argued to be separate entities where spirituality is more personal and individual, and religion is a more formal and structured part of faith (Kale, 2004). Durkheim (1945) defined religion from a sociological perspective stating that it is a system of traditions and thoughts that combine individuals into a single community. With these definitions in mind, in this study religion will be defined as a structured and established tool to explore an individual's spirituality (Kale, 2004).

At the institution of interest, the predominant religion expressed is Christianity. From the 16 religious organizations that are available to students on campus, 15 of them are Christian. Because of this, the religion that was focused on in this study is Christianity. The Christian ministries offered on campus are each structured differently and allows students to explore their faith as they wish.

Christianity has been constantly studied in the literature because of the intertwined history between Christianity and higher education as well as Christianity's persistence despite secularization (Jenkins, 2002). Religious scholars suggest that Christianity is still prevalent in society because it provides strong emotional experiences that stem from unconditional love and forgiveness doctrines (Smith, 2007). Additionally, the Christian religion allows people to find meaning in familial roots and ethnic identities, and it provides people the opportunity to take part in a community that provides support to others (Edgell, 2008).

Spiritual identity development for Muslim students is described differently than Christian development. Peek (2005) has suggested three stages of identity development for Muslim

students. The first stage, ascribed identity, is where students take their identity for granted and do not focus much time or energy reflecting on their identity. The second stage, chosen identity, is where a Muslim identity is consciously chosen with the support of their peers and after much time reflecting. The final stage, declared identity, is where Muslim students will strengthen and assert their identity and address misconceptions about their faith following September 11, 2001.

Along with Muslim spiritual development, some researchers have focused on impediments and obstacles to the Muslim faith since it is not a privileged religion such as Christianity. For example, during Ramadan, Muslim students may struggle to find meal options after sundown. Additionally, wearing head coverings may be difficult for Muslim women since there is ignorance and discrimination against Muslim beliefs (Seifert, 2007). Usually, people of non-Christian faiths experience a form of double minoritization because they experience marginalization both on campus and within mainstream society (McGuire et al., 2016).

Spiritual Development and the University Setting

It is important to discuss how college affects the spiritual development of students. There has been evidence in research that suggests faith development can be attained and cemented through various college experiences (Hartley, 2004). As students go through college, views shift to a more individualistic perspective (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Additionally, tolerance for other faiths increases throughout an undergraduate's academic career (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). However, studies performed on how colleges impact faith development are lacking in detail regarding the time and by what means student's spiritual journeys are shaped (Hartley, 2004).

Alternatively, there are many factors that have been identified in shaping spiritual journeys. These include peer groups, training in leadership, and interactions with people on campus that talk about religious ideas (Hartley, 2004).

Research has also been conducted to evaluate the impact that peers can have on spiritual development during teenage and young adult years. Because friendships become important during adolescent years, it has been suggested that peers can play a specialized role in student spiritual development (Desrosiers et al., 2011). Peers and friends can also play a vital role in supporting a student's spiritual development alongside parents (Schwartz, 2006). Additionally, religious commitment and spiritual belief has been positively correlated with perceived support from peers (Schwartz, 2006). Commitment to a religious affiliation can also be strengthened because students tend to have peers who are religiously affiliated since they are more likely to steer clear from delinquent peers (Desmond et al., 2010). With similar peers, religious service attendance increases as well as the belief in the importance of their spirituality.

Regarding religious service attendance, peers can be a primary motivating factor for students because young adults seek out social opportunity with peers (King & Roeser, 2009). The social aspect is important since a large factor that students use to describe their social circles include similar religious beliefs. Researchers have also suggested that there is a positive correlation with more frequent positive interactions with friends that have similar religious beliefs (King & Roeser, 2009).

Although parents are attributed as having a profound impact on spiritual development of their students, sometimes they are not as embedded in their child's social circles (Roehlkepartain et al., 2011). In these cases, peers can have an even larger impact than a supportive intermediary role between a student and parent. The relationship between spirituality and peer relationships

has also suggested to be cyclical (Schwartz et al., 2006). In these cases, a friendship can be formed through similar spiritual journeys. Furthermore, if a student and friend engage together in the exploration of their similar journeys, that can allow for a deeper friendship. This deepened friendship also connects to the sense of belonging that was mentioned prior (Schwartz et al., 2006).

At Christian universities, students are often automatically grouped together with like-minded peers. Residing on campus at Christian religious institutions also gives students opportunity to have spiritual development through Bible study, theology classes, and attending religious events with peers (Bowman & Small, 2010). Students who surround themselves with peers and attend an institution with similar beliefs as them allows for ample opportunity to develop spiritually with a large support system.

New friends and peers acquired at a university also give students the opportunity to reflect on their spirituality and beliefs as they become more independent from parents (Lefkowitz, 2005). This is because students attending a university leave behind friends and family who had similar beliefs to them. Since colleges are diverse, students will encounter others with differing spiritual beliefs and practices that they have yet to experience (Rew et al., 2007).

Spiritual Development in the Workplace

Researchers have examined the relationship that the workplace can have on spirituality (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Milliman et al., 2003). Measures for spirituality in the workplace have been developed to analyze the support employees experience while working. The research has suggested that workers who have spiritual goals aligned with their work and feel supported will experience the most growth and developmental benefits (Milliman et al., 2003).

Others have theorized how spirituality in the workplace can benefit or increase output from an organization (Karakas, 2009). Karakas (2009) made three proposals of how spirituality in the workplace benefits employees. First, he proposed that employee's general well-being is increased because morale and commitment are increased. Additionally, stress and burnout is decreased due to meditation, reflection, and spiritual wellness programs implemented in the workplace.

Second, Karakas (2009) argued that spirituality in the workplace helps give a sense of meaning and purpose to employees. He argued this because focus from profit and work output shifts to a focus on the passions and talents of the employees. Work being seen in a spiritual light or as a calling gives employees an opportunity to be more involved in their work and feel more satisfied from it. Finally, spirituality in the workplace can give employees a sense of community and connectedness through their work (Karakas, 2009). The sense of belonging that employees seek can be obtained through social connections in the workplace. With a sense of community and interconnectedness, employees are more likely to have more commitment to their organization and be more effective in their work.

With the spirituality in the workplace literature in mind, connections to spirituality at a higher education institution can also be made- especially with Karakas's third proposal. Much research has focused on student's sense of belonging on campus and how that positively correlates to persistence success in their studies (Yeagar et al., 2016; Gopalan & Brady, 2019). Spirituality in the workplace may possibly be translated to a university setting and the benefits that students may experience.

Additionally, faculty impact on student beliefs and values has been evaluated regarding religious topics. It has been found that students who have faculty that had lower levels of

religiosity resulted in the students themselves having lower values in religiosity, suggesting that the classroom environment had a larger effect on values belief change rather than course material (Avina & Delaney, 2018). This means that students in the study tended to shift their values and beliefs to match their professors' beliefs. This shift is concerning since faculty who have strong opinions can shape the spiritual development of students in the upcoming generations. How do faculty impact the spiritual development of students who are in very objective, science-based courses such as biology or chemistry?

Spiritual Development and Student Affairs

Love (2001) analyzed Parks's theory of faith development and challenged student affairs professionals to support students in spiritual development. He challenged student affairs professionals to embrace their own spirituality and not just restrict the idea of spirituality to those who subscribe to a religion. He encourages the distinction between spirituality and religion. Love states that volunteering and leadership activity could be ways that students strive for meaning making, and spiritual development is not exclusive to religious organizations.

Additionally, Love (2001) recommended that student affairs professionals create communities and evaluate existing communities that can mentor students. If student organizations do not currently have mentorship opportunities or characteristics, then it may be possible to tweak them to create a mentorship community that Parks strongly suggested in her theory. Furthermore, Love encouraged professionals to allow for development in graduate education, as well as teaching young professionals in the field how to be inclusive and help others explore their spirituality. Finally, Love stresses the importance of explicitly including spiritual development into the overall wellness of students.

Other recommendations for student affairs professionals include clarifying the terms of spirituality so that it is easier to understand (Dalton, 2004). If spirituality becomes a term that becomes distinct from religion, then supporting students with their development can become clearer and less confusing to navigate. Along with this clarification of terms should also come additionally training and education for professionals in spiritual development. This can come in the form of discussing instruments for measuring faith and spirituality during research classes, characteristics of students through the lens of religion, and the impacts environments can have on student's spiritual development (Smith, 2004).

Competencies regarding spirituality and faith have been proposed the National Association of Student Affairs Professionals as well (Stewart & Kocet, 2011). These include navigating the different aspects of spirituality, religion, and secularism. Student affairs professionals also have been proposed to learn about religious privilege and how personal biases can affect student development. Professionals have suggested incorporating religion, secularism, and spirituality in with multiculturalism conversations and training to help the holistic development of students (Stewart, Kocet, & Lobdell, 2011).

Also, creating spaces on campus for spiritual reflection and meditation is recommended (Dalton, 2004). This can also differentiate between religion and spirituality because students would not feel pressure from committing to a specific community but can have a place to make meaning on their own terms.

Legal and ethical considerations have also been made for student affairs professionals to engage students in these sensitive topics. Craft (2019) stated that as long as professionals in the public realm are not favoring one religion over another religion, then they are free to discuss their own personal beliefs with others. However, ethical consideration and reflecting on whether

it is appropriate to have those discussions. Craft suggested that evaluating whether a discussion with students would be constructive before a conversation should guide whether or not to have a conversation in the first place.

Researchers have suggested that there may be risks associated with not engaging spirituality on campus. These risks include not preparing students for a diverse world, missing educational opportunities, and allowing for conflicts to arise regarding religion and spirituality (Patel & Giess, 2016). A suggestion to combat this risk would be to engage in positive interactions with students regarding both religious and non-religious identity, as well as being proactive with engaging this topic with students rather than being reactive (Patel & Giess). Additionally, calls for having religious talks in the educational departments or areas professionals are in have been made to aid in navigating spiritual development (Patel & Giess, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

The core theory that will be utilized in this study is Parks's theory of faith development (Parks, 2000). Parks's book, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* explores development of faith during a student's college experience (2000). Within the theory, three forms of development are described, with each form being further distinguished by stages. The forms described include knowing (cognitive perspective), dependence, and community (social aspects) (Patton, 2016).

