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Pioneers in Education and Faith: Spiritual Development of First Generation College Students

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Pioneers in Education and Faith:

Spiritual Development of First Generation College Students

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Abstract

Spirituality may be a factor in the success of first generation college students. Leading spiritual development theories were built on the dominant population of continuing generation college students. This qualitative research explored the spirituality and spiritual development of twelve undergraduate first generation college students at two Christian, liberal arts institutions in the Midwest United States during one year of their college education. Throughout the year, participants answered questions and created spiritual ecomaps to illustrate the changing relationships and influences on their spirituality. This research also explored the participants' definitions of spirituality; their faith development according to Fowler's (1981) theory; their experiences of academic, social, and emotional success; and their feelings of spiritual similarity and spiritual belonging at home and at college. This research found that first generation college students are pioneers in their education and faith journeys. In both journeys, they are travelling into unknown territory without a guide from home. They are discovering something new, and becoming someone new, which people from home will never completely understand. They need guides to affirm them in their places of questioning, to assist them in discerning truth, to help them form relationships with their peers, to lead them in self-awareness and understanding, and to encourage them in their relationship with God. Attending to spirituality helps first generation college students succeed academically, socially, and emotionally at college. This holistic success prepares students to be holistically successful in their life and work after college.

This research is dedicated to my parents, Richard and Rosalie Krusemark, who were both first generation college students and pioneers in their education and faith journeys.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

17

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

First generation college students have become an increasingly popular focus in higher education in recent decades (Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007). With parents who did not attend college, first generation college students are often in a low socioeconomic bracket (Choy, 2001, p. 24). College education could break the socioeconomic cycle for first generation college students' families, because the students' educational mobility could become social mobility for their family's future (McGee, 2015; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004, p. 276). However, the chances that first generation college students will graduate from college with a bachelor's degree are very low—13% (Choy, 2001, p. 30). What can be done to help?

Researchers and practitioners have been interested in helping first generation college students succeed in higher education (Saenz et al., 2007). Most of the early research focused on three main areas: preparation for college, performance in college, and persistence to graduation (Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Terenzini, 2003; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). Recent research added a focus on the cultural deficiencies that first generation college students experience in a college culture dominated by people whose parents attended college (Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012; Stephens et al., 2012; Tierney, 2013). These deficiencies were hypothesized to be main reasons that first generation college students did not ultimately succeed in higher education.

In contrast, Aspelmeier, Love, McGill, Elliott, and Pierce (2012) suggested that this hypothesis could be amiss. Instead, these researchers suggested that the factors for college success may have been "more personal and psychological . . . such as self-esteem,

18

attributional style, academic self-efficacy, and . . . self-regulation skills" (Aspelmeier et al., 2012, pp. 777-778). Aspelmeier et al.'s research questioned the previously trending hypothesis about the factors that influenced first generation college students' success in higher education.

Spirituality is another factor that has not been studied with respect to first generation college students. Higher education has taken a renewed interest in spirituality and the spiritual development of college students. Astin (2003) said that the problems of the world are about values, beliefs, perspectives, and feelings (p. 14). Students who develop spiritually may be able to interact with these problems, because they have grown in the realms of values, beliefs, perspectives, and feelings. For example, students who attend to their spirituality often become involved with improving their communities and helping individuals within their communities (Kuh & Gonyea, 2005).

Even so, higher education institutions have not always been interested in spirituality. In the second half of the twentieth century, the majority of scientists in the academic community said their field was incompatible with spirituality. During the 1960s and 1970s, when college students were interested in understanding the meaning of life (Astin, 1998, p. 124), their questions were often met with secular answers (Smith, 2009, p. 249).

Research shows that higher education affects students' religious beliefs. Sociologist J. P. Hill (2011) analyzed data from the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) in 2002-2003 and 2007-2008 and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). He found that if students graduated from college or attended an elite institution, they grew more skeptical of spiritual entities (p. 548). Hill suggested that higher education

19

secularized religious college students by exposing them to scientific methods and secular theories.

Most college students have at least one parent or guardian who attended higher education. These parents of today's college students would most likely have experienced a lack of openness to spirituality when they attended college. These parents may have had their religious beliefs affected in some way by the academy: for example, they could have become more secular in their thinking about the world and spirituality, or they may have become more understanding and tolerant of religious pluralism, or they may have developed a stronger defense of his or her faith. Most college students are raised by at least one parent who had his or her spirituality influenced in some way by higher education.

First generation college students, however, do not have a parent or guardian who has attended higher education. What is the nature of the spirituality these students bring with them to college? How might these students' college experiences affect their spiritual development? While researchers and practitioners have a renewed interest in spirituality, the spiritual development of first generation college students has yet to be researched.

The recent focus on first generation college students in higher education and the renewed focus on spirituality in higher education come together in this qualitative research study on the spiritual development of first generation college students in higher education.

Background of the Study

The renewed attention on spirituality and the attention on first generation college students are relatively recent. The histories of both spirituality and first generation college students in higher education have endured several vicissitudes.

Since the beginning of this country's history, one of the tensions in the United States has been the separation of church and state. This tension is reflected in higher education by the separation of religion and spirituality. In order to separate religion and spirituality, the academy has attempted to define each. However, spirituality is not easy to define. In fact, its definition changes as the culture and the field evolve. Most have considered religion to be subsumed by spirituality (Constantine, Miville, Warren, Gainor, & Lewis-Coles, 2006; King, 2003; Mayhew, 2004). Others have understood spirituality to be the core of religion (Pargament, Mahoney, Exline, Jones, & Shafranske, 2013).

Higher education reflects the tension of church and state separation by pursuing matters of spirituality without including religion in the conversation or in its definition. Therefore, one of the trends in the discourse of spirituality in higher education is to remove the content of one's spirituality (Estanek, 2006). Without content, the definition of spirituality becomes making meaning, transcending oneself, being authentic, and being open to others.

There may be a connection between the rise in spirituality and the emphasis on individualism in post-modern America. Spirituality has been interpreted as a personal or individual phenomenon (Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999, p. 903). Berger (1967) made a connection between this private understanding of spirituality and the individualism of modern America (pp. 133-134). First generation college students, however, may come from community-based cultures (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012). How might their spiritualities differ from the spiritualities of their continuing generation college student peers?

In addition, spiritual development theories used by higher education practitioners have largely been developed for and about adults within the dominant American culture and demographic (Fowler, 1981; Parks, 2011). Research about the influences on emerging adult spirituality—which focuses on the higher education classroom, parents, peers, the church community, media, and culture—have also largely been based within the dominant American culture and demographic (Abo-Zena & Ahmed, 2014; Barry & Abo-Zeba, 2014; Barry, Nelson, Davarya, & Urry, 2010; Clydesdale, 2007).

First generation college students are not the dominant population in today's colleges and universities (Saenz et al., 2007), but they are getting attention. In the late twentieth century, the federal government turned its attention to first generation college students. The federal government sought to increase the enrollment of low-income, first generation college students in higher education and established the Higher Education Act of 1965 (U. S. Department of Education, 2014). Although numbers of first generation college students have increased since then, the proportion of these students in four-year undergraduate institutions has decreased steadily since 1971 (Saenz et al., 2007).

Studies that focused on first generation college students were about their preparation for college, performance in college, cultural deficiencies, and persistence to graduation (Padgett et al., 2012; Saenz et al., 2007; Stephens et al., 2012; Tierney, 2013; Yeh, 2010). Those few studies that mentioned or examined the spirituality of first generation college students were brief or descriptive (Gonyea & Kuh, 2006; Kuh & Gonyea, 2006; Lovik, 2010).

It is not clear whether the current spiritual development theories and known influences on emerging adult spirituality apply to first generation college students in the

same way that they apply to continuing generation college students. If the spiritual

development of first generation college students is unique or different from the spiritual

development of continuing generation college students, the uniqueness and differences are

unknown.

Statement of the Problem

A twenty-first century interest in spirituality has been met with twentieth-century

research about college student spiritual development. These prevalent, twentieth-century

models and theories about college student spiritual development were based on the

historically dominant college student culture (Fowler, 1981; Parks, 2011). Because they

omitted references to historically non-dominant populations, the most established faith or

spiritual development models for college students were formed around the historically

dominant college student demographic. Therefore, these models outlined the expectations for

spiritual development for middle-to-upper-class, White college students whose parents

attended college.

When considering spiritual development, higher education institutions have needed to

be aware of the spirituality and needs of multiple student groups, not just the dominant

group. Recent studies examined the relationship between spirituality and education for

racially non-dominant student populations, such as African-American, Latina, and Asian

students (Chau, 2006; Corona-Ordoñez, 2014; Donahoo & Caffey, 2010).

However, little research on spirituality focused on the group of students who were

identified by their status as first generation college students. Research that focused on the

retention of first generation college students mentioned the positive role that spirituality

played in student resilience and support (Corona-Ordoñez, 2014). However, an understanding of the development of this spirituality during college had not been explored.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this research was to explore and describe how first generation college students developed spiritually during their college experience. The secondary purpose of this research was to explore how first generation college students developed in relationship to Fowler's (1981) faith development theory.

Research Questions

The five research questions are listed below, each followed by the rationale for the research question.

- How did first generation college students' spiritual influences and spiritual relationships develop or change during their college experience? This question explored which college experiences influenced first generation college students' spirituality; which relationships, events, classes, and concepts affected them. It also explored which relationships and experiences from home continued to affect first generation college students' spirituality.

- What language did first generation college students use to describe their own spiritual development? Instead of the researcher imposing a definition, the students defined spirituality and worked with this definition throughout the study. Each student's definition could have been different. The relationships and influences that affected students' spiritual development did not depend on a specific definition of spirituality.

- How did first generation college students show faith development during their college experience? This question considered the relationship between faith development (which is largely cognitive) and spiritual development.

- In what ways did first generation college students' spirituality affect their perceived success at college? Success was defined in academic, social, and emotional ways. This question explored what success meant to the student and whether spirituality helped, hindered, or had no effect on this success.

- How did first generation college students describe their spirituality in comparison to others, if at all? This question addressed where the student felt they belonged spiritually. It considered whether students felt they fit at home or at college, or elsewhere. It explored whether spirituality was one of the elements of culture in which first generation college students did not fit with the dominant continuing generation college student culture.

Significance of the Study

Religion and spirituality are powerful entities in American lives. Pargament et al. (2013) captured the presence of these entities when they explained:

Religion and spirituality are embedded in the greatest hopes and dreams of many people, their deepest disappointments and frustrations, the ways they understand and deal with themselves and the larger world, and their everyday experiences across the life span, from birth to death. (p. 3)

Although these entities are powerful and an emotional part of life, religion and spirituality have often been neglected in higher education.

Some twenty-first century researchers suggested that holistic, student-centered education needs to engage all elements of students' lives in the learning and development process (Kazanjian, 2013; Tisdell, 2007). Some educators and administrators believed that higher education institutions were intended to take part in the human development of students (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011b, p. 16; Shushok, 2011, p. 2). One such higher education administrator said, "Spirituality and spiritual practice on our campuses are increasingly seen as educational issues, important to the lives and learning of our students" (Kazanjian, 2013, p. 97).

In his essay about spirituality on campus, Kazanjian (2013) wrote, "Spiritual identity is a critical part of a college student's overall identity formation" (p. 100). According to Kazanjian, students who identify as spiritual will connect with spiritual beliefs and practices to understand themselves. Those students need to be able to discuss these priorities in their lives. In some cases, students' religion and spirituality will influence their career goals and academic plans. Ignoring spirituality could negatively affect students' psychological development or resilience in their academic pursuit (Constantine et al., 2006, p. 239). As Pargament (2013) stated, a focus on spirituality "lends itself to a more collaborative, respectful, and productive relationship with diverse individuals and communities because it takes seriously their own visions of the world" (p. 269).

In addition, the more that colleges and universities understand the spiritual development of first generation college students, the more they can provide holistic services in and out of the classroom to help address the needs of this population. Helping students on their spiritual development journey can be one way to support academic success, because spirituality-enhancing practices and security in matters of faith are connected with students'

sense of overall student wellbeing (Bryant & Astin, 2008; Pargament, 2013), which positively affects academics (Sax, Bryant, & Gilmartin, 2004). Practitioners who understand the spiritual development of first generation college students may be able to guide these students toward greater health and well-being. If college is a stressor for first generation college students, an encouragement toward spirituality may benefit students' success and persistence in college.

This research is relevant to both academic and student affairs programming and planning in the university setting. Academics and student affairs offices need to be partners in education. The positive effect of teaching and learning improvements on student development will be limited by the institution's ability to address students' spirituality (Kazanjian, 2013; Kuh & Gonyea, 2006; Tisdell, 2007). Student affairs offices that provide comprehensive services to first generation college students or include spirituality and faith development in their programming need to understand the spiritual needs of this population.

The exploration of first generation college students' faith development could provide educators and administrators with the means to assist these students as they navigate the development of their faith and spirituality within higher education. Perhaps more importantly, however, the research findings could help inform the ways spirituality may be addressed within higher education to improve the development of all students.

Definition of Terms

Spirituality and religion. Spirituality has been a difficult construct to define. Many definitions of religion and spirituality acknowledged a relationship between the two constructs. Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butter, Belavich, Hipp, Scott, and Kadar (1997) recognized that individuals used thirteen categories for the constructs of religion and

spirituality, with no clear or majority definition for either construct. In her review of the literature, Estanek (2006) found five main categories for the construct of spirituality. Pargament et al. (2013) agreed that no one definition of religion or spirituality exists; this multiplicity mirrored the diversity of these constructs in the world today. A table of definitions is listed in Appendix A.

According to Pargament et al. (2013), religion was broader in function and context than spirituality, and spirituality could be observed in traditional or nontraditional contexts (p. 16). Pargament (1999) defined religion as a "search for significance in ways related to the sacred" (p. 11), and spirituality as the "search for the sacred" (p. 12). Unlike Pargament (1999), however, many of the definitions of spirituality were disconnected from the sacred. Instead, they focused on attributes of humanity, kinds of relationships, and making sense of the world (Constantine et al.,2006, p. 228; Kazanjian, 2013). Kazanjian (2013) challenged the "traditional understandings of spirituality having to do exclusively with religion or something theistic" (p. 100) because he believed these understandings did not represent where students were at today. He said these definitions were too narrow for today's world.

Zinnbauer, Pargament, and Scott (1999) critiqued this natural view of spirituality. They said, "As much as significant objects such as intimacy with others, authenticity, meaning in life, holism, and self-improvement may be valued in our culture, they do not fall within the spiritual realm unless they are somehow connected with the sacred" (p. 910). The sacred could also refer to "objects that take on spiritual character and meaning by virtue of their association with the divine" (Pargament, 2013, p. 259).

Without connecting spirituality to the sacred, the construct became too broad (Pargament, 1999, pp. 9-10; Zinnbauer et al., 1999, p. 904). It became functional, and the

pursuit of any kind of goal (Pargament, 1999, p. 10). Spirituality retained its uniqueness as a field when it was defined as the search for the sacred (Pargament, 1999, p. 11). As a search for the sacred, spirituality was a process of discovery, conservation, and transformation (Pargament, 2013, p. 259).

In this research, the subjects were asked to define spirituality. This approach was meant to explore how subjects understood spirituality, whether or not it was reflective of current academic discourse, religious teaching, or public conversation.

Faith. This research explored connections with faith development as described in Fowler's (1981) faith development theory. Therefore, Fowler's definition of faith was relevant. Although the theory was first developed in 1981, Fowler continued refining and explaining his theory for decades.

For Fowler (1981), the construct of faith was "trust in another and . . . loyalty to a transcendent center of value and power" (p. 14). Faith was imagination, because it involved a knowledge that was beyond the conscious (p. 25). Faith was also both active and relational, because it involved trusting and committing to someone or something other than oneself (p. 16).

In 1996, Fowler provided the following definition of faith:

Faith . . . may be characterized as an integral, centering process, underlying the formation of beliefs, values, and meanings, that (1) gives coherence and direction to persons' lives, (2) links them in shared trusts and loyalties with others, (3) grounds their personal stances and communal loyalties in a sense of relatedness to a larger frame of reference, and (4) enables them to face and deal with the limit conditions of human life, relying upon that which has the quality of ultimacy in their lives. (p. 56)

Emerging adults. Within the last half century, researchers have begun to identify a new and distinct phase of the lifespan for people in industrialized societies (Arnett, 1998; Arnett & Jensen, 2002). This was a phase of development between adolescence and young adulthood (Arnett, 1998, p. 312). People in this phase were no longer in secondary school, and they may or may not have been in college. They had likely not made commitments to an occupation, to relationships, or to beliefs. Instead, they were in a phase of exploration before transitioning to adulthood (Arnett & Jensen, 2002, p. 452). Arnett (1998) was the first to call this phase of life "emerging adulthood" (p. 312).

First generation college students. As stated by Saenz et al. (2007), "Demographers often use the descriptor 'first-generation' to designate someone who is first in their immediate family to enter a new country or embrace a new social status" (p. 6). First generation college students were most often defined as students who came from families with parents (or guardians) who did not have any college education (Choy, 2001; Ishitani, 2006; Kojaku & Nuñez, 1998; Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Padgett et al., 2012). These students and their siblings were the first in their immediate family to enter college. This was the definition used in this research.

Assumptions and Limitations

One of the limitations of this research was that it was not a comparison study with first generation students who did not attend college. Hill (2011) believed that the spiritual development of college students needed to be compared to the spiritual development of emerging adults who were not attending college in order to determine whether the college environment had a significant effect on the students' spiritual development (p. 535).

This research was also not nationally represented. The subjects of the research were located in an upper Midwest metropolitan area. Therefore, the findings could not be applied to first generation college students across the nation. The purpose of this research, however, was not to normalize the findings to all first generation college students. It was designed to explore and describe the experience of a small group of first generation college students. This research discovered themes which might be further researched across a larger sample size of first generation college students (Patten, 2014, p. 21).

This research was also only a longitudinal study for one academic year. It explored one year of spiritual development in the lives of several first generation college students. It did not explore the spiritual development of several first generation college students throughout their entire college experience.

One of the challenges in studying spirituality has been that researchers who use the term "spirituality" may be describing and studying different constructs. Therefore, their findings and recommendations may or may not be related to one another. This researcher understood that the definition of spirituality used in this research might limit the applicability of the research findings within the field; however, all studies on spirituality face the same limitation.

This research was not intended to be a comprehensive study of spirituality from all religious or non-religious perspectives; instead, the focus was on the spiritual development of Christian students. The Christian faith was chosen because of its familiarity to the researcher; Zinnbauer et al. (1997) recommended that researchers understand worldview and belief systems of subjects in their study. The limitation of one religious background was

meant to keep the focus off of religious content and on to the first generation college student experience, so that themes could be most simply identified.

As has been expanded in Chapter 5, the limitations of this research provided opportunities for further research. For example, the themes of this research could be compared against the experience of first generation college students from other religious or non-religious backgrounds and beliefs. In the event of further studies, researchers would be wise to understand multiple belief systems and worldviews in order to present religiousness and spirituality within a broad variety of perspectives (Zinnbauer et al., 1997, p. 562).

Nature of the Study

This research used a qualitative, phenomenological approach to describe the experience of spiritual development for first generation college students. The study involved student self-report of influences and relationships in spirituality. It also included written and verbal discussion of students' deeper thoughts and values.

The model of spiritual development in this research was not structural. Instead, it was based on students and their experiences. The students described the relationships and influences that affected their spirituality, and they showed how their spirituality developed during a year of college.

Because higher education focuses on cognitive development, this research also included an inquiry about Fowler's (1981) faith development theory in the midst of a larger exploratory study on the relationships and influences that affected first generation college students' spiritual development at college.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Because this was a qualitative, explorative study, the review of the literature provided a background of the prevalent theories and themes that may have been represented in the phenomenon. A discussion of spirituality in higher education and the lives of emerging adults preceded a discussion of first generation college students.

History of Spirituality in Higher Education

The religious climate of American society has been reflected in higher education; as society has changed, so has higher education. Spirituality was integrated within higher education in colonial America. According to Kuh and Gonyea (2006), early American colleges were founded by Christian denominations in order to perpetuate the beliefs, traditions, and values of these denominations. Young men attended colleges and universities in order to become civic leaders or ministers, and examples of Christian character (Lucas, 2006, pp. 104-105; Speck, 2007, p. 14; Stamm, 2006b, p. 74). The higher education institution took on the role of *in loco parentis* to continue the nurture of students' personal and spiritual development (Murphy, 2005).

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Christian faith was dominant in American society. In higher education, the study of knowledge was related to the study of God. Professors had theological backgrounds, and most college presidents were ministers. All universities considered themselves to be Christian institutions (Stamm, 2006b, p. 75).

Then, the Enlightenment philosophies of Europe began to influence the United States. Philosopher John Locke (1700) was an example of Enlightenment thinking. He argued that truth could be determined from sense, experience, and reason. In his view, faith came from tradition or God, and should be proven by reason wherever possible. As Americans began to

adopt the European Enlightenment culture, the focus of colleges and universities in America shifted away from spiritual development. In the late nineteenth century, they began to adopt the secular German research university model (Smith, 2003, pp. 100-102). After the Civil War, higher education institutions underwent dramatic changes (Lucas, 2006, pp. 145-146). Industrialization and urbanization influenced society, and education began to be viewed as a means for professional training and financial success (Lucas, 2006, pp. 148, 151).

After World War I, the academy continued to shift its purpose from developing students' intellect and character to becoming scientific research institutions that offered specialized studies (Stamm, 2006b, p. 77). Spiritual knowledge or pursuits were not scientific, so nineteenth and twentieth century American universities slowly excluded them (Stamm, 2006b, p. 78). Professors were identified as researchers and specialists in fields of study; they no longer were expected to have theological backgrounds. The founding of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) exemplified the new specialized professional status of college professors (Stamm, 2006b, pp. 78-79). The popular bureaucracy of business influenced the organizational structure of administrative staff and faculty (Lucas, 2006, p. 199).

Throughout the twentieth century, higher education continued to maintain its emphasis on science, technology, and specialization. It also began to emphasize the preparation of students for employment, professional careers, and economic success (Murphy, 2005). By the 1960s, churches and higher education institutions had unofficially divided their responsibilities. Colleges and universities took responsibility for teaching by science and technology, and churches took responsibility for teaching by faith and experience (Stamm, 2006b, p. 80).

Psychologists and social scientists of the twentieth century sought to explain religion and spirituality as the means people use to resolve urges and needs. For example, Freud explained that religion was a soothe for anxiety and a protection from the human tendency toward destruction (Pargament, 2013, p. 257). Speck (2007) explained that positivist epistemology, the belief that knowledge was the result of rational thought and scientific inquiry, made human ideals capable of transcendence (p. 6). Speck wrote:

> The goal [of pragmatics] was to make the world the place it ought to be by teaching students to understand their own spirituality (i.e., potential as community builders) so that they could become good citizens in helping to build the ideal community (p. 9).

> Albrecht and Heaton (1984) summarized the relationship between religiosity and

higher education in the 1980s as follows: "Educational achievement impacts negatively on religious commitment and […] increased levels of education often lead to apostasy as individuals encounter views that deemphasize spiritual growth and elevate scientific and intellectual achievement" (p. 46).

But then, this education—that was based on rationalism, science, and economic success—needed a balance. In recent years, a number of higher education administrators and practitioners have argued for the resurgence of spirituality in higher education. A renewed interest in spirituality may have been a response to "the final disillusionment with the Enlightenment ideal of progress generated by the wars of the 20th century" (Schneiders, 1989, p. 696). According to Schneiders (1989), this interest represented people's "desire . . . for wholeness in the midst of fragmentation, for community in the face of isolation and loneliness, for liberating transcendence, for meaning in life, for values that endure" (p. 696).

In 2006, higher education administrator Arthur W. Chickering summarized this need for balance when he said, "We need to temper our current heavy emphasis on rational empiricism and professional and vocational preparation with increased efforts to help students address issues of authenticity and spiritual growth" (p. 23). According to Chickering (2006), there were four contexts that needed spirituality. The world and nation needed spirituality to address large-scale problems; institutions needed spirituality to produce students who could be civic leaders; students needed spirituality because they were asking for it; and academic professionals needed spirituality so they could reclaim their own souls, and lead and teach with spirit (pp. 24-36). Similarly, Pargament (2013) argued that people were born with an intrinsic desire for the sacred, so that spirituality was a motive and process of its own (pp. 261, 266).

The increase of non-Western and non-dominant populations in higher education also encouraged an epistemology that included spirituality (Estanek, 2006). From an African-American perspective, Dillard, Abdur-Rashid, and Tyson (2000) wrote:

Many scholars and activists involved in the reformation of the academy have worldviews deeply embedded in the spiritual. The heretofore silencing of the spiritual voice through privileging the academic voice is increasingly being drowned out by the emphatic chorus of those whose underlying versions of truth cry out "We are a spiritual people!" (p. 448)

Speck (2007) synthesized literature on spirituality in higher education to determine three main reasons why spirituality had become a popular topic (p. 3). First, conversations about spirituality were both a reaction to positivist epistemology and an interest in

postmodern philosophy. Postmodern philosophy sought to deconstruct any grand narratives about life and also questioned the benevolence of social institutions and their leaders.

Second, American society was interested in spirituality. Speck (2007) wrote, "The positivist epistemology jettisoned something that most people believe to have substance" (p. 13). Attention on spirituality within higher education reflected American society and encouraged intellectual discourse about a history of religious beliefs and personal experience.

Third, professional programs needed to address spirituality in order to prepare students for future practice. Spirituality was part of business, health care, social work, and psychology in American culture. The very goals of these professions were to effect social change through community transformation—which was a spiritual effort, according to pragmatists (Speck, 2007, pp. 16-17). Therefore, those who educated future practitioners needed to discuss spirituality in order to prepare these students for their work.

An interest in spirituality, in combination with the secularization of higher education institutions, led higher education institutions today to emphasize religious pluralism. One of the current conversations in higher education literature was about pluralism and the representation of a diversity of religious and spiritual perspectives on campus (Bryant, Wickliffe, Mayhew, & Behringer, 2009). The pluralistic emphasis on college campuses was not surprising, given the secularization of American society. Foreseeing the future, Berger (1967) wrote, "The 'polarization' of religion brought about by secularization, and the concomitant loss of commonality and/or 'reality,' can also be described by saying that secularization *ipso facto* leads to a pluralistic situation" (p. 135).

Interestingly, however, although religion and spirituality were topics of interest in higher education, these topics were not frequently discussed on many campuses. Based on

their qualitative interviews, researchers Bryant et al. (2009) discussed several reasons that faculty and students did not discuss religious and spiritual topics. One reason the topics were not discussed was because students and faculty perceived tension, awkwardness, or the uncertainty of how others might respond. Faculty members felt they would be successful if the classroom was neutral (p. 5). Students had other topics and responsibilities that occupied their attention, like social activities (p. 7). In addition, conversations about spiritual or religious beliefs could bring up political topics and conflicts (p. 8).

Within this context of spirituality in higher education, theorists sought to explain how people developed spiritually. Two key theorists were James Fowler and Sharon Daloz Parks.

Fowler

In the late 1970s, James Fowler began to study the faith journeys of people. He also taught applied theology to graduate school students. Fowler was influenced by structural developmentalists Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg. Through his research and teaching, Fowler developed a theory of faith development. He proposed this theory in his foundational work, *Stages of Faith*, in 1981.

Fowler's (1981) faith development theory was a structural, sequential, hierarchical theory that described an individual's faith journey over the lifespan. Faith development was not contingent on the content of faith; rather, it described the structure of faith. According to this theory, individuals progressed through up to six faith stages sequentially, and individuals achieved each level in successive order.

There were six stages in Fowler's (1981) theory of faith development. In Fowler's theory, each stage of faith could be identified by seven aspects, or categories. Each of the seven aspects had a unique manifestation at each of the six stages of faith development. The

six stages and seven aspects are outlined in Table 1. The six stages were Intuitive-Projective

Faith, Mythic-Literal Faith, Synthetic-Conventional Faith, Individuative-Reflective Faith,

Conjunctive Faith, and Universalizing Faith (1981, p.113). The seven aspects were Form of

Logic, Perspective Taking, Form of Moral Judgment, Bounds of Social Awareness, Locus of

Authority, Form of World Coherence, and Symbolic Function (1981, pp. 244-245).

Table 1

Stages and Aspects of Fowler's (1981) Faith Development Theory

Estimated Phase of Life	Form of Logic Aspect	Perspective Taking Aspect	Form of Moral Judgment Aspect	Bounds of Social Awareness Aspect	Locus of Authority Aspect	Form of World Coherence Aspect	Symbolic Function Aspect
Young child			Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith				
Older child			Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith				
Adolescent			Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith				
Young adult			Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith				
Middle adult			Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith				
?			Stage 6: Universalizing Faith				

Stages of faith development. The Intuitive-Projective Faith was the faith stage of

the young child. In this stage, a person was at the center of their own world, which they were

exploring. They understood life by their perception, imagination, and feelings. The young

child began to understand God through stories and images.

The Mythic-Literal Faith was the faith stage of the older child. In this stage, story,

drama, and myth helped explain the world and experiences. There were heroes and villains

of faith stories. The older child believed that good people and good deeds were rewarded, and bad people and bad deeds were punished.

The Synthetic-Conventional Faith was typically the faith stage of the adolescent. The adolescent's faith was similar to those of others in his or her family or community, and the tenets of faith had clear boundaries. Faith symbols had clear meanings. Faith either made sense or was not questioned. This Synthetic-Conventional Faith was a comfortable faith.

The Individuative-Reflective Faith was the faith stage that many people attained, no earlier than late adolescence. The person in this faith stage had questioned the clear boundaries and explanations of the Synthetic-Conventional Faith, often because the person had experienced people or situations that did not fit within its structured system. The person in this faith stage looked for meanings behind faith symbols, incorporated the perspectives of others in his or her understanding of faith, and created his or her own identity. Because the person was seeking to understand and make his or her own decisions about faith, this Individuative-Reflective Faith was an owned faith.

The Conjunctive Faith was the faith stage that some adults attained, perhaps in middle-adulthood. The person in this faith stage saw commonality among faith traditions and among individuals. Boundaries were fluid, and beliefs could be in tension with one another. Faith symbols were significant, even if their significance could not be easily described in words. Because the person was seeking for unity and understanding among others, Conjunctive faith was a shared faith.

Finally, the Universalizing Faith was a rare faith stage. Fowler (1981) did not research anyone in this faith stage, and he imagined that inspirational people like Martin Luther King, Jr., or Mahatma Gandhi may have had Universalizing Faith. This faith sought

for an inclusive and beneficial world community. This faith was manifested as a "redemptive subversiveness" (p. 203) and a "relevant irrelevance" (p. 203) to the rest of the world.

Aspects of faith stages. The seven aspects were separate constructs that took different forms at each of the six stages of faith. Since the subjects of this research were most likely to be in the Synthetic-Conventional (Stage 3) or Individuative-Reflective Faith (Stage 4) stages, these two stages are described in the explanation of each of the seven aspects. These descriptions relied on the *Manual for Faith Development Research* (Fowler, Streib, & Keller, 2004).

Form of Logic was the way a person organized his or her thought and reasoning. This aspect was most closely connected to Piaget's structural theory of cognitive development. As a person proceeded through the stages of logic, they acquired the ability to understand and use (in this order) cause-and-effect, serial order, conservation, linear, inductive, deductive, paradoxical, dialectical, and synthetic thinking processes. In Stage 3, a person was able to construct theories and generalizations, but was not yet able to critique them. The Stage 3 person was also able to hypothesize and imagine possibilities, such as seeing himself or herself as a president or neurosurgeon. The Stage 4 person had begun to operate in Piaget's (1970) formal operations stage of logic. He or she tested theories, used straightforward reasoning, and sought to establish clear boundaries and definitions of systems and beliefs.

Perspective Taking was the view a person had of himself or herself, others, and interpersonal relationships. This aspect was closely related to Selman's (1980) social perspective taking theory. As a person progressed through the stages of perspective taking,

he or she was more able to consider how another person was thinking and feeling. He or she was also able to better understand his or her own thoughts and feelings. The thoughts and feelings of others were more important to a Stage 3 person than his or her own. The Stage 4 person was able to differentiate him or herself from the perceived thoughts and feelings of others. The Stage 4 person explained others with theories and categories, such as by a personality type. The Stage 4 person exercised choice to be in relationship with others.

Form of Moral Judgment was the way a person decided whether something was right or wrong. Also included in this aspect was a person's reasoning about why it was or was not important to be moral. This aspect was most closely connected to Kohlberg's (1981) structural theory of moral development. In Stage 3, a person's morality was based on his or her interpersonal relationships and expectations. Morality supported the values that were important to interpersonal relationships within a person's social group, such as kindness, honesty, and loyalty. Something was right if it encouraged harmony and good will among others. In Stage 4, a person associated morality with that which kept the larger social system in order. Something was wrong if society would fall apart if everyone did that activity.

Bounds of Social Awareness was how the person viewed other people and his or her relationships with them. This aspect concerned the groups with which a person chose to associate him or herself, and how similar or dissimilar these groups were to the person. This aspect also examined the way a person viewed other groups of people. In Stage 3, a person associated himself or herself with his or her relational group, which was most often his or her family and peer group. Other groups were stereotyped without critical thought. In Stage 4, a person was concerned with coherent systems of thought; therefore, his or her group was

comprised of others who shared the system of thought. Those who did not share the system of thought were viewed critically according to this system.

Locus of Authority was where a person located the authority for his or her life. The authority could be internal or external. This aspect concerned the way in which someone chose his or her authority. In Stage 3, the consensus of the person's relational group held authority. An authority was selected if others in the relational group chose the same authority; the basis for this choice was often a positive interpersonal characteristic (such as honesty) or charisma. In Stage 4, a person chose an authority by how well the authority demonstrated the same beliefs and worldview as the person. An authority was selected if his or her perspectives and practices supported social order.

Form of World Coherence was the way in which a person made sense of the world. Objects, experience, and the cosmos were elements that a person fit together. This aspect considered the principles and thought processes a person used to understand the world. A person in Stage 3 adopted the way in which his or her relational group thought about the world, without necessarily realizing he or she was doing this adoption. If something did not seem to fit with the way the group believed and operated, the Stage 3 person would exclude it. A person in Stage 4 recognized his or her own system of thought about the world. He or she wanted to have a rational, comprehensive understanding of the world. If something did not seem to fit, the Stage 4 person would work out a rational way to make it fit. A Stage 4 person was aware of the differences among others' understandings of the world.

Finally, Symbolic Function was the description of how a person understood and used symbols and symbolic language in meaning-making and expressing value and power. In Stage 3, symbols were connected to emotions. The concepts and meanings behind the

symbols were not examined or expressed. The use of symbols was determined by the Stage 3 person's relational group. A Stage 4 person sought to explain the one true meaning or concept that a symbol represented. The symbol and its meaning fit into the Stage 4 person's system of thinking and understanding of the world.

There may have been a connection between levels of formal education and faith development stage. Using Fowler's (1981) theory, Hammond (1993) assessed the correlations between individuals' faith development stage and the demographic variables of age, church attendance, and level of formal education. The only significant positive correlation was between faith development stage and level of formal education. In his review, Hammond reasoned that one of the goals of higher education was to change individuals' beliefs and behaviors, including their attitudes toward others (p. 65). Others more recently agreed with this reasoning (Keeling & Hersh, 2011, pp. 5-6). These goals also illustrated elements of higher faith development stages. For example, in the aspect of Form of World Coherence in Stage 4, an individual put together his or her own worldview and was aware of the unique worldviews of others. By exposing college students to beliefs and behaviors unlike their own, it was conceivable that higher education encouraged an individual's growth in faith development (p. 65). The current research sought to observe this potential connection.

Critiques. Fowler's (1981) theory analyzed faith from a cognitive-structural perspective (Streib, 2001). The primacy of this perspective, according to critics like Streib (2001) and Parks (1986), neglected the interpersonal, social, affective, imaginative, spiritual, and biographical perspectives of faith. Others critiqued Fowler's (1981) methods as lacking

empirical data and needing an inductive approach to support his theory (Nelson & Aleshire, 1986, pp. 186-190; Parker, 2010, pp. 244-246).

Two other critics found fault with what was missing from the theory. Dykstra (1986) believed the analysis of a person's faith story by structures did not enable the researcher to find themes, events, or experiences that are central to the faith story, and therefore did not allow for a faith story to have wholeness and complexity (p. 61). Harris (1986) noticed that the theory was based on rationality and the perspective of men and thought the conversation needed to be completed by including art and the perspective of women.

In response to these critiques, rational thought was only part of this study. This study also included an analysis of themes and experiences, and non-dominant populations participated in the study.

Parks

Like Fowler (1981), Parks (2011) took the definition of faith beyond a traditional religious meaning. For Parks, faith was a dynamic human universal that was connected to meaning, trust, and truth (p. 24). Faith underwent transformation throughout the lifespan. It was also comprehensive and connected to human emotion and experience:

> When we speak of faith as the composing of meaning in these most comprehensive dimensions, we mean a sensibility of life that not only transcends (is beyond us) but also permeates and undergirds our very existence (is within, among, and beneath us). (p. 32)

Parks (2011) created her theory by interacting with emerging adults as a professor and a researcher between the late 1960s and 2000s (pp. 3-4). Her initial research was published in 1980, and she developed her theory over several decades. Her research was in

the areas of developmental psychology and education, religion and theology, and leadership and ethics. She was especially focused on the years of the lifespan from ages 18 to 32, and, most recently, she called this life stage "emerging adulthood" (p. 5). Her choice of this term echoed Arnett's (1998; 2004) studies on this stage of the lifespan.

Parks (2011) analyzed the transformation of faith on three levels: cognition, affect and relationships, and community. Cognitive development was a clear component of Fowler's (1981) theory. Parks (2011) explicitly added emotional and social development to her theory because of their essential roles in faith and human development (pp. 94-97, 115-118). Because Parks examined emerging adults, her theory covered the lifespan from adolescence to mature adulthood. Where Fowler (1981) had two stages that cover the lifespan from adolescence to adulthood, Stages 3 and 4, Parks (2011) established three stages. These three stages were Adolescence, Emerging Adulthood, and Tested Adulthood. Mature adulthood was the fourth and final stage in Parks's theory and usually came after midlife. Because they are related to this research, each of Parks's first three stages is described from the three levels of cognition, dependence, and community.

Adolescence.

Cognition. In the development of her theory, Parks (2011) keyed off the Locus of Authority aspect in Fowler's (1981) theory (Parks, 2011, p. 60). Epistemologically, the adolescent had an external locus of authority. This authority could have been in people, such as parents, teachers, church leaders, or political figures, or it could have been ascertained from the environment, such as from media, advertising, or social customs. The adolescent's belief system was dualistic: ideas, people, and things were right or wrong, true or false, or inside or outside of the group.

Dependence. Adolescents were dependent upon their authority figures to let them know—either explicitly or implicitly—how to feel. When adolescents began to question their authorities, the adolescents were still related to and dependent upon the authorities. However, this dependence could take the form of rejection.

Community. The adolescent's form of community was conventional. The adolescent uncritically accepted the norms and interests of his or her community.

In the transition to emerging adulthood, the adolescent discovered that his or her understanding of reality did not fit with his or her experience, and other people did not share the same norms and interests as his or her community. Truth seemed to be relative. The adolescent began to accept alternate realities as equal to one another, and he or she sometimes sought out uncritical relationships with diverse others. This period of transition was difficult to sustain, and emerging adults began to make choices (Parks, 2011, pp. 75-78, 119-120).

Emerging adulthood.

Cognition. Epistemologically, the emerging adult explored new ways of thinking. What appeared to be the emerging adult's hunger for the spiritual may have been an "awakening of the need to honor inner as well as outer demands while finding a right relationship to a wider and more complex world" (Parks, 2011, p. 103). The emerging adult's attempts to reconcile his or her inner self with the outer world could come across as ambivalence (Parks, 2011, p. 104).

Dependence. The emerging adult's locus of authority began to shift internally as he or she determined which ways of thinking made sense to him or herself. The emerging adult started to be inner-dependent, because he or she was "able to consciously include the self

within the arena of authority" (Parks, 2011, p. 101). This form of dependence was fragile and tentative.

Community. The emerging adult also chose his or her own authorities, often in the form of mentors (Parks, 2011, p. 105). These mentors and other chosen authorities became the emerging adult's new place of belonging. This community was not the conventional community of the past and welcomed questioning. The emerging adult chose this community because it fit with his or her developing understanding of purpose and truth (Parks, 2011, p. 123).

Tested adulthood.

Cognition, dependence, and community. The person who was more fully adult had decided on the one way of thinking that made the most sense. The tested adult was done exploring. Still understanding truth as relative, he or she was committed to the coherence he or she had put together to understand the world. The tested adult was confident in his or her inner authority. His or her inner-dependence was strong enough that he or she saw a mentor's position as equal to his or her own. Mentors became more like peers (Parks, 2011, p. 109). Although the tested adult could tolerate dichotomies and differences with others, the tested adult still chose a community that shared his or her own meanings about life (even if these meanings included the embrace of diversity) (Parks, 2011, pp. 128-129).

Critiques. Love (2002) criticized Parks's (2011) choice of epistemological categories in her theory. According to Love (2002, p. 363), Parks was the only cognitive development theorist that transitioned dualism into relativism. Dualism assumed that the truth about the world could be known, even if an individual recognized that multiple explanations of truth existed in the world. Relativism, however, did not assume that a truth

existed. Perry (1970) and other theorists kept dualism separate from relativism since the underlying beliefs were very different.

Love (2002) also contended that individuals had a choice about their own spiritual development. Instead of becoming inner-dependent in a higher education setting, for example, emerging adults could stagnate or regress toward an external authority or conventional social group (Love, 2002, pp. 366, 368). It was also possible that individuals might not have been triggered to progress in Parks's (2011) faith development model if they did not encounter others unlike themselves.

Critiques and Deficiencies

Neither Fowler (1981) nor Parks (2011) included the spiritual realm or its entities in their models of an individual's spirituality or spiritual development. Instead, Fowler (1981) and Parks (2011) analyzed the human elements in spirituality and spiritual development: thinking, feeling, belonging, and understanding. This emphasis on human factors may have stemmed out of their definitions of faith, which were focused on making sense of the world. Their definitions of faith could be summarized in the phrase "meaning-making." Edgell (2007) noted that Fowler's and Parks's theories became "pedagogies for critical thinking" (Edgell, 2007, p. 50) when converted to praxis.

Edgell (2007) desired a meta-theory of spiritual development that recognized the complexity of individual spiritual experience and represented the spiritual development from multiple Christian worldviews, such as African and African-American perspectives and approaches to spirituality (p. 51). Fowler (1981) and Parks (2011) and other theorists did not represent multiple demographics in their research; instead, their subjects had relatively uniform demographics (Stamm, 2006a, p. 62).

Fowler (1981) studied Americans from 3.5 to 85 years of age, with most subjects between 21 and 30 years of age (p. 315). Almost 98% of the subjects were White (Fowler, 1981, p. 316). Although Parks (2011) did not identify the demographics of her subjects in recent research, Small (2008) and Mayhew (2004) noted that Parks's (2011) initial research subjects were twenty undergraduate students at a private, residential, Protestant, liberal arts school. In Parks's 1980 study, 18 of the 20 students were White (Small, 2008, p. 45). One student was non-American and one student was non-Caucasian (Mayhew, 2004, p. 649).

