Evangelical Students in American Higher Education

by

Joseph C. Fox

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Co-Major Professor: William Young, Ed.D.
Co-Major Professor: Michael Mills, Ph.D.
Robert Sullins, Ed.D.
Bobbi Greenlee, Ed.D.

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Dedication

For Jesus Christ
The One who died that I might live.

And

For Yvette Fox
The one who persevered with me in this project and encouraged me to complete it.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract .............................................................................................................................. iv  
Chapter One: Introduction .................................................................................................1  
  Background of the Problem .....................................................................................1  
  Statement of the Problem .........................................................................................1  
  Purpose of the Study .............................................................................................10  
  Research Questions ..............................................................................................11  
  Importance of the Study .........................................................................................11  
  Definition of Terms ................................................................................................14  
  Who Are The Alienated and Disenfranchised? .....................................................21  
  Limitations and Delimitations................................................................................22  
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature .............................................................................29  
  Section One – A Worldview Analysis of American Higher Education .................29  
  Section Two – Student Alienation .........................................................................40  
    Purpose .......................................................................................................40  
    The Problem ...............................................................................................40  
    Alienation Defined .....................................................................................41  
    The Alienated and Disenfranchised ...........................................................43  
    The Tinto Model of Student Departure ......................................................43  
  The Literature Review on Student Alienation .......................................................47  
    The Minority Student .................................................................................48  
    The African American Student .................................................................54  
    Social Integration of African American Students ...........................................55  
    Academic Integration of African American Students .......................................57  
    Social and Academic Integration of African American Students .................58  
    The Hispanic American Student .................................................................64  
    The Native American Student .....................................................................67  
    The Disabled American Student .................................................................71  
    Other Alienated Student Groups ..................................................................74  
    Conclusions from the Review ....................................................................77  
  The State of Alienation Research ..............................................................79  
Chapter Three: Research Methods .....................................................................................84  
  Qualitative Paradigm .................................................................84  
  Qualitative Methods ..............................................................................................89  
  Data Sources .....................................................................................................90  
  Data Collection .................................................................................................92  
  Data Analysis .................................................................................................97
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of evangelical freshmen students attending the University of Texas at Arlington and the University of Texas at Dallas during the spring semester of 2006 in the context of student alienation. The purpose of this study was to explore the possibility that evangelicals attending secular universities were perceiving alienation through their interactions with their universities. It was hypothesized that the modern university, having evolved into its present naturalistic worldview condition, might prove alienating to evangelicals from a worldview standpoint. Assuming the possibility that alienation might prove to be a reality for evangelicals, the subordinate purposes were intended to discover the types and sources of alienation, the possible evangelical coping strategies, and their perceptions of the university’s reaction to them as evangelicals. During the spring semester of 2006, I conducted two live interviews with twenty participants. The first interview included a questionnaire which was administered for the purpose of providing insight into each participant’s religiosity or evangelical commitment. The first interview (conducted prior to spring break) asked the students to reflect back upon their first semester experience (the fall of 2005). The second interview, conducted towards the end of the spring semester, was oriented towards the second semester experience. I found that all evangelicals but one had successfully assimilated socially and academically into their
respective university. Their academic assimilation was primarily manifested by their relatively high academic achievement. Although they did experience worldview related incongruence, it was not severe enough to manifest any related attrition. I found the most severe incongruence to be related to the perceptions of a negative university moral ethos combined with the prevailing naturalistic monism of the university that relegated the Christian worldview to marginalization or irrelevance. I also found that the high level of social integration was primarily related to participant affiliation with various evangelical entities independent of the university. The data revealed that zero participants lost or abandoned their evangelical faith during their freshman year, and the students’ perceived that they had actually experienced positive growth in their spiritual lives as a result of the overall college freshman experience.
Chapter One:

Introduction

Background of the Problem

This qualitative study will describe and analyze the perceptions of evangelical students attending state universities and will explore the influence (if any) of alienation upon their freshman college experience. Student alienation is the theoretical construct that is the focus of this research. The potential source of that alienation will be the potential conflict of worldviews (the worldview that the student brings to the university in conflict with the dominant, Enlightenment-based worldview of the university). The research design will include qualitative interviews (see Chapter 3) involving a primary sample of 20 evangelical students enrolled in their freshman year at state universities. This research may have implications for administrators and faculty who value student retention and success, regardless of the religious/worldview system that a student brings to the university. It may also have implications for those educators who value diversity on the campus and in the classroom, to include religious/worldview diversity and tolerance.

Statement of the Problem

During the past fifty years in the United States, there has been a national shift towards greater social equality. A major component of this social equity movement has been access to higher education. Higher education has been viewed as one of the keys to social advancement, economic prosperity and personal well being. It has been perceived
as a requisite gateway to opportunity and ultimately to personal success. This national movement has demonstrated a general intent to increase the access to higher education and the retention of socially disadvantaged subpopulations. In fact, some might argue that prior discrimination in access to higher education has created a portion of the social inequality that exists and persists to this day.

During the late 1960s and 1970s, minority students began enrolling in higher education in greater numbers than ever before, particularly at predominantly White institutions. This trend was primarily due to affirmative action programs, civil rights legislation and increased access to financial aid. However, since the early 1980s, there has been a regressive trend that has emerged in a number of large longitudinal studies. This regressive trend has been primarily in three areas: enrollment, academic performance and retention of minority students (Tinto, 1998). For example, minority students attending predominantly White colleges are less likely to earn a degree within five years, have lower grade point averages, have higher attrition rates, and have lower graduate school matriculation rates than White students (Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993). Throughout the decade of the 1990s, the national college dropout rate for African Americans was 20-25% higher as compared to their White counterparts (Steele, 1999). These same regressive trends emerged when comparing minority students on predominantly White campuses with their peers on minority campuses. This research becomes increasingly significant when one considers that minority groups currently constitute 25% of the overall U.S. population and it is estimated that by 2015 one third of the population will consist of minority groups (Davis et al, 2004, p. 421).
Since the majority of minority students attend predominantly White colleges, the problem is significant. Many researchers, particularly those interested in student retention, began to search for an understanding of this trend toward increased racial disparity in higher education. This search proved to be the catalyst for a large body of subsequent research on student alienation that began to emerge in the 1980s as a possible contributing factor for minority problems with high attrition, poor academic performance, low graduate school matriculation, etc., and has continued to the present.

Student alienation has been a major issue in American higher education for the past several decades and continues to be a significant issue to the present day. Many studies of student alienation have compared multiple minority groups or have investigated the general problem of minority alienation and have demonstrated that minority students (generally) are far more alienated than the majority population (Loo & Rolison, 1986; Richardson et al, 1987; Stage, 1989; Murguia et al, 1991; Smedley et al, 1993; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Downey & Stage, 1999; Perry 2002).

However, most alienation research has been focused on investigating specific ethnic groups. African American students have been the most widely studied subpopulation and have experienced alienation in a variety of ways and in a variety of educational settings (Suen, 1983; Allen, 1985; Pascarella, 1985; Nettles et al, 1986; Sedlacek, 1987; Allen, 1987; Allen, 1988; Lichtman et al., 1989; D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Davis, 1995; Fisher & Hartman, 1995; James, 1998; Millner, 1998; Gloria et al, 1999; Harvey, 2001; Redden, 2002; Lett, 2003; Lewis et al, 2004; Davis et al, 2004). Higher education faculty, administrators, and particularly student affairs administrators have continually sought to create programs, activities and events to help
reduce the African American student’s alienation on predominately White campuses. However, based upon the most recent research findings (Davis et al, 2004), the alienation problem persists in spite of the efforts to reduce it.

Although Hispanic students are the fastest growing ethnic population entering higher education today, the research has continually demonstrated that they are also an alienated subpopulation group (McCool, 1984; Nora, 1987; Lowe, 1989; Attanasi, 1989; Murguia, 1991; O’Brien, 1993; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Collison, 1999; Hernandez, 2000). However, they have consistently been shown to be less alienated than African American students.

Similar to African Americans and Hispanics, Native American students also have significant retention problems and have also experienced alienation and estrangement while attending mainstream institutions (Sanders, 1987; Tierney, 1992; Harvey, 2001; Taylor, 2001; Perry, 2002; Taylor, 2003). Over time, the research has consistently shown that cultural distinctiveness has contributed significantly to Native American alienation on predominantly White college campuses.

Because Asian American students are often lauded for their academic achievement and are consequently perceived as a “model minority” group, this has had a limiting effect on the number of studies investigating Asian American student alienation. However, the limited research suggests that alienation exists for this subpopulation group (Suen, 1983; Asamen & Berry, 1987; Schram & Lauver, 1988; Nicholson, 2001).

The passage of two bills – the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (PL101-336) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (PL101-476), combined with tremendous technological advances over the past several decades, have enabled disabled
students to gain access to higher education in ever greater numbers. In fact, across the entire national higher education system from 1978 to 1994, the percentage of disabled students rose from 2.6% to 9.2% (Henderson, 1995). However, with that tremendous rise in population, new problems have arisen associated with disabled students. Although disabled Americans have benefited greatly by legislation, accommodations for the disabled have not gone far enough to make these individuals totally welcome (less alienated) in the academy (Stillwell, 1983; Wiseman et al, 1988; Henderson, 1995; Hodges & Keller, 1999).

According to Astin (1998), women undergraduate students are now the majority in higher education. However, in many college and university settings women feel alienation and powerlessness as compared to their male counterparts (Hall & Sandler, 1982, 1984; Astin, 1993, 1998; Pascarella et al, 1997; Millner, 1998; Whitt et al, 1999; Sax et al, 2002; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Hall and Sandler (1982, 1984) hypothesized the existence of a “chilly climate” for women in the academy. The research suggests that the problem persists in spite of the enrollment numbers.

Over the past twenty five years, alienation research has developed significantly, particularly with respect to the subpopulations under study. The study of this phenomenon began primarily as a function of ethnicity (primarily African American alienation), progressing to the study of other racial/ethnic groups (Hispanics, Native Americans and Asian Americans), and then moved beyond ethnic qualifiers to other subpopulation qualifiers (e.g. gender and disability). With the research identifying alienation as existing in different subpopulations, higher education institutions have attempted to address the issues and problems with specialized programs and services.
Consistent with this trend of investigating subpopulations based on other qualifiers besides ethnicity, one possible source of student alienation that has not yet been investigated is the subpopulation qualifier of student worldview or student religion. To this date, there has been no exploration of student alienation of subpopulations based upon religious affiliation. The general question is whether or not the worldview or religion that a student brings to the academy is a source of alienation for that religious student, similar to race or gender. The specific focus of this research will be to explore the possibility of evangelical student alienation in American higher education.

In the study of minority alienation, there was at least one key assumption that first had to be made before the research was initiated. The assumption provided the impetus for the entire body of research. That assumption was the possibility that the minority student immersion onto majority campuses may cause alienating perceptions that may be negative or even debilitating toward the overall success of minority students. Likewise, there are two key prerequisite propositions that help to ground the problem for this study. That is, these propositions provide the impetus for this study. The first proposition is that the modern American university has evolved into an institution that has elevated Enlightenment ideals to a position of presuppositional hegemony. In fact, one could easily conclude that the modern university is an Enlightenment institution in that the Enlightenment ideals of reason and skepticism have risen to prominence and have become so pervasive in setting boundaries on thought that they mostly go unnoticed and unchallenged. They are assumed to be normative. These ideals contain presuppositions and subsequent philosophical and theological boundaries that are rarely questioned today.
Chapter 2 will include a historical analysis of this. However, it might be useful to briefly introduce that discussion here. A significant public demonstration at the end of the French Revolution provides an illustration of the prominence of reason as an Enlightenment ideal. After declaring the year 1792 the “year one”, the French proclaimed the goddess of Reason in Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris and in other cathedrals throughout the country. In Paris, this goddess of Reason was personified in the form of a famous Parisian actress (Demoiselle Candeille) who was dressed to appear as a queen, placed on a mock throne and paraded shoulder-high around the streets of Paris and eventually into the cathedral wearing a crown. At the time, this symbolic gesture was a revolutionary idea as it asserted that human reason had deposed Queen Faith. Prior to this time, theology had been commonly recognized as the “Queen of the Sciences”. What was being proposed in this symbolic public display was the notion that human beings, starting from themselves, could answer the important questions of life (i.e. find truth). With regard to epistemology and ontology, Queen Faith had been deposed by Queen Reason. According to David Hume, a key figure in the foundational thinking of the modern university, the deposing of Queen Faith included everything revelatory which includes all religious texts. Most of the influential thinkers of the 20th century stood on the shoulders of David Hume who made the following critical conclusion concerning the issue of epistemology in *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*:

> When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume—of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance—let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of
fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames, for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion (1955, 12.3.173).

Notice that Hume’s epistemology contains two main points and both points involve human reason: 1) abstract reasoning concerning quantity (math) and 2) experimental reasoning concerning facts (science). Also note that Hume suggests that anything outside of these two epistemological-boundary-markers should be committed “to the flames”. All religious texts (“volume[s]--of divinity”) would exist outside of Hume’s parameters and would therefore be considered “nothing but sophistry and illusion”.

Although the history of modern science demonstrates the Enlightenment dichotomy to be an unfounded one (the fathers of modern science (Newton, Linnaeus, Boyle, Kepler, Euler, Cuvier, Faraday, Morse, Babbage, Joule, Pasteur, Mendel, etc.) were men of both faith and reason), the Enlightenment created a dichotomy or schism between faith and reason that persists to this day. Since the beginning of the Enlightenment period (late seventeenth century), there has been a protracted struggle between faith and reason on America’s campuses (discussed in Chapter 2) that has ebbed and flowed across the centuries with the modern campus (along with much of the modern culture) moving increasingly and more decisively toward the Enlightenment ideals. This study is set in the broader context of this protracted conflict between faith and reason.

The second major proposition that sets-up this study involves a faith component. In this study, the faith component is represented by evangelical students. I provide a detailed definition of an evangelical later in this chapter. However, for the purpose of developing the problem, the second proposition is that one of the distinguishing characteristics of an evangelical worldview is that evangelicals hold to a high view of
Scripture, or what might be called *Biblical prioritization*. Evangelicals maintain that the Jewish Tenach (what Christians call the Old Testament) and the Christian New Testament comprise one complete document – the Holy Bible. Evangelicals believe that this document represents God’s complete and direct revelation to humanity and that it provides humanity with information about cosmology, ontology, anthropology and epistemology which God determined as essential for humanity. Evangelicals also believe that God used human authors as He superintended the entire revelatory project under the process of what theologians call *inspiration* (literally “God-breathed”). Contrary to some mischaracterizations, evangelicals are not opposed to reason or science as is evidenced by the previously cited list of scientific giants who held to a high view of Scripture. The founders of modern science (see previous list) were Christian theists, and two noteworthy nonsectarian scholars (Alfred North Whitehead and J. Robert Oppenheimer) have both asserted (independently) that modern science would not have come into existence if Christian presuppositions had not been held by its founding giants (Schaeffer, 1976, p. 132-133). However, because of the evangelical belief that Scripture has been delivered (revealed) to humans by the God who created the universe and who therefore defined all of reality, they maintain that where human knowledge contradicts God’s direct revelation, human knowledge is necessarily subordinated.

Therefore, there may be a potential worldview distinction between American higher education, with its Enlightenment base and evangelicals, with their worldview primarily guided by Biblical prioritization. This study seeks to explore whether a worldview distinction is perceived by evangelical students and whether that worldview distinction can be said to be alienating to them.
In summarizing the problem in an effort to understand the potential for evangelical alienation, I would like to suggest one possible description of the situation that currently exists in American higher education as a general setting for this study: Over the past 369 years, the philosophical climate on the nation’s campuses has shifted dramatically away from a dualistic ontology and towards an Enlightenment-driven, naturalistic monism (discussed in chapter 2). However, many of the students enter college with a dualistic ontology. The tension here seems obvious and it solicits the following question: What occurs when theistic students are required to operate within institutionally defined worldview parameters that are contradictory to their personal worldviews or where a substantial portion of what concerns them (spiritual matters) is not addressed or is institutionally marginalized due to philosophical constraints? Another way of stating this question is: Does the interaction between the institutional, Enlightenment-based empiricism of American higher education with the worldviews of highly religious or theistic students (specifically evangelicals) create a philosophical tension that causes these students to perceive themselves to be alienated?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the possibility that evangelical students may be alienated in the modern academy. If this study does demonstrate some support for the hypothesis that evangelical students are alienated, then the contingent purposes are to enhance our understanding of that evangelical alienation. That is, this study will seek to understand the following: 1) the possible source(s) of evangelical alienation, 2) how evangelical students respond to the alienation that they experience, and 3) the student’s perceptions of how the institution reacts to who they are as evangelical students.
Research Questions

This study, within the general context of worldviews in conflict, will attempt to explore the following research questions or research goals: 1) Are evangelical students experiencing alienation at American colleges and universities? 2) What are the prevailing types of alienation for evangelical students? 3) What are the specific sources of evangelical student alienation? 4) What are the dominant themes with regard to evangelical student coping strategies? 5) What are the dominant themes that emerge that threaten or impact the evangelical student’s academic success and/or persistence/retention? 6) How do the student’s perceive the institutions reaction to them as they manifest their Christian worldview on campus?

Importance of the Study

According to data collected from the recent HERI project (2005) on college student spirituality, 26% of entering freshmen identified themselves as “born again” Christians (p. 7). Therefore, based upon this data, at least 26% of all incoming freshmen in 2004 (those identifying themselves as “born again”) might fall into the category of evangelical, as it will be defined. This suggests that 1 out of every 4 students in every college classroom identifies themselves as having some level of a Biblical Christian worldview. That is, the Biblical Christian worldview begins with a person becoming “born again” and the worldview develops from that point. This study is significant because it hypothesizes a phenomenon (evangelical alienation) that potentially impacts 1 out of every 4 college students in the country. If this study does support the notion that evangelical students are alienated, then this would suggest the possibility of a significant number of students throughout the country that are “worldview alienated.”
Additionally, if there is support for the hypothesis, then there is potential for future study using other theistic students (Jews, Muslims, Catholic Christians, etc.), as it is possible that the philosophical tensions that are generated by the circumstances previously outlined may be similar for students from all three of these world religions. In suggesting this possibility, it is assumed that the students sincerely hold to the central truth claims of their respective worldviews (that it is not simply a nominal worldview (by birth, etc.) or a collection of very loosely held beliefs). The notion that other (non-Christian) theistic students are likely to be confronted with similar worldview tensions is expressed in “Jewishness and Judaism at Brandeis University,” as Fox (1993) observed the following at this primarily Jewish institution:

…the most urgent questions that face a religiously committed Jew in any American university receive no answers or even any consideration…

We do nothing institutionally to help our students deal with the issues generated for religion by our whole range of academic subject matter…

Such concerns stand outside the orbit of a nonsectarian university…

We do not, because we may not, address the deepest religious questions, even those that are specifically generated by the academic setting in which we spend our lives (p. 469).

Since Christians collectively represent the largest proportion of the U.S. population of the three world religions previously mentioned, this study will focus on students who hold to the Biblical Christian worldview. However, this study may have broader implications for other types of theistic students, as the previous quotation by Fox (1993) suggests. Another important phrase to the relevance of this study is the statement, “We do not,
because we may not, address the deepest religious questions…” This solicits the question: What constrains them (the Brandeis faculty and staff) from being able to “address the deepest religious questions?” One explanation has already been developed – the possible philosophical constraints of Enlightenment boundaries. Could it be that the Enlightenment boundaries of inquiry in higher education limit the explanation of how the world works, in spite of the expectations and interests of many of the primary constituent groups (the students)?

Perhaps some further insight into this question comes from one of the participants (David Hollinger) from the Lilly Seminar. The Lilly Seminar on Religion and Higher Education met semiannually over a three year period ending in the fall of 1999 to discuss topics related to religion and the academy. According to Hollinger (2002) in his article “Enough Already: Universities Do Not Need More Christianity”,

Universities have reason to be proud of having created, within the most Christian of all industrialized societies of the North Atlantic West, a rare space in which ideas identified as Christian are not implicitly privileged. Our leading colleges and universities once shared in a pervasive Protestant culture, to which they owe a great deal. Now, however, mainstream academia maintains a certain critical distance from the Christian project. This critical distance is consistent with the drift of science and scholarship in the North Atlantic West (p. 40).

To this, Hollinger (2002) suggested the following as the central issue of the Lilly Seminar: “At issue…is whether these imperfect academic communities can be improved by diminishing the critical distance from Christian cultural hegemony that they have achieved only after a long struggle” (p. 40). Hollinger’s comments are most insightful in
that they acknowledge the following points in support of this study: 1) Christianity had a significant impact in American higher education. 2) Although Christianity was once privileged in status, it no longer is. 3) Mainstream academia deliberately maintains a “critical distance” from Christianity. 4) Science has something to do with the “critical distancing” of the modern academy with Christianity. 5) This “distancing” from Christian hegemony took a long time and has been successful. Hollinger has provided a summary which is consistent with this introduction. More specifically, his conclusions are consistent with the Enlightenment hypothesis presented previously.

As the literature review will demonstrate, African Americans have commonly been recognized as being the most intensely alienated group and also the largest alienated student population group. If the findings of this study support the hypothesis that evangelical alienation is being experienced, then we would have potentially identified a larger problem, in terms of the number of students potentially experiencing the alienation phenomenon. If the hypothesis is strongly supported by the findings, I would think that college administrators and student development professionals would find this study very significant. At the very least, the topic seems potentially significant enough to explore which is what this study will attempt to do.

Definition of Terms

Three of the significant constructs for this study are the concept of worldview, the construct of alienation, and the idea of an evangelical. The term worldview has a long and complex history. The term is a translation from the German Weltanschauung and was first used by Immanuel Kant. The term has appeared in many contexts over the past several centuries and has been used by a variety of scholars with notably different
worldviews. The following list represents a few of the scholars who have used or
developed this term: Kant, Dilthey, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Foucault, Orr and Kuyper.
As this list indicates, the term has been developed and used by a wide array of
philosophers of various stripes from German Idealists to Nihilists to Calvinist
theologians. Because the concept of worldview developed over time and because it has
developed at the hands of such diverse thinkers, there is much disagreement about what a
worldview is. However, for the purposes of this study, a comprehensive modern
definition comes from philosopher James Sire (2004) who suggests that a worldview is
essentially the following:

A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be
expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be
true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or
subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of
reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our
being (p. 161).

In this definition, a worldview is something that all human beings have, even if they do
not recognize that they have one. Sire (2004) offers the following seven fundamental
questions that, taken collectively, provide an example of the essence of a worldview as he
has defined it.

1) What is prime reality—the really real? To this we might answer God, or the
gods, or the material cosmos.

2) What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us? Here our
answers point to whether we see the world as created or autonomous, as
chaotic or orderly, as matter or spirit, or whether we emphasize our subjective, personal relationship to the world or its objectivity apart from us.

3) What is a human being? To this we might answer a highly complex machine, a sleeping god, a person made in the image of God, a “naked ape.”

4) What happens to persons at death? Here we might reply personal extinction, or transformation to a higher state, or reincarnation, or departure to a shadowy existence on “the other side.”

5) Why is it possible to know anything at all? Sample answers include the idea that consciousness and rationality developed under the contingencies of survival in a long process of evolution or that we are made in the image of an all-knowing God.

6) How do we know what is right and wrong? Again, perhaps we are made in the image of a God whose character is good; or right and wrong are determined by human choice alone or what feels good; or the notions simply developed under an impetus toward cultural or physical survival.

7) What is the meaning of human history? To this we might answer, to realize the purposes of God or gods, to make paradise on earth, to prepare a people for a life in community with a loving and holy God, and so forth (p. 7).

Herein lies a potential source of alienation for evangelical students; the more comprehensively they understand and apply (the more salient it is to all components of their life) a Biblical worldview (manifested by the Biblical answers to the above questions), and the more they recognize and understand the prevailing worldviews of the academy, the more worldview tension they will likely experience.
The second construct that needs defining for the purpose of this study is *alienation*. First, however, some background is necessary. According to Smith (1989), “The theme of alienation pervades the literature. It is a powerful voice in the literature concerning racial and ethnic minorities. It is also present in the literature focusing on women, the disabled, and other non-traditional groups” (p. 1). However, one of the great challenges in conducting the alienation literature review was that the terminology representing alienation has not remained consistent throughout the literature and over time. Another difficulty was that the variables used to study alienation changed from study to study, rarely providing a stable target. In spite of these challenges, alienation, is one of the integrating threads of the literature overall and is the primary focus of this research. Another integrating theme of the alienation literature was the consistent validation of the Tinto model over time and across both research paradigms. The majority of the reviewed literature on alienation is within the construct boundaries of what Tinto (1998) called *social and academic integration*. The proposed research on Evangelical Student Alienation is also within the boundaries of these constructs.

For the purposes of this study, student alienation will be defined consistent with a component of the Tinto model called *malintegration* (described in detail in chapter 2). For the purposes of this study, malintegration should be considered a form of student alienation. Malintegration is defined as the absence of social and academic integration. It must be pointed out that Tinto did not specifically use the term alienation in his model. Rather, Tinto used the terms *incongruence* and *isolation* which, in combination, comprise malintegration. Tinto (1998) defined incongruence in the following manner:
…what is sometimes referred to as lack of institutional fit, refers to that state
where individuals perceive themselves as being substantially at odds with the
institution. In this case, the absence of integration results from the person’s
judgment of the undesirability of integration…Incongruence refers in general to
the mismatch or lack of fit between the needs, interests and preferences of the
individual and those of the institution. Reflecting the outcome of interactions with
different members of the institution, it springs from the individual perceptions of
not fitting into and/or of being at odds with the social and intellectual fabric of
institutional life…Typically, incongruence is manifested in the individual’s
judgment that the institution’s intellectual climate is unsuited or irrelevant,
perhaps even contrary, to his/her own intellectual preferences (p. 50-51).
Incongruence occurs when integration is perceived as something undesirable from the
student’s standpoint. Incongruence can be experienced through a wide range of formal
and/or informal interactions - from the college’s policies and regulations on academics to
daily interactions with faculty, staff, and students in the classroom and outside the
classroom. Incongruence involves a student’s perceptions of and reaction to the overall
ethos of the institution.

The second component of malintegration is isolation which is what occurs when
students find themselves removed from the daily activities of the institution and the
individuals and groups that collectively comprise the institution. “Isolation …refers to the
absence of sufficient interactions whereby integration may be achieved” (Tinto, 1993, p.
50). Though incongruence and isolation are closely related, the difference between them
is that incongruence arises from a student’s perceptions of the character or quality of interactions while isolation results from the lack of interactions.

Although Tinto did not use the term alienation in his attrition model, his definitions of incongruence and isolation are entirely consistent with the components and forms of alienation discussed in the large body of alienation research discussed in chapter two. Social integration and academic integration are primarily determined by varying degrees of isolation and incongruence (i.e., alienation). Therefore, one could conclude that the construct referred to as student alienation in the literature is at the very heart of the Tinto model as a significant predictor of attrition. Much of the research presented in the literature review will focus on the Tinto model as a theoretical model that reveals the key to minority attrition because the implicit hypothesis is that higher levels of minority attrition are a result of higher levels of minority alienation on majority campuses. Loo and Rolison (1986) suggested that the Tinto model is more than an attrition model and that it provides a theoretical framework for describing the entirety of the minority college experience. Because it has been generally validated by the literature as the best framework for studying minority student alienation, it is likely to be the best framework for exploring the evangelical student experience.

Another key concept that requires defining is the term evangelical. Although many people in the United States claim to be Christians, the diversity of the group making that claim is so broad as to be unwieldy as a concept of study. Therefore, this study will confine itself to the study of those students identifying themselves as born-again Christians. Self-identification as being born-again places these students in the group classified as evangelicals. The definition offered in the succeeding five paragraphs
is for the purposes of greater clarity and deeper understanding. It is represented in a more concise form by combining the questions offered in Appendix 2.

In a broad sense, an evangelical is defined as a person who believes that a personal God exists, and that He revealed Himself to humanity in the following ways: 1) through the natural universe (what theologians call general revelation), 2) through the incarnation (life), death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and 3) through the Bible (special revelation), which is believed to be the infallible and inerrant word of God.

More specifically, evangelicals believe that all human beings are separated from a holy God by their personal sins. Sin is defined as any act that contradicts God’s personal character or commands. Sin can occur in thought, word or deed. Because God is just, He will justly and wrathfully judge every human being for their personal sins. However, though God detests sin and is righteously justified in judging it, God does not desire to wrathfully judge sinners. Evangelicals believe that the triune God acted in humanity’s behalf by sending His only Son to die on a cross for all sinners, for all time, and that the only way that a person can have a restored relationship with this God is by believing and trusting in the Son of God (the one who died in their place as payment for their sins).

