

THE SPIRITUAL ENGAGEMENT OF STUDENTS
ENTERING INSTITUTIONS THAT BELONG TO THE
COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife,

Linda Krauklis Ferreira,

and to my children,

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and

Colton James Edward Ferreira.

I love you all!

ABSTRACT

Religion has been connected to higher education throughout its history in the United States and recent research suggests that the development of spirituality, as a part of the pursuit of higher education, is important to today's college student. In an effort to understand twenty-first century college students' perspectives on spirituality in relation to their education, this study examines the relationship between student pre-college characteristics and the spiritual engagement of students entering institutions affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.

Data for this study were drawn from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's *Freshman Survey* and the *College Students' Beliefs and Values* survey administered to 112,232 entering freshman at 236 colleges and universities across the United States during the fall semester of 2004. The subjects examined in this study were the 9,838 students who enrolled at colleges and universities affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities and who participated in both portions of the 2004 survey.

Findings of this research suggest that students' gender, race or ethnicity, high-school academic achievement, high-school type, and religious identification are informative in understanding their spiritual engagement as they enter colleges and universities affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. These findings may be useful to researchers and practitioners as they design ways to encourage students in their unique journeys toward spiritual maturity during their college years.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Interest in spirituality and in the spiritual lives of students and faculty has returned to the academy in recent decades. In reviewing historical trends and generational change and their impact on modern college students, Coomes (2004) suggests that spirituality will be one of a number of trends that will characterize the millennial generation. A significant amount of scholarly research points to the increased interest of today's college students in spirituality and in their personal spiritual growth (Astin, Astin, Lindholm, Bryant, Szelenyi, & Calderone, 2005; Astin, Astin, & Lindolhm, 2011b; Lindholm, 2006). For institutions that are members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities and for students who choose these schools for their higher education, this trend is not new.

This study focuses on the spiritual engagement of students entering their first semester at schools affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. Knowledge of the differences among entering students, in relation to their spiritual engagement, is useful for understanding how to educate and serve the students who attend institutions that recognize the importance of the spiritual lives of students.

Statement of the Problem

If educators are to be effective in educating students as whole persons, the inner lives of students—their spirituality—must be a concern in higher education. A number of education researchers have begun to argue in favor of the importance of spirituality in the academy including a reconnection of the *interior life* to education for both students and

educators (Astin, 2004; Braskamp, Trautvetter, & Ward, 2006; Dalton, 2006; Lindholm, 2006; Palmer, 1999; Tisdell, 2003). Astin, known best for his research on the impact of college and university attendance on students and the longitudinal study of entering students' characteristics (Astin, 1993), argues for the importance of this emphasis in the work of educators:

“Academia has for too long encouraged us to lead fragmented lives, where we act either as if we are not spiritual beings, or as if our spiritual side is irrelevant to our vocation or work. Under these conditions, our work becomes divorced from our most deeply felt values and we hesitate to discuss meaning, purpose, authenticity, wholeness, and fragmentation with our colleagues” (Astin, 2004, p. 38).

Astin (2004) contends that an examination of research makes evident the imbalance in “attention devoted to the exterior and interior aspects” (p. 34) of individual's lives. By suggesting that spirituality “touches directly on our sense of community....[and] giving spirituality a central place...will serve to strengthen our sense of connectedness with each other, our students, and our institutions” (p. 41), Astin challenges educators to give spirituality a central place in education. Palmer (1999) supports this notion, suggesting that “Attention to the inner life is not romanticism. It involves the real world, and it is what is desperately needed in so many sectors of American education” (p.16).

Over the last half century, research in higher education settings has provided ample evidence that individuals who differ in their “socio-historical context” (Lindholm, 2006, p. 100) and related life experiences may differ in their engagement to religion and to spirituality. At the same time, little research has been published which examines

differences among students who attend schools affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, many of which hold faith and spirituality as distinctive in their approach to educating students. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine whether students with varying background characteristics attending schools affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities exhibit differences in their *spiritual engagement* as they enter college.

Background of the Study

The college years are a time of significant transition and personal development for students (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) and a time during which students may explore the deepest questions of life, those that relate to meaning and purpose (Parks, 2000).

Dalton (2001) suggests that:

“The deepest questions in life are spiritual. They are questions about the search for ultimate purposes and enduring truths. They are profoundly personal questions that each of us must ultimately answer in our own way” (p. 17).

Garber (2007) challenges educators that “the years between adolescence and adulthood are a crucible in which moral meaning is being formed and central to that formation is a vision of integrity that coherently connects belief to behavior”(p.34). Parks (2000) suggests that it is in these years that students’ ability to make meaning is developed. It is the capacity to make meaning of the world and their lives that a number of scholars have referred to as *spirituality* (Bryant, 2007b; Fowler, 1981; Parks 1986; Tisdell, 2003).

Research focused on students in higher education settings suggests a strong interest among today's college students in spirituality (Astin et al., 2005; Lindholm, 2005; Astin et al., 2011b) and in an education that encourages their spiritual exploration (Astin et al., 2005; Astin et al., 2011b; Lindholm, 2007). Many students who select a school affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities for their higher education choose the institution based on its intentional focus on the spiritual lives of students.

Higher education institutions affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities share a "common commitment to providing and supporting Christ-centered higher education" (Rine, 2012, p. 10). Many of these schools have mission-driven goals to develop the spiritual lives of students who choose to attend these institutions and, as Rice (1994) reminds us, these "schools make bold claims about their positive effect on student faith and worldview" (p. 33).

On the one hand, Lee (2002b), reflecting on research examining religion and college attendance, observes that "...institutional religious affiliation does not affect changes in students' religious beliefs" and suggests that "whether religious schools are affecting changes in students' religious lives while in college remains questionable" (p. 383). On the other hand, Lindholm (2006) found that students attending a religiously affiliated school "felt that their spirituality was strengthened because of the culture and practices of the institution" (p. 97). Still, little published research has examined how CCCU schools promote spiritual development in students or assessed the effectiveness of these schools in accomplishing these mission-related values.

Colleges that intentionally encourage spiritual development in their students have looked for ways to assess spiritual growth as an outcome of attendance in their schools. Lindholm (2005), reflecting on the results of the 2003 *College Students' Beliefs and Values* study, says that "given the questions, struggles, and contradictions college students deal with, it is critical to understand how the college experience adds to or detracts from students' spiritual development" (p.7). While Fowler (1981) and Parks (1986, 2000) offer theoretical frameworks to aid educators' understanding of spirituality through stage-like levels of development, most attempts to measure spirituality or spiritual change have fallen short in providing effective tools for assessing spirituality as an outcome.

Although a growing number of studies examine spiritual change in the broader educational community in the United States, only a few studies have appeared that may assist educators at CCCU schools in understanding their students through the lens of spirituality (see, for example, Birkholz, 1997; Bussema, 1999; Cannister, 1998; Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004; Paredis-Collins & Collins, 2011; Railsback, 2006; Ratliff, 2005). Several assessment measures, which show some potential for usefulness, are in various stages of development, including the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (Hall & Edwards, 2002) and the Faithful Change Project (Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004). Yet, at this point in time, none has emerged as a common measure of assessment for spiritual engagement or spiritual development. The *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* (Astin et al., 2005; Astin et al., 2011b) may prove to be a useful tool, for the broader education

community as well as CCCU schools, to inform educators about students' spiritual engagement and about changes in their engagement over time.

To fully understand how higher education impacts students' spirituality it is critical to understand where students begin in terms of spiritual engagement as they enter college. This dissertation draws upon Astin's "Input-Environment-Output" (I-E-O) framework (2002) for studying the impact of college on students, which suggests that "to understand the impact of college on any given student "output", we must have some gauge of where students began" (Astin, 1993, p. 13). The premise of this study is that differences exist in the way students engage their spirituality and that it is necessary for colleges and universities to recognize those differences in order to design and implement effective curricular and co-curricular programs to facilitate the development of students' faith and spirituality.

Definitions

A study of the spiritual engagement of college students requires an understanding of what is meant by the terms "spiritual" or "spirituality" and, equally important, what is not implied by the use of these terms. This section defines "spirituality", "religion", and "spiritual engagement" as each term is used in this study. The literature review in this dissertation provides a more comprehensive discussion of the ways in which spirituality and religion have been understood by higher education researchers over the last century.

Drawing upon definitions proposed in the educational literature, *religion* is understood as the cumulative rituals, traditions, and practices (Fowler, 1981; Hill,

Pargament, Hood, McCullough, Swyers, Larson, & Zinnbauer, 2000; Stamm, 2006), stimulated by a pattern of beliefs or a worldview (Love, 2001; Murphy, 2007; Parks, 1986; Stamm, 2006), through which individuals or groups (Shults & Sandage, 2006; Tisdell, 2003) express their devotion or obligation to something they consider to be of ultimate value or to the Transcendent (Shults & Sandage, 2006).

The educational literature suggests that “spirituality” may be more personal in nature. It is a reflection of “our interiors, our subjective life” (Higher Education Research Institute, n.d., “What is Spirituality?”). Spirituality is understood as the *journey* (Shults & Sandage, 2006) of individuals toward greater personal wholeness (Murphy, 2007; Tisdell, 2003), meaning, and purpose (Astin, 2004; Fowler, 1981; Love, 2001; Parks, 1986; Stamm, 2006), through relationship with other humans (Astin, 2004) or with an Ultimate Source that transcends human life (Fowler, 1981; Shults & Sandage, 2006, Strange, 2001). Hill et al. suggest that spirituality is “The feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred” (2000, p. 66). While spirituality most often takes place in a community setting and “may lead people to become religious” (Hill et al., 2000, pp. 70-71), it has often been understood in the higher education literature as an individual endeavor that can easily be practiced outside of religion or communal settings.

For the purpose of this study, I use the term “spiritual engagement” to represent comprehensively an individual’s *experience* of spirituality. The conceptualization of spiritual engagement employed in this study draws upon the psychosocial identity theories put forward by Erikson (1963); Chickering (1969); Chickering & Reisser (1993);

Heath's theory of young adult maturity (1968); and the faith development theory proposed by Fowler (1981) and extended by Parks (1986, 2000). Each of these theories has been connected to college-aged students in the higher education literature. It also draws upon definitions of spirituality and its components found in the educational literature (Astin, 2004; Bryant, 2007a; Chittister, 1990; Higher Education Research Institute, "What is Spirituality?", n.d.; Hill et al., 2000; Lindholm, 2005; Strange, 2001). I define *spiritual engagement* as the individual's experience of spirituality in terms of: values and attitudes, behaviors (which may include religious practices), self-concept, and beliefs, as each relates to the individual's search for the sacred in his or her personal life.

These definitions are used in this study with recognition that the meaning of the terms "religion" and "spirituality" are often not agreed upon in the literature. I also recognize that "both religion and spirituality involve a search process" (Hill et al., 2000, p. 67) and that defining elements of both constructs are present in the practices of individuals who identify themselves as religious, spiritual, or both (p. 62).

Research Question

Scholarly literature suggests that Americans' interest in the spiritual aspect of their lives has increased over the past few decades (Gallup & Jones, 2000; Gallup & Lindsay, 1999; Smith & Denton, 2005; Wuthnow, 1998a). Research provides evidence that this growing interest is also present among college students who report a significant interest in spirituality when they enter college (Astin et al., 2005; Astin et al., 2011b), who hope to grow spiritually during their university years (Astin et al., 2005; Astin et al.,

2011b), and who expect their higher education experience to contribute to their spiritual growth during college (Astin et al., 2005; Lindolm, 2007). Tisdell (1999) suggests that spiritual engagement, like academic engagement, is “deeply connected to one’s cultural background and sociocultural context” (p. 90) and therefore may be closely related to students’ background characteristics, including factors such as gender, ethnicity or race, age, socio-economic status, education, and religious or spiritual self-identification.

Bryant and Astin (2008) claim that, for institutions of higher education to be effective in encouraging students’ exploration and engagement in this part of their university experience, researchers must continue to explore the nature of spirituality and spiritual engagement among college students. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), noting the change in students’ religious practices and engagement between the publication of their 1991 and 2005 comprehensive reviews of the research in higher education, suggest that the nature of current research calls for further “attention to scholarship on college effects” (p. 292) as they relate to the religious attitudes and values of students. Bowman and Small (2010) contend that although spirituality “has received little attention in the higher education literature, spiritual development may constitute one of the most important outcomes of the college experience” (p. 595). Clearly, some segments of the higher education research community consider the inclusion of spirituality in the higher education research agenda to be essential.

Acknowledging the premise established by the scholarly research in the area of college student spirituality, this study examines the differences present in students’ spiritual engagement as they enter college at schools affiliated with the Council for

Christian Colleges and Universities. Its implications provide educators and administrators with tools with which to enable students' spiritual and faith development during their university years.

A primary question provides the foundation for this inquiry, along with four related sub-questions. The primary research question is: What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the spiritual engagement of students entering member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities? The related components include the following:

- What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the *spiritual values and attitudes* of students entering member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities?
- What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the *spiritual practices* (including behaviors related to the practice of students' religious beliefs) of students entering member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities?
- What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the *spiritual self-concept* of students entering member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities?
- What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the *spiritual beliefs* of students entering member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities?

Methodological Overview

Recent research conducted through the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California, Los Angeles (Astin et al., 2005; Astin et al., 2011b) contributes to our understanding of spiritual change among college students by considering change, over time, in indicators of students' spiritual engagement. In the spring of 2003, the HERI launched a groundbreaking research effort studying "the spiritual development of undergraduate students during the college years" (Astin et al., 2005, p. 2). The pilot survey of this multi-institutional, longitudinal study was administered to 3,680 third-year students at 46 undergraduate colleges and universities across the United States. Data from the initial phase of the study were compared with entering data for the same students from the 2000 Cooperative Institutional Research Program annual *Freshman Survey* (Higher Education Research Institute, College Students' Beliefs and Values (CSBV) Survey Methodology, n.d., p. 1).

The study proposed to "enhance understanding of how college students conceive of spirituality, the role it plays in their lives, and how colleges and universities can be more effective in facilitating students' spiritual development" (Astin et al., 2005, p. 2). Researchers designed the study to answer the following questions about college students' religious values and experiences:

1. "How many students are actively searching and curious about spiritual issues and questions such as the meaning of life and work?"
2. "How do students view themselves in terms of spirituality and related qualities such as compassion, generosity, optimism, and kindness?"

3. “What spiritual/religious practices (e.g., rituals, prayer/meditation, service to others) are students most/least attracted to?”
4. “How do spiritual/religious practices affect students’ academic and personal development?”
5. “What is the connection between traditional religious practices and spiritual development?”
6. “What in the undergraduate experience facilitates or hinders students’ spiritual/religious quest?” (Astin et al., 2005, p.2)

In the fall of 2004, 112, 232 entering first-year students from 236 diverse undergraduate colleges and universities were surveyed using the *College Student’s Beliefs and Values Survey*, a two-page addendum to the CIRP *Freshman Survey*. The present analysis draws upon the data collected from this administration of the survey.

Survey responses from 9,838 students entering schools affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in the fall of 2004 were obtained and serve as the sample for this study. With the goal of understanding the nature of spiritual engagement among entering students who choose CCCU schools for their higher education, data from student responses to the 2004 annual *Freshman Survey* and the supplemental *College Students’ Beliefs and Values Survey* are used to explore the relationship between students’ spiritual engagement and various student pre-college characteristics including gender, race/ethnicity, first-generation college attendance, high-school type, religious identification/born-again, age, socio-economic status, and pre-college academic achievement.

A review of the literature shows a clear need for further research in the area of spirituality in relation to students' higher education. The literature review also reveals a scarcity of research on spirituality and spiritual change in schools affiliated with the CCCU. Acknowledging the desire of some colleges and universities to affect students' spiritual engagement and growth (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities *Profile*, 2012; Lindholm et al., 2011, Rine, 2012) and recognizing that the initial findings from the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* provide evidence that students desire to grow spiritually and that they desire that the college they choose for their higher education will play a part in this growth (Astin et al., 2005, p. 3), this study examines the spiritual engagement of students as they enter colleges and universities affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in the fall of 2004. The findings of the study provide educators and administrators with tools to aid their efforts to affect students' spiritual and faith development during their university years.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Religion and spirituality have been woven into the fabric of U.S. higher education since its earliest days in colonial America. Colonial colleges were established, primarily, for religious means and purposes. The founders of the earliest colonial institutions believed that the process of higher education, with its religious foundation and spiritual focus, produced Christian character in students. The ways and means of education have changed dramatically over the past 250 years, but character continues to be an important goal for many institutions of higher education. While religion, *per se*, is no longer a central factor in the culture of many colleges and universities, the development of spirituality appears to be an important concern for today's college student and is a reemerging concern for some educators and institutions of higher education.

This literature review provides a theoretical and empirical framework for the study of spiritual engagement in first-year college students. It begins by exploring the connection of spirituality and religion to U.S. higher education through its history, beginning in the colonial colleges through the present day reemerging interest in spirituality in higher education settings. A discussion of how spirituality is understood and defined in recent scholarly literature follows. Theories concerning students' development during the college years are examined with particular attention to theories that attempt to understand religious and spiritual engagement in the lives of contemporary college students. I conclude this literature review by examining a number of studies that explore attitudes, practices, and values related to spirituality in higher education, giving particular attention to research conducted on college students over the past decade.

From Religion to Spirituality: An Historical Perspective

The history of higher education in the U.S. cannot be fully understood aside from its religious origins. Boyer (1987) suggests that “religion was the centerpiece of the early American college” (p. 178). Ringenberg (1987) contends that “Almost without exception, to be a college in America before the Civil War was to be a Christian college” (p. 77). Indeed, nearly all of the early colleges in colonial America were established by Christian denominations in support of their religious purposes. The education of young men for ministry was a stated purpose in the founding documents of many of these colleges. Brubacher and Rudy (1968) suggest that the need to prepare well-educated ministers for denominational interests was “the most important single factor explaining the founding of colonial colleges” (p. 6).

Religion and Early U. S. Higher Education

Colonial colleges were also charged with the transmission of culture in colonial America. Colonial culture, to a large degree, was centered in its denominational affiliations. Christian tradition was seen as the primary bearer of the intellectual culture of the time and the colonial colleges were the “central element of transfer” (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968, p. 6) of that culture. Tewksbury (1932) observes that “colonial colleges were...devoted more or less exclusively to the perpetuation of the traditional religious forms of religious culture” (p.59). While not all of those writing on the history of higher education agree with this exclusive view of the colonial college’s purpose (Thelin, 2004),

nearly all recognize the significant influence of religious denominations on the establishment of higher education in the United States.

Propagation of denominational interests was not the only goal in the establishment of denominational colleges. It should be noted that these early founders recognized the importance of the development of the whole person, which included development of character, as a core purpose of higher education. Boyer (1987) contends that “The early American college did not doubt its responsibility to educate the whole person—body, mind, and spirit; head, heart and hands” (p. 177). Hofstadter and Smith (1961) point out the importance of the spiritual relative to the development of character, suggesting that the founders “aimed at the formation of Christian character, as well as the furtherance of learning” (p. 2).

The colonial founders understood that spiritual development was a critical component in this goal. Dalton (2006) observes that in early American colleges and universities “it was assumed that students’ spiritual lives and faith development were integral aspects of learning....Colleges were expected to...encourage the spiritual growth of students” (p. 146). Education was seen as a means through which values were instilled in young men with the goal of producing “a Christian gentleman” (Thelin, 2004, p.24). This *whole person* emphasis in higher education continues to be an important element in the stated missions of many colleges and universities today (Braskamp, Trautvetter & Ward, 2006) and is a central theme in much of the recent theory regarding students’ personal development during the college years.

Religion and spirituality continued to play an important role in U.S. higher education throughout its early history. Their influence has ebbed and flowed during the past 250 years, but has always been present. Many of the liberal arts colleges established across the U.S. during the nineteenth century were rooted in denominational efforts to provide a place for their youth to be educated in faith and culture and to expand denominational influence. Through the mid- to late- nineteenth century, denominations established colleges across the frontier of the American West “to provide a succession of learned and devoted ministers of the Gospel” (Tewksbury, 1932, p. 78). Ringenberg suggests that many of these colleges were ultimately partnerships—a kind of “Christian community college”—between church and community, the community benefiting by the social and cultural prestige of providing a home to the college (1987, p. 81). Addressing the denominational response to the frontier expansion, Crane (1963) observes that “In these years it became clear that each major sect intended to sponsor at least one institution in every state” (p. 18).

A Changing Philosophical Foundation

During the late 1800s, tension arose between institutions of higher education and their religious origins. U.S. colleges began to come under the influence of the German academic system. Strange (2000) writes that:

“As the Enlightenment period unfolded ... faculty returning from the German research experience brought a new picture of what it meant to be educated as well as the kind of curriculum best suited for the achievement of such ends....In the

shadows of empiricism, what was once thought to be essential to learning was relegated to the peripheral, and the intellect held new privilege over the soul” (Introduction).

One consequence of the Germanic influence was a shift toward the secularization of colleges. For some institutions, secularization was marked by their departure from the values and practices of their founding denominations, which at times included an actual separation from their denominational ties (Burtchaell, 1998). The early manifestations of secularization emerged through “a gradual shift of interest away from knowledge that was based upon religious and supernatural sanctions toward knowledge that originated in secular and human investigation.... toward the kind of knowledge that would contribute to practical usefulness and the utilitarian business of living” (Butts & Cremin, 1953, p. 57). Marsden (1994) contends that the Germanic emphasis on scholarship as a profession necessitated the concomitant need for individualistic freedom of inquiry, which he suggests was inconsistent with the community nature of the American colleges up to that point in time. Noll (1987) argues that this “intellectual transformation” not only altered the way in which knowledge was understood, but necessitated changes in institutional structure to accommodate this transformation including changes in the role of the professor and the form of the curriculum. In short, the expanding influence of the German system of higher education prompted a distinct change in the religious and denominational worldview that had provided the philosophical foundation for higher education into the early nineteenth century.

The advent of the scientific method as a central mode of inquiry in higher education was another significant force in the secularization of the American college. A product of the growing influence of German education, the scientific method challenged the religious worldview held by many Americans as a primary way of knowing. Butts and Cremin (1953) describe this change in the way human nature and the world was understood and studied by suggesting that it was “the formulation and application of a new method of thinking, a new method of arriving at truth and acquiring knowledge, a new method of human learning and intelligence” (p. 54). Drawing upon the philosophical concepts of naturalism, empiricism, and positivism, the scientific method opposed the metaphysical nature of religion and spirituality. Caple (1998), describing this new way of viewing truth and knowledge, defines these concepts noting their exclusion of the kind of phenomena associated with religion and spirituality:

“Naturalism held that all phenomena can be explained by natural causes and laws without attributing moral, spiritual, or supernatural significance to them.

Empiricism directed that the experience of the senses is the only source of knowledge. Positivism held that propositions command belief only when they can be tested and confirmed by observation. Knowledge is confined to what has been experienced or can be experienced” (p. 7).

The growing dominance of the scientific method as the primary mode of inquiry in higher education displaced religion as an accepted foundation through which to view the world and human nature and ultimately forced a dichotomy between scholarship founded in the constructs of “faith” and scholarship based in “reason” as it emerged in the

Enlightenment era. Years ago, Cuninggim (1947) stated that due “to its dependence on revelation, religion was looked upon by many scientists as ‘unscientific’ and therefore both unnecessary and false” (p. 33).

The growth, primarily through immigration, of the U.S. population in the early nineteenth century also influenced the relationship between religion and higher education. The growing diversity of the United States prompted the need for colleges to be more sensitive to the various cultures and religious backgrounds present on their campuses. Laurence (1999), commenting on nearly 250 years of population expansion, contends that “Secularization of education has also been a response to the growing acceptance of religious diversity in the U.S. population.” (p. 11). He goes on to express concern for the impact of this kind of secularization on the religious foundations of those colleges. Marsden (1994) notes that the early colleges, much like the early churches, had close religious and denominational ties to their communities. As immigration altered the ethnic and religious composition of communities, many colleges accommodated these changes by de-emphasizing denominational characteristics and religious practices and becoming more pluralistic, recognizing other forms of religious practice and spirituality on campus. Ringenberg (2006) notes the impact of pluralism on the relationship of Christianity to higher education commenting that “This growing religious pluralism combined with the new systems of naturalistic thought...meant that the Christian faith ceased to be the integrating center of the educational process” (p. 120). Over time, many of the characteristics and practices identifying institutions with their Christian roots disappeared completely from the culture of some schools.

Several authors have offered alternative views to explain the change in religion's relationship to higher education over the past two centuries, suggesting that the source of change might rest in transition in the church and the wider culture, rather than the secularization of higher education as an institution. By implication, the response of colleges has been accommodation to these church and culture changes rather than a departure from their religious heritage. Cherry, DeBerg, and Porterfield (2001) observe that religion has always accommodated American culture, and therefore the trends which have been identified as secularization are merely "the tendency of American religion to assume new shapes as social and cultural conditions change...It is reasonable to suspect that religion on our college and university campuses has assumed new appearances as well..." (p. 5). Thelin (2004) argues that the change in the relationship between higher education and religion was due to the "secularization of American life in general, rather than academic atheism" (p. 148). Wuthnow (1998b) resists the idea of secularization contending that it "misconstrues the question, because it suggests a linear trend away from something definably religious toward something patently nonreligious" (p.153). Wuthnow offers instead the idea that what has seemed to be secularization could instead be recognized as "the simultaneous interplay of the secular and the sacred" (p. 153).

The tension created by these manifestations of secularization changed, over time, the way in which religion and spirituality are viewed in and by institutions of higher education. Yet, Perko (1991) in an historiographic survey of religion in higher education says that:

“In many respects, to survey historical writings about America’s religious colleges and universities is to take the pulse of the higher learning in this country as a whole.... Because such a large segment of higher education began its life within a religious context, an understanding of the complex interplay of religion and schooling is absolutely vital to any real sense of both those institutions that still maintain religious affiliation and the totality of American higher education” (p. 440).

The institutions represented in this study are among those that continue to maintain religious affiliation. Findings that lead to a greater understanding of their impact on students who choose them for their higher education is a goal of this research.

An Emerging Interest in Spirituality in Higher Education

While the relationship between religion and higher education has undergone significant change through the history of U. S. higher education, personal spirituality and the study and exercise of religion have never left U.S. colleges and universities. The mid-twentieth century witnessed the reemergence of interest, especially on the part of students, in spirituality in their personal lives and in the classroom. Yet, spirituality in the modern college and university is not as connected to the context of Christianity as it was in the earliest decades of U. S. higher education, although it certainly continues to be inclusive of it. In fact, the spirituality felt and practiced by today’s college students is not necessarily tied to any particular religious movement. Generally (though not always) recognizing some Higher Power or Ultimate Reality, twenty-first century students are

more likely now than any time in the past to disassociate themselves with religion (Kiely 2001; Laurence, 1999), while at the same time maintaining the importance of spirituality in their lives (Astin et al., 2005).

Amidst the growing secularization of U.S. higher education a number of colleges and universities have retained a distinctively Christian ethos attempting to preserve the religious heritage and spiritual core values that was a salient feature of early American higher education. This study looks more closely at these schools and the spiritual engagement of students who choose them for their higher education.

Christian Higher Education in the Twentieth Century

This research focuses on schools that Ringenberg (2006) refers to as the “continuing Christian colleges” (p. 184) distinguishing those schools that have retained a distinctively “Christ-centered” identity in their approach to higher education. Noll (1987) suggests that the “intellectual transformation” of the late nineteenth century led to a crisis of identity for many religiously affiliated and denominational colleges and universities. Scholars studying the history of higher education note that many colleges felt compelled to choose between a distinctively Christian identity focused on “educating students for life” (Noll, 1987, p. 104), which included an emphasis on spirituality and character, or the pervasive movement toward secularization that predominated the academy at that time (Marsden, 1994). Dovre (2001) contends that as a consequence of this movement many colleges “became more religiously diverse in the composition of their faculties, staffs, and student bodies and more secular in character and content” (p. 18). Yet, Noll

describes the institutions that emerged from this identity crisis as “Modern Christian colleges...distinctive in preserving a belief that character formation is an essential part of higher education. They are likewise distinctive for preserving an ideal of education that integrates the academic with other spheres of existence” (1987, p. 107).

An often-identified goal of the modern Christian institution is a focus on the “integration of faith” with students’ learning (Ringenberg, 1987). De Jong (1992) refers to this as the “overt connection of the curriculum to [the] spiritual heritage” which gives identity to many religiously-affiliated institutions (p. 22). As noted earlier, the Enlightenment era created a dichotomy between education rooted in reason and education rooted in the traditions of faith that had characterized many colleges and universities up to the mid-nineteenth century (Marsden, 1994). Christian colleges and universities in the twenty-first century, especially those that value strong scholarship, continue to face the implications of this dichotomy. Yet many scholars suggest that it is possible and necessary to provide strong academic programs while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of spiritual viewpoints and commitments. Rather than being in opposition, recognition of students’ spirituality complements academic education when seen through the lens of holistic development.

Nearly 150 years after the emergence of the “intellectual transformation” of the academy, Riley (2005) writes that “religious education is on the rise in America” (p.7). Askew (1987), addressing the resurgence of Christian colleges in the 1940s, says that “the same post World War II forces that benefited higher education as a whole also stimulated growth in evangelically focused higher education” (p. 138). Many of the

member and affiliated colleges associated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities today share the history and the legacy of this movement.

Mahoney, Schmalzbauer, and Youniss (2001), noting that some believed the “light of faith that burned in the halls of academia since the Middle Ages had finally expired,” assert that “the evidence suggests otherwise” (p. 40). Citing the National Center for Education Statistics they claim that “enrollments in church-affiliated higher education grew more quickly than in secular higher education” (Mahoney et al., 2001, p. 38) in the 1990s. The authors further suggest that “across disciplines, religion is gaining ground, both as an object of study, and epistemologically, as a way of knowing” (p. 39). Clearly, evidence suggests that schools holding to religious values and commitments continue to play a significant role in American higher education in the twenty-first century. Perko (1991) notes the importance of this role saying that “Religious higher education, in all of its dimensions, constitutes a rich part of the tapestry of higher learning in America” (p. 441). Included among these religiously affiliated schools are institutions affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, which are the focus of this research.

The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities is an international higher education association of intentionally Christian colleges and universities. Founded in 1976 with 38 members, the Council today reflects “one of the fastest growing sectors of higher education” (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities *Profile*, 2012) with

118 members in North America and 53 affiliate institutions in 19 countries. While not unique in their church affiliation or religious emphases (Guthrie [1992] notes the presence of over 700 church-related colleges and Universities in the U.S. in 1991), according to the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities *Profile* (2012, hereafter “CCCU *Profile*”), CCCU schools collectively share a mission “to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth”.

CCCU member schools share a number of characteristics including “a strong commitment to Christ-centered education”; being “located in the U.S. or Canada” (affiliate institutions are located around the world); holding “full regional accreditation”; being “primarily four-year comprehensive colleges and universities”; having “broad curricula rooted in the arts and sciences”; and, employing “Christians as full-time faculty and administrators” (CCCU *Profile*, 2012). In 2012, CCCU institutions had a combined enrollment of over 350,000 undergraduate and graduate students, employed over 25,000 full and part-time faculty members, and comprised over 350 undergraduate majors and over 150 graduate majors (CCCU *Profile*, 2012). Institutions affiliated with the Council are among those that Riley (2005) refers to saying that:

“Although America’s most seriously religious colleges have an evangelical mission, it is a broader one than that of spreading their faith. . . . [They] seek to enhance the ethical core of American life. . . if the perpetuation of liberty depends on the continued propagation of virtues like integrity, loyalty, courage, charity,

and self-restraint, then America's religious colleges will be a vital component in the country's future" (p. 262).

Institutions associated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities represent a significant sector of U.S. higher education. Their mission-driven emphasis on spiritually grounded education makes these schools particularly interesting in light of the questions of students' spiritual engagement addressed in this study.

Religion, Faith, and Spirituality: Developing Constructs

A study of the spiritual engagement of entering college students must be preceded by a discussion of the ways in which the concept of spirituality and the related concepts of religion and faith have been treated in the higher education literature. This section examines those definitions and concludes by discussing the relationship between spirituality and religion.

Speck (2005), in an attempt to define spirituality, notes the broadly differing and at times confusing, even contradictory, definitions for spirituality used in the scholarly literature. The literature appears to agree only on the fact that there are many definitions and that finding an adequate definition may be difficult (Hill et al., 2000; Love, n.d.; Tisdell, 2003; Wuthnow, 1998a; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). Complicating the objective of defining spirituality is the fact that the scholarly literature, throughout the twentieth century, regularly used the terms religion, faith, and spirituality, interchangeably as if the terms were synonymous (Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butter, Belavich, Hipp, Scott, & Kadar, 1997).