In addition, the subjects of Fowler's (1981) and Parks's (2011) studies were raised within dominant American cultural values, such as independence. Their theories also reflected the value of independence. In Fowler's (1981) theory, the progression from Stage 3 to Stage 4 involved a separation from the community and differentiation of beliefs as an individual. In Parks's (2011) theory, independence was balanced with community in the journey to mature adulthood.

Lovik's (2010) findings briefly highlighted the spiritual growth of two demographic groups of students (pp. 112-113). He noted that both Asian American and first generation college students experienced spiritual growth during their first year of college. His speculations on these findings were that non-White students were typically more spiritually oriented than White students, and that either first generation college students came from families that were more spiritually oriented than continuing generation college students' families, or that the cultural difference of college spurred the first generation students on to inward reflection and spirituality.

Most recent studies in spirituality did not specifically attend to the categories of first generation college students. The demographic variables that were analyzed in research were

gender, race/ethnicity, family income, faith traditions, and religious minorities (Bowman &
Small, 2010; Bryant, Choi, & Yasuno, 2003). This research studied the demographic of first
generation college students, who were more likely to be non-White and might not have all
been raised in cultures that shared dominant American values, such as independence. These
characteristics are discussed in more detail in the section of this literature review that focuses
on first generation college students.

Influences on Emerging Adult Spirituality

Fowler (1981) and Parks (2011) both alluded to the context within which emerging
adults develop spiritually. Multiple people and environments influence their spiritual
development. In Lovik's (2010) study of the spiritual development of first year college
students attending four year colleges, he found that pre-college characteristics, classroom
experiences, and relationships affected spiritual development. Two classroom experiences
that most affected spiritual development were discussing and writing about diverse
perspectives and service learning. The experience that most positively affected spiritual
development, however, was out of the classroom: prayer, meditation, or community worship
(p. 101). This section examines some of the main influences on spiritual development in the
literature.

Education. Researchers disagreed on whether or not education affects emerging
adults' spirituality. Astin's (1993) research indicated that education did affect emerging
adults' spiritual beliefs. Others contended that emerging adults did not examine their
spiritual beliefs during college, and therefore, did not change their beliefs, even if their
religious practices changed during college (Clydesdale, 2007; Smith, 2009; Uecker,

Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007). Still others showed that education affected some spiritual beliefs and practices (Lefkowitz, 2005; Rew, Wong, Torres, & Howell, 2007).

Since the turn of the century, one of the most cited studies on spiritual development in college students was a seven-year longitudinal study from the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) of the University of California, Los Angeles, co-directed by Alexander W. and Helen Astin. This longitudinal research began in 2003 and continued through 2010. It began in 2003 with a pilot survey to design the quantitative College Students' Beliefs and Values (CSBV) survey. In 2004, the refined CSBV survey was completed by 112,232 first-year students from 236 colleges and universities and over 65,000 faculty. The freshmen, who were then finishing their third year, were surveyed again in 2007; at that time, 14,527 students completed the CSBV survey. Researchers conducted personal interviews in 2008 and held a research symposium in 2009. The final findings were published in 2010.

By the end of 2007, HERI reported that students' religious beliefs did not undergo significant change. Their religious practices, as measured by attendance at religious services, declined. The HERI (2007) press release indicated that students' spirituality, as defined and measured with the CSBV scales, increased. Students increasingly agreed with life goals that matched the concepts of a spiritual quest and ethic of caring for others. They also increased in equanimity—the belief that life was meaningful, even in difficult times—and an ecumenical worldview. The HERI press release also showed a liberalizing effect in students' political beliefs and an increase in their charitable involvement. Students also indicated an increase in feeling stress and depression.

For those researchers who believed that education did affect students' spirituality, the researchers seemed to agree that students' choice of academic major influenced their spiritual

development. Astin, Astin, Lindholm, Bryant, Calderon, and Szelenyi's (2005) summary of initial findings showed that students' initial rating of their religiousness and spirituality, and subsequent spiritual growth, were lower for some majors and higher for other majors. Fine arts and humanities students were more likely to report high levels of spirituality than science and professional studies students (Astin et al., 2005, pp. 6-7; Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004). Bryant and Astin (2008) also found that students in psychology had greater spiritual struggle, which came from being aware of and questioning one's spirituality, than students in other majors (p. 14). Researchers also agreed that students' choice of academic major did not affect their spiritual practices (Astin, 1993; Kuh & Gonyea, 2006, p. 44).

In contrast to these studies, however, ethnographer Clydesdale (2007) theorized that students would not engage with their spiritual beliefs in college. Instead, they would compartmentalize their inner lives and keep their spiritual beliefs separate from the ideas, concepts, and perspectives they were learning in the classroom. Especially in the first and last years of their college experience, Clydesdale found that students were so focused on the daily management of life that they did not have the time to pay attention to deeper questions about their identities or the world (p. 207). In their first year out of high school, students did not differentiate between spirituality and religion. Instead, they were consumed with navigating relationships, managing gratifications like drugs, sex, and alcohol, and making and spending money. Only a few intellectually engaged with deeper issues in college or broadened their social horizons. Clydesdale found that two groups of students—(a) religious students who attended religious institutions and (b) astute non-religious students who attended non-religious institutions—were the most open to having their identities challenged.

Their college choice already showed their awareness of the connection between their religion, identity, and future goals (pp. 176-178).

Sociologist Smith (2009) made similar assertions as Clydesdale (2007): Emerging adults did not focus on religion and spirituality because they were focused on relationships, education, jobs, finances, and living situations (Smith, 2009, pp. 76-77). Smith (2009) wrote:

Emerging adults are primarily dedicated in this phase of their lives to achieving their own financial, identity, and household independence from their parents. Serious religious faith and practice do not necessarily directly conflict with that mission, but they are not crucial or intrinsic to it either. (p. 76)

Uecker et al. (2007, p. 1683) came to the same conclusion as Clydesdale (2007) and Smith (2009), but from a different angle. They found that students who attended four-year schools were not abandoning their religious affiliation as frequently as emerging adults who did not attend college. These researchers reasoned that higher education's emphasis on employment and financial success caused students to be intellectually disengaged. Because students' beliefs and philosophies about life and faith were not challenged in the classroom, they did not abandon their religious beliefs.

Other researchers found that some emerging adults agreed that their spiritualities had changed during college. Of the 205 college students, aged 18-25, whom Lefkowitz (2005) studied, 43% perceived their religious views had changed since they started college. Lefkowitz studied students' perceptions in order to discover their values about change—that is, which changes were important, and which changes were successful. Students who had been at college longer reported more changes and were more positive about these changes than students who had not been at college for very long. Students perceived the growth or

strengthening of their original religious views, their openness to others' religious views, their ability to question, and/or their selection of another religion (pp. 52-54).

Rew et al. (2007) found that eight of the 28 college students in their research, aged 18-21, changed their religious beliefs during college. Five of these students attributed this change to their exposure to other ideas, beliefs, and people in college, and the freedom they felt to make their own decisions without parental oversight (pp. 65). Those students whose beliefs did not change said their beliefs were similar to those of one or both of their parents (pp. 66).

Parents. Parents have a strong influence on adolescents' religious beliefs, because parents are the socializing agents for children and adolescents. Parents can also influence their emerging adults' spiritual development. Researchers have studied the influences of mothers and fathers on their children's religious beliefs and practices and the specific characteristics that positively affect spiritual development.

Barry, Padilla-Walker, and Nelson (2012) found that a positive relationship quality between emerging adults and their mothers positively influenced the students' religious beliefs (pp. 73-74). If the mother had high religiousness, children who were securely attached to their mother tended to keep the religious beliefs of their childhood (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990, pp. 323-326). Especially when a mother's religiousness was low and children were not attached well to their mother, they tended to choose different religious beliefs in emerging adulthood, often becoming conservative and strong in their religious beliefs. Unlike beliefs, however, the mother-child relationship quality did not correlate to the emerging adults' religious behaviors (Barry et al., 2012, pp. 73-74).

These researchers only analyzed and presented data about mothers and therefore supported the theory that maternal attachment was influential on religious development. In contrast, Desrosiers, Kelley, and Miller (2011) suggested that the father's role in an adolescent or emerging adult's spiritual development may be more related to security and attachment than the mother's role. They wrote, "With respect to spiritual identity development during adolescence, fathers may tend to be more important in providing the base (i.e., a secure attachment) from which spiritual individuation can evolve through mothers' encouragement and facilitation of spiritual exploration" (p. 50).

Parents' influence on emerging adults' religious beliefs and practices during emerging adulthood was difficult to ascertain because of pre-existing childhood and adolescent influences and religious socialization (Nelson, 2014, p. 60). Religious socialization was also a bidirectional process, which meant that children could also influence their parents (Kelley, Athan, & Miller, 2007). Bidirectionality might have been affected by emerging adults' perceptions that their parents would be able to answer their questions about spirituality (Nelson, 2014, p. 69).

Parental influence on emerging adults' religious beliefs and practices was at least more indirect than it was during childhood and adolescence. Adolescents said that parental openness and familial flexibility benefitted their spiritual development (Kelley et al., 2007, p. 20). Parental openness was demonstrated when parents were willing to discuss their adolescent's questioning of spiritual matters. Familial flexibility was demonstrated when families accepted each member's potentially unique spiritual development.

Emerging adults typically explored the religious beliefs of their childhood and adolescence, and individually chose what they wanted to believe. They typically participated

less in the religious practices of their childhood and adolescence (Arnett & Jensen, 2002).

Rew et al.'s (2007) findings supported Smith (2009), who reported that two-thirds of

emerging adults had similar religious beliefs as their parents, although the similarity

decreased modestly between adolescence and emerging adulthood (pp. 128-129).

Specifically related to this study, it was possible that parents had a more direct

influence on emerging adults' religious beliefs and practices in cultures that placed value on

elders, such as collectivist cultures (Nelson, 2014, p. 63). A subset of first generation college

students could have been from cultures that valued elders. This research could have found

that parents had a direct influence in at least some of the first generation college students'

spirituality.

In addition, Arnett and Jensen (2002) found that the level of education of emerging

adults' parents had a direct inverse relationship with the emerging adults' religious beliefs

and practices. Specifically, the level of mothers' education was inversely related to (a) the

importance emerging adults placed on religious beliefs, (b) the relevance of religious beliefs

to their daily lives, and (c) the presence of a belief that God or a higher power was involved

in their lives. The level of fathers' education was inversely related to (a) the importance

emerging adults placed on attending religious services, (b) the importance they placed on

religious beliefs; and (c) the presence of a belief that God or a higher power was involved in

their lives (pp. 458-459).

Peers. Peers had a strong influence on the religious beliefs and behaviors of

adolescents and emerging adults. Their influence could have superseded the influence of

parents (Schwartz, Bukowski, & Aoki, 2006, pp. 320-321). One reason for this great

influence was because emerging adults sought out their peers for conversing about

spirituality and religious beliefs (Astin & Astin, 2004, as cited in Barry & Christofferson, 2014, p. 82). Another reason was that emerging adults were in the process of separating themselves from their parents (Desrosiers et al., 2011, p. 50; Schwartz et al., 2006, p. 321; Smith, 2009, p. 78). In contrast, however, other researchers suggested peer and parental influences remained stable (Martin, White, & Perlman, 2003, p. 184) and complemented one another (Desrosiers et al., 2011, p. 50).

According to Smith (2009), 63% of emerging adults had friends who shared their religious beliefs; however, only 48% conversed with their friends about religious beliefs (p. 129). Friends could be a socializing context that influenced adolescent and emerging adult spirituality and religion, if the friends were open to talking about spirituality and religion (Kelley et al., 2007, pp. 17-20, 26). For university students, friends provided the kind of support that helped emerging adults develop their individual spirituality (Desrosiers et al., 2011). Emerging adults were also more involved in religious practices, such as community service, if their friends were also involved (Smith, 2009, p. 263).

One of the factors that influenced emerging adults to change their perspectives about spirituality was exposure to others in the college community who had different religious beliefs (Lefkowitz, 2005). One of the college students in Bryant's (2011) study talked about religious beliefs with college peers from multiple religious backgrounds; Bryant's subject valued the truth-seeking he could participate in with his peers (pp. 21-22).

Media. Emerging adults' religious beliefs and behaviors likely influenced their use of media, and their use of media in turn influenced their religious beliefs and behaviors. This reinforcing spiral was a communication theory proposed by Slater (2007). Emerging adults could incorporate media messages into their religious views, or they could develop their

religious views around media messages. Some emerging adults also applied their religious views to media by expressing their beliefs through social media.

Emerging adults may have been less influenced by media than they were as adolescents, because the emerging adults had stronger identities. The emerging adults may also have been more open minded, so that they were comfortable exposing themselves to media that they would not have exposed themselves to in adolescence. At the same time, emerging adults might not have had the same need to react or counter-argue with authority, so they may have been less exposed to unhealthy media than when they were adolescents (Bobkowski, 2014, pp. 98-99).

Barry et al. (2012) found that emerging adults' use of positive media (such as news or research) positively influenced the students' religious faith, through the mediation of prosocial values (such as kindness and honesty). In contrast, emerging adults' use of negative media (such as violent games or pornography) had negative influences on students' religious faith and religious practices. Negative media also indirectly affected the students' religious faith, through the mediation of prosocial values (pp. 73-74).

Church community. The role of the church community in an emerging adult's spiritual development varied, since this role was dependent on each emerging adult's personal development and the perceptions the emerging adult had about the specific church community. For example, one of the college students in Bryant's (2011) study found her church community was a place of spiritual openness and authentic discussion about big questions of faith. This college student returned to this church community in order to process her faith (pp. 22-23). Another college student in Bryant's study found his church community

to be filled with people who did not have the knowledge base to answer the questions that experts on his college campus could answer (p. 21).

Whitney and King (2014) asserted that a church community provided the ideological, social, and transcendent contexts that enabled emerging adults to make meaning out of life (pp. 142-148; King, 2003). Ideologically, the church community translated its religious values into life and interpreted life by its religious beliefs in practical ways that helped emerging adults make meaning. Socially, others in the church community provided mentorship and role modeling for emerging adults. Transcendentally, the church community enabled the emerging adult to shift focus from himself or herself to other people and spiritual entities. The church community was unique in providing these three contexts that could assist the emerging adult with identity formation (Whitney & King, 2014, p. 147).

This research intended to study the influences on first generation college student spiritual development, partially through the use of a spiritual ecomap, in which the individual college student was at the center of the ecosystem. Some researchers considered that a church community was its own ecosystem of spiritual development. In this ecosystem, an individual experienced the influences of relationships, rituals, and a sense of transcendence or sacredness (Roehlkepartain & Patel, 2006, pp. 328-330; Whitney & King, 2014, p. 141).

Culture. The relationship between culture and spirituality was complex, especially for emerging adults whose internal beliefs and external contexts were often both in transition. The multitudinous variations of cultural contexts that existed in the United States also intersected with each individual's personality and personal development. While the synopsis in this section is not thorough, awareness of the role of culture in spiritual development was helpful for this research.

Culture's influence was micro-level and macro-level. On the micro-level, an individual could experience a family culture, a neighborhood culture, a school culture, and a church culture. On a macro-level, an individual's culture was influenced by race/ethnicity, gender, socio-economic class, region, media, and structural systems (Abo-Zena & Ahmed, 2014).

These layers of micro- and macro-level culture intersected with an individual's personality and personal development to influence the individual's spirituality. Abo-Zena and Ahmed (2014) provided this example of the influence of individuals' personalities and micro-level church culture on their spirituality: "[R]eligious music and dance may inspire some believers, while leaving others empty, depending on the individual and how the religious context portrays or limits such expressions" (p. 225).

Another example of the interaction between a facet of culture, individual development, and spirituality was emerging adults' development of racial identity. According to Sanchez and Carter's (2005) study, the development of students' racial identity seemed to affect students' religious orientation. Sanchez and Carter discovered that African-American men and women had different responses to religion as their racial identities developed. For example, in their study, male African-American college students distanced themselves from religion as they worked through difficult times during the development of their racial identities, and female African-American college students invested in their religious practices during this development. As they resolved their racial identities, however, religious beliefs were more important to male college students, and less important to female college students (pp. 291-292).

While an emerging adult was undergoing personal and spiritual development, these layers of external cultural context affected the emerging adult's beliefs and behaviors. Sometimes, a religious belief or spiritual practice was more connected to a culture than to a theological or religious tenet. If and when emerging adults in higher education were exposed to different cultures, they may have begun to distinguish between the beliefs and behaviors that were associated with their cultural background and the beliefs and behaviors from their upbringing that were specifically religious (Levitt, Barnett, & Khalil, 2011, pp. 150, 153-154). This analysis could be part of the individual's own personal and spiritual development.

Having discussed spirituality in higher education and in the lives of emerging adults, this literature review continues with a discussion of first generation college students. A review of the characteristics, history, and prevalent theories and themes related to this category of college students helps to set the stage for this qualitative, explorative study.

Characteristics of First Generation College Students

Multiple researchers agreed that first generation college students typically shared characteristics that differentiated them from continuing generation college students. First generation college students were more likely than other students to be older, have spouses and/or dependents (Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998, p. 5); to be ethnic minority students (Bui-Khanh, 2002; Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998); to have English as a second language (Bui-Khanh, 2002; Padgett et al., 2012, p. 251); and to be lower-income or working-class (Bui-Khanh, 2002; Horn & Nuñez, 2000, p. 10; Stephens et al., 2012, p. 1187; Terenzini et al., 1996, p. 19).

History of First Generation College Students in Higher Education

In the early twentieth century, students who enrolled in college were mostly sons of rich, White men. These White men may not have gone to college themselves, and they may not have thought that college education was very good, but they still sent their sons to college to earn the credential (Lucas, 2006, pp. 208-209). Before 1945, college was a luxury. Between 1945 and the mid-1960s, college became a privilege for those who earned it through military service (McGee, 2015, p. 9).

The Higher Education Act of 1965 initiated the increase of first generation college students in higher education, since its goal was to increase access to higher education for low-income, first generation, and minority students (Tate, Williams, & Harden, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The name "TRIO" was established in 1968 to describe the trio of college access services for under-advantaged students that were the Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services programs (U. S. Department of Education, 2014). Between 1998 and 2002, federal funding for TRIO increased 52%, with the goal of increasing access to college for first generation, low-income college students (Department of Education, 2005). The Higher Education Act of 1965 was reauthorized by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, so that most programs were given authorization to continue through 2014 (Hegji, 2014). Federal appropriations for TRIO programs remained relatively stable, with approximately 5% decrease, between fiscal year 2009 and fiscal year 2013 (Hegji, 2014, p. 32). In fiscal year 2013, TRIO served over 750,000 students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), which is part of the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA),

analyzed trends of first generation college students in higher education from 1971 to 2005 (Saenz et al., 2007). Although some researchers referenced an increase in the number and proportion of first generation college students in the overall undergraduate student population nationally (Terenzini et al.,1996, p. 20), Saenz et al. (2007) found that the proportion of first generation college students who had attended four-year institutions had declined steadily since 1971 (p. vi). Between 1975 and 2005, the proportion of first generation college students attending four year colleges decreased from 31.2% to 15.9% (p. 9). This decline in proportion was because of the overall increasing numbers of students enrolled in undergraduate education, and because more first generation college students were attending two-year institutions (p. 8).

According to data gathered in the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study by the U.S. Department of Education 1996, 47% of the incoming college class of 1995-96 was first generation college students (Kojaku & Nuñez, 1998, p. 54). Thirty percent of those students were enrolled in four-year colleges and comprised 30% of the four-year-public-college and 35% of the four-year-private-not-for-profit student bodies. Only 43.5% of the incoming first generation college students in 1995-96 attended full-time, all year (Kojaku & Nuñez, 1998, pp. 28, 40, 44). Only about 13% of all incoming first generation college students in 1989-1990 graduated with a four-year degree, in comparison to 33% of all other incoming college students (Choy, 2001, p. 30; Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998, p. 44).

More recently, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) analyzed demographic and degree attainment rates of over 200,000 students in over 350 private four-year institutions by combining CIRP and National Student Clearinghouse data between 2004 and 2010 (DeAngelo, Franke, Hurtado, Pryor, & Tran, 2011). The attainment rates of a four-

year degree were approximately 14% less for first generation students than continuing generation students in their fourth, fifth, and sixth years of college. First generation college students attained four-year degrees at the rates of 27.4% (four years), 44.8% (five years), and 50.2% (six years). Continuing generation college students attained four-year degrees at the rates of 42.1% (four years), 59.7% (five years), and 64.2% (six years) (DeAngelo et al., 2011, p. 9). These statistics did not compare exactly to the national statistics of Choy (2001), Kojaku and Nuñez (1998), or Nuñez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998), because they were analyzing different populations of students in different decades. However, the degree attainment gap between first generation and continuing generation students remained consistent.

Further analysis of the demographic data of first generation students revealed a disproportionate representation of racial/ethnic groups. In 1971, when the proportion of first generation students in four-year institutions was 38.5% nationally, the proportion of Hispanics who were first generation was 69.6%; of African-Americans, 62.9%; of Native Americans, 44.8%; and of Asian/Asian Americans, 42.5%. While these proportions decreased over time, the highest proportion remained with the Hispanic student population; in 2005, 38.2% were first generation at four-year institutions (Saenz et al., 2007, p. 10). That being said, Pizzolato, Chaudhari, Murrell, Podobnik, and Schaeffer (2008) clarified that not all first generation students were non-White, and not all non-White students were first generation (pp. 301-302).

Given the large proportion of Hispanics who were first generation college students in 2015, McGee painted a bleak picture for the graduation rate of this population. He wrote:

Fewer than half of all 18- to 25-year-old Hispanics indicate that they plan to complete a bachelor's degree or more (compared to 60% of all similar-aged young people). . . . Of all Hispanics in the United States aged 25 to 29 . . . only 15 percent have completed a four-year degree . . . significantly lower than rates for the same age population as a whole . . . with one-third earning a four-year degree. (pp. 38-39)

Clearly, attention needed to be given to first generation college students in higher education in order to help increase their enrollment and graduation rates. To better understand the current state of affairs for first generation college students, a discussion of their experiences and personal development in higher education follows.

Experiences and Personal Development of First Generation College Students in Higher Education

Multiple researchers noted that the four main categories of research about first generation college students were preparation for college, performance in college, cultural deficiencies, and persistence to graduation. Less research had been done about the college experience and personal development of first generation college students (Pascarella et al., 2004, pp. 249-250; Terenzini et al., 1996, p. 3).

This section of the literature review highlights the research that has been done about the experiences and personal development of first generation college students in the cognitive, emotional, social, familial, cultural, and spiritual areas of their lives. It is a challenge to put the experiences and development of first generation college students in discrete categories because the academic, emotional, social, familial, and spiritual areas of life intersect with one another. Brief descriptions of these categories will be followed by a discussion that flows from one area to another.

Descriptions.

Academic and cognitive. In high school, first generation college students might not have taken the opportunities to pursue advanced coursework or to develop academic skills like time management, organization, and study skills—if they even had access to these opportunities (White, 2005, p. 377). First generation college students might not have seen the connection between college, careers, and long-term economic benefits, and their high school counselors may not have encouraged their college aspirations. Their peers were not likely to have prioritized academic activity over social activity. They might not have been encouraged to seek help from or have academic discussions with teachers in high school (Padgett et al., 2012, p. 261). First generation college students typically began college with lower critical thinking skills than continuing generation college students (Terenzini et al., 1996, p. 18), and some needed remedial coursework (Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998, p. 5).

Once in college, they took fewer credits from fewer academic areas, spent less time studying, and achieved lower grades than other college students (Pascarella et al, 2003, p. 425; Pascarella et al., 2004, p. 265; Saenz et al., 2007, p. 28). They also spent less time integrating within the academic culture of the college or university than continuing generation college students (Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998, p. 39).

Terenzini et al. (1996) found that by the end of their first year of college, first generation college students had similar gains to continuing generation college students in math and critical thinking skills (p. 18). Pascarella et al. (2004) found that by the end of their third year of college, first generation college students had a higher level of interest in higher-order cognitive tasks and a higher level of giving themselves credit for their academic success than did continuing generation college students (p. 267). These gains in cognitive

skills were examples of stage progression in the Form of Logic and Locus of Authority aspects of Fowler's (1981) faith development theory.

Emotional. Coming to terms with their own complex identities was part of the emotional development that first generation college students experienced. Jehangir, Williams, and Jeske (2012) argued that first generation college students tolerated ambiguity because of the multiple roles they played in life, and they could have benefitted in college from having time to reflect on their personal development (pp. 268-269). Orbe (2008) theorized that a first generation college student's cyclical experiences of stress and adaptation in a new college culture, over time, would lead to a new identity that included the student's old and new selves (p. 84).

On the negative side, Padgett et al. (2012) found that first-generation college students had lower levels of psychological wellbeing than continuing generation college students (p. 260). On the positive side, Corona-Ordoñez (2013) identified five inner qualities that Latina first generation college students relied on when facing challenges: patience, perseverance, pride, rebelliousness/defiance, and the ability to sacrifice (pp. 112-113).

Social. First generation college students were less socially prepared for college than continuing generation college students. First generation college students may not have been exposed to people from backgrounds other than their own before college. They likely had not traveled or studied abroad (Tierney, 2013, p. 258). They might not have ever visited a college campus.

Once in college, first generation college students were not likely to participate in extra-curricular academic or social events, often because they had work, families, and studies that took higher priorities (Corona-Ordoñez, 2013, p. 53; Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998, p.

42; Pascarella et al., 2004, p. 265). They were not likely to have roommates on campus or interact with peers as often with continuing generation college students (Saenz et al., 2007, p. 27; Terenzini et al., 1996, p. 11). They were more likely to live at home or off campus and commute (Pascarella et al., 2004, p. 265; Saenz et al., 2007, p. vii).

Students who attended an elite college away from home tended to change their appearance (Winkle-Wagner, 2009, p. 13), such as by wearing a wardrobe of college T-shirts and hoodies and college shorts or sweatpants (Tierney, 2013, pp. 267-268).

Cultural and social capital. First generation college students did not have college cultural capital. Cultural capital was defined as the norms, values, beliefs, and behaviors that were needed for success in a culture, according to the middle-to-upper-classes; specifically, in this case, cultural capital included the cultural knowledge and capacity students needed to succeed in college (McDonough, 1997).

Language was one of the elements of culture. "The university, like many other cultures," sociolinguist and professor White (2005) wrote, "has its own unique and specialized discursive practices" (p. 371), which members of the community needed to know and use in order to be accepted. Like the students in White's (2005) case study, many first generation students may not have known that they did not know the language and rules of the academic system. For example, students may not have known how to calculate a grade point average (GPA), a figure on which academic standing was often based; they might also not have known how to use email, nor comprehend sections of classes and the registration system (pp. 377-378).

First generation college students often did not have college social capital, either. Social capital was defined as the resources available to individuals by way of their social

connections and interpersonal relationships. According to Padgett et al. (2012), social capital

was "the information, values, norms, standards, and expectations for education as

communicated to individuals through the interpersonal relationships they share with others"

(p. 246). Social capital also included the benefits individuals receive from being part of a

group (Coleman, 1990, pp. 316-317). Because they were rarely socially connected with

college graduates, their college social capital was low.

Familial and cultural. Scholars have debated about whether or not college students

needed to differentiate from their families in order to succeed in college. Tinto (1993) stated

that although it was stressful, most students needed to differentiate from home in order to

integrate into college, to reap the intellectual and social benefits of college, and to persist to

graduation. Tinto especially made this recommendation for students whose parents did not

attend college (pp. 95-97). Tierney (2000) contended that this recommendation for

assimilation came from an institutional perspective and was not geared toward students in

minority demographics (p. 220). Instead of expecting all students to differentiate from home,

Tierney suggested that the college make efforts to incorporate some families, such as low-

income families, into their students' college experience (p. 228).

To study the issues in this debate, Winkle-Wagner (2009) researched the family

relationships of 30 African-American women, 24 of whom were first generation college

students (p. 5). She found that these students maintained a tension of homelessness, as they

felt "you don't fit here, but you can't go home" (p. 9) and in "bringing [family] along or

cutting ties" (p. 9). This last phrase meant they felt both responsible for their family while in

college, especially financially, and they felt they needed to sever relationships with their

family in order to succeed in college (p. 13). Sometimes these responsibilities were a

hindrance to their academic success, and sometimes they were an inspiration and motivation (p. 15). This tension of homelessness became an added pressure (p. 16). Winkle-Wagner responded to the scholars' debate with the statement, "Whether a student should sever ties with her family is not a simple, dichotomous decision. Rather, it was a complicated, nuanced, commonly occurring, and often painful process. . . . The issue is more nuanced than either position suggests" (pp. 20, 26).

First generation college students who lived on campus may have felt torn between going home for weekends and staying in the dorms. They may have also found that travel time was too valuable, and that they had difficulty finding a time and place to study at home, especially when nobody else in their family was studying. At the same time, when they were away from home, they may have missed elements of their home culture, such as the cooking of their home culture. Overall, these perspectives and travel habits likely changed throughout their college experience (Tierney, 2013, p. 268).

At the same time, all of the first generation college students in Gofen's (2009) study acknowledged the pivotal role their family played in enabling them to break through the intergenerational pattern and attend college (p. 109). The family's attitude toward education, interpersonal relationships, and family values enabled this breakthrough (p. 110). Instead of being seen as a constraint, the family was seen as an essential resource (p. 114).

Based on their home culture, first generation college students approached college with a different set of motivations, values, and beliefs than continuing generation college students. The dominant college culture was independent. An independent culture motive for college would be "to learn more about my own interests," (Stephens et al., 2012, p. 1188) and an interdependent culture motive would be "to be a role model for people in my

community" (p. 1188). First generation college students most frequently came from interdependent cultures (p. 1193). Unlike continuing generation college students, their motivation for attending college may have been to give back to their family and community (Bui-Khanh, 2002); to acknowledge the sacrifice of their parents and show their appreciation (Corona-Ordoñez, 2013); to bring honor to their family (Bui-Khanh, 2002); or to gain respect and status (Bui-Khanh, 2002). First generation college students were also less motivated by becoming an authority in their field or being a community leader than continuing generation college students (Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998, p. 32).

Financial. Based on 1991 high school graduate data, over half of the first generation college students came from low-income families (Horn & Nuñez, 2000, p. 10). In 2005, over half of the first generation students at four-year institutions (55.1%) intended to pay for college by working. In comparison, 45% of other students intended to pay for college by working (Saenz et al., 2007, p. 20).

More than continuing generation college students, first generation college students said making more money was an important reason for attending college (Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998, p. 32; Rood, 2009, p. 250; Saenz et al., 2007, p. vii). While the goal of attending college to develop a "meaningful philosophy of life" (Saenz et al., 2007, p. xiii) became less important for all students, it was consistently less important for first generation college students than continuing generation college students between 1971 and 2005.

Spiritual. Lovik (2010) found that first generation college students experienced positive spiritual development in the first year of their college education at a four year institution (pp. 93, 112). He suggested that the parents of first generation college students might have placed a higher value on spirituality than parents of continuing generation college

students, or the first generation college students adhered to their spirituality to cope with the newness of higher education and the cultural mismatch they felt (p. 113).

In their analysis of 2005 CIRP data, Saenz et al. (2007) noticed that first generation students who attended private four-year institutions had a greater probability of being involved in volunteer or religious work, or of discussing religion than first generation students at public four-year institutions. Their interpretation of this data "somewhat mirrors the historical alignment of most private colleges with religious organizations and their focus on undergraduate teaching" (p. 42).

Observable results. The academic, emotional, social, familial, cultural, and spiritual characteristics and experiences of first generation college students generated observable results in how these students approached and persisted in their college experience. First generation college students were more likely than others to attend two-year colleges (Kojaku & Nuñez, 1998, pp. 14-15), to work full-time and attend school part-time, or to work more hours than continuing generation college students (Pascarella et al., 2004, p. 265; Pascarella et al., 2003, p. 425; Terenzini et al., 1996, p. 11). They were also more likely than continuing generation college students to delay their entry to college (Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998, p. 28) and to take time off for periods throughout their college education. First generation students were more likely than continuing generation college students to depart from college (Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998, p. 6). Most first generation college students departed after the first year (Kojaku & Nuñez, 1998, p. 30), and more first generation college students departed after the second year than continuing generation college students (Ishitani, 2006).

Convergence. As these areas of first generation college students' lives and experiences converge, some patterns emerged. The students' families and cultures had the greatest effect on their academics, emotional, social, and spiritual experiences in higher education. Conversely, their emotional, academic, social, and spiritual experiences in higher education had little effect on their families and cultures.

The effects of families and cultures on first generation college students.

Academic effects. A cultural mismatch could have negative repercussions on first generation college students' experience and performance in higher education (Stephens et al., 2012, p. 1189). Stephens et al. contended that the performance gap between first generation college students and continuing generation college students was more related to the difference in cultures that first generation college students experienced in higher education.

First generation college students needed the knowledge and skills for taking standardized tests, using technology for academics, preparing and applying for college and financial aid, and choosing both a major and appropriate courses. They needed to understand and live within the norms, rules, expectations, behaviors, and communication style of the college culture. They also needed to learn the cultural skills of forming relationships, navigating bureaucracies, and grasping educational pathways available in college. These skills and knowledge could be understood as institutional cultural capital, which first generation college students did not have (Dumais & Ward, 2010, pp. 247, 250). Since first generation college students' parents did not have this knowledge or these expectations about college, the parents were not passing down this cultural capital to their children (Corona-Ordoñez, 2013; McDonough, 1997; Padgett et al., 2012, p. 260).

Parents of first generation college students were also likely not passing down an enjoyment of reading or writing, or the discussion of words and ideas, as evidenced by the smaller manifestation of this trait among first generation college students than other students after their first year of college (Padgett et al., 2012, pp. 252-253).

Emotional effects. Since first generation college students most frequently came from contexts that supported interdependence, they were unfamiliar with and did not thrive in higher education contexts that supported independence (Stephens et al., 2012, p. 1193). This independence mirrored the dominant culture in America. Tierney's (2013) research subject learned that "growing up in America is less a communal exercise than an individual one" (p. 275).

First generation college students also might not have been comfortable speaking in class because of the different lexicon they used; their lack of "college talk" could lead to them feeling inferior and alienated (White, 2005, p. 385; Winkle-Wagner, 2009, p. 12). Tierney's (2013), White's (2005), and Winkle-Wagner's (2009) students practiced "code switching." White's (2005) students gained confidence in using academic linguistic styles to express their ideas (p. 387). In so doing, these students chose to communicate in a style that was separate from their own cultural identity (Tierney, 2013, p. 273; White, 2005, p. 390).

These academic and cultural differences could have led first generation college students to feel isolated, alienated, and stressed out by living in two different worlds at the same time (Orbe, 2008; White, 2005). They felt marginalized in both their home and college cultures (Corona-Ordoñez, 2013, p. 11). They might have thought their home culture viewed them as "selling out" (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003, pp. 559-560; Orbe, 2008). At the same time, they might have thought their college culture viewed them as not "fitting in." They

may have felt prejudice and discrimination in the college setting (Terenzini, Springer et al., 1996).

Family pressure and responsibilities could also affect first generation college students. Some students may have felt the expectation from their families to be the one who would get a college degree, finish the goals of their parents, be a role model to the family and community, or help their families financially (Corona-Ordoñez, 2013; Winkle-Wagner, 2009). First generation college students perceived that their families did not understand the academic pressures they were under; nor did they understand the complexities of higher education (Corona-Ordoñez, 2013, pp. 62-63; Winkle-Wagner, 2009, pp. 12, 15).

College counselors Tate, Williams, and Harden (2013) acknowledged that many first generation college students experienced "survivor guilt." They defined survivor guilt as "worrying about being in a better position than others and the negative effects these feelings may have on all aspects of well-being" (p. 81). As their college experience continued, first generation college students may have felt guilty about the challenges they were leaving behind for their family. They may have perceived that their education was creating a chasm between them and their home community (Jehangir et al., 2012, p. 276). Tate et al. (2013, p. 80) suggested the emotional strain of this guilt could contribute to first generation college students' attrition. At the same time, some distance may have helped their relationships with parents or siblings draw closer (Tierney, 2013, p. 268).

Social effects. Padgett et al. (2012) found that first generation college students had some negative social characteristics, most likely related to the lack of social and cultural capital that first generation college students received from their parents (p. 261). They found that first generation college students were less open to diversity than other students (p. 260).

First generation college students also had more negative psychosocial outcomes from faculty interaction than continuing generation college students (p. 261).

Orbe (2008) outlined six dialectic tensions that first generation college students experienced between their home and college cultures: (a) individual and social identity, (b) similarity and difference, (c) stability and change, (d) certainty and uncertainty, (e) advantage and disadvantage, and (f) openness and closedness (p. 85).

At home, these tensions appeared in secondary tensions of (a) independence and interdependence, (b) the ordinary and the special, (c) the old and the new, (d) predictability and unpredictability, (e) support and resistance, and (f) revealing and concealing. At school, these tensions appeared in the secondary tensions of (a) autonomy and connection, (b) the peripheral and the central, (c) divergence and convergence, (d) confidence and doubt, (e) motivation and pressure, and (f) the visible and the invisible (Orbe, 2008, p. 85).

Spiritual effects. Rockenbach, Walker, and Luzader's (2012) phenomenological research identified that contrast—within oneself, within relationship and community, or within one's efforts to make meaning of lived experiences—was the main root of spiritual struggle (p. 62). The contrast with the community could occur when a student was determining whether or not to express their authentic self to the community, such as when an African student became Pagan:

> I think if I were doing an African path, then it would be okay. . . . But [when] I tell someone I'm on more of a Celtic path, I kind of just get strange looks, like, "Where did that come from? That doesn't make any sense. Do you realize that you're Black?" (p. 66)

77

In the event a first generation college student changed his or her spirituality in college, this student could experience a spiritual struggle in determining whether or not to express his or her authentic self to the home community.

The effects of academic, emotional, social, and spiritual experiences on first generation college students.

Effects of academics. Academic challenge helped first generation college students. Padgett et al. (2012) found that first generation college students experienced greater psychological benefit from academic challenge and peer interaction than other students (p. 260). Academics also helped first generation college students grow spiritually and socially. Yeh (2010) found that service-learning in the classroom helped low-income first generation students examine their values and make meaning (p. 59).

Although she addressed underrepresented students in general, as opposed to specifically addressing first generation college students, Tisdell (2007) connected the classroom to social justice and spirituality. As students engaged in using imagination about their culture, they learned about one another and developed community (pp. 556-557). Tisdell (2007) wrote, "Teaching for social justice that engages the cultural imagination can also engage people's creativity, and often their spirituality as well, which often unites groups and builds classroom community" (p. 556).

Validation in the classroom should have benefitted first generation college students emotionally, helping them to overcome personal doubt and feelings of insignificance (Rendón, 1994, p. 44). Reflection on their lived experiences helped first generation college students integrate the multiple identities they felt (Jehangir et al., 2012, p. 277). Instead of

assimilating into the college culture, a few of Jehangir et al.'s (2012) students were able to reflect upon and develop their own identities.

Effects of the emotional. Aspelmeier et al. (2012) offered an alternative hypothesis to those researchers who believed that first generation college students were negatively affected in college because of their lack of social and cultural capital. Aspelmeier et al. (2012) observed that the effect sizes in the comparison groups of first generation and continuing generation college students were small enough to suggest that first generation college student status was a sensitizing factor instead of a causal factor in college outcomes. Therefore, they suggested that the predictive factors for college success may have been "more personal and psychological factors such as self-esteem, attributional style, academic self-efficacy, and other relevant factors (e.g., self-regulation skills)" (pp. 777-778).

Tierney (2013) made an interesting observation about Manuel, a first generation college student. He wrote: "Manuel adapts his identity to his surroundings in a manner that makes his actions and sense of self more fluid than fixed" (p. 271). Tierney contended that a fluid identity was affected by social capital and affected the gaining of social capital (p. 276).

Researchers Bryant and Astin (2008) wrote, "Spiritual or religious struggle can emerge out of stress related to one's identity" (p. 3). It was possible that first generation college students like Tierney's (2013) subject had a wider variety of identity challenges than continuing generation college students, perhaps because they were navigating more than one culture at the same time. Because they were simultaneously living in more than one culture, first generation college student's identities may have seemed "fluid" (Jehangir et al., 2012, p. 277; Tierney, 2013). This fluidity may have resulted in stress. Stress may have resulted in spiritual struggle.

Spiritual struggle could have been part of students' experience in higher education. Higher education may have challenged students' religious and spiritual beliefs and led them to question and struggle with spiritual matters. Bryant and Astin (2008) defined spiritual struggle as internal concerns about faith, purpose, and meaning in life (p. 2). In college, spiritual struggle could have been measured by students' questioning of their spiritual beliefs; feeling unresolved about spiritual matters; being challenged to understand suffering, evil, and death; feeling anger toward God; and being disillusioned with childhood and adolescent religion.

Effects of social experiences. On one hand, peer interactions could have significantly increased first generation college students' psychosocial development (Padgett et al., 2012, p. 257). On the other hand, Holcomb and Nonneman (2004) said that cognitive dissonance led to crisis, which was the examination of one's beliefs (p. 100). Cognitive dissonance could come from an individual's significant exposure to other cultures (p. 101). This crisis could lead to spiritual development if support and challenge were balanced (p. 102).

Effects of spiritual experiences. Spiritual struggle was a reality in spiritual development. Parks (2011) referred to it as "shipwreck" (p. 45). Fowler (1981) called it "disequilibrium" (pp. 100-101). Spiritual struggle had negative emotional and physical outcomes, such as perceived low self-esteem (Bryant & Astin, 2008, pp. 16-17). However, to the educator, spiritual struggle was not completely negative, because it was related to indicators of positive spiritual development, such as tolerance for the religious beliefs of others (Bryant & Astin, 2008, pp. 14, 17). Because spiritual struggle was part of positive spiritual development, it was essential for educators and practitioners to help guide college students into and through spiritual struggle.

For college students who were undergoing stress, depression, discrimination, or other difficult times, church could be a place of solace, encouragement, and comfort like a family (Donahoo & Caffey, 2000, pp. 93-94, 99-100). Faith in God could help first generation college students face financial and academic challenges and persevere (Corona-Ordoñez, 2013, pp. 109-112).

Deficiencies

This review of the literature provided a relatively comprehensive view of the influences on first generation college students during their college experience. However, cognitive development from the perspective of Fowler's (1981) faith development theory and spirituality, defined as the pursuit of the sacred, were both lacking in the literature. Aspelmeier et al.'s (2012) questioning of prevalent cultural capital theories in first generation college student research added justification for an exploratory study on the spirituality of first generation college students.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The focus of this research was the spirituality and faith development of Christian first generation college students during their college experience. The research design was qualitative, phenomenological, advocacy research, in order to discover and give voice to the spirituality and faith development experiences of first generation college students as they pursued college education.