Evangelicals believe that God demonstrated His love for all of humanity by providing a way back into a restored relationship with Himself. God did this by leaving heaven, taking on human flesh, willingly going to a cross, and then rising from the dead. In fact, evangelicals believe that true love was forever defined by this great act of selflessness on the part of God toward all human beings. The essence of the gospel (or good news) is that God Himself paid the penalty for human sin and offers the following
gifts to all who would believe: 1) forgiveness of sins, 2) full restoration, 3) adoption as His children, and 4) eternal life in heaven with Him.

When a person believes this gospel, it is at this point in time that this new person of faith is said to be “born again.” Acting upon those beliefs in gratitude for what God has done for him or her, an evangelical attempts to align all areas of his or her life with the personal character and commands of God, as revealed by the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. Evangelicals do not strive for personal righteousness in order to earn salvation. By faith (in God’s personal character), they strive for personal righteousness as an expression of gratitude to God for His love, grace and mercy in providing salvation for them.

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of an evangelical is their high view of the Bible. Evangelicals consider the Bible to be inspired by God (literally God-breathed) and therefore, authoritative above all other epistemologies. They believe that God (the Holy Spirit) used human authors and superintended the very words of Scripture. Therefore, since the Bible is believed to be God’s direct revelation to humanity, evangelicals believe that all areas of knowledge are to be subordinated to that revelatory knowledge. Simply, an evangelical is a person that has a decidedly Biblical worldview. If human knowledge contradicts Scripture, then human knowledge is necessarily subordinated.

Who Are The Alienated and Disenfranchised?

Who are the alienated groups in American higher education? According to two secondary sources (Smith, 1989; Tinto, 1998), and the collective body of primary sources in the literature review, the hypothesized alienated groups in American higher education
are the following: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, women, disabled Americans and international students. Smith (1989) included gays and lesbians in the above list, whereas Tinto (1998) omitted them. I use the term “hypothesized” alienated groups because much of this literature will implicitly or explicitly attempt to determine whether alienation is a perceived phenomenon among these population groups on majority campuses, its sources, and its consequences. By the types or categories listed above, one might conclude that those involved in this type of research have concluded that alienation is primarily a function of ethnicity, gender, or disability. However, the vast majority of this research centers on alienation as a function of ethnicity. It is interesting to note that I discovered no primary sources studying alienation as a function of ideology or belief system. Likewise, research on sexual-preference-related-alienation is also scanty. However, my hypothesis is that ideology, belief system or worldview, like ethnicity and sexual preference, is a source of student alienation. This proposed research (Evangelical Student Alienation) potentially breaks new ground in that I have been unable to locate any research conducted in the area of worldview-related-alienation or ideological/religious alienation.

Limitations and Delimitations

The findings of this study are likely to be tentative because of its exploratory nature. The sample size (20) is very limiting in terms of the generalizability of the study. Because of the limited sample size, I could neither generalize to all evangelical students at secular or religious affiliated schools, nor could I generalize to all theistic/religious students (Jews, Muslims, Catholics, etc.) attending secular or religious affiliated schools. Additionally, since this research will be conducted within the qualitative paradigm,
generalizability is not what is sought but rather transferability. However, the implications for future study in similar contexts are present and studies seeking transferability are encouraged.

A significant limitation of this study is its duration. Assuming that alienation is a perceived phenomenon, it is quite possible that I will only be with the students long enough to observe the initial alienation and will not be able to adequately evaluate the manner by which the students cope with the perceived alienation. For example, the process of learning to tolerate other worldviews, the process of abandoning the Biblical worldview, or whether this alienation ultimately produces attrition from college are events which may exceed the duration of this study. However, the primary purpose of this study is exploratory in scope. In other words, it is acknowledged that the development of any worldview is a lifelong process. Although a four-year college experience may play a more significant role in worldview formation than any other time, this study only observes a portion (the initial stage) of the total college experience and an even lesser portion of the entire worldview development process.

As an evangelical student and Bible college graduate, having also studied at four state universities, three community colleges, one church-affiliated college, two large private universities, and one seminary, I have personally experienced the philosophical/worldview tension or alienation that this study hopes to explore. What follows is a brief narrative of one personal experience that may provide insights into the various biases I might bring to this study and for which I need to take caution. This narrative may also illuminate the potential worldview related alienation that this study
will attempt to explore because it stands as a contemporary example of the persistence of
the reason/faith schism in American higher education.

I was a new student in an advanced degree program attending a state university,
and it was the beginning of a new semester - the second night of class. I began the new
semester with my usual anticipation. I really love learning and enjoy being in school.
There is always something exciting to me about a new semester. As I sat waiting, I
nervously tried to prepare the binder on a new textbook in subconscious and reverential
deferece to my fifth grade teacher’s thirty-five-year-old-instructions on how to properly
care for a book. The homework assignment for this evening’s class was for the students
to bring in and share articles relating to the coursework. The professor solicited student
volunteers to begin the evening’s discussions. One of the students began sharing an
article that discussed the problem of the inclusion of religious students and how those
students really did not belong on the university campus because they questioned
naturalistic assumptions, particularly Darwinian evolution. The student, a community
college professor, proceeded to explain how she could identify with the author as she had
had some previous “trouble” with religious students, particularly “born again” Christians.
The words “born again” rolled off her tongue with a certain and deliberate contempt. She
added that her husband, also a community college instructor, complained of similar
problems. In summary, her proposition was the following: Anyone who questions
Darwinian evolution or naturalistic presuppositions should be excluded from higher
education because they do not fit, operating from faith, not scientific reason.

I had become a Christian a few years earlier and because I had done a great deal
of self-initiated study on the subject of Darwinian evolution, I entered the discussion. The
other student soon became hostile toward me and labeled me a mythologist in spite of my desire to engage in intellectual discourse and in spite of the fact that 15 of the first 16 years of my education had been strictly secular (I attended Catholic school for 10th grade but evolution was taught as fact in the biology class). Because of my mostly-public-education, I had previously held to Darwinian evolution because it was consistently presented to me as a scientific fact as far back as I can remember. She kept returning to the issue of faith. Finally, I responded, “So, are you saying that faith is not a part of your worldview? She replied, “That’s right, faith is not part of my worldview.” I responded, “Are you saying that belief in spontaneous generation from non-life to life is not an act of faith?” “That’s right, because it is science.” My response, “Do you observe spontaneous generation of non-life to life today and can it be replicated?” Her response, “This issue has already been sufficiently dealt with in the Scopes Trial.” I responded, “That’s interesting, since many of the evidences that Clarence Darrow used in that case have been dismissed by most modern evolutionists as invalid. For example, one of the most embarrassing points for William Jennings Bryan was when “Nebraska Man” was introduced as evidence. What Darrow failed to mention was that all that was ever found of “Nebraska Man” was a single tooth. A few years later, identical teeth were found attached to the body of an extinct pig - so much for all of those biology textbook drawings of Nebraska Man and his nuclear family sitting around a fire in primeval Nebraska making primitive tools.

I was prepared and attempted to discuss fossils, the lack of transitional forms in the fossil record, fraudulent, questionable, or erroneous missing links (e.g. Nebraska Man, Ramipithicus, Orce Man, Piltdown Man and Lucy’s “trick knee”), Gould’s
punctuated equilibrium as last gasp effort to salvage the theory because the fossil record could no longer sustain it, the circularity of combining the geologic column with radiometric dating, and intelligent design research. I closed my argument by saying that based upon my study of the scientific evidence it would take far more faith than I currently had to accept the veracity of the evolutionary hypothesis.

I was well prepared for this topic because of my own personal quest in the struggle between faith and reason. For the sake of personal integrity, I had previously determined it necessary to come to grips with the scientific challenges to Biblical creationism. I had to settle the issue for myself because I came to understand that if the creation account was untrue, then the Bible is untrustworthy. Additionally, if Genesis is inaccurate, then the human problem of sin is no longer an issue. Subsequently, God’s act of love in going to a cross becomes ridiculous and the Christian faith, for me, would lack integrity and would become untenable.

Anyway, I was attempting to intelligently discuss her article although I had no idea that this topic would come up in class. What I received was adversarial language coupled with a refusal to consider any of the scientific issues that I had raised. I was simply ignored and dismissed like just another “flat earther”. Ironically, I did not introduce the Bible once into this discussion. Sadly, I paid for this evening’s class in more ways than just the tuition. Is this what an American university should be like? In American universities that claim free inquiry as a sacred tenet of our national educational heritage, shouldn’t students be allowed to openly raise such questions or challenges without personal affront? Certainly, this was alienating discourse at its very height. Essentially, the general message conveyed to me that evening was that I was a poor fit for
the academy because of my Christian worldview and the fact that I questioned the validity of a cornerstone of the academy’s naturalistic, Enlightenment-base. It is not insignificant that a community college professor would not find it inappropriate to bring in an article to share with other professional educators that singled out one group of American students who should be denied admission into the academy. Neither is it insignificant that one group could be maligned publicly without any reservation on the part of the presenter. Would she have presented an article for discussion that suggested that African American students were a poor fit for the academy? How about gays and lesbians? Native Americans? The disabled? In fact, would it have been acceptable if any other student group had been written about in such negative terms? It is not insignificant that “born again” Christians could be singled out without any reservation. One can only wonder how Christians fare in her community college classroom. I spent eleven years of my life serving and defending this nation as an active duty United States Marine (enlisted and officer), yet I was being told by a fellow professional public educator that I was a poor fit to attend any public institution of higher education because of my religious views (essentially, my commitment to both faith and reason as opposed to reason alone).

Unfortunately, I have many more of these true narratives about my personal journey as an evangelical student trying to obtain an education. Perhaps this study will reveal similar stories from others of like mind. It may be obvious that my greatest challenge in this research is to prevent my personal bias from invalidating the analysis. I understand and acknowledge that it is quite possible that the alienation that I have experienced may be mine only. It is also possible that undergraduate schools are far less alienating to Christians than graduate schools but that would be another study. It is also
possible that the vocationally-driven development (high school Bible teacher) of my own Biblical worldview reached a level whereby I became particularly sensitive to philosophical attacks that other/younger evangelicals may not perceive. On the other hand, it is also possible that evangelicals are being alienated. It certainly seems possible that the requisite pieces are in place for it to be occurring.

I recognize that my life experiences and personal worldview may influence the collection and analysis of the data. I fully recognize that my conversion to Christianity (1991), my eight years of teaching experience in Christian schools (secondary and post-secondary), my five years of service as a Christian school administrator, and my twelve years of secular-based higher education coupled with my Bible college and seminary experiences combine to influence my perceptions and thinking and anyone evaluating this work needs to take this into consideration.
Chapter Two:

Review of the Literature

This Literature Review is divided into two main sections: 1) Worldview Analysis of American Higher Education and 2) Student Alienation. Section One describes the historical background and the worldview context for this study. It includes a brief historical analysis which will provide the contextual setting for the problem (Evangelical Student Alienation in American Higher Education) of this study. Section Two provides a general overview of alienation research over the past 25 years providing some critical insights into how the theoretical construct (Student Alienation) has developed and providing a detailed overview of the theoretical construct under investigation in this study.

Section One – Worldview Analysis of American Higher Education

According to David Hollinger (2002) in his article “Enough Already: Universities Do Not Need More Christianity”,

There was once a time when scholars in the North Atlantic West took for granted a shared Christianity. In that bygone era, the boundaries of the epistemic community and the boundaries of the community of faith were largely coterminous. But now the boundaries of the epistemic communities that define discussion in the learned world are no longer coterminous with the Christian community of faith, and this fact appears to create discomfort on the part of some Christians (p. 43).
Hollinger (2002) concludes,

Now that academia is emancipated from Protestant hegemony, the evils of which require no belaboring here...I believe we should rejoice in this...Universities should not surrender back to Christianity the ground they have won for a more independent, cosmopolitan life of the mind. There are plenty of things wrong with higher education in the United States today, but a deficiency in Christianity is not one of them (p. 48-49).

At least for Hollinger, Christianity is no longer anywhere near the center of the epistemic community in higher education, and this is something to rejoice about. The central issue for Hollinger is determining the safe distance between the academy and Christianity. Therefore, for Hollinger, the question as to whether Christian marginalization in higher education has occurred has already been settled. This is consistent with what historian and fellow Lilly Seminar participant Mark Schwehn has said about the subject of Christian marginalization. According to Schwehn (2002),

…and with respect to “Protestant hegemony,” no informed observer would deny that there has been a relative decline of Protestant domination of higher learning in this country over the course of the last century. Disagreements arise over the question of whether such decline should be lamented or celebrated (p. 51).

If marginalization of the religious perspective has occurred as these modern scholars indicate, how did this happen? In the 1990’s, in response to historian F. Michael Perko’s lament that, “historians of higher education have not kept pace with scholars of the schools in examining the influences on education of both formal and non-formal religion” (Eisenmann, 1998, p. 295), some scholarly...
attention was given to the issue of academic secularization from the viewpoint of mainline Protestantism. According to Eisenmann (1998), “During the 1990’s, …there has been a minor explosion in solid, creative work on various historical aspects of religion and higher education that begins to provide interpretive depth and scope” (p. 295). Three primary works in this group include Julie Reuben’s *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality*, Douglas Sloan’s *Faith and Knowledge: Mainline Protestantism and American Higher Education*, and George Marsden’s *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief*. According to Eisenmann (1998), “Taken together, these three books offer in some ways a corrective and in other ways a fuller version of the “emergence of the American university,” one that complicates the received story of religion being shunted aside by the juggernaut of modernization and secularization” (p. 297).

George Marsden’s *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (1994), chronicles the history of American higher education from its inception (Harvard established in 1636), to the later half of the turbulent 1960s. This is the story of how, over this 350-year period, American higher education evolved into its present secularized form. Marsden provides an explanation as to how religious perspectives gradually moved from the core or epistemic center of the intellectual life of the universities to the epistemic periphery of intellectual discourse and beyond. This transition from epistemic core to periphery is described by Rudolph (1977) in the following:
In the early eighteenth century the Yale College laws put the matter directly: “every student shall consider the main end of his study to wit to know God in Jesus Christ and answerably to lead a Godly and sober life.” The history of the American college curriculum may be the history of how a people departed from such a goal, …leaving aside the question of what happened to God, one asks without expectation of finding the answer, “What happened to man?” (Rudolph, 1977, p. 17)

Although all of the colonial colleges had similar purposes to Harvard’s in “the deepest expression of its [their] purposes and goals in the Scriptures… [to] the training of its [their] Biblical expositors [preachers]” (Rudolph, 1990, p. 6),

There was also, however, a vital stream of hostility to religion… The dawning Enlightenment promised to emancipate man a number of times and in a number of ways, one of which was to free him from religious institutions. Consequently there was a ready audience in the United States for the philosophic positions that were popular in France at the time (Rudolph, 1990, p. 37).

The Enlightenment was so influential on some American campuses that in the 1790’s Rudolph indicates that the typical Harvard student was an atheist. For further evidence of this vital stream of hostility to religion, he describes how a Princeton student-deist led a student ceremony where they burned the Bible of a local Presbyterian church (Rudolph, 1990, p. 38).

A critical point in this struggle arose during the later half of the nineteenth century as a result of the roughly ten thousand American graduate students who studied in Germany from 1800-1880. According to Rudolph (1977),
In the nineteenth century the great German universities were the centers from which spread a gargantuan appetite for research and scholarship as well as a profound regard for the scientific ethos that defined it. The consequences have generally and appropriately been described as both profoundly inventive and overwhelmingly destructive (p. 10).

The German model advanced by these German-educated-Americans gradually elevated positivism and its associated principle of scientific inquiry to an exclusive position as the source of truth. The earliest higher education institutions (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, etc.) held that the Bible, as a direct revelation from God, was the final source of authority and truth. These institutions believed that the Enlightenment emphasis on natural science would only serve to support and validate the Biblical truth claims. The German model eventually brought this Biblical authority under question by elevating the scientific method as the premiere tool for establishing/confirming evidence, and the scientific method was eventually applied to the Bible itself in the form of Higher Criticism. This, combined with the general acceptance of Darwinian evolution by many in the academic community during that time, brought an end to the Biblical worldview as a significant component of the intellectual life of the modern university. It is Marsden’s (1994) contention that by the end of the 1960s, religious perspectives had been significantly marginalized.

Another significant historical account on this broader issue of the secularization of the modern university is The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities From Their Christian Churches by Burtchaell (1998). Burtchaell’s concentration was on the issue of the secularization of the religious affiliated schools.
Burthchaell attempted to answer the following question: What is the current relationship between the religious affiliated schools and their founding denominations? He approached this question by investigating each denomination and its relationship to its respective flagship schools over several decades. He concluded, “The story in the stories is more melancholy than the author had expected. Most of these [denominational] colleges and universities no longer have a serious, valued, or functioning relationship with their Christian sponsors of the past” (p. xi). Similarly, Chris Anderson in *Teaching as Believing: Faith in the University* (2004) concluded,

…in this respect there really isn’t much difference between religious and secular institutions. Even in most church-sponsored colleges and universities, faith is no longer an integral part of the intellectual life on campus and hasn’t been for a long time….Though faith and reason may be in more harmony at such places than at public institutions, day to day-in the classroom, on the hiring and tenure committees-my Christian colleagues at Christian colleges and universities say that their situation is much the same as mine at Oregon State (p. 205).

It seems apparent that religious perspectives have been marginalized in terms of the intellectual center of the modern university. I do not mean that religion is not discussed or even studied. However, what I mean by marginalization is that the truth claims of the various religious perspectives are no longer on the table. The American academy has shifted its view from the Christian perspective of theology as the queen of the sciences, to religion(s) as social objects of study in religion departments. Religions are not studied to gain truth or to gain wisdom for living (because God has spoken and has something to say); rather, they are studied in order to explain or understand the
phenomenon of religion in the lives of people as a function of the evolutionary social adaptation consistent with Dewey’s model of the three stages of human development (or a similar model, see Comte). As Drees (1996) suggests, religion is viewed as being rooted in our evolutionary past and as a component of our neurophysiology.

This shift in perspective was described in detail by Marsden (1994) in his explanation of the historical progression from the theological perspective to methodological secularization and finally to ideological secularization (where he claims the Academy is today). In Marsden’s (1994) account of how secularization occurred, the first major step away from theology was the Academy’s shift in allowing scientific naturalism to define methodology while simultaneously retaining Christianity as a guiding ideology. This occurred and was maintained with some level of tension for several decades. He calls this methodological secularization. Methodological secularization occurred when the technical tasks of discovering knowledge were ceded to science. In Marsden’s (1994) account, the next step was the transition from methodological to the ideological secularization, and he suggests that this was completed by the 1920’s. It was during the last transition to ideological secularization that Christianity lost its role as the guiding ideology in the university. “After that time, religion lost its primacy in both curriculum and epistemology and was left struggling for a place within the increasingly objective university” (Eisenmann, 1998, p. 301).

This “struggling for a place within the increasingly objective university” continues to the present day. For example, the creation and existence of a diverse group of academics assembled from across the country to discuss foundational issues surrounding the interaction of religion and the academy illustrates that some academics
believe there is a need for such discussion. The *Lilly Seminar on Religion and Higher Education* met semiannually over a three year period ending in the fall of 1999. According to Sterk (2002), the *Lilly Seminar* focused primarily on the following three topics: 1) religion and student formation, 2) religious commitment and classroom teaching, and 3) religion and scholarship (p. 237). The fact that there were representatives from a diverse spectrum of religious backgrounds (agnostics, Catholics, Jews, Evangelicals, Mainline Protestants, et.al.), from different types of colleges and universities, and included both administrators and teachers suggests that religious marginalization may have occurred as the historians included in this review (Rudolph, Marsden, Burtchaell, Rueben, Sloan, and Eisenmann) have asserted and that this “struggling for a place” persists. However, on a positive note, the fact that such a seminar could take place demonstrates that this sort of discussion does take place in the academy, though recognizably taking place on the epistemic periphery.

If the previously cited works on the history of higher education have some validity, then this may suggest why many educators seem to be attempting to answer the following question: What should the role of religion be, if anything, within American higher education now that the yoke of Protestant hegemony has long since been removed? One of the pervasive threads in this collection of essays from the *Lilly Seminar* was that some of the religious participants used the seminar as a platform to express their personal frustrations at being the excluded, at being the other, at being alienated within and by the academy. Within this thread of frustration, another term clearly emerges. For example, Francis Oakley (2002), in his article “*Concluding Reflections on the Lilly*
Seminar” made the following conclusion about a group of Christian participants in the seminar:

I am left, then, with the impression, as I indicated last time, that what some of the advocates of Christian scholarship may be doing …[is] expressing (perhaps unwittingly) a type of epistemic resentment stimulated by the degree of marginalization or condescension they may have experienced at the hands of a highly secularized mainstream academic establishment (p. 241).

Similarly, in her article “Stopping the Heart: The Spiritual Search of Students and the Challenge to a Professor in an Undergraduate Literature Class,” the Jewish scholar Susan Handelman (2002) observed,

Many of my colleagues teaching feminist and postcolonial theory, or gay and lesbian studies quite passionately “profess” their beliefs on those issues. Yet professing beliefs on religious issues in the classroom tacitly seems to have been deemed illegitimate…We have elided religion as one of those factors that goes into making of identity—not even hearing it as a “marginalized voice.” While we encourage a very free discourse about political and sexual identity, we are silent about our spiritual sides (p. 204).

Later in this article, Handelman (2002) says,

For our students also often hide from us their own passionate concerns, their spiritual struggles. Not often are they afforded an opportunity to express them in a large state university; and they are quite tentative about doing so, fearing retribution from relentlessly skeptical professors and seemingly cynical fellow students…I had been struck by a recent article in my Smith College alumna
magazine about “Religion on Campus” in which a Smith religion major was quoted as saying that in her religion courses, “we talk about spiritual experiences as if no one in the classroom could possibly have had one” (p. 206).

As a further Lilly Seminar example, in her article “Sociology and the Study of Religion” Nancy Ammerman (2002) concludes,

When we look at what is being taught and published in the discipline [Sociology] as a whole, it would be easy to conclude that the study of religion is indeed marginalized and often excluded entirely from our professional efforts to understand today’s society (p. 81).

Later in the same article, Ammerman (2002) says,

Sociology will never be able to claim its birthright as a discipline until it takes off its Enlightenment blinders to pay attention to all the elements of the society it is supposed to be explaining (p. 86).

Consistent with the statements above, the most often repeated idea (implicitly or explicitly) throughout most of this section is the term marginalization. That is, there seems to be consensus among all of these scholars that the religious perspective in American higher education has been marginalized.

Relative to this study, the problem with the marginalization hypothesis, if valid, is that the nation’s evangelical students would be immersed within philosophical parameters that are often antithetical to their ontological, cosmological, epistemological and moral presuppositions. The modern university is dominated and defined by a set of Enlightenment-driven, naturalistic assumptions about cosmology, epistemology and ontology. Among the dominant philosophical groups in American higher education there
are several shared or common presuppositions. One of those commonly held presuppositions is a naturalistic ontology. As such, academic pursuits are necessarily conducted primarily within naturalistic parameters.

The secular philosophical domination of the modern American university potentially creates an obvious philosophical tension for a large population of religious/theistic students as well as for religious faculty. This tension in higher education is discussed by Chris Anderson in *Teaching as Believing: Faith in the University*. In this book, Anderson (2004) chronicles his own personal journey and struggle between his Catholic faith and his role as a professor of English at Oregon State University. Anderson (2004) concluded,

> Christian faculty too often feels discounted and excluded by the university.

> That’s been my own experience as a Catholic deacon who is also a professor of English: The university either ignores my faith or sees it as a potential problem.

> But this is wrong. Faith isn’t irrelevant to the intellectual life. Faith isn’t a threat to pluralism. (p. 9).

For Anderson, as well as several other academics cited in this review, the academy can be an alienating place. If it is alienating for Anderson and the other academics quoted in this section, is it possible that it could be systemically alienating for the evangelical student population as well? Is it possible that Nature has finally conquered grace? To use the language of Newman in *The Idea of the University* (1996), has *reason* finally conquered *faith*?
Section Two – Student Alienation

Purpose. The purpose of this section is to explore the barriers, constraints, prejudices, injustices and resultant alienation experienced by disenfranchised groups in American higher education. More specifically, this section will attempt to explore what the literature reveals about minority/disenfranchised students who find themselves removed from the mainstream of the institution. This “lack of fit” may be due to some mix of variables such as culture, ethnicity, ideology, gender, sexual preference, beliefs, etc.

The problem. During the past fifty years in the United States, there has been a national shift towards greater social equality. Higher education has been viewed as one of the keys to social advancement, economic prosperity and personal well being. It has been seen as a requisite gateway that leads to the system’s best and ultimately, to personal success. Consequently, a major component of this social equity movement has been higher education. This national movement has demonstrated a general intent to increase the access to higher education and the retention of socially disadvantaged subpopulations. In fact, some might argue that prior discrimination in access to higher education has created a portion of the social inequality that exists and persists to this day.

During the late 1960s and 1970s, minority students began enrolling in higher education in greater numbers than ever before, particularly at predominantly White colleges. This trend was primarily due to affirmative action programs, civil rights legislation and increased access to financial aid. However, since the early 1980s, there has been a regressive trend that has emerged in a number of large longitudinal studies. This regressive trend has been primarily in three areas: enrollment, academic
performance and retention of minority students (Tinto, 1998). For example, minority
students attending predominantly White colleges are less likely to earn a degree within
five years, have lower grade point averages, have higher attrition rates, and have lower
graduate school matriculation rates than White students (Smedley, Myers, & Harrell,
1993). These same regressive trends emerged when comparing minority students on
predominantly White campuses with their peers on minority campuses.

Since the vast majority of minority students attend predominantly White colleges,
this problem is very significant. Many researchers, particularly those interested in student
retention, began to address this trend toward increased racial disparity in higher
education. This trend proved to be the catalyst for a large body of subsequent research. It
is a portion of that body of research that is evaluated in this review. This problem
(minority disparity in higher education) is extremely important because its solution or
lack thereof, may have significant societal repercussions. When subpopulations within
any society perceive themselves as having been denied access to the general social
benefits of that society, the stability of the society is potentially imperiled.

Alienation defined. This section will describe the most salient definition of
alienation that emerged from the literature review on this construct. However, this
definition is broader than what was developed for the purpose of this study and outlined
in chapter 1. The rationale here is that I believe there are distinct characteristics related to
the particular group under study which render the most prominent (broader) definition
less effective for this particular study. However, I also think it is important that the reader
understand the most prominent definition.
According to Smith (1989), “The theme of alienation pervades the literature. It is a powerful voice in the literature concerning racial and ethnic minorities. It is also present in the literature focusing on women, the disabled, and other non-traditional groups” (p.1). 

Alienation is a very broad term that refers to three types of experiences (Steward, Germain, & Jackson, 1992). The first component of alienation is powerlessness, which is an interpersonal interpretation of a situation in which one subjectively feels they have limited or no control over desired outcomes (Shram & Lauver, 1988). Another component is normlessness or meaninglessness, which is the loss of previously socialized values that may give meaning or purpose to life, and the conflict that may arise from adopting contradictory values (Burbach & Thompson, 1971). This component is very similar to the construct known as cognitive dissonance and has some similarities with what Tinto (1998) called incongruence or malintegration (discussed later), though not identical. The third component of alienation is social isolation, or what Burbach (1972) called social estrangement, which consists of feelings of loneliness and a general sense of separation from group norms or standards (Dean, 1961). This is also similar to a component of Tinto’s construct of malintegration identified simply as isolation. The general acknowledgement from the literature is that all college students experience some form of alienation, and all alienation forms have been associated with social withdrawal (Stephan & Stephan, 1989). However, a great deal of the literature presented in this review will support the hypothesis that alienation for minority groups is much more pervasive and has a direct effect on increased minority attrition rates relative to non-minority attrition rates. However, one of the great challenges in this construct review was that the terminology representing alienation has not remained consistent throughout the
literature and over time. An associated difficulty was that the variables used to study alienation changed from study to study, rarely providing a stable target. In spite of these challenges, alienation, as defined previously, is one of the integrating threads of this literature and is the primary focus of this research.

_The alienated and disenfranchised._ Who are the alienated groups in American higher education? Obviously, I believe that one significant alienated group is the evangelical student group. However, according to two secondary sources (Smith, 1989; Tinto, 1998), and this collective body of primary sources, the hypothesized alienated groups in American higher education are the following: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, women, disabled Americans and international students. Smith (1989) included gays and lesbians in the above list, whereas Tinto (1998) omitted them. I use the term “hypothesized” alienated groups because much of this literature will implicitly or explicitly attempt to determine whether alienation is an actual phenomenon among these population groups on majority campuses, its sources, and its consequences.