Parks incorporated an integrative approach to her theory, including psychological, cognitive, and social perspectives while highlighting cultural and interpersonal influences (Love, 2001). Not only does the theory focus on the psychology and biology of student development, but also incorporates traditional student development theories by Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg.

This understanding is useful because integration of multiple grounded theories allows for a wide array of limitations and strengths to be considered when developing a theory (Love, 2001).

Parks's theory is also beneficial because it expands upon Fowler's proposed stages of faith. Fowler outlined six different stages of faith that occur through human development from infancy to adulthood (Fowler 1981). Parks argued that there is more of a transitional stage that occurs between adolescence and adulthood where there is a combination of both stages in a new stage she referenced as "young adult" (Parks, 2000). Additionally, she suggested that because there is an emerging adulthood where critical thinking is being developed, there needs to be a mentoring environment and mentors available to help support spiritual development in educational systems.

Within the knowing form, five separate stages are described. The stages include individuals placing trust in exterior authorities for knowledge, then moving to a relativistic view of knowledge after authorities are seen to be incorrect, followed by individuals becoming more secure and committed to their faith later in life (Patton, 2016). For the dependence form of faith, individual's dependency on others is examined and how that impacts faith. Individuals start by having a heavy reliance on authorities, and they move towards a more interdependence view on their life as they grow older and become more confident in their faith decisions (Patton, 2016). Finally, a form of community is described as the impact that connections individuals have on faith development. The stages within form of community describe how individuals explore different communities as they develop. These include finding mentoring communities, sharing similarities with others in groups, and valuing diverse views later in life (Patton, 2016).

Forms of Knowing

While in the early adolescent years, the first form of knowing that students experience is *authority bound*. Students place trust in authority figures such as parents and authority with little questioning. Later in the adolescent stage, students will experience the form of knowing known as *unqualified relativism*, where truth and reality is discovered to have many forms, and they do not come directly from authority (Parks, 2000).

Once in the young adult stage, the next form of knowing that students experience is referred to as *probing commitment*. Typically, the individual will take the *unqualified relativism* a step further where they try and construct their own meaning and life path while not solidifying their beliefs for long periods of time. Next, adults will move on to *tested commitment*, where individuals become more secure in their beliefs and focus on relativism.

Forms of Dependence

Parks's dependence form of faith development incorporates the feelings of students. This form focuses on senses of self that students create derived from their relationship from authority figures in their life (Parks, 2000). This is seen in development during adolescence where there is a *dependent* and *counter dependent mindset*. A *dependent mindset* is where the student relies on their authorities to make meaning and develop a sense of self, whereas *counter dependence* is when an opposition to authority occurs. This *counter dependence* does not mean that their own sense of meaning making is formed- it is a period of adolescence where there is a rejection of the authority (Parks, 2000).

When entering Parks's young adult stage, the dependence form is described as *fragile inner dependence*. This phase is described as when young adults are impressionable in their sense of self development. Typically, young adults in this stage balance their own view with

others to make meaning. Parks stresses that this is when mentors and a mentorship environment needs to be accessible to students (Parks, 2000). With this proposed mentorship and time, students in the young adult stage should move to the *confident inner dependence* form. Parks describes this form as an increase in confidence and an established sense of self that is not reliant on others. In later life, older adults use this strong sense of self to make new meanings of their faith and value the beliefs of others.

Forms of Community

The conventional form of community is seen during the early stages of adolescence, where the community is viewed as a strict set of values and culture that the individual adheres to (similar to conforming to authority figures mentioned previously). In the last stage of adolescence, individuals go through the *diffuse* form of community, where they look at communities beyond the lens of the one they adhered to, and will make commitments to other communities (Parks, 2000).

Once in the young adult stage, students will enter the *mentoring* form of community. Recall that Parks (2000) argued for strong mentoring community and mentors available in educational systems. This is because in this form, students need assistance in forming their own adult faith. Forming an adult faith is possible through experiences with a group that allows an individual to feel a sense of belonging. Mentoring communities should also be able to challenge and support students through their faith development. Once young adults move into the tested adult stage, they can feel more comfortable in the group they find themselves in and solidify their meaning making.

This theory is valuable in the study because it is applicable as a lens in examining the spiritual journey that students go through at the target institution. The theory is dynamic, and the

forms and stages within overlap with one another at similar times- like the lives of college students. While investigating the journey of upperclassmen, the different stages of dependence, community, and knowledge can be evaluated while also accounting for various experiences that may have impacted these stages on campus. A major interest would be to investigate how involvement with faculty or an on-campus ministry impact a student's spiritual development using Parks's theoretical lens. This theory is particularly helpful since there are gaps in the literature describing relations between different types of campuses and spiritual development (Mayrl & Oeur, 2009). Evaluating spiritual journeys on a rural, public institution can give a contextual insight in religious development.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, spiritual journeys, religion, and college affecting faith development were discussed. Spiritual journeys are a way in which students make meaning of life and consider concepts of good, evil, death, and suffering over an extended period. This concept is different from religion, which is a tool in which students can explore their spiritual journeys. The main religion available to the target institution's students is Christianity. Additionally, various ways in which college can shape students' spiritual journey were identified. The study utilized Parks's theory of faith development (Parks, 2000) to investigate spiritual journeys of students through various stages to describe the "how" of development.

Chapter III

Methods

The goal of this research is to investigate how students' peers, faculty, and involvement in religious organizations shape the perceived impact of spiritual development during undergraduate studies. This chapter presents the design of the study, desired participants, information on the research site, method of data collection, and method of data analysis. This study will utilize a qualitative approach as it will allow for an open-ended investigation into students' experiences. Moreover, it will allow for an opportunity to probe deeper into areas that could provide insight in students' spiritual development on campus.

Design of the Study

This study will utilize a qualitative phenomenological research design to drive the processes for this study. This is appropriate because of the focus on students' experiences, perceptions, and feelings. In research, phenomenological approaches are used when there is a need for understanding lived experiences directly from participants (Mapp, 2008). Also, in a qualitative phenomenological research design, the researcher attempts to understand the personal introspections of participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Moreover, this approach should allow for rapport building during interviews that will provide participants with an easier time giving honest information. Additionally, the study is participant-oriented in order to respect their lived experiences involving spirituality, which is what a phenomenological approach allows (Alase, 2017).

Participants

The participants were initially seven undergraduate students that belong to an on-campus ministry at the chosen university. However, at the time of the interview, Student A decided to

only give short, succinct answers that provided no usable data. As a result he was not included in the analysis. In the end, six participants were finalized and their transcriptions were analyzed. Participants were in at least their second year of enrollment and had been involved in an on-campus ministry organization for at least one academic year. This population was selected in order to allow participants to draw from a larger pool of experiences to speak and reflect on during the interview. In addition, this increased the probability that they would have experienced enough spiritual development to speak freely about it. Furthermore, participants in their second year of enrollment were able to speak on people or activities that either supported or hindered their spiritual journey.

For the selection process, leaders of the campus ministries (ministers or pastors) were contacted in order to make an announcement at weekly gatherings about the study. An additional method used for the selection process was contacting student affairs professionals on campus that supervised students involved in faith organizations. Participants were advised of their rights as a participant including that they can drop the study at any time and their involvement in the study is voluntary. Interested participants were able to contact the researcher through email or office phone.

Student B was a 21-year-old white female and in her third year of college. She identified as Catholic who practiced her faith for her entire life. She has been involved with an on campus Catholic ministry since her first year.

Student C was a 21-year-old white female in her third year of college. She identified as a non-denominational Christian who was practicing for the last 6 years. She has been involved with a non-denominational campus ministry since her first year.

Student D was a 21-year-old white male in his fourth year of college. He identified as a non-denominational Christian who had been practicing his faith for his entire life. He has been involved with a non-denominational organization on campus for four years.

Student E was a 22-year-old white female in her fourth year of college. She identified as a Roman Catholic and has been practicing her faith her entire life. She has been involved with an on campus Catholic ministry for four years.

Student F was an 18-year-old white female in her second year of college. She identified as a protestant non-denominational Christian how had been practicing her entire life. She was involved with a non-denominational organization for the past two years.

Student G was a 20-year-old white female in her third year of college. She identified as non-denominational Christian and was practicing her faith for over two years. Student G had converted to Christianity during her first year of college after students had talked with her. She has been involved with a non-denominational organization for the over two years.

Research Site

Date collection was conducted at a Midwestern, public, medium sized institution which from this point onward will be referred to as “the institution.” The institution is in a rural area in the United States. The institution has approximately 7,500 students enrolled, with 43% of the undergraduate students being male and 57% female. As for the ethnic and racial makeup of undergraduate students, 61% of the student body is white, 17% is black/African American, and 12% is Hispanic/Latino. Both the institution and the surrounding community are predominantly Christian, with denominations consisting of primarily Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, and nondenominational. The researcher conducted interviews through video chatting software (Zoom) due to the covid-19 pandemic.

Instrument

This study utilized open-ended questions to drive the interview. The interview questions (Appendix A) stem from the three primary research questions detailed in Chapter I. Every interview question was rooted in the primary research questions to keep the interview structured and not stray from the themes. The questions asked participants their experiences in on-campus ministries, experiences with mentors and peers, and conversations about their spirituality between different groups and settings.

Demographic questions (Appendix B) were utilized to give insight into the participants' background in their spiritual development and involvement with on-campus ministries and organizations. The demographic questions asked basic identity questions that discuss ethnicity, year in school, and gender. This is important as it adds context to what is discussed during the interview and can allow probing questions to be improvised that consider the participants' identities.

Finally, it is important to recognize the role of the researcher when conducting this kind of research. In qualitative research, the researcher conducts interviews, observes participants, and gathers artifacts for evaluation of phenomena (Barrett, 2007). The researcher can understand the research questions that they are investigating and can capitalize on probing deeper than what scripted interview questions can allow (Mallozzi, 2009). Since a key instrument is the researcher, it is important that a safe space be created for participants to be comfortable sharing their experiences (Owens, 2006). This safe space can be deepened by the researcher's own personal identification as a Christian who is well versed in common terminology used within the community, and has a firm grasp of specific phrases used in religious groups that are mentioned during the interview. Furthermore, shared identities with participants provides the chance for

usually private thoughts and concerns to be brought to light (Alby & Fatigante, 2014). This allowed for the establishment of rapport with participants as well as improving and understanding and analyzing of responses in the correct context.