Only toward the end of the last century when religious affiliation began to take on a negative association did the literature go to great lengths to differentiate between the terms (Zinnbauer, et al, 1999). Zinnbauer et al. (1997) attribute “a drop in public confidence in religion and religious leadership” to the need for the term “spirituality to acquire distinct meanings and connotations” (p. 550). Related to this evolution in the understanding of these constructs over the last century, Wuthnow (1998a) suggests that one difficulty in finding a satisfactory definition for spirituality may lie in the dramatic change in the United States’ culture as it relates to the place of religion in the lives of individuals and the community, and subsequently in a movement toward what he calls “spiritual seeking” during the twentieth century. This position, reflected in several scholarly writings that discuss the meaning of spirituality (Astin, 2004; Zinnbauer et al., 1997), is made clear when Hill et al. (2000) explain that because “historical-cultural events continually affect people’s perceptions of the divine... each generation may be required to define what abstractions such as ‘religion’ and ‘spirituality’ are meant to encompass” (p. 58) in that generation.

To appreciate fully the complexities of understanding what spirituality has come to mean in the contemporary educational culture, it is important to note some elements that may impact the way definitions have been derived in past scholarly research. Speck (2005) suggests that an individual’s understanding of spirituality is inextricably influenced by her or his worldview, that is, whether she or he holds a purely naturalistic viewpoint or believes in the possibility of a supernatural view of nature and human life (p. 12). Shults and Sandage (2006) go further in suggesting that one’s definition of

spirituality is linked to their “context, tradition, and concerns” (p. 14). Tisdell (2003) supports this concept as she examines the relationship between spirituality and culture in adult education and observes the way in which culture and background impact our experience of spirituality, and likely, therefore, our definition. Noting recent research on young adults and their impact on the religious character of the United States, Wuthnow (2007) highlights the significant differences evidenced between younger and older Americans in their engagement with religion and spirituality, as well as differences between ethnic groups.

Recent scholarly research often differentiates between religion, faith and spirituality (Love, 2001; Speck, 2005; Zinnbauer, et al., 1999), and so I consider how these terms have variously been defined, with the goal of arriving at a definition of spirituality suitable for this study.

Religion

Scholarly literature in the early twentieth-century conceived of religion as a multi-dimensional construct (Hill et al., 2000) inclusive of elements, which in recent scholarship, are variously termed religion, faith, and spirituality. Scholars from the early to mid-twentieth century saw the term “religion” as suggestive of the “historic combinations of doctrine, ritual, organization and common ethos” associated with the major world “religions” but also of the personal relationship to transcendence or “the divine” (Neibuhr, 1943, p.49). Sociologist Emile Durkheim (1912/1995), noting elements often associated with religion, contended that “a religion is a unified system of

beliefs and practices relative to sacred things...” (p.44). Yet, psychologist William James, using terms that recent scholarship would associate more closely with spirituality, described religion as “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine” (1958, p. 42). Reflecting elements of each of these definitions, Hill et al. (2000) note that the term “religion,” rooted in the Latin term *religio*, suggests the idea of a “bond between humanity and some greater-than-human power” (p. 56).

Recent scholarship frequently characterizes religion by describing its relationship to a set of doctrines or practices associated with the individual’s or community’s attempt to faithfully live out the expectations of that worldview. Love (2001) proposes that “religion is a shared system of beliefs, principles, or doctrines” (p. 8). Murphy (2007) extends this focus on beliefs and principles by suggesting that they focus on “the nature of a higher power or a divine being and what conduct is required of the individual in relation to that supernatural entity” (p. 35). Linking the concept of behavior to the definition of religion, Stamm (2006) contends that religion is the “...practices delineated by established denominational institutions and framed through defined doctrines, theology, and historical narratives...” (p. 37). Sanchez and Carter (2005) make the institutional connection to religion by suggesting that “religion is an institutionalized system of attitudes, beliefs, and practices through which people manifest their faith and devotion to an ultimate reality or deity” (p. 280). In contrast to recent research that considers faith or spirituality to be a more individualized enterprise (Zinnbauer et al., 1997), much contemporary research identifies religion as an institutional or community

endeavor (Hill et al., 2000). Shults & Sandage (2006) propose a broad-ranged definition of religion that includes many of the elements noted above and encompasses elements that more recent scholarship associates with the idea of spirituality. They say that “religion is best understood as a multidimensional construct that can include an ultimate concern, social and communal identity, ritual and symbolic mediators of sacred space and experience...and moral and spiritual practices” (p. 155). Recent scholarly writing on religion suggests that it is characterized by practices and associations, stimulated by a pattern of beliefs or a worldview, through which individuals or groups express their devotion or obligation to something they consider to be of ultimate value or to the transcendent.

Faith and Spirituality

Spirituality, as used in modern scholarly literature, is a fairly recent construct or perhaps a new name for a construct that has existed in the scholarly literature for some time. The term “spirituality” rarely appears in educational research and literature before the last decades of the twentieth century. The term “faith”, which has often been used interchangeably with and which is often defined similarly to the modern conceptualization of spirituality, is seen more frequently in the scholarly literature during and prior to the 1980s. The seminal writing of James Fowler (1981) on faith development conceives of faith as a process of “finding and being found by meaning” including ways of “finding and orienting oneself to coherence in an ultimate environment which is not religious” (p. 16). Fowler’s writing is strongly influenced by the theologian

Paul Tillich who conceptualized faith as “the state of being ultimately concerned” (1957, p.4). Parks (1986), building on Fowler’s definition, suggests that faith is “the activity of composing and being composed by meaning” (p. 14).

Much of the recent research and scholarship attempting to define spirituality points toward an individual endeavor focused on movement toward ultimate concerns, a higher power, or God. Tisdell (2001), reflecting a concept first suggested by Fowler (1981) and later Parks (1986), suggests that “spirituality is one of the ways that people construct knowledge and meaning” (Spirituality, Culture, and Emancipatory Education, para. 4). In other words, spirituality is a lens through which individuals see and understand the world around them, which is an element of the individual’s worldview. Chittister (1990) suggests that spirituality can be a very different thing than church attendance and is conveyed in the *ways* we choose to express our religious faith more than in the content of the belief. She observes that “It is possible to go to church and never develop a spirituality at all. Spirituality is the way in which we express a living faith in a real world. Spirituality is the sum total of the attitudes and actions that define our life of faith” (p.4). Mayhew (2004), studying the way individuals understand spirituality across varying worldviews and religions, concludes that “spirituality is a construct that is conceptually different” from religion and “transcends” differing faith traditions (p. 667). He proposes that “spirituality carries personal meaning for all students, even those who identify themselves as non-religious” (p. 667).

Recent scholarship points to the internal or personal nature of modern conceptualizations of the spiritual. Astin (2004) and Lindholm (2005) propose that

spirituality is related to “the interior” or “subjective” part of a person’s life. Lindholm clarifies this idea suggesting that:

“Spirituality involves the internal process of seeking personal authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness; transcending one’s locus of centrality; exhibiting openness to exploring a relationship with a higher power that transcends human existence and human knowing; and valuing the sacred” (p. 4).

Bryant (2007b) builds on Lindholm’s definition adding that spirituality is a process of “developing a greater connectedness to self and others through relationships and community; deriving meaning, purpose, and direction in life...” (p.1). Strange (2001) bridges the definitions traditionally associated with faith to the recent understandings of spirituality by suggesting that “spirituality focuses on the importance and role of a meaningful center of one’s life upon which to ground a sense of ultimate purpose and direction” (p. 59). His definition points to a common element found in many contemporary conceptualizations of spirituality; the notion of “meaning and purpose”.

The association of religion and spirituality with the quest for finding “meaning and purpose” emerges in the early- and mid-twentieth century writings of Allport (1962), Tillich (1957), and Smith (1963). As Fowler (1981) and Parks (1986) sought to understand how faith develops in humans, they associated the idea of faith with the search for meaning. Parks posits that “it is in the activity of finding and being found by meaning” that individuals “participate in the life of faith” (p.14). Recent research studying spirituality in the lives of college students regularly refers to spirituality as a journey toward “meaning and purpose” (Love, 2001 & 2002; Love & Talbot, 1999;

Mayhew, 2004; Parks, 2000; Tisdell, 2003). Hill et al. (2000) use the term “search” to describe this journey (p. 66). These researchers have understood spirituality as the journey of individuals toward greater personal wholeness, meaning, and purpose, through relationship with others humans or with an ultimate source that transcends human life. The Higher Education Research Institute study on which the present study is based connects spirituality to meaning and purpose by offering the following definition of what it means to *develop* spiritually: “How students make meaning in 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” (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 40).

A few scholars challenge the dichotomization of religion and spirituality promoted by much recent scholarship. Zinnbauer et al. (1999) suggest that the “separation of religious experiences and sentiments from their association with organized religion” has made necessary the “rise in the popularity of the construct of spirituality and the increasing polarization of spirituality and religiousness” (p. 899). Scholars holding this view suggest that the move toward differentiation may be misguided, with the ultimate impact of artificially complicating our understanding of both constructs. Zinnbauer et al. (1999) promote the view that “we need to distinguish between these constructs without polarizing them” (p. 907), which has tended to be the effect of recent scholarship’s attempt to see them as wholly separate constructs. With this in mind, Zinnbauer et al. (1999) offer a definition for spirituality posited first by Pargament

(1997), which may bridge the widening gap between the constructs of spirituality and religion in the scholarly research:

“Spirituality is a search for the sacred. As such, spirituality is the heart and soul of religion, and religion’s most central function. Spirituality has to do with the paths people take in their efforts to find, conserve, and transform their sacred lives....spirituality focuses specifically and directly on the search for the sacred” (Zinnbauer et al., 1999, p. 909).

Hill et al. (2000), reflecting to some degree the early work of James (1958) add “the feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred” (p. 66) suggesting that most often “spirituality and religion can and often do co-occur” (p. 70) as part and practice of one another.

The abundance of research focused on spirituality and the spiritual lives of college students in recent years testifies to its perceived importance by a growing number of scholars. Yet, agreement on a definition is difficult. The definition proposed by Hill et al. (2000), “The feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred” (p. 66), is the basis for the definition of spirituality used in this dissertation. The definition used herein is: the individual’s experience of spirituality in terms of values and attitudes, behaviors (which may include religious practices), self-concept, and beliefs, as each relates to the individual’s search for the sacred in his or her personal life. In developing this definition, I recognize the essential overlap of the constructs of spirituality and religion, while at the same time, distinguishing between the two. This definition also includes the values, attitudes, and practices of spirituality that most closely

reflect the idea of “spiritual engagement” used in this research study. While this definition does not limit spirituality to a particular view of transcendence or “Ultimate Concern” such as God or a higher power, this study focuses on the spiritual engagement of students who choose Christian colleges for their higher education.

Spirituality in Higher Education: Re-emerging Interest

Over the past two decades interest in spirituality and the spiritual lives of college students has reemerged. This interest is evidenced in the growing number of studies, doctoral dissertations and published research on the subject. Astin et al. (2005) note this resurgence as they introduce their study on the spiritual lives of college students stating that the research builds on “the growing interest on college campuses to include spiritual development as a core component of a liberal arts education...” (p. 2). In fact a number of voices in the higher education community are calling educators to recognize the importance of the spiritual in the holistic development of students and, as Astin (2004) notes, the return of spirituality to a “central place” in academia (p. 41).

Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm (2006) argue that the purpose of higher education in today’s society and culture is one of “dissemination of knowledge...focused on the transmission of theories, empirically derived facts, and the disciplinary frameworks and methods to create and interpret empirically derived information” (p. 1). They suggest that education in universities and colleges is no longer about the student, but instead, focused on the information itself. In this educational culture, students are given the facts, but they are not given the tools with which to understand their significance and meaning.

The exploration of “Characteristics such as wisdom, compassion, and integrity...concepts such as justice, ethics, values, morality, virtue and character” (2006, p. 2) has rarely been encouraged in the curriculum. Chickering et al. (2006) maintain that today’s students come to the university with the expectation that they will have opportunities to grow in the spiritual elements of their being and suggest that “a renewed commitment [by educators] to recognizing and honoring spirituality in the academy is essential if we are to succeed in providing higher education that integrates intellect and spirit” (p. 17).

Dalton (2006) contends that educators have failed to fulfill their mandate to educate whole persons because of their reticence to engage the spiritual dimension of students’ lives. Noting the holistic perspective of the *Student Personnel Point of View* (American Council on Education, 1937), which included “spirituality” as a feature of the student’s whole person development, Dalton argues that student development professionals have

“Often failed to recognize the centrality of spirituality in the identity development of students...and have underestimated the power of students’ spiritual quests...and, in so doing, have ignored an aspect of students’ lives that is often at the very core of their concerns” (2006, p. 147).

Among a number of challenges offered to educators, Dalton emphasizes the importance of the return of an “advocacy” (p. 162) for the spiritual in the lives of students. He also recommends an increase in research that examines the impact of higher education on the spiritual lives of students, as well as, a reconsideration of the traditional student development theories in light of spirituality (p. 162). It is striking to note Dalton’s

admonition in light of the acknowledgment of “meaning making” as “central to holistic, transformative learning” (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators/American College Personnel Association, 2004, p. 17) in *Learning Reconsidered*, a joint publication of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), which argues that educators need to see higher education as transformative – as “a holistic process of learning that places the student at the center of the learning process” (NASPA/ACPA, 2004, p.1).

Tisdell (1999), addressing spirituality and adult education, reminds educators that spirituality is not something that is instilled by institutions of higher education; it is something that students bring with them into the higher education setting (p. 93). By implication, it cannot be left at the door of the classroom. Spirituality is a part of the student’s identity, and educators must take it into consideration if their intent is to educate whole persons. She contends that the individual’s spiritual identity cannot be separated from their “sociocultural context as learners” (p. 94). To ask students to separate their spirituality from their learning is, in a sense, a request to stop, at the deepest level, being who they are as they enter the higher education classroom.

The challenges offered by these higher education researchers and writers clearly suggest that spirituality is an essential component of students’ lives and identity and, therefore, must return as an emphasis in the work of educating students. Recognizing the importance of the place of spirituality in twenty-first century colleges and universities, this review of the literature next considers the theoretical foundations of student

development in higher education. Using these theories as a backdrop, I then review the faith (spiritual) development theories of Fowler (1981) and Parks (1986, 2000).

Theoretical Foundations for Understanding the Spiritual Engagement and Development of Contemporary College Students

Student development theory and practice may be the best lens through which to understand faith development and spirituality in today's college student. Before considering current theories of faith development and spirituality, I briefly examine student development theory and practice through the history of higher education in the United States.

Student Development Theory and Practice

Student affairs as a profession and student development as its theoretical foundation are, at their core, the practice of caring for students. Giving attention to the personal growth and development of students beyond the doors of the classroom has been a focus in higher education since colonial days. The earliest indication of a student development perspective is seen in what Rudolph (1962) describes as the "collegiate way." He suggests that the founders of colonial colleges understood that the basic needs of life for the student extended beyond the doors of the classroom:

"The collegiate way is the notion that a curriculum, a library, a faculty, and students are not enough to make a college. It is an adherence to the residential

scheme of things. It is respectful of quiet rural settings, dependent on dormitories, committed to dining halls, permeated by paternalism” (Rudolph, 1962, p. 87).

Fenske (1980), noting the goal of “Christian piety as the primary aim of education,” says that “all functions which might now be called *student services* were carried out by trustees, administrators, and faculty in the name of the colony that nourished the college” (p. 5). The attempt to exert a parent-like influence in the life of students, which has often been referred to as “*in loco parentis*” (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968, p. 330), was a hallmark of student personnel practice, as late as the mid-twentieth century. From that time until recent years, the higher education community has attempted to distance itself from this parental image.

Student affairs began its development as a profession within the field of higher education early in the twentieth-century. The growing complexity of higher education, stimulated by the development of the elective system, an increase in the number of students, and expansion in the amount and kind of knowledge generated in the academy (Caple, 1998) required new ways of providing the services that had earlier been provided through the work of faculty and administrators.

At the same time, there was an increased awareness of the potential impact of higher education on the student as a person. The notion of the *whole person* development of the student permeated the thinking of student affairs practitioners and theorists of the time (American Council on Education, 1937, 1949; Sanford, 1979, 1980). The evolving view that education included the development of the whole person provided a foundation

for the emergence of a number of theories and professional statements which supported this philosophy.

In 1937, the American Council on Education attempted to clarify the evolving practice of student affairs administrators and practitioners through its publication of *The Student Personnel Point of View*. The opening paragraphs of the document suggest a philosophical framework, focusing on the student as a whole person, for the practice of student development in institutions of higher learning:

“This philosophy imposes upon educational institutions the obligation to consider the student as a whole—his intellectual capacity and achievement, his emotional make-up, his physical condition, his social relationships, his vocational aptitudes and skills, his moral and religious values, his economic resources, his aesthetic appreciations. It puts emphasis, in brief, upon the development of the student as a person rather than upon his intellectual training alone” (American Council on Education, 1937, p. 2).

The statement provided a context for much of the student development theory and practice that followed. It highlighted the growing recognition that higher education touches every aspect of the student’s life and, therefore, requires the attention of educators and student affairs professionals to growth in all areas of the student’s life. The American Council on Education revised and strengthened the statement in the *Student Personnel Point of View* (1949). It identifies the “...student personnel movement...as a protest against German-born intellectualism” (American Council on Education, 1949, p. 19). The statement re-emphasizes the whole person nature of higher education:

“The student personnel point of view encompasses the student as a whole. The concept of education is broadened to include attention to the student’s well rounded development—physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually, as well as intellectually” (1949, p. 17).

The mid-twentieth century writings of Nevitt Sanford challenge educators to consider the whole-person perspective of higher education and the process through which students grow and develop during their college years. His influence on student affairs warrants deeper consideration as I consider the place of faith and spirituality in the lives of college students.

The Concept of Growth and Development: Nevitt Sanford

Numerous scholars, recording the historical progression of student development practice and theory, identify Nevitt Sanford as a significant influence on current theory (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Hamrick, Evans, & Schuh, 2002; Widick, Knefelkamp, & Parker, 1980). Sanford (1979) highlights the whole-person nature of education claiming, “The human individual functions as a unit, and his diverse features develop in interaction one with another. Intelligence, feeling, emotion, and action are inseparable aspects, not separate parts, of behavior” (p. 254).

In earlier writings, Sanford (1967) describes the concepts that have formed the foundation for many of the student development theories used in higher education today. He stresses the importance of the idea of change in human beings noting that the terms “change, growth, and development have been used interchangeably” (p. 47). He suggests

that this usage does not reflect the nuances of each word. Sanford claims that “*change* embraces both growth and development,” defining growth “as the expansion of the personality—the addition of parts (e.g., habits, needs, or beliefs) and the enlargement of existing parts (e.g., an increase in the intensity of a need)” (p. 47). He goes on to suggest that “*development* means, most essentially, the organization of increasing complexity” (p. 47). Sanford (1980) explains that:

“A high level of development in personality requires both complexity and wholeness. A mature person is characterized by a high degree of differentiation (a large number of parts or features having different and specialized functions) and a high degree of integration, of communication among parts great enough so that different parts may, without losing their essential identity, become organized into larger wholes in order to serve the person’s purposes” (p. 30).

This explanation is central to the notion of *challenge and support*, which draws on Erikson’s (1968) concept of developmental crises. Sanford (1967) contends that *crisis* is necessary for students’ forward movement in their journey toward wholeness and maturity through their college years. Widick et al. (1980), reiterate Sanford’s conceptualization of the college’s role in student growth and development, suggesting that “college should be a developmental community that both challenges and supports students” (p. 76).

The concept of growth and development, as well as the notion of individual movement toward maturity (Sanford, 1980), are not only foundational to many student development theories, but are also important to an understanding of a number of the faith

development theories that are considered later in this literature review. Sanford (1962) reflects on the process of challenge which leads to maturity, contending that:

“The student is bound to encounter and take seriously values and roles that are different from some that he has taken for granted; he is thus forced to make conscious choices and to take the first steps toward building a value system of his own” (p. 267).

This claim corresponds with the process of faith development that is explored in greater depth in this study.

An Overview of Student Development Theory in Brief

Through the mid-twentieth century, a number of theories were formulated that attempted to describe the process of student growth and development during the college years. These theories offer differing points of view on diverse aspects of individual change during these years. Widick et al. (1980) suggest that “The different theories can best be seen as a mosaic of necessary pieces” (p. 78). They go on to describe the various categories of student development theory as families: “Each family of theories shares certain basic assumptions and uses similar constructs to describe development or point to influential factors in development” (p. 78).

A brief review of the literature on student development theory (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Hamrick, Evans, & Schuh, 2002; Strange, 2004; Widick, Knefelkamp, & Parker, 1980) suggests four strands of thought concerning student growth and development: psychosocial (identity) development theories; cognitive developmental

or cognitive structural theories; typology models; and, person-environment interaction models. This section briefly describes the psychosocial and the cognitive-structural categories, which are the most closely associated with faith development theories, and identifies the major theories falling within each category.

Psychosocial Development Theories

Psychosocial (identity formation) theories hypothesize that personal development happens through a series of stages or “cycles of stability and transition” (Strange, 2004, p. 49). Emerging from the work of Erik Erikson (1950, 1968) psychosocial theory considers the individual’s development over the entire lifespan. Erikson (1968) contends that natural biological maturation, which he refers to as *epigenesis* (p. 92), and social role expectations (p. 93) push individuals toward stage-related “crises” (p. 95). Each stage or cycle is marked by age- or stage-appropriate tasks through which the individual must move. Resolution of these developmental tasks at each successive stage equips the individual to enter into and face the developmental tasks of the next stage. Widick et al. (1980) point out that, “Psychosocial theorists suggest that development follows a chronological sequence; at certain times in life, particular facets of one’s personality emerge as a central concern to be addressed” (p. 78). A number of theories fit into this category, including Erikson’s (1950, 1968) theory of lifespan development; Marcia’s (1966, 1980) theory concerning ego identity statuses; Heath’s (1968) maturity model; Chickering’s (1969) theory of student development during the college years; Josselson’s (1987) theory focusing on identity development in women; the racial identity models

posited by Cross (1991) and Helms (1993); and Chickering & Reisser's (1993) revision of the vectors of college student development.

Cognitive-Structural Theories

Cognitive-structural development theories focus primarily on the way in which individuals perceive the world around them, process those perceptions, and make meaning of the world based on those perceptions. These theories suggest that development is influenced by both heredity and environment. They consider the intellectual *structures* through which we learn to interpret the experiences of our lives. Cognitive-structural theories give attention to *how* we understand the world around us and the processes through which we “compose” (Parks, 1986, p. 33) its meaning. Chickering and Reisser (1993) succinctly describe the process or “developmental sequence” through which this kind of change occurs:

“The cognitive structures evolve, becoming more complex, differentiated, and integrated. One stage of thinking provides the foundation for the next.... Development proceeds through a predictable sequence....Each stage is qualitatively different from earlier structures....Development proceeds through a process of preparing for a shift to the next, more complex stage, and once attained, expanding and integrating gradually within the stage” (p.7).

Cognitive developmental theories find their origins in the work of Piaget (1952), which focused on the “processes of intellectual organization and adaptation” (Wadsworth, 1979, p. 10). These processes or “structures” form the basis of modern

cognitive-structural theory. Paralleling Sanford's (1967) conceptualization of change as movement from simplicity to complexity, cognitive-structural theories contend that:

“Development occurs in stages, in which persons gradually move from using simplistic assumptions about how the world operates in making a decision or interpreting experience, to basing their understanding on complex principles. Progression through this hierarchy of increasingly complex stages occurs as they engage in new experiences, are exposed to differing perspectives, and must resolve cognitive conflict” (Hamrick et al., 2002, p. 57).

Many theorists describe cognitive-structural stages as sequential and invariant suggesting that they occur one after another in a prescribed order and that the learning that occurs in earlier stages provides a foundation for the challenges of later stages. These theories often claim that cognitive-structural stages, while related to growth in maturity, are not necessarily tied to a particular age. It is also believed that these stages are universal and therefore occur across cultures.

A number of theories, which have been used in understanding college students' growth and development, fall within the cognitive-structural paradigm. Included in this family of theories are: Perry's (1968) theory of intellectual and ethical development; Kohlberg's (1969, 1971) theory of moral development; Rest's (1979) moral decision making model; and Gilligan's (1982) theory concerning women's moral development. Additionally, Hamrick et al. (2002) specifically note the work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule's (1986) and Baxter Magolda (1992), which consider “gender related patterns of epistemological development” (Hamrick et al., 2002, p. 57).

Especially significant to this paper, and also representative of the cognitive-structural family, is the work of James W. Fowler (1981) concerning faith development through the lifespan and the work of Sharon Parks (1986, 2000) which considers faith development and spirituality during the young adult (or college) years. Greater attention is given to these theories in the next section of this review.

Faith Development Theories

Studies examining the religious attitudes and practices of college students, as well as those of the general population, began to appear in the late 1940s with the seminal work of Allport, Gillespie, and Young (1948). A number of longitudinal studies conducted through the mid-twentieth century examined changes in the religious attitudes and practices of individuals over time (Hastings & Hoge, 1970, 1976, 1981, 1986; Hoge, 1974; McAllister, 1981, 1985; Roof, 1993). Several of these studies are examined in more detail later in this literature review.

During the 1970s, a reemerging interest in religious and spiritual change in the lives of individuals led to the development of a number of theories offering explanations for *the way* faith changes or develops. Many of the earliest theories were grounded in theological points of view and expressed primarily in religious, often Christian, terminology (Gillespie, 1988; Hagberg & Guelich, 1989; Loder, 1989; Mulholland, 1993; Westerhoff, 1976; Whitehead & Whitehead, 1992). Amidst the numerous theologically based theories, two faith development theories, grounded in the psychology of human development, emerged in the 1980s. Emanating from the writings of educational

theorists, the writings of Fowler (1981) and Parks (1986, 2000) are particularly significant to faith development in young adults during the college years.

James W. Fowler: Stages of Faith

In 1981, Fowler proposed a theory of faith development which is grounded in Erikson's (1950, 1968) psychosocial development theory and the cognitive-structural paradigm of intellectual and ethical development proposed by Piaget (1952). While Fowler notes the influence of the theological writings of Tillich (1957) and Niebuhr (1943) in the development of his theory of faith maturity, he considers human faith to be more than simply a component of religious practice or theological belief.

Fowler's understanding of the term *faith* emerges from the writing of Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1963) who writes on the relationship between faith and religious practice. Fowler is also influenced by Smith's (1979) study of the historical usage of the terms *faith* and *belief*. Smith contends that:

“Faith is deeper, richer, more personal [than belief]. It is engendered by religious tradition and to some degree by its doctrines...but it is a quality of the person, not of the system. It is an orientation of the personality, to oneself, to one's neighbor, to the universe...a way of seeing whatever one sees and of handling whatever one handles...to see, to feel, to act in terms of a transcendent dimension” (p. 12).

Smith (1979) goes on to argue that “faith is a quality of human living” (p. 12). Fowler (1981) uses Smith's conceptualization of faith to argue that it is a human universal. Faith exists in all people and, therefore, is not bound by the practices of a religious sect or a

system of beliefs. All people are people of faith. Faith is a component of the development of identity in every human being. These descriptions of faith are quite similar to the definitions of spirituality, noted earlier, that began to appear several decades later in the higher education literature.

At the heart of Fowler's conceptualization of faith development is the human process of meaning-making. He argues that "faith is a way of being, arising out of seeing and knowing" (1986, p. 19). Fowler contends that *faith knowing* is an active concept and is critical to understanding one's self in relation to others and the "transcendent centers of power and values" that shape our "ultimate environment" (p. 19). He suggests that the activity of faith knowing is the process of organizing and "composing" our surroundings and relationships in ways that give meaning to our world. Fowler (1992) contends that:

"Faith development theory attempts to account for the operations of knowing, valuing and committing that underlie a person's construal of self-other relations in the context of an explicitly or implicitly coherent image of an ultimate environment. Faith is understood dynamically as involving both the finding of and being found by meaning...and it is meant to include both explicitly religious expression and enactments of faith, as well as those ways of finding and orienting oneself to coherence in an ultimate environment which is not religious" (p. 16).

Fowler's theory of faith development is a stage-based theory, most closely resembling the cognitive-structural theories of human development, which find their source in the work of Piaget (1952). Fowler (1992), commenting on Piaget's theory, notes that structural stages "occur in all cultures and human groups" (p. 3). He observes

that these stages “occur in the same sequence everywhere, and that sequence is invariant. The growing person cannot skip over a stage. The stages build on each other, and each more advanced stage includes within it the transformed and integrated structures of earlier stages” (p. 3). Cognitive-structural theories highlight the *process* of development that occurs at each stage. Faith development, in Fowler’s conceptualization, focuses on the structure and process of the individual’s development, not the content of faith (their religion). He suggests that each stage “represents the culmination of a revolution in the patterns of knowing and valuing by which a person finds or makes meaning” (1992, p. 16). Individuals move sequentially through each stage at their own pace, influenced by physical maturation, interaction with significant others, and by challenges to current ways of thinking brought to bear by the events of life.

The theory proposes six stages toward faith maturity:

1. *Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith* – Found primarily in pre-school children through ages six or seven, this is a “fantasy-filled, imitative phase in which the child is powerfully and permanently influenced by examples, moods, actions and stories” (Fowler, 1981, p. 133) of the visible faith of parents and significant others. The child makes meaning in an episodic and story-like fashion drawing on their emotional and perceptual ordering of the world and their experiences (Fowler, 1996). Their thinking is characterized by imaginative processes which are fluid and unrestricted by logical modes of thought. Thinking is not yet reversible; therefore, cause-effect relationships are poorly understood. The child’s first awareness of self emerges during this

stage, but is characterized by an egocentric regard for the perspective of others. Fowler sees the gift of this stage as “the birth of imagination” (1981, p. 134) with its ability to unify and grasp the experience-world in powerful images.

2. *Stage 2: Mythical-Literal Faith* – Occurring in school age children (although at times present in adolescents and adults), this stage accompanies the emergence of concrete operational thought (Piaget, 1952) and the child’s growing ability to develop logical, sequential patterns of thought. Concepts of faith are essentially the reflection of the faith and thought patterns of others, but the child’s circle of influence increases beyond parents to include friends, teachers, and significant others in their life. The child begins to take as their own the stories, beliefs and observances that symbolize belonging to their community; however, beliefs and symbols, as well as moral rules and attitudes, are interpreted literally.

As yet unable to reflect deeply on the feelings, attitudes, and personal guiding processes of self and others, the child understands the meaning and values of community and her or his own role in community through the medium of story or narrative (Fowler, 1996). Marked by a growing ability to differentiate their own experiences and perspectives from those of others and their developing ability to understand cause and effect relationships, individuals in Stage 2 compose a world based on “reciprocal fairness and an immanent justice based in reciprocity” (Fowler, 1981, p. 149). Fowler

suggests that the strength of this stage is the rise of narrative and the emergence of story as ways of finding and giving coherence to life experience (p. 149).

3. *Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith* – Generally appearing in adolescence, this stage is common among adults as well. The individual's experience of the world extends beyond family. The attitudes, values, and perceptions of others now become critical, especially as they relate to the composing of their emerging self-identity. Individuals see themselves as part of a group or groups and have difficulty understanding themselves apart from these affiliations. Self-identity is strongly tied to the approval and affirmation of significant others.

Stage 3 is marked by the onset of early formal operational thought. "Capable of using and appreciating abstract concepts, young persons begin to think about their thinking, to reflect upon their stories, and to name and synthesize their meanings" (Fowler, 1996, p. 61). Stage 3 is also characterized by growth in an individual's ability to understand the perspectives of others.

Beliefs and values, which are deeply felt and often held without critical reflection, frequently mirror the values, attitudes and practices of significant peers or communities. Faith provides a meaningful perspective through which individuals draw together and begin to understand the complexities and uncertainties of life, which emerge through their attempt to synthesize the

various, and sometimes conflicting, values and beliefs of significant others.

Fowler (1986) describes this stage by stating:

“This stage holds together a vital but fragile dance in which we try to shape the movements of our life to give expression to a way of being forming from within, while at the same time trying to maintain connections and exchanges to all those to whom our becoming seems integrally connected” (p. 29).

4. *Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith* – For those who reach Stage 4 faith, the transition most often occurs in early adulthood (late 20s) although it is not unusual to reach this transition in the 30s and 40s. Fowler notes that many adults never reach Stage 4. In Stage 4, individuals begin the formation of a new identity, moving away from the tacitly held beliefs and values adopted from family, community and social groups to values and beliefs that are critically examined and evaluated in light of a growing awareness of self. Authority for one’s beliefs and actions is relocated within the self. While the values and judgments of others are important, their expectations, advice, and counsel are subject to critical examination and weighed against the individual’s own developing view of the world. Fowler (1986) contends that the “Roles and relations once constitutive of identity now become expressions of identity” (p. 29).