Justification and Theoretical Framework

Since little was known about the spiritual development of first generation college students, qualitative research was a good choice for this study. Qualitative research discovered themes inductively, from which theories for future quantitative studies could be deduced (Patten, 2014, p. 21).

Definitions of faith, spirituality, and religion abounded, because these constructs were difficult to identify (A. W. Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011a; King, Clardy, & Ramos, 2013). Having students define spirituality was very insightful. The meanings the subjects gave to spirituality reflected the subjects' culture, generation, upbringing, or worldview. Qualitative research authorities Bogdan and Biklen (2007) wrote, "The meaning people give to their experience and their process of interpretation are essential and constitutive" (p. 27) in phenomenological research. Understanding the subject's definitions and meanings was part of phenomenological research.

Tierney (2013) noted that "relationships are not static and opinions change" (p. 263). This research was longitudinal for the purpose of observing how a first generation college student's relationships and opinions changed during the course of a year of college.

Of his chosen research method, Tierney (2013) explained that "qualitative work may shed light that is not otherwise available on a scholarly topic" (p. 261). A longitudinal study of one or more individuals could provide deeper and richer phenomenological data than a one- or two-time survey or interview (p. 262).

This researcher chose a phenomenological approach for the research in order to describe the experience of spiritual development, especially as this development included relationships and spiritual influences in students' lives. Phenomenological studies investigated the essence of an experience (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). This research studied the essence of the experience of spiritual development for first generation college students.

Because higher education helped students develop cognitively, this researcher was interested in seeing how first generation college students developed cognitively, and how this cognitive development worked within their spiritual development. Therefore, this researcher inserted an inquiry about Fowler's aspects and stages of faith into a larger exploratory study on the relationships and influences that affected first generation college students' spiritual development at college.

The phenomenological approach to research was the examination of subjects' perceptions (Patten, 2014, p. 165). The epistemological approach to this study was interpretive/constructivist, whereby subjects constructed the phenomenon of spiritual development as first generation college students, and the researcher's role was to "describe, understand, and interpret" (Merriam, 2009, p. 11) the essence of this phenomenon.

Qualitative research was based on observation and interpretation. Instead of seeking to find an objective reality, a qualitative approach to research sought to understand reality from the perspective of others, and this understanding was subjective (Patten, 2014, p. 20).

In qualitative research, the researcher influenced the interpretation; therefore, it was also important for the researcher's perspective to be disclosed (pp. 20,163).

Role of the Researcher

This researcher was a middle-age, White, Midwestern, Evangelical Christian woman whose parents both attended college. Her parents were each first generation college students. Between her bachelor's and master's degrees, this researcher spent three years engaged in ministry among people in cultures other than her home culture: South Florida, Eastern Europe, and Alaska. Some of her Native Alaskan friends were the first in their family to attend college. Upon return to Minnesota in 2002, this researcher had been involved in high school ministry in the local suburban Evangelical Christian church setting. Almost all the high school students in this setting had parents who attended college. This researcher's higher education employment began in 2003 at an online, for-profit, university for adult education, and she had been working with traditional undergraduates at a non-profit Christian higher education institution since 2012.

Research Questions

The primary purpose of this research was to explore and describe how first generation college students developed spiritually during their college experience. The secondary purpose of this research was to explore how first generation college students developed in relationship to Fowler's (1981) faith development theory. The five research questions are listed below, each followed by the rationale for the research question.

- How did first generation college students' spiritual influences and spiritual relationships develop or change during their college experience? This question explored which college experiences influenced first generation college students'

spirituality; which relationships, events, classes, concepts affected them. It also explored which relationships and experiences from home continued to affect first generation college students' spirituality.

- What language did first generation college students use to describe their own spiritual development? Instead of the researcher imposing a definition, the students defined spirituality and worked with this definition throughout the study. Each student's definition could have been different. The relationships and influences did not depend on a specific definition.

- How did first generation college students show faith development during their college experience? This question considered the relationship between faith development (which is largely cognitive) and spiritual development.

- In what ways did first generation college students' spirituality affect their perceived success at college? Success was defined in academic, social, and emotional ways. This question explored what success meant to the student and whether spirituality helped, hindered, or had no effect on this success.

- How did first generation college students describe their spirituality in comparison to others, if at all? This question addressed where the student felt they belonged spiritually. It considered whether students felt they fit at home or at college. It explored whether spirituality was one of the elements of culture in which first generation college students did not fit with the dominant continuing generation college culture.

Research Design Strategy

Fowler, Streib, and Keller's *Manual for Faith Development Research* (2004) provided researchers with a research instrument that corresponded with Fowler's (1981) faith development theory. This research instrument was the Faith Development Interview. This two-part instrument contained a guided exercise called the Life Tapestry and a four-part series of interview questions that addressed all seven Aspects of Fowler's (1981) faith development theory. Fowler et al. (2004) gave future researchers instructions on conducting, transcribing, coding, and scoring the Faith Development Interview.

Unlike Fowler's (1981) faith development theory, however, the spiritual development in this research was not structural. Instead, it was a development that was defined by the students and their experiences. The students described the relationships and influences that affected their spirituality, and they showed how their spirituality developed during college.

The Faith Development Interview also did not fit very well with this researcher's goals and research design. The *Manual for Faith Development Research* (Fowler et al., 2004) guided researchers to assign scores to subjects' interview data. If this research followed the guide, it would have replicated Fowler, Streib, and Keller's (2004) research methods. With their method, this research would have compared the quantitative faith development scores with other quantitative data about the research subjects. To do a comparison, this research would have included a quantitative element in the research design. This researcher would have therefore needed a larger sample size. She would also have needed to work with others to cross-check her scoring (i.e., inter-rater reliability or inter-coder agreement), so that this researcher could have been confident of her scoring reliability (Creswell, 2009, pp. 190-191).

This researcher intended to complete the dissertation research within an academic year. Because of her own time constraints, the length of interviews, and the difficulty she anticipated with finding subjects who were qualified and willing to participate in the research, she planned to have a smaller sample size (approximately 12). The strategy of inquiry for this research was exploratory and phenomenological—therefore, qualitative. It was not limited to replicating Fowler, Streib, and Keller's (2004) Faith Development Interview or to converting qualitative data to scores for quantitative analysis.

Rationale for data collection methods. Among qualitative researchers, content saturation had been the rule of thumb for determining sample size in qualitative research. In her review of research articles in five journals, Patten (2014) found that qualitative sample sizes ranged from 10 to 36, with a median of 13 (p. 161). Bowen (2008) suggested that both depth and breadth of data collection contributed to adequate sampling, and therefore content saturation (p. 141). It stood to reason that the more data collection methods that were used in qualitative research or the deeper the data collection was with participants, the smaller the sample could be.

This research used three data collection methods—verbal, written, and diagrammatic. This combination of data about subjects' spiritual development was methods triangulation (Patten, 2014, p. 167), which the researcher employed to increase the reliability of the data collected. To increase the reliability of the data collected, subjects were able to review and make corrections to the results. This activity is known as member checking (Patten, 2014, p. 167). Merriam (2009) defined member checking as allowing the participant to report on whether or not the researcher's interpretations match the participant's perspectives and

experiences (p. 217). To ensure the validity of the data collected, an independent person checked a sample of the recording against the transcription (Patten, 2014, p. 167).

Measures

Semi-structured interview. One data collection method was the semi-structured interview. According to Patten (2014), the semi-structured interview had been the most widely used data collection method for qualitative research (p. 163). Polkinghorne (2005) suggested that researchers hold three interviews with each participant: one for initial introductions and surface conversation about the topic, one for deep discussion about the topic, and one for member checking. This research included two semi-structured interviews; the first was at the beginning of the data collection, and the second was at the end. Member checking was done electronically at the conclusion of the researcher's data analysis.

Spiritual ecomap. During the initial interview, subjects created a diagram of the influences and relationships that related to their spirituality. The spiritual ecomap was a pictorial representation of a subject's perception of their relationships with specific people, institutions, religious activities, spiritual beings, etc., as these people and systems related to the subject's spiritual life. The immediate family was at the center of the diagram, surrounded by those systems or events that had spiritual significance to the subject. Relationships among the people, systems, and events were described by type of line (such as a thick line or a dashed line) with arrows that pointed in the direction of energy or interest (Hodge, 2005).

A first generation college student's spiritual ecosystem included the people, events, institutions, symbols, and activities that affected the college student's spirituality. The first generation college student represented these influences and his/her relationship with each of

these influences on a spiritual ecomap. An example of a spiritual ecomap is shown in Figure 1.

The spiritual ecomap had many benefits for this research. First, it accounted for relationships, influences, and meanings (Hodge, 2000, p. 224). Second, it focused on the present moment, rather than the past. Third, it focused on a system, rather than a personal history. This focus was meant to help the subject feel more open to talk about spiritual matters, since a system should be less threatening than a personal history (Hodge, 2005).

Fourth, because the researcher and subject were on the same side of the table putting together and talking about the spiritual ecomap (Hodge, 2000, p. 225), this exercise helped level the power differential between researcher and subject. The subjects were the authorities of their ecomaps. This benefit fit well with the phenomenological approach of this research. Since the subject was constructing his/her own spiritual ecomap, the subject was able to come up with influences and factors that the researcher would not have considered.
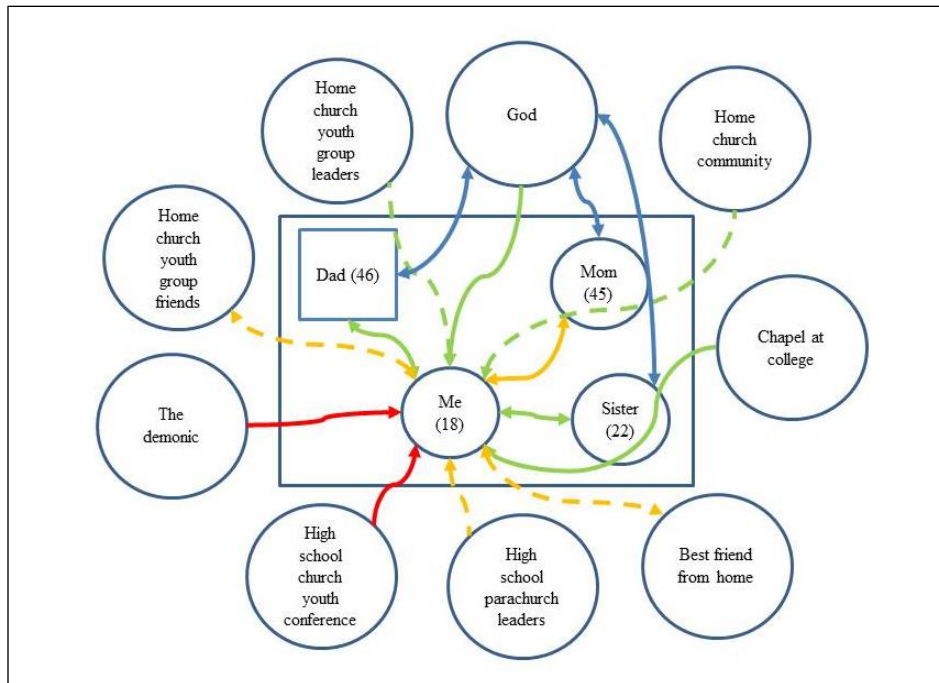
Figure 1. Sample spiritual ecomap. The subject's immediate family is within the box at the center of the map. Relationships among the people, systems, and events are illustrated by type and color of line with arrows that point in the direction of energy or interest.

Fifth, the spiritual ecomap was also a cross-cultural tool. In explaining how non-Black, non-religious, social workers could have used the spiritual ecomap with their clients, Hodge and Williams (2002) advised, "The ultimate goal is to provide a nonjudgmental atmosphere in which consumers' spiritual strengths can be freely explored in a respectful manner that dignifies their worldview" (p. 589) and "The spiritual ecomap . . . can be adapted to many other populations" (p. 593). Since this researcher was not a first generation college student, her culture was not necessarily the same as the culture of her subjects. A data collection tool that could cross cultures benefitted this research.

Last, changes in relationships and influences were made visible when more than one spiritual ecomap, each created by a subject at different points in time, were compared (Hodge, 2000, p. 226).

Monthly responses. In between the two interviews, this research included a third data collection method. This method was written documentation, recorded electronically and privately. The documentation took the form of responses to posted questions. Subjects were also asked to review and update their spiritual ecomaps every month. The monthly responses and updates provided the opportunity for progression or development of faith and spirituality over time.

Sampling Design

This researcher intended to use a purposive criterion, cross-sectional sample. Qualitative researchers used purposive samples to select subjects who were most likely to provide relevant information (Patten, 2014, p. 159). This research was about first generation college students, so this status was the main criteria for the research sample. Within the population of interest, this researcher wanted to sample freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Although the diversity of college class added complexity to the study (p. 159), this researcher was interested in having students from all four years of college in the study in order to best represent the various experiences and influences of first generation college students during their entire college education.

Since this was a qualitative study, this researcher intended to sample 10-12 students. Because this researcher wanted the results to have a broader application, she intended for approximately five or six subjects to be from Christian colleges or universities, and approximately five or six to be from secular colleges or universities.

Additional demographic information was collected after participants are selected, so that readers of the research would have a more comprehensive understanding of the participant (Patten, 2014, p. 159). This demographic information included age, gender, socio-economic status, major of study, race/ethnicity, and denomination (if applicable). Demographic information was shared in aggregate, or individually, when doing so did not personally identify a subject.

This researcher planned to send an email invitation to identified first generation college students at private Christian colleges and public universities. Institutional Research or Registrar's offices identified Christian, first generation college students and sent an invitation on this researcher's behalf (so as not to share non-directory information with her).

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection occurred throughout one academic year. The research began with an interview at the start of the academic year and concluded with an interview at the end of the academic year. The semi-structured interviews used the questions in the research proposal, which were refined through field testing. Interviews occurred in a neutral setting on each of the college campuses where the researcher intended that students would feel comfortable sharing about their experiences confidentially, and in which the interviews would be visible to others. This researcher recorded the conversations with an instrument that was unobtrusive, so as not to attract unnecessary attention to the conversation. This researcher took notes with a LiveScribe pen. Each interview took approximately one to one-and-a-half hours. The first meeting was approximately one-half-hour longer to cover the consent form and other introductory information. In between the two interviews, subjects interacted with their spiritual ecomaps and answered written questions electronically.

In the initial invitation, participants were informed about both parts of the research plan. At the first interview, the research plan was reviewed, and subjects read a consent form, asked clarifying questions as needed, and signed the form. The subjects provided a personal email address for the researcher to use to communicate with the subjects and collect data. Subjects either chose to use a current personal email account or created an email account for this research. They were told that the interviews would be recorded, and they could cancel their participation in the research at any time. Also, they were told that they would have the ability to review the data analysis results, correct them, and send them back to the researcher. The Consent Form is available in Appendix B.

Using the personal email address each subject provided at the initial interview, this researcher planned to create either an individual Dropbox folder or Google Drive folder for each subject and invite each subject to his/her Dropbox or Google Drive folder (http://www. dropbox.com or drive.google.com). This creation and invitation took place at the initial interview, so the subject was able to ask any questions about the installation process and ensure access to the Dropbox or Google Drive. Although most of the data collection was most easily done using a personal computer, the Dropbox or Google Drive installation could take place on either a personal computer or smartphone or tablet. A copy of the consent form was posted in the Dropbox or Google Drive folder. The Dropbox or Google Drive folder was used for data collection between the two semi-structured interviews.

Since the Dropbox synced to a folder on the subject's personal computer or tablet/smartphone, and had built-in notifications, the subjects who used the Dropbox were notified when a change was made in the Dropbox. Therefore, the subject did not need to be actively checking his or her personal email account to be reminded to participate in the

research. For students who used the Google Drive and did not respond within a week, the researcher sent blind carbon copy emails to their school email address to notify them about changes in the Google Drive folder.

Spiritual ecomap. Subjects started their initial interview with guided construction of their spiritual ecomap. The goal of this conversation was for the subjects to discuss the relationships, influences, and meanings of their current spiritual system. In creating a spiritual ecomap with a subject, Hodge (2000, 2002) suggested that interviewers explore God, rituals, the faith community, and spiritual entities (such as angels or demons) with subjects.

Barry and Abo-Zeba (2014) outlined several influences in the spiritual lives of today's emerging adults. In addition to those influences suggested by Hodge (2000, 2002), this researcher also planned to suggest Barry and Abo-Zeba's (2014) list of influences to the research subjects. These influences were parents, peer relationships (siblings, friends, romantic partners, and acquaintances), media, the law, religious congregations and communities, and higher education (climate, curriculum, and co-curriculum).

Although her article provided a protocol for a counseling session and long-term treatment, Yasui's (2015) steps for using the ecomap were helpful for the data collection protocol for this researcher. First in Yasui's article, the researcher asked the subject for general themes of influence; next, the researcher probed for specific examples of each of these influences. Third and fourth, the researcher asked for general themes of barriers and specific examples of these barriers (pp. 97-101). The themes and specific examples could be used in data analysis.

Since recording physical responses was part of taking field notes in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009, pp. 128-129), this researcher needed to write reflections immediately following the interview, also taking care to record non-verbal responses (pp. 109-110).

The spiritual ecomap construction guidelines are available in Appendix C. The initial explanation of the spiritual ecomap, along with clarifying questions and concluding theme questions, are available in Appendix D.

The subject created the initial spiritual ecomap for each student using either Microsoft Powerpoint or Google Drive's Google Drawings. At the initial interview, the researcher shared an ecomap template via email or Google Drive with the subject. If the subject did not have a laptop at the interview, the subject would have been able to sign into the researcher's laptop as a guest and use Microsoft Powerpoint. After the interview, the subject saved the Powerpoint presentation or Google Drawing as a pdf and uploaded it to the subject's Dropbox or Google Drive account. If the subject was using the researcher's laptop, the subject uploaded the Powerpoint presentation to the subject's Dropbox.

The working version of the Powerpoint or Google Drawings was saved on the subject's laptop or within the subject's own Google Drive account. The subject had a choice of using the cloud-based Google Drive or the non-cloud-based Microsoft Powerpoint product. If using Google Drive, the subject assumed the responsibility for the privacy of his or her own Google Drive account.

Semi-structured interview. In order to gather additional data, this researcher also asked a few semi-structured interview questions after the completion of the ecomap. The semi-structured interview questions are available in Appendix E. Because the researcher

referred to the ecomap, she honored the work the subject created, and therefore was reflecting with the subject on the subject's world. The intentions in this approach were to continue to lessen the power differential between the researcher and the subject, and to use the subject's construction as the "home base" for the research.

The interview questions directly addressed the aspects of faith development stages. Fowler et al. (2004) recommended that at least three instances of a stage be identified in an interview. In order to keep the length of the interview session under two hours, this researcher did not ask three questions for each aspect. Instead, this researcher anticipated that subjects would reveal the cognitively-based aspects throughout their conversations with her, so that she would be able to identify and code at least one or two aspects apart from a direct question about the aspect during the year. This researcher also hoped that some of the aspects would be revealed as the subject constructed the spiritual ecomap.

Monthly responses. Once a month, this researcher added a document to the Dropbox or Google Drive with a couple questions for participants to respond to in writing. When the document was posted, Dropbox notified the participant via email and a pop-up on their personal computer's taskbar. The anticipated amount of time a participant needed to respond to a prompt was 15-20 minutes. The instructions that described how participants should use the Dropbox or Google Drive were refined through field testing, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Over the four months of written responses, this researcher addressed each faith development aspect directly with one or two related questions in the written component of the data collection. The questions related to those aspects that may have taken longer to

develop, based on this researcher's estimation, were placed at the initial and final months of the study. Written questions are in Appendix F.

An overview of all data collection exercises and interview questions, and the relationship of each to this study's research questions, is listed in Table 2.

Organizational chart.

Table 2

Organizational Chart of Questions and Data College Methods

Research Question	Faith Development Aspect	Initial Interview Questions and Exercise	First Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Second Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Third Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Fourth Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Preparation for Final Interview	Final Interview Questions and Exercise
1. How did first generation college students' spiritual influences and spiritual relationships develop or change during their college experience?	(Not applicable)	Construct Spiritual Ecogram. Consider the influence of God on your life. If he is not on your spiritual ecomap, why not? Are there any names or attributes of God that resonate the most with your personal life right now? What are some words or themes you would use to describe how God influences your identity? Theme	Revise Spiritual Ecogram	Revise Spiritual Ecogram	Revise Spiritual Ecogram	Revise Spiritual Ecogram	Revise Spiritual Ecogram	Review all Spiritual Ecograms and provide interpretation of changes: Pretend you're me, analyzing your ecomaps over the year. What do you see? What explanations can you provide for what you see? Theme questions: Choose one or two positive (and one or two negative) spiritual influences from this ecomap. How
2. What language was used by first generation college students to describe their own spiritual development?	(Not applicable)			What does spirituality mean to you? How do you think about your own spiritual development?				

98

Research Question	Faith Development Aspect	Initial Interview Questions and Exercise	First Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Second Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Third Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Fourth Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Preparation for Final Interview	Final Interview Questions and Exercise
	(Not applicable)	questions: Choose three or four positive (and one or two negative) spiritual influences from this ecomap. How would you say these people or events positively (negatively) influenced your spirituality? If you had to sum up their influence in a few themes, what would these themes be? Can you give me specific examples of the ways these people or events positively (negatively) influenced						would you say these people or events positively (negatively) influenced your spirituality? If you had to sum up their influence in a few themes, what would these themes be? Can you give me specific examples of the ways these people or events positively (negatively) influenced your spirituality?

Research Question	Faith Development Aspect	Initial Interview Questions and Exercise	First Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Second Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Third Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Fourth Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Preparation for Final Interview	Final Interview Questions and Exercise
2. What language was used by first generation college students to describe their own spiritual development? (continued)	(Not applicable)	your spirituality?						
3. How did first generation college students show faith development during their college experience?	Form of Logic		Do any of the influences or relationships in your spiritual ecomap represent a turning point, resolution to a conflict, or breakthrough for you? If so, describe what happened. If not, talk about a turning point or breakthrough in your life.					

Research Question	Faith Development Aspect	Initial Interview Questions and Exercise	First Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Second Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Third Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Fourth Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Preparation for Final Interview	Final Interview Questions and Exercise
3. How did first generation college students show faith development during their college experience? (continued)	Social Perspective Taking	Pick two people in your spiritual ecomap. Have there been any changes in your perceptions of each of these people since you've known them? What caused these changes? How do they think about you now?			Pick someone in your spiritual ecomap that you've known for a while and describe your current relationship with them. Have there been any changes in your perceptions of them since you've known them? If so, what caused these changes? How do you think they think about you?			

Research Question	Faith Development Aspect	Initial Interview Questions and Exercise	First Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Second Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Third Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Fourth Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Preparation for Final Interview	Final Interview Questions and Exercise
3. How did first generation college students show faith development during their college experience? (continued)	Form of Moral Judgment			Do you think actions can be right or wrong? What makes an action right? Can you give me an example?		Did anything happen lately that resonated with you as being "right" in the world? How about "wrong" in the world? Why were these happenings either right or wrong?		
	Bounds of Social Awareness	How do you define your group? Which of these people (from the spiritual ecomap) are in your group? In what ways do you feel you fit in your group, and in what ways do you feel that you do not fit in your group?				Which of the people from your spiritual ecomap are in your group? How do you define your group? How well do you feel you fit in your group?		

Research Question	Faith Development Aspect	Initial Interview Questions and Exercise	First Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Second Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Third Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Fourth Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Preparation for Final Interview	Final Interview Questions and Exercise
3. How did first generation college students show faith development during their college experience? (continued)	Locus of Authority	Would you say that any of these people or influences has authority in your life? If so, why do they have this authority? If not, who or what would you say has authority in your life?				What gives your life meaning?		
	Form of World Coherence		What is something about God or the Christian faith that does not make sense to you? Why doesn't it make sense? What is your best explanation for it? How does your best explanation compare to what you've heard from other people?		Is there anything about God or the Christian faith that started making sense to you this year? (a) If so, what was it? How did you figure it out? How does your understanding compare to what you've heard from other people? (b) If not, why do you think			

Research Question	Faith Development Aspect	Initial Interview Questions and Exercise	First Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Second Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Third Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Fourth Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Preparation for Final Interview	Final Interview Questions and Exercise
3. How did first generation college students show faith development during their college experience? (continued)	Form of World Coherence (continued)				there isn't anything that has started to make sense to you about God or the Christian faith this year?			
	Symbolic Function	Are there any words or images (symbols) that have meaning in your spiritual world, or that are especially important to you right now? If so, what does that word/symbol mean to you?			Are there any words or images (symbols) that have meaning in your spiritual world? Or that are especially important to you right now? What do these words/symbols mean to you, and why are they important?			

Research Question	Faith Development Aspect	Initial Interview Questions and Exercise	First Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Second Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Third Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Fourth Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Preparation for Final Interview	Final Interview Questions and Exercise
4. In what ways did first generation college students' spirituality affect their perceived success at college?	(Not applicable)							What would an academically successful year look like to you? A socially successful year? An emotionally successful year? (a) Did you have this kind of "successful" year? Why or why not? (b) How did your spirituality help or hurt your achieving of success this year, in any or all of these areas?

Research Question	Faith Development Aspect	Initial Interview Questions and Exercise	First Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Second Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Third Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Fourth Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Preparation for Final Interview	Final Interview Questions and Exercise
5. How did first generation college students describe their spirituality in comparison to others, if at all?	(Not applicable)	How is your spirituality similar or different from the spirituality of your parent(s) or guardian(s)? Why do you think this is? Spiritually, how well do you feel you belong at home? Why do you think this is? How is your spirituality similar or different from the spirituality of your classmates, most of whose parents went to college? Why do you think this is? Spiritually, how well do you feel you belong at	With whom could you share your explanation and still feel like you would be accepted or belong?		With whom could you share your recent understanding and feel you would be accepted or belong?	If you talked with anyone about them, who did you talk to, and how did they respond?		Is your spirituality similar or different from the spirituality of your parent(s) or guardian(s)? Why do you think this is? Spiritually, how well do you feel you belong at home? Why do you think this is? Is your spirituality similar or different from your classmates whose parents went to college? Why do you think this is? Spiritually, how well do you feel you belong at college? Why

Research Question	Faith Development Aspect	Initial Interview Questions and Exercise	First Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Second Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Third Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Fourth Monthly Written Questions and Exercise	Preparation for Final Interview	Final Interview Questions and Exercise
5. How did first generation college students describe their spirituality in comparison to others, if at all? (continued)	(Not applicable)	college? Why do you think this is?						do you think this is? In which community (home, college, church, elsewhere) do you feel the greatest sense of spiritual belonging? What does spiritual belonging mean to you? How important is it to you to have a sense of spiritual belonging?

For the conclusion of the data collection, this researcher met again with each participant for 30-60 minutes. The subject had uploaded a final version of their spiritual ecomap before the meeting. At the meeting, this researcher showed subjects their original and revised spiritual ecomaps and asked for their interpretations of the spiritual development displayed throughout the revisions of the ecomaps. The researcher also asked additional final semi-structured interview questions, which were other opportunities for the subject to reflect on his or her spiritual development over the study. The subject was also invited participants to share any concluding thoughts or reflections. The researcher also planned to use this meeting to ask any questions to help clarify her initial data analysis.

After this researcher finished data analysis, she posted her tentative analysis or their data in the respective subject's Dropbox or Google Drive for their review and comment. This review by research subjects was known as member checking and contributes to the validity of the research (Creswell, 2009, p. 191). If questions and comments were not easily resolved electronically, the researcher was prepared to the subject to meet with her a final time.

Confidentiality and Privacy

To ensure subject confidentiality, the researcher kept a key that connected participants with their pseudonyms. This key was stored separately and securely from the collected data. The consent form explained that each participant would use or create a personal email address and pseudonym. This researcher reminded participants to keep their Dropbox or Google Drive and email login information secure so that their responses remained private.

Dropbox was a secure, encrypted, cloud-based file storage and file sharing program. The Teaching and Learning Technology staff at the researcher's university suggested the use of Dropbox to this researcher for her research. A basic account was free and only required an email account. In setting up their Dropbox account, subjects were able to choose their first and last names. In this research, subjects were asked to use their pseudonyms as the first and last names for their Dropbox accounts. The researcher then recognized and continued to correspond with subjects by their pseudonyms. The only two identifiers between the subject and the Dropbox data were the subject's personal email address and pseudonym. In order to manage the risk of data loss on this cloud-based server, this researcher also planned to download copies of Dropbox or Google Drive documents to her personal computer and external hard drive every week.

As will be further discussed in the data analysis section, this researcher was planning to use Dedoose for data collection and analysis (http://www.dedoose.com). Dedoose was a secure, cloud-based software service. Data was stored on a cloud-based server. However, Dedoose also provided a project specific encryption feature, so that only the researcher (project creator) had an additional encryption key that needed to be entered in order for the project to be accessed (Dedoose, 2015).

The researcher's personal computer was always locked and password protected, and she was the only user with an account on the personal computer. The personal computer was set with password-protected sharing, so only people with a user account and password on the computer could access shared files. The data was backed up on an external hard drive, which was locked in a fireproof box that could only be accessed by the researcher.

Creswell (2009) stated that data needed to be kept for several years after analysis is completed (p. 91). Once five years have elapsed after the completion of this dissertation, this researcher will purge electronic files and shred paper files of her research.

Field Test

This researcher field tested the spiritual ecomap, interview questions, and monthly prompt questions with four or five college students whom she knew from church. She asked each of them to complete one or two of the data collection methods. Although they were continuing generation college students, and therefore ineligible for the study, this researcher knew they would give her honest feedback from the perspective of a college student about how to improve the data collection tool.

Data Analysis

This researcher planned to use a constant comparative approach to the data analysis. Patten (2014) explained the constant comparative approach as a type of grounded theory. Patten's definition of grounded theory was unlike Merriam's (2009) definition (pp. 29-31). For Merriam, grounded theory was a researcher's approach to data collection and analysis that included creating a theory that explained the data. For Patten (2014), grounded theory was an approach in which researchers openly coded and categorized the collected data, and then analyzed the coded data for emerging themes and relationships (p. 169). This research followed Patten's approach.

The constant comparative approach to data analysis involved data analysis during data collection. Researchers carefully reviewed and categorized one set of data before gathering the next set of data. Once the next set of data was gathered, it was compared to the first set of data. The continuing data collection could be adjusted to focus on emerging ideas

or find more details about recurring concepts (Merriam, 2009, pp. 170-171; Patten, 2014, p. 169).

Expected data and analysis software. This researcher expected to gather data in the form of audio recordings of spoken words and electronic records of diagrams and typed words. She planned to use Dedoose software for the qualitative data analysis, since it was accessible and inexpensive, and since other doctoral researchers in her program had used it successfully. For her analysis of students' use of digital interfaces (Tarsa, 2015), education researcher Rebecca Tarsa explained her choice of Dedoose for data analysis (2013). Although she felt the coding analysis stage was tedious, in the end, Tarsa (2014) said she would use Dedoose again. In Dedoose, this researcher added the demographic data about each subject of the research, such as the subject's age, gender, school, class, and major field of study.

Transcription and coding. Because the initial data collection was through interviews, this researcher transcribed each interview into a Microsoft Word document and uploaded it to Dedoose. She also uploaded each recording and linked it to the transcript. This researcher then read through the transcript in Dedoose and made excerpts in the transcript when an idea related to the research questions. She attached a category code to the excerpt in Dedoose.

In order to take the constant comparative approach, this researcher transcribed, uploaded, and coded each interview before doing the next interview. She planned to have her dissertation advisor review the first transcript and coding before conducting another interview. Feedback from an objective third party was meant to assist with initial data

analysis. Once interviews were uploaded and analyzed, this researcher worked on the monthly prompts.

Reflection. This researcher also kept a journal of her reflections on the excerpts and categories. In this journal, she also paid attention to her biases and assumptions in order to increase the credibility of her findings (Merriam, 2009, p. 219). This researcher planned to make notes about the data analysis categories on index cards, so that she could arrange the categories spatially and look over the ideas without the computer.

Category refinement and theme discovery. In the first few interviews, this researcher anticipated having 25-30 categories (Merriam, 2009, p. 187). As the research continued, this researcher refined the categories. Using Dedoose analytics, such as graphs and word frequency pictures, this researcher made sub-categories within larger categories and found relationships between categories (Patten, 2014, p. 169). She intended to challenge her categories and relationships by imagining other explanations or angles from which to make sense of the data (Merriam, 2009, p.199). These alternate explanations or angles could have come from the literature review. The researcher intended for the dissertation committee members to help challenge her analysis, since they were not as attached to the data as this researcher was, and since they had different ways of thinking about the research topic. In the end, this researcher intended to find 5-7 themes that addressed the research questions (Creswell, 2009, p. 189). These themes may have been more theoretical than descriptive and could have formed sub-headings in the final dissertation chapters (p. 189).

Report of findings. The report of findings could have the 5-7 themes as sub-headings underneath the appropriate research questions. The report could include graphs or

charts of the data analysis from Dedoose to explain how this researcher derived the themes. Within each sub-heading, this researcher used excerpts from the data to support the theme.

Anticipated challenges. Merriam (2009) said that researchers really only understood the process of data analysis when they started working with their own data (p. 175). The challenges this researcher foresaw were those that she thought she would discover as she started analyzing her own data. She expected to feel overwhelmed at the beginning and in the middle of the data analysis process. At the beginning of the process, she anticipated not knowing how important an idea was in a transcript, or whether to trust the categories she would be making. In the middle, she anticipated she would not know how to re-categorize after finding discrepant data and would question her own objectivity. This researcher thought that critically reviewing her journal would help her make sense of her own thinking during the analysis process. Finally, this researcher anticipated finding the Dedoose software to be challenging to learn and use. Having never used data analysis software, this researcher thought she might find limitations with the chosen software and might reconsider the choice of software for the data analysis process. One of the reasons this researcher was planning to use Dedoose, however, was because it was inexpensive, so that she would not feel stuck by an investment in software if she found it too limiting or cumbersome. However, from previous experience with software in her line of work, this researcher also knew that pushing through initial frustrations with new software could enable her to take advantage of the benefits of the systems.

Limitations of Methodology

This researcher anticipated that her socio-cultural background, religious background, and age would affect her relationships with the participants and her interpretation of the data. She expected that her role as researcher also would also her relationships with the participants.

The research design did not provide a comprehensive view of a first generation college students' journey of spirituality and faith development during college. This research did not follow subjects through all four or more years of their college experience.

This research design also did not provide a comprehensive view of faith from multiple religious or non-religious belief systems. It was focused on one religion, Christianity. As a qualitative study, this research was not intended to be generalized to a larger population of first generation college students, such as in the metropolitan area or state. Also, while first generation college students may have identified with a lower socio-economic status or historically marginalized race or ethnicity, this researcher did not intend for this research to provide an in-depth analysis of these characteristics of the students' background or identity.

Ethical Considerations

As discussed in the Belmont Report (1979), respect for persons has been essential in ethical research. For all students who were interested in becoming involved in the research, this researcher let them know that their participation was optional; the research was expected to be for two semesters; the research involved two interviews and monthly online participation; their responses would be kept confidential with pseudonyms; they would be able to review and edit the results for accuracy; they could contact this researcher or her

dissertation advisor with any questions about the research; and they could opt out at any time. Subjects who completed the entire study were compensated with a $25 gift card after each semester of participation. The gift cards were emailed to the subjects' personal email address. A copy of the consent form was provided to the subject. After students submitted a consent form, they created a research-related email account with a pseudonym and password of their choice.

Beneficence and justice have also been essential principles in ethical research (Belmont Report, 1979). The potential risks of the qualitative research were that students could have shared information that was personally identifiable, depending on the uniqueness of the information, and that they may have felt uncomfortable sharing information about their personal beliefs, decisions, values, and experiences. To respond to this potential risk, the researcher asked students to highlight any demographic data that they did not want released.

The potential benefits of the research were that institutions who responded to the research findings could have been better able to help more first generation college students to remain enrolled and receive four-year degrees from higher education institutions. In this case, the category of students who was involved in the research, first generation college students, was the category that would directly benefit from the results of the research. The likelihood that the group that was researched, first generation college students, was the group who would have benefitted from the application of the research corresponded to the justice principle of the Belmont Report (1979).

Chapter 4: Results

Participants

After receiving IRB approval from one institution in the spring of 2016, the researcher field tested the initial interview with four continuing generation traditional undergraduate college students that she knew personally. They gave her feedback on the demographic data collection, the instructions, the spiritual ecomap instructions and construction process, and the interview questions. She also tested recording devices during field testing.

At the same time, the researcher contacted multiple institutions in the metropolitan area in order to gather first generation college student participants. In order to receive a breadth of qualitative data, the researcher intended to have participants who attended multiple kinds of colleges and universities. The Institutional Review Boards of three institutions—a private, Catholic university; a private, secular university; and a public university—approved this research for study at their institutions. The researcher contacted the Institutional Research or Registrar departments of the three schools to request they extend an invitation to first generation college students at their institutions. All three Institutional Research departments would not provide assistance to outside researchers.

Two private, Christian, liberal arts institutions in the metropolitan area agreed to support this research. The Institutional Research or Registrar's Offices at each university contacted first generation college students who were registered in their traditional undergraduate colleges for the upcoming fall semester. Using data from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), they identified first generation college students as those

who had answers of "middle school/junior high" or "high school" to the questions, "What is the highest school parent 1 (2) completed?"

Between the two institutions and over six months, this researcher gathered 12 qualified participants. Their demographics, as relevant to this study, are available in Appendix G. She had initial interviews lined up with two additional participants, but for reasons that could be indicative of first generation college student general characteristics, they did not meet with her for the interviews. One of them could not find the study room in the library, and then dropped out of college before scheduling another attempt at the interview. On three separate attempts, the other had a baptism to attend, then lost her phone while downtown with friends and needed to attend to recovering it, and then lost her keys and student ID and had to go home to eat meals. She asked the researcher for a phone charger, so the researcher helped her check one out from the library, and the student got a ride home from a friend who was not enrolled at the university.

Data Collection

The researcher scheduled initial 90-minute interviews with each of the 12 final participants. These interviews took place between the end of August 2016 and beginning of November 2016. At one institution, the interviews took place at tables in the student commons building or a windowed conference room. At the other institution, the interviews took place in a windowed library study room. Each interview was recorded with a LiveScribe pen and Sony digital recorder. In two cases, one of the recording instruments failed, so the back-up recording was essential. Each student created a pseudonym and personal Google email to use for the research. These pseudonyms were used for the duration

of the research. Throughout the study, the researcher shared documents with the participants via Google Drive.

Four times between the initial interview and the final interview in April, the researcher contacted the participants via email to ask them to update their spiritual ecomap and answer two to three questions on documents she had provided in the Google Drive. Because each participant began the study at a different time and had varying response rates, the timing of each of these notifications was different for each student. Primarily, participants updated their ecomaps and wrote responses once every four to six weeks. In one case, a student's ecomaps were only two weeks apart. In another case, the student missed updating an ecomap one month because of surgery and recovery.

The day of the first interview, the researcher started a dissertation journal. This journal kept ideas, discoveries, biases, limitations, processes, and questions. The researcher reviewed the journal throughout the data collection and analysis process.

As the research was underway, the researcher made slight adaptations to the monthly responses and interview questions. In November, a direct question about the definition of spirituality was added, in order to help answer Research Question 2. In January 2017, wordings were revised on several other monthly response questions to better gather data for Research Question 3. An analysis about the ecomaps was added to the final interview questions. All adaptations were reviewed by the dissertation committee.

Data Analysis

A third party transcribed the initial interviews for the researcher and sent them to her as they were completed. Starting in December 2016, the researcher listened to the interviews, edited the transcripts, and uploaded them to Dedoose.com, the qualitative

research analysis software she chose to assist with data analysis. The transcripts were coded with topics that related to the research questions. Within each topic, subtopics were created to describe the students' perspectives about the topic. Some of the codes were weighted numerically, to indicate stages in Fowler's theory (3, 4, or 5), or to indicate positivity, neutrality, or negativity (such as -1, 0, or 1).

After coding five students' transcripts, the researcher analyzed the codes she had created. Some codes were collapsed and others were combined. The resulting codes were used for the remainder of the interviews. If new theme arose, a corresponding code was added to capture that theme.

After coding all 12 initial interviews, and being more familiar with the complexity of assigning Fowler stages to interview excerpts, the researcher re-read parts of Fowler (1981) and Fowler et al. (2004) in order to create a self-guide for rating faith development stages for each of the seven aspects. The aspects and stages in all related excerpts in the initial interviews were re-rated with this guide. This re-rating provided a greater reliability through a second, more consistent application of the faith development stages. Separate memos highlighted the faith development stages and aspects in each interview, and a Fowler stage was assigned to each student's initial interview.

The researcher then reviewed all five research questions to make sure their topics were represented with codes. New codes were created for Research Questions 2 and 5, and the initial interviews were coded a third time. All codes were then simplified and reorganized.

After refining codes, the researcher transcribed the final interviews. She then uploaded and coded each student's monthly responses and final interviews in sequence, so

119

she could see and feel themes and progressions throughout the year for each student. Separate memos recorded the Fowler aspects and stages identified in each monthly response and final interview, and Fowler stages were assigned to each month. A subtopic code was added when a new theme arose that did not fit into an already existing code.

The spiritual ecomaps were not imported or coded in Dedoose. Having recognized that the spiritual ecomaps were five-dimensional, the researcher sought a way to represent the five dimensions visually. The five dimensions were the (a) positivity, (b) strength, and (c) direction of (d) each influence over (e) time. She found Tableau Public (https://public.tableau.com). The dimensions of positivity, strength, and negativity were converted to numerical data in order to be represented on the charts. Since the software required stored charts to be published online, the five-dimensional charts were captured with screen shots and saved on the researcher's computer. An example is in Appendix H.

The Dedoose software was an affordable choice. However, it would not be chosen again for further qualitative research. The coding process was very slow, since the software treated each document like a .pdf. Multiple seconds elapsed between an excerpt highlight and right-click in order to drag-and-drop a code to the excerpt. Positively, Dedoose helped with organizing the material and locating relevant excerpts. However, its analysis functions were very limited. The word clouds only showed the frequency of codes, and the export of code data did not provide weights. The researcher hand-typed her own spreadsheets based on data views in Dedoose in order to analyze weight-related codes. Most of the qualitative analysis tools showed code frequency or code counts, neither of which was helpful for theme analysis.

After this initial analysis, the researcher performed member checking. She shared each participant's interview transcripts, ecomap chart, and codes related to the research questions with the respective participant. Each participant was asked to review the ecomap chart and assigned codes to confirm if these items represented how the participant was thinking and feeling at the times of the interviews and written responses.

Each of the methods and approaches used to analyze the data are covered in the Research Question sections below, along with the findings. After an analysis of each research question, a synthesis provides themes that represent the phenomenon of spiritual development by first generation college students during their college experience.

Research Question 1

How did first generation college students' spiritual influences and spiritual relationships develop or change during their college experience?