The nature of this study was subjective, and there is potential to have the researcher's own personal bias interfering with the data. To address this, greater attention was paid to make sure that participants are free to interpret questions on their own with minimal direction. When analyzing participant responses, the focus was on what was directly observable as this is a common technique in eliminating bias (Driscoll, 2011). Additionally, any questions asked in an improvised manner followed the structure and themes of the developed interview questions. Finally, there was a focus on building rapport with the participants and respecting them throughout the interview process to encourage natural, authentic answers.

Data Collection

Before interviews were conducted, a Zoom link was sent to participants interested in being interviewed. At the start of the interview, participants were read an informed consent form. After consent was given, participants were individually virtually interviewed via Zoom while being audio recorded on a laptop. The video cameras mirrored the face-to-face interview method, which was beneficial since nonverbal cues could be read in person, and the participants and the researcher reacted in a more direct manner to each other (Lavrakas, 2008; Oltmann, 2016; Opendakker, 2006). Interviews were audio recorded to ensure accurate data is recorded while allowing the researcher to focus on asking questions and probe appropriately. Interviews will be transcribed, and transcriptions will be reviewed and coded to finalize data collection.

Data Analysis

Once transcriptions were completed, coding categories were formulated based on responses that were received. Coding is the process where researchers take pieces of data and then label it with a word or phrase (Liamputtong, 2009). For coding in this study, the transcriptions were read, and notes were written down. Then, codes were developed from common themes that were found in the notes. Afterwards, the codes and transcriptions were analyzed to identify common themes through the lens of the research questions and Parks's faith development theory to make meaning from the data.

Treatment of Data

All recordings, transcriptions, and analysis were managed on a personal laptop that has facial recognition password protection. Additionally, the laptop was locked in a secure location when not in use. Informed consent documents and other physical documents that were created during the study were locked away in the same secure location. Names of participants were changed in order to ensure confidentiality and privacy during data analysis and sharing of results. After 3-years, physical documents will be shredded, and data files will be deleted as per IRB protocol.

Chapter Summary

The proposed qualitative phenomenological research utilized interviews to gather information on students' perceptions on their interactions with peers, faculty/mentors, and involvement in organizations. Participants were selected from on-campus ministries or organizations and recorded for the researcher to transcribe their responses, code, and analyze what was collected.

Chapter IV

Results

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six students to analyze the three primary research questions: 1) How do participants perceive their interaction with peers, faculty/mentors, and on campus involvement influencing their spiritual development? 2) How do participants perceive how their institution can better support their spiritual development? And 3) What role does student affairs have in spiritual development? Participants were asked several questions regarding their relationships and involvement at their institution, and how they perceived that those interactions had influenced their development (for better or worse). Responses were then coded to find similar themes within each research question.

Spiritual Development Influences

Four main themes were identified when analyzing responses from questions that investigated the first research question. These questions asked about participants' experiences with peers, faculty, and involvement in religious organizations. Participants talked about how they perceived their experiences at the institution shaped their spiritual development. Most of the questions asked in the interviews evaluated this topic.

Faith Builders

All participants described certain interactions experienced at the institution as a "faith builder." Typically, this building of their faith was from a personal commitment or more confidence in learning and talking about their faith to others. For example, Student B spoke about how she valued talking with peers at the Catholic center near campus. She stated that conversations were fruitful, and one-on-one conversations with a campus minister was "a huge building block of my faith." She also said that Christian retreats sponsored by the organization,

“are usually like huge faith builders for a lot of people and they were for me too.” While at the Christian retreats, she experienced the value in going to a special physical place to spend time in structured prayer. Similarly, Student G expressed the change in their faith after attending conferences sponsored by the Christian organization she attended. As a result of the conferences, they “started a Bible study with some of my friends who attended, and that’s really when I professed my faith. Then continuing in the organization, I started to grow more in faith with Bible studies and discipleship.” In Student G’s case, their friends’ invitation to conferences snowballed into increased commitment to their faith and growing spiritually with their peers.

Student B mentioned that going to Christian retreats with others was a large factor in building independence and a fresh start to her faith. “It really just awakens you to your faith,” and, “that’s what kind of kick started my faith life through college and having that backbone of the Newman Center was always super helpful.” Taking part in the organization and going to retreats to focus on her faith was a fresh start in her spirituality. Going to retreats was a way where Student B could spend time in quiet and intentional Bible study. Typically, times outside of Bible study during retreats were spent talking with others about faith.

Student C talked about her faith being built by having conversations with other students and comparing their beliefs. For example, she would talk with a co-worker who was Buddhist.

She said

trying to explain to somebody else what you believe is a lot harder than just believing yourself. I feel like just really explain to people why I believe that I do has really strengthened my faith I feel like because I’m able to say why I believe what I do. Also their reasoning behind what they believe as well.

Student D said that they experienced a large growth in their faith early in their time at their institution because of their involvement in a registered student organization (RSO). Specifically, he said this involvement, “influenced the way I spent time outside of the four walls of the church like reading my Bible more and praying and just spending more time kind of doing it- doing the work on my own.” The increased involvement in the religious organization helped Student D to gain independence in his own faith and equipped him with the desire to explore his spirituality more than once a week.

Student E listed several ways in which her faith was built up by her interactions with others. Taking part in a religious community created a, “better foundation for my faith and that I was able to grow from there.” Additionally, she shared that the Catholic church near campus helped her with commitment to prayer, which is an important aspect of her faith. Discussions with campus ministry leaders influenced her to have more discipline with prayer, and it was “super helpful and you know giving me building blocks and become more independent with that and hold myself to those standards that they did.” The leaders at the campus ministry set an example of commitment to their faith with a prayer-filled life, and she followed their example.

Student E also took on a leadership position which helped strengthen her faith. She interacted with other like-minded Christians as she planned retreats and led small group spiritual development sessions. She said, “being in these leadership positions has been a wonderful opportunity for me to help others grow, but it’s also been an opportunity for me to grow because I am in a context where I need to be growing to help others grow.”

Independence and Accountability

Five of the six participants noted that their involvement in their campus religious organization and interactions with peers allowed them to have a fresh start in their faith. They

perceived the involvement and interaction with others allowed them to be independent in how they practiced their faith. Another aspect of this independence was accountability. Three of the six participants indicated they experienced accountability in their leadership roles. Three participants shared that they felt like they had to be stronger and more independent in their faith if they were to lead others.

Student D said that joining a campus religious organization as he entered college was helpful in his independence. He stated,

It was while I was in college that I would say, like my faith really became my own and that it was something that I experienced outside of the influence of my parents. And it was something that I could really just kind of uncover for myself and it got a lot more depth that way.

Student E also shared a similar experience in that going away to college allowed her to gain independence from her family. She shared that while growing up her parents made most of her decisions when it came to her spiritual development. However, her first year at the institution was “where it started to become my own. So just having that independence and that autonomy in my own faith, I think, has led to a lot of growth since then.” Additionally, Student E expressed how talking with campus ministers helped her with gaining more independence. She stated, “I think it’s helped give it [faith] more structure and more discipline because without those meetings with them and without the guidance from them, it would be a lot harder to have maintained a personal prayer life.” The experience of being by herself on campus and talks with ministry leaders allowed her to gain independence she did not have growing up.

Three of the six participants shared that an accountability from their leadership roles aided in their spiritual development. Student C mentioned their experience on the leadership team for their faith organization. They described their experience,

It's interesting because you start out just going there and you're just a student and then you become a leader. You're in this higher role now and people are watching you, and just to see if you not screw up. If you make a mistake it means a little bit more. It's kind of helped me check myself because if I'm doing this, should I really be doing that?

Her leadership made herself be more accountable in the ways that she acted to not go against what she believed in.

Student D shared many thoughts on how leadership impacted their faith development. She stated that while serving on the leadership team you must, "make sure that, you're at a certain place in your spiritual life to make sure that you're in a place where you can help effectively guide people." With his leadership, he was allowed "a different set of responsibilities to make sure that people feel welcomed." Several participants shared how the religious organizations they joined were a welcoming place and they felt comfortable spending time with others concerning their faith. Student D shared that in his leadership position there was additional responsibilities. There is a "weight that comes along with that. Like, you almost feel responsible for the way that people grow and develop." Through his leadership experience, he found a confident inner dependence in his faith and supported others in their spiritual growth.

Similarly, Student E shared the importance of the accountability through her leadership experience. She said

If we want to help others grow, then we have to be in a solid enough foundation that we ourselves are in a position to grow. Being a small group leader, I want to help people

facilitate their own prayer lives. But then, being honest to yourself saying, ‘oh, I’m not in a good place spiritually’ and what can I do to change that?’ And you know, willing to put into work to, maintain our own prayer lives so that we can help others maintain theirs.

Student E had built enough independence in her own faith and with her conversations with campus ministers that she felt comfortable enough to lead her own small group and actively check in on her group’s prayer lives. As a leader, she felt responsible for holding herself accountable to make sure she was in a strong enough place to help others also become independent.

Support from Faculty, Mentors, and Peers

Another key theme that participants shared when describing their interactions with others was how support from others had a large impact on their faith. Five of the six participants shared how important it was that they received support from other people on campus. Questions that investigated relationships with faculty, mentors, and peers asked participants whether they had interactions regarding their faith with these populations on campus.

Student C shared that her first year at college was where she felt she had grown most in her faith. A significant reason for this was that she had met others that were like herself. She said,

you don’t really know your identity on campus yet, so, yeah, just finding your people and being able to be around them and I feel like the people you surround yourself with really help build your hobbies and your character.

She continued, “It’s really good to be around people who are similar to me and just encourage me in my faith and my spiritual walk also.” Having relatable peers helped her share experiences and grow in her spiritual development.

Similarly, Student D shared the importance of being around a community of Christians. “It gave me kind of a home in a community of people who share similar values. And we’re all kind of centered on the same thing. So, I think the community aspect aside from the ministry aspect, was the biggest thing.” Having a community of like-minded individuals that he could share his faith with was what he described as the most important influence on his faith.

Student F stated that peers similar to herself was important to her development. “Just to be with other people in my age, see this [faith] lived out, to be learning alongside people. I think that was super impactful, but yeah, that was probably the main thing.” She continued,

I think being surrounded by Christians is so helpful. I love going to church with all these people. I know all these people on a deep level and I think that’s just allowed me to be a better friend and a better Christian.”