It is in this critical stage that the individual begins to take seriously the burden of responsibility for their own commitments, lifestyle, beliefs, and

attitudes. While continuing to practice mutual perspective taking, they begin to recognize that institutions and social systems also hold perspectives (Fowler, 1981). Stage 4 individuals must critically evaluate the worldviews of friends, family, group affiliations, and the institutions and social systems in which they work, worship, and live against their own developing sense of self to find their place in relation to other individuals and institutions.

Fowler uses the metaphor of “leaving home” to illustrate the vital change in “identity” and “ideology” (1981, p. 182) that result from transition to Stage 4 faith. The personal tension generated by the ongoing evaluative processes inherent in Stage 4 makes it a difficult place to stay for long periods of time. Individuals generally move in and out of Stage 4, often over a number of years.

5. *Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith* – Stage 5 faith emerges as life is lived, drawing from the various strands of one’s faith journey including family and religious upbringing, participation in various groups, both social and functional, educational background, social context, and lifestyle. While many individuals never reach Stage 5 faith, it is rarely seen before mid-life.

Through a developing awareness of contradiction, paradox, and ambiguity, individuals begin to realize the limits of human knowledge and understanding (Moseley, Jarvis, & Fowler, 1992, p. 54). Recognition of these limits may reawaken the individual to the mystery represented in symbols, myth, and story, which they may have left behind in earlier stages. Grounded

in this emerging awareness, previously held boundaries of faith may be broadened. Stage 5 faith recognizes the possibility that truth is present in beliefs and systems that have previously been excluded.

A significant characteristic of this stage is the individual's ability to identify with persons from different races, socio-economic backgrounds, or ideological or theological perspectives. Fowler (1986) suggests that Stage 5 persons possess an "epistemological humility" (p. 30). A strength emerging from this stage is the capacity of the individual to hold deeply their "own powerful meanings or those of the groups with which they associate, while at the same time recognizing that they are relative, partial and inevitably distorted conceptualizations of transcendent reality" (Fowler, 1981, p. 198).

6. *Stage 6: Universalizing Faith* – Fowler, commenting on his own description of Stage 6 faith, contends that "my words are at best a kind of abstract poetry. Stage 6 can really be grasped only through the lives of those who incarnate it" (Fowler & Keen, 1978, p. 90). Stage 6 persons are exceedingly rare. Fowler describes Stage 6 individuals as persons "having generated faith compositions in which their felt sense of ultimate environment is inclusive of all being. They have become incarnators and actualizers of the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community" (Fowler, 1979, pp. 13-14, as cited in Fowler, 1981, p. 200). Fowler (1981) suggests that "Universalizers" can be perceived as "subversive" in their opposition to the unjust structures of the social, political and religious world. He identifies Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi,

and Dietrich Bonhoeffer as individuals who represent *Universalizing Faith* and who were martyred for their stands against injustice. “The rare persons who may be described by this stage have a special grace that makes them seem more lucid, more simple, and yet somehow more fully human than the rest of us” (Fowler, 1979, pp. 13-14, as cited in Fowler, 1981, p. 201). Stage 6 individuals are characterized by their willingness to give of themselves, or to give up themselves, for the benefit of the greater good of humanity.

Fowler’s stages of faith are one of the most often-cited explanations of the way faith grows and develops in human beings found in the educational literature. While noting the faith transitions of young adulthood and the notion of “leaving home,” identified in Stage 3, Fowler does not focus specifically on the development of faith in college-aged students. Parks (1986), grounding her ideas in Fowler’s faith stages, offers a paradigm for understanding the faith journeys of young adults during the college years.

Sharon Parks: The Critical Years

Drawing upon Fowler’s stages of faith development and grounded in theoretical frameworks offered by Piaget (1952), Erikson (1968), Kohlberg (1971), Gilligan (1982/1993), Perry (1968/1999), and Keniston (1960), Parks (1986) proposes a theory describing the process of faith development in young adults during the college years. Parks, like Fowler, sees the task of meaning-making as a fundamental component of what it means to be human and an essential element of the journey of faith development during the young adult years. She states that:

“It is in the activity of finding and being found by meaning that we as modern persons come closest to recognizing our participation in the life of faith. It is this activity of composing and being composed by meaning, then, that I invite the reader to associate with the word faith” (Parks, 1986, p. 14).

Resonating with Fowler’s conceptualization of faith, Parks contends that “faith is integral to all human life, that it is a human universal” (1986, p. 10). All humans have faith; therefore, faith is not defined by nor confined within religious practice or beliefs.

Emphasizing the changing nature of the faith journey, Parks (1986) suggests that faith development is a dynamic process that occurs through the lifespan for healthy individuals. Parks and Fowler agree that faith is not a static phenomenon, but a process of growth in knowing and being. She says that “the word faith as I am using it primarily denotes the *activity of composing meaning* [italics added] in the most comprehensive dimensions of our awareness” (p. 16).

Parks’ theory proposes three components that together constitute the essential activity of individuals in each stage. Using the term “form” to describe these components, she contends that each form is intertwined with the others and each one is essential to the composition of faith at each level. The first component, *forms of cognition*, draws upon the work of Perry (1968) and refers to growth in *the way* that individuals know the world around them—their intellectual development (Parks, 1986, pp. 44-53). The second component, *forms of dependence*, reflects growth in the way individuals relate to others, moving from the dependent relationships of childhood, through counter-dependence and inner-dependence (often the form most prevalent in

college-aged young adults) to interdependence, which Parks (1986) contends reflects adult maturity (pp. 53-61). The final component is *forms of community*. She contends that “The human does not compose meaning alone... [They are] not the sole actor in the drama of human development” (p. 61). This aspect of each stage reflects the way individuals choose their community or “network of belonging.” She suggests that mature faith is found in individuals whose network is open to others, even those from whom they differ (pp. 61-69).

Building on this foundation, Parks proposes a stage in-between Fowler’s Stage 3 and Stage 4, which she suggests describes the faith journey of college-aged students. She cites the work of Keniston (1960) in her contention that modern culture has brought about a new stage in human development, which Keniston termed post-adolescence. Parks uses “young adult faith” to describe this in-between stage that she contends best characterizes the experience of college-aged individuals.

Evidenced in Parks’ description of the “forms” of young adult faith is the fact that this is a time of exploration and experimentation. She describes the form of cognition as “probing commitment” (1986, p. 84). Parks contends that this is the young adult manifestation of Perry’s “commitment within relativism” stage. She describes the form of dependence of young adult faith as “fragile inner-dependence” (p. 88). By fragile, she does not mean to imply weakness, but to describe the vulnerability of relationships at this point in a young person’s life that can often result in feelings of “disappointment, failure, exclusion, abandonment, emptiness and hopelessness” (p. 88). Parks characterizes the form of community in young adult faith as “ideologically compatible groups” (p. 95).

Young adults affiliate with groups that hold closely to the belief systems that are most like their own. At this stage, these groups can tend to be somewhat impermeable to those who hold differing beliefs or value systems.

Parks' later work (2000) builds upon her conceptualization of young adult faith and contends that the college environment can have a powerful impact in this time of exploration and experimentation. Noting that "young adulthood is rightfully a time of asking big questions and discovering worthy dreams" (2000, p. 5), she believes that institutions of higher education have the potential to become a form of community that produces the kinds of challenge, recognition and support that encourage students to question and dream. She suggests that college and university environments could be the "mentoring communities" in which students' can safely and confidently engage in the search for "meaning, purpose, and faith" (p. 158).

The faith development theories proposed by Fowler and Parks provide a theoretical framework through which to view the process of the faith journey of individuals, especially college-aged young adults. With these theories as a backdrop, this review examines the re-emergence of spirituality and the renewed interest in religious participation as topics of reflection and inquiry in the higher education literature.

Research on Spirituality, Religion, and Higher Education

Acknowledging the theoretical framework implicit in these theories, this section reviews a number of studies related to the religious and spiritual lives of students. Beginning with selected research conducted in the early twentieth century, this review

then focuses primarily on the growing number of studies conducted over the past ten years that examine the spiritual and religious values and attitudes, practices, self-concept and beliefs of college students, and the impact of college and university attendance on students' religious practices and spirituality.

Early Research: 1948 to the mid-1990s

In order to develop a clearer understanding of contemporary research on spirituality and the religious practices of students in colleges and universities, this section first examines research from the mid- to late-1900s. A brief review of research from that time period provides insight into students' attitudes toward, and practice of, spirituality today.

An increased interest in spirituality in the general population, and in college and university students in particular, arising in the early twentieth century was accompanied by the emergence of a number of studies examining the religious attitudes and practices of college students. The most widely cited research of that time is the work of Allport, Gillespie, and Young (1948) examining the religious attitudes and practices of college students fifteen months after the close of World War II. Using the *Attitude Inventory: Aspects of Religious Life*, developed for their study, Allport et al. surveyed 414 undergraduates at Harvard and 86 undergraduates at Radcliffe in November of 1946. Findings, similar to those of the most recent research on college student spirituality conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (Astin et al., 2005), reflect students' views of the importance of religion "to achieve a fully mature philosophy of

life” (Allport et al., 1948, p. 30), the changing nature of their religious experience after leaving home (p. 31), and the observation that a clear majority of students surveyed were “dissatisfied with institutional religion” (p. 30). The *Attitude Inventory* survey has been used in a number of studies examining college student spirituality through the mid-twentieth century, and variations of the survey are still used today in research on spirituality.

Several studies conducted during the mid-twentieth century found significant change in the spiritual practices and attitudes of students during their college years. Feldman and Newcomb (1969), drawing upon their comprehensive review of the available research up to the 1960’s, conclude that “religious values relative to other values, become less important to students” (p. 23). Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) echo this finding in their comprehensive examination of higher education research over a twenty-year period reporting consistent and significant “declines in religious attitudes, values, and behaviors during the college years...” (p. 280).

Through the perspective of a multi-decade study of the religious beliefs and practices of male students at Williams College, Hastings and Hoge (1986) found what they termed a “fall-rise-fall-rise pattern in traditional religious commitment” (p. 370) over a period of nearly 40 years. Identical surveys conducted in 1948, 1967, 1974, 1979, and 1984 showed a “liberalization and disengagement from church life” (Hastings & Hoge, 1981, p. 517) between 1948 and 1967. While the researchers did not find a “linear” pattern of change over the intervening years, following the 1984 survey they

concluded that there was “evidence of a conservative shift in personal morality along with religious attitudes” (Hastings & Hoge, 1986, p. 376).

A study of the religious preferences and religious backgrounds of Berkeley students during the 1970-1971 college year, revealed that student religious experimentation or change in religious preferences, which the researchers termed “religious defection,” appeared to be part of a larger disenchantment with societal issues of the time (Wuthnow & Glock, 1973, p. 175). The study found several college-related factors including academic performance, difficulty with interpersonal relationships, and “psychic distress” (p. 175) to be associated with students’ disengagement from the religion in which they were reared; however, it appears that the move away from traditional forms of religious observance did not signify a complete departure from religion in most of the students surveyed.

A longitudinal study of Russell Sage College women conducted from 1981 to 1985 seems to confirm the trend toward more conservative attitudes and beliefs during that period of time. McAllister (1981, 1985), using the Allport et al. (1948) *Attitude Inventory*, found that the seniors in the 1985 phase of this study, who were surveyed as freshmen in 1981, continued to have “positive attitudes toward religion” (McAllister, 1985, p. 802). He found that “There appeared to be no significant changes in religious attitudes or theological beliefs over the four years of the college experience” (p. 802). McAllister notes that only two significant differences were found between the women’s freshman year and senior year surveys, both related to religious practice. The research showed a significant decrease in church attendance and the frequency of prayer reported

by the women in this study (p. 800). This finding corresponds closely to the findings of the most recent research on spirituality conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA.

Contemporary Research on Spirituality and Higher Education

Over the past two decades, research exploring spirituality and college students has tended to focus on the ways in which students understand spirituality; their engagement with religious and spiritual practices; differences in these practices based on differing student characteristics; specific components of the student's spiritual or religious experience; and on the efforts of higher education institutions to assist their students' development in this area. In contrast to the research in the early to mid-twentieth century, which focused primarily on change in students' attitudes and behaviors over the span of their college years, recent research has examined the impact of spirituality on areas such as students' identity development, racial and ethnic identity formation, health and emotional well-being, educational impact and the overall impact of religious practice and spirituality on students' educational experience. The next section of this review explores this research.

Spirituality in Adolescence

The present study focuses on background characteristics that students bring with them as they enter college. Sociologist Christian Smith contends that we "know very little about the religious lives of American adolescents" saying that "social scientific

knowledge of the religious affiliations, practices, beliefs, experiences, and attitudes of American youth is impoverished” (Smith, Denton, Faris & Regnerus, 2002, p. 598). The authors suggest that the dearth of research examining spirituality in this age group may be due to “a simple lack of interest and attention” among researchers (p. 598). The research in this article focuses on spirituality among American adolescents and finds that:

- “A majority of American youth are religious” (p. 609).
- While “about half of American adolescents regularly participate in religious organizations.... about half of American youth are not religiously active” (p. 609)
- “The religious participation of American youth declines with age” (p. 609).
- “Adolescent girls are somewhat more likely to be religiously active than boys” (p. 609).
- “The religious participation of American adolescents is somewhat differentiated by race” (p. 609).

As was noted earlier in this review, a number of the characteristics observed here (including differences in participation, gender, and race) continue to be evident in college students as well as in adults.

Spirituality and College Attendance

A significant concern for researchers studying the relationship between spirituality and higher education is the impact of college attendance on the students and on their faith. As noted earlier, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), reviewing studies in

higher education up to the late 1980s, found that “with some exceptions, the literature published since 1967 fairly consistently reports statistically significant declines in religious attitudes, values, and behaviors during the college years...” (p. 280). However, a number of studies conducted over the past fifteen years appear to arrive at dissimilar conclusions reporting increases in measures of spirituality or spiritual interest (Astin et al., 2005; Birkholz, 1997; Bussema, 1999; Hulett, 2004; Lee, 2002a; Lee, Matzkin, & Arthur, 2004; Lindholm, 2007). While the sample size or distinctiveness of some of these studies may make the results difficult to generalize to larger populations, their findings must be considered. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), in their updated review of literature on the impact of college on students also note this change reporting that “More recent studies indicate that college students may not reject religious identity or values but rather refine and reinterpret previously held beliefs into more complex, personalized, and internalized concepts” (p. 218). Evidence from past research may shed light on the findings of more recent research on spirituality and contribute to the conceptual framework for this study.

Spirituality and Entering Student Experiences

A number of studies have related spirituality to students’ first experiences of college. Low and Handal (1995) studied the relationship between students’ religious beliefs and practices and their adjustment to college. They found an “overall significant relationship between religion and college adjustment for students in transition” (p. 411). Similarly, in a study of the relationship between students’ spiritual well-being as

measured by Paloutzian and Ellison's *Spiritual Well-Being Scale* (1991) and their college adjustment, Ratliff (2005) found a positive correlation between students' high scores on spiritual well-being and their successful adjustment to college.

Edmondson and Park (2009) studying the "prevalence of religious belief change among entering students" (p289), note the impact of college entry on students' religiosity and subsequently college adjustment and coping. In research examining the impact of college entry on spiritual life they observe that "a large number of students are engaged in a process of examination and alteration of their religious beliefs, and that the college experience plays a key role in this change" (p. 297). Stating their contention that change in religious beliefs is a "normal student development" process, the researchers contend that this change impacts "college adjustment and coping" and challenges colleges and universities to "provide a means for students to critically explore topics of religion and spirituality" (p. 297) to facilitate students' successful transition into college. Yet Bryant (2006), while conceding that first-year students will face "challenge and disequilibrium" in relation to their faith traditions, contends that first-year religious minorities possess "confidence...in the stability of their respective beliefs" and "report feeling "secure" in their spiritual views and unlikely to change them in the future" (p. 23). Bryant further submits that "first-year students as a whole feel fairly established with respect to the worldviews that define their experience" (p. 23).

Using data from the pilot survey of the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) *College Students' Beliefs and Values* study, Bryant, Choi, and Yasuno (2003) examined the experiences of first-year college students in relation to their spiritual

practices. Similar to earlier studies exploring the relationship of spirituality to college attendance, this study looked at the impact of the first year of college on students' spiritual beliefs and practices. Reflecting the findings of earlier research, Bryant et al. (2003) report that "although students became less religiously active in the first college year with respect to attending religious services, praying, and discussing religion, they became more committed to integrating spirituality into their lives" (p. 736).

Participation in religious student organizations also appears to aid students' adjustment to college in their first year. Noting the relationship of social integration and academic integration to college adjustment and success, Bryant (2005 & 2007b) notes a positive connection between students' participation in campus religious organizations and successful adjustment to college suggesting that participation supports "social integration, emotional well-being, and spirituality" (2007b, p. 14).

Institutional impact on spiritual development among first-year students was examined in a large sample, multi-institutional study conducted by Lovik (2010) using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Noting the HERI finding that students come to college "with very high levels of spiritual interest" (Astin et al., 2005, p. 3), Lovik found that "particular organizational features, campus policies, and student experiences [in the college environment] contribute to spiritual development in the first year" (p. 132). Lovik concludes that "intentional campus actions can influence the development of student spirituality" (p. 133) in first year students.

Spirituality and Identity Development

A number of studies have examined the relationship between spirituality and religious practice with various aspects of identity development. While spirituality appears to be related to several components of an individual's identity, some researchers suggest that spirituality is an inseparable component of identity itself (Tisdell, 2003). Hindman (2002) contends that "...our spirituality is a dynamic expression of who we are, truly. It gives shape to, and is shaped by who we really are at our deepest levels" (p. 168).

In a study of students at a Midwestern denominational liberal arts college, Bussema (1999) observed a significant relationship between progress in personal identity development as measured through Marcia's identity development statuses (1980) and the individual's faith development as seen through Fowler's faith stages (1981) and measured by the *Faith Development Interview*. Bussema (1999) found that:

"Faith and identity appear to follow similar developmental paths. As students progress from their early college experience toward graduation we see movement in both their understanding of themselves and in their articulation of faith answers to important worldview questions....For the majority [of students] in this sample, progress towards an internalized, critically examined and personally chosen sense of self and faith is evident by the end of their college experience. Identity status and faith stage are clearly related" (p. 22).

A number of characteristics contribute to an individual's identity. In the following sections, I examine research on a number of individual student characteristics

that are often seen as related to identity development. These characteristics are used in the present research to study college students' spiritual engagement.

Gender. An abundance of research has identified gender as a characteristic influencing the spirituality and religious participation of college students. Differences in women and men have long been noted in research on spirituality and religious practice. Smith et al. (2002) state that "It is well known that adult American women consistently score higher on most measures of religiosity than adult men" (p. 605) noting that the difference in women and men is present even among the adolescents studied in their research.

The resurgence of interest in the relationship between higher education and spirituality has given rise to a number of studies that identify gender differences in the spiritual attitudes and practices of college and university students. Lindholm (2005), citing results from the first phase of *The Spiritual Life of College Students* study conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, observes that "on the whole college women exhibit greater commitment to spirituality and religion than men" on several of the scales of spirituality and religion developed in this study (pp. 6-7).

Sanchez and Carter (2005) observe a significant correlation between racial identity status and religious orientation in African American college students, but also note a significant difference in these results between male and female students in the study. The researchers suggest that these differences may result from differences in

racial and religious socialization between women and men in the African American community (p. 292).

A study of undergraduate students in a secular Midwestern university revealed significant differences in women's and men's "practice of prayer and religious meditation" (Buchko, 2004, p. 94). She concludes that "women's faith appears to include a stronger relationship with God. This relationship is composed of frequent connections with God in prayer, a strong sense that God is present and active in one's life..." (p. 97). Knox, Langehough, Walters, & Rowley (1998) studying a small sample of students at three southeastern universities using the *Allport Spirituality* scale found that women students reflect a higher religiosity than men and were more likely to reflect an intrinsic orientation to spirituality than men (p. 431).

Zinnbauer & Pargament (1998), examining the nature of spiritual change in Christian college students also identify differences in the way that women experience and benefit from religious experience and spiritual engagement. They found that "women seemed to benefit more from an increase in religiousness than men," that women who experience religious change during their college years became more "self-reliant" and that women "generally increased in spirituality over time more than men" (p. 176). Research emerging from the Higher Education Research Institute (Astin et al., 2005) study on college students' spirituality appears to support these findings. Bryant (2007a), examining data from the pilot study, observed "marked gender differences in spiritual qualities, and gendered patterns of spiritual development" (p.1).

Amidst the plentiful research comparing women's and men's spirituality, Bryant (2003) focused specifically on the spiritual experiences of a small group of college women who participated in a Catholic organization at a public research institution. Noting that "too often the distinctiveness of women's perspectives has been overlooked in faith development theories and women's voices silenced in many traditional religious circles" this research set out to "affirm women's spiritual uniqueness and strength" (p. 79). Bryant found that the "diverse peers and curricular content" experienced at college "posed challenges or new ways of thinking about their own and other's spirituality" (p. 70) which contributed to women's religious and spiritual identity development (p. 70).

While evidence seems to suggest that men and women differ in their practice of religion and spirituality, little research has been conducted which focuses specifically on the spiritual engagement and religious practices of male college students; however there is some evidence from recent research (Astin et al., 2005; Longwood, Muesse, & Schipper, 2004) which supports the conclusion that spirituality is identified by male, as well as female, college students as being very important in their lives.

Race and Ethnicity. Researchers have also studied the impact of spirituality and religion on the development of racial identity in college students. Taylor, Chatters, Jayakody, and Levin (1996), noting the place of religion and religiousness in the African American community (p. 403) report "consistent racial differences in religious involvement...higher levels of public and private religious behaviors" and stronger "religious commitment" (p. 409) in African Americans than Caucasians in several large

sample surveys. Smith et al. (2002) identify the presence of differences in spirituality as it relates to race and ethnicity appearing as early as adolescence in their research examining religious effects on American teenagers.

Sanchez and Carter (2005) observed a significant correlation between racial identity status and religious orientation in African American college students. Noting that “religious beliefs and practices have and continue to be a salient aspect of culture and upbringing” (p. 281) for African Americans, the researchers conclude that “racial and religious issues are an integral part of self-identity processes for African Americans during college” (p. 291). Stewart (2002), studying African American students at a predominantly white college, found evidence that appears to confirm this conclusion stating that for a majority of students in this study “spirituality was a central component to their identity make-up” (p. 592).

Noting the importance of culture and community for African Americans, which has traditionally been rooted in expressions of spirituality and religious participation, several researchers have pointed to the positive socializing effects of participation in religious communities for African American students on personal and collective coping mechanisms (Constantine, Wilton, Gainor, & Lewis, 2002) and on academic success (Brown & Gary, 1991). Donahoo and Caffey (2010) found church attendance for African American students to be related to a wide range of college experiences including “successful transition into college, academic performance, career selection, ability to cope with stress” (p. 100) as well as student retention (p. 101).

Research utilizing the 2007 longitudinal data set for the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* and using several scales from the HERI study examined differences in white and non-white students in CCCU schools. Noting the “predominantly white environment” present in most CCCU schools, Paredes-Collins & Collins (2011) found that “religion, spirituality, and race intersect at evangelical schools” (p. 93). Their study demonstrates “significant differences between white students and non-white students” and highlights specifically the “contrasting results between ethic of caring (UCLA scale) and religious commitment (UCLA scale)” (p. 96). The results of this research are noteworthy for the present research in that they may point to the *effect* of attending CCCU schools on change as reflected in differences over a period of time in the HERI scales used in this study.

The connection of white racial identity development to religious orientation was examined in a study of white female and male students at a predominantly-white Southern university (Sciarra & Gushue, 2003). Using a measure of white racial identity status developed by Helms & Carter (1990) and several scales designed to measure individuals' intrinsic or extrinsic orientation to religion, the researchers found a significant correlation between racial identity status and religious orientation in white university students. The data from this study “support the notion that higher and more sophisticated racial identity statuses, which are characterized by greater complexity in information processing, are related to more integrated and flexible forms of religious orientation” (Sciarra & Gushue, 2003, p. 480).

Age. Little research is available relating age to religiosity or spirituality. Smith et al. (2002) researching spirituality among American adolescents found, that “religious participation of American youth declines with age” (p. 690). In a small sample study of college students, Knox et al. (1998) found that younger college students reflect higher levels of religiosity than older students and that younger students reflect higher intrinsic spirituality scores than older students (p. 431). In light of the theoretical literature postulating change in spirituality and faith as individuals mature (Fowler, 1981; Parks 1986, 2000; Westerhoff, 1976), it is interesting to note that there appears to be little research studying age in relation to its impact on spiritual and religious life.

Socio-economic Status

A significant amount of research has examined the impact of socio-economic status on education at every educational level and particularly as it impacts students pursuing a higher education (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; Sirin, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991 & 2005). Yet little research is available linking socio-economic status to religion or spirituality in the life of college students.

The literature makes a connection between spirituality and individual’s culture and background (Tisdell, 2003). Cohen (2009) extends the conversation about culture to include aspects of individuals’ religious experiences and socio-economic status. Cohen contends that “Those of high socioeconomic status are more able to control their environments and influence others. Those of low socioeconomic status are more likely to have to adapt to their surroundings...because of their inability to directly control their

environments” (p. 197). He also notes that “children of differing socioeconomic status are enculturated to have different values” (p. 197). The lack of “direct” control over their environment and surroundings and the impact of this lack of control on individuals’ developing values may be related to the place religion holds in an individual’s life. While the relationship of socio-economic status to academic achievement has been demonstrated in the literature, there appears to be little direct connection between socio-economic status, religion and spirituality, and students’ educational experiences or outcomes.

Recognizing the demonstrated relationship of religious participation to academic achievement (Regnerus, 2000 & 2003), Regnerus and Elder (2003) examined the influence of religious participation in high- and low-risk communities where *risk* is defined, in part, by the level of poverty in the community. The researchers found that church attendance provides a benefit to high-risk youth as it “functions as a protective mechanism in high-risk communities” (p. 646) in ways that are not as evident in youth from low-risk communities. The researchers conclude that the positive outcomes may be more related to “a form of social integration” that is tied to religious participation (p. 645) than to the direct effects of religion or spirituality. This research seems to be supported by the findings of a study by Solt, Habel, and Grant (2011) which concludes that religion’s impact is “profoundly social” having “a powerful positive effect on the religiosity of all members of society regardless of income” though it “serves as a comfort for the poor” while providing “a means of social control for the rich” (p. 462).

Several additional studies found little relationship between religious participation and spirituality and individuals' socio-economic status. An early study by Mueller and Johnson (1975) found that socio-economic status "is not an important determinant of religious participation" (798). Similarly, Banthia, Moskowitz, Acree, and Folkman (2007) studying socio-economic differences in the effects of prayer on health found that income was "not an important moderator in the relationships between religiosity and prayer and health and quality of life" (p. 257) though they did find a positive correlation with lower levels of education and prayer as they relate to health. Gaede (1977), in a "single religious group" sample, likewise found that education had greater impact on belief and religious participation than socio-economic status. More recently, a study of "spiritual struggle" by students during their college years found that income had an insignificant relationship to the amount of spiritual struggle experienced by college-age students (Bryant & Astin, 2008).

While the examination of socio-economic status often includes parents' level of education, first-generation college attendance is also an education issue. For purposes of this literature review, I discuss first-generation college attendance in the section below.

Spirituality and Education

The educational literature provides ample evidence of the association of spirituality, religious commitment and religious participation to educational outcomes in students. Studies suggest that religious participation, especially, is related to higher educational aspirations (Regnerus, 2003; Regneus & Elder, 2003) and academic

achievement (Milot & Ludden, 2009; Park, 2001; Regnerus, 2000), though the importance of religion to the individual (Milot & Ludden, 2009) and the individual's biblical knowledge (Jeynes, 2009) has also been demonstrated to positively affect educational outcomes in students.

First-Generation College Attendance. Scholarly research provides evidence that the characteristics and experiences of students who are the first college attenders in their family may be different from students whose parents—one or both—attended or graduated from college. Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, and Nora (1996) conclude that “In both precollege characteristics and their experiences during their first year in college, first-generation students differ in many educationally important ways from the students higher education has traditionally served” (p. 20). Among a number of characteristics identified as being different from their non-first-generation peers, the researchers found first-generation students to be more likely to be from low-income families, to be students of color, to possess lesser cognitive skills, and to possess lower academic aspirations (p. 16). The researchers in this study also note that some college experiences of first-generation students are different in ways that may be impacted by characteristics associated with their first-generation attendance and which “put them at a potential disadvantage when compared to their traditional peers” (p. 17).

Nearly a decade later, a longitudinal study conducted by Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini (2004) reached conclusions that support the earlier research suggesting that “compared to other students, first-generation college students tend to be

significantly handicapped in terms of the types of institutions they attend and the kinds of experiences they have during college” (p. 275). The researchers note that this finding was “particularly evident in students whose parents possessed higher levels of post-secondary education” (p. 275). In this study, first-generation students, in comparison with their non-first-generation peers, attended “less academically selective” institutions which then impacted educational attainment and degree completion, and significantly influenced the way they experienced college.

A longitudinal study conducted through the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) and drawing upon data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program’s *Freshman Survey*, highlights changes in the characteristics and experiences of first-generation students between 1971 and 2005. Extending a number of the findings noted in the research above, Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, and Yeung (2007), identify several outcomes germane to the present study. The researchers conclude that:

“Relative to their peers, first-generation students are distinct in lower self-confidence and academic preparation prior to arriving at college. They are more likely to reflect concerns with financial security in their choice of college and personal values, have different expectations for their college experience and beyond, and have distinct experiences that serve as obstacles in their path to degree attainment and academic success” (p. 44).

While no research is available that relates first-generation college attendance to college-student spirituality, the pervasive impact of first-generation attendance on college experiences and outcomes, as well as the established relationship of first-generation

attendance to socio-economic status and income (Pascarella et al., 2004; Terenzini et al., 1996) leads me to speculate that first-generation college attendance may be related to students' spiritual engagement.

Academic Achievement and Educational Attainment. The scholarly research demonstrates evidence that spirituality and religious participation affects students' educational aspirations, academic achievement, and educational attainment. Several studies identify the association of religious participation and religious activities to positive educational outcomes. Regnerus (2000) observes that students "involvement in church activities has a positive relationship with both educational expectations and educational outcomes as measured by math and reading achievement scores" (p. 369). The author hypothesizes that "churches serve as networks that operate as agents of socialization into traditional means of [academic] achievement" and concludes that "church participation positively affects both educational aspirations and academic achievement" (p. 370) for students. A review of educational research and theory conducted by Regnerus (2003) appears to confirm this finding. Among a number of positive adolescent outcomes affected by religious participation, Regnerus reports that religious involvement, as opposed to mere religious affiliation, has a generally positive affect on education (p. 401). He observes that "devoutly religious teens also report greater educational expectations for themselves" and suggests that "religious involvement modestly benefits two distinct groups of students, the best and the worst performers..."

(p. 402). Both of these studies reflect Regnerus' hypothesis that the impact of religion on education is mediated by the social expectations of religious communities.

The findings of several studies examining various student characteristics in relation to the impact of religion on educational outcomes appear to validate these findings. Brown and Gary (1991) studying African American college students observed that "religious socialization is positively related to educational attainment" and that "as levels of religious socialization rise, there is a concomitant incline in educational achievement" (p. 421). Milot and Ludden (2009) studying male and female high-school students in a rural setting found that attending religious services was positively associated with higher grades in adolescents (p. 413) though they observed that male students for whom religion is *important* are more likely to experience positive educational outcomes while religious *participation* produced more significant educational outcomes in female students. Park (2001) found that "more religious students outperform less religious students in academic achievement" (p. 373) and that this finding held true across differing racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Research suggests that the impact of religious involvement may extend beyond the direct participation of the student themselves. The effect of family religious involvement is noted in a study by Park and Bonner (2008). The researchers found that "family religious involvement displays a positive impact on academic achievement" (p. 354) and that the "religious traits and behaviors of parents, specifically participation with their children, wield notable impact on their children's academic achievement" (p. 358).

This finding may further support Regnerus' observation about socialization as it is possible that family socialization plays a role in the positive outcomes noted in this study.

While most of the studies reviewed here examine religious participation in high-school students, there is some evidence to suggest that the positive impact of religious and spiritual participation continues into the college years. The findings of research by Brown and Gary (1991) cited earlier seems to confirm this effect and aspects of the *Spiritual Life of College Students* study (Astin et al., 2005) may also provide evidence that this influence continues as students begin college.

Religious Affiliation and Identification

Students' affiliation with particular religions, denominations, or spiritual groups appears to impact their self-identity, as well as, their religious and spiritual experiences. Research studying students' identification with varying faith expressions and their subsequent acceptance, alienation or marginalization in college and university cultures highlights the degree to which students hold spirituality as a component of self-identity and self-understanding (Bryant 2003, 2006 & 2008; Hulett, 2004; Moran, Lang, and Oliver, 2007).