The interviews, written responses, and ecomaps provided data to address this research question. The researcher first created codes for the relationships and other influences on spirituality that were prominent in the literature. As the data collection progressed, she added codes for other influences that students referenced. The codes and their definitions or examples, as relevant, were as follows:

Table 3

Codes for Spiritual Influences or Relationships

Code	Definition or Examples
Church Community	Home church, college church, or a Christian community outside of school (which could be a para-church organization)
College Spiritual Programming	Dormitory Bible studies, chapel, student-led worship nights, spiritual life committees, or ministry events and outreaches
Culture	Cultural identity, college culture, or social culture
Education	Connections and opportunities, exposure to ideas, its intersection with beliefs, busyness, or grades
God	-
Media	Books, online sermons, movies, social media
Mentors	-
Nature	-
Parents	-
Peers	Siblings, romantic partners, friends and similar-aged acquaintances from home, or friends and similar-aged acquaintances from college
Personal Spiritual Disciplines	Bible reading, prayer, or fasting
Serving Others	Parachurch ministry leadership, church volunteering, or child sponsorship programs
Student Life Programming	Student government, residence life, or intercultural student programs
Work	-

Presence and significance of spiritual influences in interviews and written responses. The researcher did not analyze these influences by frequency of use, because frequency did not indicate how significant these influences were to the students. Instead,

frequency showed how often the students talked about the influences, which might be related to the questions the researcher asked instead of the significance of the influences themselves.

However, a positivity value was added to help interpret the effects each of the influences had on the students. The influences were weighted on a positivity scale of 1-3 (3 being positive, 2 being neutral, and 1 being negative), and Dedoose provided averages of the weight of each influence by characteristics of the participants, such as numbers of years in college.

The "years in college" descriptor was used to analyze much of the data, because this research studied the phenomenon of spiritual development during the college experience, which is multi-year. This research was not quantitative; therefore, any observable patterns cannot be normalized to the larger population of first generation college students. However, in reviewing influence weights by "years in college," several patterns stood out. These observations may be characteristic of spiritual development during the college experience and might warrant further study:

- The most positive influences were church community, God, student life programming, and college spiritual programming (in that order).

- When the influence of parents was more positive, the influence of peers was more negative or neutral.

- The influence of siblings was similar to the influence of parents.

- The influence of media grew in positivity from freshman to senior year.

- The influences of mentors and church communities increased between freshmen and sophomore year, and then increased slightly between junior and senior year.

- The influence of God did not change.

Presence and significance of spiritual influences in spiritual ecomaps. The spiritual ecomaps were designed to illustrate changes in spiritual influences and relationships over time, so they provided more data for analysis than the interviews and written responses. The researcher converted the positivity, strength, and direction of the influences to numbers in order to represent the ecomaps visually in graphs with five dimensions. The spiritual ecomap graph provided in Figure 2 is an example of a student who had all colors, shapes, and sizes on her ecomap. Another spiritual ecomap graph is provided in Appendix H.

Influence	Month					
	September	October	November	January	March	April
Dad	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Mom	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Sisters	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Brothers	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Husband	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Son 11	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Son 9	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Son 6	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Childhood friend	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Church	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Education	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
God	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Tithing	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Volunteer	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Fundraiser	◆	▲	▲			
Past	◆	▲	▼			
15K in April				▲	▲	▲
Grades				◆	▼	▼
Stepmom				◆	◆	◆
Christian friends					◆	◆
Sponsoring 3 children						◆
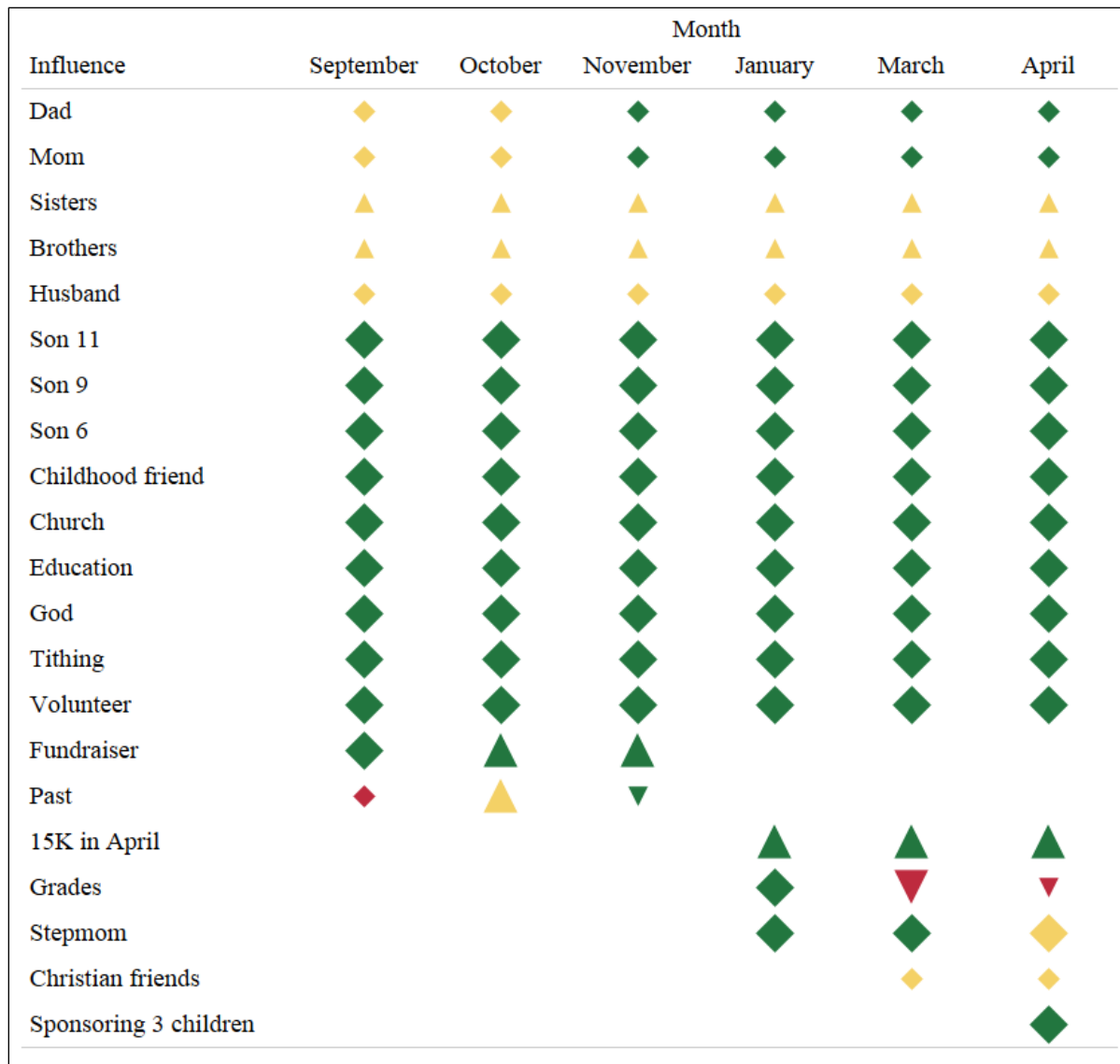
Figure 2. Spiritual ecomap graph. The vertical axis lists the items the students had on their ecomaps. The horizontal axis lists the months in which the ecomaps were created or revised. Color shows positivity of influence: green was positive; yellow was neutral; red was negative. Size of shape shows strength of influence: large was strong or strengthening; small was weak or weakening. Shape shows direction of influence: a diamond represented energy or effort going both ways, a triangle showed energy or effort going from the student to the item, and an inverted triangle showed energy or effort going from the item to the student.

The researcher did a preliminary analysis of the positivity and strength of influences using averages of the numbers used to create the ecomap charts. The three options for direction could not be represented on a two-dimensional spectrum, so an average of the numbers used to represent direction on the ecomaps could not be meaningful. Positivity/negativity and strength/weakness were two-dimensional measures, however, so their numbers could be averaged and provide some meaning. Yet, these measures are not ordinal, so the averages were only hints at positivity or strength of influences.

Home and college spheres of spiritual influence per student. Using the number averages for positivity and strength, the researcher first categorized the influences into "home" and "college" spheres. She assigned personal influences, such as "my career goal" or "media," to the sphere in which the student was living. Five students—one freshman and two sophomores who lived on campus, and the junior and senior who lived at home—had more positive influences at home than at college. Three students—all sophomores—had stronger influences at home than at college. The majority of students had stronger influences with higher positivity at college than at home.

Spiritual influences at the beginning and end of the year per student. Next, to see change over the year, the researcher compared the average positivity and strength of influences on each of the students' first and last ecomaps. The majority of the students ended the year with higher positivity in influences. About half of the students had stronger influences at the end of the year than the beginning of the year.

Three students had more positive influences on their initial ecomaps than their final ecomaps. They also had stronger influences at the beginning of the year than the end of the year. This research is more descriptive than causal; therefore, further research to explain the

reasons for these changes is warranted. However, the researcher was not surprised by the results for these three students because of the narratives the students had provided during the year. In the final interview, one of the students said he started the year very strong and then put less time and effort into communicating with God or attending church by the end of the year. Another of the students had surgery and a mental health diagnosis during the year. Finally, the third student said she struggled to find connection with peers, and this struggle negatively affected her spirituality. In February, she said:

I have been going through a tough time finding where I fit in the [college] community; I feel as if I am in between two friend groups, and neither fully accepts me. The word Abide reminds me that in Christ, I belong; I don't need to have a designated group of people because all I need is Him.

In March, she said:

Right now my spiritual world is pretty dark. Living in an in-between of friend groups and feeling like you don't belong and are not wanted anywhere are challenging spaces to exist in. It's honestly a struggle to even sing worship songs at church, because I'm beginning to wonder, what difference does it make? And it's not that I am not trying to find light in all the darkness and tension; I'm going to church, spending time in the Word, and striving to be in community with others.. [*sic*] But honestly it feels like an empty pursuit.

Analysis of the spiritual influences in conglomerate. Next, the researcher analyzed the influences that the students put on their ecomaps as a group. She looked at the influences, in conglomerate, in the following categories:

- Which items influenced the students (were present on their ecomaps, with direction toward them)

- Which items the students influenced (were present on their ecomaps, with direction away from them)

- Which items influenced the students the most (strong, with direction toward them)

- Which items the students influenced the most (strong, with direction away from them)

- Which items' influence did not change throughout the year

- Which items' influence changed:

    o From strong to weak

    o From weak to strong

    o From positive/neutral to neutral/negative

    o From neutral/negative toward positive/neutral

- Which items were added

- Which items were removed

A summary of the items in these categories is available in Appendix I.

Influential items. All participants listed their family members (father, mother, siblings) as influential, because that was the first instruction in the ecomap creation. Therefore, the presence of family members as influences was not remarkable. Knowing an item was influential was just part of the analysis; the more insightful data was how the item influenced the student, since this information helped inform suggestions for the future.

Most influential items. Those items that were most influential—including family members—were as follows:

1. Roommates (7/10 possible participants, since two participants lived at home)

2. Mother, Siblings, God, College Peers (which included roommates), Clubs, Mentors (7/12)

3. Father, Home Peers, Education/Professors/Classes (6/12)

4. Chapel (5/12)

5. Work (3/12)

Changes in influence. The items that did not change in type of influence were nearly all positive, strong, and with energy going in both directions. Among all students, the most prevalent unchanging items were family members, God, home peers, and home church.

Among all students, the items that changed the most were roommates and college peers. They changed in strength and positivity, sometimes both directions on both spectrums for the same student, during the year. One student summarized these kinds of changes:

So Roommate One and I were super close, and Roommate Two and I started to fall away a little bit more, and since Roommate One and I were so close, it was like pretty good [during November], but it was starting to fall away, but then it started getting worse and worse, and then Roommate One and I started falling away [in March], and Roommate Two and I got stronger, and now, Roommate Two and I are great. (April).

Frequently, as in the excerpt above, it seemed that students may have correlated the spiritual influence of a relationship with the relational and emotional health of the relationship. Crystal said as much to the researcher when talking about her initial ecomap: "Oh, this is for spiritual relationship? I thought it was just like relationship in general." (November).

129

The items that changed least were in the home sphere, and items that changed most were in the college sphere. It is reasonable to conclude that home relationships were more stable than college ones, or students were more affected by college relationships than home ones, or both.

The frequency of changes, however, did not indicate whether these changes were positive or negative, or strong or weak. Therefore, the researcher calculated the net changes among all students. A net of the changes in positivity and strength for all students throughout the year is in Appendix I. Since only changes in items were included in this analysis, no conclusions about the overall influence of these items among all students could be made. Therefore, because they analyze a subset of data in isolation, the net of changes in positivity and strength cannot provide any conclusions on their own but could be a starting place for further study.

During the year, students added and removed influences and relationships from their spiritual ecomaps. The spiritual influences that were added during the year were in the college sphere. The spiritual influences that were removed were in the home sphere.

Again, the researcher netted the additions and removals and created the following list:

1. College Peers, including Roommates (+8)

2. Work (+4)

3. Education/Professors/Classes (+3)

4. Mentors, Service, Clubs (+2)

5. Home Peers, Roommates (+1)

6. Home Church (-2)

For the four students who added work as an influence, three of them found their jobs on campus or through college connections. Two of the four students who added education, professors, or classes were taking classes that directly related to the Bible or spirituality. Calvin explained:

I added classes and professors [to my ecomap] this last time because I'm a missional ministries major, and now that I'm getting into those classes, I didn't even realize how much those were affecting like my spiritual journey and faith. So those have been really helpful and really, really great. I guess two classes in particular, so like Intro to Reconciliation Studies and then Spiritual and Faith Formation. [The professors] are [great], totally, and I just have learned so much from them. They're amazing. (April).

Inconsequential analyses. The researcher also conducted two inconsequential analyses. She looked to see which month had the most changes for each of the students (proportionately for each student). This analysis was inconsequential because it did not address any of the research questions. She also analyzed the influences the students put on their ecomaps by year in college to see if there were any trends or observable patterns. She found none.

Content of spiritual influences in interviews. Finally, the researcher analyzed the content of the final interviews, in which the students discussed the changes they saw in their ecomaps throughout the year and also provided themes and examples of the ways in which they experienced positive and negative (or neutral, if they did not have negative) influences on their spirituality. In this content analysis, she looked for themes and reasons.

Reasons for spiritual influence. As the students discussed the influences that were listed on their ecomaps, the researcher summarized the reasons for these influences. In the summaries, the following words surfaced (in descending order):

1. Talk (8)

2. Time (5)

3. World (4)

4. Personal (4)

5. Church (4)

6. Problems (3)

7. Connect (3)

8. Advice (3)

9. Together (3)

10. Career (3)

11. Others (3)

12. Goals (3)

Using these words, the essence of influences on students' spirituality could be reformed into a sentence such as this:

> My spirituality is influenced by those people or communities where I can talk with others about the world, my problems, my career, my goals, and other personal things, and they will take time to connect with me and offer advice.

The students provided several examples of this essence of spiritual influence in their lives. Sadie demonstrated this type of influence when talking about her roommate, who had become a close friend over the year:

I understand more about her, and we can talk to each other about almost anything.

This happened through many moments of uncontrollable laughter and hours of

serious conversation, staying up late into the night and waking up crabby for class.

We very quickly became best friends, and as I grew to trust her, we grew to become

sisters. (January).

And again, in April, Sadie shared more details about what made this relationship a

positive spiritual influence:

I feel like the random conversations we have, even if they don't happen all the time,

they're just really like fulfilling, I guess. It's not always just like superficial stuff, like

we can go deeper so that's good. She might argue with me, but she is not gonna, like,

put me down because I might think differently or whatever, and then we can discuss

things.

Perhaps the most succinct example of the essence of spiritual influence came from

Liza, in talking about one of her fellow Resident Assistants:

Especially like when [I was dealing with challenges], she was just a safe place to go.

She was super good at listening and she knew when to talk and when to give advice.

So there was an understanding in that, but it wasn't just like advice, it was like

leading me to Christ through her advice, which is like huge in relationships for me.

Yeah, and that was in a ton of situations, it wasn't a one-time thing. (April).

Themes of spiritual influences. Last, students provided themes for the positive and

negative (or neutral) influences on their spirituality, and an example for each of the themes.

Using their responses, the researcher categorized and summarized the positive and negative

themes.

Positive themes.   First, the researcher sorted the themes into two types: presence and interaction. The types and themes are available in Appendix J. These themes suggested that students had positive spiritual experiences when they had people in their lives that were open and available to them, listened to them, talked to them as equals, affirmed them, and were present when life was difficult. The researcher noticed over-arching themes of support, intentionality, and community.

Abbie gave this illustration of support from a friend of hers from home:

We're always, we've both been linked in with depression and anxiety, so we'll call each other, pick up if we can, leave a voicemail, call each other right back, listen to each other, speak, I don't know, give them comfort or encouragement if we need it, or just let the other person talk if that's what they need, too. Yeah, mutual like actually caring about each other, like wanting to listen to the other person. Yeah, just like being there for me. (April).

At both schools in this study, students had been allowed some freedom of expression through painting on a large rock in the middle of campus. In October 2016, both colleges experienced divisive, racially-themed incidents on campus when these rocks were painted with negative messages toward non-dominant student populations. Waverly, an East Asian/Southeast Asian student, shared how her home church community provided a positive spiritual experience for her during this season:

I think this week—this past week—I experienced a lot of pain, but I also was able to give it to God and be embraced through community. So with last week when it happened, I was one of the first people with—two of my roommates—that were also part of it [to] see the individuals cover the rock. And that was really painful. And, so

after that, like, just being in community and being loved. I told my church right away what happened, and I can't even tell you how many like love responses and support responses that I got, of prayer and love and really feeling like I was supported and loved on. (October).

Students also had positive spiritual experiences when they pursued relationships with others who would intentionally talk about spiritual things and challenge them to work through difficult things, pray through temptations, seek after the things of God, and choose wisely. Some of the intentionality came from others, and more of it came from within themselves and their desires.

Otto shared how he pursued spiritual relationships with his mentor and roommates as he defined the positive spiritual themes of love and persistence:

Love is like pushing towards real friendship, real relationship, like learning how to love someone, like despite anything really. . . . I think just a simple example would be the opening up to one another, like sharing those deep things that you literally haven't shared with a single person on earth and knowing, maybe not expecting, but knowing in your mind that it's not going to change the way they see you. . . . Persistence is one thing. That's more of persistence in seeking after God, but also pushing other people in like being, lighting a fire under someone's butt if they're not feeling it, and really pushing someone forward or pushing alongside someone, pulling someone, doing whatever you can to pull them toward God, push them toward God. (April)

Pepper's mentor and men's Bible study group at school provided intentional spiritual experiences for him. Sadie sought after people and resources that would help her grow spiritually and address how she was feeling about her spirituality. Waverly illustrated both

her intentionality in pursuing spiritual influences and the intentionality of a professor from her church reaching out to her:

> I'm intentionally meeting with [one of the campus pastors], intentionally keeping up on social justice, intentionally thinking about the environment. [The college professor from my church] has had a huge role in intentionality, like in the ways that she has, like, the way she has talked to me and the words that she has used and like the way that she affirms me and affirms my leadership, like she was at the Asian Heritage Celebration and supporting me in that way, so her intentional relationship has really developed a positive relationship between us. (April).

Finally, some students found positive spiritual growth in a larger group, with people who are seeking after spiritual growth together or being a community of Christians together and serving others. Pink expressed her spirituality through her participation in her church and other Christian organizations to help others. She explained the recent addition of sponsorship to her spiritual ecomap:

> I've always wanted to sponsor kids, like my friend at work talked about it and yeah I found three kids and decided to sponsor them. . . . The nine-year-old is from Cambodia so that's where my parents are from, and the other two are from Africa, from Tanzania. After taking Peoples and Cultures of Africa [at college], that's where I felt like I wanted to sponsor. . . . And like what I do, I feel like—you know that God is always there. I'm always thinking about what he would want, or what I—I don't know how to explain it, my relationship with him, it's important. This is my thought process, like how I look at others in wanting to help others and not always think about myself. (April).

Negative (or neutral) themes. The researcher sorted the negative or neutral themes into three categories, as presented in the table in Appendix J. The categories were absence in relationship, friction or conflict in relationship, and personal or emotional themes.

Some of the influences were negative or neutral because the students were not in consistent contact or presence with the other people—or even with God or the church. When Liza moved to college, she spent less time with her mentor from home, and their spiritual relationship became neutral. Pepper experienced inconsistent connection and communication with his family members, church, and God:

> Well I think it's just the lack of communication, consistent communication. I just
> don't interact with these people very much, but then you know like God, Holy Spirit,
> church, you know, it's probably time as well, it's communications. You know,
> they're all pointing at me [on the spiritual ecomap], so I do believe that they're—the
> Holy Spirit and God–they're doing their part, and I do think I receive some of that,
> you know. 'Cause I'm not completely—I don't shut them out intentionally, but I think
> naturally it's not a two-way deal because of the lack of time that I give. And yeah
> that's true of God, Holy Spirit, and church. (April).

Other influences were negative because of friction, conflict, or dissatisfaction within the relationship, whether the relationship was with classmates, a roommate, a parent, a romantic partner, a mentor, or a church. Some of these conflicts were passive, and some were active.

For Emily, active conflict involved a feeling of top-down control from others. Emily experienced friction during the year with her dad, who started to demonstrate his spirituality

by doing such things as starting a ministry and expecting Emily to be involved in it. She felt similarly about her college's student life and spiritual programming:

But [my college's] community is great, but—OK, [my college's] community is forced, I think. You're forced to do events, you're forced to do hall events or Bible studies. You're not forced to go, but the RAs are forced to put them on. So it feels like it's too much pressure. (April).

The passive conflicts were a lack of connection or understanding. Sadie felt a spiritual lack of connection with most of the churches she visited at college. Calvin shared that she and her mentor seemed to have different expectations for their relationship, which she decided to end:

Yeah, so I think with [mentorship], I tend to be the type of person who needs [a mentor] to ask me questions, and she was waiting for me to say something, and I didn't know what to say because I'm not going to just pour everything out. . . . It wasn't that one thing really happened, it was just kinda like we weren't really connecting really well, and it was causing me more stress, it kinda felt that I was her mentor sometimes, so it was kinda hard for me to say, thank you, but . . . I did it through email, which maybe wasn't the best way, but also that was the way we were communicating. (April).

Finally, personal and emotional themes were mostly triggered by other events. For Abbie, a breakup triggered anxiety. For Pink, poor grades, which she thought she could have been prevented, led to shame:

Well, grades would be [a negative theme] mentally 'cause I feel like I tried but I just can't get it right. Like negative things like I'm dumb or something; things that I

could have done better, things like that. . . . [An example is] I just took BIO over again. . . . I could have done better but I didn't really calculate my GPA and aim for the goal that I should have got. It took me through the class without knowing what grade I should aim for. 'Cause if I did that, I wouldn't be having to take two summer classes, or even having to take any summer classes at all. [She started to cry]. (April).

Crystal felt a lack of confidence in explaining spirituality. For Heidi, a mental health issue in her family and a tragedy in her friend's family led to a lack of confidence in spirituality:

[The negative spiritual influences were] very random. And they kind of knocked me down in terms of confidence in my spirituality. Because, like my best friend's brother being arrested, like, it's like wow, how could that happen, you know? And I had to say it because it did make me question God, like 'Why did you let that happen to such a nice family?' You know, because they were, they were a nice, generous, family, and it was crazy to just—out of the blue. (April).

Summary. Their most positive spiritual influences were the church community, God, student life programming, and college spiritual programming. Most students had more positive spiritual influences at the end of the year than the beginning of the year.

Among all students, the most prevalent unchanging items were family members, God, home peers, and home church. Living at home or remaining connected at home encouraged positive and strong spiritual influences from home. While the items that changed least were in the home sphere, the spiritual influences that were removed as influences were also in the home sphere.

Among all students, the items that changed the most were roommates and college peers. The spiritual influences that were added during the year were in the college sphere. It is reasonable to conclude that either home is more stable than college, or that students are more affected by college than home.

Students' spiritualities were influenced by people who took the time to talk with them and give them advice about the world, their problems, careers, goals, and other personal issues. Students had positive spiritual experiences when they had one person or a community of people in their lives that were open and available to them, listened, talked on an equal playing field with them, affirmed them, and were present when things were difficult. Students also had positive spiritual experiences when they pursued relationships with others who would intentionally talk with them about spiritual things and challenge them. Students also found positive spiritual experiences in larger groups, as people were being a community of Christians together and serving others.

Students interpreted some spiritual influences as negative or neutral because of their lack of contact or connection with each other. Friction, conflict, or dissatisfaction within a relationship also made some relationships negative or neutral as spiritual influences. Finally, some negative spiritual relationships and influences triggered difficult emotional thoughts and feelings for students.

Research Question 2

What language did first generation college students use to describe their own spiritual development?

The researcher used the interviews and written responses to address this question. She used data in which the students directly and indirectly defined spirituality and spiritual

development from their perspectives. The researcher did not define spirituality for any of the

students, and none of the students asked her what spirituality meant.

Definition of spirituality. First, the researcher analyzed how the students defined

spirituality. She started by reviewing the sections of the interviews in which students talked

about the positive and negative influences on their spirituality. This section of the interviews

defined how students' spiritualities were influenced but did not identify what students meant

by spirituality.

She used a constant comparative method of data analysis (Merriam, 2009) to create

the students' definitions (p. 175). She started by writing down phrases that summarized how

a couple of the students talked about their spiritual influences. Some examples of phrases

were "attending church," "following rules about what to say and do," and "knowing the

Bible." She took these items and put them into general categories of "relating to God,"

"relating to others," and "improving oneself." Merriam (2009) identified this interpretive

categorization of phrases (or codes) as axial or analytical coding (p. 180).

As the researcher continued this process with other students' data, she developed a

grid of six categories with more explanatory subcategories. Since the literature made a

distinction between religious and non-religious elements of spirituality, the researcher

incorporated that distinction into the categories. She kept the three main categories of focus

on God, focus on self (person), and focus on others. She then divided these into religious and

non-religious content. The codes and categories are available in Appendix K.

The students directly defined spirituality in response to the second month's written

response question. They indirectly defined spirituality in the interviews and other written

responses as they discussed their spiritual influences and relationships. The researcher used the six categories and subcategories to code the direct and indirect responses.

   Direct definitions. When directly asked to define spirituality, students focused the most on religious themes about God and themselves. The most frequent themes, with some exemplary excerpts, were these:

1. Relating to God (Jesus, Holy Spirit), such as through hearing, waiting, pursuing, accepting, loving, getting mad, being wowed, listening, or spending time with Him. (God: Religious).

My personal definition of spirituality is being close to God, talking with Him, and letting Him guide me. (Sadie, November).

2. Experiencing God (Holy Spirit), which includes feeling His presence. (God: Religious).

When I fast for days, weeks and months I feel the closest to God. I know that when I fasted the first time in my walk with God, he opened up my eyes more to the things I didn't know. (Pink, November).

3. Reading the Bible and praying. (Person/Self: Religious).

My spiritual disciplines have been much better. Reading/listening to the bible [*sic*], daily praying, and simply keeping Him in my mind in all I do (as much as I can remember) has been much better than it ever used to be. (Otto, November).

I then started to go to [college] and I started to grow greatly in my spiritual development. I began to read and understand the bible [*sic*] more than I ever thought I could. I truly started to enjoy reading and grasping the full understanding of God's word. (Cherry, January).

4. Understanding who God is. (God: Religious).

As I grow and learn more and more about God and about myself and discover his will for my life, I get closer to him. (Calvin, November).

Spirituality is the sense of being a child of God and the active participation in trying to know God more. (Liza, January).

5. Being a spiritual being who relates to God (Holy Spirit). (Person/Self: Religious).

Spirituality means being in touch with your own personal spirit and doing things that feed your spirit for good or for bad. I think we are made up of the mind, body, and the spirit. We need to invest in each of these for us to truly be whole and holy people. I identify my spirit as being the Holy Spirit. I believe God has given me his Holy Spirit and now I have the opportunity to walk in that Spirit at all times. I say I have the "opportunity" because I do not always actually walk in the Spirit of God but I have the choice to do so. (Pepper, November)

Spiritually means I am a spiritual being, created with a soul and a spirit with space made for the Holy Spirit to enter inside of us. It means I have the holy spirit [*sic*] and it is a part of my every day. It is with me always. (Calvin, November).

Indirect definitions. When students indirectly defined spirituality by talking about spiritual influences and relationships in their lives, their themes were both religious and non-religious, and they focused the most on other people. The most frequent themes, with exemplary excerpts, were these:

1. Having close relationships that include personal and spiritual conversations. (Other people: Non-religious).

Some thing [*sic*] that happened that resonated as being "right" was a friend from my freshman floor and I started hanging out weekly and talking about our lives openly and honestly with each other. It has been really great for both of us to feel so invested in our friendship and to be able to talk about our personal lives together on coffee dates. I think this felt right because I believe we were designed to be relational beings and I, personally like talking one-on-one to people. (Calvin, March).

Comparing [my high school friendships] to my friendships here, and realizing what a real friendship is and realizing it's not just taking pictures of each other and putting them online, and it's not just videotaping each other every moment that we can get, it's like being present with one another and wrestling with challenging things and I think that was huge in my forming of my relationships with my college friends here. (Waverly, April).

2. Attending church, chapel, and youth group. (Other people: Religious).

[People] always would question like, "Why are you going to church?" And I'm just like, "'Cause I like going to church." I love going to church. It's like my thing—I've been doing it since I was—you know—born! Like why would I not? They're like, "Well 'cause God doesn't exist," and I'd be like, "Well, I really hope you find Him someday." (Heidi, November).

That is so, one of my best friends here—also one of the guys I'm living with—started a ministry through his church with his mentor, and it's pretty—It's a Bible study, but it's basically just a church that meets on Thursday nights, and so there's ten— somewhere between like 10 and 20 people so far, that show up, and it's a very spiritual experience, like it's—I've never been somewhere like that, where I've

experienced and felt God as consistently as I do there, along with everyone else that shows up also has similar feelings like that. (Otto, September).

3. Connecting things in life to God and His plan. (Person/Self: Religious).

It's just funny, that you see these doors opening, and it's funny when you look back and you see doors opening and closing, and you're like "Wait a second!" For me, it's hard to see that this is God's hand right now, like I just know that God's in this, but when I look back, I'm like "Oh my gosh, I see it." (Emily, April).

4. Relating to God (Jesus, Holy Spirit) such as through hearing, waiting, pursuing, accepting, loving, getting mad, being wowed, listening, or spending time with Him. (God: Religious).

I think it's great—like I get mad at Him—as everyone does, but it's like I'll get upset about things that He's doing, and stuff like that, and then like, a week later, I'm like— "Whoa! He did that—Wow!" So it's kind of like I don't like spend like a certain amount of time a day like talking to Him—that was what me and my mentor talked about. Like I constantly do it, in my head, and it's not even like me talking to myself. It's like I'm thinking about it. It's something I constantly think about. (Crystal, November).

You know, I'm listening, and I'm always trying to listen, and it's like, I can never hear anything and I don't know if it's—it must be me, because like I don't think it's God, obviously, because He's perfect. So I'm always listening and waiting and waiting. I'm just thinking, in my mind—He's dealing with something more important right now. I'm just waiting, you know—it's not the right time yet. Like I'm sure He's positively sending good energy and stuff, so I'm just waiting. (Heidi, November).

5. Encouraging, helping, and caring about others (mostly friends). (Other people: Non-Religious).

So, [one of my friends from home]—we'll call each other, pick up if we can, leave a voicemail, call each other right back, listen to each other, speak, I don't know, give them comfort or encouragement if we need it, or just let the other person talk if that's what they need, too. (Abbie, April).

The mentors would help me with like teen girl problems, my mom just encourages me with everything, whether it's spiritual or anything else, you know. And working at church camp . . . they see you, they give you a hug, we all do our work, we're joyful about it. [It's] just very encouraging to be with that group of people. (Sadie, August).

6. Avoiding sin and obeying the Bible. (Person/Self: Religious).

They like are all positive influences like I don't hang out with the people that I used to and I don't have the negative of like—the pressures of the world, in like their sin, and I'm focusing more on like a positive worldliness. I still worry about these things, like how I dress, what I do, what music I listen to, what people think of my social media and stuff. I think I'm focusing less on that now because I'm in a place where I—you need to learn how to put God first. (Crystal, April)

I don't live my old life anymore, and that would have been like drinking crazily and doing drugs. So, I gave that up. I wanted to get married, so I could honor Him, because I didn't believe in marriage [before]. . . . I wanted to honor God. I knew that was what he wanted for us, and—I don't know, just believing in God and literally what marriage was about. [I learned that from] reading the Bible. (Pink, August).

Frequency of categories. Combining the direct and indirect definitions of spirituality, four categories were equally prominent, and the other two were much less frequent. The overall frequency of categories was:

1. Other people: Non-religious (74)

2. God: Religious (73)

3. Person/Self: Religious (73)

4. Other people: Religious (72)

5. Person/Self: Non-religious (38)

6. God: Non-religious (5)

The researcher reviewed the ratio of religious and non-religious themes for each student. Nine students had similar frequencies in both categories. Two students, Pepper and Otto, had a high ratio of religious themes, and one student, Waverly, had a high ratio of non-religious themes.

Both Pepper and Otto were graduating seniors who talked about intentional decisions and efforts they were making toward their spiritual development and relationships with others. At the beginning of the year, Waverly observed that God was indirectly connected to her life through others. At the end of the year, she questioned conventional spiritual constructs and how to apply spirituality to her life in an authentic way. Given this state of reflection, it may not be surprising that her definitions of spirituality were less religious.

Waverly said:

At the peak of [my mom being sick], her and I had lunch and we've had lunch a couple times and I've just been able to really see her and see God and realizing that like my image of God isn't like a White male but it's actually it's more an immigrant

Asian woman. The strength that I see in my mom I see in God, and I think it's hard to talk about that with people especially in the church and to have people really understand what that means to me, and so I think that's why I've been like going to different churches and like I haven't really been going to church lately. . . . And like coming back to [college after the Spring Break mission trip] and seeing the way that people like interact with their faith is, isn't right to me. Like I don't know, I don't know if I would agree with, and I think that has to play with why I'm not going to church, like I don't know how I want to see my faith, I don't know what that looks like, I'm not really sure what it means to live in my faith and also live in this community and not be superficial about it. (April).

As with Research Question 1, the researcher analyzed the frequency of themes by the students' "years in college," to potentially get a picture of how these themes might appear or change throughout the college experience. While any observed patterns cannot be normalized to the larger population of first generation college students, a few stand out for potential further study:

- Studying the Bible in a group increased year by year. (Other people: Religious).

- Encouraging, helping, and caring about friends increased year by year. (Other people: Non-religious).

- Having close relationships that include personal and spiritual conversations decreased year by year. (Other people: Religious).

- Having a sense of purpose decreased year by year. (Person/Self: Non-religious).

The researcher also noticed that the definitions of spirituality fell into four main topic areas, which have some overlap: interpreting life and learning, understanding one's identity,

acting and behaving, and relating to others (including God). When the researcher ranked frequency of themes by these topic areas, four of the top six themes, including the top two, were in the category of relating to others (including God). See Appendix L.

Definition of spiritual growth. Second, the researcher analyzed how students defined spiritual development or spiritual growth. This question was addressed directly through a written response in the second month of the study. As students described their own spiritual development, several themes emerged.

Personal effort. In most cases, spiritual development required personal effort and was achieved by doing spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, Bible reading, evangelism, fellowship with other Christians, and fasting. Pepper recognized his role in spiritual growth through spiritual disciplines:

> My own spiritual development consists of me being intentional about how I surrender more of my earthly, human spirit and obtain more of the Spirit of God. I think there are many practical things that feed the Spirit of God that is living in me, such as reading the Word, prayer, worship, and fellowship with fellow believers. (November).

> Crystal applied herself to spiritual disciplines, which changed as she grew spiritually: I've gone from being a complete unbeliever to speaking with God everyday [*sic*]. It started in small doses like praying and reading a daily devotional. When I got to [college], I started attending chapel everyday [*sic*] and participating in daily worship along with praying and taking time out of some part of the day to just be with God. (January).

God's involvement. In some cases, students recognized that God was also involved in their spiritual development. Pink discussed how she connected with God through the spiritual discipline of fasting, and Otto also connected spiritual disciplines with his relationship with God:

Reading/listening to the Bible, daily praying, and simply keeping Him in my mind in all I do (as much as I can remember) has been much better than it ever used to be. Because of this, I'm learning more about God. Because I'm learning more about Him, I feel closer to Him. (November).

In contrast, Sadie recognized that God was involved in her spiritual development even when she did not put time into relating to Him through spiritual disciplines:

My spirituality, my relationship with God, is highly important to me, but it is difficult at the same time. I go through rough spots, or I forget, or sometimes I feel like I don't have time to spend time with God. That obviously does not help me with my spiritual development. Even though I am not spending much time with Him, I feel like He is carefully guiding me. For example, He guided me into going on a Spring Break Mission Trip. . . . Already my participation with the mission trip is making me realize that God is in control. He's got it, and that is something I need to remember in my daily life. (November).

The community's involvement. Also in some cases, spiritual development was contingent on the student's community. Waverly noticed that God spoke into her life through multiple communities of people:

When I think about my own spiritual development, I think of multiple communities

that have supported my spiritual journey. I imagine God speaking into my life

through the multitudes of people in my life. (January).

Emily found that being surrounded by people with different backgrounds and ideas

helped her grow spiritually:

I think my own spiritual development has been stunted a little since arriving at

college. I think I was expecting a Christian University to really push me in my

spiritual development, but it hasn't. I think if anything, it has hindered me from

growing. I was excited to come here for the Christian atmosphere and environment,

but I have been missing out on the real world and the different souls and ideas out

there because this school has put me in a Christian bubble. I think my spiritual

development in high school was growing well, since I was in an environment with a

lot of opportunities to meet people with different backgrounds, and I am sure that will

continue once I leave this university and head off to a big-girl job. (January).

Images and goals. Consistent with most developmental theory models, students

identified spiritual development as a time-based phenomenon. Waverly explained that her

spiritual life had a beginning. Liza said that her spiritual life had a past, present, and future.

Heidi identified that she grew spiritually every day:

I believe that I am growing spiritually every day of my life. There is always

something new I find out about myself and my spirituality. (January).

It was not surprising, then, that four of the students provided images of spiritual

development that illustrated movement in time and space. For a few students, "going up"

symbolized positive spiritual growth, and "going down" symbolized negative spiritual

growth. Calvin drew a picture of a wavy line from the bottom left corner to the upper right

corner. She then explained it:

> I am on earth and the moment I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and savior [*sic*], I
>
> started this journey to eternity. I can never earn my salvation, but as I grow and learn
>
> more and more about God and about myself and discover his will for my life, I get
>
> closer to him and am still on this journey going up towards heaven. I drew a squiggly
>
> line because there are definitely ups and down along the way, but through it I am one
>
> step further than I was before in my journey. (November).
>
> Cherry provided a vivid image of her spiritual growth experience:
>
> I do not feel like my spiritual development is necessarily like a roller coaster but more
>
> like a staircase. When I grow to the next level of my spiritual development then I stay
>
> there for a long time and my development stays constant, but when I grow in my
>
> faith, it's like a big step in my spiritual development. (January).
>
> For most students, the goals of spiritual development were temporal, and most

involved relational intimacy with God or surrender to God. Abbie explained that she wanted

to stay close to God in order to have purpose and joy in life:

> I want to be closer to Him and Holy Spirit because honestly without them life is just
>
> so much more.. Bland.. Dull.. [*sic*] almost colorless. When I live in touch with Christ
>
> my life has purpose and I am filled with joy, even when things get tough. I want to be
>
> in that place again and hope that I am able to get there and stay. (December).
>
> For Liza, the goal of spiritual development was being united with God in heaven, in

eternity:

My spiritual development is very much both in the past, present, and future. I don't

think it will end until I am reunited with our Father in heaven and His full glory is

revealed to me. (January).

Summary. Students defined spirituality with religious content when directly asked

for a definition. They provided non-religious content when talking indirectly about

spirituality. Overall, other people were most often the focus of these definitions, and non-

religious content was slightly more prominent than religious content. Next prominent were

religious content about God and religious content about the students' own personal

development.

For students, spirituality focused on other people, such as in having positive

relationships, treating other people well, and engaging in spiritual and religious practices

together. Spirituality also involved relating to God and knowing God as a spiritual Person.

Spirituality also was about developing the part of one's personhood that was connected to

God and could grow, mature, and be transformed. Students defined spiritual development as

a long-term progression of getting closer to God in relationship with Him.

Research Question 3

How did first generation college students show faith development during their college

experience?

Some of the initial interview questions and most of the monthly written response

questions were designed to assess students' stages of development in the seven aspects of

Fowler's (1981) Faith Development Theory. Since the faith development stages were

numbered (1-6), the researcher first quantified her ratings and analysis. Then she turned to a

qualitative review of the students' faith development stages according to the seven aspects.

Data preparation. In data collection, the researcher assigned a faith development stage to each aspect identified in an interview or set of written responses. She assigned a 3 for the Synthetic-Conventional Stage and a 4 for the Individuative-Reflective Stage. None of the students met the criteria for stages 1, 2, 5, or 6. The researcher then took notes about the ratings she had made.

Sometimes, she assigned a 3 but discussed in the notes how the student was showing transition to stage 4. Other times, she assigned a 4 because the student was close to a 4. After making these assignments and writing notes, she stepped back and looked at all the aspects that she had assessed for a month's written responses or interview. Viewing these aspects as a group, she assigned one of four stage labels as a summary for that month's written responses or interview. The four stage labels were "Three," "Three with Some Transition," "Three with a Lot of Transition," and "Four."

The researcher then plotted the numbers across the six months of data collection per student to look for patterns. After noticing that the second month's results seemed out of place for several of the students, she re-examined the data for that month. Only one of the essay questions that month was related to Fowler aspects, and it was one of the aspects that the researcher found difficult to rate. Since the rating that month was potentially weak, she removed the second month essay out of this analysis. An example of the resulting charts is in Figure 3.
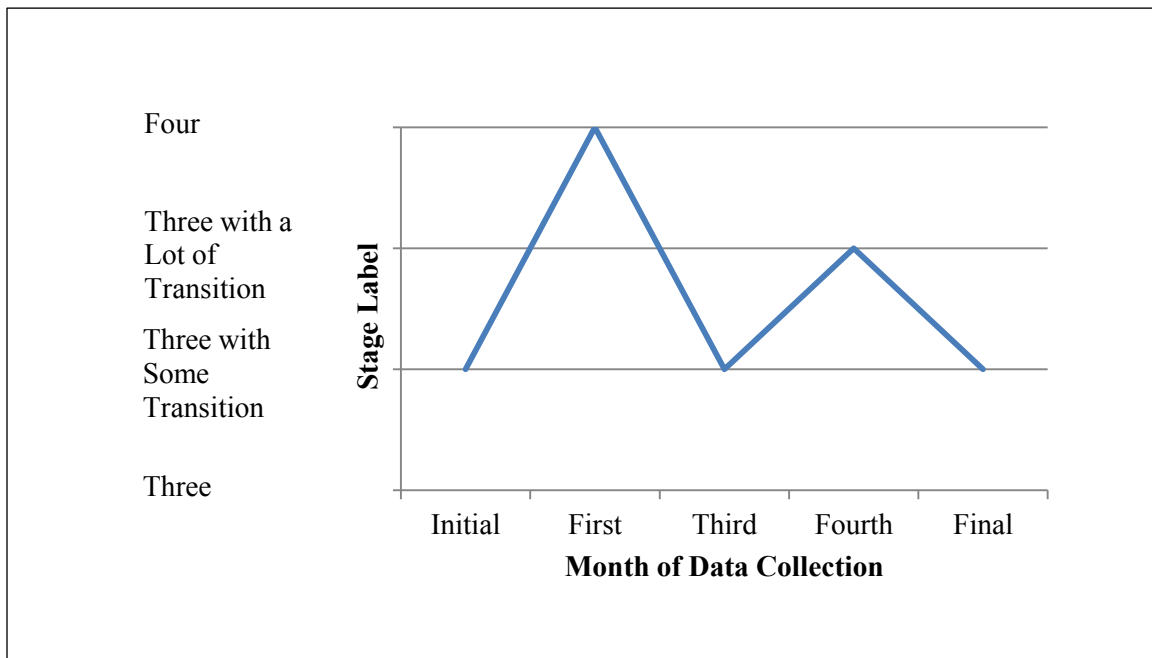
Figure 3. Fowler stage labels for one participant. Five of the months of data collection are on the x-axis, and the four stage labels are on the y-axis.