_The Tinto Model of Student Departure._ As I began this research, I soon realized that alienation was frequently mentioned in an attrition/retention context. In fact, there is minimal alienation-relevant research that is not somehow linked to student withdrawal behavior. Additionally, I discovered that after 1975, there was one attrition model that emerged as the dominant theoretical model for the study of departure in general, and of minority alienation in particular (as a factor in minority departure). The dominant model for the past 30 years has been Tinto’s (1975) model of student attrition. In fact, Boyle (1989) concluded, “the model has withstood careful scrutiny from the profession and has
become accepted as the most useful for explaining the causes of student departure from higher education” (p. 290). Unfortunately, many of the researchers involved in this review failed to use the model foundationally and this has negatively influenced the picture that has emerged. The model has evolved over time and has developed as new research has emerged. Before describing the model, it is necessary to describe some foundational assumptions made by its designer. The model rests on several conclusions that Tinto (1998) made about the existing research related to the roots of student departure and the dominant themes within that research. There were three general categories or themes that emerged as primary factors for student attrition: (1) the dispositions of individuals as they enter higher education, (2) the character or manner in which individuals interact within the institution, and (3) the external forces that might influence the way a student behaves within the institution. He observed that there were two attributes associated with disposition - student intention and student commitment upon entry into the institution. For student-institutional interaction (item [2] above), he hypothesized the existence of four constructs or subcategories influencing departure. These constructs are the following: adjustment, difficulty, incongruence and isolation. For the external forces (item [3] above) that affect departure, there were two that emerged - obligations and finance. According to Tinto, it is the integration or combination of all of these factors in varying degrees that accounts for student attrition, and these categories collectively comprise the foundational basis for his student attrition model. Although Tinto described the significance of both student disposition (those individual characteristics the student brings to the academy) and external forces, most of the research reviewed here will not reflect this. Rather, the majority of the literature reviewed
for this study has its origins in item (2) – student interaction with the institution. It is through this interaction that student alienation arises and this alienation subsequently influences persistence-withdrawal behavior. Incidentally, two foundational studies reviewed by the author that strongly validated this model and its theoretical constructs were Getzlaf, Sedlacek, Kearney, and Blackwell (1984) and Pascarella and Terenzini (1983). It is this student alienation associated with interaction with the institution that is the focus of this proposed research involving evangelical students.

A brief background and description of Tinto’s model might prove beneficial here. Student attrition has been studied for many decades. However, most of the research was not theory driven. Additionally, most of the research could be placed on extreme ends of a continuum. That is, the researchers either focused on student characteristics and deficiencies, or they focused on institutional shortcomings but rarely both, concomitantly. The prominence of the Tinto model can probably be explained by the fact that it combined both the institutional factors and student factors into a more comprehensive, integrative model. This brought some coherence to the research and provided a conceptual framework that has served to guide the subsequent quantitative and qualitative research.

Tinto’s model is longitudinal and it hypothesizes that withdrawal behavior is a function of four separate theoretical constructs: (1) student background characteristics (e.g., quality of elementary and secondary education, socioeconomic status, family background, etc.); (2) initial commitments of the student (i.e., graduation commitment and commitment to the institution); (3) academic integration and social integration; and (4) subsequent goal and institutional commitments. However, the heart of the model is
academic and social integration as Tinto (1975) suggested, “given individual characteristics, prior experiences and commitments…it is the individual’s integration into the academic and social systems of the college that most directly relates to his continuance in that college” (p. 96). It is within the construct boundaries of social and academic integration that a majority of the reviewed literature on minority alienation is to be found. As stated previously, the proposed research on Evangelical Student Alienation is within the boundaries of Tinto’s constructs of academic and social integration.

It must be pointed out that Tinto did not specifically use the term alienation as a construct within his model. Rather, Tinto used the terms incongruence and isolation. Tinto (1998) defined incongruence in the following manner: “…what is sometimes referred to as lack of institutional fit, refers to that state where individuals perceive themselves as being substantially at odds with the institution” (p. 50). Incongruence occurs when integration is perceived as something undesirable from the student’s standpoint. On the other hand, isolation is what occurs when students find themselves removed from the daily activities of the institution and the individuals and groups that collectively comprise the institution. Though Tinto did not use the term alienation, that construct is what he was synonymously referring to, as the definitions of incongruence and isolation are entirely consistent with the components of alienation discussed previously. Social integration and academic integration are primarily determined by varying degrees of isolation and incongruence (i.e., alienation). Therefore, one could conclude that the construct labeled student alienation is at the very heart of the Tinto model as a significant predictor of attrition. Much of the research presented herein will focus on the Tinto model as a theoretical model that reveals the key to minority attrition.
because the implicit hypothesis is that higher levels of minority attrition are a result of higher levels of minority alienation, specifically on majority campuses. By giving the Tinto model prominence in the organization of this paper, I agree with Loo and Rolison (1986) that the model is more than an attrition model but it provides a theoretical framework for describing the entirety of the minority college student experience. In my opinion, it is also the best framework for evaluating student alienation, as a component of the minority student experience and as a component of the Evangelical student experience. As mentioned previously, not everyone involved in this field would agree, and this is one of the weaknesses of the overall research effort (discussed later).

The Literature Review on Student Alienation

This chapter describes the literature that is relevant to the purpose of this study (Evangelical Student Alienation), providing a construct overview. It is organized into seven sections: (1) The Minority Student, (2) The African American Student, (3) The Hispanic American Student, (4) The Native American Student, (5) The Disabled American Student, (6) Other Alienated Student Groups, and (7) Conclusions. The alienated groups are presented in the above fashion because the literature seems generally to reflect that type of organization. With the exception of literature necessary for explaining theoretical constructs, I made a commitment to exclude from this review those studies conducted before 1980. Additionally, it must be recognized that the words used as racial and ethnic identifiers change over time. This research covers a period of twenty-five years. I will use the same racial identifiers used by the researchers during that period. Many racial identifiers will be used interchangeably.
The minority student. A summary of the four-year, majority-campus-environments for racial and ethnic minorities concludes that, “while the scope and depth of racial and discriminatory attitudes and behavior are unknown, it is clear that predominantly White four-year colleges and universities have somehow failed to live up to their ideals as civil and tolerant social communities that respect diversity and pluralism” (Crosson, 1988, p. 381).

This section consists of studies concerning alienation that included comparisons of more than two ethnic groups, or studies that refer to minorities in a general sense. The foundational study in this section is a study conducted by Loo and Rolison (1986). In this study of Anglos, Chicanos, Asian Americans, African Americans, Filipino Americans and Native Americans, conducted at a small, public university in the California system, the researchers assessed and compared the extent and nature of sociocultural alienation and academic satisfaction among ethnic minority students and Anglos. They found that social alienation for minority students was greater than that for Anglo students. They also found that minority students could attain academic integration without social integration. Academic alienation for Blacks and Chicanos was due to poorer academic preparation and the culture shock of encountering an environment very different to the home environments they had left behind. The authors introduced a term they called “ethnic enclaves” which they defined as a social unit where an ethnic subculture could be expressed in a supportive, yet isolated environment. White students perceived these ethnic enclaves as manifestations of lingering racial segregation whereas the minority students saw them as entities necessary for survival in a larger, threatening and generally unsupportive environment. Another significant finding was that attrition for Anglo
students was primarily a function of academics while minority attrition was primarily influenced by social integration and academic factors. In other words, the findings for minority students were more consistent with the Tinto model. Minority students also emphasized the scarcity of minority faculty as a contributing factor in their alienation.

In a follow-up study using the Tinto model on racially different student populations at a major, Southwestern university, Stage (1989) found that high levels of social integration were associated with the persistence of minority students. This is consistent with a similar finding in Loo and Rolison (1986). Stage also found that minorities at high levels of academic integration were less likely to persist than Anglos with equivalent levels of academic integration. This is consistent with a similar finding in a study by Lichtman, Bass, and Ager (1989) which compared African American and Anglo persistence.

The previous studies support the general hypothesis that minority alienation on majority campuses exists. The next several studies explore and attempt to provide greater insight into the causes and effects of minority alienation on majority campuses. Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel (1991), in a qualitative study of Hispanics and Native Americans, explored the role of ethnicity in Tinto’s model and what it means for a student to be integrated into the social system of the campus. They found that ethnicity is such a major component of self-identity and social identity that it has an enormous affect on how a person functions on a university campus. Another theme that emerged was the importance of ethnic enclaves to the minority students themselves. Because ethnicity is such a significant component of self and social identity, these researchers concluded that universities should create policies that are supportive of these ethnic enclaves. They
suggested that this could be critical if these enclaves happen to be the primary vehicles of social and academic integration. Additionally, they suggested that by their institutional inactivity and general lack of support, majority institutions tend to communicate that one’s ethnicity should be left at the campus gate upon entrance.

Nora and Cabrera (1996) attempted to determine the role of perceptions of prejudice and discrimination within the Tinto model, and to determine whether a difference existed between minority and majority students in this perception. This study was conducted at a major, public, commuter, predominantly Anglo, Midwestern university. Their freshmen sample consisted of Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics and Whites. The researchers found general support for the notion that perceptions of prejudice and discrimination negatively affect academic and social adjustment. However, the perceptions did not have the overwhelming affect on persistence that the researchers had originally hypothesized they would. This finding tends to contradict the findings of most of the studies included in this review. However, they did suggest that other cultural related variables might account for the student incongruence. In a similarly focused study, Smedley, Myers, and Harrell (1993) hypothesized that there were a collection of variables they labeled “minority status stresses” which contribute to alienation and subsequent attrition. Although they recognized the existence of stresses for all freshmen students, they suggested that there are stresses unique to minority students that account for the difference in minority malintegration as compared to White students. The general findings supported the hypothesis that minority status stresses play a significant role in minority freshmen adaptation. Status stresses emerged from contact and conflict between and within racial
and ethnic groups. Additional minority stresses were identified as the following: concerns over their lack of academic preparedness, questions about their legitimacy as students, perceptions of negative expectations from Anglo peers and faculty, concerns over family expectations, and lack of understanding from the family. The most debilitating minority status stresses were found to be those that undermined the student’s academic confidence and ability to bond with the university. The African American students had the highest level of stresses of all the ethnic groups studied. It is interesting to note that African Americans also have the highest attrition rate of any minority group (Allen, 1985). Perhaps these minority status stresses are the significant variables in the alienation problem. This study emphasized how important the university environment is to the adaptation and success of minority students, what Crosson (1988) referred to as the “campus climate.”

One anomalous study by Steward, Germain, and Jackson (1992) found that Anglo, Asian and Hispanic seniors have similar interactional styles and that they experienced alienation to the same degree at this Midwestern, public university. They suggested that because the sample of minorities was primarily middle-class, these students had already been acculturated closer to Anglo, middle-class values prior to arrival, which would reduce alienation during the college experience. A previous study by Steward et al. (1990) had found that Hispanics felt less alienation the more they attempted to negotiate with the dominant culture. In this same study, African American students would change their interactional styles based upon the social setting. African Americans also perceived themselves to be more alienated the more they attempted to interact with the dominant culture; this is quite different to the Hispanic students’
behavior. Harvey (2001), in a study analyzing stigmatization and social isolation of African American students and Native American students compared to Caucasian students, found that both minority groups reported significantly higher stigmatization scores than White students.

Another portion of research on minority alienation consists of studies oriented towards providing possible research based solutions to the social and academic incongruence of minority students. Richardson, Simmons, and de los Santos (1987) identified the most successful minority-graduating, public universities across the nation and sought to determine what they were doing that was enabling them to successfully overcome the minority attrition problems. The findings were significant and they are consistent with the Tinto constructs. They found that successful colleges and universities tend to view minority achievement as a preparation problem rather than as a racial problem. Campus environment or climate was recognized as a critical variable and these schools attempted to attain a minimum of 20% minority populations. The successful schools have recognized the importance of minority faculty in creating a positive climate and so they were continuously seeking to hire minority teachers. At successful institutions, there was visible evidence of administrative support, and there were systematic strategies in place to promote the success of all of their students. However, when needs were identified, funds and policies were applied aggressively. In a related study, Crosson (1988) attempted to determine what steps were necessary to create campus environments that would retain minority students. She identified four areas that need institutional attention: (1) precollege programs, (2) remediation programs, (3) programs and services promoting student involvement in campus life, and (4) campus
climate (particularly the racial climate). Similarly, Levin and Levin (1991) suggested that there were two bodies of literature relating to predictors of retention – precollege and at-college (consistent with the Tinto model). They made two general recommendations based upon a literature review of the at-college predictors. First, institutions should increase faculty involvement as a policy. Second, institutions should develop academic retention programs. These programs were divided into the following categories: proactive interventions, small group tutorials, study skills and test taking programs, and programs for improving the quality of instruction. Concerning the quality of instruction, the hypothesis was that underprepared students need particularly effective instructors. The consistency of these last three studies is worth noting. They were advocating similar policies for improving minority retention and graduation rates.

The last part of this section focuses on Crosson’s (1988) campus climate but applied to a national level. Downey and Stage (1999) assessed the national campus climate by studying hate crimes on college and university campuses. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (1990), a hate crime is a criminal offense committed against an individual, group of individuals, or their property because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. Unfortunately for minority groups, “Incidences of violence and hate crimes are increasingly prevalent today and threaten the sense of community on college and university campuses” (Downey & Stage, 1999, p. 3). In fact, according to estimates from the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence (NIAPV), 20% to 25% of the nation’s minority students are victimized by hate crimes every year (Ehrlich, 1990). Downey and Stage (1999) suggested that campus hate crimes can be identified in a general sense by the following characteristics: (1) hate crimes are
more likely to involve violence, (2) they are usually random and spontaneous acts committed by young White males, and (3) they are usually conducted by more than one perpetrator. According to Levin and McDevitt (1993), college students are the most frequent perpetrators of hate crimes upon other college students, and they commit 85% of all campus hate crimes. According to the NIAPV, victims who did not report hate crimes ranged from 80% to 94% at four Northeastern universities (Ehrlich, 1992). Perhaps the most likely reason for this failure to report is that not reporting hate crimes is a manifestation of the victims’ perceptions of marginalization and alienation from their campus communities. Implicit in this behavior is the apparent belief that the university officials will probably fail to act and that reporting will likely catalyze further attacks. D’Augelli (1989) found that 94% of the gays and lesbians in his sample did not report incidents of harassment to university officials. According to Stage and Downey (1999), gays and lesbians are victimized more often than any other group. It seems obvious that hate crimes, or what Perry (2002) calls “ethnoviolence,” is a significant contributor to minority alienation on majority campuses. The recentness of these figures is not good news and reflects the general persistence of an alienating environment.

The African American Student. The majority of literature concerning minority attrition evaluates African American students. To a certain extent, this makes sense, as African Americans are the largest minority group in the United States, and they have the longest historical involvement with higher education. Although some of the access barriers for African Americans have decreased, significant problems persist. For instance, although university enrollments have increased nationally over the past 25 years, African Americans continue to be underrepresented (Gloria, Robinson-Kurpuis, Hamilton &
Willson, 1999). Additionally, 66.3% of the African American students attending predominantly White colleges or universities, will fail to persist (Gloria et al., 1999). Since the vast majority of African American students attend predominantly White colleges, the problem is very significant. African American students on White campuses also have lower academic performance than their peers on African American campuses (Nettles, Theony, & Gosman, 1986). The literature in this section attempts to shed light on these very significant issues. To maintain consistency with the Tinto model and to attempt to make sense of a fairly substantial body of research, the literature discussed in this section has been organized into three categories: (1) literature related to social integration, (2) literature focusing strictly on academic integration, and (3) literature that combines academic and social integration. Although racial identifiers tend to shift with the passage of time, the two terms that were most frequently used over the past twenty years of research to identify students of African descent are African Americans and Blacks. These terms are used interchangeably in the following sections.

*Social integration of African American students.* Pascarella (1985) sought to discover the variables that would account for different attrition rates between Whites and Blacks. Using the CIRP longitudinal data from 1971 to 1980, involving 5,577 students at 352 four-year colleges and universities, this study compared Whites and Blacks by gender using the five constructs of the Tinto Model. There was a significant difference between White men and Black men. For the Black male population, having a formal leadership role had a significant partial correlation with persistence. Additionally, social integration contributed more significantly to Black male persistence than academic integration. This suggests that the social integration component is integral to Black male
persistence. This was consistent with the findings of Allen (1985), in which 45% of a sample of 695 Black undergraduates, at six major, public universities in different regions reported high levels of social estrangement. What might account for this high social estrangement nationally?

In a related study, D’Augelli and Hershberger (1993) controlled for academic achievement, grade level, and academic major in an attempt to explore the noncognitive dimensions (e.g., racism, etc.) influencing the lives of Black students. They found that Black students had significantly lower well-being and life satisfaction scores than White students. They hypothesized that the only variable that was distinct enough to account for this was the level of the perception of racial discrimination. In fact, 66% of Blacks reported knowledge of racial incidents, 48% said it was likely that the average Black would be mistreated, 57% said they feared for their safety, and 33% said they felt mistreated by faculty at their large, midAtlantic university. Based upon these percentages, it seems understandable why high social estrangement is so prevalent among African American students.

Another study reflecting social estrangement was a longitudinal, qualitative, follow-up study at Southwest Missouri State University (SMSU). Fisher and Hartmann (1995), building on previous Black alienation studies at SMSU, looked to identify certain patterns that would affect the quality of the overall social experience of Blacks on campus. Additionally, they sought to determine whether Blacks and Whites place equal importance on interracial relationships. They identified the following emergent themes: (1) A student’s social life and associated opportunities are strongly affected by his or her racial background. (2) Race is far more salient for Black students. (3) Black students at
SMSU feel alienated by campus life. (4) The majority of Blacks (54%) reported witnessing racial prejudice on campus with 71% of those incidents being racial slurs. (5) Blacks tend to segregate themselves so as not to be considered a “sell out” by their peers. The themes for this self-segregation or sell-out avoidance behavior were peer pressure from other Blacks, distrust of Whites, and avoidance behavior related to potential prejudice from Whites. In a similar study on the social isolation of Black students attending southern, predominantly White colleges, James (1998) found that Black students were experiencing social alienation in various forms. Consistent with this, Redden (2002) determined that “African American students perceived their predominantly White university more negatively than their White counterparts” (p. 2) and that this was a factor in depression and social alienation of Black students.

In a qualitative study in this same category, Davis et al (2004) identified several major themes that emerged from phenomenological interviews of successful Black students at a predominantly White southeastern university. Those themes included the following: unfairness, sabotage, condescension, isolation, the sense of differentness or standing out, having to prove one’s worth, invisibility, and the feeling of sometimes having to represent all Black students. Lewis et al (2004) suggested similar emerging themes in another qualitative study that explored experiences of African American Ph.D. students at a predominately White Carnegie I research institution. Those themes included the following: (1) feelings of isolation, (2) feelings of standing out, (3) relationships with peers, and (4) negotiating the system.

Academic integration of African American students. Only two studies were found that specifically examined components of academic integration. Lichtman et al. (1989)
longitudinally examined White verses Black attrition rates at an urban, commuter college over a six-year period. This study sought to determine whether Blacks have higher attrition rates and whether GPA and academic preparation affected attrition rates equally for Blacks and Whites. The study found that 57% of Blacks dropped out as opposed to 38% of Whites and the difference remained when controlling for high school grades and ACT scores. This challenges the notion that Blacks drop out because of poor preparation. However, it also solicits the following question: If inadequate preparation does not drive attrition, then what does? The general tone of the rest of the research in this section tends toward alienation as the primary cause. This is further reinforced by the counterintuitive finding in the above study that as GPA increased, the rate of Black withdrawal increased. They found that above 3.0, one White student dropped for every 3.47 Black students. This suggests that some other set of factors was affecting attrition rates of African American students. The second study, conducted by Giles-Gee (1989), was a comparison of two cohorts of Black students. One cohort received an intense academic improvement program that included advising, study skills and a tutorial center. The control group was not given the treatment. The cohort of students receiving the program had a 9% higher retention rate. This study suggests that academic integration can improve retention for African American students. This is reinforced further by the previously discussed studies on minority retention and success (Richardson et al., 1987; Crosson, 1988; Levin & Levin, 1991).

*Social and academic integration of African American students.* Donovan (1984) examined low-income Blacks attending a variety of institutions throughout the country to determine whether the background characteristics of the student or the college experience
(academic and social integration) was the dominant predictor of attrition. Donovan found that college experiences are more important than background characteristics in predicting withdrawal behavior. In a follow-up study, Stoecker, Pascarella, and Wolfe (1988), using data from the nine-year CIRP surveys from 1971 to 1980, attempted to validate the various components of the Tinto model. They found that six variables in the model had significant direct effects on Black male persistence. Two were background traits – socioeconomic status and secondary school achievement, and the other four were measures of the college experience. They determined that academic and social integration were the most important determinants of Black persistence. Sedlacek and Brooks (1976) hypothesized the existence of eight noncognitive variables that were critical in the lives of minority students in order for them to achieve success on majority campuses. These variables include the following: (1) positive self-concept, (2) realistic self-appraisal, (3) understands and deals with racism, (4) demonstrated community involvement, (5) prefers long range goals to short term, (6) availability of strong support person, (7) successful leadership experience, and (8) knowledge acquired in their field. All of these could easily be placed into Tinto’s model and the majority of them would fall under academic or social integration. Sedlacek (1987), in his review of the literature of twenty years of research assessing Black students on White campuses, found that Blacks still had problems with self-concept, racism, developing a community and other noncognitive variables. What Sedlacek was really saying is that Blacks are suffering from social estrangement and this is consistent with the later findings of D’Augelli and Hershberger (1993), discussed previously.
In a study using the University Alienation Scale (Burbach, 1972), Suen (1983) examined the relationship between alienation and attrition among Black students within a predominantly White university environment. The University Alienation Scale was designed to measure meaninglessness, powerlessness, and social estrangement, known collectively as alienation. In this study, on a medium-sized, public, Midwestern university, Black students were more alienated than Whites. The most important contributor to the alienation score was social estrangement. Attrition was higher for Blacks and attrition related significantly to the total alienation score and the subscale score of meaninglessness. Suen concluded that alienation does relate to Black student attrition. As discussed previously, alienation is a function of the integration of noncognitive variables. Studying Black students at a large, Southwestern, state university, Gloria (1999) examined these noncognitive variables as they affect persistence. The results suggested that more social support, more comfort in the university environment, and positive self-beliefs were associated with persistence. Of these three constructs, university comfort and strong social support were the strongest predictors. These studies emphasize the importance of noncognitive variables in the retention of African American students attending majority schools.

One of the components of academic integration is academic achievement. There were several studies that attempted to clarify the relationships between the college experience (academic and social integration) and performance. For example, Nettles et al. (1986) asked the following questions in their study involving thirty institutions: (1) Is there any difference in the college performance of Black and White students? (2) What are the significant predictors of Black student and White student college performance?
(3) How do differences in the quality of the college experiences of Black and White students affect their college performance? One of the most important findings of this study was the importance of student-environment fit as measured by the following variables: student feelings that the university is nondiscriminatory, academic integration, student satisfaction, peer group relations and interfering problems. This study showed that lower feelings of discrimination contributed to higher performance as measured by GPA. Blacks were less academically integrated, had less satisfaction with their university, and experienced more interfering problems. With all other variables held constant, Black students who perceived less discrimination, who were satisfied with their university, and who had stronger peer group relations, had higher GPAs. Tracey and Sedlacek (1987) developed this further through a longitudinal study at one majority university. They were attempting to learn whether there were different determinants of success for Black and White students. The best predictor for Whites was SAT scores. However, this was only true for Blacks for the first semester. Thereafter, they found that persistence and grades were independent. In other words, Blacks were not dropping out because of poor performance. Rather, they found the noncognitive variables (social integration) to be the best predictors of Black persistence. Again, this points heavily toward student alienation because the noncognitive variables are predominantly alienation variables.

There were several studies conducted during this period that assessed performance as a function of alienation by comparing Black students on White campuses with Black students on Black campuses. Allen (1987, 1988) conducted studies in consecutive years using data from the National Study of Black College Students (1981,
1983). These studies collected data on Black students at six, large, majority, public institutions and compared them to data on Blacks attending eight, public, Black institutions. In Allen (1987), grades were found to be higher for Blacks on Black campuses. White campuses were found to be far more alienating for Black students and those students desired more supportive environments. This was reflected in less involvement in campus activities for Blacks on White campuses. Relations with White faculty were more favorable on Black campuses. In the follow-up study, Allen (1988) looked at performance as a function of satisfaction with college and racial attitudes. He found that Black students at Black colleges have higher GPAs. He also found that 63% of the students on Black campuses indicated that campus activities were consistent with their interests while only 8% could say this on majority campuses. Black students on Black campuses reported positive relationships with White faculty. They also reported much higher levels of academic competition, had lower occupational aspirations and were less likely to desire advanced degrees. Allen (1988) concluded, … the evidence suggests that Black students on Black campuses are more disadvantaged socioeconomically and academically than are Black students on White campuses but that students on Black campuses display more positive psychosocial adjustments, significant academic gains, and greater cultural awareness/commitment (p. 406).

In a related study comparing the same two groups, Davis (1995) attempted to determine what noncognitive variables affect educational achievement for Black males. The independent variables were academic and personal background, racial congruency factors and college level environmental factors. Black students at Black institutions were
more integrated into the academic life of their campuses, earned better grades and perceived their colleges to be providing more institutional support. He concluded that differences in the racial environment and other college environment variables affect academic achievement.

One of the most interesting primary sources acquired during this research was a diary of a female, African American freshman (Millner, 1998), attending Harvard University. In studying this document, five themes emerged that reinforced much of the research presented in this section. Those themes were the following: (1) Black students tend to segregate themselves. (2) Black students feel extremely isolated because of race. (3) There was very little explicit institutional support of minorities and this increased the student feelings of incongruence. In particular, the author pointed to the lack of minority facilities to support the development of ethnic enclaves and to the overall poor quality of the minority studies programs. (4) Black students feel alienated on campus. The author referred to alienated minorities as “Harvard zombies” (p. 121). (5) Minority students have intense disdain for the highly competitive academic atmosphere. This is consistent with a similar finding in McCool (1984), to be discussed in the next section (The Hispanic American Student). The themes that emerged from this diary are consistent with the literature over the past twenty years. I would like to close this section on African American incongruence with the following summary statement:

Ask a black student about the racial climate on campus and he or she will likely describe it as a microcosm of society…. They hear outlandishly insensitive statements and observe painful expressions of disrespect and downright hatred….Repeatedly, however, black experiences in mostly White colleges are
chronicles of how the institutions have almost systematically bruised self-esteem and doled out mere pittances of support services (Beckham, 1988, p.76).

*The Hispanic American student.* Due to the increasing presence of Hispanic Americans in higher education, research on the recruitment, retention and performance of this population becomes increasingly important. Latinos have become one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States. According to the 1991 U.S. Census, Hispanics were 8.2% of the total population (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1991). Demographic projections report that Hispanics will become the largest minority group by 2005 (“Facts on Hispanic Higher Education,” 2000). However, despite these figures, Latinos continue to be underrepresented on America’s campuses (Collison, 1999). According to O’ Brien (1993), few colleges and universities are succeeding in retaining Latinos and Latinos are the least likely ethnic group to persist. Many researchers have commented on how scanty the research on Hispanic retention has been. What has been done has not contributed much to our overall understanding of the problem of low Latino persistence. Consequently, there has also been little revealed about Latino alienation as a component of social and academic integration within the Tinto model. Additionally, no Hispanic-specific-constructs related to persistence for Hispanic students have been identified up to this point in time. Nonetheless, this section is a brief summary of the research that has contributed to the knowledge in Latino alienation and their subsequent lack of persistence.

In attempting to determine how Chicano perceptions of their community colleges might affect their persistence, Lowe (1989) determined that Chicano persistence was positively related to the amount of support provided by others. Lowe suggested that these
significant others could include family, peers, faculty and staff. This was consistent with the findings of Hernandez (2000) in a qualitative study attempting to find themes in Latino retention that emerged from the students’ perspectives. Additionally, Hernandez (2000) attempted to determine what environmental factors were influencing the college experience and subsequent retention of this group. Over half of the emerging themes in this study had to do with social integration. The students in this study identified the following themes related to social integration: (1) the family (as a source of support and encouragement), (2) friends and peers, (3) positive faculty and staff relationships, (4) involvement in extracurricular groups and activities, (5) finding a Latino community (ethnic enclave) and (6) the theme that the environment is the people.