Variation among groups within Protestantism and the impact of this variation on educational attainment was studied by Beyerlein (2004). The researcher disaggregated conservative Protestantism into three kinds (levels) finding that the "cultural traditions" of the different groups result in significant differences in the view of education effecting the educational attainment of students whose religious roots stem from those traditions.

Beyerlein observes that these “cultural traditions explain why evangelical Protestants are substantially more likely to be college educated” than other Protestant groups studied in this research (p. 514). This study not only demonstrates the differences between the sub-groups of conservative Protestantism examined in this research, but suggests that differences in religious traditions, even those differences not often recognized in educational research, can have significant effects on students’ educational attainment.

Studies of the religious and spiritual experiences of students who do not identify with the traditional majority religion on many U.S. campuses may also shed light on the effect of religion and spirituality on identity development. Bryant (2006) studied the college “experiences of students who are not in the religious majority” from the perspective of students “not situated within the Christian worldview that prevails culturally and religiously in the United States” (p. 3). Using data drawn from *The Spiritual Life of College Students* study from the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, Bryant examined the responses of entering students who identified with religious perspectives other than Christianity. The researcher concludes that “The worldviews that students bring with them to college serve as the lenses they use to make sense of their encounters within the classroom and beyond it” (p. 24); therefore, as noted earlier by Tisdell (2003), students’ worldview is very much a part of the “self” they bring to the college experience. Bowman & Small (2010) recognize the challenge of “fostering spiritual growth among diverse religious backgrounds” (p. 611) when they challenge colleges, including Christian, Catholic, and non-religious schools, to be aware of the

differences in the religious practices and worldviews that exist among students on their campuses.

The experiences of evangelical students at a public research university are the focus of a study conducted by Bryant (2008). Noting the growing “attendance of “born-again” Christian students at selective colleges and universities” Bryant asks “who these students are in a holistic sense, [and] how their identity as evangelicals impacts their college experience...” (p. 1). Bryant says that the effect of “prolonged experiences with diverse cultures and ways of life outside of the evangelical subculture” impacts students’ “questioning or doubts in matters of faith and truth” (p. 19). The researcher notes the challenges these students present for educators “because of their adherence to doctrines and beliefs that may conflict with the broader campus ethos, goals, and norms” (p. 26) but also notes the hope of these students to “differentiate their faith from that of their parents and other authority figures in an effort to become the authors of their own worldviews” (p. 25).

These studies suggest that the spiritual journeys of students from varying religious and spiritual backgrounds, as they enter college, affect the way they see themselves in relation to religion and spirituality, specifically their spiritual self-identity. This identity and the worldview it presupposes may affect the way in which students engage spirituality during their college years.

Studies Relevant to the Present Research

This section examines recent and ongoing research on the impact of college attendance on change in students' religious beliefs and practices and on students' spiritual development. Their relevance makes these studies particularly significant to the present study and to future research on student spiritual engagement in higher education; therefore, I examine them in greater depth.

The Impact of College on Students' Religious Beliefs

A study conducted by Lee (2002b) set out to “identify the factors in the college environment that influence changes in students' religious beliefs” (p. 372). The study used data from the 1994 CIRP *Freshman Survey* comparing it to data from the 1998 *College Student Survey* to examine the impact of college attendance on the religious beliefs and convictions of 4000 students at 76 colleges and universities across the United States. The longitudinal and multi-institutional design used in this study, along with the large student sample, make its results potentially useful in understanding the institutional impact of higher education on the religious beliefs and practices of students in other colleges and universities.

Based on earlier research on the effect of college attendance on religious practices and beliefs, Lee (2002b) hypothesized that “students will experience a decline in religious beliefs and convictions” (p. 372). Contrary to her expectations, evidence from the study suggested that “while students tend to experience changes in their religious beliefs, more students experience a strengthening of religious convictions than those

whose faith is weakened” (p. 382). Lee notes the growing tolerance that students exhibit for other religions and the religious beliefs of others, even while they hold strongly to their own religious perspectives. Her study found that “students may engage in less church attendance and observance of the Sabbath but may still hold strong convictions about being spiritual...” (p. 382). This finding has been confirmed in a number of single institution studies.

Faithful Change: Undergraduate education and spiritual maturity

The *Faithful Change Project* (Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004), a joint study by six member schools of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), was designed to explore and assess the faith and spiritual maturation experienced by undergraduate students attending CCCU schools.

Using Fowler’s (1981) stages of faith development as a theoretical model for the study, researchers used both longitudinal and cross-sectional research methodologies. The *Faithful Change Project* studied 120 freshman students entering college in the fall of 1998. The research design included in-depth qualitative interviews, as well as, quantitative spirituality surveys. Participants were re-interviewed during each successive year of their enrollment to “enable researchers to determine spiritual growth patterns, identify when those patterns are most likely to occur, and examine the environments and experiences most conducive to spiritual development” (Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004, p. 98). Sixty seniors were interviewed and surveyed in the first year of the study to provide data for immediate comparisons. Sixty more seniors (in addition to the original freshman

participants who were also now seniors) were interviewed and surveyed during the final year of the study (2001-2002) to compare responses to the original cohort.

Reporting only on the cross-sectional comparison of freshmen and seniors in the first year of the study researchers found that most students enter college at Stage 2 faith (mythic-literal), but an “intriguing subset” enter at what the researchers term a “3.5 transition” or “3.5 level” (p. 100). Holcomb and Nonneman use the term “3.5 level” to describe the stage between Fowler’s Stages 3 and 4, which Parks (1986) contends that young adults experience during the college years. Approximately half of the graduating seniors functioned at the 3.5 level or above (p. 100).

The qualitative component of the research identified the “key driver,” for students functioning at a higher faith stage, to be the presence of some kind of crisis experience in their life. The definition of crisis in this research was the occurrence of experiences that cause “cognitive dissonance” (p. 100). Holcomb and Nonneman (2004) identify three significant categories of crisis that they believe contribute to students’ faith or spiritual development: (a) “being around people who think differently or having their beliefs challenged” (p. 101); (b) exposure to multicultural experiences (p. 101); and (c) “emotional challenges”, which the researchers identify as events such as death of a relative or friend, severe depression, alcoholic family members, as well as several others (p. 101).

Based on findings from this study, Holcomb and Nonneman (2004) contend that colleges that offer “environments that foster the appropriate mix of challenge balanced with communal support are the type of environment most conducive to developing a

higher level of cognitive, social, and spiritual functioning” (p. 102). They conclude by suggesting that “too much or too little of either support or challenge effectively stunts development, spiritual development included” (p. 102).

College Attendance and Spiritual Struggle

Bryant and Astin (2008) examined the concept of “spiritual struggle” which they suggest is a “familiar experience to many students whose college years are marked by reflections on faith, purpose, and life meaning...” (p. 1). Using data drawn from the 2000 CIRP *Freshman Survey* and follow-up data from the 2003 *College Students’ Beliefs and Values Survey*, the researchers examined the “personal characteristics, orientation, and beliefs; environmental influences; and college experiences that predispose students to spiritual struggles” (p. 7) during their college years. Their research defined spiritual struggle as “intrapsychic concerns about matters of faith, purpose, and meaning of life” (p.2), which was derived through a factor analysis of a number of questions from the *College Students’ Beliefs and Values Survey* including “questioning one’s religious/spiritual beliefs; feeling unsettled about spiritual and religious matters; struggling to understand evil, suffering, and death; feeling angry with God; and feeling disillusioned with one’s religious upbringing” (p. 2).

The researchers note several key characteristics that their research concludes are related to “spiritual struggle” in college students including gender, which resonates with earlier research suggesting that “women are more engaged spiritually than men, on average” (Bryant & Astin, 2008, p. 13), religious preference (p.13), college major noting

that individuals majoring in psychology were more likely to experience spiritual struggle (p. 14), and various college experiences that “challenge, disorient, and introduce students to new and unfamiliar worldviews” (p. 20). An interesting finding, specifically relevant to the present research, is that students attending “Evangelical, Roman Catholic, or other Christian church-affiliated institutions are more inclined to struggle spiritually than are students attending public or private nonsectarian institutions” (p. 13-14). The researchers suggest that this finding, which runs counter to their hypothesis, may result from the fact that students at religiously-oriented colleges and universities are intentionally encouraged to grapple with issues of faith “in classes and with peers, that some may find perplexing” (p. 14). Bryant and Astin suggest that this is one of the first times a study has been conducted examining the characteristics of spiritual struggle among college students (p. 24) and state that spiritual struggle is “a phenomena affecting a sizable proportion of college students” (p. 20). Proposing that “the spiritual realm and the deeper life questions it brings to light play a role in the young adult journey” (p. 23), they conclude that awareness of these issues is essential for educators arguing that “Failure to recognize the seriousness of these facts of students’ lives is to leave them quite alone on their quest to understand central issues of meaning” (p.23).

Bryant and Astin’s research relates to the present study because it examines the relationship of individual characteristics on items that are related to students’ engagement with spirituality and because researchers found differences between students attending religiously-focused colleges which distinguished them from the larger survey population.

The Spiritual Life of College Students: A National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose

In the spring of 2003, the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, launched a groundbreaking research effort studying “the spiritual development of undergraduate students during the college years” (Astin et al., 2005, p. 2). Funded by the John Templeton Foundation, the study proposed to “enhance understanding of how college students conceive of spirituality, the role it plays in their lives, and how colleges and universities can be more effective in facilitating students’ spiritual development” (p.2). Research has been published, to date, on all three phases of this study—the pilot study in the spring of 2003, the initial phase of the longitudinal study focused on entering students in the fall of 2004, and the longitudinal follow-up study of juniors in the spring semester of 2007. The present study draws from data collected in the second phase of the study, but I briefly overview all phases of the study to provide a context for this research.

2003 Pilot Study

The pilot survey of this multi-institutional, longitudinal study was administered to 3,680 third-year students at 46 undergraduate colleges and universities across the United States. Data from the initial phase of the study were compared with entering data for the same students from the 2000 Cooperative Institutional Research Program annual *Freshman Survey* (Higher Education Research Institute, College students’ beliefs and

values (CSBV) survey methodology, n.d., p. 1). Researchers designed the study to answer the following questions about college students' religious values and experiences:

1. "How many students are actively searching and curious about spiritual issues and questions such as the meaning of life and work?"
2. "How do students view themselves in terms of spirituality and related qualities such as compassion, generosity, optimism, and kindness?"
3. "What spiritual/religious practices (e.g., rituals, prayer/meditation, service to others) are students most/least attracted to?"
4. "How do spiritual/religious practices affect students' academic and personal development?"
5. "What is the connection between traditional religious practices and spiritual development?"
6. "What in the undergraduate experience facilitates or hinders students' spiritual/religious quest?" (Astin, et al., 2005, p. 2)

Lindholm (2006), summarizing the results of the pilot study says that "undergraduate college students are indeed engaged both spiritually and religiously" and that "notable differences [exist] in students' perspectives and practices based on individual characteristics" (p. 96). Lindholm identifies specific student characteristics including gender (p. 94), major (p. 95), and questions connected to political engagement (pp. 95-96), as factors found to impact the way students engage spiritually.

While survey results indicated that students engagement in "structured religious activities" may diminish during their college years (Lindholm, 2006, p. 87) the 2003

College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey also “revealed that a notable proportion of third-year students are nonetheless actively struggling with spiritual issues” (p. 87).

Lindholm reports that students “who are highly involved in religion are less likely to experience psychological distress and less likely to report poor emotional health” (p. 91).

This reflects earlier research suggesting that spiritual and religious engagement is positively connected to students' self-reported emotional well-being (Ratliff, 2005).

Noting the importance of “understanding how the college experience adds to or detracts from students' spiritual development” (Lindholm, 2006, p. 97), Lindholm completes her analysis of the pilot survey by suggesting that research must seek to understand how

“Spirituality affects other aspects of college students' development, including their academic performance, psychological and physical health, sense of personal empowerment, civic responsibility, empathy, racial/ethnic awareness and tolerance, religiousness, and satisfaction with college” (p. 102).

Lindholm points to the completion of the *Spiritual Life of College Students* longitudinal study to provide greater insight into these questions.

These are important findings in light of the present research. Initial findings from the pilot study of the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* suggest that there is evidence of spiritual engagement on the part of students and that there appears to be significant differences in this engagement based on differences in students' characteristics. The present study examines whether those differences are present among students choosing CCCU schools for their higher education.

2004 CIRP Freshman Survey

In the fall of 2004, 112, 232 entering students from 236 diverse undergraduate colleges and universities were surveyed, using the *College Student's Beliefs and Values Survey*, a two-page addendum to the 2004 CIRP *Freshman Survey*. Initial findings suggest that entering college students have “high levels of spiritual interest and involvement” (Astin et al., 2005, p. 4). Many are actively engaged in a “spiritual quest” which the researchers say reflects “interest in the meaning or purpose of life, finding answers to the mysteries of life, and developing a meaningful philosophy of life” (p. 8). Lindholm (2007), reporting on findings from the 2004 phase of the study, says that seventy-five percent of students say they “are searching for meaning or purpose in their lives” (p. 12), while half believe it is “essential” or “very important” to find ways to grow spiritually (p. 12).

Survey results suggest that today’s entering college students are highly involved in the practice of their religion. The survey reports that “Four of five report that they attended religious services in the past year and that they had discussed religion/spirituality with friends and family” (p. 4). Interestingly, the 2003 pilot survey indicated that students’ attendance at religious services dropped-off significantly from their first to third years of college. At the same time, their view of the “importance” of spirituality increased (Astin et al., 2005, p. 3).

Accompanied by a strong religious interest and commitment, entering college students report a high tolerance for the religious beliefs and practices of others. Eighty-three percent of students surveyed believe that “non-religious people can lead lives that

are just as moral as those of religious believers” (Astin et al., 2005, p. 4). Although students hold a strong interest in spirituality, a significant number also express “doubts and reservations” (p. 5) about their spiritual and religious experiences.

A final finding worth noting is that entering undergraduate college students “have high expectations that college will help them develop emotionally and spiritually” (p. 5). This is significant in light of the fact that some educators have deemed the spiritual domain to be outside the purview of higher education, and some consider it irrelevant to the student’s educational pursuits.

The multi-institutional nature of the Higher Education Research Institute study makes it a valuable tool for understanding the spiritual attitudes and religious practices of students attending diverse higher education institutions. The longitudinal design may provide insight into the changes that take place in students’ spiritual attitudes and practices while they are attending college. The data drawn from this study, as well as that resulting from other recent research on the impact of college and university attendance on students’ spirituality, will supply vital information for helping educators to develop strategies and programs that can meet the spiritual development needs of today’s students.

2007 Longitudinal Follow-Up Study

The final component of *The Spiritual Life of College Students* study conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA was administered in the spring of 2007. The third administration “involved a longitudinal follow-up of a sample of freshman who

had completed the expanded (*CSBI*) version of the 2004 CIRP *Freshman Survey*” toward the end of their junior year (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 43). For the final phase of the study, completed surveys were obtained from 14,527 students representing 136 institutions.

Introducing the findings of this groundbreaking seven-year study of the “spiritual growth of college students” Astin, et al., (2011b) say that their “primary reason for undertaking this study has been our shared belief that spirituality is fundamental to students’ lives. The ‘big questions’ that preoccupy students are essentially spiritual questions” (p. 1). The research resulted in the development of a “comprehensive battery of measures for assessing students’ religious and spiritual qualities” (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 2011a, p. 58). Based on the examination of findings related to these measures, the researchers suggest that “the most obvious application...would be to use the measures...to expand our concept of “student development” in a more holistic direction” and may “provide new insights to [student development] practitioners who are working to implement a more holistic approach to enhancing the undergraduate experience” (p. 59).

Concluding their book, *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students’ Inner Lives*, which provides an overview of the development, implementation, and evaluation of the study, Astin et al. (2011b) find that providing students with opportunities to connect to their “inner lives” as a part of their higher education “will facilitate their academic and leadership skills, contribute to their intellectual self-esteem and psychological well-being, and enhance their satisfaction with the college experience” (p.157). They challenge that the findings “constitute a powerful argument in support of the proposition that higher education should attend more to students’ spiritual

development,” and they posit that “Assisting students to grow spiritually will help to create a new generation of young adults who are more caring, more globally aware, and more committed to social justice than previous generations...” (p.157). While the findings of *Spiritual Life of College Students* study diverge from the envisioned focus outcomes of the present research, they provide a potent rationale for the study of the spiritual lives of college students.

Conclusion

Religion and spirituality have been a part of U.S. higher education since the establishment of the earliest American colleges. While their role in higher education has changed significantly over the past 250 years, recent research points to the fact that today’s students see spirituality as an important part of their personal growth and they want colleges and universities to support this growth. Studies relating various aspects of students’ religiousness and spirituality to their higher education experience seem to indicate clear movement toward an increased importance among college students; although the way students view spirituality and its practice appear to change during their college years.

College students are not alone in their renewed interest in spirituality. Gallup and Lindsay (1999) in a 1998 survey of the general American population report that three of five Americans classified religion as “very important” to their lives (p. 9); 95 percent of adults believe in God or a universal spirit (p. 21); most Americans think about the meaning and significance of their lives (p. 41); and 82 percent of Americans “feel the

need in their lives for spiritual growth” (p. 1). The *National Study of Youth and Religion*, the largest study of teenagers and religion ever conducted, found that “Religion is significant in the lives of many U. S. teens today. Many continue to participate in their families’ communities of faith. Many report that faith is important in their lives and exerts a significant influence on their moral views and choices” (Smith & Denton, 2005, p. 260). It appears that the findings of recent research on college students and spirituality are not an anomaly. They seem to reflect a movement in the American population in general and are likely reflective of the young adults who will arrive on our campuses over the next several years.

This exploration of the research and literature on student spirituality and religious practice points to a need for further inquiry. The significance of the topic is apparent from the findings of current research, but these findings stimulate many additional questions. While a substantial amount of research has been conducted studying the connection of spirituality and religion to higher education over the last decade, little research has been published exploring these connections in colleges that are affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. While a growing amount of research considers differences in individual characteristics and the impact of those differences on students’ engagement and practice of religion, little research has been published on these relationships in CCCU-affiliated schools.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study uses quantitative research methods to examine the relationship between student input characteristics (Astin, 2002) and the spiritual engagement of students entering schools affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. Data for this study are drawn from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's (CIRP) annual *Freshman Survey* for the fall of 2004 and the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey*, administered to the same group of incoming students in the fall of 2004.

This chapter outlines the procedures used to obtain and analyze the data on which this study is based. The chapter is divided into three sections. Section one summarizes the research design including the conceptual model that provides the framework for the study and describes the subjects studied. Section two overviews the methodology, highlighting the instrument chosen for this study, the construction of the scales used, and the process through which data were obtained. Finally, section three presents the statistical analysis used in this study.

Research Design

Acknowledging Astin's (2004) challenge that research makes evident the imbalance in "attention devoted to the exterior and interior aspects" (p. 34) of individual's lives, this study examines the spiritual engagement (interior lives) of students

as they begin college at schools affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.

A primary question provides the foundation for this inquiry, along with four related sub-questions. The primary research question is: What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the spiritual engagement of students entering member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities? The related components include the following:

- What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the *spiritual values and attitudes* of students entering member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities?
- What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the *spiritual practices* (including behaviors related to the practice of students' religious beliefs) of students entering member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities?
- What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the *spiritual self-concept* of students entering member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities?
- What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the *spiritual beliefs* of students entering member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities?

The conceptual framework for this study illustrates the relationship between students' pre-college characteristics and spiritual engagement. The use of pre-college background

characteristics to examine student difference on various outcomes of interest is a common practice in educational research (Astin, 1993). Astin (2002) developed a theoretical model for understanding the relationship between student background characteristics and environmental effects to predict variability in students' educationally-related outcomes. Drawing on the longitudinal study of first-time, full-time students entering colleges and universities across the United States each fall since 1966, Astin proposed the "Input-Environment-Output model as a conceptual guide for studying college student development" (Astin, 1993, p. 7). The I-E-O model begins with "inputs," that is, "those personal qualities the student brings initially to the educational program" (Astin, 2002, p. 18). Astin identifies these as "student input characteristics" (2002, p. 67) and suggests that "to understand the impact of college on any given student 'output', we must have some gauge of where students began" (Astin, 1993, p. 13). The premise of the present research rests on this concept: that it is important to understand where students begin on significant spiritual engagement factors. Investigating the relationship between pre-college characteristics and spiritual outcomes will help colleges and universities to be intentional about developing curricular and co-curricular strategies to obtain their stated objectives in the areas of faith maturity and spirituality.

The theoretical foundation supporting the concept of spiritual engagement is rooted in the faith and identity development theories reviewed in Chapter 2. The relevance of individuals' spirituality as a significant concern for educators is supported by previous research (Astin 2004; Astin et al. 2011b; Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006; Parks, 2000; Tisdell, 2003) and studies have shown that interest in spirituality

continues to grow among the general population of the United States (Gallup & Lindsay, 1999; Gallup & Jones, 2000; Smith & Denton, 2005; Smith & Snell, 2009; Wuthnow, 1998a) and specifically among college students (Astin et al., 2005; Astin et al. 2011b; Lindholm, 2007).

Fowler (1981) proposed a theory for understanding the development of faith in individuals, suggesting that faith is an integral part of what it means to be human. Parks extended Fowler's theory focusing on the faith-development issues associated with late adolescence (1986), and specifically in college students (2000). A central component of these faith development theories is the concept of "meaning-making" (Parks, 1986, p. 16), which is closely associated with the way spirituality is conceptualized in much of the recent educational literature.

Fowler's and Parks' theories, drawing upon Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (1968) and the cognitive-structural theories proposed by Perry (1968) and Kohlberg (1969, 1971), suggest a stage-related process for faith development. Each stage has components that describe the critical activity or task to be accomplished at that level. Fowler and Parks refer to these activities as "forms" (Fowler, 1981; Parks, 1986). A number of theories relevant to this research suggest constructs, similar to the forms described by Fowler and Parks, that explain the task, activity, or content associated with growth through each stage proposed by the theory. Included are Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (1968), Heath's maturity model (1968), and Chickering & Reisser's (1993) "vectors" of identity development in college-aged students. Common to each of these theories is a task to be accomplished, a crisis to be faced, or an activity to

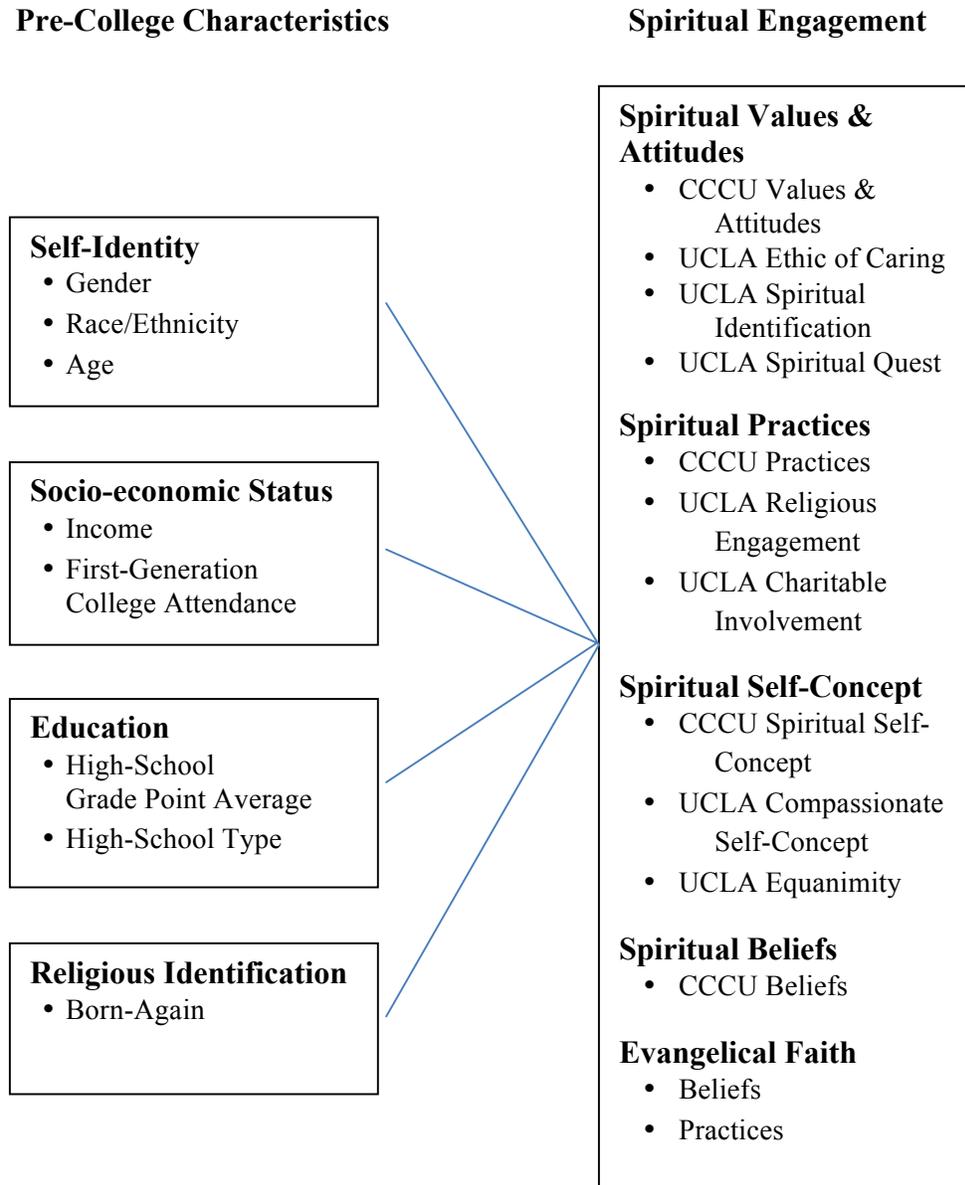
be carried out. Tasks identified in various theories include: clarifying values; choosing behaviors; maturity in self-understanding; and establishing patterns of belief, among others.

Drawing upon these theoretical constructs and upon the definition of spirituality offered by Hill et al. (2000: “The feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred” p. 66), I propose four components associated with the construct of spiritual engagement. These components are spiritual values and attitudes, spiritual practices (behaviors, activities), spiritual self-concept, and spiritually-oriented beliefs (see Figure 1). These factors align closely with the definition of spiritual engagement proposed in the first chapter of this paper: the individual’s experience of spirituality in terms of values and attitudes, behaviors (which may include religious practices), self-concept, and beliefs, as each relates to the individual’s search for the sacred in his or her personal life.

Eight pre-college background characteristics were chosen for this research (see Figure 1), each emerging from the literature reviewed. The literature suggests that spirituality is an inseparable component of an individual’s self-identity (Tisdell, 2003). Hindman (2002) contends that spirituality is “an expression of who we are” at the deepest level (p. 168). Gender, race/ethnicity, and students’ age as they begin college were chosen as characteristics representing students’ self-identity for this study.

A significant amount of research on the impact of higher education on students suggests that students’ socio-economic status is related to their experience of college (Kuh et al., 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991 & 2005). Income and first-generation

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for understanding the impact of student pre-college characteristics on student spiritual engagement as they enter college.



UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) scales are based on items from the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey*. CCCU (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities) scales are sums of UCLA scales, as indicated.

college attendance were chosen to represent socio-economic status in this study due to their demonstrated relationship to education outcomes for college students (Pascarella et al., 2004; Sanz et al., 2007; Terenzini et al., 1996) and due to a number of studies identifying a relationship between income and spirituality (Bryant & Astin, 2008; Cohen, 2009; Solt et al., 2011).

The higher education literature has also demonstrated a relationship between students' religious participation and their higher education aspirations (Regnerus, 2003; Regnerus & Elder, 2003) and academic achievement (Milot & Ludden, 2009; Park, 2001; Regnerus, 2000). Given the importance of educational achievement and experiences previous to college on students' engagement to spirituality as they enter college, high-school grade point average and the type of high school students graduated from were chosen as characteristics representing students' pre-college educational experience for the purpose of this study.

Finally, a number of studies suggest a relationship between students' spiritual or religious identification and their engagement to spirituality (Beyerlein, 2004; Bowman & Small, 2010; Bryant, 2006; Railsback, 2006). Due to the evangelical perspective of Christianity held by most of the CCCU schools represented in this study, the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* question "Do you consider yourself to be a Born-Again Christian?" was chosen to represent students' religious identification as they begin college.

Methodology

Data for this study are drawn from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's [CIRP] 2004 *Freshman Survey* and the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey*, a two-page, 129-item addendum to the fall 2004 *Freshman Survey* (Higher Education Research Institute, *College Students' Beliefs and Values (CSBV) Survey Methodology*, n.d., p. 4). The annual CIRP *Freshman Survey*, first used in the fall of 1966, is a "project of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, a continuing longitudinal study of the American higher education system housed at the Higher Education Research Institute in the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles" (Sax, Hurtado, Lindholm, Astin, Korn, & Mahoney, 2004, p. 1). The 2004 survey represented the 38th administration of this longitudinal study which collects "national normative data on characteristics of students attending American colleges and universities as first-time, full-time freshman" (p. 1).

Instrument Development

In the spring of 2003, the Higher Education Research Institute launched a groundbreaking research effort to study "the spiritual development of undergraduate students during the college years" (Astin et al., 2005, p. 2). Funded by the John Templeton Foundation, the study proposed to "enhance the understanding of how college students conceive of spirituality, the role it plays in their lives, and how colleges and universities can be more effective in facilitating students' spiritual development" (p.2). The Higher Education Research Institute research team partnered with a Technical

Advisory Panel (TAP) to develop an initial, four-page, 175-item pilot survey that was administered to 3,680 third-year students who had participated in the CIRP *Freshman Survey* three years earlier (Higher Education Research Institute, *College Students' Beliefs and Values (CSBV) Survey Methodology*, n.d., p. 1).

Analysis of data from the pilot survey and consultation with the Technical Advisory Panel resulted in the reduction of the number of items on the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* to 129 and the relocation of 30 additional *College Students' Beliefs and Values* items to the *Freshman Survey* portion of the instrument (Higher Education Research Institute, *College Students' Beliefs and Values (CSBV) Survey Methodology*, n.d., pp. 3-4). In the fall of 2004, 112,232 first-year students from 236 undergraduate colleges and universities across the United States were surveyed, including 12,641 students beginning their higher education at colleges and universities affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. The multi-institutional and longitudinal design of the Higher Education Research Institute study makes it valuable for understanding the spiritual attitudes and religious practices of students attending the diverse institutions that participated in the survey and may be a particularly useful instrument for understanding the differences among students at the subset of colleges and universities represented in this study.

The Sample

The subjects in this study are the students entering colleges and universities affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in the fall of 2004 who

completed the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) *Freshman Survey* and the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey*. This group is a subset of the 34,906 students who entered CCCU schools in the fall of 2004 (R. Sherry, personal communication, July 7, 2009). It is also a subset of the 112,232 students beginning their education at the 236 colleges and universities that participated in both surveys the same fall. Overall, 12,641 entering CCCU students completed the CIRP *Freshman Survey*. The 9,838 students who also completed the *College Students' Beliefs and Values* portion of the survey are the subjects of this research.

Subjects in this study attended colleges or universities that are members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), an international higher-education association of intentionally Christian colleges and universities. CCCU member schools share a number of characteristics including: a strong commitment to Christ-centered education; being located in the U.S. or Canada (affiliate institutions are located around the world); holding full regional accreditation; consisting primarily of four-year comprehensive colleges and universities; having broad curricula rooted in the arts and sciences; hiring faculty and administrators who identify themselves as Christians; and having sound finances (CCCU *Profile*, 2012).

Data Collection

Council for Christian Colleges and Universities member schools were invited to participate in the Council's Comprehensive Assessment Project [CAP] through the Council website and through emails sent to individual contact persons at each member school. Schools that chose to participate in CAP paid \$1200 each, and signed an

agreement allowing their CIRP *Freshman Survey* and *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* data to be pooled with other Council schools by the Higher Education Research Institute. Forty-six schools participated in the fall 2004 administration of the CIRP *Freshman Survey* and thirty-three schools participated in the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* that year. According to Randy Bergen, Provost at Greenville College, the number of students from participating schools ranged from a low of 57 students to a high of 849 (R. Bergen, personal correspondence, July 23, 2009).

The data set containing the responses of students attending Council schools as entering students in the fall of 2004 was obtained from the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. I completed and submitted a research proposal and data-access-and-use agreement to the Professional Development and Research division of the Council (See Appendix A) and received final approval for use of the aggregate data set on April 17, 2009.

Institutional Review Board Approval

I submitted the *Research Exempt from IRB Committee Review Category 4: Existing Data: Records Review & Pathological Specimens* form to the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board on October 7, 2010. The project was approved by the IRB (see Appendix B).