Next, the researcher analyzed the Fowler stages by each of the seven aspects, per student. If an aspect was coded and rated more than once in a month, the corresponding plot on the chart was an average, which could have been between 3 and 4. This analysis was numerical and resulted in a bar graph for each student. An example is in Figure 4.
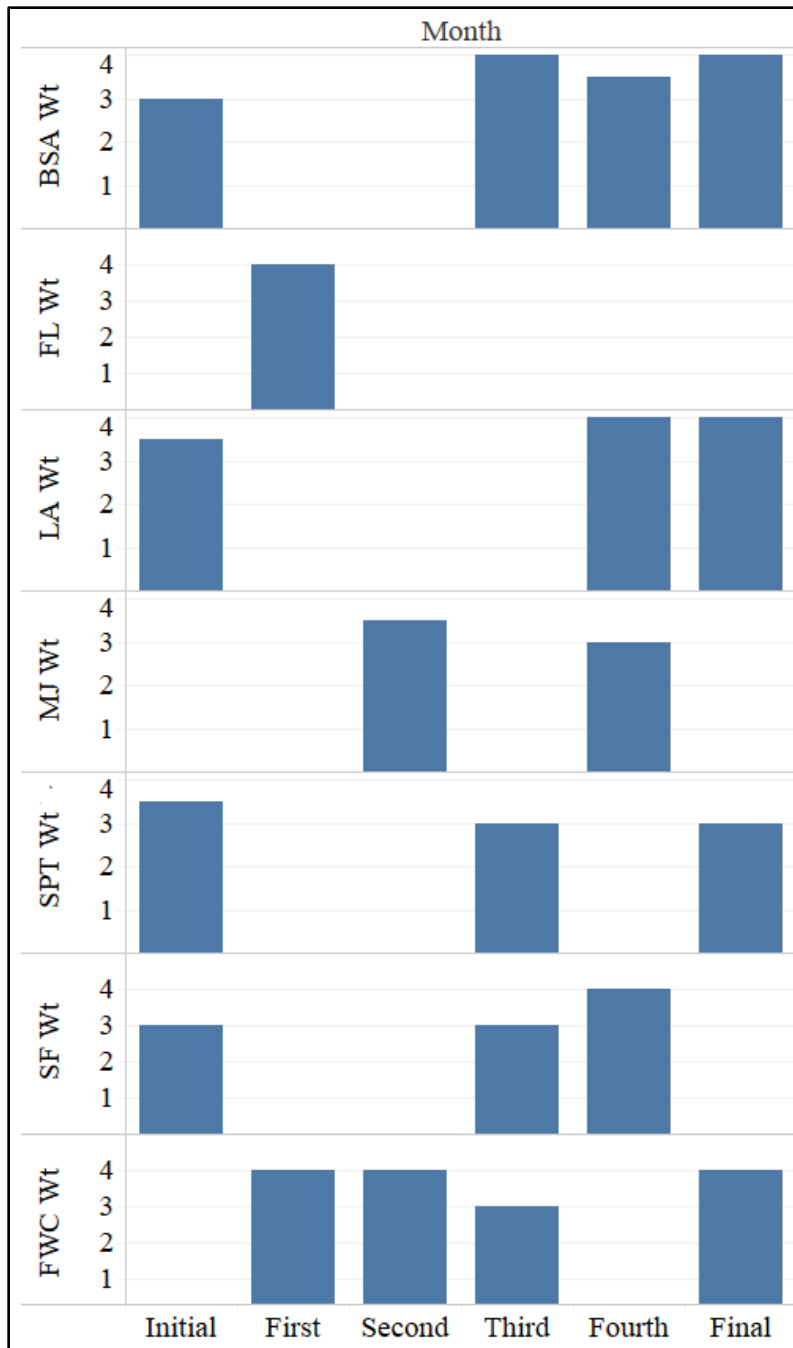
Figure 4. Stages of faith development assigned to the seven aspects of the Fowler (1981)

faith development theory during the six months of evaluation for one participant. The seven

aspects are Bounds of Social Awareness (BSA), Form of Logic (FL), Locus of Authority

(LA), Moral Judgment (MJ), Social Perspective Taking (SPT), Symbolic Function (SF), and

Form of World Coherence (FWC).

The researcher then prepared for a qualitative discussion of the faith development stages by each of the seven aspects. She reviewed the notes she had taken when coding and assigning ratings to the aspects in the students' interviews and written responses. For each aspect, she identified themes that related to Stage 3, Stage 4, and a place of transition between Stage 3 and Stage 4. Using her notes, the researcher made a chart that listed these themes and the student and month in which she had identified the theme. The chart of themes is available in Appendix M.

The researcher then compared her notes to the ratings on each of the bar graphs and made some adjustments to the bar graphs if needed. Finally, she reviewed the chart of themes to create categories and make observations.

Analysis of Fowler stage ratings. All but one student progressed in Fowler (1981) faith development stages during the year. The one who did not progress was rated as "Stage 3 with A Lot of Transition" all year. This finding seemed to match Holcomb's (2004) description of the change in Fowler stages between freshmen and seniors at Christian liberal arts institutions. In her findings, it appeared that over 60% of the students could have progressed at least one Fowler stage (or partial stage) during their four years of college (p. 6686).

As with the previous two research questions, the researcher analyzed the stage label patterns by the students' "years in college," to potentially get a picture of how these stages might change throughout the college experience. While any patterns she observed cannot be normalized to the larger population of first generation college students, a few stand out for potential further study:

- Four of the sophomores remained between "Stage 3" and "Stage 3 with Some Transition" all year.

- A fifth sophomore progressed to "Stage 3 with A Lot of Transition" in the final interview.

- The juniors remained between "Stage 3 with Some Transition" and "Stage 3 with A Lot of Transition" all year.

- Two of the seniors demonstrated three different stages, non-sequentially. There was no clear pattern to the changes.

- The third senior moved sequentially from "Stage 3 with Some Transition" to "Stage 3 with A Lot of Transition" in the first month to "Stage 4" in the final interview.

The researcher analyzed the stage labels by the levels of parents' education to see if there was an evident pattern in students' Fowler stages based on the amount of education parents had. She did not see any patterns by parents' education levels.

Analysis of Fowler aspect ratings. The seven aspects were Bounds of Social Awareness (BSA), Form of Logic (FL), Locus of Authority (LA), Moral Judgment (MJ), Social Perspective Taking (SPT), Symbolic Function (SF), and Form of World Coherence (FWC). Among all the students' charts, the researcher made the following broad observations:

- Of the eight students rated on Form of Logic, six of them were Stage 4.

- Six students progressed to Stage 4 in Symbolic Function.

- Four students progressed to Stage 4 in Social Perspective Taking.

- Three students progressed to Stage 4 in Moral Judgment.

- Seven students progressed in Bounds of Social Awareness during the year.

- Locus of Authority and Form of World Coherence had the most variation throughout the year.

The researcher divided the charts into groups by year in college. The sophomores had the least amount of change in each of the aspects. All of the sophomores showed some change in Bounds of Social Awareness. Half of them showed change in Social Perspective Taking. The freshman, juniors, and one of the seniors showed change on all but one aspect. In contrast, the other two seniors showed changes on a fewer than half of the aspects.

The researcher also grouped the charts by level of parents' education, and, once again, did not find any reasonable patterns.

Analysis of qualitative findings per aspect. The qualitative findings, per aspect, were as follows.

Bounds of social awareness. The Bounds of Social Awareness aspect considered how a person thought about his or her group and related to this group. It also considered the breadth of a person's social circle, and how the person treated other groups (Fowler et al., 2004, p. 24).

Students in Stage 3 accepted the group who surrounded them as their group. At the beginning of the year, Abbie provided an example of Stage 3:

My group. When I hear that, I think of people from camp, and like my friend, and my brother—because he worked at camp with us, and was really close—she's a year in between us, so we kinda hang out a lot. (October).

Students in Stage 4 intentionally chose the group in which they surrounded themselves. Some of them chose their group based on a shared ideology. Some showed an

awareness of those who were inside and those who are outside the group. At the end of the

year, Abbie demonstrated Stage 4, since she was aware of who was inside and outside of her

group. In this instance, she identified with mainstream culture. She noticed the

disadvantaged and marginalized others:

> In my Reconciliation class, we study different passages that talk about Jesus
>
> interacting with various disadvantaged and marginalized people. In these passages,
>
> we have been learning much about how much Christ loved and valued those who
>
> were rejected by the mainstream, even 'church', [*sic*] culture. This new learning has
>
> prompted me to reflect on my own life and experiences when I have witnessed
>
> mistreatment and myself mistreated others due to my own insecurity, stereotypes, and
>
> prejudice. These reflections have helped me determine both 'right' and 'wrong'
>
> things in the world and in our culture here at [college], in my hometown, and at my
>
> home church. (March).

Form of logic. The Form of Logic aspect addressed how a person thought about

problems and conflicts. It examined which perspectives a person valued, which factors he or

she considered, and what kind of resolution he or she sought (Fowler et al., 2004, p. 23).

Most students displayed the Stage 4 Form of Logic aspect when they were trying to

resolve problems. One student had a decision to make about a relationship, and another

pondered multi-dimensional, systemic problems. Others, like Otto, cognitively wrestled with

a dichotomy:

> As I have slowly been reading through the Old Testament, I continuously am
>
> confused about the consistency of God. I know in my head, and I think I know in my
>
> heart, that God never changes and is the same God yesterday, today and in the future,

but it [*sic*] have been having difficulty tying in some of the actions and the way God

works in the [Old Testament] than how he works in the [New Testament] and in

today's world. As far as I can explain it for myself, I think that it may possibly just be

a difference in the way we as humans see his work ever since Jesus died for us on the

cross and the Holy Spirit now invades our hearts. (Otto, October).

In all these cases, such as in Otto's, students sought to resolve tensions and

ambiguity. Even though the researcher rated them as Stage 4, a few students made

preliminary resolutions. Liza accepted a preliminary resolution to the problem of suffering,

and she also indicated that she might not keep this resolution:

Something that I still struggle with is understanding the purpose of struggle in our

lives. I know God didn't design the world this way, and sin is at fault, but I know that

He has the power to change things and I wonder why He doesn't. At summer training

project, I had it explained to me like this: A dad looks at his daughter who has a

crippling disease and needs a shot every day in order to be able to walk. She looks at

him and says "daddy , [*sic*] please, why do we have to do this? It hurts me." And he

responds with "honey [*sic*] if we don't do this, you wouldn't be able to walk." I like

to think of pain in that way, where God looks at us and says "If you didn't go through

this, you wouldn't be able to walk." I feel like most other people that I have talked to

about this usually say something about it bringing us closer to God, but I think there

is more to it than just that. (December)

Locus of authority. The Locus of Authority aspect judged how a person chose and

related to their authority (Fowler et al., 2004, p. 25). In Fowler (1981), the Stage 3 person

found authority and meaning within an institution or social convention (or leader of one of these), and the Stage 4 person found authority and meaning within themselves.

A few students relied on their parents and friends as authorities at the beginning of the year, which was Stage 3. Abbie's response was unsurprising for a freshman student in the fall semester:

My parents have always had the authority, I guess. Through talking about our faith, our relationship is becoming stronger, because I trust them. And the same with my friend, like, I trust her opinion and her advice. So I will let her be an authority. (October).

In contrast, other students showed individuation from their families and explained how they liked to be in control of their own lives, which was Stage 4. Emily told her father that she did not want to follow his plan for her life:

[My dad] asked me and my boyfriend if we would take over his ministry after, he wants to retire. So he wants me to be on the accounting side of things because I'm an accounting major. . . . I don't really have a desire to do that, like I don't have a desire to take over that ministry or to do the accounting side. It's just not like something that—my parents spent their whole lives trying to make ends meet. That's what they've been doing their whole lives, and that's not something that I want for me and my family. Um, so I don't want to take over that ministry. . . . A few weeks ago, he asked me to design a logo for it, and I was like, OK, I'll do that, but I don't want to do anything else. (April).

Uniquely Christian responses. As the researcher assessed the responses from

students, she determined that Fowler (1981) did not provide a space for some of their

uniquely Christian responses to issues and questions about authority or meaning in life.

Some students accepted God's authority because He created the world or was in

control (such as fate). The researcher rated this group as Stage 3. At the beginning of the

year, when asked why God had authority in her life, Liza said the following:

> I think just knowing like He is the Creator of our universe, and—like without Him I
>
> would have nothing—and then continuing every day to see the things that He's
>
> provided for me and the things that He's like blessed me with—just kind of like
>
> reinforces that. And even to see like how He's present in our relationships—in my
>
> relationships—things like that. (November).

Some students chose to let God be their authority or give their lives meaning.

Because awareness and volition were involved, the researcher rated this group as

transitioning between Stages 3 and 4. By the end of the year, Cherry was in this group,

because she chose to let God give her life purpose and direction:

> Before I always thought that as long as I'm doing something that I love and enjoy that
>
> my life has some meaning and as long as there's a good reason or purpose behind
>
> what I'm doing, then my life has meaning. I gained a new perspective when I came
>
> here to [college]. When I was in high school, I loved math and wanted to teach, and I
>
> still do, but after being here at [college] for almost half a year, I changed my outlook
>
> on life and changed my emphasis from math to special education. I started to notice
>
> that whatever I do in my life, I want to do it with the goal of serving God. God gives
>
> us strengths and puts us through certain things in our lives so that we may serve and

glorify him. So whatever I may end up doing in life, as long as I am serving God through my works, then my life has meaning. (Cherry, March).

Another uniquely Christian response was from the student who chose to give his mentor authority in his life because doing this was an act of humility, and the student chose to be humble and not be his own authority. The researcher noted that Otto demonstrated the ability to be at Stage 4 but had chosen to live as in Stage 3:

I'm not going to be able to like humble myself to God if I can't humble myself to someone I know. So that's how I see a lot of it, so learning to open up to someone and humbling myself to them and give them authority in my life has become a way of learning how to do that with Jesus. And so that's been like the biggest part of my emotional life. . . . Learning to give my authority up to my mentor is like, "OK, this is a decision in my life, like what do I do?" And then when he says to do something, I do it. (Otto, April).

Moral judgment. The Moral Judgment aspect assessed how a person defined moral issues and gave reasons for morality (Fowler et al., 2004, p. 24). Stage 3 provided interpersonal reasons for morality. Stage 4 had an understanding of systems and structures that were best for society—which could be different in different societies. Finally, Stage 5 appealed to reasons of "prior to society," principled, or higher laws.

Students' general responses fell into four categories: (a) what was good for him/her (including that which did not lead to shame or guilt), (b) what was good for other specific people, (c) what was good for society at large, and (d) moral relativism among social groups.

The researcher rated the first two categories as Stage 3:

An action that is right is one that I don't regret after the fact and that I feel positively

about. If an action is wrong, I feel remorseful about it in the future, even if that is just

seconds after I made the decision. For example, a right decision would be completing

my homework in a timely manner. I always feel good after I get my homework done

before it's due. But an example of a wrong decision that I've made is not studying for

a certain test. I chose to not study for my economics test, thinking that I would be fine

since I knew the material, but I quickly found out that was a wrong decision since I

actually did not know the material. Just for simple examples. (Emily, January).

An action that is right would be something that is done with good intentions, or

something done righteously/rightfully. For example: Reporting suspicious activity...

[*sic*] this is a true story! So weird. I was driving home from work at about 4 am. I was

on the [highway] going north and I see a boy out of nowhere waving his hand,

jumping up and down trying to flag for help. I was skeptical if that was even real or

not, and I knew for sure I wasn't going to stop because it would put my life at risk. I

called 911 and reported what I saw. Sure enough, other people had saw him [*sic*] and

reported it too. That is how I knew that I did the right thing because I reported what I

saw to the police. I don't know what that person's situation was, but I helped him by

getting help for him. (Pink, November).

The researcher rated the last two categories as Stage 4:

Although it doesn't seem like much "right" is happening in the world, I know there is

some. God is always at work. I think that there is "right" happening at aiming to bring

voices to the oppressed. Some people might not agree with how it's being

accomplished, but people are getting it down and are very passionate about it. There

might not be obvious progress yet, but it is coming. . . . [We] should be acting in order to help the oppressed. As for "wrong" in the world, unfortunately there's a lot of obvious wrongs thanks to sin. Racism, hatred, intolerance, fighting over issues such as immigration. Satan has implemented himself in such a strategic way to get countries to fight against themselves. People know about the issues in our society, but are unwilling to do anything about it because it doesn't benefit them. (Otto, March).

My whole life I grew up in a world where every issue was black and white; you were either in the right or the wrong, and there was nothing more to it. After my first semester at [college], I have begun to realize that life isn't always as black and white or as simple as we like to make it seem. Every issue has two or more sides, and the people who take the stance opposite yours probably aren't out there trying to ruin the world and society; they're just doing what they think is right. Something I'm questioning and struggling with now is finding the balance between knowing and standing firmly on what you believe while at the same time keeping an open mind to the perspectives and experiences of those around you (realizing that other people have had different experiences than you and considering that their views might hold more truth to them than what you think you already know or believe). (Abbie, December).

Uniquely Christian responses. Like Locus of Authority, Moral Judgment had a uniquely Christian set of responses. Most students gave answers that could rate as both Stage 3 and Stage 5 in Fowler (1981), because their primary rationale appealed to God's "prior to society" law (Stage 5), and some had a secondary rationale of what was best for people (Stage 3). The researcher rated all of these Christian responses as transitioning between Stages 3 and 4.

As an example of this response, Pepper recognized that God's "prior to society" laws were for a person's good:

I try to conduct myself in a way in which my Christian beliefs kind of encourage me to do so, which is beneficial. So it's because –I came to this conclusion a long time ago, but what God says, what the Word says, is not only true, but it is good, you know. It's not coercive, it's not regulatory, it is beneficial, it is for your good. (April).

Heidi identified a secondary reason for following God's "prior to society" laws—to help others:

In a religious sense . . . there are laws and rules to being a follower of Christ and actions that we commit should be within those rules. If they are not within those rules and cause damage to another person, they can most certainly be described as wrong actions. Actions such as praying to other gods goes against the rules God set before us, therefore making it a wrong action. Actions that are right can be attending church on a regular basis, praying more frequently, and/or donating to non-profit organizations. (January).

Another uniquely Christian response came from two students who identified that the rules they were following were not the rules of society, but the ways of God's eternal kingdom. These ways were their guide to what was right, both now and forever. Fowler (1981) did not provide a place for a social order or set of rules to come from outside the temporal world, as Pink discussed:

When thinking about the world around me I think about what is to come; when God comes back to take us back with him. . . . This makes me think about being "wrong"

167

in the world because this world now is temporary. When I look at my social media like Instagram for example I see other being "right" with the world because these are the people that I know of that doesn't [*sic*] know God. I see images of things that are "right" in the world but in heaven it wouldn't be godly. (March).

Last, two students said that it was not the law of God that showed them what was right, but the person of God through the person of the Holy Spirit who guided them. Fowler (1981) clearly did not provide a place for a spiritual Person to be an active moral guide, as Pepper identified in his life:

I am a strong believer in being able to identify what is right and wrong. I believe the Holy Spirit allows us to literally feel whether or not the actions we do are right or wrong. I also think we can suppress the Holy Spirit in us and become numb to the conviction that the Holy Spirit provides. (November).

Social perspective taking. Social Perspective Taking was the aspect concerned with how a person thought about himself or herself, another person, and how they related to one another.

The responses for the Perspective Taking aspect fell on a spectrum between students' self-awareness and others-awareness. In Stage 3, the students focused on how they viewed other people, or how other people viewed them, and how they felt about other people, or how other people felt about them. Their discussion was in the realm of emotions and communication.

The first time [one of the campus pastors and I] met, I was kind of intimidated by her and didn't feel like I was important enough for her time, and but that has totally changed as we have gotten to know each other and as I have grown. I think if

anything, I have only grown to think more highly of her and the consistent woman of

God that she is. For me, I see her as a spiritual mom that I can have hard

conversations with, where nothing is off limits, and I think she would say the same.

(Calvin, January).

As they transitioned to Stage 4, students became more aware of others, beyond their

interpersonal relationships and feelings. They recognized economic systems, the difference

in backgrounds of other people, and justice issues within the community. Students in

transition also started to distance themselves from their interpersonal relationships and

analyze these relationships. They were able to separate their self-image from the perceptions

that others had of them.

There have been many changes in the way I perceive my sister since I've known her.

My sister didn't get the best grades, and everyone saw her as a mean person, yet she

was really funny and kept my family laughing. I now see that she is not necessarily a

mean person, but she acts a certain way because of her experiences and the way

people treated her; therefore, she became more defensive. Later on in life, I actually

how caring and genuine she actually is, and even though she may express herself

differently, deep down she truly cares. (Cherry, February).

In Stage 4, students began to believe in and act on the differences they saw in others

in the world around them. Within interpersonal relationships, they were able to label

themselves and others from an objective, third-party perspective. They acknowledged that

multiple groups of people have different viewpoints, and they learned to identify systemic

differences in people and understand the culture of others.

Through my father's absence, I have never thought that he and I could ever have a relationship. However recently, [*sic*] I have been able to look at my father's absence as a relationship within itself and the significance it has had on my life. The mindset that has changed my perspective has been the perspective of being present with the stories of others. Though I have only indirectly learned the perspective of my father, through Hmong culture and history, I have learned more about the pain and trauma of my people, which has allowed me to better understand my father's history. Which has widened my perspective on understanding Hmong men. (Waverly, February).

Symbolic function. The Symbolic Function aspect measured how a person used symbols and language to express values and meaning (Fowler et al., 2004, p. 25). Those students who did find meaning in symbols, Stage 3, most often used typically sacred symbols. Most of the time, the symbols represented a spiritual idea to the student; on occasion, the student related to the transcendent through reflection on the symbol.

Lately the cross and nails have been a big inspiration to me. . . . I think about the suffering I have experienced, and I know that it is nothing compared to what Jesus endured, without our Father, for my sake. The cross and nails symbolize sacrifice, hope, and love. Jesus loved us with such sacrificial love that He gave His life so that we may live, and that is the truest statement of hope. (Liza, February).

In transition between Stage 3 and 4, the level of abstraction deepened, and the symbols' meanings broadened.

This is the symbol for the persecuted church. There are people being killed, and this symbol is written on their walls and art in their homes and on their belongings, because it represents—I think it's the word for Christian or Believer. . . . It says, "I

will not let them suffer alone." And I think that is a huge image that comes to mind when I think of my faith. Because it's such a blessing to be here, a woman, at a university that celebrates you being Christian and that you don't have anxiety about a bomb hitting your house, or your business going out of business if they figure out you're Christian, you know, and like you don't have that stress and anxiety of believing. And it gives me so much courage that inspires me almost to live my faith without being in fear of other people, but being in fear of God, because people [who are persecuted] are continuing their faith. (Waverly, October).

In Stage 4, students had no meaningful symbols, or the symbols or words they identified had literal meanings for the students. For example, wisdom was wisdom; hard work was hard work; and grace was grace.

I have been really stuck on hard work lately. Working hard leads to a better life. I don't know why honestly. I do not know if God is trying to tell me to work harder, or that I work too hard, but it is on my brain like crazy. I think I become over anxious about failing so I work hard to not fail, even if it becomes overbearing. (Heidi, February).

Form of world coherence. The Form of World Coherence aspect judged how a person made sense of the world, which included both visual objects and the greater environment (Fowler et al., 2004, p. 25). One of the focuses of this aspect was how a person might examine or question his or her worldview.

Students in Stage 3 were not wrestling with a dichotomy. They were learning about their worldview, if anything. Some students in Stage 3 did not critique their faith or faith

171

community at all. Cherry demonstrated that she was learning about the Christian worldview from college and church:

I have gained a better understanding of Christianity in general. I have always had a list in my head of what Christianity is, but through chapel and many classes, I have learned that there is no checklist to Christianity. We can't just do certain things and become the perfect Christian. I have learned through the church that I go to that you can look like you have good fruit, but the fruit will never be fruitful unless you fix the problem from the root of the tree. You can not [*sic*] look like a Christian and do "Christian things," but unless you start at the root of your faith, you will not bear good fruit. (February).

Students in transition between Stage 3 and Stage 4 were beginning to ask questions about their faith and worldview. When faced with some new perspectives and ideas about theology, these students expanded their worldview to include them. When faced with a dichotomy, or two ways of thinking that could not both be true, students had to find a way to make sense of the world. While in this transition, some evaluated both perspectives and chose what made most sense, some accepted a simplistic answer to resolve the dichotomy, and some rejected the theology of the past.

I do not understand why Christ would die for me. I feel like I am an averagely crummy person. I lie, I cheat, I sin. I'm not a good person. My best explanation for it is that Jesus just loves me that much that he would die for me anyway. But I still don't understand it. An explanation I've heard from other people is that Jesus loves everyone and he died for everyone's sins. He had me in mind when he was suffering on the cross because of His great love for His people. My explanation is the same

idea, but I think the reason for that is because I took my explanation from others. I don't know that I actually understand it. I believe in the gospel. I know it is true, I know Jesus came, died, and rose again for me and everyone else. But I don't understand why he would. (Emily, December).

Actually, [during] my freshman year, we got into a lot of like the Protestant Reformation theology sort of stuff and that was mind-blowing and, like, I don't know what's right anymore! . . . I just kind of look at everything that's there and be like, "well, this is what I grew up with, this is maybe what makes more sense, this is what maybe feels right, so I'm gonna stick with this part." (Sadie, August).

Some students in Stage 4 continued forming their worldview from within the understanding that multiple systems of thought existed.

My mind has been opened up a bit to the truth that Jesus and the Christian faith cannot be hindered by culture. That is, Jesus fits with every culture in the world. . . . I thought of this mostly while considering Buddhist and Shinto cultures and religions in Japan. I think of the beautiful shrines, the attunement with nature (in some cases), and the traditions that express their heritage, like sending lighted lanterns down the river to usher the souls of their ancestors that visited. Although Christianity says that dead people's souls cannot come back, so the idea of the lanterns could be seen as a remembrance of those we have lost and the assurance that they are in a better place. This is an example of how I think that Jesus can transcend cultures. (Sadie, January).

Liza demonstrated Stage 4 thinking within her Christian worldview by wanting to tell others about multiple perspectives in theology so that they might choose their own beliefs:

I mean, everyone at home identifies as Calvinist, and I agree with most things, but there are also some things that I'm starting to question, and it's like, "Is that really the way?" I don't feel my sister thinks my exploration of those things is welcomed. . . . When I tell my sister I'm exploring something, she's like, "Well, you wouldn't tell Mom that, would you?" Oh man! And my mentality now is that I feel all the options should be presented, so that [my Mom] can make her own decision and not have to base it off of what we believe. (April).

Finally, some Stage 4 students may have already questioned their theologies in light of multiple perspectives and chosen their own set of beliefs. Their spiritual struggle of the Form of World Coherence may have been in the past.

I've studied lots of different—like Hinduism, Buddhism, all that—so I've looked at them, but they don't add up in the way that Christianity adds up. There's just so much more sense that goes into Christianity. Of course not everything is answered. (Heidi, November).

Summary. Students moved from Stage 3 Synthetic-Conventional to Stage 4 Individuative-Reflective as they progressed through their college experience. Students showed the most changes during the year in the Bounds of Social Awareness and Social Perspective Taking aspects.

Students gave uniquely Christian responses for two of the aspects, which did not clearly follow Fowler (1981), so that the researcher needed to make an independent assessment about how to rate them. In Locus of Authority, the Christian response, "God's authority," had two categories: (a) students who accepted God's authority because He created the world or was in control (like fate), and (b) students who chose to give God authority over

their lives. The researcher rated the first category as Stage 3 and the second category as

Stage 4. Apart from Christian responses, some students relied on their parents as authorities

at the beginning of the year (Stage 3). Others showed individuation from their families and

explained how they liked to be in control of their own lives (Stage 4).

In Moral Judgment, most students gave answers that could rate as both Stage 3 and

Stage 5, because their primary rationale appealed to God's "prior to society" law, and their

secondary rationale related to what was best for people. Other than appealing to following

God's laws, students' responses landed in four categories: (a) what was good for him or her,

(b) what was good for other specific people, (c) what was good for society at large, and (d)

moral relativism among social groups. The first two categories were Stage 3, and the last

two were Stage 4.

Most students displayed Stage 4 Form of Logic as they considered dichotomies. The

responses in Bounds of Social Awareness fell on a spectrum between students accepting the

group that surrounds them as their group (Stage 3) to choosing the group with which the

students surrounded themselves (Stage 4). Stage 4 students chose a group based on a shared

ideology and were aware of those who were inside and those who were outside of the group.

The responses for the Social Perspective Taking aspect landed on a spectrum between

students' self-awareness (Stage 3) and others-awareness (Stage 4). In Stage 3, the students

focused on their perspective on their interpersonal relationships. As they transitioned to

Stage 4, students became more aware of others, beyond their interpersonal relationships and

feelings. In Stage 4, students began to believe in and act on the differences they saw in

others in the world around them.

The difference between Stage 3 and Stage 4 Symbolic Function was whether a word or symbol represented something else or whether it is its own literal definition. In World Coherence, most students were wrestling with a dichotomy. Also, they were either learning about their worldview (Stage 3), or they were questioning, evaluating, and amending it (Stage 4).

Research Question 4

In what ways did first generation college students' spirituality affect their perceived success at college?

The researcher included academic, social, and emotional success in her research design and analysis. In the final interview, students defined their ideals for academic, social, and emotional success. Then, they described whether or not they had this kind of ideal success over the last academic year, and why or why not. Finally, the students addressed whether their spirituality helped or hurt their achieving of success. In most cases, as will be further discussed, students did not connect their spirituality to their specific definitions of academic, social, and emotional success.

Academic success. The researcher created four categories out of students' descriptions of what academic success would look like for them. The categories and subcategories are represented in Table 4.

Table 4

Categories of Academic Success

Outcomes (9 students)	Personal Effort (9 students)	Perspective (3 students)	Community (4 students)
Getting good grades	Doing all the work	Not being stressed	Telling professors about problems and asking for help
Getting into the program I want	Processing what I'm learning	Not letting academics take first priority in my life	Making a good impression on professors
-	Improving study skills	Liking to learn	Academic connections with people
-	Knowing the material	-	Getting involved with other things on campus
-	Doing my best	-	-
-	Applying what I'm learning	-	-

Students from all years in college defined academic success with themes of outcomes and personal effort. With the exception of two seniors, students had success in achieving their academic outcomes. Three students—one freshman, one sophomore, and one senior—did not achieve their ideal in personal effort.

Only juniors and seniors defined academic success with themes of perspective, and they achieved this success. Only sophomores and juniors defined academic success with community themes, and only one student experienced this kind of success.

Three students did not make a connection between their spirituality and academics. For the rest, spirituality positively affected academic success in four main ways:

- Students experienced God helping them study and pass tests.

177

- Students who were interested in spirituality experienced academic success in classes about spirituality.

- Students who felt positive about their spirituality felt more balanced emotionally and in life, and they experienced academic success.

- Students experienced the help of the Christian community in their academics.

Spirituality negatively affected academics in two main ways:

- Students who pursued spirituality were distracted from their academic classes.

- Students who felt negative about their spirituality felt stressed about their academics.

Social success. The researcher created three categories out of students' descriptions of what social success would look like for them. The categories and subcategories are represented in Table 5.

Table 5

Categories of Social Success

Breadth (9 students)	Depth (6 students)	Internal Growth (3 students)
Building relationships	Having people who care and listen	Being socially independent (leading others; not worrying what others think about me)
Caring for others you don't know very well	Being more open and vulnerable with others	Not being over-social (knowing my limits and following them)
Getting into a club at school	Having good communication with friends	Not judging others
Making time for fun/having fun	Investing in fruitful relationships	-

Students from all years of college except freshmen year described social success in the breadth category. All used the depth category, and only sophomores used the internal growth category in their definitions.

Most of the students had social success on campus, but three did not. Two of these students identified social success as having people who care and listen did not find social success on campus; one of them experienced social success at home, and the other did not experience social success anywhere. The third student experienced social success—which she defined as building relationships—at work.

Spirituality positively affected social success in four main ways:

- Students' spiritualities encouraged them to build new relationships. For example, one student's spiritual passions led him to create a new program, which opened up new relationships to him.

- Students who felt positive about their spirituality were more relational and built new relationships.

- Students' spiritualities encouraged them to invest in deep relationships with others.

- Students found help from God, such as through prayer or the Bible, to resolve relational conflicts.

Spirituality negatively affected social success for one student. Because of her spiritual interest, she had high expectations for deep spiritual conversations with others, and these expectations were not always met.

Emotional success. The researcher created four categories out of students'

descriptions of what emotional success would look like for them. The categories and

subcategories are represented in Table 6.

Table 6

Categories of Emotional Success

Positive Emotions (2 students)	Negative Emotions (6 students)	Self-Awareness and Personal Growth (6 students)	Interaction with Others (7 students)
Being positive	Being OK with showing emotions, even negative ones	Taking time to refresh	Having support from friends
Not having negative emotions	Accepting highs and lows	Being emotionally independent from my friends	Talking about my emotions
-	Getting past my negative thoughts	Being aware of my emotions	Having fun with friends
-	-	Learning how to avoid emotional triggers	Forgiving others
-	-	-	Joining others in their emotions and staying with them

Only sophomores defined emotional success with the category of positive emotions,

and only sophomores and juniors used the category of negative emotions. In the category of

self-awareness and personal growth, the freshmen and sophomores focused on becoming

independent from others. The juniors and seniors focused on understanding themselves,

taking more control of their emotions, and talking about their emotions with others.

Most students achieved their definitions of emotional success. Two that did not were

in the negative emotions category, and two were in the self-awareness and personal growth

category. There might be a social component to emotional success. The one student who did

not experience success in self-awareness and personal growth also did not emphasize interaction with others as a characteristic of emotional success.

Spirituality positively affected emotional success in six main ways:

- Students felt God provided them with emotional support.

- Students saw how the process of spiritual discernment helped them grow emotionally.

- Student felt God gave them peace.

- Students noticed that without investment in spirituality, their emotions got "out of whack."

- Students experienced emotional help from the Christian community.

- As students noticed their own spiritual growth or the work of God in their lives, they felt emotionally positive.

Spirituality negatively affected emotional success in two main ways:

- Students who had negative feelings about spirituality, including the lack of feeling the presence of God or the lack of their own spiritual growth, felt emotionally negative.

- Students who struggled spiritually also felt that spirituality hurt their emotional success.

Reasons for success. Students explained why they had or had not achieved their definitions of academic, social, and emotional success. Half their reasons for having success were internally motivated, and the other half were externally motivated. For example, two students achieved success academically because they were more interested in their classes, and two students achieved success academically because their professors pushed them to turn

in work and discuss readings at every class session. The same was true for the reasons that students did not have success: Half the reasons were internal, and half were external. Additionally, the reasons why students achieved or did not achieve success were equally split between internal and external motivations for all three types of success. The reasons students gave for how spirituality helped or hurt their success are available in Appendix N. The listing of internal and external motivations for success is available in Appendix O.

Ways spirituality positively affected success. Students clearly indicated that spirituality was more helpful than hurtful to their achievement of academic, social, and emotional success. The three main ways that spirituality helped their successes were (a) personally, (b) in and from their relationship with God, and (c) within the community of others.

Personally:

- Students who felt positive about their spirituality felt more balanced emotionally and in life, and they experienced academic success.

- Students saw how the process of spiritual discernment helped them grow emotionally.

- Students noticed that without investment in spirituality, their emotions got "out of whack."

- As students noticed their own spiritual growth, they felt emotionally positive.

In and from their relationship with God:

- Students experienced God helping them study and pass tests.

- Students found help from God, such as through prayer or the Bible, to resolve relational conflicts.

- Students felt God provided them with emotional support.

- Student felt God gave them peace.

- As students noticed the work of God in their lives, they felt emotionally positive.

Within the community of others:

- Students experienced the help of the Christian community in their academics.

- Students' spiritualties encouraged them to build new relationships.

- Students who felt positive about their spirituality were more relational and built new relationships.

- Students' spiritualties encouraged them to invest in deep relationships with others.

- Students experienced emotional help from the Christian community.

Connections between success and spirituality. Appendix P lists the students' definitions of success and indicates how many students said they did and did not achieve success, and how many of them connected these definitions to spirituality.

As students described how their spirituality affected their academic success, their answers were most often disconnected from their definitions about ideal academic success. The definitions that students connected to spirituality were knowing the material, not being stressed, and not having academics take first priority in life. Students did not connect spirituality with the following:

- Getting into the program they wanted

- Improving their study skills

- Applying what they were learning

- Liking to learn

- Telling professors about problems and asking for help

- Making a good impression on professors

- Making academic connections with people

- Getting involved with other things on campus

In the area of social success, almost all the students connected their spirituality to the category of depth. However, almost none of the students connected their spirituality to breadth. And only one of three students connected spirituality to internal growth. This lack of connection was prevalent in all years of the students' college education. Whether or not the students were experiencing social success in areas of breadth and internal growth, the majority of them were not connecting their spirituality to their achievement of success.

In the area of emotional success, almost all students made connections between their spirituality and the categories of positive or negative emotions. Half the students made connections between their spirituality and the categories of self-awareness and personal growth or interaction with others. Among the subcategories, one noticeable gap was between spirituality and students' becoming emotionally independent from their friends. The two students who expressed this definition of emotional success did not experience this success to the extent they wanted, and neither of them connected their spirituality to this emotional goal.

As can be seen by the totals in Appendix P, the majority of the students who made connections to their spirituality also experienced success. Liza explained how these connections were very obvious to her:

Overall [spirituality] had a very positive effect, and I think a lot of it, too, is [that] I remember I didn't become a believer until right before coming to college, and so I— it's very vivid in my memory to not have God in my life, and so He's just a constant support that's there now, and He's definitely in everything that I do. To say that I've

184

had an academically successful year, a socially successful year, without God—just

it's not even a thought for me. I know He's at the center of each of those things, and

it's so clear to me the way that He has worked through each of those things, and

looking at them, I'm like, "Yeah, there's no way that I did that on my own." (April).

Both Sadie and Pepper explained the positive connections between spirituality and

academic, social, and emotional successes very succinctly and insightfully:

This semester of course I get stressed [about academics] with other things piling up

but I'm a lot more relaxed. And when it's like that—of course, like that you work

better. And also I feel like the peace that God has been giving me is linked to my

being more relaxed which links to being able to work better which links to being

more relational with people which links to emotional health and just like everything.

(Sadie, April).

Honestly, I've come to the conclusion that I have been so stressed, and this semester

has been so difficult, because I've lacked spiritually. So I honestly say it is the most

important thing. It is the cornerstone in which everything else flows from. Now with

that said, things can still flow [without spirituality], and they do—it's just more

difficult, and perspectives are shifted, and you start investing time in things you don't

need to be, and your emotions get out of whack because you're focusing on the wrong

things. But if your spirituality is the cornerstone, then I think things are just in line.

(Pepper, April).

However, not every student found it easy to connect spirituality to their academics,

social life, and emotions. During the final interview, Waverly found it challenging to

connect spirituality to success, since she was also struggling to connect spirituality and faith to her life in general:

I think when times get really hectic I think that my spirituality, my faith, gets dimmed a little bit. And especially since I'm kind of new to my faith, like understanding how to apply it and everything, I think it's really hard, especially in having a bunch of things on my hands, and I don't know where my faith sits in, and in the past few weeks it hasn't been. . . . And it's kinda funny that in a place where I'm surrounded by Christians, I don't feel like my faith is being used, but when I'm the space that I'm the only Christian, like my home, then my faith has become more important to me. And so I think this year, I haven't really been going anywhere but [college], or even when I am, I'm surrounded by [college] people, and I think that really has had an impact on how faith is incorporated in my life, because it hasn't really been in terms of socially or emotionally. . . . But it's also something I never grew up with all of that so I don't know how. (Waverly, April).

Summary. Students defined their ideals for academic, social, and emotional success. Academic success was most often focused on outcomes and personal effort; social success was most often focused on the breadth and depth of relationships; and emotional success was most often focused on interaction with others, self-awareness, and personal growth.

Students explained whether or not they had these kinds of successes, and why or why not. Overall, students did experience academic, social, and emotional success. Half their reasons for achieving success were internally motivated, and half were externally motivated.

Students identified whether their spirituality helped or hurt their achieving of success, and why or why not. Most often, spirituality helped students achieve success. The ways in

which spirituality benefited them were personally, in and through their relationship with God, and through the community of others.

Overall, students did not connect spirituality to their definitions of ideal academic, social, and emotional success. The definitions with the highest ratios of connections to spirituality in each category were the outcomes and perspective of academic success, the depth of social success, and the positive and negative emotions of emotional success.

Research Question 5

How did first generation college students describe their spirituality in comparison to others, if at all?

To address this question, the researcher analyzed how students compared their spirituality to the spiritualities of their parents and of their college classmates (most of whose parents went to college) in the interviews and written responses. She looked at whether students felt similar or dissimilar to either group, and what reasons they gave for the similarity or dissimilarity.

Then, the researcher reviewed students' definitions of spiritual belonging and their reasons why spiritual belonging was important to them, if it was. She analyzed students' assessments of their sense of spiritual belonging at home and at college, and the place they identified as where they felt the greatest sense of spiritual belonging. Finally, the researcher compared students' sense of spiritual belonging with their similarity or dissimilarity to the spiritualities of others.

Similarity of spirituality to parents and college peers. The researcher coded excerpts from the interviews and written responses in which students identified that they felt spiritually similar or dissimilar to their parents or peers at college (most of whose parents

also attended college). First, she created codes that represented the reasons why students felt

their spirituality was similar to or dissimilar from these groups of people. During the data

analysis process, she combined and refined these categories.

    She also weighted the excerpts on a positivity scale of -1 to 1 (-1 being dissimilar, 0

being neutral, and 1 being similar). Dedoose provided averages of the weights for each

month's interview or written responses and a listing of the codes that represented the reasons

each student gave for the spiritual similarity or dissimilarity they felt. A chart and graph of

each student's responses about their spiritual similarity and dissimilarity with parents and

college peers was created for each student; an example is available in Appendix Q.