She emphasized how she enjoyed friendships with peers that went deeper because of their shared faith. Additionally, having peers that shared her faith made her feel energetic and excited to continue going to church weekly.

One of the participants mentioned that surrounding herself with others that had the same faith as hers was the most important decision she made regarding her spiritual development. Student G said, “Just like consistently surrounded by Christians, and I think that was probably the most growing thing that I could have done.” Additionally, having conversations at conferences or retreats where participants are vulnerable with their faith was helpful.

I really think it’s helped me find a lot of joy. I went to a conference last year and it said that sharing your faith with other people is a way for you to feel the same joy as when you found your faith, just to have that glimmer of hope.

Throughout the interview, Student G continually referenced the importance of being with other Christians and how important it was to her faith.

Participants also shared their experiences with faculty and mentors and how they felt supported in their faith. Student B mentioned that talking with a Christian ministry mentor at the RSO was helpful because she felt reassured about her spiritual development. It was like speaking with a family member. One participant shared that she had appreciated a particular science faculty member being open with her faith. The faculty member was teaching an evolutionary theory class and expressed her faith to the class and assured them that she did not want to offend anyone or their beliefs through the content of the course. Student C said that this impacted her development because,

I am a Christian and I do have my faith, but I also I believe science as well. I feel like there's that stigma that if you are, you know, have faith and you don't agree with science, which is totally not the case in my situation. So yeah, it was reassuring because it's nice to see somebody who has a PhD in science that they kind of did that the same way I did.

Student D, who shared a lot about their leadership experienced, also expressed the importance in having support from a Christian ministry mentor. He mentioned that he was busy helping other people grow in their spiritual and emotional health. However, having support from a mentor that gave him individual time to reflect and be heard was important in taking a break from his leadership responsibilities.

Student E had a similar experience, yet it was with an instructor. She had met a faculty member that had a different Christian background from her, but they still had conversations about their experiences. She said,

There's some similarities and there's some differences and just having the opportunity to talk with her about that has led to her being comfortable to ask me and then also me being comfortable with being asked within the classroom.

In this case, Student E was willing to talk about her faith in the classroom if the instructor asked her about certain topics concerning Christianity. If Christianity emerged in discussion or lecture, the instructor in a supportive manner asked Student E to hear her perspective.

Another participant shared the value of having a Christian ministry mentor at her RSO to look up to as a role model. Student F shared that one of her mentors was already married, and the mentor was a few steps ahead in their life compared to hers. However, Student F noticed the mentor's knowledge of the Bible, and she also saw that the mentor was able to apply Biblical knowledge to life situations. Student F shared that having a mentor role model these traits (including a devout prayer life) were important to her and her growth, and that she tries to reflect that in her own life. Similarly, Student G shared that her mentor showed her how to handle situations maturely, and that their relationship gave her wisdom she would otherwise not have received.

Challenged by Others

Another main theme participants shared when answering questions pertaining to research question one was being challenged by others. Participants perceived growth in their own faith when they were exposed to different faiths or were challenged for their beliefs.

Student B described her interactions with non-denominational Christians as "eye opening." Being raised Catholic and having conversations with other types of Christians impacted her growth. Student C expressed something similar, where she said, "I mean, there's a

wide variety of people who expressed their religion in different ways, so it's been really eye opening."

Student D talked about interacting with people of various faiths as a tool to understand and learn from others. He said that when talking to others, "my goal is not often to meet someone and then change their belief system in a conversation, but more just to see how people think and how they process the world." When talking about interacting with nones he mentioned,

it is just kind of interesting to me to see how people who don't have a faith, so somebody who had fallen to that, like none religion category processing as opposed to what I do.

It's not that one way is necessarily good or bad, but it's just different and that has definitely caught my attention on multiple occasions.

Furthermore, Student E saw value in having conversations with those of different faiths. She stated that people tend to see issues as black and white, and she also admitted to being stuck in her own mindset at times. However, she said,

having the conversation with another person who doesn't do things the exact same way as I do, it opens up my perspective. I would definitely say throughout my four years here that I've been able to- I guess accept and reject certain aspects of the Catholic teaching just based on what I experience.

In this instance, conversations with people with differing faiths opened her mind to other world views, and she eventually made her own decisions about what to accept or reject from the Catholic faith.

Also, Student F would have conversations with others who did not share his faith. He said,

we're all just sitting down late at night, just hanging out and then one person will be like 'hey [Student F], I've been wondering this, do you have an answer for this?' Just something related to Christianity and yeah, and then the whole group will talk about their thoughts or what they believe.

When asked about how that influenced their faith development, Student F said that before college she did not have many answers for people that asked questions about her faith. However, through similar situations to what was previously described, she knows how to share her faith to others and listen to concerns that they may have.

Another common trend found when students talked about being challenged in their faith was when they were directly confronted and asked questions about their faith. Student C shared that she felt intimidated when talking to others about her faith because "it's not embarrassing, but it's just that you don't know how people are going to react." Student E experienced a similar phenomenon where she would be asked about her faith in class by the instructor. She was selected as a representative for Christianity and was challenged by the classroom to talk about her faith when the subject material related to her faith.

One student shared that they experienced hostile challenges from peers once her faith was shared. Student F would talk about topics pertaining to Christianity. She shared,

There was some students who had been hostile, just some Christian ideals or they weren't even acknowledging that these ideas came from the Christian faith and are rooted in that, and so I kind of again provided some pushback and it wasn't taken very favorably just because they didn't believe what it was.

The topic in this instance was murder, and Student F was sharing that it was a principle found in the Bible. From this experience, Student F shared that she learned how

people's perceptions often kind of like mar the truth about something. But if you're not rooted in [the Bible], then you're just getting your perceptions and ideas from all these other, different things that aren't necessarily accurate.

Overall, the experience caused Student F to retreat further into her own faith and not find common ground or different truths from other students' perspectives.

All participants shared that certain interactions with peers, faculty, mentors, and organizations on campus were "faith builders" and aided in their independence of how they practiced their faith. Support from peers, mentors, and faculty were appreciated by participants because it was a means to have deeper relationships with others to prevent feelings of alienation in their faith. Furthermore, different faith exposures and being challenged by others inside or outside of the classroom allowed students to be introspective about what they believed as the truth when reflecting on their faith or morality.

Perceptions on the Institution and Spiritual Development

The second research question asked how participants perceived their institution could better support spiritual development. When asked how the institution could better support their spiritual development, most participants perceived that their institution supported them in a satisfactory manner. Student F mentioned that "[the institution] is one of the most open schools is what I've heard to having these types of things. I know a lot of other schools are really shut down and just don't allow these opportunities to happen." Student E shared a similar feeling, where she stated "[the institution] is a very open and supportive place."

Despite the general finding that students felt adequately supported by their instruction, some participants shared ideas on how the institution could improve support. Furthermore, participants indicated what spiritual roadblocks they experienced on campus.

Spiritual Roadblocks

While a third of participants consistently shared many roadblocks they experienced, five of the six participants mentioned that the largest roadblock for their spiritual development was apathy or temptations from their peers. Sometimes participants would feel the need to separate from their peers if their peers were engaging in risky behavior that conflicted with their beliefs such as drinking and drugs. Additionally, participants wanted to have conversations about their faith with others outside of their Christian communities, but their peers had no interest in discussing this topic with them.

Student B shared that she was tempted by her peers to engage in parties. While she did go out with friends or host gatherings of her own, she did mention that these gatherings could be potential setbacks for her spiritual development. She said, “I mean sometimes it can be [a setback] and sometimes again I guess it just depends how much and how far it goes, you know?”

Student C had a similar experience with a sports team at the institution. She shared an experience that she described as a setback for her spirituality:

I used to be on one of the sports teams here at [the institution], and we had to do a lot of team bonding type things, and a lot of the team bonding was like ‘oh come to this party and get absolutely wasted’ and things like that. And that’s not my speed. That’s just not what I do. So, yeah, being around people who were just kind of bad influences I feel like was challenging.

This conflict between team bonding with her peers and her faith eventually led her to dropping her sports involvement entirely.

Another common experience participants had was apathy towards faith from non-Christian peers on campus. Student C shared that she wished to have conversations about faith

with other students on campus to broaden her understanding of different approaches to Christianity. However, she said, “There is a large variety of students who don’t have any kind of religious belief, which has been really interesting to talk to them. I feel like it’s been majority of students who just don’t have a home church.” In this instance, students were apathetic to religion in general, so she spent time asking general questions about their beliefs rather than specific Christian topics.

Student E shared that most of her conversations about faith and religion occurred at her Catholic place of worship. Conversations about spirituality with other students outside of the organization were few and far between. She said, “I think entering into the deeper conversations about faith definitely don’t happen as naturally and as frequently.” Student F also shared that “I feel like I don’t talk to people like that regularly, so I just don’t think it would come up.” These two participants shared that conversations about faith are not initiated with students outside of their religious organizations.

Another point Student E expressed was how students belonging to the LGBT community were apathetic to her faith organization because of exclusionary practices from the Church. She stated,

I think of you know, members of the LGBTQ plus community in that there's a history within the Church as they're not being welcome in that it hurts my heart and... you know it makes me doubt [the faith] that I've put into this institution into this church because of the exclusion that it can sometimes represent for some people and for some of my friends and who have experienced that.

She experienced a large setback in her faith when she encountered students that felt excluded

from the Church and did not want to take part in her religion. Despite this, she focuses her criticism on the religious institution rather than her individual experiences with her spirituality.

Student G had an experience with apathy as well. She said,

I'm really noticing this year a lot of students really just are very apathetic towards faith and really apathetic towards my faith, and so they're apathetic towards me. A lot of students are just uncomfortable with the topic of religion and death and thinking we are pushing things onto them that they don't want- which isn't the case.

Contrary to Student E (who believed that the God she worshipped was inclusive of everyone), Student G admitted that they felt like the gospel is offensive to others. Student G said that the gospel's message also tries to transform others, which some students may not be ready for and that could be the reason for their apathy.