Dependent Variable

In Chapter 1, I proposed the use of the term “spiritual engagement” to represent an individual’s comprehensive experience of spirituality. Spiritual engagement is the dependent variable in this study. Drawing upon theory and research related to the study of spirituality, I further suggested that spiritual engagement at the college level is best understood through the lenses of an individual’s values and attitudes, behaviors (which may include religious practices), self-concept, and beliefs as each component provides a lens to the individual’s spirituality (Hill et al., 2000). These represent the four primary components through which I examine students’ spiritual engagement.

Subsequent to the 2003 administration of the pilot *College Students’ Beliefs and Values Survey*, researchers at the Higher Education Research Institute analyzed initial data to develop scales with the intent of making the 175 items more manageable for data analysis. Factor analysis using a Varimax rotation was utilized, resulting in 19 scales on which reliability analysis was performed (Higher Education Research Institute, *College Students’ Beliefs and Values (CSBV) Survey Methodology*, n.d., p. 5). Following the 2004 *College Students’ Beliefs and Values Survey* administration, factor scales were modified to account for the items that were removed from the pilot survey. Several scales were removed and a new scale was added resulting in twelve scales (Higher Education Research Institute, *College Student Beliefs and Values (CSBV) survey methodology*, n.d., p. 6).

This dissertation utilizes eight of these remaining scales to measure the components of spiritual engagement identified in the present study. The UCLA scales

that most closely aligned with the four components of spiritual engagement were combined into the four CCCU scales used here. (The scales and survey items that comprise the dependent variable are provided in Appendix C.)

CCCU Values and Attitudes Scale

The first scale developed for this study is labeled the *CCCU Values and Attitudes* scale denoting the values and attitudes component of the *spiritual engagement* variable for the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) data sample. The “values and attitudes” component of the spiritual engagement variable is drawn from the emphasis on “meaning and purpose” that emerged in the literature review (Love, 2001 & 2002; Love & Talbot, 1999; Mayhew, 2004; Parks, 2000; Tisdell, 2003) and relates to the assertion that spirituality, as it pertains to education, “points to the inner, subjective life” of the individual (Astin et al., 2011b, p. 4). Reliability for this scale was determined through the use of Cronbach’s alpha that equaled .873 (See Appendix C. Note: All alpha reliability coefficients in Appendix C are based on the subsample used in this dissertation).

I used items from three *College Students’ Beliefs and Values* scales to comprise the *CCCU Values and Attitudes* scale, based on their close relationship to students’ values and attitudes as they relate to spirituality and religious participation. The *College Students’ Beliefs and Values* scales comprising the *CCCU Values and Attitudes* scale are: *UCLA Ethic of Caring*; *UCLA Spiritual Identification*; and *UCLA Spiritual Quest*.

UCLA Ethic of Caring Scale. Astin et al. (2011a) describe the *Ethic of Caring* scale as an "...internal measure [of spirituality] that assesses the student's degree of commitment to values such as helping others in difficulty...and making the world a better place" (p. 52). Alpha reliability for this scale in the 2004 study is .79 (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 53). Reliability for this scale for subjects in the present study is .761 (See Appendix C). Items typical of the *Ethic of Caring* scale include: "The extent to which you participate in trying to change things that are unfair in the world"; "The importance to you personally of helping others who are in difficulty"; and "The importance to you personally of influencing social values". All items that compose this scale are presented in Appendix C.

UCLA Spiritual Identification Scale. The *UCLA Spiritual Identification* scale "reflects one's propensity to see themselves and others in 'spiritual' terms" (Astin et al., 2011a, pp. 46-47). The alpha reliability for this scale in the 2004 UCLA research is .88 (p. 48). The reliability test for the subjects in the present study produced a Cronbach's alpha of .788 (see Appendix C). Items typical of the *Spiritual Identification* scale include: "The importance to you personally of integrating spirituality into my life"; "The importance to you personally of seeking out opportunities to grow spiritually"; and if the students see themselves "on a spiritual quest."

UCLA Spiritual Quest Scale. The final UCLA scale included in the CCCU *Values and Attitudes* scale used in the present research is *Spiritual Quest*. Astin et al.

(2011a) suggest that the Spiritual Quest scale “assesses the student’s interest in searching for the meaning or purpose of life and...developing a meaningful philosophy of life” (p. 47). Cronbach’s alpha reliability for the 2004 UCLA survey subjects is .83 (p. 48), while the alpha reliability for subjects in the present research is .770 (see Appendix C). The *Spiritual Quest* scale includes a number of items I found relevant to the attitudes and values component of spiritual engagement including those highlighted above and “The importance to you personally of finding the answers to the mysteries of life” and “How many of your close friends are searching for meaning/purpose in life.”

CCCU Practices Scale

The second scale developed for this study is designated the *CCCU Practices* scale. The literature reviewed for this research clearly identifies spiritual and religious practices as important components of individuals’ engagement with spirituality. Hill et al. (2000) frame this as “the behaviors” exhibited by individuals as they “search for the sacred” in their lives (p. 66). Cronbach’s alpha was used to determine reliability for this scale resulting in an alpha of .786 (see Appendix C).

Two scales from the *College Students’ Beliefs and Values Survey* were used to construct the *CCCU Practices* scale. These scales contained questions that are associated most closely with students’ practices and behaviors as they relate to their engagement with spirituality and religion. The *College Students’ Beliefs and Values* scales used in the *CCCU Practices* scale are *Religious Engagement* and *Charitable Involvement*.

UCLA Religious Engagement Scale. The *UCLA Religious Engagement* scale is one of five scales that Astin et al. (2011b) identify as “measures of religiousness” (p. 84). They describe the *Religious Engagement* scale as “an external measure that represents the behavioral counterpart to *Religious Commitment* (another *College Students’ Beliefs and Values* scale used to measure religiosity), including behaviors such as attending religious services, praying, and reading sacred texts” (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 49). The alpha reliability for the 2004 UCLA study is .87 (p. 50). Alpha reliability for the subjects in the present study is .784 (see Appendix C). The *Religious Engagement* Scale contains nine items, each of which is helpful in illuminating the spiritual practices or behaviors of students. Questions typical of this scale include: “During the past year did you attend a religious service?”; “How often do you engage in reading sacred texts?”; and “Do you pray?”

UCLA Charitable Involvement Scale. The second *College Students’ Beliefs and Values* scale used in the *CCCU Practices* scale in the present study is titled *UCLA Charitable Involvement*. Astin et al. (2011b) describe this scale as a “caring and connectedness” measure of spirituality (p. 69). Composed of seven items, the *UCLA Charitable Involvement* scale is “a behavioral measure that includes activities such as participating in community service, donating money to charity, and helping friends with personal problems” (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 52). Alpha reliability for the 2004 UCLA study is .67 (p. 53). Reliability for the participants in the present research is .653 (See Appendix C).

CCCU Spiritual Self-Concept

The *CCCU Spiritual Self-Concept* scale is the third scale developed for the present research. The literature suggests an association between one's understanding of the self and one's spiritual and religious engagement. Hindman (2002) contends that one's spirituality "is an expression of who they are, truly" (p. 168). Tisdell observes that spirituality is an inseparable component of personal self-identity (2003). Alpha reliability for CCCU study subjects for this scale is .755 (see Appendix C).

The *CCCU Spiritual Self-Concept* scale is composed of two scales from the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey*. The *UCLA Compassionate Self-Concept* scale includes questions that permit the student to rate themselves in relation to their peers on several characteristics often associated with maturing spirituality. The *UCLA Equanimity* scale is comprised of questions that reflect the way the student's spiritual experience affects their outlook on life.

UCLA Compassionate Self-Concept Scale. The first UCLA scale used in the *CCCU Spiritual Self-Concept* scale is one of five scales that Astin et al. (2011a) describe as "spiritually related qualities...that highly spiritual persons would be likely to exemplify" (p. 52). The scale consists of four questions, each providing students with an opportunity to "rate" themselves. The four characteristics are: kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and generosity. The alpha reliability for participants of the 2004 UCLA study is .78 (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 54) while alpha reliability for subjects in the present study is also .780 (see Appendix C).

UCLA Equanimity Scale. The *Equanimity* scale is the second UCLA scale chosen to be included in the CCCU *Spiritual Self-Concept* scale. Astin et al. (2011a) describe equanimity as “the extent to which the student feels at peace/centered, is able to find meaning in times of hardship, and feels good about the direction of her/his life” (p. 47). Astin & Keen (2006) contend that one of the most useful ways to understand the definition of “spirituality” is to describe what a “person who is highly developed spiritually would look like” suggesting therefore, that equanimity may be the exemplar of what a spiritual person is like (p.1). Cronbach’s alpha for the 2004 UCLA survey subjects is .76 (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 49). The alpha reliability for subjects in the present research equals .711(See Appendix C).

The UCLA *Equanimity* scale is composed of five items that suggest a framework through which “students respond to their experiences, especially experiences that are potentially stressful” according to Astin et al. (2011b, p.61). Besides the questions noted above, items typical of this scale include: “Being thankful for all that has happened” and “Seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift” (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 49).

CCCU Beliefs Scale

The CCCU *Beliefs* scale is the final factor developed for this research and which is composed of one scale initially developed for the UCLA study. The literature reviewed for the present research clearly identifies individuals’ beliefs as an important component of their spiritual engagement. Spiritual beliefs are often associated with individuals’ practice of religion and therefore connected to their spirituality (Astin et al., 2011b; Love,

2001; Sanchez & Carter, 2005; Hill et al., 2000). Hill et al. (2000) express the sense of much of the literature reviewed when they suggest that “spirituality and religion often occur simultaneously” (p. 70) suggesting, as noted earlier, that beliefs are often connected to spirituality through the content of the doctrines and teachings associated with various religions. Love (2001) defines religion as a “shared system of beliefs, principles, and values” (p. 8) while Sanchez and Carter make this connection by noting that the “attitudes, beliefs, and practices” of religion are the path through which “people manifest their faith and devotion to an ultimate reality or deity” (2005, p. 280).

The CCCU *Beliefs* scale is composed of only one scale from the *College Students’ Beliefs and Values Survey*. The UCLA *Religious Commitment* scale includes questions that focus on students’ beliefs and thoughts as they relate to their spirituality and therefore most closely reflect the concepts associated with the belief component of spiritual engagement. The alpha reliability for this scale for CCCU subjects is .922 (see Appendix C).

The UCLA *Religious Commitment* scale consists of twelve items with an alpha reliability of .96 for students who participated in the 2004 UCLA study (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 50). The UCLA *Religious Commitment* scale is one of five measures of “religiousness” in the *College Students’ Beliefs and Values* research and is described as “an internal quality” reflecting the “degree to which the student seeks to follow religious teachings in everyday life, finds religion to be personally helpful, and gains personal strength by trusting in a higher power” (Astin et al., 2011b, p. 21). The researchers suggest that this scale “measures the extent to which spiritual and religious beliefs play a

central role in the student's life" (p. 21) which reflects the student's beliefs about their faith.

In addition to the items noted above, the *UCLA Religious Commitment* scale asks students to rate their spiritual beliefs as "One of the most important things in their life"; "Lies behind my whole approach to life"; and "Have helped me to develop my identity" (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 50). The alpha reliability for the UCLA study participants in the 2004 study is .96 (2011a, p. 50) while the reliability for participants in the present research, as noted above, is .922 (see Appendix C).

Evangelical Beliefs and Practices Scales

Review of items from the CIRP 2004 *Freshman Survey* and *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* that were used in the *College Students' Beliefs and Values* scales previously discussed reveals several questions that appear to reflect the mission related beliefs and practices of the distinctively "evangelical" (I use this terminology based on the "member characteristics" identified in the *CCCU Profile*, 2012) schools which are represented in the CCCU and on which this study is based. A number of items from the survey were not used in preceding scales, and so I chose to explore the possibility of creating additional measures of spiritual engagement using these questions and based on the distinctive beliefs and practices of evangelical Christianity.

Several unused items were chosen as potentially useful in reflecting these distinctive beliefs and practices. A factor analysis was run using SPSS and resulting in three potential new scales. One scale reflects individuals' beliefs as they relate to their

practice of religion and faith. The items in the second scale seem to reflect the experiences or practices of individuals' religion or faith. The items in the third scale identified students' reasons for choosing the college they are attending. The first two scales are easily associated with two of the four components of the dependent variable, while the third was not so obviously related. For this reason, I use only the first and second scales for this study.

For the purpose of making a clear distinction between these scales and the CCCU *Beliefs* scale and CCCU *Practices* scale, the additional scales are labeled as *Evangelical Beliefs* and *Evangelical Practices*, reflecting their connection to the distinctive beliefs and practices associated with evangelical spirituality.

Evangelical Beliefs Scale. The *Evangelical Beliefs* scale consists of eleven items representing beliefs that are widely held among evangelical Christians and subsequently may be held by students attending CCCU schools. Three items, which were originally included in UCLA's *Religious Skepticism* scale (Astin 2011a), are reverse coded for this scale, reflecting the notion that individuals practicing evangelical Christianity *often* would agree with these notions. Four additional items are reflective of individuals' conceptualization of God as Protector, Creator, Supreme Being, or Love.

Questions in this scale ask students to indicate agreement with items such as: "Whether or not there is a Supreme Being doesn't matter to me"; and the extent to which items such as the following describe you: "Believing in life after death"; and "Do you

believe in God?” Alpha reliability for the participants in the CCCU sample is .771 (see Appendix C for additional items used in this scale).

Evangelical Practices Scale. The *Evangelical Practices* scale consists of six items that might be construed as reflective of common practices in evangelical Christianity. While clearly not unique to evangelical Christians, these represent practices that are *often* present in their lives and therefore might be characteristic of students entering CCCU colleges. Examples of items used in this scale include: “The extent to which the following describes you: being committed to introducing people to my faith”; “Having a spiritual experience while in a house of worship”; and “Service to my religious community” (see Appendix C for additional items). Reliability for the CCCU students participating in the present research is .724 (see Appendix C).

Independent Variables

The independent variables for this study were selected from items on the 2004 CIRP *Freshman Survey*. The independent variables include gender, race or ethnicity, age, income, first-generation college attendance, high-school grade point average, high-school type, and religious self-identification. Table 1 presents all independent variables used for this study.

Table 1: Independent Variables (N=9,838).

| Independent Variable | Original Survey Question | Measure |
|---|--|---|
| Gender | Your Sex: | Male (0) Female (1) |
| Race/Ethnicity | Please indicate your ethnic background. (Mark all that apply). | Caucasian (0) Student of Color (1) (Recoded from eight categories on the original survey) |
| Age | How old will you be on December 31 of this year? (Mark one) | 1=16 or younger; 2=17; 3=18; 4=19; 5=20; 6=21-24; 7=25-29; 8=30-39; 9=40-54; 10=55 or older |
| Income | What is your best estimate of your parents' total income last year? Consider income from all sources before taxes. (Mark one). | 1=Less than \$10,000; 2=\$10,000-14,999; 3=\$15,000-19,999; 4=\$20,000-24,999; 5=\$25,000-29,999; 6=\$30,000-39,999; 7=\$40,000-49,999; 8=\$50,000-59,999; 9=\$60,000-74,999; 10=\$75,000-99,999; 11=\$100,000-149,999; 12=\$150,000-199,999; 13=\$200,000-249,999; 14=\$250,000 or more |
| First-Generation College Attendance | What is the highest level of formal education obtained by your parents? (Mark one in each Column) | Parents Completed College (0) First Generation College Student (1) (Recategorized and relabeled from the original survey responses: Grammar school or less; Some high school; High school graduate; Postsecondary school other than college; Some college; College degree; Some graduate school; Graduate degree) |
| High-School Grade Point Average | What was your average grade in high school? (Mark One). | A or A+ (8); A- (7); B+ (6); B (5); B- (4); C+ (3); C (2); D (1) |
| High-School Type | From what kind of secondary school did you graduate? (Mark one) | Public (0) Religious/Parochial (1) Private (2) Home School (3) (Recategorized and relabeled from original survey responses : Public school (not charter or magnet); Public charter school; Public magnet school; Private religious/parochial school; Private independent college-prep school; Home school) |
| Religious Identification/ Born-Again | Do you consider yourself a Born-Again Christian? | No (0) Yes (1) |

Gender

A number of studies suggest that gender contributes to differences in the way individuals experience spirituality (Bryant, 2007a; Bryant & Astin, 2008; Buckho, 2004; Milot & Ludden, 2009; Sanchez & Carter, 2005; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 1998). For the present research *Gender* was relabeled *Female* and coded 0 for male and 1 for female (see Table 1).

Race/Ethnicity

Ethnicity or race is identified by a number of researchers as a possible factor contributing to individuals' experience of spirituality, faith, and religion (Sanchez & Carter, 2005; Sciarra & Gushue, 2003; Stewart, 2002). The 2004 CIRP *Freshman Survey* asks students to "indicate your ethnic background".

While the survey identified eight non-Caucasian categories of race, the percentage of students in several categories was sufficiently low to suggest that the categories should be collapsed into one, which was labeled *Race/Ethnicity*. The eight categories comprising students of color and the percentage of students represented in each category are: Black/African American (3.8 percent); American Indian/Alaskan Native (2.2 percent); Asian American/Asian (3.9 percent); Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (.8 percent); Mexican American/Chicano (3.1 percent); Puerto Rican (.8 percent); Other Latino (1.7 percent); and Other (2.7 percent). The variable *Race/Ethnicity* was coded 0 for Caucasian and 1 for Students of Color.

Age

The literature indicates that age and the maturity associated with age (for students and non-students) is a likely factor in faith maturity (Fowler, 1981; Parks, 1986 & 2000) and, subsequently, engagement with spirituality. While there is little significant variability in age among the subjects in this research, age has been suggested as a factor in the way individuals engage in spirituality and religious practices and is examined for its relationship to the dependent variable scales in this study.

The 2004 CIRP *Freshman Survey* asks students “How old will you be on December 31 of this year?” Students are asked to select one of the response categories provided. Specific response categories for this question are presented in Table 1.

Income

Several studies examining religion and spirituality suggest that socio-economic status may be related to individuals’ engagement to religion and spirituality (Banthia et al. 2007; Bryant & Astin, 2008; Cohen, 2009; Mueller & Johnson, 1975). In order to explore the possibility of this relationship in college-aged students, I chose the 2004 CIRP *Freshman Survey* question asking students “What is your best estimate of your parents’ total income last year? Consider income from all sources before taxes”. Students were asked to choose only one of fourteen categories. Category options for this question are itemized in Table 1. The variable was relabeled “Income” for this study.

First-Generation College Attendance

Research on religion and spirituality suggests that students' experiences and practices of spirituality are strongly influenced by their parents' religious beliefs and practices (Dean, 2010; Smith & Denton, 2005; Smith & Snell, 2009). In addition, there appears to be an association between religious participation and academic performance, academic engagement and motivation (Brown & Gary, 1991; Milot & Ludden, 2009; Park, 2001; Regnerus, 2000 & 2003; Regnerus & Elder, 2003). Drawing upon these findings in the educational literature, I speculated that a relationship may exist between first-generation college attendance (a factor often noted in the literature examining socio-economic status) and students' spiritual engagement. On this premise, established by findings in the literature, I examine first-generation college attendance as a potential contributor to variance in students' spiritual engagement.

The 2004 CIRP *Freshman Survey* asks students "What is the highest level of formal education obtained by your parents?" Response categories for this question are: Grammar school or less; Some high school; High school graduate; Postsecondary school other than college; Some college; College degree; Some graduate school; and Graduate degree. Students were asked to mark one option for each parent.

In order to use this question to determine first-generation college attendance, I recoded the response categories for this question from the eight response categories noted above to two categories. Responses to the categories Grammar school or less, Some high school, High school graduate, Postsecondary school other than college, and Some college were recoded 0 and labeled "non-grad". Responses to College degree, Some graduate

school, and Graduate degree were recoded 1 and labeled “college graduate”. If one or both parents were found to be a college graduate, then “First-Generation College Student” was coded 0. If both parents were categorized as “non-grad”, then “First-Generation College Student” was coded 1.

High-School Grade Point Average

There is substantial evidence in the literature to suggest that academic performance is related to students’ religious participation and possibly to their spiritual experience (Astin et al., 2011b; Milot & Ludden, 2009; Park, 2001; Regnerus, 2003; Regnerus & Elder, 2003). In order to examine this relationship among entering students at CCCU schools, I chose to use students’ self-reported high-school grade point average as an indicator of academic performance prior to entry to college.

The 2004 CIRP *Freshman Survey* asks “What was your average grade in high school?” Students were provided eight response categories and asked to mark only one: A or A+; A-; B+; B; B-; C+; C; C-; and D.

High-School Type

Educational influence on spirituality is also the basis for examining the type of high school that students attended before entering college. The relevance of high-school type has no direct basis in the literature reviewed for this study, but its established relationship to academic performance, religious identification and religious experience makes it a variable of interest.

The 2004 CIRP *Freshman Survey* asks students to identify “From what kind of secondary school did you graduate?” They were asked to mark only one of the following response categories: Public school (not charter or magnet); Public charter school; Public magnet school; Private religious/parochial school; Private independent college-prep school; Home school.

For the purposes of this study, this variable was recoded to four categories. All public school categories (Public school; Public charter school; and Public magnet school) were added together, recoded 0 and labeled “Public”. “Religious/Parochial” is recoded 1, “Private” is recoded 2, and “Home School” is recoded 3. This variable was replaced by indicator variables in the regression analyses.

Religious Identification/Born-Again

Religious identification is an independent variable in this study. Several research studies (Bowman & Small, 2010; Bryant, 2003; Bussema, 1999; Hindman, 2002; Lovik, 2010; Railsback, 2006; Tisdell, 2003) suggest that the way individuals identify themselves in relation to spirituality or religion is related to individuals’ engagement to religion and spirituality.

CCCU schools hold to an evangelical perspective of Christianity (I base this observation on the “Christ-centered” perspective identified in the CCCU *Profile*, 2012); therefore I chose the question, “Do you consider yourself to be a Born-Again Christian?” from the 2004 CIRP *Freshman Survey* to establish whether students identify with the religious perspective most commonly held in these schools. Students could respond

“yes” or “no” to this question. The variable *Religious Identification/Born-Again* was coded 0 for No and 1 for Yes.

Analytical Approach

This study employs various statistical procedures to examine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Descriptive statistics were computed for all items used in the study. Means and standard deviations for all dependent variable scales and their contributing items are reported in Appendix C. Percentages for categorical independent variables and means and standard deviations for continuous independent variables are reported in Table 2 in Chapter 4.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to examine relationships between all the dependent variable scales and the categorical independent variables: Gender, race/ethnicity, first-generation college attendance, type of high school attended, and religious identification. Bivariate correlations are used for all variables. Finally, multiple regression analysis is employed to examine the relationship between the pre-college background characteristics (independent variables) and spiritual engagement.

Conclusion

This chapter overviewed the methodological approach utilized in this study to examine the relationship between students’ pre-college background characteristics and students’ spiritual engagement as they enter college. Chapter 4 presents the results of the statistical analyses employed in this research.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Scholarly research findings demonstrate students' interest in spirituality and point to their hope that their university years will provide opportunities for growth in their spiritual lives (Astin et al., 2005; Astin et al., 2011b). The literature also recognizes the mission and efforts of many colleges and universities to develop the spiritual lives of students who attend their institutions (CCCU *Profile* 2012; Lindholm, Millora, Schwartz, & Spinosa, 2011; Rine, 2012). Acknowledging Astin's (2002) contention that institutions are most effective at designing curricula and co-curricular programs (the educational environment) to affect desired student outcomes when they have a familiarity with students' characteristics as they enter school, this study is designed to investigate the differences present in students' *spiritual engagement* as they enter college at schools affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). Data for this research are drawn from the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* and the CIRP *Freshman Survey* conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA in the fall of 2004.

Chapter 4 presents findings of the statistical analyses used for this research. Descriptive statistical findings are presented first, followed by analytic results including the analysis of variance, bivariate correlations, and multiple regression analyses used to explore this data. The research question driving this study is: What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the spiritual engagement of students entering

member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities? There are four related components to the research question:

- What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the *spiritual values and attitudes* of students entering member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities?
- What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the *spiritual practices* (including behaviors related to the practice of students' religious beliefs) of students entering member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities?
- What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the *spiritual self-concept* of students entering member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities?
- What is the relationship between pre-college characteristics and the *spiritual beliefs* of students entering member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities?

The subjects in this research are 9,838 students who entered schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in the fall of 2004 and who completed the *College Students' Beliefs and Values* portion of the CIRP *Freshman Survey*. This sample is a subset of the 12,641 students who completed the CIRP *Freshman Survey* at CCCU schools and a subset of the 112,232 students who completed the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* nationwide in the fall of 2004.

Descriptive Findings

Descriptive findings for the independent variables used in this study are presented in this section. The means and standard deviations for the thirteen scales of the dependent variable and the means and standard deviations for each question that comprises those scales are presented in Appendix C.

Independent Variables

Descriptive statistics for the pre-college background characteristics (independent variables) utilized in this study are presented in Table 2. The study design identified eight background characteristics that would be used as independent variables: gender, race/ethnicity, first-generation college attendance, high-school type, religious identification/born-again, age, income, and high-school grade point average. Table 2 includes descriptive statistics for the eight.

The sample for this study consists of 9,838 students who entered colleges and universities affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities at the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year. Female students represent 61.8 percent of the sample while males represent 38.2 percent. A majority of survey participants identified themselves as Caucasian (83.1 percent), whereas 16.9 percent identified themselves in categories that were subsequently combined and categorized as Students of Color.

The literature reviewed suggests that socio-economic status may play an indirect role in the way in which individuals engage and are affected by religion and/or spirituality (Regnerus & Elder, 2003; Solt et al., 2011). Two characteristics are examined

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables (N=9,838).

| Variable | Percent |
|--|----------------|
| <i>Gender</i> | |
| Male (0) | 38.2 % |
| Female (1) | 61.8 |
| <i>Race/Ethnicity</i> | |
| Caucasian (0) | 83.1 % |
| Student of Color (1) | 16.9 |
| <i>First-Generation College Student</i> | |
| Parents Completed College (0) | 68.9 % |
| First-Generation Student (1) | 31.1 |
| <i>High-School Type</i> | |
| Public (0) | 68.9 % |
| Religious/Parochial (1) | 22.4 |
| Private (2) | 3.1 |
| Home School (3) | 5.6 |
| <i>Religious Identification/Born-Again</i> | |
| No (0) | 14.4 % |
| Yes (1) | 85.6 |

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation | Range |
|---|-------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Age</i> (1=16 or less, 2=17, 3=18, 4=19, 5=20, 6=21-24, 7=25-29, 8=30-39, 9=40-54, 10=55 or more) | 3.56 | .862 | 1-10 |
| <i>Income</i> (1=Less than \$10,000, 2=\$10,000-\$14,999, 3=\$15,000-\$19,999, 4=\$20,000-\$24,999, 5=\$25,000-\$29,999, 6=\$30,000-\$39,999, 7=\$40,000-\$49,999, 8=\$50,000-\$59,999, 9=\$60,000-\$74,999, 10=\$75,000-\$99,999, 11=\$100,000-\$149,999, 12=\$150,000-\$199,999, 13=\$200,000-\$249,999, 14=\$250,000 or more) | 8.35 | 2.977 | 1-14 |
| <i>High-School Grade point average</i> (1=D, 2=C, 3=C+, 4=B-, 5=B, 6=B+, 7=A-, 8=A or A+) | 6.44 | 1.490 | 1-8 |

which are sometimes included in the examination of socio-economic status in the literature: first-generation college attendance and income. The CIRP *Freshman Survey* question asking students to indicate “the highest level of formal education obtained” by each parent was used to gauge whether or not students were first-generation college students. First-generation students represented 31.1 percent of the sample, while for 68.9 percent of the students one or both parents had completed at least an undergraduate college degree.

The influence of education on religious participation and spirituality, noted in some of the literature reviewed, is the basis for considering the type of high school from which students graduated. The CIRP *Freshman Survey* asked students to identify “What kind of secondary school” they graduated from. Student responses indicate that 68.9 percent graduated from a public school, 22.4 percent graduated from a religious or parochial school, 3.1 percent graduated from a private college-preparatory school, and 5.6 percent graduated from a home school.

The literature reviewed also suggests a connection between students’ religious affiliation or spiritual identification and their degree of engagement to spirituality. CCCU schools hold, primarily, to an evangelical perspective of Christianity, and so I chose the question “Do you consider yourself to be a Born-Again Christian?” from the 2004 CIRP *Freshman Survey* to establish whether students identify with the religious perspective most common in these schools. A majority of survey respondents answered *yes* (85.6 percent) to this question and 14.4 percent responded *no*.

The CIRP *Freshman Survey* asked students “How old will you be on December 31 of this year?” The mean for student responses is 3.56 (3 = 18; 4 = 19) on a response category range of 1-10. Notably, 89.2 percent of the students reported ages of eighteen or nineteen (54.6 percent eighteen; 34.6 percent nineteen) placing a majority of the students in this sample within the average age for students beginning their college academic pursuits immediately after high school in the United States. While there is clearly little variability in age, the age variance of the CCCU sample is greater than that of the UCLA study population which reported 96.6 percent of students at either age eighteen or nineteen (Sax et al., 2004, p. 19).

As noted earlier, the educational literature suggests a relationship between socio-economic status and students’ engagement to religion or spirituality. The CIRP *Freshman Survey* asked students to “estimate your parents’ total income for the past year...considering all sources before taxes.” Student responses to this question resulted in a mean of 8.35 (8 = \$50,000 to \$59,999; 9 = \$60,000 to \$74,999) on a response category range of 1-14. Only 7.3 percent of the students surveyed selected the lowest three categories reporting parents’ income at \$19,999 or under, while 9.2 percent selected one of the top three categories with parental income levels of \$150,000 or above.

Finally, noting again the influence of education on religious participation and spirituality suggested in the literature reviewed, students’ high-school academic performance was examined. High-School academic performance was measured by the CIRP *Freshman Survey* question which asked for their “average grade in high school.” Students’ mean response was 6.44 (6 = B+; 7 = A-) on a response category range of 1-8.

A majority of student respondents reported high-school grade point averages in the A- to A range (55.6 percent), while only 5.6 percent reported a grade point average below B.

Analytical Findings

This section presents the analytical results for the study. The first section presents findings of the one-way analysis of variance used to determine differences in the categorical variables as they relate to the thirteen scales of the dependent variable. The next section presents results of the correlation analysis of the independent variables with the dependent variables. The final section presents the results of the multiple regression analyses conducted to examine the relationship between student pre-college characteristics and student spiritual engagement.

Analysis of Variance

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used in this study to identify differences in the dependent variable by the categorical independent variables. This section presents ANOVA results for the five categorical variables used in this research. Asterisks are used to indicate levels of statistical significance reported throughout this research: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Gender

Table 3 presents the one-way ANOVA results for the scales of the dependent variable by students' gender. Women have significantly higher mean scores than men on

Table 3: Analysis of Variance in Student Spiritual Engagement by Gender (N=9,838).

| | Male | Female | F Statistic | Significance |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------|----------------|--------------|
| CCCU Values & Attitudes | 76.931 | 79.426 | 102.119 | *** |
| Ethic of Caring | 17.449 | 17.788 | 15.806 | *** |
| Spiritual Identification | 36.465 | 37.890 | 162.722 | *** |
| Spiritual Quest | 23.108 | 23.745 | 44.502 | *** |
| CCCU Practices | 44.880 | 47.743 | 312.985 | *** |
| Religious Engagement | 30.756 | 32.237 | 144.407 | *** |
| Charitable Involvement | 14.110 | 15.502 | 418.130 | *** |
| CCCU Spiritual Self-Concept | 27.803 | 28.406 | 64.993 | *** |
| Compassionate Self-Concept | 15.336 | 15.511 | 12.493 | *** |
| Equanimity | 12.468 | 12.898 | 114.924 | *** |
| CCCU Beliefs | 40.626 | 42.503 | 230.821 | *** |
| Evangelical Beliefs | 30.880 | 31.692 | 156.475 | *** |
| Evangelical Practices | 17.033 | 17.720 | 165.932 | *** |

Significance Levels: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

all scales of spiritual engagement. This result is not surprising in light of the literature reviewed, which suggests that women tend to be more spiritually engaged than men in various ways (Astin et al., 2011b; Buckho, 2004; Cherry et al., 2001; Knox et al., 1998) and that women's experience of spirituality has a greater impact on them as individuals. (Astin et al., 2005; Bryant, 2003; Tisdell, 2003; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 1998).