    Table 7 lists the top reasons that students gave for why their spirituality was similar to

or dissimilar from the spiritualities of their parents and peers at college, according to

frequency:

Table 7

Reasons Why Spirituality was Similar to or Dissimilar from Parents and Peers at College

Similarity	People Group	
	Parents	Peers at College
Similar	We agree about theology. (5)	We have the same values and morals. (5)
	We pursue God. (3)	How we worship and express faith, and the language we use, is similar. (4)
	We place trust in God. (1)	A few others are unique like me. (3)
	We are willing to serve. (1)	Some people share my political views. (2)
	-	We are all struggling to maintain our faith. (1)
	-	We are all working toward a degree. (1)
	-	We have similar questions and answers about life and faith. (1)
Dissimilar	I pursue God and they do not. (15)	Our backgrounds are different. (18)
	We have theological differences now. (11)	Our interests in spiritual things are different. (13)
	I critique their faith. (7)	Our perspectives on faith are different. (12)
	We have had different experiences. (5)	I experienced Christian conversion in or after high school. (7)
	We think differently about the world. (4)	We had different amounts of choice about our faith and education. (5)

As with other research questions, the researcher analyzed the frequency of themes by the students' "years in college," to potentially get a picture of how these themes might appear or change throughout the college experience. While any patterns she observed cannot be

189

normalized to the larger population of first generation college students, a few stood out for potential further study:

1. No clear trends appeared by years in college.

2. At the beginning and the end of the year, three sophomores and one freshman did not feel similar to either parents or college peers.

3. Two of the seniors started the year feeling spiritually dissimilar to their college peers. All three seniors ended the year that way.

She also noticed a few other patterns:

1. No students felt spiritually similar to both their parents and their college peers at any time during the year.

2. Three students felt spiritually dissimilar to both their parents and their college peers all year.

3. Three students felt spiritually similar to their parents and dissimilar to their college peers all year.

4. No students felt spiritually similar to their college peers and dissimilar to their parents all year.

Based on the frequency of their responses, the students felt spiritually dissimilar to their parents. The top two reasons for this dissimilarity were specifically related to spiritual beliefs and passions. One student gave an example of this dissimilarity, which in this case was with her aunt:

[My spirituality is] different. Different. Way different! They don't believe in anything, and when I talk with them about God, they're just like, "OK." For example, my aunt called me yesterday, and I told her about the Nursing program, and she was

like, "Wow, how do you do it?" And I gave God the glory, because I couldn't do this without Him, and she's like, "No, I think you're strong, you did it for yourself." No, I don't want to take credit for it, no. He gives me strength! (Pink, April).

One student noticed that her parents did not share or understand her passion for studying spirituality in college:

I think just like the fact that I'm studying so much of this [i.e., spirituality], like every single day, and not that I have more knowledge than them, but that I want to talk about my classes with them, and it's kind of weird, because they're like, "Why does that even make a difference to you," you know? So it's like "just classes" to them, but to me, it's like, "This is my whole life, and this is my calling, and this is my heart." [They see college as] school. Just like a checkmark. Let get out in four years and get a job. (Calvin, April).

Based on the frequency of their responses, first generation college students also felt spiritually dissimilar to their continuing generation college student peers. Several students explained how the differences in their backgrounds affected their perceptions of dissimilarity with their college peers:

I think [their spirituality] is more . . . normal for them. Like that's what their family did, and like they take pride in it, and I feel awkward taking pride in it because my parents don't really care. . . . I had that totally just different upbringing than some other people—like compared to my roommate. She wouldn't even begin to understand the things that I've seen and been through and stuff like that. . . . I've told her some stories, and she's just like, "I didn't know people could act like that, or think

like that, or do these things,"—and it's like, "Yeah, it's real!—and this is what happens when you don't believe in God!" (Crystal, November).

In comparison to their college peers, three students recognized the difference in their families' financial backgrounds, which they also applied to a difference in their spirituality and perspectives on faith. One of them, Pepper, described this difference:

I want to think that [my spirituality is] different [from the spirituality of my classmates], and I honestly hope that it's different. Because a majority—from my perspective, the majority of this people do not have a convicting faith, a deeply rooted faith. And maybe some of this *is* because their parents went to college and they've kind of just been lulled into this upper middle class lifestyle where everything is great, you go to college, you don't pay for anything. I don't know. . . . Establishing [the men's Bible study group] was a difficult feat, but I did it! With help from other people, absolutely. But that was something that obviously no-one has really done before, so I think that because of my spiritual convictions, that was something I wanted to do. And l look at my peers, and yes, there are a few that are committed to doing that, but at large, I don't think so. (Pepper, April).

Waverly highlighted a difference in her perspective and interest in spirituality and those of her college peers:

I think my view of Christianity is more of a radical of Christianity, whereas a lot of people, a lot of my classmates, would believe, I would think, that Christianity is more of a passive Christianity, and I don't necessarily agree with that. And I would say that because like people always say that Christians live out their faith, and a lot of people, a lot of classmates don't live out their faith, or if they do, it's very passive. So it's like

how do I—I think of my faith as being radical, as being challenging to people, and really investing in people's stories and investing in people's lives is a big part of my faith and a big part of how I view Jesus, and I don't think a lot of my classmates see it the same, unfortunately. (Waverly, April).

Heidi and Liza illustrated the distinction that several students noted about what seemed like a lesser amount of choice or ownership the continuing generation college students had about their education. They related this amount of choice and ownership to their classmates' spiritualities:

Some people, you know, who've just had parents who went to college and did all that—they just sounded very, like, "Yeah, this is what I do, because this is what my parents did, and I'm doing this 'cause they did it." And I don't know if that's a good—it feels like they're stagnant in their faith, like it's just a, "Yup, I'm here," kind of a feel. (Heidi, November).

I think [my spirituality is] really different, especially because I am such a new believer compared to a lot of people, and that really shocks a lot of people. But I think that I have a lot of time just a deeper appreciation, because I remember what it's like to be without, whereas it seems that a lot of people here take things for granted—or people who grew up in the church, and it was just the logical decision for them to come to [my college], it's sometimes easier for them to complain about little things that don't matter, like "Oh, we have to go to chapel." Well, no, it's an opportunity to go to chapel. (Liza, April).

I feel as if—like students who have parents that went to college—some of them, I feel like, sound like a broken record, unfortunately. I hate to say that, but I feel like they

just say things because that's what they've been taught to say and that's what they're saying, and that's what they have always said, so why would they say anything different? . . . I know some people have gone to liberal colleges, and I'm like, "Yeah, I get that you're strong in your faith because you've encountered other faiths." And I think maybe that's kind of like their parents also. My parents didn't go to college. They didn't have suggestions of what college to go to. They just thought, "Whatever college you get into, go for it." And I think some people who are like the broken records, have had parents who are like, "Yeah, we went to [this Christian college], so you should go to [this Christian college], because why would you go anywhere else, you know? That's what we did, so that's what you should do," type of thing. And I think, maybe students here get kind of swallowed up in the whole, like, "Well, that's what my parents did, so that's what I'm doing." Instead of, like, "Yeah, I've fallen down and I've realized, you know, like, this is what I have to do." (Heidi, November).

Otto also noticed a lack of ownership in his own faith, even as a first generation college student, until he studied abroad at a large, secular university:

I think New Zealand—it made me learn how complacent you can be here, with consistently being surrounded by not only like Christian friends, but chapel and [Sunday evening worship]. I went to a large, very secular school in New Zealand—a massive party school. I had to begin to actually take my own time out of the day to pray and to read the Bible, and to actually seek. So it made me appreciate it more, but it also made me like it more. It's beginning to feel like it's my own. (September).

Heidi also provided her own balance to this critique of her college peers. After suggesting that students should be challenged by multiple belief systems in a college of their

choice instead of assuming the beliefs and education of their parents, Heidi acknowledged that during the time in her life when she faced different viewpoints and even opposition to her own faith and spirituality, she had a safe place to retreat—at home:

So, I think having my home—it's like a little reset for every day. So I come home—when I was going to [my former school], I would come to school and would be so influenced for all these different views all the time, it was like, all this white noise, distractions—and I'd come home, and it would be like a reset. Like it'd be just like, "OK, I'm back, I'm back to safety." (November).

Students noticed a difference in interest and perspective toward faith between themselves and their college peers whose parents attended college. Some students thought the difference in spirituality could be related to the lack of ownership or initiative their college peers had in attending college. However, some first generation college students also acknowledged that they had similarly felt apathetic or disconnected from their spirituality when they were not part of a spiritually diverse community.

Definition of spiritual belonging. At the end of the year, the researcher asked students what spiritual belonging meant to them. Most students described spiritual belonging with these categories:

- Being accepted

- Being able to talk openly

- Having purpose

Heidi and Liza provided succinct explanations of the first two categories:

I think it's going into another community of people with similar beliefs and values and being accepted, and not critiqued or accused of certain little things. I think it's

people who want you to be here, and that's what I feel a lot, people want you to be here. (Heidi, April).

I guess [spiritual belonging means] to feel accepted and comfortable with being able to talk about what you believe and being open and honest about things that you struggle with or are thriving with, so a lot of like vulnerability and intentionality. (Liza, April).

As evident in these three categories, students identified a distinction between the belonging of acceptance and the belonging of purpose. Pepper acknowledged them both:

I think I belong very well here. I guess I don't know what "belonging" means. I mean, you know, I'm under the impression that wherever it is that I am, I am supposed to be there for a reason. So, nonetheless, there are a handful of people that I can really connect with and resonate with who would share the same passions and dreams, and so there is a mutual belonging with those people that share the same vision. But I also feel that I belong here because there is a gap in which the Lord is using me to help people cross that gap. (September).

Not all the students said that spiritual belonging was important to them. The majority did. They said spiritual belonging was important because it provided:

- The ability to ask questions, explore, and grow in one's faith

- Freedom to be oneself

- Affirmation

- The ability to have good results in other areas of life

- A filling of the void inside oneself

Two students explained the importance of spiritual belonging:

I think [having a sense of spiritual belonging is] huge, because if you don't have a

sense of spiritual belonging, I think that's when it's easier to fall away. . . . You can

turn to God and question and blame for the lack of feeling like you belong. And I

think, too, it's critical to be able to explore your faith and be who you are, be who

God made you to be. (Liza, April).

If you don't have spiritual belonging, you're probably not going to grow that much,

and if you do, it's probably going to be difficult, not enjoyable. You're probably not

going to see as much fruit from that, and if you are not growing spiritually—and this

is still convicting for me—if you are not growing spiritually—and I honestly feel and

have seen it in my life—you are not doing other things well either. (Pepper, April).

Sense of spiritual belonging at home and at college. The researcher coded excerpts

from the interviews and written responses in which students identified that they felt they did

or did not belong spiritually at home or at college (among peers, most of whose parents also

attended college). First, she created codes that represented the reasons why students felt they

did or did not have a sense of spiritual belonging in either of these places. During the data

analysis process, she combined and refined these categories.

She also weighted the excerpts on a positivity scale of -1 to 1 (-1 being dissimilar, 0

being neutral, and 1 being similar). Dedoose provided averages of the weights for each

month's interview or written responses and a listing of the codes that represented the reasons

each student gave for the senses of belonging they felt. A chart and graph of each student's

responses about their spiritual senses of belonging at home and at college was created for

each student; an example is available in Appendix Q.

Table 8 lists the top reasons that students gave for having a positive or negative sense of spiritual belonging at home and at college, according to frequency.

Table 8

Reasons Why Students Felt They Did or Did Not Spiritually Belong at Home or at College

Sense of Spiritual Belonging	Place	
	Home	College
Positive	Can talk about spiritual things. Support. (13)	We can talk about faith and be supported and respected. (16)
	Shared devotion to God (4)	I am like others. (10)
	Purpose: I am there for a reason. (3)	I am accepted and can be myself. (9)
	We are becoming like peers. (1)	There is a purpose for me here. (8)
	I belong at home. I belong spiritually because I go to a Christian school. (1)	When I am with others who unique, I don't feel excluded. (2)
	I belong but God isn't there. God and home don't touch. (1)	Validation because there are a few others like me. (2)
Negative	They don't accept me. (6)	I am not like others. (7)
	Can't talk about spiritual things at home. (5)	People aren't willing to go deep and be genuine. (5)
	They have no interest in spiritual things. (3)	I am not accepted by friend groups. (3)
	-	People do not understand diversity. (3)
	-	The viewpoints are tiringly similar. (2)
	-	People don't think my friends and I should be here. (2)
	-	My parents were not Christians. (1)
	-	My family does not talk about spiritual things. (1)
	-	People are judgmental. (1)

198

As with other research questions, the researcher analyzed the frequency of themes by the students' "years in college," to potentially get a picture of how these themes might appear or change throughout the college experience. She also looked for other patterns. While any patterns she observed cannot be normalized to the larger population of first generation college students, a few stand out for potential further study:

- The freshmen and sophomores had more changes in their sense of spiritual belonging at home and college than the juniors and seniors. Of the freshmen and sophomores:

  - Three increased and two decreased in their sense of spiritual belonging at home.

  - Three increased and one decreased in their sense of spiritual belonging at school.

- Just over half (seven) of the students started and ended the year with a positive sense of spiritual belonging at college. Just under half (five) of the students started and ended the year with a positive sense of spiritual belonging at home. These were not exclusive categories.

Heidi provided an example of the two top themes in having a positive sense of spiritual belonging at college, which were being accepted and being able to talk about faith:

Even though everybody's got such different denominations, it's a healthy atmosphere. We all mutually respect each other. . . . When we all come together, as a big group, everyone's so supportive of everybody. Like in our spiritual formation classes, we had testimonies, and there's some [students] that you could tell had fallen very hard, and they still haven't recovered. But everyone was OK with them just saying this,

you know. Even the professors here are really good about it. And I love being here.

I'm happy here. I feel like I'm OK to say like, "Yes, I'm a Christian, I'm Catholic, but

I'm not like stuck-up, you know." I feel accepted. (November).

It is possible some students equated spiritual belonging with general belonging at

college. A couple students said that others on campus did not understand diversity or did not

welcome those from non-White backgrounds. These statements could have been about the

community's lack of understanding or openness to socio-economic and race-ethnicity

differences. However, these statements could also have been interpreting the community's

lack of understanding as a deficiency in spirituality. Waverly noted this lack of openness to

diversity at her college:

Many times I don't feel at home. I don't feel comfortable in that, spiritually. At a

certain point I can deal with it, I can accept it. . . . Other times, [chapel worship is] not

so great, because it's kind of tiring. . . . People think that you need to pray the same

way every time, or sing the same songs every time, or have the same conversations

with the same people every time, and I don't believe in that. . . . Like a lot of my

African-American friends here, like, they don't really relate with the worship, with the

type of worship or, the very, I would say, like White-washed worship. So in that way

like I have empathy for them, and I stand with them, in that like they want more

diverse groups of worship, and I get like that they disagree and don't really relate with

their faith here. (October).

Drawing on this topic, two of the reasons students gave for positive spiritual

belonging at college, "When I am with others who are unique, I don't feel excluded," and "I

feel validation because there are a few others like me," exhibited a qualified sense of

belonging. In the larger college community, these students did not feel they belonged. Cherry felt she did not belong because of her lack of Bible knowledge. Waverly felt like she did not belong because of her race/ethnicity. Both found belonging with others who shared similar non-dominant traits:

I think this was my first semester of my freshman year—I was in spiritual formation and [the professor] was asking how many of you just started to get to know your faith here? And a lot of people raised their hands—I was like, "Wow! Like, these many people don't even like know the Bible, just like me." So I took this as an opportunity to learn more about it, you know, and not looking at it like, "Oh wow, I don't belong here." (Cherry, November).

I hold like basic, generalized views of what I think Christianity is, and I definitely see students not agree with that. So like—the re-painting of the rock [which was a negative racial incident on campus]—that really hurt! . . . When it happened, [my friends and I] stopped and prayed for a while, and at one point I just didn't feel like I was safe there. . . . And like walking around and seeing Trump posters here really hurt me, and really take me back, and help me realize that like a lot of the people here don't think that my family should be here. They think that my best friends and their families don't belong here. And that's hard. . . . [In contrast], with my college group, I don't feel excluded or I don't feel like I'm the only one in this. Because, like, even though I'm the only Hmong and Chinese person, there is [in my college group] only one other Karen person, there are three Black people, and two Hispanic girls, and so I think, like we're all so unique in our ways, we're—like a few of us did grow up in like fatherless homes, so in that way I don't feel different. (Waverly, October).

Emily, a White student, also acknowledged the lack of diversity on her campus:

I think that because everybody here—for the most part, at least—is a Christian, and

they all are coming from kind of the same background, for the most part—like we're

not a very diverse school. So, we're all coming from right around the same

background—typically in the Midwest. So we all kinda have the same idea of what

we should be doing. I feel like when you are all on the same page, it's not—it's not

easy to expand from that—so we just don't. (November).

Place with greatest sense of spiritual belonging. In their interviews and written

responses, students indicated a positive, neutral, or negative sense of spiritual belonging at

home and at college. Students were then asked where they feel the greatest sense of spiritual

belonging. Even the students who did not feel a positive sense of spiritual belonging at home

or college had to identify a place. Their responses were represented in Table 9.

Table 9

Greatest Sense of Spiritual Belonging

Number of Students	Whether home or college had a positive sense of spiritual belonging at the end of the year	The location with the greatest sense of spiritual belonging at the end of the year
2	Nowhere	College (friends)
2	Both	College
2	College	College
1	Both	Both
1	Both	Work
1	Both	Church at College
1	Both	College (mentor)
1	Home	Work
1	Home	College (missions trip church)

The researcher made a few observations:

- College was the primary place in which students felt the greatest sense of spiritual belonging.

- Three students chose a place other than home or college.

- Only one student chose home (while also choosing college). She was also the only one who felt spiritually similar to both parents and college peers.

- Most of the students (6/8) who felt the greatest sense of spiritual belonging at college did not feel spiritually similar to their college peers.

Most students used these categories to describe their reasons for the greatest sense of spiritual belonging:

- We have a common goal.

- I have a spiritual sense of purpose there.

- We can talk and pray about anything.

- I can be myself.

- I learn spiritually in this environment.

- People push me to grow spiritually.

Drawing on reasons of purpose and shared goals, Emily explained why she felt the greatest sense of spiritual belonging at work:

So, this is strange. I think I'd go with work [as the place where I have the greatest sense of spiritual belonging]. Not everyone there is a Christian, but everyone there is so nice. And I feel like it's a super great place to share the gospel, even if it's—like I feel like I belong even, just because I feel like I'm supposed to be there. Not that

everybody else is just like me, like we're family, but it's—yeah, it's just been a really great place to be. (April).

Although she said she did not feel a sense of spiritual belonging at college, Sadie explained why she felt the greatest sense of spiritual belonging during a college experience:

I'd say the church of the spring break missions trip [was the place where I felt the greatest sense of spiritual belonging], since that's the place I learned a lot of spiritual things. And the way that our two teams worked together, it felt like the Acts 2 sort of church, where everybody is pitching in to help everybody with everything. So spiritually that is like a great place I think to be able to come together and be able to discuss things, and you just feel so at home there, in an atmosphere like that. (April).

Spirituality and sense of belonging. The researcher compared students' sense of spiritual belonging with their perceptions of similarity and dissimilarity to the spiritualities of others. Figure 5 provides a view for each student into the four dimensions of (a) similarity to the spirituality of parents, (b) similarity to the spirituality of college peers, (c) sense of spiritual belonging at home, and (d) sense of spiritual belonging at college.
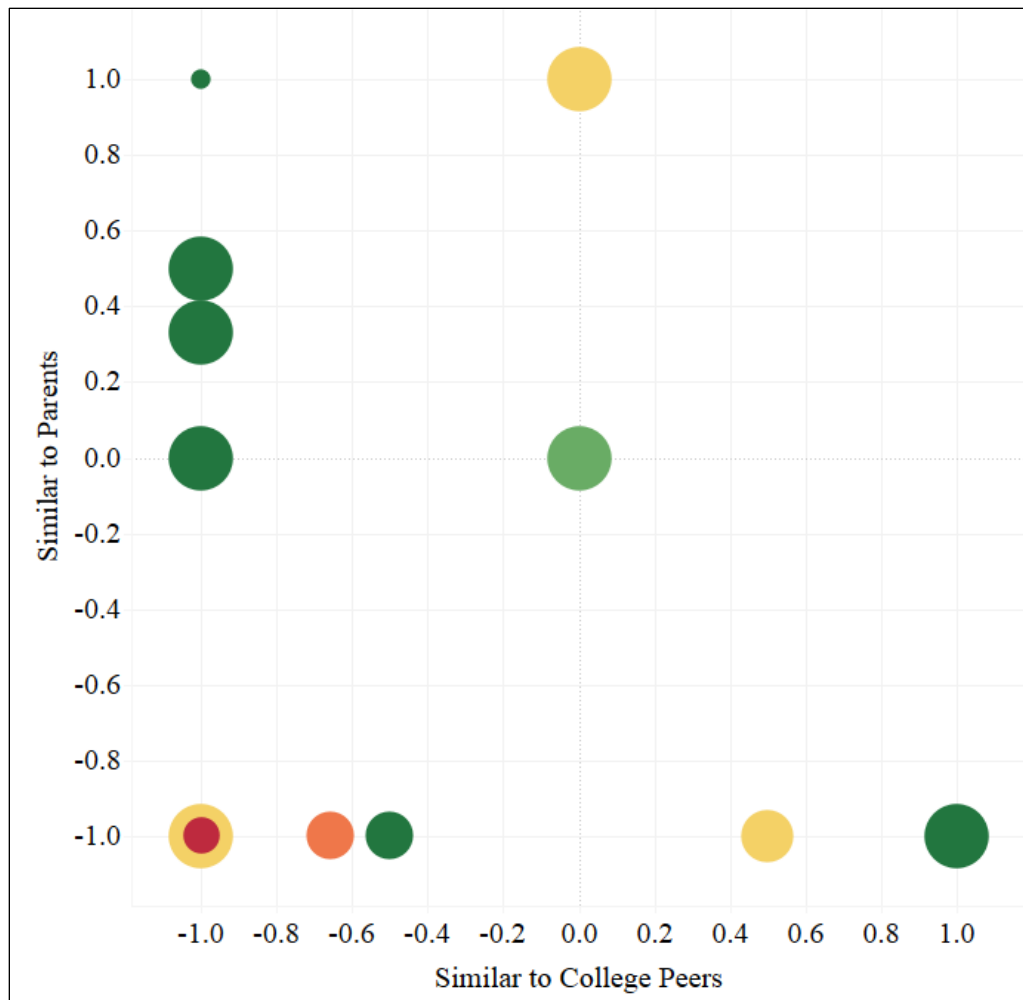
Figure 5. Combination of similarity and sense of belonging dimensions for each of the

participants. The vertical axis lists the students' similarity (1) or dissimilarity (-1) with the

spirituality of their parents. The horizontal axis lists the students' similarity (1) or

dissimilarity (-1) with the spirituality of their college peers. Color shows students' sense of

spiritual belonging at home (green was positive, yellow was neutral, and red was negative).

Size shows students' sense of spiritual belonging at college (large is positive, and small is

negative).

In Figure 5, the small, green circle in the upper left represented the student who felt spiritually similar to parents, dissimilar to peers at college, a positive sense of spiritual belonging at home, and a negative sense of spiritual belonging at college.

The large, green circle in the lower right represented the student who felt spiritually dissimilar to parents, similar to peers at college, and a positive sense of spiritual belonging at home and college.

The yellow and red circles in the lower left represented the students who did not feel spiritually similar to parents or peers in college. The smaller, red circle indicated that student did not feel a sense of spiritual belonging at home or college. The larger, yellow circle indicated that student felt some spiritual belonging at home and college.

At the end of the year, two students felt no similarities and also did not have a positive sense of belonging anywhere. The commonalities between these two students were as follows:

- They had different theological beliefs than their parents and couldn't talk about spiritual things at home.
- They did not feel that they fit in the dominant college culture.
- Even though they could talk about their faith at college and be supported, they felt that most college students had a different perspective on faith and were not as interested in spiritual things.

Three of the four of the students who felt spiritually similar to their parents at the end of the year also felt they belonged at both home and college at the end of the year, even though their backgrounds and perspectives on faith were different from their college peers.

This graph showed that most students (all but two) felt dissimilar to either parents or college peers. Most (eight), did not feel similar to their college peers. Only two of them identified that they felt more similar to their college peers than their parents (and both of these students said their parents did not pursue God).

However, six of these eight students felt they belonged spiritually at college. The three top reasons they felt they belonged spiritually at college were:

1. They could talk about their faith and be supported and respected. (6)

2. They had a sense of purpose. (4)

3. They were accepted. (4)

Summary. Students did not feel spiritually similar to their parents, nor to their peers at college (most of whose parents went to college). In spite of this lack of similarity, students felt the greatest sense of spiritual belonging at college. Spiritual belonging was important to most students. They primarily appreciated being accepted, having the ability to talk about faith, and having a sense of purpose in these places of spiritual belonging.

The two students who did not feel a sense of spiritual belonging or spiritual similarity at home or at college were the ones who said that a sense of spiritual belonging was not important to them. One of them provided some more insight about why that was the case:

I guess I'm just not looking for belonging right now, I'm looking for answers. . . .

When you're in the hard place of questioning, I think it's important to have people

who affirm you in your place of questioning. [Affirming is] more like, "I agree, I

have that question, too," because saying, "It's OK to question," but you're not

questioning is like, it feels kind of superficial, because do you really know where I'm

coming from? I don't know. Is your motivation just to bring me back to where I started? (Abbie, April).

Synthesis: The Phenomenon

The research questions provided insight into the phenomenon of first generation college student spirituality during the college experience. A synthesized analysis of the data also provided unique insights. Finally, reflection on overarching themes also assisted in understanding this phenomenon.

Commonalities between Fowler stages and family backgrounds. Using stages of faith development based on Fowler (1981), the researcher assessed four students at "Stage 3" and "Stage 3 with Some Transition" all year. One additional student was at both these stages until the last interview, in which she was assessed at "Stage 3 with a Lot of Transition." All five of these students were sophomores and shared some commonalities in their family backgrounds:

- They were the ones in their families who sought out faith or church—with the exception of one student, whose older sister was first.

- Their families did not typically talk about spirituality at home—with the exception of one student's father (who did not live with the rest of the family) and another student's sister.

- If conversations at home occurred about spirituality, these students initiated the conversations.

Two students had another kind of similar spiritual family backgrounds. They were raised by parents who embraced Eastern religions (Buddhism or Shamanism). One was the only one in her family who pursued Christianity. The other student's sister pursued

Christianity first; they were the only two in their family who believe in Christ. While the first student's Fowler stage assessments were similar to those of the previous group, the second student's Fowler stages were consistently assessed at "Stage 3 with a Lot of Transition."

The five remaining students had believing family members who initiated church attendance and conversations about faith. Two of them were assessed at "Stage 3 with Some Transition" and "Stage 3 with a Lot of Transition." Both of these juniors talked the most with their mothers about faith and spirituality.

The other three were the only students assessed at "Stage 4" at some point during the year. They had a few other commonalities:

- They were in the process of separating from their family's faith in some way.

    o One of them questioned her family's beliefs.

    o Another one chose different theological beliefs and was seen as a spiritual leader in his family.

    o The third one chose different theological beliefs and identified that he was now a peer with his parents and older siblings.

- Their definitions of spirituality were most often focused on others.

- Their religious definitions of spirituality were at the extremes of all 12 students:

    o One of them had the least number of religious themes in her definition of spirituality.

    o The other two had the most number of religious themes in their definitions of spirituality.

Negative connections between spirituality and success. The analysis on academic, social, and emotional success focused on the positive connection between spirituality and success. However, the students who did not make a positive connection between spirituality and success also had some commonalities that are worth analysis. Of the eight students who indicated that spirituality had a neutral or negative effect on their achievement of academic, social, or emotional success, five students' discussions provided evidence of spiritual struggle. The researcher identified spiritual struggle when students questioned their theology or relationship with God, their faith, or their religious beliefs. As an example of spiritual struggle, one student said:

> And personally it's hard, because I don't really know where I stand in my faith, so I've been kind of silent, and I'm learning about other religions and other practices and I'm understanding—trying to like reset myself in my faith and reminding myself why I believe in Jesus, and why I believe, [and] why it's so important, but I don't know who to talk to with that, or I don't know what to say, or like how to go about that, right, because I don't want to be wish-washy with my faith. (April).

For these five students:

- All five indicated that spirituality had a neutral or negative effect on their emotional success.

- Three of these students were the ones in their families who sought out faith or church and who initiated spiritual conversations in their families.

- Two of these students had the highest ratios of non-religious to religious themes in their definitions of spirituality.

Negative success and negative spiritual belonging. The two students who did not feel a sense of spiritual belonging or spiritual similarity at home or at college, and who also said that a sense of spiritual belonging was not important to them, were the only two students who did not meet a majority of their definitions of success. These two students also provided more external reasons than internal reasons for why they did or did not achieve success:

- Others showed me they cared (external).

- I had to turn in something and process ideas in class every day (external).

- I had a conflict with another student (external).

- I had too much going on, especially in leadership (external).

- I was too emotionally invested in a romantic relationship (internal and external).

- I could not process ideas when leading a group (external).

Negative spiritual belonging and definitions of spirituality. The four students who did not feel a sense of spiritual belonging at college were four of the five students who had the least frequency of religious themes in their definitions of spirituality. They also had three of the four highest ratios of non-religious to religious themes in their definitions of spirituality.

There was no pattern in the categories of relationships and influences this group of students had on their spiritual ecomaps. However, these four students had four of the five highest ratios of numbers of influences from home to numbers of influences from college on their final month's spiritual ecomap. One of these four students lived at home.

Overarching themes. Finally, the researcher explored overarching themes that she gathered through her observations and analyses. They were themes that rang true and seemed to be consistent as she applied the data to them.

Students are pioneers in education and spirituality. What does it mean to be a pioneer? It means being the first to travel into unknown territory. It means embarking on an unfamiliar journey without a guide from home. It means being independent and needing to look to former travelers for help in navigation. It means discovering something new, and becoming someone new—which people back home will never completely understand.

Crystal described the pressure and sense of independence she had in being the first in her family to go to college:

It was like everything [in my family] was put on me, like I had to go to school. But if I didn't, like, "Whatever—she was just a failure"—it'd be like that. . . . When I told [my mom] I got in [to college], she was like, "This will be so good for us." And I was like, "What do you mean, us? Like, no offense, but this is, like, for me. This is me!" (November).

Heidi vividly described her discovery of college and the lack of understanding her parents had of this experience, as she continued to live at home. Her descriptions exemplified a lack of college cultural capital:

I think there's definitely a disconnect [in my family] because of college, 'cause my parents haven't gone to college. So they don't know really what's going on. . . . It's very—it's hard to tell them like, no, really, you have to build everything yourself and you have to figure out how you're gonna get this done. It isn't like, "Oh, I hop on a school bus—the magic yellow school bus—and you go to school, and you learn, and you come home"—you know. You gotta get there, you gotta figure this out, you gotta get your own tutor, you gotta keep your own—this stuff, that food is your own. It's like, all this stuff you gotta think about! And I think that they don't understand me

and my sister—'cause we have no prep for this. They don't teach you in high school, like, "This is what the format of college is like," so when we got to college, and we're like, "Whoa!" It's like school shock—like, "I don't know what's goin' on. Why is this the way it is? Why do we have breaks in classes? And, you know, what's a curve?" We're just like, "What's going on?" So there's definitely that disconnect. . . . My mom understands, like, when it's homework time, you know, it's homework time. We gotta do homework. My dad just doesn't understand the intensity of some things: Now you do have to read from four different books in order to get your homework done. In his school and it was like, "You read one book, you do an assignment, and that's it. You're done, you're good." So it's hard to try to regulate that with all the other like chores and helping with meals and, you know, all those other things. So, I think there is a big disconnect, for sure. (November).

Parents might not understand the beliefs, perspectives, and values that their children have and are expressing now, as a result of their higher education experience. As discussed previously, Calvin's parents did not understand her interest in classes about spirituality. Waverly's mother did not understand her interest in social justice. She said:

My mom always says that she thinks I'm weird. I think, one, because she doesn't understand my passion for social justice, and my passion for loving others, and my passion for equality and equity, right? So—she just thinks it's something foreign, like something's wrong with me. . . . She doesn't get it. (October).

Liza demonstrated one kind of approach that students took to their parents:

I think like my sister and I actually like teach my mom a lot. . . . [My mom will] ask us questions, so we're like able to walk through things that way. But it's not like we

213

sit down and say, "Here's a lesson!" . . . I'd say a lot of [what we talk about] is more theology, definitely Bible-based questions. (April).

Crystal demonstrated two other approaches throughout the year. At first, she criticized her mother's lack of Christian knowledge and expression. At the end of the year, she reflected about the open conversations she and her mother had about the differences in their beliefs and spiritual lives:

I think between my mom and I, we kinda had a discussion—I don't remember when it was, it was sometime [before] Christmas. So it got better. It's just kinda awkward to talk to her about it, because I don't think she really understands. She just kind of makes up her own things a little bit when it comes to that type of thing. But it's still like she understands that that's an extreme influence in my life. Like everything kind of revolves around God. [She was more supportive] and kind of understood it more and would like listen to me when I would talk about it. (April).

First generation college students also experience changes in their beliefs and perspectives about life and spirituality which differentiate them from their peers from home. In October, Waverly recognized that her friends from home did not place the same value she did on social justice, but she did not think this difference would affect their relationships. In April, however, as she shifted her friend group from home to college (which is part of the faith development process in the Bounds of Social Awareness aspect), Waverly felt the differences in their beliefs and perspectives were affecting her relationships with her friends from home:

I think it's just really hard to see the way that [my high school friend] interacts with her faith, and then seeing how people at [my college] interact with their faith, and

214

then noticing, and like being cautious about where I am in my faith and where I am in who I view God, and how I see Jesus, and his life, and what He—like what people's stories are. I don't know, I don't see it as something I want to mess around myself with, which is a huge part of me trying to space myself away from my high school friends. And like I'm still really close with them and I'm still kind of in touch with them, but it's difficult. Again, I know where they are in my life, and I know where they stand basically, and I know where I want to be, so maybe it will change. . . . One of the biggest things is like realizing my passions in my life and seeing like, "OK, I want—this is really important and I want this to be in my future." Like social justice, right, to continue that. But a lot of my high school friends are not in that place and don't have those passions, and it's kind of hard to talk about life with them. Um, and understanding that people are on their own journey, too. (April).

The vast majority of students showed a pioneering spirit by pursuing leadership and spiritual activities on their own. They participated in summer outreach team, chapel committee, international student ministry, missions trips, church services, and church fundraisers. They were leaders in dorm and campus Bible studies, Residence Life, an intercultural group, and a high school parachurch ministry.

Students choose guides on the journey. Students did not choose their parents or their peers as their guides in their educational and spiritual journeys as much as they chose those who had gone before them. The majority of students had mentors; two were from the home sphere, and six were from the college sphere. Their mentors were professors, church laypersons, and college staff within student ministries or student development departments. Pepper explained why he looked up to his mentor from college:

215

You would think I'd give authority to my mother and father, but honestly—and this might not be good, but, because I have had more schooling, and have been more successful even to this point than they have been, it's like, "How are you gonna speak into my life, when I'm already"—you know what I mean? . . . When it comes to Dr. [Anderson] – wait, *Doctor* [Anderson]—you know what I mean? I want to be very similar to what he is doing. And so, because he's been there, he's done that—"hey, I will submit to whatever it is you, whatever kind of guidance you wanna give me, because your life, you know, demonstrates kinda what I wanna embody." (September).

One of the students explained to the researcher that she wanted to participate in the research in order to provide a testimony to encourage other first generation college students that it is possible to succeed in college. She desired to inspire future first generation college students and serve as a guide on their journeys to success in college.

Students benefit personally and spiritually from opportunities in education.
Multiple students demonstrated faith development as a direct outcome of their college experience and the opportunities provided by college. At the beginning of the year, Emily drove a couple hours each way to keep working at a job she had since high school. Then, a professor connected her to a new job opportunity, and this new job had multiple positive effects on her academic success and spirituality. She said:

One of my professors here, her mother- and father-in-law own the company—it's [a group home organization]—so her mother- and father-in-law own that company, and so I emailed her one day and was like, "I'm gonna apply for this job," and she was like, "Great, email me your resumé, and I'll look over it, and I'll be a reference." I

was like, "Super." I got hired on the spot and got into the most wonderful home ever. Yeah, so, I love it.

[After your tasks are done at work], the rest of the time is yours to watch Netflix—but what I do is do homework the whole time, so I've been getting my homework done, like on Friday night, I'll get all my homework done that's due the entire week. Then Saturday night, I'll spend time studying or whatever, so that's been super super nice. I think that's been the huge Godsend, because now I have like new relationships and I'm getting better grades.

I think I'd go with work [as the place where I have the greatest sense of spiritual belonging]. Not everyone there is a Christian, but everyone there is so nice. And I feel like it's a super great place to share the gospel, even if it's—like I feel like I belong even, just because I feel like I'm supposed to be there." (April).

Pepper benefitted from multiple opportunities in higher education: getting a summer internship, learning about himself through StrengthsFinder and other personality tests and measures, learning about social justice, and having a mentor. His education helped him understand his strengths and spiritual giftings, and the spiritual programming available at college allowed for him to take initiative, start a new program, and effect spiritual influence in the lives of others. This experience also developed his spirituality and leadership skills.

In September, he talked about his vision for the new program:

[It's a] guys' group I'm starting. The whole vision is to just engage the men here at [my college]—just provide a space where we can develop spiritually, because there isn't really a space for us to do that as guys. . . . . I took the Spiritual Pathways Test for one of my classes, and my number one pathway was Activism—which was

217

defined as like, "You experience God most when you are like advancing his kingdom, when you're moving forward." And so [this guys' Bible study group] is that for me—like, "How can I bring the community of God on earth, like how can I"—you know what I mean? So that's significant. (September).

At the end of the year, Pepper recognized the role his initiative and leadership of this group had in his spiritual life:

Establishing [the guys' group] was a difficult feat, but I did it! With help from other people, absolutely. But that was something that obviously no-one has really done before, so I think that because of my spiritual convictions, that was something I wanted to do. . . . I honestly think that [the guys' Bible study group] has been one of the main ways for me to feel like I am contributing to the community. (April).

For Waverly, the opportunity of education helped her grow in her understanding of her cultural heritage and identity, which also affected her spirituality and spiritual identity:

One of the things that [my mom] really pushed was education for us, because in her mind, education and assimilation were the two things that really helped you survive in this world. And so, I grew up not knowing, really, my cultural heritage—I grew up in it, but I didn't take on the language. Because all my siblings were in school, they were all learning English, my—both of my parents weren't there—they were all working, and my mom—she was learning English at the same time, so it was just helpful and convenient for all of us to only speak English at home. And we still do. And I think that has caused a lot of pain and heartache in my own spiritual life, because of the influence that I don't have, really, or cultural ways that I didn't recognize that I had, 'cause I thought it was just what people did. Now I'm taking a

218

Chinese class here [and] I'm learning Hmong from a lot of my friends—and so I'm making the step to learn more about my cultural heritage, and that has really helped my faith with God, in different ways. . . . I'm experiencing at [my college] what it means to be Christian, in a Christian setting, [and] what it means to be Asian. (Waverly, October).

In Sadie's case, higher education provided an opportunity to be involved with a church in an impoverished community. During this trip, she grew in the moral judgment aspect of faith development. She also grew in dissimilarity with her parents, since they did not have the same experience as she did and could not completely understand it. Finally, she grew in relationship with God and others:

This past month I have gone to New Orleans for the spring break mission trip through [my college]. There, as I worked with the staff at [a community church] and a team from [an east coast college] that we partnered with, I got a sense of how mission work and the church are supposed to be. We did what [the church] wanted us to do in regard to helping the inner-city neighborhoods and those people and homes still affected by Hurricane Katrina. Also, I felt this amazing sense of community when I was there. Everyone worked together and did what they could to help another. There was joy and laughter and sharing in sorrow. I think I got a glimpse of how the church is supposed to look, like the church described in Acts. I wish I could live like that every day. And I thought it was right because we were connected in Christ. Christ wants the church to work together for His glory, and that's exactly what we did. It felt wholesome and natural.

I saw the wrongness in the world also in the context of New Orleans. I learned about the injustice of the systems put in place there, I saw the way that people live in certain despair, and I saw the poverty and prejudice still going on. Many homes are still vacant and unlivable because of Hurricane Katrina. There are people who lost worldly items and loved ones in the floods. Although I saw life in the city, I also saw grief and sadness. There is an underlying feeling of despair, although there is some light shining through the streets. I learned more about the horrors of the hurricane and the hardships that people went through to escape the city, get clean water and food, and just live. It broke my heart to see that, and I don't think that this is how God wants the world to be.

I talked with my mother about this, but I don't think she understood completely where I was coming from. Of course, she hasn't been to New Orleans, and she didn't have the experience I did, so it is natural for her to find it more difficult to understand. You really have to be there to understand, and you have to hear the stories and allow them to break your heart in order to understand. I find it hard to talk about it except with people on the trip or people who have been through that or something similar. It is a difficult topic. (April).

Summary. It appeared that students whose families generally shared the same faith but were not in pursuit of spirituality were apt to assume lower Fowler (1981) stages by their sophomore years of college. Those students whose families did not share their faith traditions were apt to assume higher Fowler stages. The students who were raised in families that pursued spirituality were apt to assume higher Fowler stages, especially by their junior and senior years of college. Of those, the students who no longer looked up to their parents

as their spiritual mentors or leaders were those who were most apt to have progressed to Stage 4.

Students who did not meet the majority of their definitions of academic, social, and emotional success at college gave more external reasons for this lack of success than internal reasons. They also did not feel they were spiritually similar to their parents or their peers, nor did they feel they belonged spiritually at home or at college. Students who had more spiritual relationships and influences at home than at college and who defined spirituality less religiously did not feel they belonged spiritually at a Christian liberal arts college.

First generation college students were pioneers in their education and their spiritual journeys. They pursued mentorship, spiritual activities, and leadership activities at college even when they did not feel they belonged or were not spiritually similar to their college peers. Coming to college without social or cultural capital, they gained knowledge and connections as they persisted in college. They also became dissimilar to their families and friends from home. The opportunities they experienced because of higher education enabled them to grow personally and spiritually.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

This phenomenological research studied the spiritual relationships, influences, and experiences of 12 first generation college students at two private, Christian liberal arts institutions in a metropolitan area in the Midwest over the course of one academic year. Each of the students, whose relevant demographics are listed in Appendix G, chose a pseudonym, which was used for the duration of the study and all quotes that follow.

During an initial interview, students constructed a diagram, called a spiritual ecomap, to illustrate the positivity, strength, and energy flow of the spiritual relationships and influences on their lives. They also answered semi-structured interview questions. Details of the initial interview are available in Appendices C, D, and E. The spiritual ecomaps were posted online in a Google Drive folder associated with a personal email address the student chose for the study.