This emphasis on social integration is further emphasized by McCool (1984) who found that a cultural trait of Mexican American students is a desire for increased cooperation and group assistance. This trait is silhouetted against the competitive nature of peer relations that exists at predominantly White institutions, and this may account for some Hispanic alienation. McCool (1984) also found that this family orientation could have a negative effect in that Latino students were often expected to “help” their families while attending college. This “help” came in many forms, not the least of which was financial.

This emphasis on social integration for Hispanic students is further revealed in a study conducted by Attanasi (1989) who attempted to develop Hispanic persistence constructs. In a qualitative study of 18 students at a large, public, Southwestern university, he found that social and academic integration, what Attanasi called “Getting in,” is a function of the extent to which the university environment endows the individual
with the ability to manage their environment. In other words, Attanasi suggests that persistence is a function of how well the college environment helps the student perceive the physical, social and academic geographies as being manageable or negotiable. It was also found that the Hispanic persister is more likely to employ strategies that assist in the development of cognitive maps. This might explain one of the findings in McCool (1984) as it was discovered that Hispanic students are often not aware of the systemic support available to them in that nonpersisters might fail to develop these cognitive maps. This is further supported by Olivas (1986) in a study on retention and financial aid. He found that half of the Hispanic students studied actually over reported their family incomes and thereby decreased the amount of financial aid that was legitimately available to them. To me, this seems to demonstrate the consequences of failing to develop a cognitive map about how the university operates.

In addition to what was discussed previously, Hernandez (2000) also found that a positive self-efficacy was related to persistence behavior. This is consistent with McCool (1984) who found that the negative labels like “disadvantaged” were negatively impacting the self-efficacy of Latino students and thus, negatively influencing persistence. Another significant persistence-related-barrier for Hispanic students was simply the dominant language. It was found that many Hispanic students come from domestic environments in which Spanish is the only language spoken. Additionally, bilingual students were competent conversationally but struggled with the formal English of the classroom (McCool, 1984).

In a somewhat anomalous study, Nora (1987) attempted to test the Tinto model specific to social and academic integration and the retention of Hispanic students. For
Chicano students, the findings did not substantiate the significance of academic and social integration on retention. Instead, two precollege factors were found significant – high school grades and encouragement by others before college entrance. However, a possible relationship with Nora’s (1987) finding and the previously discussed research is that this precollege lack of encouragement might be associated with the self-efficacy variable in that those students who were not encouraged before college entrance might lack self-efficacy, which is related to withdrawal.

In closing this section, it seems obvious that the knowledge about Hispanic retention and alienation is marginal. Considering the growth of the Hispanic population in higher education, it seems almost negligent that the amount of knowledge on Hispanic retention is so sparse. Besides the paucity of knowledge, another problem is in generalizing across Hispanic groups. The general tendency has been to generalize to all Hispanic populations. The cultural differences between Spanish speaking peoples are highly diverse; to treat them homogeneously tends to degrade the minimal knowledge that is available. In other words, I question whether truly “Hispanic” research is possible given the tremendous diversity that exists within that construct.

*The Native American student.* Native Americans have similar retention problems to the other ethnic groups previously discussed in this review. In fact, according to Tierney (1992), only 20% of those Native American students who make it to ninth grade will enroll in college and of that group, only 15% will graduate from college. Perry (2002) reported even lower Native American graduation rates of less than 10%. Tierney (1992) offered one possible explanation for these dismal national results for Native Americans. “An American Indian who sets foot on a mainstream campus undergoes a
disruptive cultural experience not because college is a rite of passage, but because the institution is culturally distinct from the Indian youth’s own culture” (p. 608). Implicit in this quotation about cultural distinctiveness is student alienation. The alienation comes from having to function in a foreign environment, an environment often perceived to be openly hostile.

This thread of cultural distinctiveness runs through at least two of the studies included in this review. Sanders (1987) sought to identify cultural differences that might explain Native American difficulties in education through the K-12 system and beyond. Sanders identified twenty cultural differences between the Native American culture and the dominant culture. Some of those differences, which are pertinent to this discussion, are included in the following list: (1) Native Americans speak softer and at a slower rate. (2) They tend to avoid speaker to listener visual contact (anathema in the dominant culture). (3) They interject less during conversation or while another is speaking. (4) They tend to use less encouraging signs that they are listening (e.g., uh-huh, yeah, etc.). (5) They often delay a response, as immediate response is not a cultural necessity for them. (6) They tend to be more nonverbal than verbal in communications. (7) Cooperation is far more valuable than competition. (8) The group’s needs are more important than one’s own. (9) They tend to focus on present goals and are temporally oriented in the present. (10) Nature is something to be in harmony with, not something to control. (11) They tend to focus on controlling their own behavior as opposed to controlling others. (12) They tend towards collective discipline versus individual accountability. (13) They encourage sharing and keeping only enough for one’s present needs. (14) They tend to observe activities first before participating and will participate
only when they are certain of their ability to succeed. (15) They are patient and will allow others to go first. The above list emphasizes glaring differences in culture. However, the Native American is expected to function in what amounts to an alien environment. This alien environment is faster, noisier, more self-serving, more aggressive, more competitive, and contains a different system of goals and rewards (Sanders, 1987). Sanders concluded that the incongruent values produce passive, defeatist students at all levels of the system. Sanders also identified the need for more Native American faculty throughout the system.

The previous study focused on the general impact of cultural alienation in American education. However, Tierney (1992) explored themes in Native American attrition from higher education. This longitudinal (two-year) study involved over 200 interviews on ten college campuses. Two dominant themes emerged from this study. First, the problem with acculturation was primarily a result of Native American rejection of the majority emphasis on competition and achievement, which is consistent with Sanders (1987), discussed previously. Second, Native Americans have generally rejected the dominant culture; therefore, integration becomes extremely difficult or even impossible. Tierney indicated that the problem is not with the student and suggested that objectifying the ethnic group as the problem is, in itself, a problem. Rather, he said that the problem was that the institutions lack the ability to operate in a multicultural world. Simply stated: do not fix the alienated group; fix the environment that continues to alienate them.

The last section on Native Americans is focused on the issue of campus climate and the alienating environment. Perry (2002) studied campus ethnoviolence that was
committed against Native Americans at Northern Arizona University (NAU). Perry defined ethnoviolence as “…acts of violence and intimidation, usually directed toward already stigmatized and marginalized groups” (p. 36). Incidentally, Perry chose NAU because it had one of the highest Native American enrollments and graduation rates in the country. Perry found that 40% of Native Americans reported being victimized by virtue of their ethnicity, and 30% reported being victimized more than once. The majority of the incidents were verbal. The study also attempted to assess the campus climate by measuring the prominence of the racist literature and racist imagery that the campus atmosphere generally presented to the students. Of those Native American students sampled, 41.3% reported experiencing racist literature or imagery on campus. Perhaps the most disturbing finding was that 44% of those who reported incidents of racial victimization reported that the faculty or staff was passively or actively involved. Data collected by Taylor (2003) indicated similar findings as above. In this qualitative study of 16 Native American students on a predominantly White campus, the following themes emerged: feelings of isolation, loneliness, discomfort because of looks and stares, lack of respect, experiencing thoughtless comments or stereotypes, and a lack of institutional support. Using Critical Race Theory, Taylor (2001) found that in narratives from 16 Native American students at a predominantly White university, that there were specific aspects of university environments that help to create and support student alienation for Native Americans. Taken collectively, these data suggest that there is a general message to Native American students on campus that they do not belong, and it seems obvious that such a continuously expressed (implicit and explicit) message would be highly alienating. If one of the most successful universities in graduating Native Americans has
this level of student reported incidents of ethnoviolence on its campus, what level of alienation might be occurring at less successful institutions with similar Native American populations?

*The Disabled American student.* Consequent to the passage of two bills – the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (PL101-336) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (PL101-476), combined with tremendous technological advances over the past several decades, disabled students have sought access to higher education in ever greater numbers. In fact, across the entire national higher education system from 1978 to 1994, the percentage of disabled students rose from 2.6% to 9.2% (Henderson, 1995). However, with that tremendous rise in population, new problems have arisen associated with disabled students. Unfortunately, with that rise in enrollment, there has not been a subsequent rise in relevant research. In fact, the disabled student population has received little research attention (Hodges & Keller, 1999). Therefore, the research associated with disabled alienation is also scarce. This section will discuss a portion of that limited research.

The common thread interwoven through the four studies discussed here is social integration. In the 1970s, three barriers to disabled student retention were identified: policy barriers, social barriers and architectural barriers (Stilwell, Stilwell & Perritt, 1983). It would seem that many of the policy barriers and architectural barriers have been overcome but the social barriers persist. Stilwell et al. (1983) conducted a follow-up study that was undertaken to determine how much improvement (or lack thereof) had taken place throughout Kentucky’s higher education system since an inventory study was conducted in 1971. This study sought to measure the change using data collected
primarily from staff and administrators throughout the state. A few of the persisting policy barriers were the following: (1) very few handicapped persons were employed across the universities, (2) institutions failed to use disabled students in an advisory capacity in order to evaluate the institutions from the student’s point of view, and (3) college literature did not contain information pertinent to the disabled student. There were many persisting architectural barriers, but since those problems have been predominantly solved through subsequent legislation, they will not be listed. The dominant social barrier was that institutions failed to facilitate disabled students participation in extracurricular activities. According to Hodges and Keller (1999), this barrier persists as they identified this as a theme in a qualitative study that asked students to identify perceived barriers to social integration. In this study, the opportunity to be involved in social activities was reported as very important to students, but they also reported feeling prevented from participating by scheduling, transportation, the need for assistance, and the need to maintain an assisting animal. In fact, several students were socially limited by the public transportation schedules. One student reported that his assigned human aid only worked during the daytime shift, which precluded this student from participating in any activity scheduled at night (the time of many campus social activities).

In a very significant study conducted on a small, state college in northeastern Pennsylvania, Babbitt, Burbach, and Iutcovich (1979) sought to determine whether disabled students perceived themselves to be objects of stigmatization on college campuses. Additionally, they attempted to determine whether nondisabled students perceived themselves or others as agents of perpetrating stigmatization against the
disabled. They defined *stigma* as an attribute that is deeply discrediting or an undesirable differentness that tends to turn people away. The researchers found that disabled students sense that others in the college environment view them negatively and they hold a discrepant self-other appraisal of themselves. The responding nondisabled students reported that stigmatization was occurring but most of them suggested that they were not personally the source. In other words, they recognized that disabled students were generally stigmatized by the campus community but not by them personally. However, what is significant here is that both nondisabled students and disabled students agreed that stigmatization is a reality on campus. This finding of stigmatization is consistent with one of the themes reported by Hodges and Keller (1999). In a qualitative study, these researchers found that disabled students reported minimal peer acceptance, and they felt that if they wanted social relationships, the burden was on them to do all of the initiating. In other words, the disabled student had to somehow overcome (through personal charisma, etc.) the stigma of disability or face isolation. The students in this study also reported that affiliation with a peer group was significant to them in terms of social integration. They identified three sources: dorm residents, other disabled students, and academic major. Grouping themselves with other disabled students was most important. This seems to be consistent with the construct of students forming ethnic enclaves as presented in other sections of this paper.

In an attempt to assess the effect of being disabled on academic progress, Wiseman, Emry and Morgan (1988) conducted a study of disabled students attending a large, Western university. More specifically, they sought to determine whether academic success is contingent upon positive communication with faculty, peers and staff. In other
words, what is the affect of social integration on academic success for disabled students? They found student motivation to be negatively related to social alienation and motivation was related to academic success. The second finding of significance was that student’s perceived competence was most related to the level of social adjustment. The researchers concluded that since motivation is related to alienation, then establishing a supportive climate should decrease demotivation and thereby improve academic success. They also emphasized the significance of the faculty and staff relationships with disabled students in terms of influencing social and academic success. The researchers also found a relationship between academic performance and student opportunities to lead. This is similar to a previously mentioned finding specific to African American males and leadership (Allen, 1985).

Based upon all of the collective knowledge expressed in the previous studies, though progress has been made, it appears that disabled students are still not socially integrated into the college campus. According to the Tinto model, as long as alienation persists, academic success and graduation rates for disabled students will not be as high as they should be were positive social integration attained.

*Other alienated student groups.* The vast majority of research on student alienation and retention fall into the main student groups that have already been discussed. However, research on other student population groups has been conducted. This section will describe an assortment of studies related to this topic of student alienation.

According to Astin (1998), women are the majority of all undergraduate students. Consequently, there has been some research interest in the impact of gender on the
overall female college experience. Some studies have indicated that the college experience can have a negative effect on women’s learning and development. For example, in a study of 27,000 students, Astin (1993) concluded that the college experience “preserves and strengthens, rather than reduces or weakens, stereotypic differences between men and women in behavior, personality, aspirations, and achievement” (p. 406). Sax et al (2002) found that at the completion of the freshmen year college women have lower levels of emotional health than their male counterparts. Hall and Sandler (1982, 1984) hypothesized the existence of a “chilly climate” for women on the college campus. They asserted that this climate alienated women by threatening their self-esteem, by reinforcing stereotypes and by negatively influencing their academic success and career aspirations. Patitu and Hinton (2003) concluded that African American women faculty and administrators experienced a chilly climate consisting of racism and sexism, resulting in social isolation. Incidentally, this is consistent with two themes that I identified in Millner’s (1998) diary from Harvard (discussed previously). Millner observed that males dominate classroom discussions at Harvard and that women quickly learn to keep quiet in class because they are “supposed to keep quiet.” Pascarella et al. (1997), by focusing on the freshman year, attempted to test this hypothesis on academic outcomes. They found modest support for the chilly climate hypothesis. They concluded that the chilly climate did produce small but significant negative associations with cognitive development and self-reported gains in academic preparation for a career, in the freshman year. Whitt, Nora, Edison, Terenzini and Pascarella (1999) attempted to extend the previous study by attempting to determine whether women’s perceptions of a chilly climate negatively influenced cognitive development in the sophomore and junior
years. Using a sample of 3,840 students at 23 institutions, the researchers found that female perceptions of a chilly climate can have negative effects on cognitive outcomes. They concluded that “if female students perceptions of a chilly climate have a measurable impact on what they gain, and what they believe they gain, from college, then conditions that create that climate must be addressed” (p. 175). The introduction of the term chilly climate tends to obfuscate the issue by introducing a new and unnecessary construct. What these researchers are really talking about is student alienation. To reorient or translate this research into the frame which I have chosen for this paper, what they are evaluating are the effects of the perceptions of an alienating environment upon the social and academic integration of female students.

Asian Americans are another student subpopulation that have been studied within this genre of research. However, research has been somewhat scarce because of high success rates for Asian American students and the general perception that they are the “model minority” from a social integrationist’s perspective. Asamen and Berry (1987) attempted to determine whether Asian American students are affected by perceived prejudice, and whether their self-concepts are affected by feelings of alienation. They used a sample of 63 Japanese Americans and 44 Chinese Americans attending universities in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. They found that there was a significant negative relationship for Japanese Americans for perceived prejudice and self-concept. Those students who perceived more prejudice had significantly lower self-concepts. Japanese and Chinese Americans who felt more alienated also had lower self-concepts than those who felt less alienated. The alienation was particularly high in the two alienation subcategories of helplessness and social isolation.
In a somewhat related study using the University Alienation Scale, Schram and Lauver (1988) attempted to identify variables that could predict the alienation of international students. A sample of 266 international students was taken from 2,544 international students studying at a large, Southwestern university. The researchers found that alienation of international students can be predicted based upon social contact, graduate status and geographical region of origin. The results showed that non-European undergraduates who are social isolates are the most at-risk group among the international student body. However, it is interesting to note that the alienation scores for these international students was lower than the scores for Blacks and Whites from the study conducted by Suen (1983). This seems somewhat counterintuitive. In a related study of Asian students attending Western Michigan University, Nicholson (2001) determined that the most significant obstacle for this particular group was related to English proficiency.

Conclusions from the review. In this section, the term minority is used in a general sense to represent all of the student groups discussed in this review. The research validates the hypothesis that all students experience some level of alienation but that some groups are more alienated than others, as a function of university and college attendance. The research also supports the Tinto hypothesis that alienation is a phenomenon that is caused by the student’s interaction with the campus environment, what Tinto (1998) called social and academic integration. The research suggests that alienation affects components of the minority college experience: academic performance, self-concept and retention-withdrawal behavior. Generally, the majority of the research either directly supports, or is consistent with, the Tinto model. Of the minority groups studied, intergroup comparisons suggest that African American students are the most
alienated group in American higher education. Concerning the persistence and magnitude of alienation on a national scale, campus environments were alienating to minority students in 1980 (the cut-off point for this review) and they remain agents of alienation today. However, to what extent alienation levels have changed (either negatively or positively) is difficult to assess for reasons to be discussed in the next section. The research also revealed that some campuses are more alienating for minority students than others. For example, historically Black colleges and universities are far less alienating for Black students than White colleges. Additionally, as revealed by Richardson et al. (1987), some White colleges are far less alienating than the majority of White colleges. This is reflected by the following variables: graduation rates, student levels of satisfaction with their college experience, academic performance, and existing institutional policies at the successful institutions. One consistent theme that persisted throughout this research was the lack of minority representation among faculty and staff. Every group represented in this study articulated the fact that one of the contributing factors to their alienation was that their group was disproportionately underrepresented, particularly among the faculty. In light of this, it is interesting to note that one of the dominant themes of Tinto (1998) was the empirical support for positive faculty-student interaction as a key to enhanced retention, regardless of ethnicity. The successful institutions studied in the Richardson et al. (1987) study were all actively pursuing the hiring of minority faculty and staff as institutional policy. It certainly seems logical that if minorities were more proportionately represented on the nation’s campuses, that this would reduce alienation, thereby improving the retention and graduation rates of all minorities.
Another common theme among all minority groups (including the disabled) was the need to associate with other members of the same group, in what has become known in the literature as ethnic enclaves. A related theme that emerged from the literature is the perceived institutional support for these ethnic enclaves or student minority associations (both formal and informal). The successful institutions in the Richardson et al. (1987) study were those institutions that formally recognized, supported, and promoted these ethnic enclaves as positive entities that could enhance the campus climate for minorities. I suspect that campus ministries may serve a similar purpose for evangelical students as *evangelical enclaves* and will looking to validate/invalidate this notion with the data.

*The state of Alienation research.* The review of the literature on student alienation was neither simple nor straightforward. One reason for this was that student alienation presented a moving target since it was often not the primary purpose of the research in which it appeared. Rather, in most instances, student attrition was the topic under study, and alienation was a secondary issue or considered a variable. In several cases, alienation was implicit in a study but it was not always clear how, why, or to what magnitude. In other cases, researchers were studying attrition and alienation emerged as a general theme. In many instances, the term alienation was never used. Often, although alienation was the actual construct under study, the researcher used some other synonymous term in its stead. Researchers used associated terms like incongruence, isolation, chilly climate, social estrangement, stigmatization, etc. Along with this general inconsistency in the language and in the constructs, there was also a general lack of theoretical direction and theoretical organization. As I began to organize the various studies, it seemed that the best way to conquer the chaos was to orient them within the Tinto frame. However, some
of the researchers did not use the Tinto model as their theoretical frame. Thus, my
organizing the body of research in this manner might be considered forced.

Besides the problems of theoretical disorganization and the resulting lack of
common constructs, another problem in drawing conclusions from this body of literature
was that the researchers did not use common variables for alienation. This was
particularly difficult in the research that attempted to explain what the causes of
alienation were. For example, some researchers used constructs like “noncognitive
variables” while others used “minority status stresses,” etc. However, very few of them
maintained, extended, or built upon existing constructs. One has to wonder whether the
wheel was/is being continually reinvented, or whether this reflects a valid search for
commonly accepted variables by the researchers in the field. These research difficulties
are mentioned here because they shed some light on the state of contemporary alienation
research.

Before 1989, the majority of research done on alienation was quantitative. Some
of these quantitative studies provided strong evidence that alienation of minority students
was a real phenomenon. However, since that early research, the general weakness in
alienation research has been in determining what the causes, components, and effects of
alienation are. Some of this can be accounted for because of this lack of a common
language, discussed above. However, some of it has occurred in the legitimate search for
a commonly accepted set of variables. This field of research is still searching for some
commonly accepted variables for alienation. This problem even extends into the large
body of African American attrition research (collectively representing the most
comprehensive set of studies). The general failure to arrive at these commonly accepted
variables
variables might explain the emergence of qualitative research within this field. Some of
the most revealing or insightful research included in this review was qualitative.

After 1989, some researchers began to investigate alienation using the qualitative
method. This qualitative research, primarily building on the Tinto model, has been
invaluable to the emerging knowledge. It is through qualitative research that new
variables might be identified. With those newly identified variables, researchers might
subsequently replicate previous quantitative work. This is important because it would
allow researchers to identify whether student alienation is increasing or decreasing and its
magnitude relative to a base line. A base is what alienation research needs. Otherwise, the
field will continually be declaring that alienation is a problem that exists, but it cannot
inform us concerning magnitude, direction, or change.

Another limitation in this body of research is that the vast majority of the
quantitative research has been done in comparing African Americans to Whites. There
are several sound reasons for this. However, the lack of research on other alienated
groups seems almost negligent. Within a year or two, Hispanics are projected to become
the largest minority group in the nation. However, attrition and alienation research on
Hispanics is miniscule by comparison, and Hispanics are the next most frequently studied
group. There is a tremendous need to build upon the existing body of knowledge in
attrition and alienation for Hispanics, for Native Americans, for women, for the disabled,
for Asian Americans, for international students and for gay and lesbian students. It would
be advantageous to add belief system or worldview to this list. It is probable that the
belief system that a student brings to the academy can be highly alienating as that student
interacts with the dominant worldview(s) of the academy.
The broad classification of certain groups as homogeneous entities is also a problem to the validity of this body of research. For example, Hispanics are often studied as if they were a homogeneous group. However, the cultural differences between groups classified as Hispanics is quite pronounced. To classify them homogeneously really seems to jeopardize the usefulness and accuracy of any conclusions that are presented. This same problem exists with Native Americans. Between tribes, there are significant cultural differences, not the least of which are the tribe’s level of integration into the dominant culture, the tribe’s history, and the tribe’s language. This problem is also manifested in the term Asian American. Though there are some physical commonalities, there are significant cultural differences. For example, Filipinos and Chinese would both fall under the category of Asian Americans, yet their languages and cultures are significantly different. At the risk of increasing complexity, the population categories need to be less homogenized for future alienation research.

In a general sense, the research presented in this section revealed a significant problem within the national higher education system. Although our knowledge has increased significantly over the past 25 years, there is still much about student alienation that is yet to be explained. Because there is so much within this field yet to be learned and discovered, there are invariably significant national and institutional policy implications that rest in the balance.

It is my contention that one significant source of alienation that has not been previously researched is worldview alienation. Perhaps the fact that this form of alienation has not been considered is because it is difficult for it to be perceived or conceived from a strict naturalistic paradigm. It is my sincere hope that the findings of
this research (Evangelical Student Alienation) will add significantly to the general knowledge about student alienation and ultimately contribute to a more diverse and pluralistic academy.
Chapter Three:

Research Methods

Qualitative Paradigm

As stated previously, the purpose of this study was to explore the possibility that evangelical students are alienated by the modern academy. If, during the process of the study, the data began to demonstrate some support for the hypothesis that evangelical students are alienated, then the contingent purposes were to enhance our understanding of evangelical alienation. That is, this study sought to understand the following: 1) the possible source(s) of evangelical alienation, 2) how evangelical students respond to the alienation that they experience, and 3) the student’s perceptions of how the institution reacts to who they are as evangelical students.

This study, within the general context of worldviews in conflict, attempted to explore the following research questions or research goals: 1) Are evangelical students experiencing alienation at American colleges and universities? 2) What are the prevailing types of alienation for evangelical students? 3) What are the specific sources of evangelical student alienation? 4) What are the dominant themes with regard to evangelical student coping strategies? 5) What are the dominant themes that emerge that threaten or impact the evangelical student’s academic success and/or persistence/retention? 6) How do the student’s perceive the institutions reaction to them as they manifest their Christian worldview on campus?
I selected the qualitative paradigm because I believed it to be the most appropriate option for this basic research study, as this study’s purposes (Chapter 1) were more compatible with a fundamental goal (understanding) of qualitative research than those (cause and effect relationships) of the quantitative paradigm. Further, Echols (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of 113 studies on research related to minority students from 1970-1997, further validating the Tinto model regarding the importance of social integration to academic success. Regarding the compatibility of the qualitative approach and this type of research, Echols (1998) said the following:

This field is ripe for phenomenological and other types of qualitative inquiry where intense, depthful exchange and evaluation ideas can be achieved, adding texture and color to the portraits the numbers are helping us paint (p. 164).

At a fundamental level, the qualitative approach is derived from a phenomenological perspective which emphasizes the importance of understanding the meaning that events have for the individual persons being studied (Patton, 2002). According to Patton (1991), “The goals of qualitative research are more concerned with understanding than with causes” (p. 391). This study was concerned with understanding the meaning of the evangelical student’s relationship with the university for the purpose of determining whether alienation is a component of that relationship. This exploratory study attempted to understand the student’s relationship to the university in a context where the student’s worldview is significantly different than the worldview learning context they are immersed into. According to Patton (2002), contextual sensitivity is considered a “strategic ideal” of qualitative research (p. 66). If it was determined that alienation is a component of the student-university relationship, then a collateral goal was to broaden
the depth of understanding of this phenomenon (another strategic ideal). This focus on understanding or *Verstehen* was a key element in justifying the use of the qualitative paradigm for this study. “The tradition of *Verstehen* places emphasis on the human capacity to know and understand others through empathic introspection and reflection based on direct observation of and interaction with people” (Patton, 2002, p. 52). While the quantitative approach often focuses on cause and effect relationships, the qualitative approach focuses primarily on the understanding of phenomena.

Alienation is contingent upon individual perceptions and perspectives, and it is a construct that is experiential by definition. In describing the goals of qualitative research, Patton (1991) explains,

In this case, what is sought is understanding of social phenomena from the perspective of the persons whose behavior is under study. The qualitative methodologies seek direct access to the lived experience of the human actor as he or she understands and deals with ongoing events. The goal is to describe and analyze the activities and reasoning persons use as they engage in organized social interaction … A central objective of the qualitative approach is, therefore, to describe and understand the procedures by which persons create their own behavior and understand and deal with the behavior of others (p. 391).

Consistent with this, I was interested in what these students know and believe about their freshman year experience (the social context for the phenomenon under study – the potential for worldview alienation). Additionally, “qualitative methods permit the evaluator to study selected issues in depth and detail” (Patton, 2002, p. 14). Conversely,
the philosophical constraints of the quantitative paradigm would likely render it less
effective in understanding this phenomenon in depth.

Perhaps two of the greatest strengths that the qualitative paradigm brings to this
study are empathy and insight. “Qualitative inquiry methods promote empathy and give
the researcher an empirical basis for describing the perspectives of others while also
legitimately reporting his or her own feelings, perceptions, experiences, and insights as
part of the data” (Patton, 2002, p. 53). This notion of successfully and empathetically
entering into the world of another is clearly expressed by Moustakas (1995) as follows:

I do not select, interpret, advise, or direct…Being-In the world of the other is a
way of going wide open, entering in as if for the first time, hearing just what is,
leaving out my own thoughts, feelings, theories, biases…I enter with the intention
of understanding and accepting perceptions and not presenting my own view or
reactions…I only want to encourage and support the other person’s expression,
what and how it is, how it came to be, and where it is going (p. 82-82).

However, in my case, this also presented the greatest challenge to the validity of this
study. Much like personality traits, one of our greatest strengths can often be one of our
greatest weaknesses. However, as Patton (2002) points out, it is possible to have empathy
toward the participants while remaining neutral toward the findings (p. 53). Finding
balance here was a personal goal throughout this study.

There are several different varieties or theoretical traditions within the qualitative
paradigm. What distinguishes those traditions is “they vary considerably in their
conceptualizations of what is important to ask and consider in elucidating and
understanding the empirical world” (Patton, 1990, p. 67). For this study, I have decided
that binding the study dogmatically to one particular qualitative tradition (e.g. phenomenology, ethnography, orientational, grounded theory, heuristic inquiry, etc.) would prove to be contrived and therefore deleterious to the intended exploratory emphasis upon understanding. Instead, I intended to employ prominent strategies utilized by a variety of the various traditions while attempting to orient the conduct of the study consistent with Patton’s (2002) twelve themes (or strategic ideals) of qualitative inquiry which include the following:

1) naturalistic inquiry, 2) emergent design flexibility, 3) purposeful sampling, 4) qualitative depth, 5) personal experience and engagement, 6) empathetic neutrality and mindfulness, 7) dynamic systems, 8) unique case orientation, 9) inductive analysis and creative synthesis, 10) holistic perspective, 11) context sensitivity, and 12) voice, perspective and reflexivity (p. 40-41).