Race/Ethnicity

Table 4 presents results for the one-way ANOVA procedure examining differences in the scales of spiritual engagement by race/ethnicity. The table highlights statistically significant differences in eleven of the thirteen scales. Six of the significant scales produced higher mean scores for students of color (CCCU *Attitudes & Values*, *Ethic of Caring*, *Spiritual Quest*, *Charitable Involvement*, CCCU *Spiritual Self-Concept*, and *Compassionate Self-Concept*), and five of the significant scales produced higher mean scores for Caucasian students (*Spiritual Identification*, *Religious Engagement*, CCCU *Beliefs*, and both the *Evangelical Beliefs* and *Evangelical Practices* scales). The only non-significant scales in this table are *Equanimity* and the CCCU *Practices* scales. The non-significant result of the CCCU *Practices* scales is likely due to the fact that its contributing scales, *Religious Engagement* and *Charitable Involvement*, produced significant results in opposite directions: the mean for *Religious Engagement* is higher for Caucasian students while the mean for *Charitable Involvement* is higher for students of color. The *Evangelical Beliefs* and the *Evangelical Practices* scales both produced significant results and the mean for Caucasian students was higher for both scales.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance in Student Spiritual Engagement by Race/Ethnicity (N=9,838).

| | Caucasian | Students of Color | F Statistic | Significance |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|
| CCCU Values & Attitudes | 78.155 | 80.090 | 35.921 | *** |
| Ethic of Caring | 17.433 | 18.771 | 149.698 | *** |
| Spiritual Identification | 37.413 | 37.017 | 7.257 | ** |
| Spiritual Quest | 23.341 | 24.303 | 60.791 | *** |
| CCCU Practices | 46.718 | 46.449 | 1.572 | |
| Religious Engagement | 31.823 | 30.984 | 26.974 | *** |
| Charitable Involvement | 14.896 | 15.397 | 31.006 | *** |
| CCCU Spiritual Self-Concept | 28.146 | 28.349 | 4.322 | * |
| Compassionate Self-Concept | 15.399 | 15.672 | 18.038 | *** |
| Equanimity | 12.748 | 12.676 | 1.864 | |
| CCCU Beliefs | 41.923 | 41.162 | 21.976 | *** |
| Evangelical Beliefs | 31.521 | 30.696 | 94.494 | *** |
| Evangelical Practices | 17.541 | 17.059 | 47.387 | *** |

Significance Levels: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

First-Generation College Student

Table 5 presents the results for the one-way ANOVA procedure examining differences in the scales of spiritual engagement by students' status as first-generation college attenders. Eight of the thirteen scales resulted in statistically significant F scores. The CCCU *Practices* scale and the CCCU *Beliefs* scale both produced significant results with lower mean scores for first-generation students. The CCCU *Values and Attitudes* scale and CCCU *Spiritual Self-Concept* scale both produced non-significant results, again likely because their contributing scales (*Ethic of Caring*, *Spiritual Identification*, and *Compassionate Self-Concept*) were significant in opposite directions. Both the *Evangelical Beliefs* and the *Evangelical Practices* scales yielded lower mean scores for first-generation students.

High-School Type

The one-way ANOVA for the spiritual engagement scales by the type of high school from which students graduated is presented in Table 6. It shows significant results for all scales with the exception of the *Spiritual Identification* scale. Home school graduates produced eight of the highest mean scores (*Spiritual Identification*, CCCU *Practices*, *Religious Engagement*, CCCU *Self-Concept*, *Equanimity*, CCCU *Beliefs*, and both *Evangelical* scales). Private school graduates produced four of the highest means (CCCU *Values & Attitudes* and its contributing scales, *Ethic of Caring* and *Spiritual Quest*, in addition to the *Charitable Involvement* scale) and one highest mean score was produced by students graduating from public schools (*Compassionate Self-Concept*). It is

Table 5: Analysis of Variance in Student Spiritual Engagement by First-Generation College Attendance (N=9,838).

| | Non-First Generation | First- Generation | F Statistic | Significance |
|--|---------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| CCCU Values & Attitudes | 78.580 | 78.243 | 1.648 | |
| Ethic of Caring | 17.600 | 17.795 | 4.729 | * |
| Spiritual Identification | 37.513 | 36.966 | 21.125 | *** |
| Spiritual Quest | 23.472 | 23.576 | 1.051 | |
| CCCU Practices | 46.971 | 45.984 | 32.344 | *** |
| Religious Engagement | 31.960 | 31.042 | 49.331 | *** |
| Charitable Involvement | 15.006 | 14.920 | 1.369 | |
| CCCU Spiritual Self-Concept | 28.147 | 28.255 | 1.842 | |
| Compassionate Self-Concept | 15.399 | 15.547 | 8.157 | ** |
| Equanimity | 12.745 | 12.715 | .507 | |
| CCCU Beliefs | 41.991 | 41.343 | 24.080 | *** |
| Evangelical Beliefs | 31.550 | 31.004 | 63.009 | *** |
| Evangelical Practices | 17.560 | 17.236 | 32.732 | *** |

Significance Levels: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Table 6: Analysis of Variance in Student Spiritual Engagement by High School-Type (N=9,838).

| | Public | Religious | Private | Home | F Statistic | Significance |
|---|---------------|------------------|----------------|-------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| CCCU Values & Attitudes | 78.734 | 77.617 | 79.492 | 77.969 | 5.850 | ** |
| Ethic of Caring | 17.787 | 17.244 | 18.049 | 17.383 | 11.415 | *** |
| Spiritual Identification | 37.346 | 37.282 | 37.333 | 37.663 | .730 | |
| Spiritual Quest | 23.664 | 23.050 | 24.050 | 22.835 | 15.055 | *** |
| CCCU Practices | 46.401 | 47.160 | 46.689 | 48.150 | 11.642 | *** |
| Religious Engagement | 31.359 | 32.314 | 31.339 | 33.431 | 30.810 | *** |
| Charitable Involvement | 15.031 | 14.845 | 15.326 | 14.651 | 4.481 | ** |
| CCCU Spiritual Self- Concept | 28.265 | 27.8484 | 27.918 | 28.588 | 10.303 | *** |
| Compassionate Self- Concept | 15.547 | 15.116 | 15.434 | 15.425 | 18.076 | *** |
| Equanimity | 12.717 | 12.720 | 12.527 | 13.194 | 11.572 | *** |
| CCCU Beliefs | 41.648 | 41.986 | 41.349 | 43.357 | 14.997 | *** |
| Evangelical Beliefs | 31.243 | 31.674 | 31.214 | 32.116 | 21.003 | *** |
| Evangelical Practices | 17.346 | 17.675 | 17.256 | 18.231 | 26.083 | *** |

Significance Levels: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

noteworthy that students attending religious schools produced no highest means on the spiritual engagement scales.

Religious Identification/Born-Again

Table 7 demonstrates that students' spiritual engagement is related at a statistically significant level to students' religious identification. Means for students responding "yes" to the question "Do you consider yourself to be a Born-Again Christian?" are significantly higher than means for students responding "no" on all thirteen scales.

Bivariate Correlations

Table 8 presents the results of the correlation analysis of the independent variables with the thirteen scales of the spiritual engagement dependent variable. The bivariate correlation matrix for the independent variables by the independent variables is presented in Appendix D. The matrix does not show problematic levels of multicollinearity among independent variables, except that high correlations exist among types of high school attended by students, as expected.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was chosen for this study to explore the affect of the pre-college background characteristics on the thirteen scales of spiritual engagement. Results of these analyses reveal the contribution each independent variable makes to the

Table 7: Analysis of Variance in Student Spiritual Engagement by Religious Identification/Born-Again (N=9,838).

| | No | Yes | F Statistic | Significance |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------|----------------|--------------|
| CCCU Values & Attitudes | 74.120 | 79.180 | 215.808 | *** |
| Ethic of Caring | 17.406 | 17.702 | 6.224 | * |
| Spiritual Identification | 34.007 | 37.889 | 650.466 | *** |
| Spiritual Quest | 22.906 | 23.603 | 27.622 | *** |
| CCCU Practices | 41.139 | 47.547 | 837.088 | *** |
| Religious Engagement | 26.767 | 32.462 | 1208.154 | *** |
| Charitable Involvement | 14.323 | 15.085 | 61.312 | *** |
| CCCU Spiritual Self-Concept | 27.175 | 28.339 | 122.859 | *** |
| Compassionate Self-Concept | 15.228 | 15.480 | 13.388 | *** |
| Equanimity | 11.986 | 12.858 | 246.629 | *** |
| CCCU Beliefs | 36.868 | 42.592 | 1219.556 | *** |
| Evangelical Beliefs | 29.160 | 31.741 | 867.733 | *** |
| Evangelical Practices | 15.386 | 17.793 | 1144.577 | *** |

Significance Levels: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Table 8: Correlation Coefficients for Student Spiritual Engagement by all Independent Variables (N=9,838).

| | Gender | Race/ Ethnicity | Age | Income | First- Generation | High School GPA | Public High School | Religious High School | Private High School | Home School | Religious Identification/ Born-Again |
|--|---------------|----------------------------|------------|---------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| CCCU Values & Attitudes | .113*** | .067*** | .033** | -.031* | -.014 | .078*** | .036** | -.043*** | .017 | -.011 | .163*** |
| Ethic of Caring | .042*** | .128*** | .035** | -.061*** | .023* | -.023* | .048*** | -.057*** | .017 | -.017 | .026* |
| Spiritual Identification | .138*** | -.029** | .006 | -.002 | -.050*** | .156*** | .000 | -.007 | .000 | .015 | .268*** |
| Spiritual Quest | .071*** | .083*** | .048*** | -.020 | .011 | .018 | .054*** | -.056*** | .022* | -.037** | .056*** |
| CCCU Practices | .190*** | -.014 | -.077*** | .023* | -.062*** | .205*** | -.056*** | .036** | .000 | .048*** | .302*** |
| Religious Engagement | .129*** | -.056*** | -.062*** | .024* | -.076*** | .209*** | -.086*** | .061*** | -.011 | .075*** | .352*** |
| Charitable Involvement | .213*** | .059*** | -.068*** | .008 | -.012 | .106*** | .024* | -.023* | .019 | -.025* | .083*** |
| CCCU Spirit Self-Concept | .086*** | .022* | .031** | -.004 | .015 | .033** | .037** | -.052*** | -.013 | .029** | .118*** |
| Compassionate Self-Concept | .036*** | .043*** | .036*** | -.012 | .029** | -.046*** | .064*** | -.074*** | -.001 | -.002 | .037*** |
| Equanimity | .113*** | -.015 | .011 | .013 | -.008 | .126*** | -.015 | -.004 | -.020 | .060*** | .165*** |
| CCCU Beliefs | .163*** | -.051*** | -.024* | .012 | -.053*** | .212*** | -.039*** | .018 | -.014 | .068*** | .354*** |
| Evangelical Beliefs | .135*** | -.105*** | -.054*** | .048*** | -.086*** | .216*** | -.071*** | .054*** | -.010 | .061*** | .305*** |
| Evangelical Practices | .137*** | -.074*** | -.030** | .020 | -.061*** | .188*** | -.070*** | .047*** | -.015 | .076*** | .341*** |

Significance Levels: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

overall variance in each scale and provides insight into understanding differences in students' spiritual engagement as they enter college. While the adjusted R^2 is low for each scale of spiritual engagement, nonetheless, each is statistically significant.

Tables 9-13 present the results of the ordinary least squares regressions on the CCCU scales, the component UCLA scales and the *Evangelical Beliefs* and *Evangelical Practices* scales. The results are discussed in order of the eight background characteristics chosen for this study.

Gender

Gender is significantly and positively related to all thirteen scales of spiritual engagement used in this study. Table 9 demonstrates that women have higher mean scores than men in relation to spiritual values and attitudes on each of the UCLA scales contributing to the CCCU *Spiritual Values and Attitudes* scale. These results suggest that women in this sample are more likely to be committed to spiritually-oriented values and attitudes than their male peers. The UCLA scales used here include items from the *Ethic of Caring* scale that assess "the student's degree of commitment to values such as helping others in difficulty, reducing pain and suffering in the world, and making the world a better place" (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 52), items from the *Spiritual Identification* scale that "reflect one's propensity to see oneself and others in 'spiritual' terms" (p. 46) and items from the *Spiritual Quest* scale that "assesses the student's interest in searching for meaning/purpose in life, finding answers to the mysteries of life, and developing a meaningful philosophy of life" (p. 47). These results suggest that women are more likely than men to view themselves in spiritually-oriented ways (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 46-47).

Table 9: Regression of Spiritual Values & Attitudes Scales on Student Pre-College Characteristics: Standardized Regression Coefficient (N=9,838).

| | CCCU* Values & Attitudes | UCLA Ethic of Caring | UCLA Spiritual Identification | UCLA Spiritual Quest |
|--|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Gender | .096*** | .047*** | .117*** | .061*** |
| Race/Ethnicity | .098*** | .130*** | .020 | .101*** |
| Age | .052*** | .029* | .044** | .052*** |
| Income | -.009 | -.032* | .004 | .002 |
| First-Generation | -.017 | -.001 | -.027* | -.012 |
| High-School Grade Point Average | .079*** | .014 | .121*** | .044*** |
| Religious High School | -.051*** | .049*** | -.017 | .061*** |
| Private High School | .016 | .007 | .009 | .022 |
| Home School | -.034** | .016 | -.015 | -.052*** |
| Religious Identification/ Born-Again | .159*** | .043** | .246*** | .073*** |
| R Square | .056*** | .027*** | .101*** | .028*** |
| Adjusted R Square | .055*** | .025*** | .099*** | .026*** |

Significance Levels: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

*CCCU Spiritual Attitudes & Values Scale is a combination of the three UCLA scales in this table.

Table 10: Regression of Spiritual Practices Scales on Student Pre-College Characteristics: Standardized Regression Coefficient (N=9,838).

| | CCCU* Practices | UCLA Religious Engagement | UCLA Charitable Involvement |
|--|----------------------------|--|--|
| Gender | .156*** | .095*** | .195*** |
| Race/Ethnicity | .045*** | .010 | .087*** |
| Age | -.030* | -.016 | -.042** |
| Income | .023 | .019 | .019 |
| First-Generation | -.028* | -.036** | -.002 |
| High-School Grade Point Average | .157*** | .163*** | .080*** |
| Religious High School | .021 | .036** | -.015 |
| Private High School | .015 | .006 | .025 |
| Home School | .034** | .048*** | -.006 |
| Religious Identification/ Born-Again | .279*** | .324*** | .079*** |
| R Square | .156*** | .172*** | .069*** |
| Adjusted R Square | .155*** | .170*** | .067*** |

Significance Levels: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

*CCCU Spiritual Practices Scale is a combination of the two UCLA scales in this table.

Table 11: Regression of Spiritual Self-Concept Scales on Student Pre-College Characteristics: Standardized Regression Coefficient (N=9,838).

| | CCCU* Spiritual Self-Concept | UCLA Compassionate Self-Concept | UCLA Equanimity |
|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Gender | .070*** | .037** | .083*** |
| Race/Ethnicity | .049*** | .046** | .031* |
| Age | .043** | .029* | .043** |
| Income | .019 | .009 | .024 |
| First-Generation | .025 | .024 | .014 |
| High-School Grade Point Average | .027* | -.041** | .102*** |
| Religious High School | -.058*** | -.079*** | -.005 |
| Private High School | -.018 | -.018 | -.011 |
| Home School | .003 | -.018 | -.029* |
| Religious Identification/ Born-Again | .117*** | .050*** | .153*** |
| R Square | .027*** | .016*** | .048*** |
| Adjusted R Square | .026*** | .014*** | .047*** |

Significance Levels: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

*CCCU Spiritual Self-Concept Scale is a combination of the two UCLA scales in this table.

Table 12: Regression of Spiritual Belief Scale on Student Pre-College Characteristics: Standardized Regression Coefficient (N=9,838).

| | CCCU* Beliefs |
|--|------------------|
| Gender | .134*** |
| Race/Ethnicity | .007 |
| Age | .019 |
| Income | .021 |
| First-Generation | -.011 |
| High-School Grade Point Average | .157*** |
| Religious High School | .007 |
| Private High School | -.016 |
| Home School | -.026* |
| Religious Identification/ Born-Again | .324*** |
| R Square | .171*** |
| Adjusted R Square | .169*** |

Significance Levels: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

*The CCCU Spiritual Beliefs scale contains *only* the UCLA Religious Commitment. Because the two scale results are identical, the UCLA Religious Commitment Scale is not included on this table.

Table 13: Regression of Evangelical Beliefs and Practices Scales on Student Pre-College Characteristics: Standardized Regression Coefficient (N=9,838).

| | Evangelical Beliefs | Evangelical Practices |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Gender | .112*** | .114*** |
| Race/Ethnicity | -.050*** | -.022 |
| Age | .001 | .009 |
| Income | .026* | .021 |
| First-Generation | -.029* | -.018 |
| High-School Grade Point Average | .145*** | .134*** |
| Religious High School | -.036** | .031* |
| Private High School | -.010 | -.002 |
| Home School | .035** | .038** |
| Religious Identification/ Born-Again | .290*** | .325*** |
| R Square | .151*** | .163*** |
| Adjusted R Square | .149*** | .162*** |

Significance Levels: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

These findings are consistent with the literature reviewed for this study, which suggests that women students are more committed to their spirituality than men students (Lindholm, 2005), identifies clear differences in the way women and men experience the benefit of religious experiences and spirituality (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 1998), notes that women are more likely than men to be inclined “toward spiritual questing and engagement” (Astin et al., 2011b, p. 35), and contends that women are more aware of their spirituality than men and that spirituality is a more significant part of women’s self-identity than men’s (Tisdell, 2003, pp. 136-137).

The results presented in Table 10 suggest that female students are more likely than male students to be engaged in spiritually-oriented practices. The UCLA scales included in the CCCU *Spiritual Practices* scale include items that ask how often they “attended a religious service” in the past year, how often they engaged in “reading sacred texts,” if they pray and how often, and “how many close friends” attend worship with them. The results show that women also scored higher than men on the UCLA *Charitable Involvement* scale (also included in the CCCU *Spiritual Practices* scale) that includes items such as how much time is spent doing “volunteer work,” how often they “participate in community food or clothing drives,” and how often they “donated money to charity” and “helped friends with personal problems.”

These results clearly correspond to the educational research literature, which reveals stronger involvement by women than by men in a number of areas related to religious life. Most notably, women’s attendance/participation in religious services (Astin et al., 2011b; Cherry, Deberg, & Porterfield, 2001; Wuthnow, 1998a) and

commitment to religiously-oriented practices such as prayer and meditation (Buckho, 2004) are stronger than those of their male peers. In addition, Cherry et al., (2001) in their study of religion on campus, found that women are more likely than men to attend religiously-oriented campus activities. In relation to charitable involvement, Astin et al., (2011b) found substantial differences between women and men with respect to charitable involvement (p. 70).

Table 11 demonstrates that gender is significantly and positively related to each of the scales used to highlight spiritual self-concept. Women, more than their male peers, see themselves in terms of the “spiritually related” qualities believed to exemplify “highly spiritual persons” (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 52). The UCLA component scales ask students to rate themselves on characteristics such as kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and generosity (UCLA *Compassionate Self-Concept* scale). The UCLA *Equanimity* scale used here includes items such as being “able to find meaning in times of hardship,” “being thankful for all that has happened to me,” and “seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift.”

As noted earlier, the research appears to support these results suggesting that women are not only more spiritually engaged than men (Smith et al., 2002; Astin et al., 2011b; Cherry et al., 2001; Wuthnow, 1998a), but that their spirituality has a greater impact on them as individuals (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 1998) than appears to be true in their male peers.

The results presented in Table 12 demonstrate a clear association between gender and spiritual beliefs. In the higher education literature, spiritual beliefs are often

associated with an individual's practice of religion and spirituality. The results for this scale suggest that women are more likely than their male peers to exhibit "internal qualities" reflecting the degree to which they "follow religious teachings in everyday life, find religion to be personally helpful, and gain personal strength from trusting in a higher power" (Astin et al., 2011b, p. 21). While I found no literature addressing the differences in *beliefs* between men and women specifically, the differences between women and men observed in this scale are reflected in every other scale of the spiritual engagement dependent variable, and the result for the spiritual beliefs scale is likely a manifestation of the overall difference in men's and women's spirituality that is clearly demonstrated in the educational literature (Cherry et al., 2001; Smith et al., 2002; Wuthnow, 1998a).

Table 13 identifies differences between women and men for the *Evangelical Beliefs* and *Evangelical Practices* scales. Female college students are more likely than the male students in this sample to hold more strongly to beliefs and practices associated with the evangelical faith characterizing the institutions represented in this study. As noted previously, the literature clearly demonstrates that, in general, women are more actively engaged in spiritual and religious practices than men (Smith et al., 2002; Wuthnow, 1998a) and research suggests that this holds true just as strongly for college-aged women (Astin, et al., 2011b; Cherry et al., 2001; Lindholm, 2005 & 2006).

Race/Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity is significantly related to nine of the thirteen scales of spiritual engagement though the strength and direction of these relationships is mixed. Table 9

reveals that race/ethnicity is significantly and positively related to three of the four CCCU *Values and Attitudes* scales and produced the strongest relationship among the eight pre-college characteristics for the UCLA *Ethic of Caring* scale and the UCLA *Spiritual Quest* scale. These results suggest that students of color in this sample are more likely to be committed to spiritually-oriented values and attitudes, as reflected by the questions comprising these scales, than their Caucasian peers. Items reflective of the content of the CCCU *Spiritual Values and Attitudes* scale are: “The extent to which you participate in trying to change things that are unfair in the world” and “The importance to you personally of reducing pain and suffering in the world (*Ethic of Caring*) and “The extent to which you participate in searching for the meaning/purpose of life” and “The importance to you personally of developing a meaningful philosophy of life” (*Spiritual Quest*).

These results are generally consistent with the findings of previous research which suggests that religious and spiritual engagement contributes in significant ways to the identity development of non-white students (Sanchez & Carter, 2005; Stewart, 2002). A longitudinal study of students at CCCU schools utilizing the HERI *College Students' Beliefs and Values* follow-up survey (2007) conducted by Paredes-Collins & Collins (2011), confirms the results for the UCLA *Ethic of Caring* scale. Their research found that “white students [in CCCU schools] scored significantly lower on ethic of caring than non-white students” (p. 92) and that this finding persisted three years beyond the 2004 edition of the survey used in the present research.

Race/ethnicity is significant for two of the three scales presented in Table 10. The CCCU *Practices* scale and its contributing scale, UCLA *Charitable Involvement*, both produced significant outcomes for this independent variable, suggesting that students of color are more engaged with spiritually-oriented practices as reflected in these scales. Astin et al. (2011a) describe *Charitable Involvement* as a “behavioral measure that includes activities such as community service, donating money to charity, and helping friends with personal problems” (p. 52).

The non-significant result for UCLA *Religious Engagement* shows that Caucasian students and students of color do not vary significantly in their religious engagement suggesting that students’ spiritual practices are similar across racial and ethnic background for students in this study. This is somewhat surprising in light of research that suggests that students of color (mostly African American in the research literature) tend to exhibit “higher levels of public and private religious behaviors” and a “stronger religious commitment” (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 409) and that religious participation appears to be a stronger and more salient part of African American cultural heritage (Donahoo & Caffey, 2010; Sanchez & Carter, 2005), at least for some.

Table 11 demonstrates that race/ethnicity is significant for all of the CCCU *Spiritual Self-Concept* scales. Students of color, more than their Caucasian peers, responded positively to questions that composed the UCLA *Compassionate Self-Concept* and *Equanimity* scales, which Astin et al. (2011a) suggest are scales that reflect “qualities that highly spiritual persons would be expected to exemplify” (p. 52). The UCLA component scales include questions that ask students to rate themselves on characteristics

such as kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and generosity (UCLA *Compassionate Self-Concept* scale). The UCLA *Equanimity* scale includes items such as how often students have “been able to find meaning in times of hardship” and the extent to which they would describe themselves as “feeling good about the direction in which my life is heading.”

The literature neither directly confirms nor disconfirms these results, but the close relationship of racial community to racial identity development, coupled with the strong prevalence of religious beliefs and practices in some ethnic cultures may provide a degree of explanation of these results. Sanchez and Carter (2005) and Stewart (2002) both note the strong impact of spirituality on self-identity in the African American community, which may shed light on why students of color may be more likely to see in themselves the kinds of spiritual qualities reflected in these scales.

Table 12 shows that the standardized regression coefficient for students of color on the CCCU *Belief* scale is non-significant. This result suggests that there is no statistically significant difference between students of color and their Caucasian peers in relation to spiritual beliefs. This finding is interesting in light of research conducted by Paredes-Collins and Collins (2011) utilizing the HERI *College Students' Beliefs and Values* follow-up survey conducted in 2007, which found that after three years of attending CCCU schools white students produced somewhat higher results on the UCLA *Religious Commitment* scale (the UCLA scale which composes the CCCU *Beliefs* scale in this study) than their non-white peers (p. 91).

The results of the *Evangelical Beliefs* and *Evangelical Practices* scales presented in Table 13 are mixed. While both results are negative, the standardized regression

coefficient for the *Evangelical Beliefs* scale is significant and the result for the *Evangelical Practices* scale is non-significant. These results suggest that there is a significant relationship between race/ethnicity and the distinctive beliefs associated closely with the evangelical faith held by many of the institutions represented in this study. Caucasian students were more likely to respond positively to the belief-related questions in the *Evangelical Beliefs* scale than students of color in this sample.

As a whole, this result differs from the findings of the literature, though Paredis-Collins and Collins (2011) suggest that the “strict conservatism about following doctrine” (p. 91) which is a distinctive feature of many evangelical institutions may be indicative of the predominantly-white culture that continues to exist in many of these schools today and may suggest that the religiously-oriented patterns of belief in these schools is not yet fully inclusive of the differing culturally-related expressions of Christianity represented by differing racial and ethnic student groups.

Age

Age is significantly related to nine of the thirteen scales of spiritual engagement though the strength and direction of these relationships is mixed. Students’ age produced significant positive associations on each of the four scales presented in Table 9. Little research was found that examines the relationship between age and spiritual values and attitudes, but the faith development theories postulated by Fowler (1981), Parks (2000), and Westerhoff (1976/2000) suggest that, as individuals mature, their faith changes and matures. Despite the slight variability in age in this sample, the results presented in Table

9 show that the standardized regression coefficients for spiritual values and attitudes, as represented by these scales, are higher for older students in this study. Items representative of these scales include “The extent to which you participate in trying to change things that are unfair in the world” (UCLA *Ethic of Caring* scale); the importance to you personally of “integrating spirituality into my life” and to “seeking out opportunities to help me grow spiritually” (UCLA *Spiritual Identification* scale); and the importance to you personally of “finding answers to the mysteries of life” and the extent to which you “participate in searching for meaning/purpose in life” (UCLA *Spiritual Quest* scale).

Table 10 demonstrates that students’ age is a significant factor for two of the three scales related to spiritually-oriented practices. The CCCU *Practices* scale and its contributing UCLA scale, *Charitable Involvement*, both produced significant negative results for spiritual practices. While the religious practices of students of differing ages appear to vary little, younger students in this sample appear to be significantly more involved in charitable activities. The *Charitable Involvement* scale includes items such as how much time was spent during the previous year doing “volunteer work,” how often in the past year they “participated in community food or clothing drives,” and how often in the past year they ‘donated money to charity.’ The non-significant finding for the UCLA *Religious Engagement* scale is not surprising in light of the low variability of age in this sample and the fact that all students in the sample are attending Christian colleges where church attendance and faith-related practices are common. The literature suggests that declines in religious involvement often begin during the college years and continue

for many years beyond college (Astin et al., 2011b; Knox et al., 1998; Smith et al., 2002; Smith & Snell, 2009), but because the students in this sample are all entering students, regardless of their age, the findings for spiritual practices by age presented in Table 10 do not directly confirm or challenge the findings of these studies. I speculate that these findings, as well as the results of the supporting research, are distinctive to the window in students' lives in which this research takes place—the college years.

Students' age produced significant positive standardized regression coefficients for each of the three spiritual self-concept scales presented in Table 11. The results suggest that the older students in this sample are more likely than their younger (though only slightly so) peers to view themselves as higher in the kinds of spiritual qualities that Astin et al. (2011a) describe as common characteristics of “highly spiritual persons” (p. 52). The characteristics used in this scale include kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and generosity (*UCLA Compassionate Self-Concept* scale). The *CCCU Spiritual Self-Concept* scale also includes items from the *UCLA Equanimity* scale such as how often students have “been able to find meaning in times of hardship,” how often in the past year they have “felt at peace/centered,” and the extent to which they describe themselves as “seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift,” and as “being thankful for all that has happened (p. 49).”

The scant amount of research examined for this study that relates age to spirituality tends to confirm these results (Knox et al., 1998; Smith et al., 2002) as does the theoretical literature leading to the framework for spirituality on which this study is

grounded which suggests that individuals increase in faith and spiritual maturity as they get older.

Students' age as they enter college produced non-significant standardized regression coefficients for the scale presented in Table 12 and for both scales presented in Table 13.

Income.

Students' estimate of their parents' level of income produced only two significant results among the thirteen scales of spiritual engagement. Table 9 demonstrates only one significant, though negative, association for scales related to spiritual values and attitudes. CCCU *Values and Attitudes* and its contributing UCLA scales, *Spiritual Identification* and *Spiritual Quest*, each produced non-significant relationships for the students in this sample indicating that few differences exist among students' spiritual values and attitudes based on the level of parental income. The UCLA *Ethic of Caring* scale produced a significant negative result indicating that the standardized regression coefficient was higher for students from the lower incomes than for students whose parents earn higher incomes. Items that reflect the *Ethic of Caring* scale include "The extent to which you participate in trying to change things that are unfair in the world," "The importance to you personally of helping others who are in difficulty," and "The importance to you personally of helping promote racial understanding." These results appear to confirm research findings that suggest socio-economic status and income have

minimal impact on religious practice and spiritual values (Banthia et al., 2007; Bryant & Astin, 2008; Gaede, 1977; Mueller & Johnson, 1975).

Table 10 demonstrates that income is non-significant for each of the *Spiritual Practices* scales. This finding, confirmed by the small amount of literature available (Banthia et al., 2007; Bryant & Astin, 2008; Gaede, 1977; Mueller & Johnson, 1975), suggests that parents' income, and by inference students' socio-economic status, have no relationship to students' engagement with spiritual practices such as reading sacred texts, attending religious services, charitable giving, and participating in volunteerism. Likewise, students' estimate of their parents' income produced non-significant results for each of the *Spiritual Self-Concept* scales presented in Table 11 and for the *Spiritual Beliefs* scale presented in Table 12.

Students' estimates of their parents' income shows mixed relationships for the scales presented in Table 13. The results demonstrate no evidence of a significant relationship between *Evangelical Practices* and parents' income. This finding aligns with the results presented in Table 10, which shows no significant relationship with the scales used to highlight the spiritual practices component of the research question. The results presented in Table 13 reflect a significant relationship between *Evangelical Beliefs*, as measured through the items on this scale, and students' estimate of their parents' income. The result suggests that higher levels of family income are positively related to evangelical beliefs as reflected in the questions included in this scale. This finding is somewhat surprising in light of the fact that the CCCU *Beliefs* scale presented in Table 12 showed no significant relationship between income and beliefs as measured

by the questions comprising the *UCLA Religious Commitment* scale (the component scale of the *CCCU Beliefs* scale). The little literature examined provides no explanation for this outcome. It is possible that differences in the *kinds* of questions comprising the *UCLA Religious Commitment* scale and those chosen for the *Evangelical Beliefs* scale may have produced the slight, but different, outcome.

First-Generation College Attendance.

The indicator of first-generation college attendance status produced four significant standardized regression coefficients among the thirteen scales of spiritual engagement. First-generation college attendance produced only one significant result among the four scales presented on Table 9. The *UCLA Spiritual Identification* scale (a component scale of the *CCCU Values and Attitudes* scale presented in Table 9) produced a negative significant result indicating that non-first-generation students are more likely than their first-generation peers to see themselves and others in “spiritual” terms (Astin et al., 2011a, p 46-47). The *UCLA Spiritual Identification* scale includes items such as “The importance to you personally of integrating spirituality into my life,” and “The importance to you personally of seeking out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.”

While the research literature gives a great deal of attention to the educational experience of first-generation students (Pascarella et al., 2004; Saenz, 2007; Terenzini et al., 1996), I found no literature directly connecting spirituality to the first-generation college experience. Yet, the results may not be surprising in light of the connection often made of first-generation college attendance to socio-economic status and the fact that the

literature noted above suggests little or no association between socio-economic status and religious participation and spirituality.

Students' first-generation college attendance is significantly, though negatively, related to two scales on Table 10. Significant relationships are evidenced for the CCCU *Practices* scale and for its contributing scale, UCLA *Religious Engagement*. These results suggest that students for whom at least one parent graduated from college are more likely than their first-generation peers to participate in externally-oriented spiritual practices. Astin et al. (2011a) describe the *Religious Engagement* scale as “an ‘external’ measure that represents the behavioral counterpart to Religious Commitment” and “includes behaviors such as attending religious services, praying, and reading sacred texts” (p. 49). There is no support for these outcomes in the educational literature due to the fact that almost no literature examines direct associations between students of college-educated parents and spirituality during the college years.