Two participants shared an experience where they met a roadblock in their spirituality from a faculty member. Student F shared that one of the professors that she did have a faith interaction with was an atheist. She stated,

He was atheist I think, and then had kind of said some things about Christianity in class that I necessarily didn't agree with. And so I approached him after class and I was like 'hey, what do you think about this? Like how do you know these to be true' and just kind of challenging him and he was not a fan of the conversation. It was kind of like he seemed to be bashing Christianity.

In this instance, Student F's professor was talking negatively about Christianity in class, which pushed Student F to have a conversation about his experience with Christianity. She asked about his past experiences and tried assuring him that not all of Christianity was like how he described. She described this experience as a roadblock, but also learned from it that severe

negative interactions with faith early in one's life can severely alter their perceptions of a faith, even if it is not true.

Student G also had a similar experience with faculty in her class. She stated,

I did have a professor in my freshman year who told everyone that The Big Bang went against everything in the Bible and so the Bible wasn't true, but it wasn't anything that I could have argued with in front of a class full of people.

Student G later said that she felt frustrated at the professor's words and was worried about the impact it could have had on her peers' perceptions on her faith. Additionally, she asked her friends in the class but found out they were unbothered by the faculty's words. However, she still felt the urge to say something to defend her feelings but did not feel comfortable in that environment.

Furthermore, Student G stated how another faculty member teaching anthropology class was apathetic towards the topic of religion. The professor was quoted as saying "Well, I'm not going to get into Christianity 'cause it's not something I believe." She continued,

I think the professors are very afraid to talk about it just because again, like college students are very apathetic and wanting their own freedom to do what they will. And I think religion is just something that feels like you have to strap down and get rid of everything you love, so I think they're very touchy about it- trying to avoid it.

With Student G's second case, she shared her belief that the apathy of faculty discussing religion was tied to students being apathetic to religion first. She thinks that because students are wanting to avoid the topic, faculty also feel the need to avoid the topic to not upset their students.

Another common roadblock shared by three of the participants was negative examples of Christianity exhibited on campus. Student E shared that, "What most impacts my faith negatively

is when that bad thing happened in the Church and I would say and it just- it can be disheartening.” She shared that sometimes she felt like some beliefs or practices were exclusionary, so it would put emotional or spiritual distance between herself and her organization. Student E described how a campus visitor on campus was also a roadblock to her spiritual development.

When talking about what the institution can improve upon in supporting students’ spiritually, she said,

I think that where we run into trouble is people who don’t have a lot of experience with faith or Christianity and they see someone like [open air preacher] come and campus and he does his preaching pointing out individual students and telling them they’re going to hell and people see that and they think that is that Christianity is.

Student E did say that she understood the free speech rules on campus, but “Maybe, providing other Christian organizations an equal opportunity to just maybe speak against that, because it would be speaking for love rather than discrimination.” However, she did not feel hopeful that this would be something the institution could push for.

Another participant, Student G, had conflicted thoughts regarding the open air preacher that visited the institution. Student G did agree with parts of the message (concerning punishment for people’s actions), but people’s negative reactions towards the message was disheartening. She said,

People really do feel attacked when you come after them, especially [open air preacher] and all those people are in the middle of the library quad like yelling at you so I think those are really the hardest things that I’ve experienced at least.

Student F had a separate negative example of Christianity on campus. She said,

I don't know - there's always rumors going around about [organization] is like a cult, and I'm like 'What are you guys even talking about?' So yeah, I don't know. That's kind of weird, but that's rumors that float around."

Rather than being completely discouraged by it, Student F saw these rumors more as an annoyance. Regardless, she felt like that was still a roadblock she experienced on campus.

Ideas for Improved Support

The most common idea participants had to improve their institution was having the institution focus more energy into improving mental health of students on campus. Participants shared that if they were overwhelmed with schoolwork or responsibilities from the institution, then it would be a barrier for their spiritual development.

Student B said, "But I would say mostly like the stress of school making me anxious and not wanting to do my regular prayer things." She mentioned that the largest roadblock for her spiritual development was the stress and anxiety that came with school. She clarified that the large homework loads was what held her back from keeping up on her faith practices. Another participant, Student F, said that she experienced so much pressure and guilt from herself that she needed to seek counseling. She said that the largest setback for herself was her own mental health, despite trying to free herself from guilt because her faith. She needed extra help for her mental health to continue strong in her faith.

On the other hand, Student G said that the responsibility of navigating anxiety and depression fell on the religious community rather than the institution. She said,

I think the biggest thing at least this year was anxiety and depression. Not a lot of Christians talk about it, nor do they find ways to help each other through it, and so I think

that was a really big obstacle of like trying to figure out on my own with my pastor, rather than like having a whole community of people.

Even though she turned to her religious organization, she had to seek specific help from the pastor rather than her peers. Working with a leader of her faith to combat her mental health issues helped her overcome an obstacle of navigating her spirituality.

A third of the participants mentioned that more promotion of spirituality and faith organization on campus could be helpful for improving support. Student D said, “As far as like advertising or like, you know marketing a way to kind of grow your faith on campus I don’t know that there’s a ton of that.” Student D said that starting one’s own organization on campus was simple, but students are left to their own devices to seek out spiritual development.

Similarly, Student G shared that housing specifically on campus could be beneficial for spreading the word about spiritual development opportunities for students. She said that the largest area for improvement for the institutions support for spirituality is,

Promotion for sure. Because I didn’t know any of these [religious organizations] existed beforehand and there aren’t that many like ‘Hey like you looking for a church here’s a thing on campus.’ Other than that I think a poster that I’ve seen it’s here, all of them with emails and I think emailing can be very intimidating.

She felt like housing would be a good target area to increase promotion because many first and second years reside in the halls, so reaching out to students in the halls may be less intimidating to get involved.

One participant thought that Christianity on campus was well supported by the institution but thought other faiths could be better supported. Student D stated,

As far as Christianity is involved or is concerned, I think the University does a really good job supporting that. Now, as far as you know, creating space for other faiths to practice, or to find a home. I think the University could probably do a little bit of work there.

This participant was the only one of the 6 participants that considered faiths outside of Christianity during the interviews.

Most of the roadblocks experienced by the participants involved apathy from peers, disagreements with faculty, and negative Christian representatives or rumors on campus. When reflecting on areas of improvement for the institution to better support spirituality, participants requested more promotion of faith-based organizations, increasing mental health efforts on campus, and considering supporting students with faiths outside of Christianity.

Student Affairs and Spiritual Development

The final research question asked what role student affairs play in spiritual development. Most of the participants referenced interactions they had with their direct supervisors (who are student affairs professionals). Interactions ranged from encouraging to apathetic. Additionally, two of the participants cited spirituality being important for holistic wellbeing, which also connects to student affairs when considering student development theories.

Two participants said that their supervisors seemed apathetic or uncomfortable when discussing their faith. Student F reflected on how in general, most people she interacted with on campus did not want to have conversations about faith. She said, "I think when it comes to conversations with other people, it can be hard when people just don't want to talk about it, and so I take that really hard. I think that's been an obstacle." Student G had a similar experience when reflecting on her relationship with her supervisor.

For Student G, most conversations about her faith with the student affairs professional were brief. She said, “Had discussions about the Bible with her and so it was just uh, again very brief. She was kind of trying to avoid the conversation, but that’s typically how things go with anyone.” When asked about why she thought conversations about faith ended up brief or uncomfortable, she once again emphasized that people were uncomfortable discussing the unknown or death.

On the other hand, half of the participants shared experiences where interactions with student affairs professionals and their spirituality were positive. Student C stated,

We’ve definitely talked about - well we both believe because he knows that [organization] is a big part of my experience here on campus. And yeah, we have been able to talk about that like on our one-on-ones and he’s asked me quite a few questions. She referenced her supervisor later in the interview when reflecting on sources of support for her faith outside of her organization. She said, “He does a really good job of just like encouraging all of us in whatever we are doing. He’s been really supportive of [organization] and he asked me questions about it. I would say it’s good to have a boss that encourages it.” The participant appreciated the questions and attention her supervisor paid towards her faith. It was one of the strongest sources of support for her spirituality at the institution.

Student E also had conversations about her faith with her supervisor. She said that these conversations helped provide structure to her life in integrating faith. She also stated,

There’s you know several people that I know from housing that I feel like are very supportive of that. I’d say I don’t interact with [housing professional] very much, but like I just know he’s very supportive of [organization], which is always nice to see that relationship between the two.

Student E appreciated the positive relationship housing professionals had with the campus ministry, and she viewed that as a significant piece of support for her spiritual development at the institution.

Additionally, Student F shared that she felt her direct supervisor was a significant supporter of her faith. She said,

Honestly, like [supervisor] has been really encouraging like we just have conversations a lot like just about random things and I think that's, but it's just been really helpful and she doesn't believe what I believe, by any means, but like we will take the time to hear 'Hey, what are you struggling with? How can I be supportive of that?'

Despite not sharing the same faith as Student F, the student affairs professional dedicated time during conversations to check in on her spirituality. Questions asking Student F how best she could support her development were greatly valued. Students C, E, and F referenced their student affairs professionals that they interacted with as being nearly as important as their religious organizations through simple conversations once a week.

A final theme discovered was that of holistic wellbeing. Two participants talking about the significance of their spirituality and its influence on their overall health. Student E talked about how it was important for her to integrate her faith in her work and education during one-on-ones with her supervisor. She said,

I also talked to her about my personal life and so like it would just help- she helped facilitate an opportunity to bring all versions of myself together and I think that that also was important in- you know when we talk about the context of living our faith. That was what was important for me was bringing faith into all contexts of my life.

It was important for her to not separate her faith from other aspects of her life. She mentioned compartmentalizing her faith from the rest of her life was possible, but she preferred to incorporate it into everything she did.

Student G shared a similar sentiment. She talked about incorporating her faith life with other aspects of her well-being like a car with four wheels. Each wheel represents an important aspect of well-being such as physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. When talking about some possible ways the institution can improve its support of spirituality, she referenced the car analogy once again. She said

Oh yeah, that's a big one. But it doesn't really matter what that one aspect of spirituality could be. I mean, I'm very specific to my faith, but everyone has their own. I believe that Christianity is the way, the truth, and the life, but, I think anyone can find their own thing.

For her, incorporating her faith was important to her overall well-being. However, she also mentioned that other students should incorporate whatever faith they felt like is true.

In conclusion, students shared that the impact student affairs had on their faith could be as significant as their faith communities. Support or encouragement for spiritual development from student affairs professionals was appreciated. Two participants also shared that incorporating faith into everything they do on campus was important as well.