Instead of artificially forcing this study into a qualitative tradition, I believe that this open strategy will provide flexibility in design that will prove to be highly advantageous. This approach is consistent with Patton’s (2002) conclusion,

While these intellectual, philosophical, and theoretical traditions have greatly influenced the debate about the value and legitimacy of qualitative inquiry, it is not necessary, in my opinion, to swear allegiance to any single epistemological perspective to use qualitative methods (p. 136).

According to Patton (2002), phenomenological inquiry focuses on the question: “What is the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?”(p. 104), and focusing upon what my participants perceive and how they interpret those perceptions is consistent with a phenomenological approach.
In this qualitative tradition, the important things to understand are what people perceive and how they interpret what they perceive. In the phenomenological tradition, there is an assumption of *essence*. In this particular study, my desire is not to be artificially bound and wholly committed to a strict phenomenological approach. Although I am interested in the student’s perceptions and experience of this phenomenon, attempting to discover the *essence* of the phenomenon does not seem advantageous to this particular study. This study did not fit neatly into the phenomenological tradition. Some might argue that it is also important to experience the phenomenon under investigation. In my case, I believe I have experienced student alienation, but I cannot say that others of my group have experienced it. Therefore, I determined that heuristic inquiry to also be an inappropriate approach for this study.

*Qualitative Methods*

This study was a qualitative study that was conducted between January 2006 and June 2006. The purpose of this research was to describe and analyze the perspectives and perceptions of evangelical students at two American universities regarding the prospective influence of worldview-related-alienation upon their university experience. From the beginning, I recognized that worldview-related-alienation might not be a prevailing response. I also recognized that it was possible that other unanticipated student responses might emerge from the data.

The research design included personal interviews. I attempted to determine whether this phenomenon (evangelical student alienation) exists and then proceed to develop our understanding of this phenomenon. For the reasons stated previously, this study was best conducted within the general parameters of the qualitative research
tradition because I believed it to be the most appropriate method for addressing the specific research questions.

For the overall improvement of the study, I intentionally remained flexible in order to follow the emergent data as it was revealed. Flexibility in design is appropriate in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 225). Not only is it appropriate but “a qualitative design needs to remain sufficiently open and flexible to permit exploration of whatever the phenomenon under study offers for inquiry. Qualitative designs continue to be emergent even after data collection begins” (Patton, 2002, p. 255). Emergent design flexibility is a strategic ideal or principal of qualitative research (Patton, 2002, p. 40).

Data Sources

The geographical location for this study was two campuses in the South central region of the United States. The universities represented in this study are located in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, an area generally recognized as having a strong evangelical influence. Participants for this study were sought from two public university campuses: the University of Texas at Arlington and the University of Texas at Dallas. The area has some relatively large evangelical K-12 schools (Trinity Christian Academy, Prestonwood Christian Academy, Carrollton Christian Academy and Coram Deo Academy) and is the home of several prestigious evangelical seminaries (Dallas Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary). Many students from local evangelical K-12 schools pursue a college education through the various universities and colleges of the North Texas region. It was originally hoped that the students from local evangelical high schools might provide the bulk of the sample. Although local participants (from DFW) comprised the majority,
there were several who came from locations outside the DFW area. Additionally, local evangelical high schools did not prove to be the primary sources for participants. There was intentionality in the attempt to include some evangelical students that attended public high schools in order to use comparison with regard to alienation and coping strategies. In fact, public schools proved to be where the largest percentage of participants attended prior to their freshman year of college. The Dallas area, being a regional center for higher education, provided a larger cross section of students enrolled in a larger variety of majors. The pervasiveness of the Christian consensus in the North Texas region was initially a concern for this study as I suspected that it might not provide the same intensity of alienation for an evangelical student that a study conducted in other parts of the country might produce.

I believed that purposeful sampling, more specifically, homogeneous sampling was best for this study because it is consistent with the purpose of describing this particular subgroup in some depth. According to Patton (2002), “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research…” (p. 230).

Participants for this study were recruited from two public university campuses: the University of Texas at Arlington and the University of Texas at Dallas. Campus ministries were a significant source of study participants. Another source was the local evangelical churches. A third source was through contacting local evangelical secondary schools. The snowballing technique was employed as a means of gaining access to the information-rich cases that this study demanded. It was thought that snowballing might
also provide access to some evangelical students that were not associated with a religious social group (campus ministry or church). However, this was not the case. It was thought that having some of these non-enclave students might be very useful in terms of gaining understanding through comparison, particularly for alienation associated with isolation. However, the snowballing technique did not provide access to these types of participants.

As stated previously, the criteria for participation in this study was self-identification as a “born again” Christian. Twenty student subjects were used in this study and all participants were college freshmen. There were three sample selection goals expressed as this study was proposed and all three of those goals were realized. One primary sample selection goal was to have equal representation according to gender, and this goal was actualized. Another sample selection goal was to include minority evangelical students and this was actualized. There was also a desire to include at least two evangelical students who attended four years of public secondary school. This goal was also realized. Final sample selection was based upon the above criteria.

Data Collection

This study was a qualitative study that was conducted between January 2006 and June 2006. Initial qualitative interviews were scheduled and conducted during the first half of the spring semester of 2006. The primary method of data collection was to conduct detailed, qualitative interviews of 20 evangelical freshmen students. Each student was personally interviewed twice. The interview guides that were utilized are included in Appendix A. The two interviews were conducted on the following occasions: once during the first half of the spring semester and once during the second half of the spring semester of 2006. The intent was to conduct all interviews face to face and this was accomplished.
All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. I intended to perform my own audio-taping and transcription. The purpose of this was to retain the perspectives of the persons under study (Patton, 1991, p. 392). Although I did all of my own audio-taping and some of the transcription, a portion of the transcribing was performed by a transcriptionist. I took extensive field notes during the live interviews. According to Patton (2002), taking notes has several advantages: 1) it helps formulate new questions, 2) it facilitates later analysis, and 3) it helps to pace the interview (p. 383).

In qualitative research, interviewing is for the purpose of understanding personal perspective. The purpose of an interview is to find out what is on another person’s mind (Patton, 1991, p. 393). This study used the interview guide as the framework for structuring the interviews. The interview guides consisted of formal and complete questions. One weakness to overcome using this framework was attempting to remain sensitive to possible salient responses that did not conform to my predetermined grid of questions. However, I believed this to be an acceptable trade-off for being sensitive to participant’s schedules and this kept the interviews from being too long. For the most part, all forty interviews followed the structure of the interview guides. One of my concerns was retaining all 20 of my participants for the duration of the study. Sensitivity in time management assisted in this effort and the interview guide framework naturally supported that.

All interview questions were open-ended. The questioning style is extremely important in qualitative research. The purpose of the questions was to find out what the participants are thinking, not for the interviewer to control or influence what the participant is thinking. Patton (2000) called this “minimizing the imposition of
predetermined responses” (p. 292). Therefore, how the questions were constructed was extremely important. I took great care in avoiding dichotomous response questions. I also attempted to avoid multiple questions or questions asked in multiple forms. The clarity of the questions is also something that needs to be emphasized. Additionally, part of the art of interviewing is to gently nudge in the right direction without biasing the participant (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium & Silverman, 2004).

The purpose of the first interview was to provide a context for understanding the participant’s perspectives with regard to worldview. This interview attempted to gain insight into the student’s life history and how his worldview had developed to that point in his life. This interview also attempted to identify whether the student perceived a worldview conflict, how he perceived that, and whether he had been deliberately prepared for it. This interview also looked to identify what strategies, if any, the student had employed with regard to Christian growth during the freshman year. Students were asked to reflect back on the first semester’s experience with the intent of determining the following: 1) to identify whether the students have or are experiencing alienation as a result of worldview, 2) to identify what the sources of alienation were, 3) to determine whether they perceived their worldview to have changed since the beginning of the freshman year, and 4) to determine whether they perceived their religious commitment to have changed.

At the beginning of the first interview, a Spiritual Questionnaire or survey (Appendix B) was given to each participant. The purpose of that questionnaire was to determine the level of evangelicalism of each participant. Essentially, the survey was designed to answer three general questions regarding each participant: 1) How extensive
is their knowledge about the key doctrines of evangelicalism?, 2) How committed are they to their evangelicalism?, and in combination with all of the interview data, 3) Are they authentic evangelicals?

Because of my enrollment at Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) at the time of this study, I asked two noteworthy DTS faculty members to provide feedback regarding the validity of the instrument to accomplish its desired ends. The following DTS faculty reviewed the Spiritual Questionnaire for the purposes described above: 1) Dr. J. Lanier Burns – (Chair and Senior Professor of Systematic Theology) B.A. Davidson College, 1965; Th.M., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1972; Th.D., 1979; Ph.D., University of Texas at Dallas, 1993; Post-doctoral research, Harvard University, 2002, and 2) Dr. Ramesh Richard – (Professor of Pastoral Ministries, World Missions and Intercultural Studies) B. Com., Madras Christian College, 1973; Th.M., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979; Th.D., 1982; Ph.D., University of Delhi, 1991. I selected these individuals to review the questionnaire because these individuals had hybridized educational backgrounds in common (i.e. educational backgrounds that included both theological and secular training). I hoped their somewhat unique educational backgrounds would enable them to provide quality insights and feedback on both the survey instrument and the target audience (evangelicals attending secular institutions). After review, both seminary professors agreed that this instrument was adequately constructed for the desired ends.

The purpose of the second interview was to identify whether the student is experiencing alienation as a result of worldview, what the sources of alienation are, and some determination of how it is affecting the student. It also attempted to determine
whether they perceived their worldview or the meaning of their religious life to have changed over the semester/year.

I requested that all of the participants maintain a reflective spiritual journal of their college experiences during the duration of the study. I kept the journaling instructions very general in nature. The instructions were as follows: “If possible, please keep a journal of your spiritual journey through the duration of this study. Maintaining this journal is purely voluntary, but highly encouraged as it may provide additional insights that our interviews may not provide.” I also informed the participants that I would gratefully receive any information from their journals that would be pertinent to this study and that they could withhold journal data, as necessary. I requested that the participants bring the journals to the final interview. However, none of the participants maintained a voluntary reflective journal as had been requested. I also informed the participants that I would appreciate email updates and that the updates could be maintained in lieu of a reflective journal. None of the participants chose to send emails in lieu of the journal. Each participant was informed that I did not want their participation in this study to interfere with their academic efforts. I also expressed my sincere gratitude for whatever data they would willingly provide beyond the interview data. Since many evangelicals are involved in regular journaling as a spiritual discipline, I felt that it would likely not be perceived as an unusual or burdensome request. However, since none of the participants chose to voluntarily provide additional data in these formats, perhaps they determined that this request was too time consuming and burdensome in light of their academic and extracurricular schedules. This is consistent with the interview data which showed these participants to be highly involved in academic and extracurricular pursuits.
I made at least three decisions for this study to improve the overall trustworthiness of it. First, conducting multiple interviews over time minimized the chances of findings being based upon idiosyncratic data. Second, it was hoped that employing two data collection strategies should also minimize this problem. However, the participants chose not to submit non-interview related data (reflective journaling and emails) thereby negating the second strategy. Third, member checking was continuously employed with intentionality during the interviews and is manifested throughout all of the transcripts.

**Data Analysis**

The purpose of qualitative analysis is to transform the data into findings. “The challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of massive amounts of data” (Patton, 2002, p. 432). Because the instrument in qualitative analysis is the researcher, there is no strict formula for conducting analysis. However, Patton (2002) offers one possible rule: “Do your very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study” (p. 433). Additionally, “analysts have an obligation to monitor and report their own analytical procedures and processes as fully and truthfully as possible” (Patton, 2002, p. 434). I am committed to these ideals. The second ideal will be accomplished through reflective journaling which will begin during data collection.

In quantitative research there is a distinct delineation between data collection and data analysis. However, the qualitative commitment to emergent design flexibility and the desire to follow the evidence wherever it leads requires that analysis be concomitant with data collection. In fact, “Recording and tracking analytical insights that occur during
data collection are part of the fieldwork and the beginning of qualitative analysis” (Patton, 2002, p. 436). This overlap of data collection and analysis can improve the quality of the data collected and the analysis as long as the researcher is not too tightly bound to original hypotheses. According to Patton (2002), “Indeed, instead of focusing additional data collection entirely on confirming preliminary field hypotheses, the inquiry should become particularly sensitive to looking for alternative explanations and patterns that would invalidate initial insights” (p. 437). The caveat - if I became overly committed to exploring alienation, I recognized that I might not see other significant emerging patterns that may prove valuable or may actually prove to invalidate the hypothesis.

The first step in the analysis stage was to develop a classification or coding scheme, an attempt to discover order within the data. According to Patton (2002),

Content analysis, then, involves identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labeling primary patterns in the data. This essentially means analyzing the core content of interviews and observations to determine what’s significant (p. 463). “Classifying and coding qualitative data produce a framework for organizing and describing what has been collected during fieldwork” (Patton, 2002, p. 465). Because coding effectiveness was critical to the potential substantive significance of this study, I performed a portion of my own transcription for the purpose of being more intimate with the data, thereby enhancing my ability to discern order within the data.

In order to develop sound coding schemes, I intended to utilize convergence and divergence. Convergence is determining what in the data fits together. This was accomplished by judging the categories based upon internal and external homogeneity. That is, how well do the data in a category hold together (internal homogeneity), and how
distinct or clear are the differences between categories (external homogeneity)? Next, I tested the category system for completeness by answering the following questions: 1) Do the categories appear to be consistent?; 2) Do the categories seem to comprise a whole system?; 3) Is the category set inclusive of all of the data?; 4) Does the system fit the data?; and 5) Has the data been properly fitted into the system? Evidence that the coding scheme is inadequate will be evidenced by a large number of items that are unassignable or by a large number of overlapping data items. Alternatively, divergence was accomplished through the following:

…by processes of extension (building on items of information already known), bridging (making connections among different items), and surfacing (proposing new information that ought to fit and then verifying its existence)....Divergence also includes careful and thoughtful examination of data that doesn’t fit including deviant cases that don’t fit the dominant identified patterns (Patton, 2002, p. 466).

One product of analysis is the case study. The unit of analysis for this study was the 20 individual students attending the two state universities. “Remember this rule: No matter what you are studying, always collect data on the lowest level unit of analysis possible…” (Bernard, 1995, p. 37). According to Patton (2002), “…the analyst’s first and foremost responsibility consists of doing justice to each individual case. All else depends on that” (p. 449). All of the case data for each student was compiled into an overall case record. The case record is “…a condensation of the raw case data organized, classified, and edited into a manageable and accessible file” (Patton, 2002, p. 450). The next step was to write a final case study narrative for each case. The case study narrative is “…a readable, descriptive picture of or story about a person (or group)…making accessible to
the reader all the information necessary to understand the case in all its uniqueness” (Patton, 2002, p. 450).

Once the case study was completed, the next phase of analysis was to more comprehensively analyze, compare and interpret each member comprising the group in order to identify or generate themes, patterns and findings. The analytical tools to be employed during this phase were more/deeper content analysis, analytic induction, indigenous concepts and practices, sensitizing concepts, and logical analysis. Content analysis has been described previously. I will briefly describe the remainder of the analytical tools to be used.

Qualitative research places a paradigmatic emphasis on inductive analysis. That is, patterns, themes and categories are discovered within the data. This is in contrast to deductive analysis where the data is analyzed within the parameters of a predetermined lens or frame. However, analytic induction is a qualitative tool that begins with deduction and then the researcher looks at the data inductively. According to Patton (2002),

…with analytic induction, qualitative analysis is first deductive or quasi deductive and then inductive as when, for example, the analyst begins by examining the data in terms of theory-derived sensitizing concepts or applying a theoretical framework developed by someone else….After or alongside this deductive phase of analysis, the researcher strives to look at the data afresh for undiscovered patterns and emergent understanding (inductive analysis) (p. 454).

This study had a stated focus of student alienation and the interview guides were written with alienation in mind; therefore, analytic induction accurately applies to this analysis.
Another analysis tool that was employed was the use of indigenous concepts. This refers to the various schemes, labels, etc., that the participants used to describe the reality of their world. I felt that being sensitive to this would improve the quality of the study. On the other hand, “sensitizing concepts refer to categories that the analyst brings to the data” (Patton, 2002, p. 456). An example for this study is the inclusion of the construct of ethnic enclaves (which emerged from previous research) in the interview guide. Other constructs from related research were introduced into this analysis.

According to Patton (2002),

Once some dimensions have been constructed, using either participant generated constructions or analyst-generated constructions, it is sometimes useful to cross-classify different dimensions to generate new insights about how the data can be organized and to look for patterns that may not have been immediately obvious in the initial, inductive analysis (p. 468).

Because the creation of cross-classification matrices is based on logic, the utilization of these matrices to create new typologies (not previously detected from the data) is referred to as logical analysis. There was a deliberate attempt to remain open regarding the use of matrices and logical analysis as a potential tool for discovering new typologies within the data.

Ethical Considerations

My primary concern was to protect my student volunteers in every way possible. One of the primary means of accomplishing this was to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants. There were several measures taken to accomplish this. All data collected (audiotapes, transcripts, questionnaires, etc.) were assigned codes and there was only one
code key which was locked in a safe during the duration of the study. Additionally, all of the participants in this study were assigned pseudonyms to protect their anonymity and only the pseudonyms are cited in the text of this document (to include all tables and charts). Although the Interview Guide questions (Appendix A) specifically asked that professors not be mentioned by name, there are occasions where the participants did not comply with that request. In those rare cases, pseudonyms were also assigned to professors in the body of the transcripts. Since audiotapes did contain a few specific names of professors, they were maintained in a locked safe except during the actual time of transcription. The only documents that could link the participants to the study were the signed Informed Consent forms (refer to Appendix G) and those documents were kept in locked safes on the campuses of UTD and UTA, depending upon the participant’s campus affiliation. Additionally, the intent was to use only volunteers that I had not previously known. Also, because no university employed me, nor was I personally familiar with any undergraduate faculty at any university likely to be included in this study, there was a minimal threat to the well being of the volunteers as a result of their participation in the study.

In terms of a general risk assessment, I foresaw at least one significant potential risk with regard to participation in this study. That is, I felt it was possible that undue psychological stress may result from participation in this study. It was quite possible that a student might experience extreme forms of alienation, or that they might be in the process of questioning their previous worldview. I determined to make detection of extreme psychological stress a priority in order that my interview presence did not further exacerbate the situation. I informed participants that they could postpone or cancel any
interview with me for any reason. As part of the initial agreement, I communicated that I would prefer that they cancel if they determined that the context of a meeting with me might negatively affect them psychologically. I informed them that their well-being was far more important than this study, and that I preferred that they withdraw rather than undergo unnecessary stress through participation in this study. I carried important contact information (campus counselors, campus ministers, etc.) with me to every interview and attempted to be very sensitive to the emotional state of every participant. There was only one person that participated in this study who experienced serious enough alienation to be a concern. However, that participant withdrew from UTA a few weeks prior to our first interview so he was not experiencing severe alienation during the study and was asked to reflect back upon his first semester experience. At no time did he express or demonstrate any discomfort related to participation in this study.

I did not foresee any potential legal liabilities in participating nor did any arise during the study. In terms of the institutional settings, I did not foresee any liabilities or significant risks for the participants nor did any arise during the study. All data collected during this study belonged to the interviewer. However, participants were informed that should they request that specific data not be made public, even with a prearranged confidentiality agreement, then I would honor that request. Participants were informed that a copy of the final report would be made available to any participant who requested one as an expression of my gratitude for their participation. Upon request, participants were informed that they would be given a copy of their particular interview session(s). Participants were not granted access to the interview data of other participants in this study.
Chapter Four:

Findings

The Student Participants – What the Spiritual Questionnaire Revealed?

In order to qualify as a participant in this study, it was a requirement that students self-identify as being born-again Christians. The participants were recruited from a campus ministry or a local church using the snowballing technique. All of the students were attending either UTD or UTA for the fall semester of 2005 and during both interviews were enrolled in the second semester of their freshman year in the spring of 2006. One student (Dirk) had spent the fall semester at UTA and subsequently withdrew from UTA and enrolled at Brookhaven Community College for the spring semester. Of the participants, (16) were attending UTD and (4) attending UTA. Consistent with the proposed gender equality target in participation, there were (11) female participants and (9) male participants. The racial composition of the participants in this study was: White (15), Asian (3), Hispanic (1), and Black (1). This is also consistent with the proposal target of attempting to gain access to minority participants.

UTD and UTA are institutions known for their business, math, science, engineering, and technology-related programs. The participants were enrolled in the following list of academic majors: Business programs (7), Life Sciences (4), Computer Sciences (4), Pre-Med (3), Psychology (1), Math (1), History (1) and undecided (1). The number of majors exceeds the number of participants due to double majors. During the interviews, nineteen of twenty participants identified themselves as being “good
students” and sixteen of twenty identified themselves as being “a good fit” for their school. One of the two that indicated they were not a good academic fit did so because she felt out of place as a history major attending an “engineering school.” This near consensus in self-identifying as a “good student” is supported by a 1st semester GPA mean of 3.27. During the first semester, there were only two students who earned below a 2.0. Additionally, during the week prior to final exams, the students were asked to provide a GPA estimate for the second semester. The projected 2nd semester GPA mean was a 3.34. The educational background information (the types of schools attended during the K-12 years) was: Public School (8), Homeschool+Christian (3), Christian School (2), Homeschool (2), Christian+Public (2), Catholic (1), Private School (nonreligious) (1) and Homeschool+Christian+Public (1). The information discussed in the previous two paragraphs is summarized in chart form as Appendix E.

All of the students in this study were actively associated with a campus ministry, a local church or both during the 2nd semester. Of the 20 participants, all were members of evangelical churches. One student (Natanya) provided two responses (Roman Catholic and Methodist) to the question of church attendance. In the interview, the participant indicated that though she had grown up attending a Roman Catholic Church with her father and a Methodist Church with her mother, she had become “born-again” during the summer prior to her freshman year of college. Consequently, she had become highly involved in the Baptist Student Ministry during her freshman year. The following data represent the church affiliations provided by the participants: Baptist (5), Independent Bible Church (4), Presbyterian (4), Southern Baptist (3), Methodist (2), Assembly of God (2), and Roman Catholic (1). There were only two participants who were not actively
involved with a campus ministry. However, those two were actively involved in a local church. The following data represent the campus ministry affiliations of the participants: Baptist Student Ministry (6), Campus Crusade for Christ (5), Fellowship of Christian University Students (5), Christians on Campus (2), Cornerstone Ministry (2), and Breakthrough Ministry (1). The reason for more than (20) campus ministry affiliations is because some students held multiple campus ministry affiliations.

The Spiritual Questionnaire (Appendix B) provided some important information with regard to the level of religiosity (spiritual commitment) of the participants. The mean score of 38.75 of a possible 40 on the “Key Evangelical Doctrines” portion of the questionnaire (Questions 1-8) seems to suggest that all of the participants were very well informed about the key doctrines of the evangelical faith regardless of the time period they had considered themselves evangelicals. The mean score of 9.225 years in the faith might have provided some insight into the high doctrinal scores if those newer to the faith (Chelsea, Kelsey, Lisa and Paul) had not earned high scores also. The questionnaire also revealed that 85% of the participants’ parents would identify themselves as being born-again.

As to the question of the importance of their spirituality at this point in their lives (Appendix B - Spiritual Questionnaire Item #15), the mean score was 4.45/5. On the Likert scale, 5 represented “High Importance” and was the highest selection possible. Considered collectively or as a case, the data seem to suggest that the spirituality of these participants was very important to them. This data is also highly supported by the interview data in general. One interesting observation is that there were a couple of students who ranked themselves lower on this item and yet the interview testimony of 106
other participants did not correspond to this low self-assessment. In other words, some of those that were seemingly the most spiritually committed in the eyes of other students did not rate themselves very highly on the questionnaire for this item. One important Christian character trait is humility. It is possible that these students may have provided lower scores on this item for fear of appearing to lack humility. If that is true, then the mean would actually be higher with regard to spirituality’s level of importance to this group.

Questions 9 & 11 were open-ended and provide some insight into why the participants believe they could identify themselves as born-again. The emerging theme in the various answers had to do with the notion of “faith in Christ”. In evangelicalism, “faith,” “trust,” “belief” and “accept” are terms that are often used synonymously as they refer to Christ and salvation, and they are related terms in the original New Testament language known as Koine Greek. Another theme emerging from the responses has to do with the idea of the connectedness of sin and salvation. In evangelicalism, the terms “saved” and “salvation” are always understood in the context of personal sins. The idea is that the believer is “saved” from the consequences of her personal sins by the voluntary sacrifice of Jesus Christ who took God’s judgment in the believer’s stead. The purpose of this questionnaire was to provide insight into the participants’ levels of understanding of and commitment to their evangelical faith. Based upon all of the data including the interviews, I feel confident that this study contained authentic and committed evangelicals. The information discussed in the previous paragraphs is summarized in chart form as Appendix F.
The Interviews – What Emerged?

The transition to college. As stated previously, nineteen of twenty participants identified themselves as “good students.” However, there were a couple that questioned their academic fit from their perceptions of their institutional identities being science, math, business and technology oriented. The students generally expressed a desire for greater social and academic integration in that they articulated the hope of developing more and better relationships and the desire for academic success. There was frequently a vocational emphasis articulated in answering the question about what they hoped college could do for them. There was also a hope that college would improve their overall spirituality. Another theme was the hope for improvement in their general life skills. Many students looked upon their college years as transition years where they hoped to learn how to function as autonomous adults. They hoped that college would help them to manage their new freedom. For example, Leti said,

I guess just basically the relationships that I’m going to have with people. I’ve found a lot of people that I like a lot. I guess also learning to live away from my parents and actually having my own life, you know, rather than living at home and… (3/17/06 INT.)

To this question of what she was looking forward to as part of her college experience, Katrina said,

I’m excited about Nursing School. I think it will be very hard, but I think for me getting over the fact of applying and being accepted will be one of my biggest challenges. It’s such a big in depth process, but after that I think I look forward to
getting to meet a lot of people and kind of getting to figure out who I am and just who I am as a person and who I am in Christ. (3/2/06 INT.)

Although this group was highly motivated towards academic achievement, social integration repeatedly emerged as one of their highest priorities. Paul said, “Um, gaining more friends. Gaining better skills and like, be able to …in the field I want to go into and like growing as a Christian” (3/20/06 INT). Similarly, Dirk said, Honestly, like the first thing that pops into my mind is um social experience. Being home-schooled, obviously that wasn’t something we got a lot of. There were kids next door and the neighborhood kids that I would go out and play with but I guess the biggest thing that excites me about college is getting that group environment going like study groups and just hanging out and being in a, I guess I’ve always wanted to go to a big college and just have that people atmosphere cuz I’m a very people oriented person I’d say and I guess that’s what excites me about going to college. Of course there’s the learning aspect and the aspects of the unknown and educational fields such as a new class that I might be interested in that I haven’t taken. I’m taking an intro to business course this semester and this is a completely new field for me and I’ve never dabbled in that at all experientially but I’d still have to say the people aspect is most important to me. (2/18/06 INT.)

Generally, these students indicated that their transition to college was smooth. Chelsea said, It’s been pretty smooth, surprisingly. Probably just because I was so… like everyone always told me college is so much harder than high school and most
people go into college and bomb out their first semester. So I was so paranoid. So I worked really hard and it’s paid off. And now it’s very smooth, and I don’t work as hard as I did last semester because I know how to do everything. I’ve gotten adjusted. (3/22/06 INT.)

Academically, many of them struggled with the transition to the overall structure of college. That is, they struggled with not having regular homework assignments that were collected or graded. They also seemed to struggle with the infrequency of graded items or evaluation events. The pattern of a midterm and a final exam was unexpected and difficult to get used to. Herman said,

Yeah, everybody’s told me that the freshman year is hardest, just adjusting to….but I think I adjusted fairly well…it wasn’t that drastic of a change, like I had been away from my parents you know weeks at a time, and I had worked in high school so I wasn’t home that much so I, I think I did a pretty good job in transitioning. The hardest part was just a new way of going to classes and the way I had to study. There wasn’t as much structure from just the way they did classes and from the university, it was just a different type of style. So that was the bigger change, rather than living on my own.

F: Okay, so that kind of got into a question you sort of touched on and may have even touched on completely is one of your biggest challenges in your freshmen year…you’d say that the way you had to study was one of your biggest challenges and one of the biggest adjustments?