Students' status as a first-generation student produced mixed results for the scales presented in Table 13. While the results for both scales were negative showing that the outcomes were higher for non-first-generation students than for first-generation students, the results showed a significant relationship for the *Evangelical Beliefs* scale and a non-significant relationship for the *Evangelical Practices* scale. These results suggest that first-generation students are less likely than their non-first-generation peers to hold to the distinctive evangelical beliefs as reflected in the questions used for this scale. First-generation students and non-first-generation students show no significant difference in

relationship to the distinctive practices represented by the questions used for the *Evangelical Practices* scale.

It is interesting to note the variance of these results to the results of the similar component areas of the research question, which are illustrated through UCLA's scales. While the *Evangelical Beliefs* scale produced a significant result for the first-generation variable, the CCCU *Beliefs* scale produced a non-significant result for students in this study. The opposite was true for the *Evangelical Practices* scale. While the *Evangelical Practices* scale produced a non-significant outcome for the first-generation variable, the CCCU *Practices* scale and the UCLA *Religious Engagement* scale that contributes to it, both produced significant outcomes for the first-generation variable. This is most likely explained by the types of questions that comprised the different scales, but is no less noteworthy.

High-School Grade Point Average.

Students' high-school academic performance, as measured by students' self-reported high-school grade point average, resulted in ten significant, though directionally mixed, standard regression coefficients for the thirteen spiritual engagement scales. Table 9 reveals that high-school grade point average is significantly and positively related to three of the four CCCU *Values and Attitudes* scales. These results suggest that students in this sample with higher grade point averages are more likely to be committed to the spiritually-oriented values and attitudes measured by these scales than their lowering-performing peers. The UCLA scales used here include items from the *Ethic of Caring*

scale that assess “the student’s degree of commitment to values such as helping others in difficulty, reducing pain and suffering in the world, and making the world a better place” (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 52), items from the *Spiritual Identification* scale that “reflect one’s propensity to see oneself and others in ‘spiritual’ terms” (p. 46), and items from the *Spiritual Quest* scale that “assesses the student’s interest in searching for meaning/purpose in life, finding answers to the mysteries of life, and developing a meaningful philosophy of life” (p. 47). As a whole, the UCLA scales presented in this table that produced significant results reflect the kinds of “qualities that highly spiritual persons would be expected to exemplify” according to Astin et al. (2011a, p. 52). These results appear to confirm findings in the literature that suggest positive relationships between religious knowledge, religious participation, and spiritual values with students’ academic achievement and educational attainment (Brown & Gary, 1991; Jeynes, 2009; Park, 2001; Park & Bonner, 2008; Regnerus, 2003; Regnerus & Elder, 2003).

Table 10 demonstrates strong significant relationships between students’ high-school grade point average and each of the three scales chosen to represent the spiritual practices component of the dependent variable. The table includes the CCCU *Practices* scale and its contributing UCLA scales, *Religious Engagement* and *Charitable Involvement*. In this sample, students with higher high-school grade point averages scored higher on the UCLA *Religious Engagement* scale than their lower grade point average peers. The *Religious Engagement* scale reflects “external” practices such as “attending religious services, praying, and reading sacred texts” (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 49). Students with higher reported grade point averages during high school also

produced a significantly higher standard regression coefficient on the *Charitable Involvement* scale, a “behavioral measure that includes activities such as participating in community service, donating money to charity, and helping friends with personal problems” (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 52).

The literature reviewed for this study evidences strong support for these findings. Milot & Ludden (2009) observed a direct relationship between attending religious services and higher grade point averages in rural high school students (p. 413) while researchers have demonstrated associations between attending church, religious participation and measures of academic performance (Brown & Gary, 1991) and educational attainment (Regnerus, 2000 & Park, 2001). Further, Park and Bonner (2008) found a significant relationship between the religious involvement of the student’s family, especially when the involvement includes the student, and the student’s academic achievement (p. 359).

Table 11 presents the standardized regression coefficients for the scales related to the spiritual self-concept component of the research question. Each scale is significant, though mixed in direction. Students with higher high-school grade point averages produced significant results for the CCCU *Spiritual Self-Concept* scale and its contributing scale, UCLA *Equanimity* suggesting that students in this sample with higher grade point averages are more likely than their peers with lower grade point averages to experience the personal benefits related to spirituality such as a sense of “peace and centeredness”, finding meaning in difficult times, and “feeling good about the direction of her/his life” (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 47). Conversely, students with lower high-school

grade point averages produced a significant result for the UCLA *Compassionate Self-Concept* scale. This result suggests that students with lower grade point averages are more likely than their higher-performing peers to rate themselves higher on spiritual characteristics such as kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and generosity (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 52).

The standardized regression coefficients for high-school grade point average in relation to students' spiritually-oriented beliefs are presented in Table 12. The significant result for this scale suggests that students with higher high-school grade point averages are more likely than their lower grade point average peers to exhibit "internal qualities" reflecting the degree to which they "follow religious teachings in everyday life, find religion to be personally helpful, and gain personal strength from trusting in a higher power" (Astin et al., 2011b, p. 21). While the literature provides strong evidence of the relationship between academic achievement and spiritual and religious participation (Brown & Gary, 1991; Park, 2001; Regnerus, 2000), the research reviewed for this study identifies no link between high-school grade point average and students' spiritually-oriented patterns of belief.

Results of the standardized regression coefficients for high-school grade point average and the *Evangelical Practices* and *Evangelical Beliefs* scales are presented in Table 13. These results suggest a strong positive relationship between higher high-school grade point average and students' evangelically-oriented beliefs and practices as represented by the questions in these scales.

High-School Type.

The type of high school from which students graduated produced mixed findings related to the spiritual values and attitudes scales. Graduating from a religious or parochial high school resulted in three significant relationships in Table 9. Students graduating from religious high schools scored higher than their public-schooled peers on the UCLA *Ethic of Caring* scale that Astin et al., (2011a) describe as an “internal measure” which “assesses the student’s degree of commitment to values such as helping others in difficulty, reducing pain and suffering in the world, and making the world a better place” (p. 52). Religious high school graduates also produced higher standardized regression coefficients than their public-schooled peers on the UCLA *Spiritual Quest* scale, which “assesses the student’s interest in searching for meaning/purpose in life, finding answers to the mysteries of life, and developing a meaningful philosophy of life” (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 47). It is interesting to note that the CCCU *Values and Attitudes* scale, of which the *Ethic of Caring* and *Spiritual Quest* scales are contributing scales, produced a negative significant result indicating that for the combination of all questions represented in that scale (which also includes UCLA *Spiritual Identification*) public-school graduates produced a higher significant result.

Students graduating from private high schools produced no significant relationships for any of the scales of spiritual attitudes and values. Standard regression coefficients show that public high-school graduates and private high-school graduates respond in similar ways to the questions composing the four scales presented in Table 9.

Standard regression coefficients for home-schooled students were mixed relative to their public-school peers on the spiritual values and attitudes scales. Two scales in Table 9 produced significant results for home-school graduates, both negative. The CCCU *Values and Attitudes* scale and one contributing scale, UCLA *Spiritual Quest*, both resulted in significant outcomes suggesting that public-school graduates responded more positively than home-school graduates on questions related to students' "interest in searching for the meaning of life, finding answers to the mysteries of life, and developing a meaningful philosophy of life" (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 47).

While the educational literature suggests that religion and education are related from a number of perspectives, I was able to find no literature confirming or negating these findings in relation to the type of high school from which students graduated.

The standardized regression coefficients for spiritual practices in relation to the type of high school that students graduated from were likewise mixed. Students who attended religious or parochial high schools produced only one significant result for the UCLA *Religious Engagement* scale suggesting that students graduating from these schools are more likely than their peers who graduated from public schools to respond positively to questions about external practices associated with spirituality such as prayer, reading sacred texts and spending time with friends who also participate in these kinds of activities (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 49). This finding is not surprising in light of the kind of schools these students attended. The CCCU *Practices* scale and its contributing scale, UCLA *Charitable Involvement* scale, was non-significant for religious high-school graduates relative to their public high-school peers.

Students who graduated from private high schools produced non-significant results for each of the three scales in Table 10 demonstrating no differences from their public high-school graduate peers in relation to external practices of spirituality and to their charitable involvement as measured by the questions comprising these scales.

The results for home-schooled graduates were significant for the CCCU *Practices* scale and its contributing scale, *Religious Engagement*. These results suggest that home-schooled students are more likely than their public-schooled peers to participate in the external religious practices identified in these scales. The UCLA *Charitable Involvement* scale was non-significant for home-schooled students reflecting similarity between home-schooled and public-schooled graduates relative to “activities such as participating in community service, donating money to charity, and helping friends with personal problems” (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 52).

As noted earlier, while the educational literature demonstrates associations between religious participation and education in a number of areas, no evidence was found to support or challenge these results relating the type of high school a student graduated from to their external practices of spirituality.

The standardized regression coefficients for spiritual self-concept by the type of high school from which students graduated were mixed, but were similar to the results of earlier scales. Table 11 presents two significant, though negative, results for religious-school graduates in relation to their public-school peers. The CCCU *Spiritual Self-Concept* scale and its contributing UCLA scale, *Compassionate Self-Concept* were both significant with negative standardized regression coefficients. The third scale, UCLA

Equanimity, also produced negative, though non-significant results. These outcomes suggest that public high-school graduates are more likely than their religious-school graduate peers to rate themselves higher on spiritually-oriented characteristics such as kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and generosity.

Private-school graduates produced no significant results for the three scales contributing to the spiritual self-concept component of the research question. The standard regression coefficient results for private-school students were similarly non-significant for the *Spiritual Values and Attitudes* scales in Table 9 and the *Spiritual Practices* scales in Table 10. I speculate from these consistent results that similarities exist between the way that public-school graduates and private-school graduates responded to the questions comprising each of these scales.

Home-school graduates produced only one significant result for scales related to spiritual self-concept. The standardized regression coefficient for the UCLA *Equanimity* scale was significant and negative suggesting that students who graduated from public high schools are more likely than home-school graduates to experience the internal benefits often associated with the spiritual life such as being thankful for all that has happened, finding meaning in times of hardship, and seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 49). The literature reviewed provides no evidence to substantiate (or challenge) these results.

The type of high school from which students graduated produced only one significant coefficient in relations to students' spiritual beliefs. Table 12 presents evidence that graduates of religious and private high schools hold similar patterns of

spiritually-oriented beliefs to their peers who graduated from public schools, but home-school graduates are less likely than their public-schooled peers to respond positively to questions “reflecting the degree to which the student seeks to follow religious teachings in everyday life” (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 47).

The standardized regression coefficients for high-school type produced mixed results for the *Evangelical Beliefs* and *Evangelical Practices* scales presented in Table 13. Consistent with previous scales, private high-school graduates produced non-significant results for both of these scales suggesting that they are similar to their public-schooled peers in their responses to the questions comprising these scales.

Religious-school graduates produced significant coefficients for both scales, though the direction was different for each scale. Results suggest that public school graduates are more likely than their religious-schooled peers to respond positively to questions about belief in God and belief in life after death (*Evangelical Beliefs* scale), while religious-school graduates are more likely than their public-school peers to respond positively to questions about service to their religious community, finding spirituality as a source of joy, and to whether they have had spiritual experiences while attending a house of worship and while praying (*Evangelical Practices* scale). This result, as with previous outcomes for religious-school graduates, is puzzling and I believe is most likely related to the variety of schools that may be represented in this category.

The standardized regression coefficients for home-school students are significant and positive for both scales in Table 13. These results suggest that home-schooled students are more likely than their public-schooled peers to hold more strongly to beliefs

and practices associated most closely to the evangelical faith that characterize many of the institutions represented in this study.

Religious Identification/Born-Again

Students' identification as being "born-again" resulted in positive and significant standard regression coefficient results on all scales of spiritual engagement. The four scales related to spiritual values and attitudes are presented in Table 9. Results demonstrate that the students in this sample who identify as a born-again Christian are more likely than their peers, who identify with other or no religious perspectives, to respond positively to the questions that comprise the scales included in the CCCU *Spiritual Values and Attitudes* scale which includes UCLA scales, *Ethic of Caring*, *Spiritual Identification* and *Spiritual Quest*. The *Ethic of Caring* scale assesses "the student's degree of commitment to values such as helping others in difficulty, reducing pain and suffering in the world, and making the world a better place" (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 52). Astin et al. (2011a) state that items from the *Spiritual Identification* scale "reflect one's propensity to see oneself and others in 'spiritual' terms" (p. 46) and the *Spiritual Quest* scale "assesses the student's interest in searching for meaning/purpose in life, finding answers to the mysteries of life, and developing a meaningful philosophy of life (p. 47). These results suggest that students identifying as born-again are more likely than their peers to view themselves in spiritually-oriented ways (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 46-47).

Table 10 reveals that students' identification as a born-again Christian produced strong positive results for all scales of the spiritual practices component of the research

question. Religious identification/born-again resulted in the highest standardized regression coefficient among the eight independent variables for the CCCU *Practices* scale and its contributing UCLA scales, *Religious Engagement*. Astin et al. (2011a) describe the *Religious Engagement* scale as “an ‘external’ measure that represents the behavioral counterpart to Religious Commitment” and “includes behaviors such as attending religious services, praying, and reading sacred texts” (p. 49). Students identifying themselves as born-again also produced higher results for the *Charitable Involvement* scale, which Astin et al. (2011a) describe as a “behavioral measure that includes activities such as community service, donating money to charity, and helping friends with personal problems” (p. 52).

While this outcome is not necessarily surprising for students in the present research, these results find little direct support in the literature reviewed. Railsback (2006), in research examining students attending CCCU schools and utilizing the Higher Education Research Institute’s CIRP *Freshman Survey*, observes that students attending CCCU schools (and therefore in school environments where a significant majority of students would identify as born-again) are more likely to “attend religious services” than their peers in other institution types (p. 56). This appears to support at least one aspect of these results.

Table 11 presents the standardized regression coefficients for religious identification by the scales chosen to represent the spiritual self-concept component of the research question. Students’ who identify with a born-again experience of Christianity produced significant results for all scales on this table and produced the

highest regression coefficients for the CCCU *Self-Concept* scale and its contributing scale, UCLA *Equanimity*. The CCCU *Self-Concept* scale is comprised of two UCLA scales including *Equanimity* and *Compassionate Self-Concept*. Astin et al. (2011a) have described the *Equanimity* scale as an indication of “the extent to which the student feels at peace/centered, is able to find meaning in times of hardship, and feels good about the direction of his/her life” (p. 47). The *Compassionate Self-Concept* scale reflects the student’s self-ratings of qualities such as “compassion, kindness, generosity, and forgiveness” (p. 52).

Table 12 demonstrates a strong association between students’ religious identification and their spiritually-oriented beliefs. The standardized regression coefficient for religious identification is the highest of the eight independent variables in relation to the CCCU *Beliefs* scale. Students who identify as born-again are more likely than their peers who do not identify with this religious perspective to exhibit “internal” qualities “reflecting the degree to which they follow religious teachings in everyday life, find religion to be personally helpful, and gain personal strength from trusting in a higher power” (Astin et al., 2011a, p. 47).

Students who identify as born-again produced higher scores on the *Evangelical Beliefs* and *Evangelical Practices* scales presented in Table 13. For both scales, the religious identification variable produced the highest standardized regression coefficient among the eight pre-college characteristics used in this study. These results suggest that students who identify as born-again are more likely than their peers who do not identify as born-again to hold to the distinctive evangelical beliefs and evangelical practices that

are reflected in the questions chosen for these scales and which are likely to be present in the schools represented in this study.

While little research is available through which to interpret these findings, Railsback's (2006) longitudinal study examining changes over time in the beliefs and practices of evangelical students in CCCU schools, in comparison to evangelical students in secular schools, concludes that "students that have strong religious beliefs self-select to attend CCCU institutions and find there a nurturing environment for their religious beliefs and practices" (p. 56). Students' self-selection to schools who hold like beliefs and practices to that of the student may illuminate the strength of the results for the *Evangelical Beliefs* and *Evangelical Practices* scales presented in Table 13.

Conclusion

The data analyses results reviewed in this chapter suggest a number of significant relationships between students' pre-college background characteristics and indicators of students' spiritual engagement as they enter college. Chapter 5 discusses these results and their implications for educators at colleges and universities with mission-driven faith and spiritual development goals for the students who choose these schools for their higher education.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter summarizes and discusses the results of the research presented in this dissertation. The first sections summarize the study and the findings. The next section discusses the results of the data analyses, followed by the implications for theory and practice. The chapter concludes by discussing the study's limitations and opportunities for future research arising from this study.

Summary of the Study

The present study is predicated on the resurging interest among higher education researchers in the importance and place of spirituality in the education of college and university students (Astin, 2004; Astin et al., 2005; Astin et al., 2011b; Chickering et al., 2006; Lindholm, 2006; Lindholm et al., 2011). Scholarly research demonstrates the growing interest in spirituality and spiritual growth among the U. S. population (Gallup & Jones, 2000; Gallup & Lindsay, 1999; Tisdell, 2003; and Wuthnow, 1998a), teens and emerging adults (Dean, 2010; Smith & Denton, 2005; Smith et al., 2002; and Smith & Snell, 2009), and particularly among students attending colleges and universities in the U. S. (Astin et al., 2005; Astin et al. 2011b; Lindholm, 2007). Acknowledging the desire of some colleges and universities to affect students' spiritual engagement and growth (CCCU *Profile*, 2012; Lindholm et al., 2011; Rine, 2012), this study examines the spiritual engagement of students entering colleges and universities affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in the fall of 2004. The purpose of the

study is to provide educators and administrators with insights to support their efforts to affect students' spiritual and faith development during their university years.

Summary of Findings

The results suggest that students' pre-college background characteristics are indeed related to students' spiritual engagement. Despite the low adjusted R^2 results the multiple regression analyses yielded a substantial number of significant standardized regression coefficients indicating significant relationships between a number of the pre-college characteristics chosen for this study and the measures of the dependent variable, spiritual engagement.

Of the eight independent variables used in this study, all eight resulted in significant standardized regression coefficients for at least one of the thirteen scales of the dependent variable. Though results are mixed by strength and direction, the results of the statistical analyses suggest several strong associations between spiritual engagement and some of the pre-college characteristics.

Gender and religious identification (self-identification as born-again) exhibited the strongest relationships among the eight independent variables, producing significant regression coefficients for all of the thirteen spiritual engagement scales. The results for both variables were all positive suggesting that women vary significantly from men in their responses to the questions comprising these scales and that students who identify as having had a born-again religious experience vary significantly in their responses from students who do not identify as born-again.

High-school grade point average, which is used in the study to represent pre-college academic achievement, produced positive and significant results for twelve of the thirteen spiritual engagement scales. Results for this variable suggest that students with higher high-school academic achievement vary significantly from their peers with lower high-school grade point averages.

Several pre-college characteristics produced mixed results for both the ANOVA and multiple regression analyses resulting in more significant than non-significant outcomes, but mixed in direction. The race/ethnicity variable yielded eleven significant results between students of color and Caucasian students on the ANOVA for the thirteen spiritual engagement scales. Six of these scales resulted in higher means for students of color. The students of color indicator produced nine significant regression coefficients for the thirteen spiritual engagement scales. Seven of these outcomes, all for UCLA-derived scales, produced higher coefficients for students of color than for their Caucasian peers, while the two evangelical faith scales produced higher coefficients for Caucasian students.

The type of high school from which students graduated produced a number of directionally mixed results for religious/parochial-school graduates and home-school graduates, but with no significant results for private-school graduates. Scant research is available against which to interpret these results, but the outcomes suggest a relationship between the setting of a students' high school education and their spiritual engagement as they enter college.

Students' age also yielded a number of significant, though directionally mixed, results. While age appears to be associated with students' spiritual engagement as they enter college, the research literature offers little insight for interpreting these findings.

First-generation college attendance and parents' income level, both used as measures of socio-economic status, produced fewer significant associations for spiritual engagement. While the ANOVA for first-generation produced eight significant differences in spiritual engagement means, six of which were lower for first-generation students, the first-generation variable produced only four significant standardized regression coefficients, all negative, suggesting that non-first-generation students responded more positively to questions on these scales than their first-generation peers. The income variable produced two significant regression coefficients, one negative and one positive.

Discussion

In his insightful exposition of higher education from twenty-five years ago, *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America*, Boyer (1987) asked the questions: "Education for what purpose? Competence to what end?" Boyer suggested that effective higher education should be involved in "shaping values" and permitting students to probe "personal priorities" (p. 283). Launching the ground-breaking research on which the present study is based, Astin (2004) contends that higher education is fragmented in ways that divorces our academic pursuits—for students *and* faculty—from our most deeply

held values (p. 38). Astin challenges the academic community to give “spirituality a central place” (p. 41) in our mutual pursuit of higher education.

Addressing Protestant evangelical colleges and universities, much like the CCCU schools represented in this study, Rice (1994) notes the “bold claims about their positive effect on student faith and worldview” made by these schools (p. 33) and concludes his review of research conducted in evangelical schools by stating that “Protestant evangelical colleges’ effect on student faith and worldview is mixed” (p. 51). Yet until recently, little research has been conducted in the intervening years at schools like those Rice addresses to determine if advancement toward these spiritually-oriented educational outcomes is being achieved.

Noting the challenges offered by Boyer and Astin and recognizing Rice’s critique of schools’ efforts to effect spiritual change in their students, the next section considers the findings of the present research with the goal of understanding how colleges and universities can enable students’ exploration and engagement with the interior aspects of their lives (Astin, 2004). This research is grounded in the “Input-Environment-Output” model of higher education assessment proposed by Astin (2002) which postulates that we must have some “gauge of where students began” (Astin, 1993, p. 13) to understand fully the impact of educational environments on desired outcomes.

Gender and Spiritual Engagement

While the scholarly research finds spirituality to be important to some degree for both women and men (Astin et al., 2005; Longwood, et al., 2004; Milot & Ludden, 2009)

the research examined for this study provides clear evidence of differences between the spiritual and religious practices of women and men. Smith et al. (2002), in their study of the religious lives of American adolescents, note that the differences observed between men's and women's spiritual practices appear as early as the teenage years. Studies of the spiritual and religious life and practices of women and men during the college years reveals that women seem to be more "committed" to spirituality and religion than their male peers (Lindholm, 2005); are more involved with spiritual practices such as prayer and meditation (Buckho, 2004); are more likely to attend religious services (Astin et al., 2011b; Cherry et al., 2001; Wuthnow, 1998a); and are more likely to participate in campus religious activities (Cherry et al., 2001) than college men.

The literature also reflects differences in the intrinsic impact of spirituality between women and their male counterparts. Knox et al. (1998), found women, more than men, to hold an intrinsic orientation to spirituality (1998, p. 431), while Zinnbauer & Pargament (1998) found that women "generally increased in spirituality over time more than men" and derived greater benefit from these changes than men leading to a greater "self-reliance" (p. 176). Tisdell (2003) contends that "women are more fully conscious of it [their spirituality] than men" and that it is a more significant part of their self-identity (pp. 136-137). Utilizing data from the *College Students' Beliefs and Values* pilot survey, Bryant (2007a) observed differences in "spiritual qualities" and "patterns of spiritual development" (p. 1). These findings suggest that spirituality has a different meaning for women than for men and that its value and practice holds a different place in their lives.

The results of the present research clearly support these findings. Every scale of spiritual engagement produced stronger associations for women than for men in this study. While these results are not unexpected in relation to the evidence offered by the scholarly research, I was somewhat surprised by the strength of the findings. Several studies note commonalities of belief, practice, and worldview among students who choose the kind of university experience offered by schools such as member schools of the CCCU (Bowman & Small; 2010; Kuh & Gonyea, 2006; Paredes-Collins & Collins, 2011; Railsback, 2006). If such similarity of beliefs, practices, and worldviews were to be true across gender, I wondered if men and women who choose CCCU schools for their college education would produce more comparable results than those identified in the larger population in the research literature. Clearly, this is not the case.

Female students attending CCCU schools exhibit significant differences in spiritual values and attitudes, practices, self-concept, and beliefs, as measured by the scales in this survey, in comparison to their male peers. Based on women's responses to the questions in this survey, spirituality is a greater part of their understanding of self, their search for meaning and purpose in their lives, the activities they value and to which they give their time, and to the beliefs that undergird each of these components. This is also true for the distinctive beliefs and practices reflected in the items comprising the *Evangelical Beliefs* and *Evangelical Practices* scales.

Race/Ethnicity and Spiritual Engagement

Race and ethnicity stood out as a significant and interesting pre-college characteristic in relation to spiritual engagement for students in this study. Most of the literature reviewed for this study examined the spirituality of African American versus Caucasian students. Very little research was found that gave attention to college-student spirituality for other racial/ethnic groups.

The research reviewed reveals differences between African American students and Caucasian students on a number of points. Taylor et al. (1996) cited differences in religious involvement, in both public and private realms, between African American students and white students, finding that African American students demonstrated higher levels of involvement in both areas. Brown & Gary (1991) and Donahoo & Caffey (2010) suggest that religious participation and students' involvement with religious communities have a positive impact on students' academic performance and academic success during the college years. Paredes-Collins & Collins (2011), studying students in CCCU schools and using the 2007 *College Students' Beliefs and Values* follow-up survey, also found significant differences between non-white and white students in relation to religious commitment, which was higher for white students, and students' commitment to making a difference in the world, which was higher for non-white students. In addition, several studies connect religious practices and participation in religious communities to ethnic identity development for African American students suggesting that students' cultural community may have a modifying effect on the way

religiosity impacts students' experiences in higher education settings (Sanchez & Carter, 2005; Stewart, 2002).

Eight of the UCLA scales in this study produced significant relationships that were stronger for students of color than for their Caucasian peers. In addition, for two of the eight scales, *Ethic of Caring* and *Spiritual Quest*, race/ethnicity generated the strongest association among the eight pre-college characteristics. While the literature seems to predict this outcome for African American students, there is a dearth of available research examining spirituality in other racial/ethnic groups. This finding could be interpreted to suggest that the differences between Caucasian and African American students suggested in the scholarly research may extend more broadly to students of color—at least as represented in this sample.

Another interesting outcome for the race/ethnicity variable is the two scales for which Caucasian students had higher values than students of color. While only the *Evangelical Beliefs* scale resulted in a significant relationship, both evangelical faith scales yielded higher values for Caucasian students than for students of color.

The evangelical scales were designed to reflect distinctive beliefs and practices that are likely to be present in CCCU colleges. While I interpret this finding cautiously in light of the fact that not all faculty and administrators in these colleges would recognize the items as reflective of distinctive beliefs and practices in their institutions, I find it noteworthy that these scales are the only ones that appear to reverse the effect of race. This finding points to the importance of Paredes-Collins & Collins' (2011) contention that "If colleges are not intentional about creating an adaptive spiritual

environment where students of different backgrounds, races, and denominations can find some sense of familiarity, marginalization continues” (p. 95). In light of the fact that many of these colleges have goals to strengthen diversity and inclusiveness, alongside their spiritual-formation goals, it is important for colleges and universities to recognize differences among students of differing racial and ethnic backgrounds as they relate to their spiritual engagement as they arrive on CCCU campuses to begin their higher education.

High-School Academic Achievement and Spiritual Engagement

The results of this research illustrate the significance of high-school academic achievement, measured by high-school grade point average, on students’ spiritual engagement as they enter college. The literature reviewed notes the connection between spirituality and education as a whole, and specifically the relationship of religious participation and religious activities to positive academic outcomes. Regnerus (2000) observes that involvement with church-related activities was positively related to “educational expectations” and educational outcomes (p. 369) in high-school-aged students. Park (2001) found that more religious students, across differing ethnic backgrounds, were likely to “outperform less religious students in academic achievement” (p. 373), while Milot and Ludden (2009) conclude that attending religious services is positively associated with higher grades in adolescents. Regnerus (2003) notes that students who are more “devoutly religious” are more likely to have higher

educational expectations for themselves (p. 402) resulting in positive educational outcomes.

While there is only a minimal degree of variance in reported high-school grade point averages for the students in this sample (only 5.6 percent report grade point averages below B), the regression analysis yielded twelve significant relationships among the thirteen spiritual engagement scales. All but one of these was positive, suggesting that students with higher high-school grade point averages were more likely to respond positively to spiritual engagement questions. The only scale for which lower grade point average students generated a stronger association was the *UCLA Compassionate Self-Concept* scale that reflects students' ratings of themselves in relation to kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and generosity. Perhaps it suggests that higher-achieving students are more self-critical than their lower academic-achieving peers.

The results for higher grade point average students are especially noteworthy for the scales that measure students' practices and beliefs in relation to spirituality, including the *Evangelical Beliefs* and *Evangelical Practices* scales. The results suggest a strong relationship between high academic performance and the place that spiritual practices and spiritual beliefs hold in their lives. One possible explanation of this association may be seen in research conducted by Regnerus and Elder (2003) linking the "ritual action" and stable community relationships that often characterize religious participation to the kind of community and discipline that results in strong academic achievement.

High-School Type and Spiritual Engagement

The high-school type variable was utilized to compare public high-school graduates to graduates from three other types of high school (private-schooled, religious/parochial-schooled, and home-schooled) in relation to students' spiritual engagement as they enter college.

Students' graduation from religious/parochial schools showed significant, though directionally mixed, relationships to spiritual engagement. These findings are difficult to interpret in light of the content of the significant scales and the direction of the relationship. Public-school graduates entering CCCU schools yielded stronger associations than religious/parochial-school graduates for the CCCU *Values and Attitudes* scale, the CCCU *Self-Concept* scale, the UCLA *Compassionate Self-Concept* scale and the *Evangelical Beliefs* scale. I find these results surprising from the perspective that students graduating from religious/parochial high schools had lower spiritual engagement than their public-schooled peers. The most puzzling finding for religious/parochial-school graduates is the result for UCLA *Compassionate Self-Concept* scale, which measures students' self-rating in comparison to others on spiritual characteristics such as kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and generosity. Public-schooled students not only produced a stronger association than their religious/parochial-schooled peers, but they generated the strongest association among the eight pre-college characteristics for the UCLA *Compassionate Self-Concept* scale.

Students graduating from home schooling also produced several significant, though directionally mixed, results in comparison to their public-schooled peers. Of the

eight significant results for home-schooled graduates, half yielded stronger associations for public-schooled graduates and half were stronger for home-schooled graduates. It is interesting to note that home-schooled graduates generated stronger associations for both of the evangelical faith scales compared to their public-schooled peers.

The scarcity of literature examining associations between spirituality, religious practices, and the type of high school students attended makes it difficult to interpret these findings, though it appears clear that the type of high school students graduated from has some degree of effect on students' spiritual engagement as they enter college.

Religious Identification and Spiritual Engagement

The most surprising and interesting result of this study relates to the variable used to ascertain how students identify themselves spiritually or religiously. Initially, I had difficulty deciding what question or questions from the 2004 CIRP *Freshman Survey* and the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* would be most appropriate to represent meaningful difference in the religious identification of students who had chosen to attend the distinctive kinds of colleges and universities represented in the CCCU. I considered a question inquiring about denominational background, but many Christian students today are not aware of the denominational affiliation of their church. I also considered the self-rating of religiousness or spirituality. In the end, the question, "Do you consider yourself to be a born-again Christian?" seemed to provide the most meaningful differentiation for the purposes of this study. A born-again experience (or perspective) of Christianity is

closely related to the “Christ-centered” perspective of spirituality adhered to by colleges and universities affiliated with the CCCU (Rine, 2012).

While a few research studies examine the relationship of religious identity to components of spiritual engagement as conceptualized in this study, I found none that approached this question from the viewpoint of the born-again experience of Christianity specifically. Bowman and Small (2010) explore the experiences and spiritual growth of students from diverse religious backgrounds at public institutions as well as faith-based institutions. Suggesting that “spiritual development may constitute one of the most important outcomes of the college experience” (p. 595) they challenge practitioners and administrators at each kind of school to recognize the religiously diverse students on their campuses and “to promote spiritual growth in all of their students’ lives” (p. 611). Bryant (2005) likewise researched the “experiences of entering first-year students who are not in the religious majority” and whose “perspectives are not situated within the Christian worldview” (p. 3) that prevails culturally in the United States. Bryant’s contention that “the worldviews that students bring with them to college serve as the lenses they use to make sense of their encounters within the classroom and beyond it” (p. 24) may also provide insight into the results produced by the religious identification variable in this study.