Chapter V

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceived influences of various interactions at the institution on their spiritual development at the institution of interest. Specifically, participants reflected on interactions pertaining to faith involving peers, faculty, mentors, religious organizations, and student affairs professionals and how those interactions influenced their faith. Several key roadblocks and supporters of faith at the institution were also identified by participants. Participants also shared the role student affairs had on their spiritual development.

Participants' Perceptions and Parks's Theory of Faith Development

Participants' perceptions of faith influence and their interactions were analyzed through the lens of Parks's theory of faith development. Participants' perceptions on certain interactions they had regarding their faith revealed what stage of Parks's faith development they were currently experiencing.

Forms of Knowing

Recall that forms of knowing is where individuals obtain knowledge and work through their faith cognitively. At a younger age, they rely on their authority figures to have knowledge about their faith. Most of the participants shared that before attending college, they had relied on their parents or church leaders to understand and receive information about Christianity. Student D summarized this experience by saying "I've been a Christian since I was born basically, and that's a result of parental influence."

However, after admission to the university and subsequently joining a faith organization moved participants into the probing commitment stage. Participants shared that they found out

what their faith meant to them independent of their parents' influence. Five out of six participants stated that they had a "fresh start" or independence in their faith for the first time. Furthermore, all participants shared multiple ways in which their interactions with organizations or peers on campus were "faith builders." Participants explained that they were increasing in their spiritual competency and knowledge as they were granted independence to explore and deepen their faith. Furthermore, some participants such as Students C, D, and E were confident enough in their spiritual development to critically think about their faiths and take on leadership responsibilities to help peers with their spiritual journey. Student E said, "If we want to help others grow, then we have to have a solid enough foundation ourselves."

Additionally, Student G started showing some traits of the next stage of forms of knowing, namely, tested commitment. Student G mentioned several times that Christianity was what she believed in, but other students should choose the faith that best fit them personally. She said, "I'm specific to my faith, but everyone has their own." This relativistic view on faith is a trait of tested commitment, where one is firm in their beliefs and start to view spirituality as relative. Student C also reflected this stage as she had conversations about her faith with a Buddhist peer. During this interaction, she was reaffirming her faith and solidifying her beliefs by explaining to others why she adheres to her faith. Like Student G, there was no intention of converting the Buddhist student. Rather, she was trying to understand a different perspective while explaining her own.

Forms of Dependence

Participants' experiences and feelings about their interactions with their faith also showed shifts they were experiencing in the forms of dependence aspect of Parks's theory of faith development (2000). Forms of dependence are how one feels about their faith internally, and

how they make meaning through their interactions. Student E had a dependence mindset regarding their faith before college. She was raised in a Catholic household, and faith decisions were heavily relied on by authority figures in her life (in this case her family). However, Student E and other participants started to shift into the fragile inner dependence form of development. As Student F shared, “My dad is a pastor. Before, I felt obligated.”

Participants transitioned into a form of faith where they had autonomy to engage and express their faith however they wanted. With this freedom, participants shared that they were “awakened” or coming to their own definition or understanding of their faith. With increased involvement in their faith, they could shift into a confident inner dependence. A key piece for this to happen, however, is strong mentorship. Most participants shared that an important aspect for how they internalized interactions with others or applying their knowledge with their faith was through mentorship. Participants that received strong mentorship weekly eventually found themselves in leadership roles within their organizations or taking part in activities that tested their level of comfort such as mission trips. Student D said, “Being pushed out of my comfort zone. Those trips were a really big part of that.” The participants that exhibited a confident inner independence that held a leadership position in their organizations alongside mentorship were Students C, D, and E.

Forms of Community

The mentorship experienced and its perceived influence on faith described by participants also applies to forms of community as described by Parks (2000). Specifically, the most impactful interactions perceived by students relate to the mentoring form of community. As the students mature in their faith, they need a community to help guide and mentor their development. Five of the six participants noted the significance of having their communities

when they were becoming independent in how they practiced their faith. Student G mentioned, “Consistently surrounded by Christians was the most growing thing I could have done.” These experiences coincide with Parks’s stance on the importance of having challenge and support coming from a mentoring form of community while young adults were becoming independent in their faith.

At the institution, students obtained this community from registered sponsored organizations (RSO) on campus. It was through these organizations that they were able to meet others that shared their experiences, and they found opportunities to speak with mentors to receive additional support. Student G shared her mentorship “Has been helpful understanding my future outside of college.” Additionally, the religious organizations were the main places that students were challenged in their faith. These challenges mostly came from mission trips, going on religious retreats, or leading small group Bible studies. Participants talked about how the accountability for leadership and pushing themselves to spend more time in their faith on missions’ trips and retreats provided opportunities to build their faith, a faith stronger than before engaging in those activities.

As for support from faculty, participants shared that conversations that were supportive between themselves and their teachers were few and far between. Student D said “I can think of one occasion probably” in his four years of an instance where he talked with a faculty member about faith. However, for the participants that did have these conversations, engaging with their faith while in an academic setting were described as supportive and helped them grow in their development. Student E shared her conversations provided a historical context to her faith, so she said she received a “global understanding of Christianity in general, which did help me.”

Overall, applying Parks's theory to participants' experiences was useful in seeing what specific interactions helped their transitions at the institution of interest. All three aspects of the theory were prevalent in each of the experiences that participants shared.

Support and Roadblocks for Spiritual Development

Participants shared that they thought the institution supported their spiritual development in a satisfactory manner. It was known by one participant that the president of the university had regular meetings with the Christian campus ministers to receive updates about religious happenings on campus. Additionally, participants shared that most faculty or professionals they met on campus were supportive of their religious organizational involvement. However, every participant identified as a person of faith from a privileged religion (Christianity). This could play a factor in their perceptions of support on campus, as their religion had the strongest presence on campus (Bowman & Small, 2010).

The largest area students felt supported in was having regular talks or meetings with peers through small group studies or weekly organizational gatherings. Since participants were in a vulnerable stage of their spiritual development and in the process of becoming more independent, it was important for them to immediately find a community where they could talk about deeper issues concerning their faith. Weekly discussions also helped students to feel accountable for practices and traditions they felt like they should be doing on their own time. These practices included daily prayer or reading the Bible. Students also shared that they felt a lot of support for their faith after attending a religious retreat off campus. During these times, discussions about faith and times of worship were greatly increased.

Relationships with a mentor were also perceived as massive areas of support for faith on campus by some participants. Having a mentor was another way in which participants were held

accountable for daily practices pertaining to their faith. Additionally, a mentor was described as someone who had gone through what participants were currently experiencing. Student C shared, “my mentor also went to [the institution], so it was cool we had similar backgrounds.” This was useful in receiving advice or wisdom for applying their spirituality to life’s difficulties. Typically, strong mentorship eventually led to participants taking on leadership positions within their organization to mentor others.

Another instance of perceived support from participants that involved discussion with peers was talking about their faith with people outside of their religious community. Participants shared eagerness in learning about why other students believed the way they did. Student D wanted to “see how people think and how they process the world.” This seeking to understand reflects Parks’s form of knowing tested commitment stage. Participants wanting to engage with other students with different faiths occurred when they were solidified in their own spirituality. After a strong foundation was created through religious involvement, a desire to learn from others was formed.

Sometimes, however, participants used conversations with people outside their faith as an opportunity to convert another student. Some participants shared that converting someone to their religion or hearing stories about others coming to their faith at retreats reignited their passion for their spirituality. Regardless, conversations with students outside of their own faith were noted as eye opening to their own internalization of faith.

As far as roadblocks, the largest stumbling block participants shared was temptations or apathy from their peers. Two participants shared internalized conflict between their faith and social gatherings with friends. Student C shared being around certain friends “were bad influences. I feel like it was challenging.” Other participants shared that they felt frustration

when other students were not open to talking about their faiths or spread rumors about certain faith organizations they were involved with. Perceived peer influences on spiritual development by participants supports the current literature of peers and faith (Desmond et al., 2010; Desrosiers et al., 2011; Harley, 2004; Schwartz, 2006). College students will venture outside of their parental influences to explore their faith. Typically, peers will fill this need through social gatherings. Sometimes, likeminded peers can be seen as a place to retreat from peers that are viewed as “delinquent” or do not follow the faith the same way a student does (Desmond et al., 2010).

Another stumbling block some participants faced involved professors in the classroom. If a faculty member openly talked negatively about Christianity in front of a class or blatantly talked about the invalidity of the Bible, participants became frustrated. One participant shared that their greatest frustration was how the professor’s words could negatively impact the spiritual development of other students in the classroom. Student G shared, “there were a lot of people in the classroom and I don’t know how that impacted them.” The participant was confident in her own spirituality but was concerned that the spirituality of others might be negatively impacted by the faculty member’s words.

Implications and the Role of Student Affairs on Spirituality

Analyzing participants’ responses provided valuable insight into what role student affairs professionals can have at a non-religiously affiliated university. Student affairs professionals and faculty have the potential to positively influence the spiritual development of students. This can be accomplished through intentional conversations about spirituality and integrating spirituality alongside other areas of development for college students.

It should be noted that the institution of interest does not mention spirituality or faith development in its mission statement. As such, spirituality is not integrated into academics or student affairs work. Because of this, all participants needed to find an organization on campus to explore and build up their spirituality. Time in the classroom or in the residence halls were not a time to explore spirituality unless participants had a rare conversation with a faculty member or student. However, there is still ample opportunity for faculty or student affairs professionals to support spirituality for students during simple conversations.

Surprisingly, participants described conversations about faith with faculty or student affairs professionals on campus equally as supportive as involvement in their faith organizations. Some participants, when asked about their faith from a professor who supported their spiritual development, were encouraged because the instructor showed a concern for an important aspect of their lives. One participant took this feeling of support further by having additional conversations about her faith with a professor outside of the classroom, where the faculty became somewhat of a mentor for her.

This type of support can also apply to student affairs professionals and their conversations with students. Participants that did have conversations with their supervisors about their spirituality or faith felt supported in their development. Spirituality was integrated into one-on-one weekly meetings, and it was another question asked by the supervisor alongside schoolwork, job responsibilities, and overall wellness. Once again, participants that did experience this felt supported in their beliefs.