At four intervals throughout the academic year, the students were prompted to revise their spiritual ecomaps and respond in writing to two to four questions, which are available in Appendix F. The ecomap revision and written responses were all posted online in the student's personal Google Drive folder. Students revised their spiritual ecomaps online one additional time before their final interview. In the final interview, students reflected on the changes in their spiritual ecomaps during the year and answered semi-structured interview questions, which are available in Appendix E.

Because the two institutions that hosted this research were both Christian liberal arts institutions, some of the recommendations will apply most directly or only to Christian higher education institutions. Other recommendations could possibly be applied to students and institutions of other religious or non-religious backgrounds and beliefs.

222

Research Question 1

How did first generation college students' spiritual influences and spiritual relationships develop or change during their college experience?

General findings. Parks (2011) said that emerging adults would choose mentors (p. 105)—and they did. Eight of the twelve students in this study had mentors. Two were from their home communities, and six were from their college communities. This research supported a few findings of HERI's (2007) survey of spiritual beliefs and practices from 2003-2010. Four students decreased in church attendance, a few students included the ethical caring for others in their definition of what gave their lives meaning, and one student explained how life was meaningful even when it was difficult.

Other researchers said that students' majors affected their interest in spiritual things and in their experience of spiritual struggle. Astin et al. (2005) and Holcomb and Nonneman (2004) said that arts and humanities students would report higher levels of spirituality than professional studies and science students. All students in this research were interested in spiritual things. Their majors almost equally represented the arts and humanities (six), professional studies (five), and sciences (three) areas. Bryant and Astin (2008) found that students in psychology had greater spiritual struggle than students in other majors. In this research, only one of the two psychology majors provided evidence of spiritual struggle.

The literature also predicted how specific types of influences would affect first generation college students' spiritual development. This research only supported some of these predictions, as listed in Table 10.

Table 10

Anticipated Influences on Students' Spiritual Development Based on the Literature

Prediction	Whether or Not This Research Supported the Prediction	Explanation
A strong relationship with mothers who had high religiousness influenced students to keep their religious beliefs from childhood (Barry, Padilla-Walker, & Nelson, 2012)	Sometimes	The two students who identified strong relationships with their mothers, and whose mothers had strong religious beliefs, kept those religious beliefs. However, this connection is not conclusive, because students with weak relationships with their mothers also kept their religious beliefs.
A weak relationship with mothers who had low religiousness influenced students to choose opposite religious beliefs and be strong in them (Barry, Padilla-Walker, & Nelson, 2012)	Sometimes	The two students who changed their religious beliefs from childhood did not identify strong relationships with their mothers, nor did they identify that their mothers had strong religious beliefs. However, other students who had weak relationships with their mothers, and whose mothers had low religiousness, did not choose opposite religious beliefs.
Fathers provided a foundation for spiritual identity development (Desrosiers, Kelley, & Miller, 2011).	No	Only one student discussed having a secure attachment to her father. More than one student did not have a relationship with their fathers. All students were pursuing spiritual development.
The parents of students who come from collectivist cultures may have a greater influence on students' religious beliefs and practices (Nelson, 2014).	No	The three students whose cultural heritage included collectivist cultures were not spiritually influenced by their parents.

Prediction	Whether or Not This Research Supported the Prediction	Explanation
The level of education of parents was inversely related to the students' religious beliefs and practices (Arnett & Jensen, 2002).	Inconclusive	The specific beliefs and practices in Arnett and Jensen's (2002) study were not measured in this qualitative study. They seemed to hold true for all students.
Peers were more influential than parents (Schwartz, Bukowski, & Aoki, 2006)	Overall, yes	In conglomerate, Roommates were the most influential. Mother and College Peers were next equally influential. Father was less influential.
Peer and parental influences remain stable and complement one another (Desrosiers et al, 2011; Martin, White, & Perlman, 2003).	Overall, no	The influence of roommates and college peers changed the most. The influence of family members changed the least. However, when the influence of parents was more positive, the influence of peers was more negative or neutral.
Only 48% of emerging adults talk about their religious beliefs with their friends (Smith, 2009).	No, but this sample is specific to Christian higher education institutions.	At least 75% of the students in this sample talked about their religious beliefs with their peers.
Media may be less of an influence for emerging adults than it was for them as high school students (Bobkowski, 2014).	Possibly	Only five students discussed media during the year. One critiqued Christian movies and appreciated Christian books. Another liked online sermons. Three negatively critiqued social media and its superficial influence on peers.
The church can be a place of solace and encouragement during stress, depression, discrimination, or other difficulties (Donahoo & Caffey, 2000)	Sometimes	One student received solace and encouragement from her church during an intense season of discrimination at college. Another student's church helped her navigate a difficult relationship. Other students who expressed stress and other difficulties did not reach out to their churches for support.

Prediction	Whether or Not This Research Supported the Prediction	Explanation
The church has a varied influence on students' spiritual development, because both students and church communities are unique (Bryant, 2011).	Yes	Two students appreciated learning about faith from their churches. Four students made positive social connections at church. Two students received emotional support from their churches. One student connected to the transcendent at church. Two students served others through their church communities. One student did not connect with church.
Students' development of racial identity affects their religious orientation (Sanchez & Carter, 2005)	Yes	One student was working out both her cultural identity and her Christian identity during the year. She was also aware and critical of the cultural messages being sent by the majority culture at her college. Like some students in Sanchez and Carter's (2005) study, she distanced herself from religion during this season.
Students identify religious beliefs and behaviors that are only associated with their cultural background (Levitt, Barnett, & Khalil, 2011)	Yes	Two students discovered that some of the beliefs from their upbringing were cultural and not specifically part of their religion.

Students' spiritualities were influenced by people who took the time to talk with them

and give them advice about the world, their problems, careers, goals, and other personal

issues. Students had positive spiritual experiences when people in their lives were open and

available to talk as equals, to listen, and to affirm them, especially when things were difficult.

Students also had positive spiritual experiences with others who would intentionally

challenge them about spiritual things. Students also found positive spiritual experiences in

larger groups, as they were part of a community of Christians or as they served with others.

Students' spiritualities were negatively or neutrally influenced by distancing relationships. Friction, conflict, or dissatisfaction within a relationship also made some relationships negative or neutral as spiritual influences. Finally, some negative spiritual relationships and influences triggered difficult emotional thoughts and feelings for students.

The students' most positive spiritual influences were the church community, God, student life programming, and college spiritual programming. The items that changed least were family members, God, home peers, and home church. The items that changed the most were roommates and college peers. Although the items that changed least were in the home sphere, the spiritual influences that were removed as influences were also in the home sphere. The spiritual influences that were added during the year were in the college sphere. It is reasonable to conclude that either home is more stable than college, or that students are more affected by college than home.

Recommendations. Higher education institutions should come alongside students and help make them aware of and analyze their spiritual influences and sources of truth in their lives. On multiple occasions throughout the research, participants told the researcher how helpful the ecomaps and questions were for their personal growth and self-understanding.

This [spiritual ecomap] is a really good idea. It's helping me to like really understand the sources of truth in my life. (Waverly, October).

I don't know, it's interesting to me that things are so consistent, because I feel like there's a lot that's changed in my life. But I feel like it kind of shows that my faith is anchored in a lot of things that won't change even thought everything else might be. Yeah, so that's just really interesting to see everything laid out. (Liza, April).

227

Using this and other tools, as students become more aware of themselves as spiritual beings, and the spiritual relationships they have, they may be able to think more critically about their beliefs, life stresses, and decisions. As students analyze their influences and sources of truth, they may need mentors to help them discern the nature and veracity of these influences and sources. A mentor can also help them reflect on the past to understand their present and adjust for the future.

Spiritual programs and opportunities in higher education can be catalysts for students' spiritual and personal growth. For Pepper, the spiritual programming available at college allowed for him to take initiative, start a new program, and effect spiritual influence in the lives of others. This experience also developed his spirituality and leadership skills.

Research Question 2

What language did first generation college students use to describe their own spiritual development?

General findings. Most of the current academic discourse disconnected spirituality from the sacred or a spiritual Being. Instead, spirituality was described as a human effort with phrases like "meaning-making," and religion was connected with human institutions and power (See Appendix A).

In this research, students' definitions were only supportive of current academic discourse in the way that academics have difficulty defining spirituality (Estanek, 2006; Pargament et al., 2013; Zinnbauer et al., 1997). The students' definitions supported parts of some of the definitions in Appendix A, in both the "Religion" and "Spirituality" categories. They also combined both of these categories within their definitions of spirituality. Students

primarily connected spirituality to their relationships with God and people and their personal transformation. Students were involved in Christian churches and religious activities.

The phrases within the academic definitions of both "religion" and "spirituality" in Appendix A that most closely related to the students' definitions were as follows:

- "prescribed beliefs and practices of an organized religion of a Higher Power" (Constantine et al., 2006)

- "deepen their understanding of self, other and world" (Kazanjian, 2013)

- "connection to and with the external world" and "relationship with personal other" (Mayhew, 2004)

- "one's individual connection with spirituality has important implications for relating to others" (Lindholm, 2007)

- "the subjective experience of someone who is seeking to know the divine, the sacred or transcendent as revealed in his or her worldview" (Edwards & Hall, 2003)

- "the human spirit is . . . transformed" (Shushok, 2011)

- "an affiliation with and practice of an established denominational tradition" (Stamm, 2006)

- "one's lived relationship with [God]" (Parks, 2011)

- "the role of religion [and] the sacred . . . in their lives" (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011a)

When directly asked to define spirituality, students in this research used religious content that focused on God and themselves. When talking about spirituality, they provided religious and non-religious content that focused most on other people.

For these students, spirituality focused on other people, such as in having positive relationships, treating other people well, and engaging in spiritual and religious practices together. Spirituality also involved relating to God and knowing God as a spiritual Person. Spirituality was also concerned with developing the part of one's personhood that is connected to God and can grow, mature, and be transformed. Students defined spiritual development as a long-term progression of getting closer to God in relationship with Him.

Recommendations. Students used religious definitions of spirituality more than non-religious definitions. The wider higher education community uses non-religious definitions, however. Christian higher education institutions should prepare their students for the conversation about spirituality in the wider community, especially since many, if not most, students will be joining this wider community in their professions after college. Christian higher education institutions can bridge the gap between these definitions by applying Christian concepts and spiritual theology to discussions about meaning, purpose, and identity.

When Otto defined spiritual belonging, he also provided a new vision for spiritual development. He said:

> I think spiritual belonging could follow the lines of being in a place spiritually where you can have the same—not the same, but, you know—as meaningful of an experience with God whether you're alone or with a group of people or out in public or really anywhere, no matter where you are or what your situation is, you can have a meaningful experience with God. (April).

A higher education institution could aim to prepare students to enter their communities and workforce after college with the ability to have a meaningful relationship

with God in any context. Pioneering first generation college students are primed to pursue spiritual development after graduation, because they each had to pursue their education and their spirituality on their own in college. These students could be leaders among their classmates in coaching others how to grow spiritually without the support of student ministries or college student programming.

Research Question 3

How did first generation college students show faith development during their college experience?

General findings. Students moved from Stage 3 Synthetic-Conventional to Stage 4 Individuative-Reflective as they progressed through their college experience. Hammond (1993) found that subjects' Fowler (1981) faith development stages were directly related to their level of formal education. This research appears to support that claim because all but one student progressed in their faith development stages during one year of their college education. However, the research does not clearly support that claim because the students did not show a clear trend of progression from freshman to senior year of their college education.

Some of the goals of higher education include changing students' beliefs and behaviors, especially in how they think about and relate to others (Hammond, 1993; Keeling & Hersh, 2011). This change is often triggered when students are exposed to others whose beliefs and behaviors do not match their own. The researcher determined that three of the Fowler (1981) aspects are related to these goals and outcomes: Bounds of Social Awareness, Social Perspective Taking, and Form of World Coherence.

Over half of the students in this research progressed in the Bounds of Social Awareness aspect, with all but two students transitioning out of Stage 3. One-third of the students progressed to Stage 4 in the Social Perspective Taking aspect, with all but three students transitioning out of Stage 3. All but two of the students started transitioning out of Stage 3 of the Form of World Coherence aspect. It is possible that higher education assisted these students in their faith development, as most students changed how they thought about others.

Students showed the most changes during the year in the Bounds of Social Awareness and Social Perspective Taking aspects. However, the two aspects in which first generation college students had attained the lowest stage during the year were Social Perspective Taking and Bounds of Social Awareness. Even though they had progressed, their progressions were behind the other aspects.

The Fowler (1981) stages of faith development are descriptive of psychosocial realities more than they are achievable. He wrote:

> The faith stages . . . are not to be understood as an achievement scale by which to evaluate the worth of persons. Nor do they represent educational or therapeutic goals toward which to hurry people. . . . Time, experience, challenge and nurture are required for growth in faith. Education and nurture should aim at the full realization of the potential strength of faith at each stage (p. 114)

Recommendations. Even though students developed in how they thought about others, some of the students may have needed guidance in relating to others. One of the cultural skills in the college culture is forming relationships with others. Dumais and Ward (2010) acknowledged that first generation college students most often do not have

232

institutional cultural capital, which includes the expectations and behaviors of the college culture. They also most often do not have social capital, which includes the benefits they receive from being part of a group (Coleman, 1990, pp. 316-317). A few of the students talked about feeling alone and not connecting—or not connecting deeply—with college peers. They may have benefitted from direct coaching and mentoring about these skills.

As Fowler (1981) suggested, higher education institutions can put opportunities in place that may encourage development of the aspects of faith stages. For example, higher education institutions could coach students through assignments and experiences to take an objective, third party perspective and analyze their relationships. They could also coach students through assignments and experiences to build relationships with people who are in a different social group on or off campus.

One of the students who progressed in stages of faith development during the year also felt disconnected from classmates at college. Fowler's (1981) theory has been critiqued as largely cognitive. In this student's case, her cognitive development was ahead of her socio-emotional development. She lacked the internal ownership and personal awareness in how to fulfill her own desire for spiritual closeness with others. Higher education institutions have an opportunity to come alongside first generation college students and provide them with support and challenge to grow personally and emotionally. Jehangir et al.'s (2012) research findings support this recommendation, because they said that first generation college students play multiple roles in life and could benefit from reflecting on their personal development (pp. 268-269).

Research Question 4

In what ways did first generation college students' spirituality affect their perceived success at college?

General findings. In the conclusion of their research with African-American students, Constantine et al. (2006) advised practitioners to take students' spirituality seriously in order to help the students' psychosocial development, motivation, and resilience in college (p. 239). Bryant and Astin (2008), Pargament (2013) and Sax, Bryant, and Gilmartin (2004) found that students' spiritual practices and security in matters of faith positively influenced their overall sense of wellbeing and academic success.

This research supports those findings. Overall, students experienced academic, social, and emotional success. Half of their reasons for achieving success were internally motivated, and half were externally motivated. Most often, even though students did not connect spirituality to their definitions of ideal academic, social, and emotional success, spirituality helped students achieve success.

Sadie explained the positive connections between spirituality and academic, social, and emotional successes very insightfully:

This semester of course I get stressed [about academics] with other things piling up but I'm a lot more relaxed. And when it's like that—of course, like that, you work better. And also I feel like the peace that God has been giving me is linked to my being more relaxed which links to being able to work better which links to being more relational with people which links to emotional health and just like everything. (Sadie, April).

Higher education institutions that encourage students toward spirituality appear to benefit the students' success and persistence in college.

234

Recommendations. Spirituality affects students' success in higher education. Higher education is open to the role of spirituality in the learning and development process. Kazanjian (2013) said, "Spirituality and spiritual practice on our campuses are increasingly seen as educational issues, important to the lives and learning of our students" (p. 97).

However, in considering this role, higher education institutions need to encourage and allow space for students from all faith backgrounds to grow spiritually. Heidi explained how she felt her prior school, a private four-year college that was historically associated with her faith tradition, discouraged her spiritual growth:

So I felt like I was just being swallowed—being swallowed up by this university that wants nothing to do with God. You can't foster growth of a good spiritual connection in a constant environment that's trying to squish it out. (November).

Sadie described how spirituality positively and holistically affected her success at college. However, not all students consistently made connections between their spirituality and their achievement of academic, social, and emotional success at college. They most often connected their spirituality to their social and emotional lives, and they least often connected their spirituality to their academics. When the researcher asked one student whether or not spirituality affected his achieving of academic success, he quickly said, "No," and laughed. Of the students who most frequently related spirituality to their academic success, academic outcomes were the focus of this relationship, such as God helping students get good grades or pass tests. No students connected spirituality to the community aspects of academic success, such as asking professors for help or joining academic clubs or groups.

Higher education practitioners already coach students to apply the non-religious definitions of spirituality to academics. In students' academic tasks, such as writing papers

and having class discussions, practitioners have encouraged students to pursue truth, have character and academic integrity, make sense of life, consider and respect the different perspectives of others who are spiritual beings, and act together to make things better in the world (Lindholm, 2007, p. 15; Schneider, 2004). To help students' awareness of their spirituality and spiritual development, higher education institutions could more directly address these activities as being part of students' spiritual lives and expression.

In addition, however, higher education institutions could also coach students to connect the religious definitions of spirituality to their academics by doing such activities as considering study as worship, praying through assignments individually and with others, or taking moments out of class or individual study time to refocus on God and His work within the students' lives. In other words, the students could take spiritual activities such as prayer, Bible reading, small group prayer, deep spiritual conversations, or relating to God, and apply them to the content of their academic lives and tasks.

Students also did not often connect their spirituality to the breadth of their social success. Only half the students who defined social success as building relationships connected their spirituality to the building of these relationships, and none of the students connected having fun to spirituality. Higher education institutions could educate students about the communal nature of spirituality. They could encourage students about the healthiness of building relationships with others (who are also spiritual beings) and consider together how having fun is a means of spiritual development.

Half of the students in this study connected spirituality to their ideals for emotional success. Students could encourage their own emotional growth by seeking the emotional

side of their relationship with God. Crystal explained how she made this emotional connection with God during the year:

> What started making sense this year was that God actually cares about me. It was always so hard for me to wrap my head around this concept my entire life; which is generally why I never wanted to be saved in the first place. I figured it out when I was exposed to the verse Psalms 18:34 and it just clicked! God is drawn to those who are broken in spirit because he wants us to know his love and that it is greater than any love we could ever experience here on earth and that it is THE MOST [*sic*] important love that we have. (Crystal, February).

As students discover that they can be emotional with God, and He is emotional toward them, they can find security in accepting and expressing positive and negative emotions. They can also become less emotionally dependent on others. Higher education institutions can encourage this emotional, spiritual development by discussing the emotional aspect of being a spiritual being, and relating to other spiritual beings emotionally. Christian higher education institutions could more directly address the emotional aspect of a spiritual God who has and expresses emotions toward His spiritual people.

Research Question 5

How did first generation college students describe their spirituality in comparison to others, if at all?

General findings. Lovik (2010) suggested that either first generation college students came from families that were more spiritually oriented than continuing generation college students or the cultural difference of college spurred first generation college students to inward reflection and spirituality. This research rejects Lovik's first suggestion. Lovik's

second suggestion could be possible—however, only slightly so. With the exception of Otto, who explained how he began to take his faith seriously after studying abroad at a secular institution in New Zealand, the students in this research were interested in spirituality before they came to college.

Tierney (2000), Tinto (1993), and Winkle-Wagner (2009) debated whether first generation college students should cut their ties or stay involved with their families in order to succeed and persist in college. Although they were not directly asked about it, the students in this research did not suggest that they were experiencing a tension or sense of being torn between their home and college loyalties. One student identified that her parents did not understand her college pressures and experiences. Another student said her mother supported her assimilation to American society through education.

Corona-Ordoñez (2013) and Winkle-Wagner (2009) said that first generation college students may feel that their families expect them to get an education and help their families financially. One student felt this pressure toward education with a sense of interdependence from her mother. The student promptly rejected that idea and said her education was for her own benefit.

In this study, students did not feel spiritually similar to their parents, nor to their peers at college (most of whose parents went to college). In spite of this lack of similarity, students felt the greatest sense of spiritual belonging at college. Spiritual belonging was important to most students. They primarily appreciated being accepted, having the ability to talk about faith, and having a sense of purpose in these places of spiritual belonging.

Four of the students in the study did not feel they belonged spiritually at college, and two of these students said they did not feel they belonged spiritually at home, either. This

finding supports Corona-Ordoñez's (2013) assertion that first generation college students feel marginalized—in this case, spiritually—in both their home and college cultures.

Recommendations. To help first generation college students feel a greater sense of belonging at college, higher education staff and faculty could invest personally in the lives of students. Calvin remarked on how the care she felt and received from the staff and faculty at college positively affected her sense of spiritual belonging at college:

> I also think that having people at [my college], like pastors, counselors, advisors, professors, that are in—like it really feels they're here for us, and they literally want to walk alongside us. That is really, really cool to me. (April).

The university has an opportunity to help students focus positively on what they share in common with others, in the midst of a cultural environment that focuses negatively on differences. In a secular university, students can consider how they and their fellow students are all spiritual beings. They can consider how to encourage one another in spiritual growth. In a Christian university, students can focus on the common identity they share in their relationship with Jesus Christ. Cherry explained how this common ground provides unity, which is an important value for the society of the future:

> I know we've had so many problems here on campus, like with politics and just so many political, social problems. Just going to chapel really helps me view [my classmates], like—even though everyone has their flaws, and everyone does these things, and obviously we all judge them and everything, it's nice to know that we're all followers of Christ. Just us as a community being able to see that, first—being able to see everyone's identity in Christ instead of their identity in the world. It's just something that I feel is very important for all of us. (April)

239

Summary

It appeared that students whose families generally shared the same faith but were not in pursuit of spirituality were apt to assume lower Fowler (1981) stages by their sophomore years of college. Those students whose families did not share their faith traditions were apt to assume higher Fowler stages. The students who were raised in families that pursued spirituality were apt to assume higher Fowler stages, especially by their junior and senior years of college. Of those, the students who no longer looked up to their parents as their spiritual mentors or leaders were those who were most apt to have progressed to Stage 4.

Students who did not meet the majority of their definitions of academic, social, and emotional success at college gave more external reasons for this lack of success than internal reasons. They also did not feel they were spiritually similar to their parents or their peers, nor did they feel they belonged spiritually at home or at college. Students who had more spiritual relationships and influences at home than at college and who defined spirituality less religiously did not feel they belonged spiritually at a Christian liberal arts college.

Limitations

Sample. This phenomenological study involved 12 first generation college students who were enrolled in private, Christian liberal arts institutions in a metropolitan area in the Midwest. The findings in this study cannot be generalized to a larger population of first generation college students.

The 12 participants were not all traditional college-aged students whose parents attended no college, as the researcher had anticipated they would be. At the time the students with these minor exceptions had responded to the invitation, the researcher only had four

participants. The boundaries of the sample were slightly extended in order to gather a sufficient number of participants.

Pink was in her third year of college but was not traditional college age. She was 28 years old, which was consistent with Parks's (2011) focus in her research on emerging adults aged 18 to 32. She was also married with three children. The family section of the spiritual ecomap contained both her parents and her children. When asked questions about parents, she talked about her family of origin. When asked questions about home, she talked about both her family of origin and her nuclear family.

A few students had parents who attended some college. Pepper's father, who did not live with the family after Pepper was 11 years old, had one year of community college. Heidi's parents went to community and technical colleges for vocational studies, but they did not get degrees. Each of Cherry's parents attended college for half a semester. Abbie's father got a certificate in construction from a technical college.

Some of the students were the very first in their family to attend college; others had older brothers or sisters attend college first. Even though the researcher had intended to define first generation as students who were the first in their immediate family to enter college, she could not limit her sample by this criterion.

Three of the students attended another higher education institution after high school before transferring to the one in which they were enrolled during the study. The rest of the students only attended their current institution after high school. This research did not differentiate the experiences of each of these groups of students, even though the students who had transferred talked about their experiences at their former institutions.

The sample was imbalanced in student class ("years in college"), gender, and racial/ethnic diversity. One-third of the participants were White, sophomore girls. One-third of the participants were non-White and biracial. One participant was a freshman, six were sophomores, two were juniors, and three were seniors. Both male participants were seniors. Even though the sample was not equally spread across years in college, gender, or race/ethnicity, it did include representatives from all years in college, male and female genders, and several races/ethnicities.

Ultimately, the students in this research did not have many of the traits that typically characterize first generation college students. Although there were exceptions, most of them were not older, did not have spouses or dependents, were not ethnic minorities, and did not have English as a second language. Only half of them came from families that could be considered lower-income (less than $40,000 per year) or working-class. Seven students worked fewer than 10 hours a week. Only two of them worked 30 or more hours a week to pay for their college education, which is typical of first generation college students. Additionally unlike many first generation college students, the students in this study did live on campus and participate in extra-curricular activities, and several of them traveled abroad before and during college.

Research and researcher bias. Prior to this research, the researcher had volunteered in church youth ministry for 20 years. Therefore, she had to be cognizant of her role as a researcher and not as a youth volunteer. She told the students that her inclination was to respond to their comments, provide her perspective, or encourage them in their faith journey. However, her role as a researcher was to listen and learn, and not respond. She did not do this perfectly, which she noted in her journal after some of the initial interviews and when

listening back to these interviews. However, her awareness and self-coaching helped her to improve in her role as a researcher during the year. There was a possibility, even if small, that her responses could have affected the students' thoughts and perspectives about spirituality in some way.

The researcher also recognized that she was an observer and not a counselor. She did not probe too deeply into the students' internal lives. She asked clarifying questions in order to understand their perspectives, but she held back and honored the personal space of the students as they shared their thoughts and perspectives with her. At other times, she did not agree with what the students said. She did her best to respond in a neutral manner, such as with her facial expressions or the tone of voice she used in a response such as, "OK."

After she met with a few students, she recognized that most of the students expressed a desire to grow in their spirituality. They wanted to experience God more, feel better about their relationship with God, or see God work in the lives of others in their community. The obvious limitation of inviting qualified students to participate in research is that the students who responded were a subset of the qualified students. This subset was interested or willing to talk about the research topic. One student expressed to the researcher that she was motivated to participate because she wanted to help other first generation college students succeed at college, and she had a story to tell. Another student said she was motivated by the two $25 gift cards. Even with these two motivations, the perspectives on the phenomenon of spirituality during the college experience for first generation college students were limited to those students who were willing to talk about spirituality.

Two students recognized that this research could be one of the influences on their spirituality this year. One of them said she might add it to her spiritual ecomap (although she

did not add it). This research most likely caused the students to reflect on their spiritual influences and relationships and consider ideas that they would not have considered on their own. They may have been more reflective and perhaps more intentional about addressing areas of positive or negative spiritual influence. For example, they may have reconsidered their friend group or joined a club or church as a result. Therefore, this research may have also influenced their spirituality and spiritual development during the year.

Finally, the researcher was biased to define spirituality in her own way—as internal and relational—and apply this definition to the students. As she listened to the students, however, she better understood the uniqueness of her own spirituality by seeing the breadth and depth of each of theirs, in their own uniquenesses. She came to appreciate how she and the students had different spiritualities that could inform and complement one another.

Data analysis. The researcher was not previously trained in rating stages according to Fowler's (1981) Faith Development Theory. Even though she used Fowler et al.'s (2004) *Manual for Faith Development Research*, she discovered the complexity of identifying aspects and assigning stages to data from recorded interviews and written responses. Before analyzing data, the researcher thought the aspects and stages seemed discrete and identifiable within the theory and manual. However, as she analyzed the data, the researcher found it difficult to interpret responses and fit them into a category. She had to recreate the faith development theory model in her head and apply it to real people.

The researcher had to look beyond the words and phrases the participants used and try to understand how they thought. She observed that Fowler (1981) similarly assessed faith development aspects upon a comprehensive understanding of how his subjects processed life:

Our answers to these questions [about Form World Coherence for a subject named

Mary] depend less on quoting specific passages from the interview and more on

reflecting on the quality or characteristics of Mary's way of seeing things taken as a

whole (pp. 246).

The researcher recognized that having a team of researchers and using inter-rater

reliability measures would have been helpful. Instead of using these resources, the

researcher did multiple rounds of assessment of the stages and aspects throughout data

analysis, since the more she assessed the data, the more she understood and fine-tuned the

categories. The multiple rounds of assessment provided consistency and reliability in her

results.

In addition, the researcher was biased in her desire to want students to progress in

Fowler (1981) faith development stages during the year. To address this bias, she

intentionally did not review the students' initial interview assessments while rating the

monthly and final interviews. She also charted all the students' stage ratings per aspect

(Appendix M), examined these ratings for consistency, and adjusted some of the students'

aspect assessments accordingly.

Synthesis

One of the students progressed to higher stages of faith development in Fowler's

(1981) theory while also expressing a lack of emotional and social connection to God and her

classmates. Although higher education institutions may be encouraged by a first generation

college student's progression in faith development, they may also be concerned by a

student's lack of emotional and social connection at college. Without a connection to God or

classmates, it is possible for a student to abandon either their faith or their college education. Based on fall 2017 enrollment data, this student is no longer enrolled at her institution.

Since first generation college students are pioneers in their education and faith journeys, they need guides to affirm them in their places of questioning, be willing to speak truth with love, help them form relationships with their peers, lead them in self-awareness and understanding, and encourage them in their relationship with God.

Higher education institutions need to help pioneering first generation college students through spiritual struggle in a way that honors the students as they put their faith together authentically, while also mentoring them to discern truth. Many first generation college students experienced contrast between their home and college cultures and between the beliefs they brought to college and the beliefs they encountered at college. Rockenbach et al.'s (2012) phenomenological research identified that it was contrast—within oneself, within relationship and community, or within one's efforts to make meaning of lived experiences— that was the main root of spiritual struggle (p. 62). Mentors may help students build connections between their home and college cultures while also encouraging them to assess critically the foundations of each of these cultures.

In this study, some students experienced theological and relational dissonance with their friends and families as a result of their higher education experience. One recommendation is for higher education institutions to equip pioneering first generation students to think about their families and friends with understanding and have open conversations with them about their different perspectives and beliefs, including theological beliefs.

In his study of the relationship between first generation college students and their families, Tierney (2000) suggested that colleges and universities incorporate families into their students' college experience (p. 228). In this research, even when students no longer held the same theological beliefs as their parents, they seemed to continue to respect and appreciate their parents' practical faith.

For example, Sadie explained how her faith at college was "scholarly" and she changed some of her theological beliefs during college. While she longed to have a more emotional faith experience, she continued to learn about practical faith and spirituality from her mother:

> I'm probably following in the footsteps of my mom. I did say that she's like the spiritual mentor of my life. I know that every morning she'll wake up a half hour early just so she can have quiet time and do devotions and prayer time and do that, so I've been starting to do that in the mornings, starting to wake up earlier, just so I have time to sit before I go to class or whatever. I really enjoy doing that if I get to bed on time, that sort of thing. So I feel like just like what my mom does, I don't know. I think watching her usually gives me the idea, and I try it and find it works, so cool! (Sadie, April).

Exploration of the non-academic elements of spirituality with parents—such as trust in God, intimacy with God, forgiveness of others, spiritual discernment, and power in prayer—could provide practical grounding for first generation students while they are facing theoretical challenges to their faith and beliefs through academics. Instructors could make spiritual conversations between parents and students a class assignment and provide some coaching. For students whose parents do not share similar beliefs or a spiritual foundation,

they could have these conversations with others from their home community or mentors from the higher education institution.

Ideas for Other Research

Three of the participants had transferred from other institutions, and all three of them compared their spiritual experiences at their previous institutions with their current institutions. This research was not designed to compare past and current experiences of transfer students. However, further research could be done to compare and contrast spiritual experiences of students who transfer from one institution to another, and identify whether the spiritual experience of the former institution had a role in the students' decisions to transfer to another institution.

This research noted that students who expressed spiritual struggle did not have a different pattern of change in Fowler (1981) stage progression than other students. A more in-depth study of the effects of spiritual struggle on first generation college students may be warranted. It may be helpful to explore the effects of education on first generation college students' cognitive beliefs about God and on their emotional relationship with God, and how these two facets of spirituality interact with one another.

The researcher provided trends and patterns in her analysis of each of the research questions. These trends and patterns could not be normalized to the larger population of first generation college students, since her research was qualitative and exploratory. Any of the trends and patterns could be quantitatively studied with a larger sample of students from a similar or diverse set of colleges and universities.

Future researchers, especially those who are familiar with other religious traditions, could apply themes from this research to first generation college students from other

religions or non-religious backgrounds and beliefs. They could also use Parks (2011) instead of Fowler (1981) as a lens for viewing faith development.

Conclusion

Although many researchers believed that first generation college students had negative experiences in college because of their lack of social and cultural capital, this research joins Aspelmeier et al. (2012) in providing alternative reasons. This research suggests that a first generation college student's spirituality may be a key to his or her experience of success in higher education. In this research, first generation college students were pioneers in their education and their spirituality. They pursued mentorship, spiritual activities, and leadership activities at college even when they did not feel they belonged spiritually or were not spiritually similar to their college peers. Coming to college without social or cultural capital, they gained knowledge and connections as they persisted in college. The opportunities they experienced because of higher education enabled them to grow personally and spiritually.

Pargament (2013) stated that a focus on spirituality "lends itself to a more collaborative, respectful, and productive relationship with diverse individuals and communities because it takes seriously their own visions of the world" (p. 269). Astin (2003) identified that the problems in the world were related to beliefs, values, perspectives, and feelings (p. 14). Students who invested in beliefs, values, perspectives, and feelings may have been best equipped to address the problems in the world.

Students in this study were exploring how to do just that. One student thought deeply about the injustice in the world while he practiced being an activator and filling a spiritual programming gap on campus. Another student ran races to raise money and sponsored

children across the world to help address problems of poverty. One student participated in rebuilding the broken community of New Orleans for one week and then decided to complete a summer internship there. Another student made plans to support non-White students experiencing oppression at other campuses in the state.

In 2006, one higher education administrator said, "[Higher education institutions] need to temper our current heavy emphasis on rational empiricism and professional and vocational preparation with increased efforts to help students address issues of authenticity and spiritual growth" (Chickering, p. 23). According to Chickering, the world and nation needed spirituality to address large-scale problems; institutions needed spirituality to produce students who could be civic leaders; and students needed spirituality because they were asking for it (pp. 24-36).

The students in this research were asking for spirituality—and growing while they pursued their spiritual development. Attending to their spirituality helped students succeed academically, socially, and emotionally at college. One student vividly explained this connection:

> Honestly, I've come to the conclusion that I have been so stressed, and this semester has been so difficult, because I've lacked spiritually. So I honestly say it is the most important thing. It is the cornerstone in which everything else flows from. Now with that said, things can still flow [without spirituality], and they do—it's just more difficult, and perspectives are shifted, and you start investing time in things you don't need to be, and your emotions get out of whack because you're focusing on the wrong things. But if your spirituality is the cornerstone, then I think things are just in line. (Pepper, April).

Giving attention to spirituality is not just for students in Christian higher education institutions. By attending to students' spirituality in college, institutions may help first generation college students find success in college and be well prepared for success in life and work after college.

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Appendix A: Definitions of Religion and Spirituality

Author (Year)	Definition of Religion	Definition of Spirituality
A. W. Astin (2004)	-	"our subjective life . . . our qualitative or affective experiences . . . More specifically . . . the values that we hold most dear. . . the meaning and purpose that we see in our work and our life . . . and our sense of connectedness to each other and to the world around us. . . . and such things as intuition, inspiration, the mysterious, and the mystical" (p. 34)
A. W. Astin, Astin, & Lindholm (2011a)	-	Spiritual development is "how students make meaning of their education and their lives, how they develop a sense of purpose, the value and belief dilemmas they experience, as well as the role of religion, the sacred, and the mystical in their lives" (p. 40)
Constantine, Miville, Warren, Gainor, and Lewis-Coles (2006)	"Religion refers to the degree to which individuals adhere to the prescribed beliefs and practices of an organized religion of a Higher Power" (p. 228)	"Spirituality refers to individuals' belief in the sacred nature of life in all of its forms and the manifestation of this belief in a quest for goodness and interconnectedness with other persons and things" (p. 228)
Edwards and Hall (2003)	-	"The subjective experience of someone who is seeking to know the divine, the sacred or transcendent as revealed in his or her worldview" (p. 265).

Author (Year)	Definition of Religion	Definition of Spirituality
Kazanjian (2013)	-	"those humanistic, religious, and spiritual beliefs and practices through which a person seeks to find meaning and purpose as they deepen their understanding of self, other and world" (p. 99)
Lindholm (2007)	-	Subjects described spirituality as "people's 'ultimate beliefs,' 'morals,' or 'philosophy of life,' a core 'part of who you are' and the 'values that you live by.'" . . . While an individualistic theme was prominent, there was also a strong, commonly expressed sentiment that one's individual connection with spirituality has important implications for relating to others. Equally prevalent was the notion that spirituality is heavily process-oriented and tightly linked with 'asking questions about who you are and what you believe'" (p. 12).
Mayhew (2004)	-	"the human attempt to make sense of the self in connection to and with the external world" (p. 666). Themes are continuity, local moment, pervasiveness, local environment, relationship with humanity, relationship with personal other, internal process of meaning making, external process of meaning making, meaning making as a product.

Author (Year)	Definition of Religion	Definition of Spirituality
Pargament (1999)	"search for significance in ways related to the sacred" (p. 11)	"search for the sacred" (p. 12)
Parks (2011)	-	"one's lived relationship with Mystery" (p. 23)
Schneiders (1989)	-	"the experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives. . . . Spirituality as lived experience is . . . determined by the particular ultimate value within the horizon of which life is pursued" (p. 684)
Shushok (2011)	-	"as broadly defined in higher education, . . . the pursuit of life's big questions, meaning, purpose, and moral development in such a way that the human spirit is altered, reshaped, and transformed" (p. 5)
Stamm (2006)	"encompass[es] an affiliation with and practice of an established denominational tradition" (p. 38)	"[is] marked by a highly personal search for ultimate meaning, purpose, and values wherever they may be found" (p. 38)
Tisdell (2007)	"organized communities of faith that are . . . human institutions, and . . . preach a particular message, and . . . [have an] official belief system and codes of regulatory behavior determined by those in power" (p. 539)	"finding meaning in life, meaning-making, and personal experiences" (p. 539)

Appendix B: Research Consent Form

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in **a research study** on the spiritual development of college students whose parents did not attend college. The leading college student spiritual development theories are based on the experiences of college students who fit within the dominant college culture, which includes students whose parent(s) or guardian(s) attended college. I want to explore the spiritual development of the non-dominant category of students who are known as first generation college students because their parent(s) or guardian(s) did not attend college. I am focusing on college students who identify with the Christian faith because of my understanding of this worldview and belief system.

You were invited to participate in this research because your student records at your institution show that you selected Christianity as your religion, and your parent(s) or guardian(s) did not attend college.

I am a student in the Doctor of Education, Educational Leadership, Higher Education program at [University] in [City, State]. This research comprises my dissertation, which is the final requirement in my degree program.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me on your campus for an initial interview at the beginning of the fall semester, and a final interview at the end of the spring semester. Almost every month between these two interviews, you will be asked to complete two activities online: (1) review and update a diagram and (2) answer one or two short essay questions. You will need a personal computer, access to the Internet, and a personal email account to participate in this study.

You will create a pseudonym for this research, and you will create or provide a personal email address for me to use during the study. Using your personal email address, I will invite you to share an electronic drop box with me, so that you and I can share electronic documents. When you join the electronic drop box, I will ask that you use your pseudonym for the account. Nobody else will have access to the electronic drop box that you and I will share. The only associations these documents will have with you are the pseudonym and personal email address you provide for me to use for this study. At the conclusion of the research, the electronic drop box will be deleted.

To help me with transcription, I will audiotape our interviews. The contents of the electronic dropbox, the audio files, and the transcription of the audiotaped interviews will be stored on my personal computer, which is password protected, and on an external hard drive, which will be stored in a lockbox that is accessible only by me.

All data will be destroyed five years after the completion of my research.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will take approximately one-and-a-half hours for the initial interview, twenty minutes for each of four monthly activities, and one hour for the final interview.

After the final interview is completed, and before I have finished my report, you will be invited to review and make corrections to my results. If you choose to do this review, the additional time involvement may be thirty to sixty minutes.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: The risks associated with this study are that your experiences and views may be so unique that you could be personally identified by a reader of this research, or you may feel uncomfortable sharing information about your personal decisions, values, and experiences. The benefits which may reasonably be expected to result from this study are that institutions who respond to the research findings may eventually enable more first generation college students to remain enrolled and receive four-year degrees from higher education institutions. The category of students who are involved in the research, first generation college students, is the category that should eventually directly benefit from the results of the research. **We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this study.** Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your grades in school.

PAYMENTS: You will receive a $25 electronic gift card at the completion of each semester as payment for your participation.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your **participation is voluntary** and you have the **right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled**. **The alternative is not to participate.** You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at academic or professional meetings or published in academic journals.

CONTACT INFORMATION:
Questions: This research project has been reviewed and approved in accordance with [University's] Levels of Review for Research with Humans. If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, please contact Diane Krusemark, researcher, (d-krusemark@[university].edu) or Dr. Michael Lindstrom, dissertation advisor (m-lindstrom@[university].edu).

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form, should you choose to discontinue participation in this study. To discontinue participation, please notify the researcher or dissertation advisor.

SIGNATURE _____ **DATE** _____

Appendix C: Spiritual Ecomap Construction Guidelines and Tips

1. You should be in the center of the map. If you are a female, represent yourself with a circle shape. If you are a male, represent yourself with a square shape. Add the text, "Me," inside your shape, and then put your age in parentheses.

2. Cluster your family unit around yourself. The generation(s) that are older than you should be above you on the map. Those who are the same generation as you should be on the same level as you on the map. The generation(s) that are younger than you should be below you on the map. Put the ages of the members of your family unit in parentheses.

3. Draw a box or a circle (whichever works best) around your family unit.

4. Outside of the family unit, draw circles for all other influences on your spirituality. Consider the following:

   • Spiritual rituals or practices

   • Individuals in your faith community

   • Spiritual leaders

   • Parents' spiritual traditions

   • Angels, demons, or other spiritual entities

   • God

   • Mystical experiences

   • Friends

   • Individuals at college

   • Spiritual communities

5. Add lines with arrows between you and every other shape on the page. You can also add arrows between members of your family unit and other shapes on the page, to show how they are the same as or different from you.

   Here is a starting key:

   • Red is negative

   • Orange is neutral

   • Green is positive

   • Blue is unknown (i.e., it is describing someone else's relationship with someone or something else)

   • A solid line is a solid (consistent) relationship

   • A broken line is a weak or weakening relationship

   • Arrows indicate the flow or energy, resources, interest, or input into the relationship

6. In Microsoft Powerpoint:

- In Shapes, select the Square, Circle, or Elbow or Curved Arrow Connector.

- For Squares and Circles, use "Shape Fill" to select "No Fill" in order to have a clear shape. Once you make one shape, you can copy and paste it to create identical shapes, and then move them around the page.

- For Lines, the color, weight, dashes, and arrows are all in "Shape Outline."