Herman: Yeah. A lot of people have a harder time just with the fact that their mom isn’t there to do laundry for them and you know, but with me, I did all that
stuff at home. So that wasn’t a big deal to me. The harder part was the, like I said, the structure of the way you have to study…although there were, you know, you go to class with a bunch of people and you take calculus, you have 60 people in the class and what not, but I have to, there wasn’t as much help from the professor as there would be from a teacher in high school, so I had to adjust…it’s more independent work. But I did my best and studied really hard, and I think it paid off. That was the hardest part for me. (3/18/06 INT.)

The problem with the college workload structure was further exacerbated by a collectively acknowledged problem of poor time management and a lack of personal discipline. For example, in response to the question of the greatest challenges, Leti said,

I guess planning my time, sometimes I don’t feel like I get enough sleep or I don’t leave myself enough time to do something or leave things ’til the last minute, so I guess just having so much freedom. I feel like sometimes I waste time.

(3/2/06 INT.)

Similarly, when asked this same question regarding greatest anticipated challenges, Kelsey responded,

Kelsey: Always classes and keeping everything high management. Time management. That’s a big one.

F: Yea. It’s not. It’s kind of like you go all of your life sort of managed for you and then all of a sudden they go ‘Okay, here. Fly!’ You know?

Kelsey: Yea. Eighteen hours of classes plus anything else you want to do and you don’t have to go to class.

F: That’s right.
Kelsey: You don’t really have to do your homework if you don’t want. Yeah, you’ve got to make your own priorities. (3/17/06 INT.)

Other common challenges cited were maintaining their academic scholarships and the struggle for moral purity (discussed in detail later). Several students also expressed problems with roommates as being their most significant challenges. It is worth noting here that only a few students indicated a problem with worldview related discomfort in the context of transition to college or greatest challenges. The following two excerpts represent that minority view.

F: How has your adjustment to college been up to this point?

David: It’s been a sort of weird. Academically, it’s been great and not that much harder than I was doing before and I’ve talked to many people and that’s what they’ve said that the freshman level will not be that hard as long as you apply yourself and that’s what I found out. I got A’s last semester and I’m hopefully going to pull it off with all A’s and probably one B this semester. So academically, I think I’ve adjusted fine. It will be interesting to see when I start taking sophomore or junior level courses how I actually do but emotionally or spiritually it’s been very weird because before that I’ve been around mostly people that have the same belief. Or, if they didn’t accept it, they at least respect Christianity or they respect different religions and there are just so many people here that they either reject it or they don’t even respect it. And you see more rejecting than disrespecting of Christianity is what I’m seeing. It’s like if they see people of different faiths for example if they are Muslims let’s say or Hindus well you must respect, well there’s just all of the negativity of the professors that’s
been sort of a shock. But I’ve been just trying to let it roll off because I know that’s just the way the system is, they hire liberal professors. There was this study, I don’t remember the exact numbers but it’s like the amount of liberal compared to conservative professors are like, it’s not just at this school but nationwide, the percentages are highly liberal so I am getting used to that. It’s not that the liberal view is bad, it’s just that the slant of it well, the biggest thing I’ve had to get used to is the professors. They have their own personal views and they might say that they aren’t trying to influence but the way they teach and the way they talk about stuff comes across to me as different but I just have to take it with a grain of salt and say “huh”…but…[pause]

F: I don’t know if this feeds into that question or not but…What have been some of your biggest challenges in your freshman year?

David: Yes, the spiritual has been the biggest challenge. Not academic because I’ve studied hard but yeah the spiritual stuff has been the hardest but political too, like I was saying about the liberal versus the conservativism, uh, most professors are like so slanted, I mean one thing that bugs me is with Iraq. I mean not everyone has to believe it but they say stuff like “the invasion of Iraq” not a war but an invasion. You know they’ll just say little things like that to let you know and the whole class know that they don’t agree with it but they can’t just completely bash it. That’s the kind of stuff that I just check. I mean not check, that’s the kind of stuff that I catch. It’s like the invasion and we know now that there were no WMD’s and you know from students okay but from professors I think they should be unbiased or they should say stuff like “the war in Iraq”
there’s nothing wrong with that but when they say stuff like “the invasion of Iraq”, you know they need to be between lines and the liberal students don’t catch on to it and many students don’t bother but politically, I love to go to political debates, not arguments but debates or discussions and so that is the kind of stuff I catch the war, you know that bugs me to death because I don’t agree with everything that Bush has done but keep the views to yourself, don’t use your position as a platform for your political views. That’s what I don’t like. I believe the same thing for conservatives. They should do the same thing. They should try to stay as unbiased as possible and I know that’s not always easy and you can let things slip but there’s ways you can do it if you really try. In history courses you’re always gonna have that problem, but in courses like math and English, you should not have that kind of stuff from professors. History professors I think have a sort of lenience to be able to do that because they interpret events and so that’s there but when you get an English or a math teacher I’m like that’s just the last straw. English and math teachers on politics, that’s not really a place for them to be doing that. I don’t know, I could be wrong. (2/24/06 INT.)

Similarly, Tre discusses his biggest challenge in the following excerpt:

The biggest thing school wise is that I’ve always been in a Christian classroom where I was always taught and it’s kind of understood that everyone believes and in UTA it’s more, you know, a lot of people don’t know what they believe and a lot of teachers, a few of my teachers are kind of hostile towards Christianity and some are open to it but I haven’t really met a teacher that’s committed to it. So it’s
the chance to either kind of hide your faith or let it show by the way you act I guess. (2/23/06 INT.)

In general, the students considered the academics to be easier than they had expected. Although they struggled with what they considered a morally challenging environment, they also expressed some surprise that these universities were not as morally deficient as they had expected them to be. In fact, almost all of the students indicated that their schools were not considered party schools. Most of the students were glad that there was less emphasis on athletics and that they were attending schools more oriented towards academics. A few students also expressed some surprise that the universities were not as hostile to their faith as they had expected them to be, and there was more neutrality on the part of faculty than they expected there to be, as expressed here.

F: So, maybe it goes back to the idea of neutrality that we discussed earlier?

Dirk: Yes, which has been surprising to me because I had always thought that college was supposed to be a hard place for Christians in that you were gonna get a lot of opposition so the neutrality is kind of surprising to me.

F: So, that would be a good surprise?

Dirk: Yes. (5/13/06 INT.)

Consistent with this idea of surprising neutrality or less hostility, consider James’ second interview.

F: Is your college experience different than what you thought or what you were told it would be like (prior to your arrival)?
James: Well I never knew quite what to expect. I knew there would be a lot of more people. And I was expecting that… I knew that they are going to have teachers…I was always built up to believe that every single teacher that I have will find a way to seek and destroy my faith and to some extent there are some teachers like that. My history teacher [Jane Doe] she was a UTD teacher and she has very much a liberal perspective and women’s rights oriented so much so you might be able to call her a feminist and she might even admit it, which makes her cool.

F: She taught history?

James: Yeah, she teaches history I think she teaches 1301 or 1302 and she’s the option other than [Flanders], I think. And you know, on one hand she’s an incredibly intelligent woman. She’s a dynamic speaker and she’s a lot of fun to listen to. She says things that if you’re a Christian kind of irritate your faith. It seems like… It’s understandable, it’s what I expected in college professors and I don’t have a real problem with that other than the fact that it kind of makes me go back and search things out harder and make sure I have a good response maybe not in class because it could be disrespectful but a good response in my head. Other than that, I haven’t run into super-evolutionist teachers or anything like that yet because I haven’t really done a whole lot of science courses so I can’t really say. But that was one of the big things that people are going to be like, “evolution, evolution” and they are gonna try to destroy your creationist point of view.
F: So what you’re saying is that you haven’t necessarily experienced that up to this point? What you were told in preparation hasn’t really come to pass in the intensity that you were told it would?

James: Right, well I guess I was made to somewhat believe a lot of the teachers that I would have or the vast majority would be out to seek and destroy my faith like I said earlier. That’s not necessarily true. There are teachers out there, you know, and I would have to put Jane Doe in that category but…(4/19/06 INT.)

When asked about what they hoped the college experience would do for them, most students expressed the notion of vocation or career and the contribution to vocational success that college would hopefully bring. Only Gert held to the notion that college was about becoming well-rounded and that she was not attending for vocational reasons unless being a perpetual student could be seen as vocational (3/16/06 INT). There was also the hope that college would help them improve in their social skills and life skills. For example, Ronald said he hoped that his college experience would “Teach me how to discipline myself” (3/22/06 INT). Several students expressed a lack of social competency and felt that they had grown in this area because of the college environment. They identified themselves as the “geeks and nerds” in high school and they felt that they enrolled in universities where geeks and nerds were clearly in the majority and this tilted the social landscape in their favor. A few students mentioned the college experience as a place to learn how to think and to understand better how others think. One student wanted to understand how others think and believe so that he could be better equipped to lead them to a conversion experience. The following interview excerpts are most
representative of the group responses to the question of what they hoped college would do for them:

Paul: Well I hope that it will get me able to go out into the world. Be able to find a job of what I want to do with the help of the degree that I’m going to get and all that stuff and just hope that gets me somewhere. (3/20/06 INT.)

Leti: Prepare me for life after college. Give me the skills for the job that I need to have and also, again, learning how to look after yourself and be independent. (3/17/06 INT.)

Sonya: Prepare me for being an adult. Uh, I want lifelong friends; I want relationships that matter. I want to be prepared to go into the business world and to be successful and be able to help support my family. (3/17/06 INT.)

Dirk: Well, first off, about the future, providing a career opportunity. Uh, probably second, just teach me more about being a person, being a man, being around, socially interactive and things like that. So, I guess those are the two things that come to mind quickest. (2/18/06 INT.)

James: Well, I mean besides just giving me a practical degree that I can work through seminary on, or maybe doing something like literature or philosophy that will enrich my understanding of that literature, the philosophical and theological world before I get to seminary. The only other thing that I’m really looking forward to being developed in, is relating to people of the Islamic faith and people who are atheist or people who are agnostics, and learning to talk to all those different people because as far as being part of the ministry, learning how to understand people and learning how to communicate with people in being
sympathetic with people and being empathetic with people is a huge deal in the ministry. And I’ll tell you right now, I am not naturally gifted in that area. I very naturally easily offend people because I tend to not be sympathetic and empathetic. So that’s something I have to work on really hard. (3/16/06 INT.)

Social Integration

Evangelical social integration platforms. These participants were highly involved in Christian related social activities whether they were campus ministries or ministries of the local church. “Building activities” or dorm and intramural activities were also highly attended at UTD. Only one student (Dirk) at UTA lived in the college dorms and he disenrolled from the university at the end of his first semester citing primarily academic performance and social reasons for his decision. There were no sponsored dorm activities at UTA. UTD had a highly complex and deliberate dorm-sponsored, social-activities program. Nearly all of the participants attending UTD were involved in dorm activities.

From a social standpoint, every student in this study indicated that they had met a good set of friends at their university and the primary sources of those friendships were through the campus ministries, the local churches and the freshmen dormitories. At UTD, this was primarily through organized building activities like intramural sports.

Leti: Yes, I guess I have two groups of friends. The BSM (Baptist Student Ministries) group. I met them just because I went to Bible study and got to know them through that, and the other group is just because they make activities so the freshmen can meet and living in buildings like the apartments, so by just…

F: So they have all the freshmen in one building?

Leti: Yes.
F: That’s good. And so they have the people in charge, the RA’s or whatever you call them, they organize activities and that allows you to interact with other freshmen in the building?

Leti: Yes.

F: Do you, is that a good thing?

Leti: Yes. (3/17/06 INT.)

The majority of the students indicated that campus ministries provided the highest quality friendships and the highest number of friendships.

Paul: I actually have met a good set of friends. I actually met them through BSM because they just seem to accept me for who I am. They seem to be open to everything, so that was nice.

F: What would it be like without BSM? If you didn’t have BSM or Campus Crusade or any Christian organizations? Would you like it as much as you do?

Paul: I don’t think so, for one thing the apartment building I was in. For one thing it didn’t have that great of a building unity so I didn’t know too many people in that building. So, I actually met more people through organizations. I’ve met a few people through classes but that’s still not that many. (3/20/06 INT.)

Another social recommendation had to do with getting involved in dorm activities. This was particularly prominent among UTD students. UTD had a focused, deliberate and well organized dorm program that primarily sought social interaction, particularly for freshmen students. Every dorm student at UTD spoke positively about this dorm social program. This was emphasized by Kelsey when she was asked to give advice to new freshmen.
Live on campus and get involved with your building, because that’s where you will make friends that are your age…a lot of them are in your classes especially your first year when you have all your basics…you’ll see them every day. You’ll make friends; you’ll find your roommate for the next year. It’s where your social life will come from. (4/17/06 INT.)

The two UTA students that lived in the dorms did not mention this option. My sense was that UTA did not have similar dorm related social activities. Incidentally, the student that left UTA cited social isolation as a major factor in his decision and he was a UTA dorm resident.

Most of these students went home frequently. In fact, five of the twenty still lived at home and were commuter students. Those participants whose parents lived in or close to the Dallas - Fort Worth metroplex were going home at least weekly. Those from other parts of Texas were going home about three times per semester. The only participant whose parents were not living in Texas still managed three trips home the first semester in spite of the fact that her parents were U.S. government employees residing in England.

The social aspect and social opportunities are what the students liked most about their college experience. When asked what she liked most about her first year of college, Nancy replied, “I guess it’s the relationships that I’ve developed” (4/21/06 INT). Natanya said what she liked most about the college experience was:

I guess the people. I think I mentioned that last time, too though, but

F: It’s ok. You can include what you said last time too.

Natanya: The people I’ve met. Even like since we talked before more Christian people and those that I would like to have as friends for life. You know and we all
have decided that we are moving into the same building next year, so we’re
definitely going to know each other longer. (3/22/06 INT.)

Similarly, Paul said,

I’d have to say the social life because it’s just grown. I’ve been meeting a lot
more friends and also getting to know those friends a lot better than I have any
other friends that I’ve had. (4/21/06 INT.)

Evan said, “What have I liked most? Um, I guess meeting new people like new friends.
Like the good friends I’ve met here from Trinity Bible Church” (4/24/06 INT). The
students also mentioned their participation in Christian activities and Christian social
gatherings like Bible studies as what they liked most. Sonya said, “Um, it’s basically the
same (as the first interview). I still love the BSM and that would be what I love the most
about college and my college experience” (4/12/06 INT).

To the question on community, the majority of responses were that they perceived
themselves to be members of a community within the university as opposed to being
members of the university community. Most of the students felt like their sense of
community came from the evangelical social connections and to a lesser extent from
dorm activities and intramural teams. They felt most connected to the evangelical groups
and then to the freshmen they had met through intramurals and other dorm related
activities and from classes. All of the students except the student who withdrew from
UTA communicated a deep connection to the evangelical community in its various forms
– formal and informal. Consider the following response as most representational of the
group.
F: Could you tell me about your social life? Do you feel like you are a part of the university’s community or part of a community within the university?

Susan: I’d say I’m much part of a community within the university, and that being Campus Crusade and my classes. My friend who I was talking about who is in a sorority. She’ll bring me to events sometimes that are like all over community events, you know, like last night actually. They were doing elections for the presidency and stuff like that and giving blood and all this stuff. And I went and hung-out with her and met a lot of people but I’m really not a part of that kind of stuff. So, mostly our Campus Crusade people kind of hang-out. I’ve been much more involved with them than anyone else.

F: Okay, you feel a kind of a low-level connection with the main body of students?

Susan: I’d say a pretty average or a higher than most people connection. Like, the only way I could be higher is if I actually hung-out with those people. But those are the kind of people that aren’t really your friends. They are just people to party with and I don’t think that is very fun. [Okay] So, but I think, compared to most people on this campus, I definitely have a higher connection to it, because of my friend, so. Most people on my campus just sit in their rooms and play online games all day. (4/13/06 INT.)

The significance of the Christian connection. Every participant in this study was highly involved in evangelical activities. In fact, some of them were involved in some spiritual group or activity daily. Every participant indicated that their connection with other Christians was very important. There were several reasons for this. Moral
accountability and moral direction was a major theme. Another theme had to do with encouragement. The general sense was that associating with other Christians was going to lift them up emotionally. There was also a sense that associating with other Christians was going to help them focus spiritually, particularly in their relationship with God. Another theme had to do with avoiding feelings of social isolation. Implicit in this is the notion of separateness from the general student population. Though there was discussion of socially tapping in outside of evangelicals, there was also a sense that some students felt that there was really nowhere else to go. Being a part of the evangelical groups was seen as essential to social, academic and spiritual success. This data is consistent with the high spiritual commitment manifested in the item #15 in the Spiritual Questionnaire. It is also consistent with the responses to the question about the advice they would give to evangelical freshmen (discussed later). Consider the following excerpts in response to the question of the importance of the Christian connection:

F: In terms of your spiritual connection with Trinity Bible Church and Christians on Campus, help me to understand how important it is to you, you know, like on a continuum scale with 0 being least important and 10 being highest importance. Your affiliation this year with a campus ministry, how important was it to you personally?

Evan: Nine, I don’t know if I would have made it any other way.

F: When you say that, you don’t think you would’ve made it, can you explain what you mean? Made it how, in what sense?
Evan: Just the pressure of sin and all the stress of everything you know, it’s pretty much very necessary to have other people to pray with and pray for you, have a sort of support system.

F: So really then it was an issue of if you didn’t have that you may not have been successful in completing your freshman year?

Evan: It’s a possibility. (4/24/06 INT.)

F: Have you met with any other Christians since we last talked?

Paul: Yes. I’ve been to many Bible studies and stuff like that. So I’ve definitely been immersed in Christians.

F: How important would you say your connection with other Christians has been up to this point in the year?

Paul: I’d have to say it’s been very important because for one thing they are the friends I’ve been talking about. Because I mean, if I hadn’t joined that group, I wouldn’t have met half the friends I know now. And so, I mean that helps a lot. And plus it’s also…

F: How does it help?

Paul: It helps because with them being believers it makes me think about what I’m doing. Also, trying to open up to them.

F: When you say it makes you think of what you’re doing, are you talking about being accountable?

Paul: Yeah.

F: So like your behavior?

Paul: Yeah.
F: So when you talk to them and stuff you’re able to kind of … they are able to kind of come along beside you and sort of say “Hey, don’t be involved in that, consider this as wrong.” Is that what you’re talking about?

Paul: Um… I guess yeah. They don’t do it now but I mean but yeah something like that. It’s just the friends… usually the friends are there for you through everything and whenever I have something bad I usually tell them and they usually help me. (4/21/06 INT.)

Sonya: Yes, very important. They’re my support group and they help keep me on track.

F: What would it be like without other Christians here?

Sonya: It would be very hard.

F: Why?

Sonya: Cause I would feel alone. I will feel like, “God, how am I supposed to do this by myself?” And I know that He could do it; it would just be hard. (4/12/06 INT.)

James: I think it’s been infinitely important. I mean, I don’t even know… it’s a huge value. People there to provide encouragement, people who care about you, ask you how you’re doing with classes and how you’re doing with other things like social life. And ask how it’s going with teachers that give you a hard time about your Christianity? People always there to provide encouragement if need be, advice. (4/19/06 INT.)

F: How important would you say your connection with other Christians has been up to this point in the year?
David: Vital.

F: Because?

David: It’s just a constant support needed.

F: Constant support needed?

David: Just to know that I’m not alone. To know that it’s not just me against the world, because that’s what it seems like sometimes. I come out of classes and I go to places and I’m like, “Yes, it’s not just me.”

F: Okay so the idea of being isolated.

David: Well, the idea of not being isolated.

F: Not being isolated?

David: Yeah. (5/15/06 INT.)

F: How important would you say your connection with other Christians has been up to this point in the year?

Dirk: Very, because I really look to a lot of connections with other Christians as a source of encouragement. Maybe when I’m just feeling down or I’m worried about a test you can just send out an email to your prayer group and ask for prayer but you can’t really do that with other people because most other people just say, “Well, good luck”. What does that mean? Not a whole lot. It’s more encouraging for me to know that someone is praying for me, even if you don’t do well on the test. (5/13/06 INT.)

F: Have you met with any other Christians since we last talked?

Ronald: Well FOCUS (Fellowship of Christian University Students) Christians.

F: How many times a week do you go to FOCUS?
Ronald: Probably if you count all FOCUS related things, like three times a week.

F: Three. How important would you say your connection with other Christians has been up to this point in the school year?

Ronald: Pretty important.

F: Why do you say that?

Ronald: They’re probably the most encouraging people that I know.

F: How do they encourage you?

Ronald: They were just always like asking how I’m doing and stuff.

F: Yeah, so they were interested in you as a person?

Ronald: Yeah.

F: Would you say that they demonstrated care for you?

Ronald: Yes. (4/15/06 INT.)

F: Have you met with any other Christians since we last talked?

Leti: Met with them?

F: Yeah, like gone to be with Christians.

Leti: Yeah.

F: How often?

Leti: Every day.

F: How important would you say your connection with other Christians has been up to this point in the year?

Leti: Very important.

F: Why do you say that?
Leti: Because I think you’re so influenced by the people around you, at least I am. Maybe I’m just weak, but you know it’s really supportive to me. It keeps me focused.

F: It keeps you focused morally?
Leti: Well, yeah.

F: Morally or more than that?
Leti: Not, okay morals are important but I don’t think that’s a, I’m more interested in my relationship with God and that type of thing. (4/21/06 INT.)

F: Have you met with any other Christians since we last talked? And how important would you say your connection with other Christians has been up to this point in the year?

Susan: I think it is crucial. I have an accountability partner who is a leader in crusade and I meet with her every week. And I talk to my boyfriend everyday as an accountability partner and if I didn’t have that I don’t know what I would be doing. But, it is so refreshing to be able to be with Christians who are dealing with the same issues every day. That’s kind of why I wanted to take a freshman under my wing. Just to, I mean because if you don’t stick together you are going to fall apart, so. Other Christians are definitely crucial. (4/13/06 INT.)

*The social cost of Evangelicalism.* The majority of students in this study expressed a perceived social cost for being an evangelical. When asked whether they perceived their evangelicalism was an issue in their college social life, the following excerpts from student interviews are the most representative of the group:
Susan: I’d say definitely. However, mostly it seems just to be this university. It is a very highly ranked university so everyone is for the most part, very like, intelligent and if you say that you are a Christian or something, basically, no one, not many people will leave you. Most people will dump on you and attack you, is what will happen. And like, that happens all the time in my rhetoric class. I’ll say something and people will agree with my logic or if I say anything related to my faith they will either not listen or they will attack you, which is basically what happened a few hours ago. [just a few hours ago] Yeah, when I was debating with those guys. (3/20/06 INT.)

Susan’s second interview was consistent with her description above.

Susan: Social life? Um, well, a little bit [either positively or negatively] I’d say it is negative. If you are hanging around Christians then it is obviously a plus. But if you are hanging around non-Christians, you’re either, I mean they’re basically not gonna, I mean their entire opinion of you goes way down if you tell them you are Christian. So, that is basically why I only hang-out with Christians and my close friends. I mean no one who’s not a Christian basically wants to really hang-out with a Christian. It’s kind of like this stereotypical way, they shy away from it kind of thing.

F: You’ve experienced that here?

Susan: Yeah, in the rhetoric class. I mean like, sheesh. I would make friends with these people and they would be talking and they’d be like, “Wow, why do you have such strong,” you know, “morals and opinions and why is this stuff all wrong?” I was, they would be like, “Are you a Christian or something?” and I
would be like “yeah.” And instantly, you know, they were not my friends
anymore, for sure. And they would speak against me in class and not really talk to
me like I was a person, I was an enemy instantly. (4/13/06 INT.)

Similarly,

F: In terms of your social life at college, have you ever found being an evangelical
was an issue?

Dirk: There was a group of older students that I hung around with and there was
one girl in particular that worked in the dorm office that I got to know. When she
found out that I was an evangelical, sometimes it’s subliminal and sometimes it’s
extreme, of not necessarily avoidance but sometimes avoidance about talking
about certain things and trying to keep the topics as low key as possible and that
was only after I would mention something about going to church or reading the
Bible or praying. So there was that hindrance that you can sort of sense.

F: Anything else?

Dirk: There was chemistry lab. I had a friend that had a car accident. I mentioned
about him being in God’s hands, and there was that kind of stepping back, let’s
get out of this type of conversation that he showed and I didn’t get a whole lot of
reception when I would talk to people about that subject. Surprisingly, the gay
guy was the most receptive about spiritual issues. He actually wouldn’t mind if
someone cussed around him but if they used the Lord’s name in vain, he would
mind that. I found that interesting. (2/18/06 INT.)
Additionally,

F: In terms of your social life at college, have you ever found being an evangelical was an issue?

Nancy: It’s stood between me and going and doing certain things with a group of people because I know that my morals would be compromised, whether it’s in the environment there is a lot of alcohol consumption or just other actions that are not exactly what I should be doing. Or, even like, being associated with people who are doing those kinds of actions.

F: So you would say that your faith kind of limits your social life to a certain extent because it limits who you will allow yourself to be around or be involved with.

Nancy: Yes, or just, I don’t know, it’s kind of, it’s not like the Bible doesn’t have like a moral rule of thumb, like, there’s plenty of dos and don’ts. Sometimes there are fuzzy situations and that’s the hardest thing, is, I don’t know, like you go up to people and just say no and don’t do this and don’t do that and so when you’re in those situations, surrounded in those situations, that was fine, I could say no. But it’s the fuzzy ones where it’s kind of borderline or gray area and you’re just like, “Well, I don’t know what to say. You can make your own decision and I feel like maybe I shouldn’t do this.” Probably the main thing would be movies, like, what movies I let myself watch. And for a certain group of friends they know not to invite me cause if they watch certain rated movies or certain movies with certain content they know that I won’t be there or I don’t like watching things with that in there. (4/21/06 INT.)
The social costs cited were the following: 1) a perception that when the religious commitment is revealed there is a chill in the air that did not previously exist or that the nonbeliever is now more uncomfortable than they had been prior to the disclosure; 2) the perception that the nonbeliever now must struggle with the tension of being guarded with regard to appropriate language and topic selection; 3) the perception that they (evangelicals) are not invited to certain types of events and this limits them socially and 4) the loss of significant relationships. For example, three female participants revealed the costs of relationships with young men that dissolved because of their Christian commitments. Several male students expressed awareness and gratitude that they were not invited to certain events because of their evangelicalism in that not being invited removed them from the potential temptation of moral failure. It must also be pointed out that nine students did not perceive any social costs associated with their evangelicalism. However, two of those students indicated that they only associated with other Christians so my question was moot for those students. For example,

F: In terms of your social life at college, have you ever found being a Christian was an issue?
Evan: Hmmm.. No because most of my friends are Christians so, that’s the kind of people I try to stay with. (3/18/06 INT.)

Regarding the question of whether nonreligious friends were aware of their evangelicalism, there were two participants that practiced a “discrete” form of Christianity in that they did not openly discuss their faith or let unbelievers know about their faith. However, there is no biblical support for such a view in Christianity. The remainder indicated that their nonreligious friends were aware of their evangelicalism.
and they perceived that they did respond to them differently in some instances. For example, they recognized that they were unlikely to be invited to parties where sex, drugs and alcohol were going to be involved. Also, they would likely not be invited to watch certain types of movies depending on the rating.

**Perceptions on the University’s Moral Ethos.** When asked to describe the moral character of the student body, the participants rated the moral character of their campuses as a “four” when they were asked to place the student body on a continuum from 0 – 10 with zero representing moral depravity and ten representing the highest level of morality. They indicated that the overall morality was higher than they had expected but still significantly below their personal moral standards. The moral ethos of the university was the most significant source of discomfort for this group of participants. Primarily, the students perceived that the moral ethos of the university was presenting a negative attraction and concomitant strain on them that was averse to their moral beliefs. The students used the word “temptation” which is a biblical term to express what they were experiencing. What they were communicating is that the university offered numerous and continuous opportunities to violate their personal beliefs when it came to moral standards, in spite of the fact that there was consensus that neither university was considered a “party school.”

F: How would you describe the overall moral character of the student body?

Nancy: It’s below my standards. But I don’t know compared to the other schools because I haven’t really been to other schools.
F: But on a scale from one to ten, with ten being a highest standard that you could achieve and one being the lowest, where would you put, on that continuum, where you would you place the average student here, in terms of their morality?

Nancy: I don’t know what lowest would indicate.

F: Lowest might be at night, stealing other student’s cars, breaking into apartments, raping female students on campus, drugs, you know, a high level of drug involvement.