With this information in mind, there are several things student affairs professionals can do to further support students' spiritual development at non-religious institutions. First, student affairs professionals should integrate spirituality into conversations with students that concern

overall health or wellness. Spirituality and religion are important aspects in the Wellness Wheel, which is a tool used by health and wellness professionals to help others achieve optimized health in body, mind, and spirit (Myers et al., 2000). Despite spirituality being an important aspect for overall wellness, research suggests that student affairs professionals may avoid the topic altogether (Love & Talbot, 2000; Burchett & Glanzer, 2020).

The institution utilized in this study follows a similar pattern as interactions with student affairs professionals and faith were a rare occurrence. Student affairs professionals checking into spiritual aspects of students' lives could be a useful tool in exploring deeper topics to talk about during intentional conversations to build rapport such as one on ones.

Second, spiritual exploration opportunities should be shared with students more openly. Since non-religious institutions do not integrate spiritual exploration as part of their mission, students should be redirected to other on-campus resources to meet their spiritual needs. Universities redirect students to resources on campus in a similar fashion for students needing LGBT or multicultural resources. If students are to establish independence in their spirituality and make meaning for themselves, they should have resources they can visit to navigate that. This is especially true for students that belong to a minoritized faith. Since Christianity is a privileged faith, students may have an easier time finding appropriate resources in navigating their faith. However, for Jewish, Muslim, or other minority faiths, there may not be as much support for their spiritual development.

Third, spirituality should also be integrated into trainings or discussions pertaining to diversity, inclusion, and equity. There are many ways to navigate spirituality. Some methods may include worship of a deity, while other methods include finding meaning through serving a community through volunteer work. If spirituality were a topic covered in diversity, equity, and

inclusion trainings, then that may raise the comfort level student affairs professionals and faculty have for initiating conversations about faith and spirituality with students. Additionally, including spirituality in a general sense may help support students who do not adhere to a majority faith like Christianity. Students who do not have a solidified faith group or belong to a minority religion may feel accepted or supported if spirituality was given a considerable amount of time during trainings.

Furthermore, this may help mitigate the negative impact some faculty may have on spiritual development. If student affairs professionals and faculty are trained on the significance of different faiths and spirituality during diversity training, then apathy towards faith or openly mocking certain faiths could be avoided altogether. Additionally, if student leaders are trained on spirituality, then that could also avoid fear of spiritual discussions in a peer-to-peer setting. If students are more comfortable with having spiritual conversations, they themselves could also be referral agents for peers to help navigate spirituality.

Suggestions for Further Research

The largest area for further research is to investigate student perceptions that belong to different faiths. Every participant for this study identified as Christian (Catholic and non-denominational). The institution of interest has a strong Christian presence on campus, and there are several Christian ministries that are easily accessible immediately outside campus. As for other religious places of worship, however, there are not many options outside of Christianity. There is a cultural center on campus for students of the Muslim faith, and there is a small Jewish organization on campus.

Because the spaces designated for non-Christian populations are practically non-existent, an effort should be made to hear non-Christian perceptions on how interactions on campus affect

their faith. Hearing additional perspectives outside Christianity will also be helpful in applying spiritual exploration in a more general sense for people who belong to the “none” category as well. Additionally, all the participants identified as white. It would be important to include perspectives from students of color to see if there are any differences in perceptions of support.

Further research should also make a deeper exploration of the role student affairs professionals have on spiritual journeys. Most participants had a difficult time thinking about student affairs professionals they had conversations about faith with other than their immediate supervisors. Getting perspectives from student affairs professionals directly from non-religious institutions could be beneficial in training future professionals on this topic. Hearing perspectives on why spiritual conversations are difficult to navigate or why spirituality is not included in holistic wellness could help with integration in the future.

Perhaps short-term interactions with students in roles such as admissions or orientation could be an avenue to explore or introduce the topic of spiritual development on campus. This especially holds true if student affairs professionals in these roles are an initial referral source for students wanting to become independent in their spirituality.

Similarly, research on faculty roles on spiritual development should also be investigated. Participants perceived faculty to be both a strong support and an impediment to their spirituality depending on the conversations they had inside the classroom. Exploring faculty perceptions on how spirituality fits in the classroom could be beneficial for students who desire to integrate their faith into all aspects of their lives on campus. It would also be interesting to investigate why some faculty openly talk negatively about certain faiths or how some religions are untrue during class.

Summary

This study examined students' perceived influences on spiritual development through various interactions with peers, faculty, mentors, and RSO involvement at a public, rural institution. Participants reflected on where they received the most support for their spirituality, and they suggested ways that the institution of interests could improve spiritual development for students on campus. Suggestions included more promotion of spiritual resources on campus and including spirituality into holistic wellbeing for students.

Participants also provided insight into how faculty and student affairs professionals play a role in spiritual development through conversations. Faculty need to be wary of damaging words that include religion or faith in the classroom. Additionally, they could be a strong support for students if they ask about opinions or seek to understand their students' spirituality. Similarly, student affairs professionals can assist in spiritual development if they encourage students to talk about their spirituality and are open to supporting them.

References

- Albrecht, S. L., & Heaton, T. B. (1984). Secularization, higher education, and religiosity. *Review of Religious Research*, 43-58.
- Alby, F., & Fatigante, M. (2014). Preserving the respondent's standpoint in a research interview: Different strategies of 'doing' the interviewer. *Human Studies*, 37(2), 239-256.
- "America's Changing Landscape." Pew Research Center, Washington D.C. (2015).
- Ammerman, N. T. (2019). America's changing religious and cultural landscape and its implications for theological education. *Looking Forward with Hope: Reflections on the Present State and Future of Theological Education* (34).
- Ashmos, D. P., & Duchon, D. (2000). Spirituality at work: A conceptualization and measure. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 9(2), 134-145.
- Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S., & Lindholm, J. A. (2011). *Cultivating the spirit: How college can enhance students' inner lives*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Avina, G. E., & Delaney, H. D. (2018). The value assimilation effect between university professors and their students in the classroom. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 7(1), 158-185. 10.5430/jct.v7n1p158.
- Ballard, B. (2017). The rationality of faith and the benefits of religion. *International Journal for Philosophy and Religion*, 81(1), 213-227.
- Baltazar, T., & Ron, C. (2011). The role of doubt in religious identity development and psychological maturity. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 20(2), 182-194. 10.1080/10656219.2011.590123.

- Barranco, R., & Harris, C. T. (2019). Latino suicide and religion: Examining differences across destinations, religious traditions, and native-versus foreign-born groups. *Sociological Inquiry*.
- Barrett, J. R. (2007). The researcher as instrument: Learning to conduct qualitative research through analyzing and interpreting a choral rehearsal. *Music Education Research*, 9(3), 417-433.
- Bowman, N. A., & Small, J. L. (2010). Do college students who identify with a privileged religion experience greater spiritual development? Exploring individual and institutional dynamics. *Research in Higher Education*, 51(7), 595-614.
- Brubacher, J. S., & Rudy, W. (1997). *Higher education in transition: A history of American colleges and universities*. Transaction Publishers.
- Bryant, A., & Astin, H. (2008). The correlates of spiritual struggle during the college years. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 79(1), 1-27. 10.1353/jhe.2008.0000.
- Burchett, M., & Glanzer, P. (2020). How student affairs education limits spiritual, religious, and secular identity exploration: A qualitative study of graduate students' educational experiences. *Journal of College and Character*, 21(4), 281-300.
- Campbell, C. (1971). *Toward a sociology of irreligion*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Carlson, J. A. (2010). Avoiding traps in member checking. *Qualitative Report*, 15(5), 1102-1113.
- Cornwall, M. (1987). The social basis of religion: A study of factors influencing religious belief and commitment. *Review of Religious Research*, 29(1), 44-56. 10.2307/3511951.

- Cox, D., & Jones, R. P. (2017). America's Changing Religious Identity. Retrieved from <https://www.ppri.org/research/american-religious-landscape-christian-religiously-unaffiliated/>
- Craft, C. M. (2019). Discussing religious and spiritual beliefs at work: Legal, developmental, and ethical considerations. *Journal of College and Character, 20*(4), 345-351.
- Dalton, J. C. (2004). Supporting students' spiritual growth in college: Recommendations for student affairs practitioners. *Journal of College and Character, 5*(10).
- Desmond, S. A., Morgan, K. H., & Kikuchi, G. (2010). Religious development: How (and why) does religiosity change from adolescence to young adulthood?. *Sociological Perspectives, 53*(2), 247-270.
- Doherty, J. (1964). Comment on Stark's "On the Incompatibility of Religion and Science". *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 3*(2), 240-241.
- Driscoll, D. L. (2011). Introduction to primary research: Observations, surveys, and interviews. *Writing spaces: Readings on writing, 2*, 153-174.
- Edgell, P. (2008). We still don't know if Christianity works," much less why: response to Smith. *Sociology of Religion, 69*(4), 445-452.
- Eisenmann, L. (1999). Reclaiming religion: new historiographic challenges in the relationship of religion and American higher education. *History of Education Quarterly, 39*(3), 295-306.
- Elkins, D. N., Hedstrom, L. J., Hughes, L. L., Leaf, J. A., & Saunders, C. (1988). Toward a humanistic-phenomenological spirituality: Definition, description, and measurement. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 28*(4), 5-18.
- <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167888284002>

- Erickson, J. A. (1992). Adolescent religious development and commitment: A structural equation model of the role of family, peer group, and educational influences. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 131-152.
- Estanek, S. M., (2006). Redefining spirituality: A discourse. *College Student Journal*, 40(2), 270-281.
- Goodman, M. A., & Dyer, W. J. (2019). From parent to child: Family factors that influence faith transmission. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*.
- Gopalan, M., & Brady, S. T. (2020). College students' sense of belonging: A national perspective. *Educational Researcher*, 49(2), 134-137.
- Graham, J., & Haidt, J. (2010). Beyond beliefs: Religions bind individuals into moral communities. *Personality and social psychology review*, 14(1), 140-150.
- Gray, A. (1880). *Natural science and religion: Two lectures delivered to the theological school of Yale college*. C. Scribner's sons.
- Hackshaw, A. (2008). Small studies: strengths and limitations.
- Hall, T. W., Edwards, E., & Wang, D. C. (2016). The spiritual development of emerging adults over the college years: A 4-year longitudinal investigation. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 8(3), 206-217. 10.1037/rel0000051
- Hartley, H. V. (2004). How college affects students' religious faith and practice: A review of research. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 23(2), 111-129. Hartley, H. V. (2004). How college affects students' religious faith and practice: A review of research. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 23(2), 111-129.
- "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace." Pew Research Center, Washington D.C. (2015).