- Thicker lines and thicker arrows will be easier to see.

- Arrow Connectors will "snap" two shapes together if you hover over the red dots on each shape while drawing the arrow. Then, if you move one of the shapes, the arrow will move along with it.

- If you have more than 8 shapes connected to your shape, you may need to use the Curved Arrow Connector in order to separate the arrows from one another at one of the connector points (so you can see which arrow goes with which line). You can click on the line and then drag the yellow box that appears to shift the way the line curves.

- If you had used Elbow Arrow Connectors and want to switch to Curved Arrow Connectors (or vice versa), you can right-click on the line you want to change, select "Connector Types" and then select the new type of arrow. It will change automatically for you (which is a lot easier than drawing a new line!).

7. In Google Drawings:

- In Shapes, select the Square or Circle.

- For Squares and Circles, use "Fill Shape" to select "Transparent" in order to have a clear shape. Once you make one shape, you can copy and paste it to create identical shapes, and then move them around the page.

- For Lines, select the Elbow Connector or Curved Connector.

- The color, weight, dashes, and arrows all have their own icons.

- Thicker lines and thicker arrows will be easier to see.

- Arrow Connectors will "snap" two shapes together if you hover over the red dots on each shape while drawing the arrow. Then, if you move one of the shapes, the arrow will move along with it.

- If you have more than 8 shapes connected to your shape, you may need to use the Curved Arrow Connector in order to separate the arrows from one another at one of the connector points (so you can see which arrow goes with which line). You can click on the line and then drag the yellow box that appears to shift the way the line curves.

- If you had used Elbow Arrow Connectors and want to switch to Curved Arrow Connectors (or vice versa), you can right-click on the line you want to change, select "Change Connector" and then select the new type of arrow. It will change automatically for you (which is a lot easier than drawing a new line!).

Appendix D: Spiritual Ecomap Guided Construction and Questions

Beginning instructions:

The goal of this spiritual ecomap is for you to represent your spiritual influences and relationships in a picture. You will be at the center of your picture, and your family unit will also be in the picture, and then you'll add all the other influences on your spirituality. You will illustrate the positivity/negativity, strength, and direction of energy in these relationships with different kinds of arrows. There is a basic framework I'd like you to use. You can make adaptations, such as a new color, as long as you explain what the adaptations mean.

As you put together your spiritual ecomap, I may ask questions to help you with its construction. I may also ask clarifying questions to help me understand the different items in your ecomap or the significance of the kinds of lines you're using. Once you've put together your ecomap, we'll talk about some of the themes in it.

Potential clarifying questions (based on Hodge, 2000, pp. 223-224):

- *Rituals:* Which specific rituals or practices help (or hinder) your spiritual life?

- *God:* Have there been times when you felt deep closeness (or distance) from God? Where are you now on the continuum of the closest and further you've felt from God?

- *Faith community:* What is your level of involvement with your faith community? What are some of the main traits of your faith community?

- *Spiritual leader:* What kind of relationship do you have with the person you or your family consider as a spiritual leader?

- *Parents' spiritual tradition:* How did your family express its spiritual beliefs? Did you all agree? Did you feel you could question or talk about your beliefs with anyone in your family? If you did, how did those conversations go?

- *Spiritual entities:* Have you had encounters with other spiritual beings, like angels, demons, or evil spirits? How would you describe those encounters?

Theme questions (based on Yasui, 2015, pp. 97-101):

- Choose three or four positive spiritual influences from this ecomap.

  - How would you say these people or events positively influenced your spirituality? If you had to sum up their influence in a few themes, what would these themes be?

  - Can you give me specific examples of the ways these people or events positively influenced your spirituality?

- Choose one or two negative spiritual influences from this ecomap.

    o How would you say these people or events negatively influenced your spirituality? If you had to sum up their influence in a few themes, what would these themes be?

    o Can you give me specific examples of the ways these people or events negatively influenced your spirituality?

Appendix E: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Initial interview:

1. Consider the influence of God on your life. If he is not on your ecomap, why not?
    Are there any names or attributes of God that resonate the most with your
    personal life right now? What are some words or themes you would use to
    describe how God influences your identity?

2. Pick two people in your spiritual ecomap. What have been the changes in your
    perceptions of each of these people since you've known them? What caused these
    changes? How do you think they think about you now?

3. How do you define your "group?" Which of these people (from the spiritual
    ecomap) are in your group? In what ways to you feel you fit in your group, and in
    what ways do you feel that you do not fit in your group?

4. Would you say that any of these people or influences has authority in your life? If
    so, why do they have this authority? If not, who or what would you say has
    authority in your life?

5. Are there any words or images (symbols) that have meaning in your spiritual
    world or that are especially important to you right now? If so, what does that
    word/symbol mean to you?

6. How is your spirituality similar or different from the spirituality of your parent(s)
    or guardian(s)? Why do you think this is? Spiritually, how well do you feel you
    belong at home? Why do you think this is?

7. How is your spirituality similar or different from the spirituality of your
    classmates, most of whose parents went to college? Why do you think this is?
    Spiritually, how well do you feel you belong at college? Why do you think this
    is?

Final interview:

1. Pretend you're me, analyzing your ecomaps over the year. What do you see?
    What explanations can you provide for what you see?

2. Choose three or four positive spiritual influences from this ecomap. How would
    you say these people or events positively influenced your spirituality? If you had
    to sum up their influence in a few themes, what would these themes be? Can you
    give me specific examples of the ways these people or events positively
    influenced your spirituality?

3.   Choose one or two negative spiritual influences from this ecomap. How would
    you say these people or events negatively influenced your spirituality? If you had
    to sum up their influence in a few themes, what would these themes be? Can you

give me specific examples of the ways these people or events negatively influenced your spirituality?

4. What would an academically successful year look like to you? A socially successful year? An emotionally successful year? Did you have this kind of "successful" year? Why or why not? How did your spirituality help or hurt your achieving of success this year, in any or all of these areas?

5. Is your spirituality similar or different from the spirituality of your **parent(s) or guardian(s)**? Why do you think this is? Spiritually, how well do you feel you belong at home? Why do you think this is?

6. Is your spirituality similar or different from the spirituality of your **classmates, most of whose parents went to college**? Why do you think this is? Spiritually, how well do you feel you belong at college? Why do you think this is?

7. In which community (home, college, church, elsewhere) do you feel the greatest sense of spiritual belonging? What does spiritual belonging mean to you? How important is it to you to have a sense of spiritual belonging?
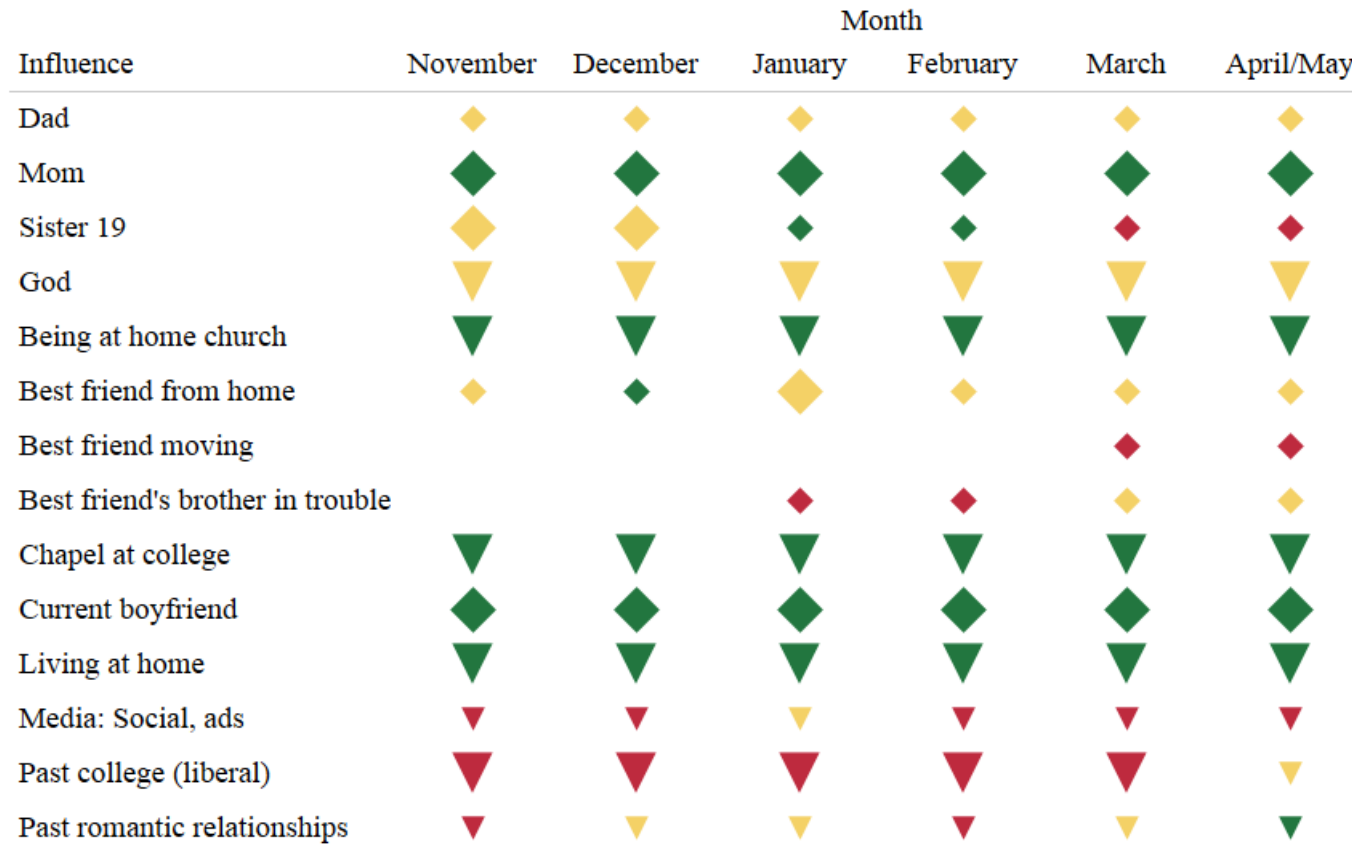
Appendix F: Monthly Written Questions

1. Do any of the influences or relationships in your spiritual ecomap represent a turning point, resolution to a conflict, or breakthrough for you? If so, describe what happened. If not, talk about a turning point or breakthrough in your life.

2. What is something about God or the Christian faith that does not make sense to you? Why doesn't it make sense? What is your best explanation for it? How does your best explanation compare to what you've heard from other people? With whom could you share your explanation and still feel like you would be accepted or belong?

3. Do you think actions can be right or wrong? What makes an action right? Can you give me an example?

4. What does spirituality mean to you? How do you think about your own spiritual development?

5. Pick someone in your spiritual ecomap that you've known for a while and describe your current relationship with them. Have there been any changes in your perceptions of them since you've known them? If so, what caused these changes? How do you think they think about you?

6. Is there anything about God or the Christian faith that started making sense to you this year? If so, what was it? How did you figure it out? How does your understanding compare to what you've heard from other people? With whom could you share your recent understanding and feel you would be accepted or belong? If not, why do you think there isn't anything that has started to make sense to you about God or the Christian faith this year?

7. Are there any words or images (symbols) that have meaning in your spiritual world? Or that are especially important to you right now? What does that word/symbol mean to you, and why are they important?

8. Did anything happen lately that resonated with you as being "right" in the world? How about "wrong" in the world? Why were these happenings either right or wrong? If you talked with anyone about them, who did you talk to, and how did they respond?

9. Which of the people from your spiritual ecomap are in your group? How do you define your group? How well do you feel you fit in your group?

10. What gives your life meaning?

Appendix G: Relevant Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Year in College	Race/Ethnicity	Residence	Level of Parents' Education
Abbie	Female	Freshman	White/Caucasian	College residence	High school graduate; some college (technical)
Calvin	Female	Sophomore	White/Caucasian	College residence	High school graduate; high school graduate
Cherry	Female	Sophomore	African-American/Black and American Indian/Alaska Native	College residence hall	High school graduate, some college (half semester); high school graduate, some college (half semester)
Crystal	Female	Sophomore	White/Caucasian	College residence hall	High school graduate; high school graduate
Emily	Female	Sophomore	White/Caucasian	College residence hall	High school graduate; high school graduate
Heidi	Female	Junior	White/Caucasian	With family or other relatives	Some college (technical); some college (community)

Pseudonym	Gender	Year in College	Race/Ethnicity	Residence	Level of Parents' Education
Liza	Female	Sophomore	White/Caucasian	College residence hall	High school graduate; high school graduate
Otto	Male	Senior	White/Caucasian	Other private residence	High school graduate; high school graduate
Pepper	Male	Senior	White/Caucasian and African-American/Black	College residence hall	High school graduate; some college (community)
Pink	Female	Junior	Southeast Asian	Own home	Some high school; some high school
Sadie	Female	Junior	White/Caucasian	College residence hall	Junior high or less; high school graduate
Waverly	Female	Sophomore	East Asian and Southeast Asian	College residence hall	Some high school; high school graduate

Appendix H: Sample Spiritual Ecomap Graph

Month

Influence	November	December	January	February	March	April/May
Dad						
Mom						
Sister 19						
God						
Being at home church						
Best friend from home						
Best friend moving						
Best friend's brother in trouble						
Chapel at college						
Current boyfriend						
Living at home						
Media: Social, ads						
Past college (liberal)						
Past romantic relationships						

The vertical axis lists the items the students had on their ecomaps. The horizontal axis lists the months in which the ecomaps were created or revised. Color shows positivity of influence: green was positive; yellow was neutral; red was negative. Size of shape shows strength of influence: large was strong or strengthening; small was weak or weakening. Shape shows direction of influence: a diamond represented energy or effort going both ways, a triangle showed energy or effort going from the student to the item, and an inverted triangle showed energy or effort going from the item to the student.

Appendix I: Summaries of Changes on Students' Spiritual Ecomaps

Which items influenced the students (were present on their ecomaps, with direction toward them):
1. Dad (11/12)
2. Roommates (8/10)
3. Mom, Siblings, College Peers (incl. Roommates) and College Church (10/12)
4. God, Home Church, and Home Peers (9/12)
5. Mentors (8/12)
6. College Clubs (7/12)
7. Chapel and Education/Classes/Professors (6/12)

Which items the students influenced (were present on their ecomaps, with direction away from them):
1. Dad, Mom (11/12)
2. College Peers (incl. Roommates), Home Peers (10/12)
3. Roommates, Siblings (9/12)
4. Home Church (8/12)
5. Mentor (7/12)
6. College Church (6/12)

Which items influenced the students the most (strong, with direction toward them):
1. Roommates (7/10)
2. Mom, Siblings, God, College Friends, Clubs, Mentors (7/12)
3. Dad, Home Peers, Education-Professors-Classes (6/12)
4. Chapel (5/12)
5. Work (3/12)

Which items the students influenced the most (strong, with direction away from them):
1. Siblings (10/12)
2. Service and College Peers (9/12)
   a. Serving at college church: 1/12
   b. Serving at college: 7/12
   c. Serving at home: 3/12
3. Mom and Home Peers (8/12)
4. Roommates (6/10)
5. Clubs (7/12)
6. Dad (4/12)
7. Work (3/12)

Which items' influence did not change throughout the year:
1. Siblings (9/12)
2. Mom (7/12)

3. Service (6/12)
4. Home Peers (5/12)
5. Dad, God, Home Church (4/12)
6. Mentor, College Friends (3/12)
7. Education-Professors-Classes (2/12)
8. Roommates (1/10)

Which items' influence changed from strong to weak:
1. College Peers (6/12) and Roommates (5/10)
2. Home Peers (4/12)
3. Dad, Mom, Siblings, God, Mentor, Past (3/12)
4. Education-Professors-Classes (2/12)
5. Home Church, College Church (1/12)

Which items' influence changed from weak to strong:
1. College Peers (7/12)
2. Roommate (5/10)
3. Siblings (4/12)
4. God and Home Peers (3/12)
5. Home Church and College Church (2/12)
6. Dad (1/12)
7. Mom=0

Which items' influence changed from positive to neutral, or neutral to negative, or both (double):
1. Roommates (5/12): 2 double
2. Dad (4/12)
3. Siblings (4/12): 1 double
4. Mentor (3/12): 2 double, College Church, Home friends: 1 double
5. Chapel (2/12): 1 double, Home church
6. Grades (1/12): 1 double

Which items' influence changed from negative to neutral, or neutral to positive:
1. Roommates (5/10)
2. Siblings (5/12)
3. Dad (4/12)
4. Chapel, Home friends, Home church (3/12)
5. Mom, God (2/12)

Which items were added:
1. College Friends (8/12)
2. Education-Professors-Classes, Mentors, Work, Service (4/12)
3. Home Peers, Clubs (3/12)

4. Roommate (2/10)

Which items were removed:
1. Mentor, Home Church, Service, Home Peers (2/12)
2. Clubs, Education, Roommates (1/12)

Items' net changes in positivity:
1. Mother and God (+2)
2. Home Church (+1)
3. Siblings, Father, and Chapel (0)
4. Home Peers (-1)
5. Grades (-2)
6. College Church (-3)
7. Mentors (-5)

Items' net changes in strength:
1. College Peers, Home Church, and Siblings (+1)
2. Roommates and God (0)
3. Home Peers and College Church (-1)
4. Father and Education (-2)
5. Mother and Mentors (-3)

Appendix J: Themes of Spiritual Influences and Relationships

Positive Themes			Negative Themes	
Type of Presence	Type of Interaction	Absence in Relationship	Friction in Relationship	Personal/ Emotional
Being in close proximity	Intentional (when reading books or studying the Bible together)	Separation/ distance	Competition/ judgment	Shame
Spending quality time together	Service-oriented	Lack of consistent communication	Forcing spirituality	Stress
Being available	Spiritual (through spiritual disciplines)	-	Imbalanced power	Anxiety
Being open	Communal (through group Bible study or church services)	-	Control	Lack of Confidence
Being supportive	Mentoring or modeling	-	Different expectations	-
Being loving	Becoming familiar	-	Unfulfilled	-
Mutually encouraging	Persistent	-	Misunderstanding and conflict	-

Appendix K: Definitions of Spirituality

	Religious theme	Non-religious theme
Person/Self	Christian dogma and expression	Moral behavior
	Avoiding sin and obeying the Bible	Personal growth, change, or transformation
	Living an authentic Christian identity	Having character
	Learning from the Bible and sermons	Pursuing truth
	Reading the Bible and praying	Knowing and valuing myself (including my cultural identity)
	Connecting things in life to God and His plan	Having a sense of purpose
	Being a spiritual being who relates to God (Holy Spirit)	Making sense of life
	Not wavering from faith	Being a whole person
	-	Being a spiritual being who relates to other spiritual beings
God	Seeing God's work in my life and the world	Nature
	Understanding who God is	Recognizing the spiritual realm is real
	Obeying and doing things for God	
	Experiencing God (Holy Spirit), which includes feeling His presence	-
	Relating to God (Holy Spirit, Jesus), which includes hearing, waiting, pursuing, accepting, loving, getting mad, being wowed, listening, spending time with Him	-
	Choosing faith in God	-
Other people	Being a Christ-centered family	Being tolerant, kind, forgiving
	Showing God to others	Allowing others to have their own faith or culture

Religious theme	Non-religious theme
Worshipping God as a community of diverse individuals	Having close relationships (genuine, dependable, healthy, intimate, vulnerable, emotional, deep, collaborative, action-based, confidential, accountable, truth-telling, trusting) with personal and spiritual conversations
Studying the Bible in a group	Encouraging, helping, caring about others (friends)
Praying for each other	Being accepted and having purpose in a group
Attending church, chapel, youth group (being the community of God on earth)	Acting together to make things better in the world
Christian mentorship	Getting to know people with different beliefs
Correcting others	Serving others

Appendix L: Frequency of Definitions of Spirituality by Topic Areas

With the topic area listed first, the frequency of definitions is listed below. The first number in parentheses is the number of occasions the definition was given. In the second set of parentheses, the first number counts the times the definition was given in response to a direct question about the definition of spirituality, and the second number counts the times the definition was given indirectly.

1. <u>Relating to others</u>: Having close relationships with personal and spiritual conversations (38)(1;37)
2. <u>Relating to others</u>: Relating to God (Spirit, Jesus) (28)(11;17)
3. <u>Behaving and acting</u>: Attending church, chapel, youth group (22)(1;21)
4. <u>Interpreting life and learning</u>: Connecting things in life to God and His plan (19)(1;18)
5. <u>Relating to others</u>: Encouraging, helping, caring about others (friends) (16)(0;16)
6. <u>Relating to others</u>: Experiencing God (Spirit), includes feeling His presence (16)(6;10)
7. <u>Interpreting life and learning</u>: Reading the Bible and praying (14)(6;8)
8. <u>Behaving and acting</u>: Avoiding sin and obeying the Bible (13)(0;13)
9. <u>Understanding one's identity</u>: Personal growth, change, or transformation (12) (4;8)
10. <u>Interpreting life and learning</u>: Seeing God's work in my life and the world (11)(3;8)
11. <u>Relating to others</u>: Praying for each other (11)(1;10)
12. <u>Relating to others</u>: Showing God to others (11)(1;10)
13. <u>Understanding one's identity</u>: Living an authentic Christian identity (10)(1;9)
14. <u>Interpreting life and learning</u>: Christian mentorship (10)(1;9)
15. <u>Behaving and acting</u>: Obeying and doing things for God (8)(3;5)
16. <u>Understanding one's identity</u>: Being tolerant, kind, forgiving (8)(0;8)
    <u>Understanding one's identity</u>: Having a sense of purpose (8)(1;7)
17. <u>Interpreting life and learning</u>: Understanding who God is (7)(5;2)
18. <u>Understanding one's identity</u>: Having character (6)(1;5)
    <u>Interpreting life and learning</u>: Learning from the Bible and sermons (6)(0;6)
19. <u>Interpreting life and learning</u>: Pursuing truth (5)(0;5)
    <u>Interpreting life and learning</u>: Making sense of life (5)(0;5)
    <u>Understanding one's identity</u>: Being accepted and having purpose in a group (5)(0;5)
    <u>Behaving and acting</u>: Acting together to make things better in the world (5)(0;5)
    <u>Interpreting life and learning</u>: Christian dogma and expression (5)(0;5)
    <u>Understanding one's identity</u>: Being a spiritual being who relates to God (Holy Spirit) (5)(5;0)
    <u>Interpreting life and learning</u>: Reading the Bible in a group (5)(0;5)
    <u>Relating to others</u>: Being a Christ-centered family (5)(0;5)
20. <u>Behaving and acting</u>: Moral behavior (4)(0;4)
    <u>Understanding one's identity</u>: Knowing and valuing myself (cultural identity) (4)(0;4)
    <u>Relating to others</u>: Worshipping God as a community of diverse individuals (4)(1;3)
    <u>Relating to others</u>: Correcting others (4)(0;4)

21. <u>Understanding one's identity</u>: Choosing faith in God (3)(2;1)
    <u>Interpreting life and learning</u>: Recognizing spiritual realm is real (3)(1;2)
22. <u>Understanding one's identity</u>: Being a whole person (2)(1;1)
    <u>Interpreting life and learning</u>: Nature (2)(0;2)
23. <u>Relating to others</u>: Getting to know people with different beliefs (1)(1;0)
    <u>Behaving and acting</u>: Serving others (1)(0;1)
    <u>Understanding one's identity</u>: Not wavering from faith (1)(1;0)
    <u>Relating to others</u>: Being a spiritual being who relates to other spiritual beings (1)(1;0)

Appendix M: Faith Development Aspects by Stages with Transition

Themes in italics are uniquely Christian themes.

Aspect	Fowler Stage 3 Theme	Transition between 3 and 4 Theme	Fowler Stage 4 Theme
Bounds of Social Awareness	Summary: Spectrum of accepting group that surrounds me to choosing the group with whom I surround myself		
	Choosing a new community during conversion, but not yet completely identifying with this group	Thinking about identity with different groups of people	Choosing their own group of friends who are similar to them
	Group is ultimately student's friends or family (not ideological group)	Spending time with similar people (but maybe not recognizing their similarity)	Group is related to chosen ideology
	-	-	There is no small group of close friends
	-	-	After engaging more in community with close friends, group is a chosen community
	-	-	Choosing a perspective and everyone else is outside
	-	-	Aware of in/out social groups
Form of Logic	No Summary.		
	Thinks within an ideal future with ideal relationships and some judgmentalism	Beginning to analyze a multi-dimensional problem and accepting an explanation for it	Thinking about systems, analyzing multi-dimensional problem with social tensions
	-	Starting to analyze why a person is the way they are; still	Wanting to resolve tension and ambiguity

Aspect	Fowler Stage 3 Theme	Transition between 3 and 4 Theme	Fowler Stage 4 Theme
		holds to ideals	
	-	-	Coming to a resolution, but it's unsatisfying (temporary, basic)
	-	-	Trying to connect two dichotomies
	-	-	Weighing different viewpoints and options to make a decision
Locus of Authority	Summary: There's a set of choosing God's authority; which can be distinguished from accepting God's authority (as in control/fate). Finding meaning in serving other people because that's what God wants is different from serving other people because that's what I want. And it's different from serving other people because that's what they want!		
	God is ultimate authority	*God and Bible are ultimate authorities, but student is willing to break with convention to come up with answers*	God is not included
	Someone from my home community is my mentor	*Finding meaning from relationship with God*	Making decisions and making things happen where there are gaps
	God has authority because He made the world (or is in control of the world)	*Choosing God as authority ("I give my life to God")*	*Choosing another mentor as authoritative because this is a choice of humility*
	God and school are my authorities	*Finding meaning in helping people because that's what God desires*	Choosing my own beliefs

Aspect	Fowler Stage 3 Theme	Transition between 3 and 4 Theme	Fowler Stage 4 Theme
	I let other people give my life meaning	Choosing a person as an authority because they represent where the student wants to go (i.e., not an assumed authority from the past social convention)	Student is her own authority (although she thinks it should be God)
	My parents are my authorities. (They help me know what to think).	*God and I are both authoritative. Church is authoritative but I'm above their limitations*	Meaning is based on what the student wants or feels is purposeful
	-	-	Individuating from family
	-	-	Choosing to help people (where meaning is located)
Moral Judgment	Summary: Own set of "Following God's laws" that sometimes do and sometimes don't have reasons attached to them. Other than that, the reasons are (1) what's good for me, (2) what's good for other people, (3) what's good for society at large, (4) relativism		
	Appeal to what is right to God	*God has created rules for people to follow, and following rules affects individual people (and is good for them)*	Do not appeal to God
	Helping or relating well to people is the right thing to do	What is best for social order (all people, not like herself)	There is more than interpersonal rightness and wrongness in the world; social structures and systems come into place (but no relativism)

Aspect	Fowler Stage 3 Theme	Transition between 3 and 4 Theme	Fowler Stage 4 Theme
	Something positive in student's life	*Following the rules of God's eternal kingdom is the right thing to do*	There are rules that everyone should follow (non-religious); they are for the benefit of other people
	Consider motivations and intentions; interpersonal focus	*A personal God (Holy Spirit) leads us to do what is right*	People in other groups have different moral judgments
	Shame and guilt (or feeling good) are indicators of morality	*God has created rules for us to follow (religious), which benefit ourselves*	-
	Student determines what is right or wrong	*Should follow God's law (appeal to law, but there is no interpersonal v social order reason for it. It's just God's law.)*	-
	If God allows something and it is best for the person, it's right	There is one set of rules to follow	-
Perspective Taking	Summary: Spectrum of self-awareness and others-awareness		
	God is personal, but distant (good example)	Aware of how other people might think about her	Reframing other people (close to student)
	Perspective about someone is how they make me feel	Aware of the world outside college, justice issues within the community	Understanding the culture and background of others (identifying systemic differences in people)
	God is personal and my relationship with him is emotional	Recognize economic system of family	Multiple groups of people have different view points

Aspect	Fowler Stage 3 Theme	Transition between 3 and 4 Theme	Fowler Stage 4 Theme
	Talking about how they relate with another person, in the realm of emotions and communication	Starting to consider how others became the way they are	Labelling people by types; objective view of both parties (including oneself)
	God is aware of me	Starting to distance self from relationship to analyze it	-
	Perspective someone has about me is really what I think about myself	Recognize the difference in backgrounds of other people	-
	Empathizing with another person (how I would feel if I were them)	Separating self-image from perceptions others have of him/her	-
	Students' world is about themselves (and other people relate to them)	-	-
	Does not consider the backgrounds and structures of others. Everyone should be treated the same.	-	-
Symbolic Function	Summary: Difference is whether the word/symbol is representing something else or is a literal definition of itself		
	Typical sacred symbols (cross, water) are meaningful	Taking a spiritual symbol and learning something from it (temporary interest)	Does not think highly about symbols

Aspect	Fowler Stage 3 Theme	Transition between 3 and 4 Theme	Fowler Stage 4 Theme
	Relating to the transcendent through reflection on the symbol	Abstract meaning of a word that is spiritual in nature but not an obvious spiritual symbol ("mighty is power in surrender")	Standard representation (heart is emotions)
	Relating directly to meaning making and value	An object reminds student about God and his world	Interpretation of non-symbolic parts of Bible
	Remotely sacred symbols are meaningful (anchor; brokenness; seasons; flowers; love, abiding)	Non-sacred symbol is descriptive of her self-assessment of spirituality and emotions	Literal interpretation of word (wisdom is wisdom; hard work is hard work; mercy is mercy; life of Christ is the life of Christ; grace is grace)
	Icon causes student to reflect on Jesus	-	No meaningful symbols
	Non-sacred symbols are meaningful (giving keys represent God's love)	-	-
Form of World Coherence	Summary: One of the main differences here is whether there is dichotomy or not		
	No critique of faith or faith community	Rejecting theology from past church while in a new church (maybe creating own, maybe choosing a new one)	Aware of different cultures' ways of thinking
	Learning more about what he/she believes	Expanding theology while learning about new perspectives and ideas (taking in a	Spiritual struggle about beliefs is in the past. Has considered and chosen a set of beliefs.

Aspect	Fowler Stage 3 Theme	Transition between 3 and 4 Theme	Fowler Stage 4 Theme
		new one but not rejecting old)	
	Rejecting what other people believe (and wishing we could respect each other)	Weighing inherited and new theology and choosing what makes most sense (not yet aware of multiple systems of thought)	Questioning beliefs and believing that people should be exposed to multiple perspectives in order to choose their own
	-	Trying to make sense of Christian dichotomies (sin and interpretations of God's law/lying to save Jews)(grace and obedience)(evil and good)	Weighing inherited and new theology and choosing what makes most sense (aware of multiple systems of thought)
	-	Accepting a simplistic answer for a complex issue in the world (asking the question, accepting an answer, but not really liking it, which is the sign of transition)	-
	-	Just beginning to ask questions about Christian dogma (why does Jesus love me?)	-
	-	Forming own system of thought, one that does not seem to be like others around her (might not have dichotomies)	-

Aspect	Fowler Stage 3 Theme	Transition between 3 and 4 Theme	Fowler Stage 4 Theme
	-	Questioning what student was taught and trying to reconcile two different concepts (about the consistency of God)	-
	-	Questioning worldview but not necessarily dealing with a dichotomy. More seeing that it might need adjusting in response to the realities of the world.	-

Appendix N: Reasons Spirituality Helped or Hurt Students' Success at College

	Reasons		
	Academic	Social	Emotional
Spirituality Helped Success (Positive)	Spirituality classes are academic and personal and spiritual	Because God gives me peace and I'm more relaxed and can work better, I'm more relational	Spirituality is something to fall back on
	Because God gives me peace, I'm more relaxed and can work better	Praying and reading the Bible about judgment helped me approach people in a new way	Realizing that people who have been hurt across America have a strong faith, which is difficult to understand but helpful
	The Christian community at college makes me want to do better, and my grades are going up. I could take what I'm getting from this college and go to a non-Christian college and probably do better, too.	Community of faith helps you succeed	Discernment process helped with emotional growth (and accepting negative emotions)
	God gave me a new job which enables me to study more (and gave me more time)	My spirituality pushes me to create programs to fill in gaps, and doing this benefits me with new intentional relationships	Emotions also helped discernment process
	My spirituality helps me become more balanced with life and academics	My spirituality and belief in the goodness of God's word pushes me to invest in good relationships	God is giving me peace
	Praying and feeling confident because of spirituality helps with passing a test	God gave me a new job which helped me build new relationships	Learning that my spirituality (foundation of the spirit) is just as important for fitting into the college community as knowledge of the Bible
	God is at the center of everything in my life (He's worked through each thing, and I can't do these things on my own), and I'm doing well academically	My spirituality encourages me to invest in deep relationships with others	knowing that God is there, everything is OK as long as God is with you, creates a positive atmosphere

	Reasons		
	Academic	Social	Emotional
	I remember what it was like to not have God in my life, and this is much better	Spirituality enables me to have a strong relationship with my mom	No reason given
	-	God is at the center of everything in my life (He's worked through each thing, and I can't do these things on my own)	My spirituality and belief in the goodness of God's word pushes me to invest in good relationships that help me grow emotionally
	-	I remember what it was like to not have God in my life, and this is much better	If a person doesn't invest in spiritual things, their emotions get out of whack. It's stressful.
	-	I'm encouraged by the community of people who care about me, and I want to pour into other people more	Opening up to another person (part of my spirituality) enables me to know myself (emotional growth) and open up more to Jesus, which in turn helps me grow spiritually
	-	I've worked on confronting other people this year, because that's part of a Christian community	Spirituality gives me confidence that God will work out the things that are difficult
	-	-	Going to chapel helped me understand I'm not the only one struggling with certain things
	-	-	I see now that God has been working in my life and I'm becoming more positive.
Spirituality Neither Helped nor Hurt Success (Neutral)	Questioning things did not affect my academics	-	Questioning, not feeling God's presence
	-	-	No connection

	Reasons		
	Academic	Social	Emotional
Spirituality Hurt Success (Negative)	Didn't see point in reading about things that didn't connect with ministry or leadership positions	Expecting a lot (spiritual depth) out of conversations	Putting a lot of pressure on myself to make the right decision about major, trying to hear from God, afraid the wrong decision would negatively hurt rest of life
	Spiritual motivation detracts from academics	-	Previously: Didn't feel God's presence, so I felt emotionally stagnant and down
	Previously: Didn't feel God's presence, so felt emotionally stagnant and stressed about academics	-	When things got tough, and it felt like nothing was happening, spirituality wasn't good
	Not knowing the Bible well hurt academic success	-	The spirituality of the community, the judgmentalism, isn't something I like
	If I define academic success as good grades (which I didn't) it hurts it	-	I felt ashamed for not going to church, not having friends, not talking about spiritual things with boyfriend, not having a good relationship with dad and brother

Appendix O: Internally and Externally Motivated Reasons for Students' Success

Reasons Students Experienced Success

Type of Success	Reason for Success	Internal or External Motivation
Academic	Past academic experience motivated me.	Internal
Academic	Been involved in other things.	Internal
Academic	Interested.	Internal
Academic	Interested.	Internal
Academic	In a class that has something due every day.	External
Academic	Something due every day. Process in class and in group/club.	External
Emotional	Had to be honest with myself, which helped me forgive. Journaling put into perspective.	Internal
Emotional	Learning to control and express emotions.	Internal
Emotional	Girlfriend was catalyst.	External
Emotional	Saw a counselor.	External
Social	Choosing friends who are good for me, meet my goals.	Internal
Social	Choosing to be like God and give people grace.	Internal
Social	Residence Life. They meet people.	External
Social	Others showed they cared.	External
Social	Class exercises; ministry trip. Internal desire changed.	Both

Reasons Students Did Not Experience Success

Type of Success	Reason for Success	Internal or External Motivation
Academic	Independent work. Losing motivation.	Internal
Academic	Can't process when leading a group.	External
Academic and Emotional	Overwhelming, too much going on. Leadership.	External
Emotional	Recent diagnosis.	Internal

Type of Success	Reason for Success	Internal or External Motivation
Emotional	Wasn't taking time for self, overwhelmed. (Saw counselor).	Internal
Emotional	Too invested in a boy.	Both
Social	Haven't gone out of my way to create or find situations where people I don't know well need me.	Internal
Social	Been busy with school and work. Not enough fun.	External
Social	Conflict with another person.	External

Appendix P: Relationship between Spirituality and Achieving of Success for Subcategories

of the Students' Definitions of Ideal Academic, Social, and Emotional Success

The students' definitions of success are provided in the first column. Subsequent columns identify how many students did and did not experience success on each subcategory, and how many students connected their spirituality to the achieving (or lack of achieving) of success on each subcategory. The subcategories with asterisks are those in which at least one student did not connect spirituality to the achieving (or lack of achieving) of success.

Definition	Success (at least for one semester)	Connected Spirituality to Achieving Success	No Success (at least for one semester)	Connected Spirituality to Achieving (or Not Achieving) Success
Academic Success				
Outcomes (9 students)				
*Getting good grades	8	7	2	1
*Getting into the program I want	0	0	1	0
Personal Effort (9 students)				
*Doing all the work	4	1	0	0
*Processing what I'm learning	1	1	1	0
*Improving study skills	0	0	1	0
Knowing the material	2	2	2	2
*Doing my best	4	3	1	0
*Applying what I'm learning	1	0	0	0
Perspective (3 students)				
Not being stressed	1	1	0	0
Not having	1	1	0	0

Definition	Success (at least for one semester)	Connected Spirituality to Achieving Success	No Success (at least for one semester)	Connected Spirituality to Achieving (or Not Achieving) Success
academics take first priority in life				
*Liking to learn	1	0	0	0
Community (4 students)				
*Telling professors about problems, asking for help	1	0	0	0
Making a good impression on professors	0	0	0	0
*Making academic connections with people	1	0	0	0
*Getting involved with other things on campus	0	0	1	0
Social Success				
Breadth (9 students)				
*Building relationships	6	3	0	0
*Caring for others you don't know very well	0	0	1	0
*Getting into a club at school	0	0	1	0
*Making time for fun/having fun	1	0	1	0
Depth (6 students)				
*Having people	1	1	1	0

Definition	Success (at least for one semester)	Connected Spirituality to Achieving Success	No Success (at least for one semester)	Connected Spirituality to Achieving (or Not Achieving) Success
who care and listen				
Being more open and vulnerable with others	2	2	0	0
*Having good communication with friends	1	0	1	0
Investing in fruitful relationships	2	2	0	0
Internal Growth (3 students)				
*Being independent socially (not worrying what others think of me; leading)	0	0	1	0
*Not being over-social (knowing one's own limits and following them)	0	0	1	0
Not judging others	1	1	0	0

Emotional Success

Positive Emotions (2 students)

Being positive	1	1	0	0
Not having negative feelings	1	1	0	0

Negative Emotions (5 students)

| Definition	Success (at least for one semester)	Connected Spirituality to Achieving Success	No Success (at least for one semester)	Connected Spirituality to Achieving (or Not Achieving) Success
*Being OK with showing emotions, even negative ones	3	1	0	0
Accepting highs and lows	2	2	1	1
Getting past my negative thoughts	0	0	1	1
Self-Awareness and Personal Growth (6 students)				
*Taking time to refresh	1	0	0	0
*Being emotionally independent from my friends (by my not needing them to affirm my identity, to approve of me, or to accept me)	0	0	2	0
*Being aware of my emotions	3	2	0	0
Learning how to avoid emotional triggers	1	1	0	0
Interaction with Others (7 students)				
*Having support from friends	2	1	0	0
*Talking about my emotions	4	2	0	0

Definition	Success (at least for one semester)	Connected Spirituality to Achieving Success	No Success (at least for one semester)	Connected Spirituality to Achieving (or Not Achieving) Success
Having fun with friends (emotions are connected to being with people)	1	1	0	0
*Forgiving others	1	0	0	0
Joining others in their emotions and staying with them	1	1	0	0
TOTALS	59	38	20	5

Appendix Q: Sample Comparison of Reasons for Spiritual Similarity and Dissimilarity and

Sense of Spiritual Belonging with Parents and College Peers

Spiritual Similarity and Dissimilarity

In the chart, spiritual similarity was marked with a "+," and spiritual dissimilarity was marked with a "-." In the graph, spiritual similarity was graphed with a 1, spiritual dissimilarity was graphed with a -1, and months with no data were graphed at 0. This participant felt more spiritually similar to college peers than parents.

	Parents	College Peers
Participant	Initial (-): • I pursue God and they do not Final (-): • I pursue God and they do not • We think differently about the world	Initial (+): • How we worship, express faith, language is similar • Same values and morals Third month (-): • Perspective on faith is different Final (+): • How we worship, express faith, language is similar • Same values and morals
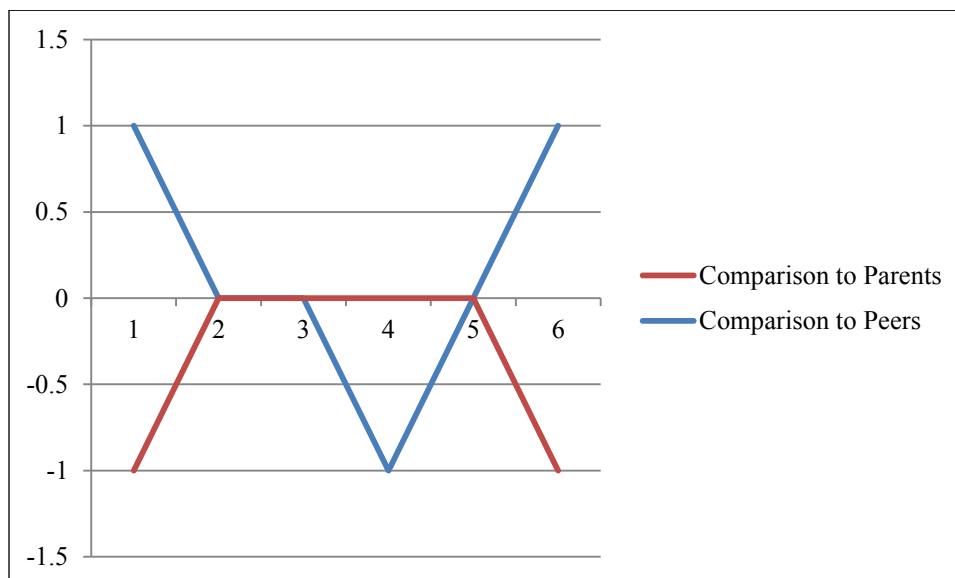
Sense of Spiritual Belonging

In the chart, a positive sense of belonging was marked with a "+,"a neutral sense of belonging was marked with a "0," and a negative sense of belonging is marked with a "-." In the graph, a positive sense of spiritual belonging was graphed with a 1, a negative sense of spiritual belonging was graphed with a -1, and months with no data were graphed at 0. Overall, this participant felt a positive sense of spiritual belonging at both home and college.

	Home	College
Participant	Initial (-): • No interest in spiritual things. Third month (+): • Can talk about spiritual things. Support. Final (+): • Can talk about spiritual things. Support.	Initial (0): • My family doesn't talk about spiritual things (unlike my friends' families) • Purpose for me here Third month (+): • We can talk about faith and be supported and respected Final (+): • I am like others • We can talk about faith and be supported and respected