Nancy: I’d have to say that it would be around the middle then because there’s definitely things that have happened on campus. There’s definitely been drug use, there’s a lot of alcohol use, there’s a lot of homosexuality, I would guess. Um, it’s not like a whole, you’re not just confronted with it day in and day out but I mean like, you’re never gonna escape it. There’s a lot of sexuality, I would guess, going on, and that, I guess that would be because of the convenience of apartments and regular housing. It’s probably an underlying moral thing going on, that or alcohol. And so, it may not be like physical, like things that disappear day in and day out on campus but it’s like seeing what people do by themselves.

(4/21/06 INT.)

F: How would you describe the overall moral character of the student body there?

Gert: Like I said it’s either liberal or Muslim, like there’s a very wide Muslim population, there’s a very wide international population in the school, and it’s also very liberal both politically and morally, I guess, and not that I know that many people that go to wild parties? But you just know that that’s what happens.
F: And when you say they’re politically liberal, in there, you know, there liberal both politically and morally, can you, kind of, flesh that out for me and tell me what you mean by that?

Gert: Well, like, I say morally, like people have this sort of, “Whatever’s good for you,” kind of attitude. There’s a lot of people who, you know, are, kind of have the attitude that maybe take advantage of this new freedom that they have and you know as long as it’s not hurting anyone else or as long as you don’t get caught, kind of thing. And I say politically because a lot of people are, politics is a common topic of… (3/16/06 INT.)

F: How would you describe the overall moral character of the student body?

Kelsey: Overall it’s pretty good. There’s not a lot of drinking and drugs inside, you can find that but I tend to stay away from it.

F: But…

Kelsey: But it’s a real problem. Like, if you want to do drugs and you want to drink you can find it. (3/17/06 INT.)

F: How would you describe the overall moral character of the student body?

Sonya: My only experience with the student body is with my friends in the student body, so it may be tainted. But, the people that I hang out with are…

F: Your friends are all Christian students aren’t they?

Sonya: Yeah. Most of them are basically good, I guess. They, we’re all simple. I’m just impressed by their honesty and their responsibility.

F: In terms of your general sense concerning the rest of student body, your perception, um, as you wander around campus, are you in the dorms?
Sonya: Yes.

F: Is it, is the amount of Christians?

Sonya: The morality or the students?

F: Well, the amount of Christians. What’s that like; what’s your impression, what’s your perception?

Sonya: Well, the quote, unquote normal college students they go to school and they party on the weekends. The morality is pretty low and I’m pretty sure that they’re just searching in order to find something to fill that void, whether it be drugs or sex or something else. I just think they’re trying to find something.

F: And filling the void in your eyes would be what?

Sonya: What would fill the void?

F: Yes.

Sonya: Jesus. Clearly He’s the only one who can ever be everything you need because he’s infinite and we have finite needs. (3/17/06 INT.)

F: How would you describe the overall moral character of the student body?

Gert: …as a whole it just seems like it’s very pro-choice and you know very, you know, whatever works for you and as long as you’re not hurting anyone else kind of a thing. (4/25/06 INT.)

F: How would you describe the overall moral character of the student body?

Tre: I guess relativism, you know, pleasing the students. (4/25/06 INT.)

F: How would you describe the overall moral character of the student body? I’m not referring to just your Christian friends but the entire student body in general.
Evan: I think pretty much an independent kind of character; everyone’s kind of doing their own thing. (3/18/06 INT.)

F: How would you describe the overall moral character of the student body?

Katrina: Um, It’s very much of a have fun doing whatever you want to do type of thing… it’s kind of just like whatever makes you happy right now.

F: So the philosophy is “now and happiness”?

Katrina: Yes, pretty much instant gratification. (4/25/06 INT.)

In our second interview, Katrina added “self-centered” to the same question and she reiterated the previous notion she had put forth regarding the student’s morality being driven by “immediate gratification” (4/25/06 INT). James described the UTD student body similarly with regard to a morality driven by self-centeredness when he suggested the following:

I’d say it’s a pretty liberal student body at UTD.

F: When you say liberal you mean in the sense of…

James: I find out the reason most of the time people want to be liberal because they think that if you’re liberal that the liberal political group will make it okay to have liberal morals, you know, and allow more and more liberal morals to be legal in America. And that’s why they want the liberal party to have power; they want to be able to live out their liberal morals.

F: And how are you defining liberal morals?

James: Well if you’re a Christian you just say amoral – being able to party, having multiple sex partners.
F: So what’s their standard for morality? What is their guide? Those students that you’re calling liberal students, what guides their morality?

James: I think most of them are just in college and they want to make good grades because you can use a big deal about making good grades but other than that they’re in college and they want to have fun and they want to sexually experiment and they want to experiment with other things drugs and alcohol and things like that. They’re in the world and they want to experience the world. (3/16/06 INT.)

The ethical component of the participant’s worldview emerged as a significant source of data in this study. Of all of the things that confronted them, morality seemed to be the topic that generated the most discomfort for them as evangelical freshmen. Although there was general agreement that the morality was higher than they had expected, they still described behaviors that disturbed them for various reasons. UTA and UTD have some commonalities in that neither school has prominent athletic programs, and both schools share a reputation as not being considered party schools. In fact, both schools tend to have a reputation for challenging scholarship and a couple of the student’s joked about attending the “college for geeks and nerds” (Susan, 4/13/06 INT). Although there was this general perception of academic emphasis at both schools, the participants still indicated that relative to their standards, the morality was generally low. The most prevalent behaviors cited as behaviors of concern were sex (premarital, homosexual, and sexual harassment), drugs and alcohol. The issues of greatest concern were the perceived influence of moral degradation upon themselves and also upon their evangelical peers.

One theme that emerged was a philosophical conflict regarding moral absolutes. The Christian students, as theists, believe in the existence of moral absolutes that
transcend time, culture, situation, and personality. Nancy said, “There are absolute morals, that’s what I believe” (4/21/06 INT). This response was given in the context of the following question: “What would you say is the most significant difference between the way you view the world and the way the world is presented in the classroom?” Similarly, when asked the same question regarding the contrast of worldviews, Gert responded:

Absolute right and wrong. A lot of things are presented as that’s what’s right for them or that’s what’s right in this situation or for this person, but there are alternatives, or you know what I mean? But from a Christian worldview, there are absolute rights and wrongs and it applies to everyone whether they live in Africa or not. And in a lot of ways, that was, you know, the idea of relativism and different cultures believe different things and have a different system of right and wrong. (4/25/06 INT.)

Nancy described the system of thought that they opposed in the following ways: “Whatever it is today, relative…Whatever it is today. Whatever floats your boat, I guess” (4/21/06 INT). When describing the student body at UTA, David said, “…the overall moral character is just go with the flow” (5/15/06 INT). In response to a request for clarification, David said, “[They] go with what society says is right or they all have their own personal values” (5/15/06 INT). This last statement seems to adequately summarize what the majority of students in this study concluded about the overall moral ethos of the university that they disagreed with from a worldview perspective. That is, the other students, and the classrooms as a whole, communicated a morality that consisted of two major components – subjective morality and cultural morality, and a lesser thread I am
calling practical morality. Subjective morality is defined as a moral system where the individual person decides what is right or wrong based primarily upon self-interest.

Subjective morality is expressed in the following interview excerpts:

F: How would you describe the overall moral character of the student body?

Gert: …as a whole it just seems like it’s very pro-choice and you know very, you know whatever works for you and as long as you’re not hurting anyone else kind of a thing. (4/25/06 INT.)

To the same question,

Tre: I guess relativism, you know, pleasing the students. (4/25/06 INT.)

Evan: I think pretty much an independent kind of character; everyone’s kind of doing their own thing. (3/18/06 INT.)

Similarly, subjective morality can also be identified in the following excerpt:

F: How would you describe the overall moral character of the student body?

Katrina: “It’s very much of a have fun doing whatever you want to do type of thing…um..it’s like..it’s kind of just like whatever makes you happy right now.”

F: So the philosophy is “now and happiness”?

Katrina: Yes, pretty much instant gratification. (3/2/06 INT.)

In our second interview, Katrina added “self-centered” to the same question and she reiterated the previous notion she had put forth regarding the student’s morality being driven by “immediate gratification” (4/25/06 INT). James described the UTD student body similarly with regard to a morality driven by self-centeredness when he suggested that,

James: I’d say it’s a pretty liberal student body at UTD.

141
F: When you say liberal you mean in the sense of…

James: I find out the reason most of the time people want to be liberal because they think that if you’re liberal that the liberal political group will make it okay to have liberal morals, you know, and allow more and more liberal morals to be legal in America. And that’s why they want the liberal party to have power, they want to be able to live out their liberal morals.

F: And how are you defining liberal morals?

James: Well, if you’re a Christian you just say amoral. Being able to party, having multiple sex partners.

F: So what’s their standard for morality? What is their guide? Those students that you’re calling liberal students, what guides their morality?

James: I think most of them are just in college and they want to make good grades because you can use a big deal about making good grades but other than that they’re in college and they want to have fun and they want to sexually experiment and they want to experiment with other things drugs and alcohol and things like that. They’re in the world and they want to experience the world.

F: Okay, so morality driven by pleasure seeking?

James: Yeah, success and pleasure seeking. (3/16/06 INT.)

Cultural morality is a system where the prevailing attitudes of the culture become the guide for moral decision making. In this notion, what is considered appropriate today may be considered inappropriate with time or a shift in geographical location. The Christian students’ perception of a cultural morality is reflected in the following excerpt:

F: What would you say they rest their morality on?
Susan: Um, what was best for society; like, um, murder and rape and stuff like that. But basically they think stuff that doesn’t really affect things in the long run, or things they think like gay marriage. It just doesn’t matter. And you can do whatever you want; it’s in your own will. As long as it isn’t bad for the economy or something like that, um. So that’s what they base their morality off of. (4/13/06 INT.)

Cultural morality is also described in the following excerpt:

F: So, I guess, when you hear people talking in class is that what comes across – moral relativism?

Tre: Yeah. One of the students wrote a paper about why premarital sex isn’t wrong but it wasn’t a good paper. You see a lot of papers that are against what we believe but it’s a good written paper but he’s like, “well because the morals in America have changed and people feel like it’s okay now but it wasn’t okay before…” (4/25/06 INT.)

Similarly,

F: What do you think they are using for a moral guide?

Tami: For a guide either themselves or, what’s right to them, or maybe what they were raised to believe what was right and wrong. Like some of the students are, um, Hindu I guess and their faith plays a lot on what they think is right and wrong. (4/12/06 INT.)

The last and lesser thread described is practical morality. I define practical morality as making moral decisions based upon what seems to be most practical at the
time. Instead of pleasure guiding decisions, decisions are based upon what seems most practical. An example is expressed in the following excerpt:

F: How would you describe the overall moral character of the student body?
Herman: …but I think that people here in general just try to be very decent people whether or not they’re religious, you know, if they’re atheist, if they’re Hindu, they try and be the best person they can be. You know everyone here is slightly educated so they understand, for the most part, that being a decent person can get you somewhere. (4/14/06 INT.)

Similarly,

Gert: It’s not that the people at UTD don’t do bad things but they don’t do bad things because of religious conviction or because of Christian convictions. Does that make sense? Like they don’t do drugs because they’re smart kids and, you know, if you do drugs, you don’t get good grades, but you know what I mean, they have…practical or cultural reasons for not doing you know because good kid’s don’t do bad drugs, or don’t do drugs or, you know, things like that. (4/25/06 INT.)

Valued by the university? The students were split on whether they perceived that the university valued the presence of evangelicals. Some concluded that Christians were valued and others felt otherwise. The reasons varied, but I will begin with those that felt the university valued the presence of Christians:

F: Is it your perception that the university values the presence of evangelical students on this campus? Explain.
Sonya: I would actually say probably yes. There are more Christian organizations on campus than any other religion. Um, the Christian organizations like, I mean, I think there is like five Christian organizations and there is like one Islamic organization or something like that. The Christian organizations really promote social gatherings and stuff. And the university tries really hard to get people out of their rooms, to get them to do stuff. So, I mean obviously there is so many of them here, so the university must like it.

F: So, the Christian organizations promote social activities and that’s seen as beneficial by the university? [yes] How do you know that?

Sonya: Because the university is like, basically, all the university tries to do is like…

F: Is it an assumption though? That’s what I am getting at [No]. Is it an assumption or have you, has the university actually said, have you heard, you know, anybody from the university say, “We like Christians. Come all Christians?”

Sonya: No, they do not say, “Come all Christians.” But they do say, “Come all social activities.” [okay] They will take anything they can get, and that is, I’m sure that the Christian organizations are included. But they never speak out openly about the Christian organizations. They do very, very, very much promote social activities, and I think that is the only reason that they really appreciate Christians. (4/12/06 INT.)

F: Is it your perception that the university values the presence of evangelical students on this campus? Explain.
Victor: I think so.

F: What makes you say yes?

Victor: Because they offer us the clubhouses of the different apartments for us to make our weekly Bible study...they give us the Galaxy Room, they uh, fully support our lunch on the lawn thing...our outside barbeque thing we had last week; we just had it out here and they brought all this stuff, they had like systems and everything. So the university is pretty supportive. And uh, other Christian groups, along with ours got together and prayed for the university and everything, and I think they also gave the clubhouse for that (event). (4/11/06 INT.)

Tre’s response to this question draws a distinction between the UTA faculty and “official UTA,” and it represents the middle position among the responses.

Tre: I don’t think the faculty respects us that much. I would hope they would. Obviously, I want them to become Christians too but that’s a different subject. I think overall, the official UTA, they welcome it because they allow the Cornerstone worship group to play music on the grass beside the library. I mean they don’t get into trouble or anything. (4/25/06 INT.)

Conversely, a representative group of responses reflecting the opposing view (that Christian presence on campus is not valued) are below.

F: Is it your perception that the university values the presence of Christian students on this campus?

David: No.

F: Why do you say that?
David: Well, if they value it, why wouldn’t they give people equal opportunities, not equal opportunities, strike that. Why wouldn’t they give people every view?
All professors that I took this semester were not straight negative, but they mocked stuff, they were like, “Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, this is right-wing.” They belittled the Christian values. They tried to include just people like, like people say the minorities now, the African Americans, the Muslims, and all that, but if you believe in actual moral values, you get looked down upon. If you believe in that, but oh, we have to be equal to everyone else, but we don’t have to be equal to you. You have to be equal to them, but we don’t have to be equal to you.
(5/15/06 INT.)

F: Is it your perception that the university values the presence of Christian students on this campus?

Ivan: I think the university values the presence of other religions more than Christianity because Christianity they say is the main religion. You know how they say freedom of religion? Everyone wants to be equal now days. So it seems that they’re bringing down the Christians and bringing out more people, you know, so that it seems as though it’s equal.

F: Okay, so bringing down Christianity, how do you see the university bringing down Christianity?

Ivan: Well like I mean stressing, it’s like stressing each religion equally, you know, they’ll stress other religions like Islam or like Hinduism. Like at events and stuff like that it seems like they’ll support one more than the other. Like bring
everyone to the same level, to bring Christianity down from the pedestal it’s on to make it all equal. (4/14/06 INT.)

F: Is it your perception that the university values the presence of Christian students on this campus?

Tami: Not really.

F: Can you explain what you mean by that?

Tami: I think maybe, I think at UTD Christians are probably in a minority here. And it, I don’t picture really, like remember any instances where UTD has valued our presence, but I don’t know, maybe. (4/12/06 INT.)

Of course we add value. There was a general consensus that evangelical students’ presence on campus added positively to the university. The fact that Christians prayed for the university was frequently mentioned. The general topics of prayer had primarily to do with the spiritual well-being of everyone associated with the university. The students mentioned praying that many more students would be converted to faith in Christ. They also mentioned praying for improved morality on campus and for one another in the area of personal accountability or morality. Consider the following excerpt from Tami’s second interview:

F: Does Christian student presence on campus add anything positive to the school?

Tami: Yeah.

F: Yeah? How?
Tami: Well, we pray for the school that it becomes a better place and becomes a better school and that more people will come to know Jesus, so I think that’s good that we’re praying that UTD will be a better place.

F: If more people come to know Jesus, how is it going to be a better place?

Tami: Well, I think it would definitely cut down on crime at UTD, like what we were talking about earlier and it would make people more understanding and more willing to help each other like. Even in sciences, I guess if people worked together, if they’re not selfish, then they’ll work together (and) more can get accomplished. (4/12/06 INT.)

The concern for the moral purity of other Christians was also mentioned as evangelical students formed accountability groups to assist one another with moral weaknesses. The students also mentioned the fact that Christians were meeting physical and spiritual needs of other students by continually providing events that included free meals and biblical teaching. They indicated that Christian concern for others would be sorely missed if they were not operating on campus because no other groups really looked to improve the well-being of others like the Christian groups do. In response to this question of whether Christian presence adds anything to the campus, Sonya said,

Yes. I would say so.

F: How so?

Sonya: Because the things that we do are positive and helpful to the student body, and I think it would be a very different campus were there not Christians here.

F: How?
Sonya: I would think that it would just be less friendly, less warm, there would be less help, I guess. Like, there would be more of a sense of pointlessness and that they would only be striving for academics to gain more knowledge.

F: So, you would say you guys, and when I say “you guys” I mean Christians as a collective group, have brought a certain amount of meaningfulness to the campus?

Sonya: Yes, because they have meaning, the Christians, and they can bring it to others, and they can show them what matters and Jesus’ love. (4/12/06 INT.)

To this question, Natanya added,

I think it does. I think having Christian people on campus gives it more of an optimistic outlook. I don’t think that Christians are generally happier or anything than most people, but we definitely have a more positive side to us because we know that everything is going to work out if you believe in what God does for you and stuff like that, so I think it just it makes it more of an optimistic community.

F: Anything else you can think of where Christians contribute to the campus in general.

Natanya: I think maybe when they look for a job like (student) ambassadors and even maybe PA’s, they look for more Christian people because I think they’d rather have a Christian in there than like an atheist because they have a more positive view. I’m not sure if that answers your question but I think that might have added. Christians generally have a better, a more community attitude.

(4/14/06 INT.)
The students also mentioned the fact that Christian presence was positive because it encouraged all of the other Christians and provided a moral and spiritual support network for evangelicals themselves. Dirk said,

Every time I encounter a fellow believer it gives me a warm sense. During my senior year of high school, I took a couple of classes at Brookhaven and I was really overjoyed when I found out that one of my classmates was a Christian. So I do think that it has a really positive experience because we’re all bonded through Christ - so it is positive for me.

F: So, for believers, it’s encouraging to have other believers on campus that you know about?

Dirk: Yes, very much so. (5/13/06 INT.)

Christian presence also provided social opportunities for evangelicals and also for nonbelievers. The students also hypothesized that the more students were converted to faith in Christ the more the overall morality of the school would improve. They also felt that improved morality would improve the overall academic achievement on the campus in that students coming to faith would be less willing to be involved in self-destructive behaviors that would negatively impact their academic success. For example,

F: Does Christian student presence on campus add anything positive to the campus?

Chelsea: I think so, yes. Well, I think it helps us, you know, because there are some…. It helps to not be a big party school and to have good students who do good in their classes.
F: Okay so, you would say the fact that there is a growing population of Christian students makes it less morally deficient and probably more academically focused or more dedication to academics?

F: Yeah. (4/12/06 INT.)

As seen above, the students perceived a relationship between the Christian faith and academic success. There was also a sense that Christian presence provides an alternative to the majority philosophy. To the question of whether Christian presence added anything to the university David said,

David: Yeah, I would say yeah because they give some grounds to other people who are more conservative. Otherwise, all the colleges would just be liberal grounds, and little [conservative] influences, like they don’t have tons and tons of influence. (5/15/06 INT.)

Without the Christian worldview presence, there was a general sense that everyone on campus would think so much alike that there would be little to discuss. The students felt that having an alternative viewpoint was a contribution to the overall intellectual health of the university in that those who held to what the evangelicals perceived to be the majority worldview of the university had something to contrast themselves with. Gert’s response to the following question reflects this.

F: Is it your perception that the university values your Christian perspective on issues?

Gert: Yes, but in an intellectual sense. Does that make sense? Like, I’m valued for the discussion it created.

F: To have somebody to oppose.
Gert: Yeah, to have somebody to disagree.

F: Because if everybody agreed, if everybody was pro-abortion or pro-gay rights there’s nothing to talk about?

Gert: Right, and everybody would be like, “Yea, yea, yea,” and that would be it.

(4/25/06 INT.)

Additionally, to this question of Christian value Susan added,

Susan: Yeah, for sure.

F: Why?

Susan: Well, we are the only light on this campus. Like, you know, if it wasn’t for the Christians here who were standing up for what is right, I mean everyone would be the same. It would be absolutely boring and I would be miserable here. Um, something that is directly good for the campus itself, I can’t really say, besides the social gatherings. But I mean spiritually, we’re obviously the light in the darkness here. At least Campus Crusade is. Baptist Student Ministry is really good.

F: You said that you felt like the Christian students on campus made a social contribution to the value of this school?

Susan: Yeah, I think FOCUS and Baptist Student Ministry have the best social contribution but Campus Crusade obviously has the highest spiritual contribution. And Baptist Student Ministry is really good too, socially and morally.

F: When you say spiritually do you mean doctrinal soundness? Is that what you are referring to?
Susan: Yeah, yeah cause I mean stuff like FOCUS gets a little too social and you’ll just be talking with those people rather than opening the Word and discussing it and having personal you know advancement in your faith and in your knowledge about the Bible. I mean there’s an actual Bible Study, so. FOCUS I don’t think ever has any, I mean they have small groups or something like that, but I don’t know, I don’t know.

F: In terms of the spiritual contribution and the idea of you say light in the sense of a moral contribution [yes], is that what you are referring to when you say Christians are light [yes], you are talking about a sense of morality?

Susan: Yes, morality as well. Um, I mean there’s just that feeling, you know. When you know, when you are around Christians. There is just that joy that’s there, and I don’t know, it’s just awesome. You can’t really explain it. (4/13/06 INT.)

As the excerpts above indicate, the participants felt that Christians added value in a variety of ways. They believed that Christians added value by praying for the university and by praying specifically for the morality of believers and nonbelievers. They believed that their presence also added value by improving the overall moral ethos, and they believed there was a relationship between an improved moral ethos (less self-destructive behaviors) and academic success. They saw themselves as meeting a variety of physical and spiritual needs on campus that would likely go unmet were evangelicals not present. They perceived themselves to be a unique source of warmth, friendliness and optimism, and they believed these qualities were beneficial to the entire university community (believers and nonbelievers). They perceived that Christian presence helped reduce social
isolation by improving social opportunities for all students. They also perceived that Christian students were filling valuable student leadership roles as RAs, student ambassadors, etc., and that this participation added value. The fact that they offered a philosophical alternative to naturalistic monism also added value by improving the overall intellectual diversity of the university.

*Advice to freshmen Evangelicals.* Concerning the issue of advice they would give to freshmen evangelicals, the advice that this group presented sounded like advice Tinto might have provided in that the advice was highly consistent with his model. Generally, the advice had two categories – social and academic. However, the stronger and more prominent theme was that social involvement was a key to survival as a freshman. Within the social category, the most prevalent emerging theme was to become involved with some evangelical group - a campus ministry, a local church, or both. There was also a lesser theme that advocated looking for and socially integrating with the Christian community at large – integrate with Christians wherever you could find them. When asked why, the students indicated that the university could be a very lonely place and that isolation would make for a less desirable college experience. Another theme emerging from this follow-up was the idea of moral support and the threat of falling away from the faith. The students believed that through social integration with Christian groups the incoming evangelical freshman would be less likely to engage in self-destructive behaviors that might thwart his long term academic goals. Consider the following responses to the question regarding advice to born-again Christians that are incoming freshmen:
Susan: Okay, I would only make one point to them and I would stress it as much as I could. Get involved in a Christian, explore all the Christian organizations that are on campus, and get involved in one and stay with it. Otherwise, your chances of falling away from the faith are so much greater. So, I mean there’s different organizations that support different things, just get involved in one of them and stay with those people.

F: And falling away from the faith, you see that as being something negative in what sense?

Susan: Um, all senses. Falling away from the faith is bad mentally, for your mental health, you’re, I mean you are going to fall away, you’re gonna do stupid things and that will hurt you emotionally, um, mentally, spiritually, like it’s, it’s degrading in all ways if you change your beliefs and start different things that you don’t really know about.

F: Okay, any other, um, things, that you’d tell a new, a Christian, coming next year, let’s pretend [um, come to Campus Crusade, be my friend] let’s pretend, okay you’ll be able, if you come back next year, you’ll be able to potentially do this [yeah]. Ah, so you, can you envision yourself finding a freshman that is a Christian [uh hum] say in the first or second week, is there anything else you could tell them besides get involved in a Christian ministry?

Susan: No, but it’s so hard to find Christians here that if I did find a Christian freshman, I would latch on to them and want to be their best friend and like make sure that they had an outlet whenever anything happened, like it is huge change, you know. And I went through it alone, and I don’t want anyone else to have to
go through that without having someone there. Just try and make sure that they have a church as well. There’s so many churches around here. Just to get connected into some type of Christian ministry is essential, that too. Forgot that. (4/13/06 INT.)

Similarly,

Dirk: Obviously, be on guard against the university setting. Watch for things that could weaken you. It’s good to identify your weaknesses and know how to avoid them. Don’t put yourself in situations where you will be tempted to fall, such as, the wrong party, the wrong group of people. Maintain reading the Word (the Bible) because it’s the main thing, I mean I started reading the Bible through in a year and it’s amazing just being in the Word every day. It’s amazing how encouraging it is to have the Word in your mind every day.

F: Just so I have it here: First, be on guard against the university setting.

Dirk: I mean the secular setting, not the university setting. I mean the secular views that penetrate most universities.

F: Okay, so be on guard against the secular views. Don’t put yourself in situations where you’ll be tempted. Be careful about the friends you select and the last thing is to stay in the Scriptures?

Dirk: Yeah.

F: Anything else?

Dirk: Nothing really.

F: So you would say that fellowship with other believers on campus is not necessary?
Dirk: No, I think fellowship with other believers is very necessary. What came across that way?

F: Well, because you didn’t mention it.

Dirk: Oh, I’m sorry. I guess it just didn’t hit me. But yeah, I believe that fellowship with other Christians is very important.

F: So would you say that getting into contact with campus ministries would be a positive thing?

Dirk: Yes, like I said earlier, just knowing that there are other Christians on campus is very encouraging. So being in a group like that would be essential.

(5/13/06 INT.)

Additionally,

Ronald: To seek out Christian organizations.

F: Okay, why would you tell them to do that?

Ronald: So that they could have a group of friends that were Christians to support them and stuff.

F: If they didn’t do that… I mean do you know anybody that said at the beginning of the year they were Christian and yet didn’t get involved in what you did. You got involved in FOCUS or Campus Crusade or BSM, or whatever. Do you know anybody like that?

Ronald: Yeah, my roommate said he was a Christian, but he didn’t get involved in anything.

F: Yeah, and what happened to him. Did he have a good experience here? I mean does he live like a Christian?
Ronald: No, I would say he didn’t.

F: He didn't have a good experience?

Ronald: Yeah.

F: Why do you say he didn’t have a good experience?

Ronald: He was just like partying all the time and stuff. Never went to class or anything.

F: Did he drop out?

Ronald: Yeah.

F: When did he drop out?

Ronald: About a week after spring break.

F: Why did he… did he tell you why he dropped out?

Ronald: Well he hadn’t gone to any of his classes so he was failing all of them, so…(4/15/06 INT.)

Leti added,

Leti: Surround yourself with Christian people, Christian friends, find a church.

F: Anything else?

Leti: Get involved with the Christian activities.

F: Anything else?

Leti: But at the same time be open to the people who are not Christians. I don’t think that there is anything wrong with having non-Christian friends. In fact, I think it’s really important.

F: Important to whom?

Leti: Both. (4/21/06 INT.)
To this question of advice to evangelical freshmen, Nancy replied rather comprehensively:

Nancy: Get involved in a church or at least a Christian group and be consistent, because if you don’t have that consistency your faith will not last very long.

Well, I find for myself that I have to take a spiritual evaluation every now and then to see why I’m doing the things I’m doing, who I’m doing them for and are good things coming from this. I don’t know. I’m trying to think of anything else.

F: So you would say that’s something that you would recommend, taking a spiritual evaluation as a, you mentioned getting involved so number two would probably be consider where you are spiritually on an ongoing basis or on a regular basis?

Nancy: Yeah, because I feel like in college that’s where your test is and you’re either going to be a Christian or you’re not and whatever, like, this is the time when you’re away from your parents and so whatever you believe is gonna come out. And you need to define what that is and mainly ask yourself why do you believe what you believe because if you don’t have any reasons people are gonna question it and you may not believe what you believe because you have no answers. Like there are a couple of books that I know that are good for that.