- Jenkins, P. (2002). The next Christianity, *The Atlantic Monthly*, 290(30), 53-68.
- Jocson, R. M., Alers-Rojas, F., Ceballo, R., Arkin, M. (2018). Religion and Spirituality: Benefits for Latino adolescents exposed to community violence. *Youth & Society*, 1-28.
- Johnson, Todd M., and Brian J. Grim, eds. World Religion Database. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008.
- Kale, S. (2004). Spirituality, religion, and globalization. *Journal of Macromarketing* 24(2), 92-107. 10.1177/0276146704269296.
- Karakas, F. (2010). Spirituality and performance in organizations: A literature review. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 94(1), 89-106.
- King, P. E., & Roeser, R. W. (2009). Religion and spirituality in adolescent development.
- Kocet, M. M., & Stewart, D. L. (2011). The role of student affairs in promoting religious and secular pluralism and interfaith cooperation. *Journal of College and Character*, 12(1), 1-10.
- Lavrakas, P. J. (2008). Encyclopedia of survey research methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Lee, J. J. (2002). Religion and college attendance: Change among students. *The Review of Higher Education*, 25(4), 369-384. 10.1353/rhe.2002.0020.
- Lefkowitz, E. S. (2005). "Things have gotten better" developmental changes among emerging adults after the transition to university. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 20(1), 40-63.
- Liamputtong, P. (2009). Qualitative data analysis: conceptual and practical considerations. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, 20(2), 133-139.
- Love, P., & Talbot, D. (2000) Defining spiritual development: A missing consideration for student affairs. *NASPA Journal*, 37(1), 361-375, 10.2202/1949-6605.1097.

- Love, P. G. (2001). Spirituality and student development: Theoretical connections. *New Directions for Student Services*, 95, 7-16.
- Mallozzi, C. A. (2009). Voicing the interview: A researcher's exploration on a platform of empathy. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 15(6), 1042-1060.
- Mapp T. (2008). Understanding phenomenology: the lived experience. *British Journal of Midwifery*, 16(5), 308–311.
- Marsden, G. M. (1996). *The soul of the American university: From Protestant establishment to established nonbelief*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Mayrl, D., & Oeur, F. (2009). Religion and higher education: Current knowledge and directions for future research. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 48(2), 260–275.
10.1111/j.1468-5906.2009.01446.
- McGuire, K. M., Casanova, S., & Davis III, C. H. (2016). “I’m a Black female who happens to be Muslim”: Multiple marginalities of an immigrant black Muslim woman on a predominantly white campus. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 85(3), 316-329.
- Meyers, J. L., Brown, Q., Grant, B. F., & Hasin, D. (2017). Religiosity, race/ethnicity, and alcohol use behaviors in the United States. *Psychological medicine*, 47(1), 103-114.
- Mochon, D., Norton, M. I., & Ariely, D. (2008). Getting off the hedonic treadmill, one step at a time: The impact of regular religious practice and exercise on well-being. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 29(5), 632-642.
- Mochon, D., Norton, M. I., & Ariely, D. (2011). Who benefits from religion?. *Social Indicators Research*, 101(1), 1-15.

- Myers, J. E., Sweeney, T. J., & Witmer, J. M. (2000). The Wheel of Wellness counseling for wellness: A holistic model for treatment planning. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 78*(3), 251–266. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2000.tb01906.x>
- Norenzayan, A., & Shariff, A. F. (2008). The origin and evolution of religious prosociality. *Science, 322*(5898) 58-62.
- Oltmann, S. (2016). Qualitative interview: A methodological discussion of the interviewer and respondent contexts. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 17*(2).
- Owens, E. (2006). Conversational space and participant shame in interviewing. *Qualitative Inquiry, 12*(6), 1160-1179.
- Parks, S. D. (2000). *Big questions, worthy dreams: Mentoring young adults in their search for meaning, purpose, and faith*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). *How college affects students: Findings and insights from twenty years of research*. Jossey-Bass.
- Patel, E., & Meyer, C. (2009). Engaging religious diversity on campus: The role of interfaith leadership. *Journal of College and Character, 10*(7).
- Patton, L. D., Renn, K. A., Guido-DiBrito, F., & Quaye, S. J. (2016). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Brand.
- Peek, L. (2005). Becoming Muslim: The development of a religious identity. *Sociology of Religion, 66*(3), 215-242.
- Pew Research Center. (2020, June 9). *In U.S., decline of Christianity continues at rapid pace*. <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

- Roehlkepartain, E. C., Benson, P. L., & Scales, P. C. (2011). Spiritual identity: Contextual perspectives. In *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 545-562). Springer, New York, NY.
- Ruiter, S., & De Graaf, N. D. (2006). National context, religiosity, and volunteering: Results from 53 countries. *American Sociological Review*, *71*(2), 191-210.
- Saad, M., & de Medeiros, R. (2016). Programs of religious/spiritual support in hospitals-five “Whies” and five “Hows”. *Philosophy, Ethics, and Humanities in Medicine*, *11*(1), 5.
- Schumann, K. (2020). A force for good: When and why religion predicts prosocial behavior. *Journal of Moral Theology*, *9*(1), 34-50.
- Schwartz, K. D., Bukowski, W. M., & Aoki, W. T. (2006). Mentors, friends, and gurus: Peer and nonparent influences on spiritual development. *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, 310-323.
- Seifert, T. (2007). Understanding Christian privilege: Managing the tensions of spiritual plurality. *About Campus*, *12*(2), 10-17.
- Seybold, K. S., & Hill, P. C. (2001). The role of religion and spirituality in mental and physical health. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *10*(1), 21-24.
- Small, J. L. (2014). Understanding change: Spirituality, faith, religion, and life purpose in student affairs. *About Campus*, *19*(2), 11-16.
- Small, J. L. (2007). “Do you believe in the whole idea of ‘God the Father?’” How college students talk about spiritual transformation. *Religion and Education*, *34*(1), 1-27.
- Smith, C. (2007). Why Christianity works: An emotions-focused phenomenological account. *Sociology of Religion*, *68*(2), 165-178.

Smith, C. (2004). Incorporating faith, spirituality, and religion into college counseling and student affairs graduate programs. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 23(2), 208-212.

Speck, B. W. (2005). *Spirituality in higher education*. Jossey-Bass.

Weinberg, F. J., & Locander, W. B. (2014). Advancing workplace spiritual development: A dyadic mentoring approach. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25(2), 391-408.

Yeager, D. S., Walton, G. M., Brady, S. T., Akcinar, E. N., Paunesku, D., Keane, L., ... & Gomez, E. M. (2016). Teaching a lay theory before college narrows achievement gaps at scale. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(24), E3341-E3348.

APPENDIX A

Signed Consent Form

Student Interactions and Their Perceptions of Faith Influence at a Rural Midwestern Institution

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Zachary Sandoval and Dr. Richard Roberts from the department of College Student Affairs at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have been selected to be apart of this study because you are a student of at least junior standing how has been involved in an on campus religious organization for at least one year.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to examine the perceived influences of spiritual development that student interactions have while attending college.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Answer several open-ended questions about your spiritual development over the course of your undergraduate career, and how you perceive different interactions with peers, faculty, and involvement in an on campus ministry influenced your faith.
2. Agree to being audio recorded to ensure accurate data is collected. Your name will be changed in the thesis to protect your identity.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any identifying information about you obtained in this research will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission as required by law. Your name will be changed to ensure confidentiality. Additionally, audio recordings and transcripts of the data will be done on a password protected laptop.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring this research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Additionally, if you find any questions discomforting, you may refuse to answer.

POTENTIAL RISK AND DISCOMFORTS

As a participant, you will agree to potential discomfort in talking about your faith during your undergraduate career. The researcher will provide a safe space for you to talk about your lived experiences, and you can request a topic change or refuse to answer conversation at any time.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There is no direct benefit for participants for participating in this study. However, participants will be able to share their lived experiences about their spirituality and contribute to the literature in how students develop spiritually at college. This information will be especially helpful as it will be performed at a medium sized, rural, public institution.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX B

Structured Research Questions

1. What has your experience with faith been prior to college?
2. Can you tell me about your spiritual journey while you attended the institution?
3. When would you say did you experienced the most growth in your faith?
 - a. What do you think the reasons for that is?
 - b. Where there any specific activities or programs that you think caused this?
4. Have you had conversations about your faith with other students?
 - a. Where did these conversations take place?
 - b. How often did these conversations happen?
 - c. Do you think this impacted your spiritual development? If so, how did it?
5. Have you had conversations about your faith with faculty or professors?
 - a. Where and when did these conversations take place?
 - b. How often did these conversations happen?
 - c. Was your faith ever brought up in classes, and if so, what was discussed?
 - d. How did these conversations and interactions influence your spiritual development if at all?
6. Do you have a mentor on campus?
 - a. Have you and your mentor discussed your faith?
 - b. How did this influence your spiritual development if at all?
 - c. Have you had any interactions or conversations around faith with student affairs professionals (advisors, housing professionals, etc.)?
7. Tell me about your involvement with the on-campus ministry/organization.

- a. How did you first get involved with the organization?
 - b. What kind of activities were/are you involved in?
 - c. Do you have any leadership experience with the organization?
 - i. How has leadership impacted your spiritual development?
 - d. How has your involvement in the on-campus ministry/organization influenced your spiritual development?
8. Where do you feel like you have been experienced the most setbacks for your spiritual development?
- a. What groups of people have set you back in your development?
9. Where do you feel like you have been most supported on campus for your spiritual development?
- a. What groups of people has supported you the most?
 - b. What kinds of activities support your spiritual development the most?
 - c. Can you think of any other supporters for your spiritual development?

APPENDIX C

Demographic Questions

What is your age?

What is your gender?

How many years have you been enrolled in school?

What is your ethnicity?

What is your major?

With what faith community (denomination) do you identify as?

How long have you been practicing your faith?

Which on-campus ministry do you participate in? How long?

What organizations are you involved with? How long?