Nearly 15 percent of the students in this study responded “no” to the question: “Do you consider yourself to be a born-again Christian?” In light of the denominational diversity present in many CCCU schools, this result is not particularly unexpected, though students’ differing responses to questions composing the scales of spiritual

engagement were somewhat surprising. The results of the statistical analysis suggest that students' born-again experience is significantly related to all of the thirteen scales of spiritual engagement. The only other pre-college characteristic to produce such strong associations is gender. In addition, the religious identification variable resulted in nine of the thirteen highest standardized regression coefficients suggesting that religious identification is the strongest predictor of spiritual engagement, as conceptualized by the model used in this study, for students entering CCCU colleges. This is an important finding in light of the evangelically oriented perspective of Christianity that prevails on CCCU campuses. The knowledge that the students who do not identify as being born-again responded differently to questions related to spiritual engagement due, at least in part, to their differing perspective of Christianity, is important for educators in CCCU schools.

Summary

Each of the pre-college characteristics chosen for this study was found to have at least one significant association among the spiritual engagement scales, though not all appear to be equally useful in providing insight into students' spiritual engagement. Parents' income and first-generation college attendance, each utilized in this study as measures of socio-economic status, resulted in a small number of significant, though directionally mixed results. Although I had anticipated the possibility that these variables would provide insight into students' spiritual engagement as they enter college, the findings of the statistical analyses used in this study suggest otherwise.

Likewise, students' age did not prove useful in understanding students' spiritual engagement. Students' age yielded a number of significant associations among the scales of spiritual engagement, but these outcomes were directionally mixed. While most of the nine significant associations for this variable favor older students, the low variability of age in this sample makes these outcomes difficult to interpret and of little use in understanding students' spiritual engagement as they enter college.

The results of this study suggest that gender, race/ethnicity, academic achievement as measured by high-school grade point average, high-school type, and religious identification/born-again seem to be the most useful pre-college characteristics to provide insight into students' spiritual engagement as they begin college. I will consider these characteristics further as I discuss the implications of these findings for theory and practice in higher education settings.

Implications

The results of this study suggest a number of implications for theory and practice in higher education settings. This section discusses those implications.

Implications for Theory

The findings of this research suggest that clear differences exist in the spiritual engagement of students as they begin their higher education in CCCU schools, yet little research is available to shed light on these results. Even less research has examined these effects in colleges and universities similar to those represented in this study.

A number of implications for theory can be deduced from this research. First, while the literature review examines theories of faith and spiritual development (Fowler, 1981; Parks, 1986 & 2000; Westerhoff, 1976/2000), and while these theories are acknowledged in some of the scholarly research, little of the research examined for this study provided evidence of the ways in which faith and spiritual development theory inform the research conducted on spirituality in higher education settings. At the theoretical level, Parks (1986, 2000) proposes a “young adult” stage of faith development that addresses the processes of faith change for students during their college years. Research that links the “forms” of faith development hypothesized in Parks’ theory to the observed change in college students’ spirituality may provide greater insight into what lies behind the interpersonal and intrapersonal change observed in the literature.

While a substantial amount of literature is available to understand the differences in women’s and men’s spirituality, and to some degree differences in race and ethnicity, as a whole, little research is available to understand what affects the development of spirituality. The lack of research on spirituality and spiritual change during the college years provided the stimulus for the UCLA study on which the present research is based (Astin, 2004). The *Spirituality in Higher Education* research has motivated a number of follow-up studies examining the effect of spirituality on education and education on spirituality, yet there appear to be substantial gaps in explaining these reciprocal effects in the research literature. While results of the present research may provide some insight into college students’ spirituality by demonstrating differences in engagement across different characteristics, I infer from the low adjusted R^2 values for the spiritual

engagement scales in this study that the identification of additional factors, beyond those highlighted in this study, is necessary to understand differences in spiritual engagement as conceptualized here.

A final implication for theory arising from this study is the need for a greater understanding of student spirituality as it emerges in colleges and universities that hold distinctively Christ-centered faith perspectives, such as those that are the focus of this research. Railsback (2006) and Lovik (2010) both note the part that students' choice plays in their enrollment at schools like those represented in this study. Understanding the elements of culture that make these institutions distinctive and attractive to students and understanding the factors which lead students to choose them may be important in developing a complete understanding of students' spiritual engagement during their college years in CCCU schools.

Implications for Practice

The *Spirituality in Higher Education* research conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA found that students entering college in the fall of 2004 had “very high levels of spiritual interest and involvement” and “high expectations for the role their institutions will play in their...spiritual development. They place great value on their college enhancing their self-understanding, helping them develop personal values, and encouraging their expression of spirituality” (Astin et al., 2005, p. 3). The students in the present study are also a part of the UCLA research sample from which this finding emerged and so are represented in this finding.

The present study suggests that for colleges and universities to provide environments that effectively enable students' growth in spirituality and faith, it is important to know where students begin this journey and the differences that exist in students' spiritual engagement across differing background characteristics as they enter college. The results of this research provide clear evidence that students do differ in significant ways in their spiritual engagement as they entered schools affiliated with the CCCU in the fall of 2004. The most notable differences occurred across gender, race/ethnicity, high-school academic achievement, the type of high school students graduated from, and students' religious identification.

The findings of the present research have a number of implications for practice for administrators, staff, and faculty in CCCU schools, some of which may be helpful for religious colleges and universities outside those affiliated with the CCCU as well. The most important implication of this study is that while CCCU schools hold a common "Christ-centered," and often evangelical, perspective of Christianity, the students who choose these colleges for their higher education exhibit significant variation in their engagement to spirituality, at least at the point when they enter college.

Differences in the way men and women value and practice spirituality suggest another implication of this research. Clear differences in spiritual engagement across gender are demonstrated in the results of this study. Schools that want to facilitate students' spiritual maturity must realize that these differences, both in the quality and practice of spirituality, exist between their female and male students. To facilitate spiritual growth effectively for both, different approaches and practices for spiritual

formation may be necessary. Assessment of the spiritual engagement of students at each individual school may provide educators with knowledge of the specific differences present in students who choose their school and offer insight for the design of effective spiritual formation efforts grounded in the uniqueness of their student body. Student spirituality is impacted by a number of factors, both environmental and intrapersonal, so institutions may wish to develop plans for regular assessment of students' spiritual engagement as they enter college to provide useful information for ongoing evaluation and planning of schools' spiritual development initiatives.

Response to the differences found by race and ethnicity might follow a similar process. Still, it is important to note the outcomes of this study as they relate to differences across race/ethnicity. Students of color had higher scores on every significant UCLA derived spiritual engagement scale than Caucasian students while the distinctive aspects of faith that are likely to be present in CCCU colleges—represented in the *Evangelical Beliefs* scale—had higher values among Caucasian students. This finding could be interpreted to suggest that the beliefs of Christianity that are most likely present in CCCU colleges may not be as reflective of the beliefs held by the students of color who enroll in these colleges as compared to their Caucasian counterparts. The findings of research conducted by Paredes-Collins and Collins (2011), whose subjects were also students attending CCCU schools, could be interpreted, in a limited sense, as supporting this result. This finding suggests that educators may need to find methods to evaluate the differences that exist in spiritual engagement among their entering students and develop

approaches to include different perspectives on the Christian faith into the distinctive culture present in many of these schools.

The results for the religious identification variable are both surprising and interesting. Fifteen percent of the students in this sample responded “no” to the question “Do you consider yourself to be a born-again Christian?” even though over 95 percent of the sample reported their religious preference as some form of Christianity. This result suggests that CCCU schools attract a significant number of Christian students outside of Protestant evangelical Christianity, which is often known, in part, by its recognition of a conversion experience (i.e., born-again). It is important for educators and administrators to recognize the differences in beliefs and practices among students, most of whom identify as Christian, if their schools are to develop approaches to faith development that take students from where they are spiritually as they enter college and move them further along the journey of spiritual formation. It is important to remember Bryant’s (2006) admonition that “the worldviews that students bring to college serve as the lenses they use to make sense of their encounters in the classroom and beyond” (p. 24) and that “Understanding students’ perspectives enables us as educators to consider how the services and teaching we provide might be interpreted [by the student] depending on the individual’s ideological frame of reference” (p. 24). The perspective of Christianity held by students as they enter college not only affects their spiritual engagement, as demonstrated in the results of this research, but also serves as the foundational worldview on which the entirety of their college education will rest.

It would be easy to assume similarity in spiritual engagement among Christian students attending these distinctively Christian schools, yet the evidence from this research suggests that this assumption is inappropriate. Educators must recognize that differences in students' backgrounds affect students' engagement to spirituality as they enter college. Those who care about the outcome of students' spiritual journey during the college years must realize that students do not all begin in the same place. In fact, to one degree or another, each student begins in a unique place. Effective spiritual formation programs will be those that recognize these differences and see them as individual and collective opportunities to engage in the celebration of the journey toward spiritual maturity as a community.

Limitations of this Study

Several limitations exist related to the sample, design, and instrumentation chosen for this research that should be kept in mind when interpreting the study's findings and conclusions. This section reviews these limitations.

The sub-sample for this study is students entering schools affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. The decision to limit the subjects to a specific group of students and to focus the research on a specific group of schools limits the generalizability of the findings to other religiously-oriented schools or to the broad population of schools represented in UCLA's overall study.

A second limitation of this study is its instrumentation. While the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey*, developed by researchers at the Higher Education

Research Institute at UCLA, is now well-established and has received a great deal of attention in educational research, the theoretical underpinnings do not have a precise fit with the conceptual model developed for this study. In addition, my choice to fit the established UCLA scales to the four components of my conceptual model rather than developing wholly new scales, while producing results that are more easily compared to the entire survey population, limits their ability to match the distinctive values, practices and beliefs of the schools represented in this study.

Another limitation is the method of data collection. Data for this study were accessed through the Professional Development and Research division of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. The Council received the data directly from the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. While the sample is large, it may not be random. Participating schools choose their own methods for involving students in the survey. Some participating schools may have selected a random sample of their students, while other schools may have surveyed the entirety of their entering class or may have used another approach. The data provided to the researcher was blind as to both students and participating institutions, so it is impossible to know how the schools included in the data set solicited student participation. In addition, while each school is a member of the CCCU and commits to certain standards and practices that provide a degree of similarity between them, there is no way to verify what schools are represented in the data set, and so it is impossible to ascertain specific school characteristics such as institutional culture, admissions criteria, academic standards, denominational influence, and spiritual beliefs, all of which may provide greater insight into the findings of the research.

A fourth limitation is the model itself. The conceptual model used in this study draws upon Astin's model for assessment in higher education (2002). Astin's model uses student input (pre-college background) characteristics, coupled with college environmental factors, to predict desired student outcomes. While the conceptual model guiding the present research was chosen intentionally for the purpose of this study, it limits application of the full predictive nature of Astin's model by not examining environmental factors at the colleges and universities represented in this sample. In addition, a longitudinal study in which students are re-surveyed at a later point in time would provide a richer understanding of the effect of the college environment on change in students' spirituality. The final stages of the *Spirituality in Higher Education* study uses this method for the wider survey population (Astin et al., 2011a; Astin et al., 2011b).

A final limitation is a personal one. I bring a Protestant evangelical framework to my research. While I have made efforts to minimize its impact in the design, research choices, and interpretation of findings, I believe it is impossible to set aside completely one's own worldview in a project of this nature.

Directions for Future Research

The purpose of the present study necessitated a research design that placed limitations on its generalizability to students beyond those entering their first year of college and to schools beyond those with affiliation to the CCCU. Due to these intentional limitations, opportunities may exist to extend this research, such as through a longitudinal design that re-surveys these students at a later point in time. Rice (1994),

writing to evangelical colleges about their efforts to assess their impact on students' faith and worldview, contends that "Longitudinal studies are essential. We must be able to study what happens to individual students during their college years" (p. 51). The *Spirituality in Higher Education* study, conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, on which the present study is based, has done that with the broader *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* population (Astin et al. 2011a; Astin et al., 2011b; Lindholm et al., 2011). Little published research examines these longitudinal outcomes for students in faith-based schools.

A second opportunity exists to extend the research in the present study beyond the group of faith-based schools used here. Research could be conducted that includes faith-based schools beyond those represented in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, as well as research that could use the conceptual design utilized in the present study for colleges and universities that have no religious mission or affiliation.

Perko (1991), in his historiographic survey of religious higher education in the U.S., critiques the fact that many of the studies reviewed for his research focused primarily on "individual religious institutions" and that this kind of research "failed to consistently situate their subjects within the broader frames of reference" (p. 441) that give meaning to the research. Though his comments referred most directly to research and writing that focused on the histories of faith-based schools, the same might be said of much of the research conducted in faith-based colleges and universities today, two decades later. Although this situation is beginning to change, there is still a substantial opportunity to conduct research in these distinctive, often smaller, faith-based schools,

using research methodologies that permit a greater generalizability and comparability to research being conducted in the wider higher education community.

The present study developed two unique scales from the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* that attempted to reflect the distinctiveness of spiritual faith that is often found in CCCU schools. However, for the purpose of developing this study in such a way that findings could easily be examined alongside the findings of the broader UCLA study population, eight UCLA scales were adapted to the conceptual model developed for this research. Though I anticipate that the results of this study will be useful to educators in CCCU schools and may be generalized to some extent to other faith-based schools, I suggest that an opportunity for future research exists by designing additional scales from the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* that more closely reflect the distinctive values, practices, and beliefs of faith-based schools.

While a majority of studies reviewed in this research use quantitative methods to research spirituality, participant observation and interviews were used in a study conducted by Bryant (2008) to understand how the religious identity of evangelical students “impacts their college experience and what their presence on campus means for higher education” (p. 1). The richness and detail of the data produced through this methodological approach reveals the limitation of purely quantitative methods to understand student spirituality. I recommend that future research consider the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

Research on student background characteristics in relation to spirituality is not original, especially in relation to the *College Students' Beliefs and Values* study, but the

present research examined several background characteristics that are not widely addressed in the educational literature, neither in faith-based institutions or the wider educational community. While gender, race/ethnicity, and elements of what this study addresses as “religious identification” have often been addressed, age, socio-economic status, and first-generation college attendance have been the focus of little research relating spirituality and college students. I recommend that these background characteristics, and others, be given further consideration as they relate to the spiritual engagement and spiritual growth of students in college and university environments.

Finally, related to his challenge that spirituality be given “a central place” in our educational communities, Astin (2004) contends that including the interior life “will serve to strengthen our sense of connectedness with each other, our students, and our institutions” (p. 41). This challenge includes not only the spiritual lives of students, but those of faculty as well. Research conducted by Lindholm and Astin (2006) focuses on “the role that spirituality plays in the lives of college and university faculty and examines the extent to which variations exist based on personal demographics, professional and institutional characteristics, and affective experiences” (p. 64). This is one of only a few studies that considers spirituality in relation to the faculty whose lives, work, and presence are demonstrated to have the most significant impact on students overall engagement than any other single element in the college educational environment. I recommend further research that examines the spiritual lives of faculty and staff and the ways in which the spirituality of faculty members intersects with and influences the educational experience of students, as well as students’ spiritual engagement and growth.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the relationship between pre-college background characteristics and the spiritual engagement of entering students at member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. Results of the statistical analyses suggest that gender, race/ethnicity, high-school academic achievement, the type of high school students graduated from, and religious identification/born-again are useful pre-college characteristics for understanding the spiritual engagement of students as they entered colleges and universities affiliated with the CCCU in the fall of 2004. These findings provide researchers and practitioners with further data and insights as they attempt to assess students' spiritual engagement as they enter college and as educators formulate strategies to encourage students in their unique journeys toward spiritual maturity during their college years.

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APPENDIX A

(Council for Christian Colleges and Universities Data Access and Use Agreement)



Council for Christian
Colleges & Universities

Data Access and Use Agreement

CCCU Collaborative Assessment (FIPSE), Quality/Retention, and Comprehensive Assessment Projects

We agree to:

- (1) Use the data that have been supplied to me, a research group that I oversee, or my institution, ethically, as defined by the guidelines from the American Psychological Association (or another professional organization which has formal ethical guidelines for the appropriate use of data from human participants, such as the American Sociological Association).
- (2) Refrain from ever presenting findings (formally or informally) from other colleges or universities in any way that exposes their findings to public scrutiny. I understand that if I (we) desire to present findings from other colleges and universities, we must have formal written approval from an appropriate college or university official before I (we) can do so.
- (3) Refrain from ever reporting data from an individual or group of individuals in such a way that allows them to be identified. I understand that if I (we) desire to publicly present findings about specific individuals in a manner that allows them to be identified, we must have formal written approval from them before I (we) can do so.
- (4) Refrain from sharing the datasets or portions of the datasets that contain data from institutions other than my (our) own with others unless I (we) have formal written approval from a given project's steering committee.
- (5) Supply an executive summary of the research to the CCCU.

Signature of Principal Researcher

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January 30, 2009
Date

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*Scanned copies are preferred.

APPENDIX B

(Institutional Review Board Approval Notification)



| | |
|---|---|
| Study Number: 1010E92298 | Study Subtype: General |
| Study Title(s): | The Effect of Student Background Characteristics on The Spiritual Engagement of Entering College Students |
| Principal Investigator: | Forsica, James A. xforsica@jmu.edu |
| Expiration Date: | |
| Submission History: New Application | Approval Date: 11/04/2010 |

APPENDIX C

(Descriptive Statistics for Student Spiritual Engagement Dependent Variable Scales)

Appendix C: Descriptive statistics for student spiritual engagement dependent variable scales (N=9838).

| Scale | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|-------------|---------------------------|
| CCCU* Values & Attitudes (Cronbach's Alpha = .873) (This scale is composed of combined UCLA scales: <i>Ethic of Caring</i> , <i>Spiritual Identification</i> , and <i>Spiritual Quest</i>) | 78.48 | 10.706 |
| UCLA* Ethic of Caring (Cronbach's Alpha = .761; items 1 & 3 are from the <i>College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey</i> , and items 2 & 4-8 are from the <i>CIRP Freshman Survey</i>) | 17.66 | 3.906 |
| <i>1=Not at all; 2=To some extent; 3=To a great extent</i> The extent to which you participate in: Trying to change things that are unfair in the world | 1.81 | .619 |
| <i>1=Not important; 2=Somewhat important; 3=Very important; 4=Essential</i> The importance to you personally of: Helping others who are in difficulty | 3.03 | .772 |
| The importance to you personally of: Reducing pain and suffering in the world | 2.73 | .815 |
| The importance to you personally of: Helping to promote racial understanding | 2.00 | .852 |
| The importance to you personally of: Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment | 1.62 | .708 |
| The importance to you personally of: Becoming a community leader | 2.15 | .902 |
| The importance to you personally of: Influencing social values | 2.58 | .860 |
| The importance to you personally of: Influencing the political structure | 1.72 | .819 |

* UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) scales are based on items from the College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey. CCCU (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities) scales are sums of UCLA scales, as indicated.

| Scale | Mean Deviation | Standard |
|--|-------------------|----------|
| <i>UCLA Spiritual Identification</i> (Cronbach's Alpha = .788; items 1 & 5 are from the CIRP <i>Freshman Survey</i> , and items 2-4 & 6-13 are from the <i>College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey</i>) | 37.34 | 5.021 |
| <i>1=Not important; 2=Somewhat important; 3=Very important; 4=Essential</i> | | |
| The importance to you personally of: Integrating spirituality into my life | 3.51 | .756 |
| The importance to you personally of: Seeking out opportunities to help me grow spiritually | 3.46 | .723 |
| <i>1=Not at all; 2=To some extent; 3=To a great extent</i> | | |
| The extent to which the following describes you: Having an interest in spirituality | 2.78 | .448 |
| The extent to which the following describes you: Believing in the sacredness of life | 2.59 | .560 |
| <i>1=Lowest 10%; 2=Below average; 3=Average; 4=Above average; 5=Highest 10%</i> | | |
| Rate yourself as compared with the average person your age: Spirituality | 3.85 | .826 |
| <i>1=No; 2=Yes</i> | | |
| Are you on a spiritual quest? (Question was re-categorized from 7 responses on the original survey) | 1.99 | .116 |
| <i>1=Disagree strongly; 2=Disagree somewhat; 3=Agree somewhat; 4=Agree strongly</i> | | |
| Indicate your agreement with: People can reach a higher spiritual plane of consciousness through meditation or prayer | 3.00 | .957 |
| <i>1=Not applicable; 2=Not at all; 3=Occasionally; 4=Frequently</i> | | |
| Have you ever had a spiritual experience while: Listening to beautiful music | 3.16 | .766 |
| Have you ever had a spiritual experience while: Viewing a great work of art | 2.38 | .747 |
| Have you ever had a spiritual experience while: Participating in a musical or artistic performance | 2.63 | .922 |

| Scale | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-------|--------------------|
| Have you ever had a spiritual experience while: Engaging in athletics | 2.34 | .794 |
| Have you ever had a spiritual experience while: Witnessing the beauty and harmony of nature | 3.13 | .782 |
| Have you ever had a spiritual experience while: Meditating | 2.54 | .962 |
| <i>UCLA Spiritual Quest</i> (Cronbach's Alpha = .770; all items are from the <i>College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey</i>) | 23.50 | 4.344 |
| <i>1=Not at all; 2=To some extent; 3=To a great extent</i> | | |
| The extent to which you participate in: Searching for meaning/purpose in life | 2.16 | .642 |
| The extent to which you participate in: Having discussions about the meaning of life with my friends | 2.23 | .645 |
| <i>1=None; 2=Some; 3=Most; 4=All</i> | | |
| How many of your close friends: Are searching for meaning/purpose in life | 2.59 | .799 |
| <i>1=Not important; 2=Somewhat important; 3=Very important; 4=Essential</i> | | |
| The importance to you personally of: Finding answers to the mysteries of life | 2.41 | .902 |
| The importance to you personally of: Attaining inner harmony | 2.46 | .910 |
| The importance to you personally of: Attaining wisdom | 3.21 | .714 |
| The importance to you personally of: Seeking beauty in my life | 2.69 | .897 |
| The importance to you personally of: Developing a meaningful philosophy of life | 2.45 | 1.016 |
| The importance to you personally of: Becoming a more loving person | 3.29 | .747 |

| Scale | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|-------|--------------------|
| CCCU Practices (Cronbach's Alpha = .786) (This scale is composed of combined UCLA scales: <i>Religious Engagement</i> and <i>Charitable Involvement</i>) | 46.67 | 7.278 |
| <i>UCLA Religious Engagement</i> (Cronbach's Alpha = .784; items 1 & 8 are from the CIRP <i>Freshman Survey</i> , and items 2-7 & 9 are from the <i>College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey</i>) | 31.68 | 5.553 |
| <i>1=Not at all; 2=Occasionally; 3=Frequently</i> Engaged in during the past year: Attended a religious service | 2.90 | .329 |
| How often in the past year: Attended a class, workshop, or retreat on matters related to religion/spirituality | 2.21 | .710 |
| <i>1=Not at all; 2=<Monthly; 3=Monthly; 4=Once/week</i> <i>5=>Once/week; 6=Daily</i> How often do you engage in: Reading sacred texts | 4.45 | 1.694 |
| How often do you engage in: Religious singing/ chanting | 4.53 | 1.499 |
| How often do you engage in: Other reading on religion/spirituality | 3.83 | 1.559 |
| How often do you engage in: Prayer | 5.59 | .891 |
| <i>1=No; 2=Yes</i> Do you pray? | 1.98 | .143 |
| <i>1=None; 2=< 1; 3=1-2; 4=3-5; 5=6-10; 6=11-15; 7= 16-20; 8=Over 20</i> During your last year in high school, how much time did you spend during a typical week doing: Prayer/meditation | 3.22 | 1.227 |
| <i>1=None; 2=Some; 3=Most; 4=All</i> How many of your close friends: Go to church/ temple/other house of worship | 2.94 | .675 |

| Scale | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-------|--------------------|
| <i>UCLA Charitable Involvement</i> (Cronbach's Alpha = .653; items 1, 3, 5 & 7 are from the CIRP <i>Freshman Survey</i> , and items 2, 4 & 6 are from the <i>College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey</i>) | 14.98 | 3.158 |
| <i>1=None; 2=< 1; 3=1-2; 4=3-5; 5=6-10; 6=11-15; 7=16-20; 8=Over 20</i> | | |
| During your last year in high school, how much time did you spend during a typical week doing: Volunteer work | 2.79 | 1.430 |
| <i>1=Not at all; 2=Occasionally; 3=Frequently</i> | | |
| How often in the past year: Participated in community food or clothing drives | 1.72 | .602 |
| Engaged in during the past year: Performed volunteer work | 2.23 | .610 |
| How often in the past year: Donated money to charity | 1.95 | .661 |
| Engaged in during the past year: Performed community service as a part of a class | 1.69 | .710 |
| How often in the past year: Helped friends with personal problems | 2.62 | .514 |
| <i>1=Not important; 2=Somewhat important; 3=Very important; 4=Essential</i> | | |
| The importance to you personally of: Participating in a community action program | 1.96 | .818 |
| CCCU Spiritual Self-Concept (Cronbach's Alpha = .755) (This scale is composed of combined UCLA scales: <i>Compassionate Self-Concept</i> and <i>Equanimity</i>) | 28.18 | 3.391 |
| <i>UCLA Compassionate Self-Concept</i> (Cronbach's Alpha = .780; all items are from the CIRP <i>Freshman Survey</i>) | 15.45 | 2.366 |
| <i>1=Lowest 10%; 2=Below average; 3=Average; 4=Above average; 5=Highest 10%</i> | | |
| Rate yourself as compared with the average your age: Kindness | 3.96 | .710 |

| Scale | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-------|--------------------|
| Rate yourself as compared with the average your age: Compassion | 3.92 | .764 |
| Rate yourself as compared with the average your age: Forgiveness | 3.79 | .821 |
| Rate yourself as compared with the average your age: Generosity | 3.96 | .710 |
| <i>UCLA Equanimity</i> (Cronbach's Alpha = .711; all items are from the <i>College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey</i>) | 12.74 | 1.838 |
| <i>1=Not at all; 2=Occasionally; 3=Frequently</i> | | |
| How often in the past year: Been able to find meaning in times of hardship | 2.41 | .577 |
| How often in the past year: Felt at peace/centered | 2.42 | .567 |
| <i>1=Not at all; 2=To some extent; 3=To a great extent</i> | | |
| The extent to which the following describes you: Feeling good about the direction in which my life is heading | 2.61 | .520 |
| The extent to which the following describes you: Being thankful for all that has happened to me | 2.70 | .486 |
| The extent to which the following describes you: Seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift | 2.59 | .553 |
| CCCU Beliefs (Cronbach's Alpha = .922) (This scale is composed only of the <i>UCLA Religious Commitment</i> scale; items 1 & 3-12 are from the <i>College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey</i> and item 2 is from the <i>CIRP Freshman Survey</i>) | 41.80 | 5.591 |
| <i>1=Not important; 2=Somewhat important; 3=Very important; 4=Essential</i> | | |
| The importance to you personally of: Seeking to follow religious teachings in my everyday life | 3.48 | .740 |

| Scale | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|------|--------------------|
| <i>1=Lowest 10%; 2=Below average; 3=Average; 4=Above average; 5=Highest 10%</i> | | |
| Rate yourself as compared with the average person your age: Religiousness | 3.84 | .869 |
| <i>1=Disagree strongly; 2=Disagree somewhat; 3=Agree somewhat; 4=Agree strongly</i> | | |
| Indicate your agreement with: I find religion to be personally helpful | 3.55 | .673 |
| Indicate your agreement with: I gain spiritual strength by trusting in a Higher Power | 3.66 | .630 |
| My spiritual/religious beliefs: Are one of the most important things in my life | 3.69 | .602 |
| My spiritual/religious beliefs: Provide me with strength, support, and guidance | 3.71 | .570 |
| My spiritual/religious beliefs: Give meaning/ purpose to my life | 3.71 | .582 |
| My spiritual/religious beliefs: Lie behind my whole approach to life | 3.45 | .811 |
| My spiritual/religious beliefs: Have helped me develop my identity | 3.64 | .604 |
| My spiritual/religious beliefs: Help define the goals I set for myself | 3.61 | .635 |
| <i>1=Not at all; 2=To some extent; 3=To a great extent</i> | | |
| The extent to which the following describes you: Feeling a sense of connection with God/Higher Power that transcends my personal self | 2.65 | .530 |
| <i>1=Not at all; 2=Occasionally; 3=Frequently</i> | | |
| How often in the past year: Felt loved by God | 2.79 | .453 |

| Scale | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-------|--------------------|
| Evangelical Beliefs (Cronbach's Alpha = .771; all items are from the <i>College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey</i>) | 31.38 | 2.919 |
| <i>1=Agree strongly; 2=Agree Somewhat; 3=Disagree somewhat; 4=Disagree strongly</i> | | |
| Indicate your agreement with: The universe arose by chance (This item is <i>reverse coded</i> from the original <i>College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey</i> question) | 3.81 | .556 |
| Indicate your agreement with: In the future, science will be able to explain everything (This item is <i>reverse coded</i> from the original <i>College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey</i> question) | 3.64 | .681 |
| Indicate your agreement with: Whether or not there is a Supreme Being doesn't matter to me (This item is <i>reverse coded</i> from the original <i>College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey</i> question) | 3.78 | .586 |
| <i>1=Disagree strongly; 2=Disagree somewhat; 3=Agree somewhat; 4=Agree strongly</i> | | |
| Indicate your agreement with: While science can provide important information about the physical world, only religion can truly explain existence | 3.55 | .739 |
| Indicate your agreement with: What happens in my life I determined by forces larger than myself | 3.34 | .785 |
| <i>1=Not marked; 2=Marked</i> | | |
| Which of the following best characterizes your conceptualization of or experience of God: Protector | 1.83 | .377 |
| Which of the following best characterizes your conceptualization of or experience of God: Creator | 1.88 | .330 |
| Which of the following best characterizes your conceptualization of or experience of God: Supreme Being | 1.69 | .461 |
| Which of the following best characterizes your conceptualization of or experience of God: Love | 1.88 | .328 |

| Scale | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|-------|--------------------|
| <i>1=Not at all; 2=To some extent; 3=To a great extent</i> The extent to which the following describes you: Believing in life after death | 2.83 | .438 |
| <i>1=No; 2=Not sure; 3=Yes</i> Do you believe in God? | 2.98 | .137 |
| Evangelical Practices (Cronbach's Alpha = .724; items 1-4 & 6 are from the <i>College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey</i> and item 5 is from the <i>CIRP Freshman Survey</i>) | 17.46 | 2.435 |
| <i>1=Disagree strongly; 2=Disagree somewhat; 3=Agree somewhat; 4=Agree strongly</i> Indicate your agreement with: My spirituality is a source of joy | 3.57 | .655 |
| <i>1=Not at all; 2=To some extent; 3=To a great extent</i> The extent to which the following describes you: Being committed to introducing people to my faith | 2.43 | .602 |
| <i>1=Not applicable; 2=Not at all; 3=Occasionally; 4=Frequently</i> Have you ever had a spiritual experience while: In a house of worship | 3.40 | .692 |
| Have you ever had a spiritual experience while: Praying | 3.51 | .669 |
| <i>1=Not marked; 2=Marked</i> Community service/volunteer activities you participated in during high school: Service to my religious community | 1.68 | .468 |
| <i>1=None; 2=Some; 3=Most; 4=All</i> How many of your close friends: Share your religious/spiritual views | 2.85 | .651 |

APPENDIX D

(Correlation Coefficients for Independent Variables by Independent Variables)

Appendix D: Correlation coefficients for independent variables by independent variables (N=9,838).

| | Gender | Race/ Ethnicity | Age | Income | First- Generation | High- School GPA | Public High School | Religious High School | Private High School | Home School | Religious Identification/ Born-Again |
|--|----------|--------------------|----------|----------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|--|
| Gender | 1.000 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Race/Ethnicity | .007 | 1.000 | | | | | | | | | |
| Age | -.106*** | .032** | 1.000 | | | | | | | | |
| Income | -.048*** | -.188*** | -.079*** | 1.000 | | | | | | | |
| First Generation | .011 | .116*** | .062*** | -.247*** | 1.000 | | | | | | |
| High School GPA | .178*** | -.161*** | -.176*** | .067*** | -.133*** | 1.000 | | | | | |
| Public High School | .052*** | .014 | .007 | -.036** | .076*** | -.048*** | 1.000 | | | | |
| Religious High School | -.038*** | -.023* | -.029** | .066*** | -.057*** | .027** | -- | 1.000 | | | |
| Private High School | -.028** | .046*** | .006 | .011 | -.029** | -.023* | -- | -- | 1.000 | | |
| Home School | -.013 | -.026* | .017 | -.043*** | -.036*** | .084*** | -- | -- | -- | 1.000 | |
| Religious Identification/ Born-Again | .049*** | -.066*** | -.009 | -.016 | -.063*** | .112*** | -.087*** | .050*** | .019 | .076*** | 1.000 |

Significance Levels: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.