F: What books would you recommend?

Nancy: Probably “Why I Believe” by Kennedy. I think it’s J. John Kennedy?

F: Do you mean D. James Kennedy?

Nancy: D. James, yeah, I had to add a J in there somewhere. And “The Case for Christ” by Lee Strobel and…
F: “More Than a Carpenter?”

Nancy: I have it but I haven’t read it all the way through. So, I’m trying to recommend books that I’ve read, and I remember positive things about them.

F: So, you’d recommend some of those resources to Christian students as well as part of your advice for that question?

Nancy: Yes, and if they don’t, at least until they find someone on campus or at their new church, get a mentor from their present church. A mentor who, maybe an older Christian, a “caregiver” or not, at my church we call them “caregivers”, like a small group leader at church. Or a youth group leader or something, someone who will send them an e-mail every week or so or just keep updated, you know, “Have you found a church yet? Are you staying in the Word? Have you found a Christian group yet?” I don’t know, I felt like, I don’t know, I think that would have helped me. (4/21/06 INT.)

Similarly, James said,

James: Find a good group of believers and hook yourself into them. Be honest about your struggles. Don’t try to hide anything because if you try to hide your shame and say that you can handle it yourself, that’s nothing but a lie from the devil. God has given us other fellow believers, not to carry our burdens for us but at times to pick us up when we stumble and fall and to pray for us. Things like that. It’s definitely important to have good Christian friends. I’ve got a couple good Christian friends here on campus and because I’m still going to my home church, I have a lot of good Christian friends there at my home church. (4/19/06 INT.)
Sonya said,

Sonya: Get involved in a Christian group. Uh, keep going to church, find a
church body that you can get involved in and um, I would personally say come
join the BSM or join FOCUS. Those are two of the groups I really see God
working in. I’d probably talk to them a little about, if they were living on
campus, just that how to live with their roommates and how to respect them and
invite them to things. If they’re roommates and they’re living on campus and
they aren’t Christians, try and get them involved as well. I would just tell them
stuff like that. (4/12/06 INT.)

Gert had a lot of advice to give evangelical freshmen in the following:

That it is important to have that network of Christian friends, I mean, for the
accountability and for the support that brings you.

F: When you say accountability, you mean in the sense of trying to live a life of
godliness or trying to live a moral life? Is that what you are referring to?
Gert: Yeah, and to walk with God and…

F: And then the other thing was the support?
Gert: Yeah.

F: And that’s emotional primarily?
Gert: Yeah.

F: Okay, so you’ve got them going and getting a network of Christian friends. It
could be formal in the sense of like “Cru” (Campus Crusade for Christ) or
informal in the sense of find other believers?
Gert: Yeah.
F: Anything else you’d tell them?

Gert: I don’t know. I mean that would be the most important thing, I would think.

F: Why would you say that’s the most important?

Gert: Because, you know, God says that’s one of our basic needs you know accountability and fellowship and (incomprehensible) lots of times that’s what you need when you’re getting away from your family.

F: You say accountability and fellowship?

Gert: Yeah. And those are the people that are really going to be your closest friends. You’re really going to be able to share things honestly and be able to know that whatever they tell you and the advice that they give you is, you know, based in the Bible. And if you did have a problem with classes or did have a problem with talking with people, or you needed help with that, if you had that Christian base, a group of strong Christian friends, then that would be something to support you in whatever you were having or giving you advice about Christians and what you should say in the class or tell you if there is a teacher that you should really avoid or…(4/25/06 INT.)

Academic Integration

*What’s happening in the classroom?* The majority of the students expressed overall satisfaction with their classes. Several expressed some dissatisfaction in having to take prerequisite coursework. The majority of the students were satisfied with their grades in the first semester. Regarding the question on how they were doing academically, most of the students provided first semester GPAs and provided predictions on their second semester GPAs. The GPA mean for semester one was a 3.27,
and the anticipated mean for semester two was a 3.34 (see data in Appendix G). Most of the students in this study were very successful academically during this freshman year of college and appeared to be academically integrated from an achievement standpoint. A few expressed some dissatisfaction at what they described as poor teaching. Some who were dissatisfied were primarily disappointed in themselves. The primary reason for not achieving at the level they expected had to do with the recognition that they did not understand how to manage time, and they lacked self discipline. The issue of poor time management consistently emerged throughout the interviews. Many of them expressed the notion that they needed to grow in terms of being able to manage their “freedom” better.

All of the students but one indicated that they were properly prepared for college coursework in the sense that they had been given the requisite academic foundation to be successful. However, they felt unprepared in the area of study skills and personal discipline. Over half of the participants expressed the idea that the freshman year was less academically challenging than they thought it would be.

Natanya: I think I was very prepared coming here. I guess the classes are less challenging than I thought they would be, but it’s more of a challenge for me motivation wise, umm, to stay on top of my school work since it’s all me and not learning the material through homework assignments and quizzes and stuff. (3/22/06 INT.)

Tre: It wasn’t too hard. I felt well prepared. The one thing I did do was I wrote good papers. It was the tests that I really didn’t study that much for and I felt like
I was really ready to write. It was less challenging than I thought it was going to be; I just didn’t study as much as I should have. (2.23/06 INT.)

A couple of students indicated that they were overconfident because they felt that they had already covered much of what was being taught in their freshman classes while they were in high school. This overconfidence gave them the idea that they did not need to apply themselves. As they navigated their midterms, they realized that their overconfidence was unfounded. With only two grades for the semester (midterm and final) and a poor midterm grade, they recognized that they had a significant hurdle to overcome.

When asked what the biggest surprises in the freshman experience were, one theme that emerged from this question was the notion that the professors were more unbiased than they had expected.

James: In a good sense…I think I’ve already said this before, but I think one of the cool things to find out, is that a lot of the teachers are not as quite as I had imagined them; I imagined the majority of the teachers in college to be, you know, trying to attack my Christian faith from every single direction. I said well, some of them fit that stereotype, a large portion of them don’t. Just to see their open mindedness about certain things…the way they view certain things is, at least on a discussion format, has been very interesting and pleasing. (4/19/06 INT.)

The freedom of the college experience was seen as positive for a few participants. For example,
Susan: Well, I didn’t really know what to expect. So when I got here just the ultimate freedom was probably the biggest plus. I mean you really can do absolutely whatever you want. And that was awesome in some ways but in some ways it’s really scary you know. But that was probably my favorite thing is you, if I don’t want to hang out with certain people then I don’t have to, you know.

(4/13/06 INT.)

Most of the students listed at least one professor that they would avoid in the future. The most often cited reason for avoidance had to do with poor pedagogy although this was expressed in different forms. For example, some students responded that they would avoid a professor because they did not “know how to teach” (Sonya 4/12/06 INT). Another reason had to do with accent or some type of language deficiency. A third reason had to do with grading and testing that was inconsistent with what was covered or inconsistent with what the professor communicated would be covered. Another theme had to do with the perception that the professor had some type of perceived attitude or personality flaw.

F: Did you have any professors this semester that you will avoid in the future?

Ronald: Yeah.

F: Can you tell me why?

Ronald: Because they were the worst calculus teacher and the worst chemistry teacher in the school.

F: What made them poor teachers?

Ronald: Well they just weren’t very enthusiastic about the material. They didn’t know it all that well. (4/15/06 INT.)
F: Did you have any professors this semester that you will avoid in the future?
Kelsey: My Chemistry teacher was insanely monotone. And we have Chemistry, in all Chemistry 1 has about 180 students in each class. And it’s a huge auditorium with a big light in the front and the rest of the lights go off and I admit I fell asleep in every class I went. And then my Calculus professor was, when he was writing notes on the board he would like erase before he would like move it out in front of them. It was just a little frustrating because we were in class to take notes and he is like erasing them and we can’t see them and so I chose to pick the other professors and try again. (3/17/06 INT.)
F: Did you have any professors this semester that you will avoid in the future?
Leti: Well, my social statistics professor, I just, he’s Chinese, I guess and I couldn’t really understand what he was saying and I felt, actually the class was mostly male and I just felt like, I thought that class was really hard and so whenever I went to him for help I just felt like he kind of looked, saw me as somebody, I mean I just felt like I was stupid when he talked to me, but that was…(4/21/06 INT.)
F: Did you have any professors this semester that you will avoid in the future?
Nancy: Yes, because the particular professor, I did not enjoy their style and I didn’t feel like even being in the class would help me on the test because what was discussed in class was never on the test because it was based on the readings and based on, like there were more stories in class than facts that were gonna be on the test. I don’t know if that makes sense, but just because…
F: What kind of class was this?
Nancy: For the Government class.

F: So the professor would teach but none of the stuff that he taught in the lecture was on the test?

Nancy: Well, he would explain political concepts or whatever but he would tell a lot of personal stories, which were interesting but I would get frustrated because I would get lost in them. I would look at my notes and have nothing and try to figure out what’s the point of this story? And, I mean, I’m sure other people were fine with it but just for me personally that that was not gonna work. (4/21/06 INT.)

F: Did you have any professors this semester that you will avoid in the future?

Natanya: There was one that I thought I would completely avoid and I did not like this teacher. She was my history teacher and I did, she was an honor’s teacher also and I thought this lady could be so much better but I mean I had an A in the class it was just the way she taught, but then so I entered honors this semester and my teacher was just, I knew the class was going to be so difficult to make even a B in because she just seemed so strict and huge ten-page essays every three weeks, you know, so I actually dropped that class to go back to the teacher I had last semester and I’m loving her. She teaches better in a bigger classroom. We went from 20 to 60 and she teaches a lot better in the bigger classroom. My government teacher I would avoid too.

F: Back to the earlier one, what were the reasons for your initially wanting to avoid her?
Natanya: I just thought that her teaching was, I guess, not on a higher level, I guess, for being in an honor’s class because like we would read the chapter before class and then she wouldn’t add anything to it. She would just go over and so it was kind of monotonous and not exciting at all. I dreaded going to that class.

F: Ok. And, you mentioned the government teacher. What was the…

Natanya: He just seems very uncaring for each student. I, we have three tests in there and I was really concerned about my grade and I went to ask him questions and stuff and he just seems distant, like, he didn’t care to help me at all, like it was my problem that my grades weren’t high enough, not his, even though I did study a lot for his tests and I felt like I was doing all that I could. (3/22/06 INT.)

F: Did you have any professors last semester that you will avoid in the future?

Leti: I guess I did have one, yeah. He was actually my government teacher. I just felt, it was a really big class, it was a lecture, so it was about 250 people, and I just felt like he was really aggressive, like if you said the wrong thing or asked the wrong question he would kind of like, I don’t know, I guess embarrass you in front of 250 people. And I was just kind of like I am never ever going to ask a question or raise my hand.

F: What kind of a student, was there any, what issues would you be embarrassed about or what issues would irritate him to where he would embarrass a student?

Leti: It just seemed like any kind of a, I guess because it was a government class there were a lot of political opinions, I guess that he had and it was kind of like you either agreed with him or he kind of you know, like if you expressed your
opinion he wouldn’t be like, “Oh, that’s a good opinion,” he would be like argue with you and I don’t know.

F: How would you classify him? Would he be more on the conservative side or more on the liberal side?

Leti: Liberal.

F: Okay, and that was, so from a political standpoint he was irritating to you?

Leti: No, he wasn’t irritating to me, I mean I didn’t agree with a lot of things he said.

F: Okay, his demeanor was irritating?

Leti: No, he wasn’t irritating to me it was just I found him intimidating.

F: Okay. I got you. Did he ever talk negatively about conservative Christians, or anything like that?

Leti: Yeah, I mean, he definitely wasn’t a fan of Bush and I know, he doesn’t directly say anything against conservative Christians, but he made his liberal viewpoints clear. (3/17/06 INT.)

F: Did you have any professors this semester that you will avoid in the future?

Dirk: I had one that I couldn’t decide on. Um, I liked the way he taught. But, it was just kind of difficult because the way he taught didn’t correlate with how he tested. But I very much liked how he lectured and what I learned. It was government class. Let’s see, one, two... Well, all the rest of them, I enjoyed.

F: So, you wouldn’t avoid this professor from a philosophical standpoint, you’re just not in agreement with the way he tests?

Dirk: Yeah, it’s like, did we actually talk about this in class?
F: So it’s more academic?

Dirk: Yeah. Of course, I took a biology class and my teacher was you know an evolutionist and he was just “millions of years ago” and I’m a creationist and I don’t believe in millions of years. But I wouldn’t avoid her because I know that whatever teacher I get at a school such as this is going to be that way.

F: Okay, so you’re not going to dodge a class? I mean if you have to take biology you’ll take it?

Dirk: Yes, in fact, in my opinion, learning about that stuff makes it easier to know what I am arguing against if I ever have to say why I believe in creation. So why not take the information in so you can understand what they believe and what their information is?

F: So, you see it as more of an opportunity to kind of broaden your understanding of the world and see how other people think and by the same token be able to perhaps increase your ability to share what you believe?

Dirk: Yes. (5/13/06 INT.)

Besides the pedagogical issues cited above, there was a theme of avoiding professors because of their open hostility to a Christian worldview. Consider the following:

F: Did you have any professors last semester that you will avoid in the future?

Without mentioning their name(s), tell me about that.

Dirk: Yeah. Obviously, for the grade reasons, I wouldn’t take chemistry again. I am actually taking biology this semester because I decided against chemistry because it wasn’t a strong point for me. The professors were fine. There was one
professor who liked to give her opinions without accepting any back and she would kind of break yours down, you know, she kind of, she wouldn’t be afraid to do it in front of the class either and I know you hear all of those stories about the college professors who try to destroy your faith and things like that. Though they didn’t destroy my faith, it proved to me that those stories are true and things like that do happen and that there are people out there like that, but I don’t know that that would make me avoid her in the future. (2/18/06 INT.)

Tre: Well, I didn’t like my writing teacher. She really has a misconstrued conception of Christianity. It seems like she really seemed bitter towards it. I don’t mind that there are no Christian teachers, and I don’t want to come across that way but she said she was a “cafeteria Catholic.” She said she picks and chooses what she believes in. She’s really into supporting gays and she hates Bush. I mean a lot of people do, but she also takes some of the things that Jesus said and really twists it around. And of course, it’s easy to point out that well Christians are divided and she really based it on those you know and she really based it on a few bad ones. Someone pointed out that there are poor representatives in every religion. I wouldn’t label Christianity a religion, but that is what she calls it. Every religion has people that are faithful to their religion and every religion has those that are half-hearted followers. So, it’s easy to attack Christianity that way.

F: Do you mean by pointing to the Christians that fail? Was it the argument that Christianity is bad because there are a few bad Christians?

Tre: Yeah. (4/25/06 INT.)
F: Okay, okay, did you have any professors last semester that you will avoid in the future?

Susan: Oh yes. There is actually a core course in film and there was about 160 to 200 people in there. And, she was very liberal, very rude. She would bash Christians in her course and Republicans, out right, and that was very offensive to me. She basically didn’t care about anyone individually because she had a big class, you know.

F: And you say she would bash Christians because of what they believe in or prominent Christians like George Bush?

Susan: She wouldn’t like sit and rant and rave about it, but she would like make comments that were, and that she would, you know people would laugh and she would move on and say, “You know I don’t want to hurt anyone.” But it was obvious that she did because she just said that. It was more prominent Christians, not any one specific, just beliefs in general. And things like creationism, and it would be completely unrelated - she would go out of her way to say things that were rude and just unnecessary.

F: Among your Christian friends, (without mentioning professors by name) are there any professors that they discuss as being one’s to avoid? What reasons did they give for avoiding particular professors?

Susan: Christian friends telling me to avoid professors?

F: Or just talking about professors to avoid, Christian friends. You know, in any of your meetings or any of your conversations with other believers at this school who would share, or might share about you know, “Man, I can’t stand...” Did you
tell anybody about the film class, for example? [yes, I did]. Okay, in reverse, someone telling you about a teacher that you wouldn’t, you know?

Susan: No one actually came up to me and told me something about that. However, this semester I originally signed up with my friend, Bri, and we were taking a rhetoric course and I forgot this lady’s name. But she was five times worse that my film professor. And like she basically sat the entire first class and just bashed Christianity. And she out right said that the Bible was false and faulty and had errors in it. And I dropped the class the first day. I went right after class and dropped it. My friend really likes courses like that, and she lasted a few weeks before she dropped as well because it was too offensive. We could have got a better professor and so I have a better professor now and actually the class I just came from and I love it, so.

F: So you are taking rhetoric with someone else [yes] okay, you just, you did a drop-add?

Susan: Basically, I actually went to my advisor, and, because they were already almost all taken and so I got just what was left. And my professor now, is very much against any abuse against any religion in the classroom and she (the rhetoric teacher) is obviously against Christianity. But I have written essays, like for example my first essay was pro-life and she really didn’t want me to write it, and I…

F: How come she didn’t want you to write it?

Susan: Because she, like we had proposals before, like we had to ask [oh, okay] and she was not willing to allow me to write it. And I basically had to argue for
fifteen minutes and I had to promise her I would not say anything about God and I would not blend, bring religion into it in order to be allowed to write it. So I did, I did base it all on fact. But, for example like, I was just arguing with like two guys from the rhetoric class and we were just having a debate over creationism and evolution. And she made us leave the classroom. We couldn’t even speak about that. (3/20/06 INT.)

Although this topic of avoiding professors was discussed among Christians, the main reasons for avoidance were primarily pedagogical. For example,

F: Among your Christian friends, (without mentioning professors by name) are there any professors that they discuss as being one’s to avoid? What reasons did they give for avoiding particular professors?

Nancy: Mainly it’s because they’re hard to understand or their teaching style is not usually helpful to the student. They usually recommend teachers who, especially math teachers that give good analogies and examples, write clear notes on the board, uh, are helpful to the students. It’s generally just how to help you succeed in college and the kind of proof they’ll give you.

F: Okay, so your friends, mostly their complaint about professors has to do with their being difficult to understand from the English standpoint, like they have an accent or that they simply don’t teach well, they’re not good teachers?

Nancy: They’re…okay…or even being an academic communicator maybe sometimes. Cause, they may be speaking English, perfect English, or like, they’re just not communicating well with the students. And I don’t know if they don’t have good teaching techniques, but just not communication. I don’t know. That’s
mainly. I’m trying to think of any other instances where I would avoid someone.
(3/14/06 INT.)

F: Among your Christian friends, (without mentioning professors by name) are there any professors that they discuss as being one’s to avoid? What reasons did they give for avoiding particular professors?

Sonya: Well, the only reason they would say was because the teacher would not teach as clearly and that they don’t explain things and that they don’t give enough information or that they’re unclear about what exactly the responsibilities are in that class. And so, you feel unprepared for the test. It’s really just their teaching capability it’s not on a spiritual level. (3/17/06 INT.)

F: Among your Christian friends, (without mentioning professors by name) are there any professors that they discuss as being one’s to avoid? What reasons did they give for avoiding particular professors?

Victor: No, not for religious reasons but more things like he’s hard to understand or grading…

F: So they would avoid them for academic reasons?

Victor: Yeah. (3/23/06 INT.)

However, there were discussions among Christian students about professors that seemed hostile to the Christian worldview. There was also a lesser thread of students who indicated that their Christian friends would avoid a teacher purely because of worldview.

F: Were there any professors who stood out as being sort of, hostile towards Christianity and students talking about that?
Nancy: I’ve heard a little bit about it, but I haven’t come in contact with those professors and I don’t know if I will because of my course plan. But, I’ve heard of some professors not as friendly towards that or who are openly against it. And so, yeah, I’ve heard that.

F: You’ve heard that from Christian students?
Nancy: Yes.

F: Do you recall the subjects?
Nancy: I want to say one is history and maybe a writing class - a rhetoric class is what they call it here. (3/14/06 INT.)

F: Among your Christian friends, (without mentioning professors by name) are there any professors that they discuss as being one’s to avoid? And if so why?

Kelsey: There is one humanities teacher that they told me to be sure not to get. She makes the class (read segments) of the Exodus story and then makes it very clear that it is fiction and that doesn’t always fly over so well. I am a biology major and so I have to take evolution classes, and of course it is going to be interesting for me but I hold on to, well it’s my major, I have to.

F: So back to this Humanities teacher, the reason that they gave for avoiding this teacher was basically because she was undermining scripture?

Kelsey: Yeah.

F: Or like trying to?

Kelsey: Trying to make it a story rather than the contents of real events.

F: Did they say that there was any mockery or anything like that or was it done in a way that was…
Kelsey: She said, they said that she was really respectful.

F: She was respectful?

Kelsey: Yeah. It’s just really hard to write a paper about the Bible being fiction. It makes it hard for the (Christian) students. (3/17/06 INT.)

These students were primarily taking prerequisites so they felt they had little choice about avoiding specific classes. However, my perception is that the majority would not avoid a course for worldview reasons. Several students expressed confidence in their worldview and felt that there was nothing that the university could present to them that would change their faith. For example,

F: Were there specific courses that you or your Christian friends deliberately tried to avoid? For example, would you be comfortable taking a zoology or a biology course?

Nancy: I was kind of hesitant to take the humanities because I know it’s the study of literature but we like, today actually, talked about creation vs. evolution and so uh, I haven’t had to take any science classes yet. I’ve mainly been following my course schedule and getting the requirements out of the way. So, not necessarily, I’ve just been worried about getting credits as far as what classes I need to take.

F: So, at this point you haven’t really, you haven’t started you know, thought that oh, I should shy away from that class from a spiritual standpoint.

Nancy: Yeah, but even then I’m not too worried about taking them honestly because I feel like I could take the class, learn what they want me to learn for the test, and still not believe it and disagree. You know what I mean? I’d be like, well, this is what is on the test, and I just don’t agree.
F: So you have a certain amount, you, I guess what you’re, help me out here; what you’re communicating is that you have confidence in your beliefs?

Nancy: Yes. (4/21/06 INT.)

Similarly,

F: Were there specific courses that you or your Christian friends deliberately tried to avoid? For example, would you be comfortable taking zoology or a biology course?

Tami: Sometimes I am worried about that, but um, right now in my requirements I haven’t had to take a zoology course or a biology course or ethics or a course that would have, that would kind of question my faith. But that is something that I do consider when I take courses sometimes, but I wouldn’t let it stop me from taking the course.

F: Why wouldn’t you let it stop you?

Tami: Because I know the truth about how God created the world, and I know that it is just a theory. I guess other people tend to believe what they want to believe.

(3/18/06 INT.)

Kelsey expressed her concerns and notions on the possibly of avoiding her evolution requirement.

Kelsey: Yeah. Evolution is the biggest class that I am not really looking forward to. I have a lot of trouble studying it because I personally don’t believe in natural evolution. So it’s hard for me like to sit down and study. There is a class on campus but it is evolution versus creationism and two days a week. One day a week a professor who believes in evolution will come in and speak on evolution
and then the next day a professor who believes creationism will come in and speak on creationism. I really I am hoping that that will count as my evolution credit cause I think that will be neat to take and hear both sides of it back to back like that but I don’t think it does. (3/17/06 INT.)

Additionally, with eight students of twenty in the study coming from public high schools (see Appendix G), this particular group of eight students felt confident because they felt they had already been in an environment which they perceived to be hostile to their belief system. Since they were used to functioning successfully in that kind of environment, they were less uncomfortable over the challenges or potential challenges to faith that they might face. For example, when asked whether he felt challenged in his faith this year, Herman replied,

Herman: No, the biggest transition as far as my faith was concerned was going from a Christian middle school to a public high school, and that was like five years ago. I adjusted to that, and now I know that there are different viewpoints, people are more devout than others, and so, in college it wasn’t a big deal.

F: And so you had some challenges; they just happened earlier in life.

Herman: Yeah, exactly. (3/18/06 INT.)

Students from homeschools and Christian schools were generally more uncomfortable from a worldview standpoint. The one student who became alienated and disenrolled from UTA was a homeschool student.

No participants expressed the idea that there were favored teachers among Christian students because they were pro-Christian or because they were not anti-
Christian. Favored or disfavored teachers were primarily favored for pedagogical reasons.

Dirk: Never anything from an evangelical standpoint. I never really got anything like this person who teaches history is great and is an evangelical. I never really got any of that. None of the sophomores I knew were evangelicals from what I could tell and sophomores are the ones who have had more teachers but mainly it was because it had to do with an easy grader, or teaches the subject well, or his understanding would help a student along the way. (2/18/06 INT.)

F: Are there certain professors that are favored or more highly regarded by your Christian group?

Herman: Not, there are professors that are favored, but not just by the Christians, you know…it could be, let me see, like…

F: Amongst the Christians…

Herman: No, not any different from non-Christians. You know, like my calculus class, everybody wanted this one professor because he taught better, but it wasn’t any different between Christians and non-Christians. (3/18/06 INT.)

F: Are there certain professors that are favored or more highly regarded by your Christian group?

Susan: Actually, I do not know of any Christian believers who are professors on campus. I would go out of my way to take a course that was unrelated from a Christian professor just so I could learn from him. However, I have never heard of any professor here being a believer or being favorable to Christians or anything like that. The only people we talk about are people who are easy. (3/20/06 INT.)
F: Are there certain professors that are favored or more highly regarded by your Christian group?

There are, but I don’t know that it has anything to do with being Christian. I think, umm, more interesting classes, upper level classes that they think I would enjoy for having a major that is biology, so, umm, and I guess teachers that would help you get a good grade and care. (3/22/06 INT.)

However, there was a thematic expression of favoring professors that the students perceived to be seeking neutrality or who seemed to be unbiased philosophically or politically.

F: Are there certain professors that are favored or more highly regarded by your Christian group? Explain?

Nancy: Like in what ways, like, I’d totally recommend them to you or…

F: Yes, yeah and why would they do that? What reasons, if they have made recommendations or they feel very strongly and positively towards these professors, why do they feel that way?

Nancy: I’m not really sure I’ve come across it where people have recommended professors except based on teaching style and how easy they are to approach or how easy or hard it is to succeed in the class. I’ve been thinking about my professors this semester and what else they’ve brought up and like, my humanities professor is very good about like, he is personally, an atheist, I believe, but he is very good about being fair and presenting just the facts and not preaching to everyone, not ridiculing anyone but presenting just the facts. I know he doesn’t agree with Christianity, and he may talk and I can tell that that’s the atheist
talking in him, but I don’t feel personally ridiculed in that case. And so, I would recommend him based upon the fact that he may not agree with you, but he’ll give you a chance to talk. He won’t ridicule you, and he’ll make sure that no one else will.

F: Oh, that’s good.

Nancy: He fosters a sense of a discussion only not cutting down other people. And so, I was very impressed with our discussion today on evolution.

F: So you don’t feel like in that discussion that your viewpoint was ridiculed in any way.

Nancy: No, and I stayed away from personal beliefs cause I felt like I wasn’t really sure if my evidence was valid because of my source, but we also didn’t have a whole lot of time and I wanted to respect everyone else. And the question was mainly should intelligent design be taught alongside evolution, why or why not? We were all in conclusion that it pretty much should be, but maybe not in science class. The general consensus was that there should be a required world religion class, or something to that extent. There were other people who wanted like, there were some people who you could tell were a Christian, but they were really like, pushing their beliefs. Like, I don’t, you can’t push your beliefs on anyone; it doesn’t work that way. You can present your idea, but everyone has to make their own decision ultimately. So, I was really upset during the discussion because I was like, “let other people talk.” And there were sometimes where I just wanted to raise my hand and say something but I had to wait.

F: Yeah. I’ve been in classes like that. It’s hard.
Nancy: Yeah. But it’s the only class where so many people talk because it touches so many hot buttons. (3/14/06 INT.)

Tre expressed a similar notion of favoring professors who stood for neutrality.

F: Among your Christian friends, (without mentioning professors by name) are there any professors that they discuss as being one’s to avoid? What reasons did they give for avoiding particular professors?

Tre: Yes, well one person has a really big name so I’m not going to say it.

F: What reasons did they give?

Tre: That person and just other teachers, it’s not good having teachers that try to slam your faith. I don’t mind so much because no one’s going to change my mind, but it’s not the best learning environment but if you’re not going to be a Christian then that’s cool. It doesn’t really bother me if they are not a Christian, I would just prefer if they weren’t hostile or if they could be as unbiased as possible.

F: That’s what you like?

Tre: Well, I would prefer a Christian teacher but if not, my English teacher was a good example of someone that’s not a Christian and yet understands the principles of all of them and she doesn’t you know…

F: So she gave a fair treatment of religions?

Tre: Yes, that’s a good way to say it. (2/23/06 INT.)

The data from this section revealed that the majority of the students perceived themselves to have been well prepared academically although there was a group expression of unpreparedness in the areas of study skills, time management, and personal discipline. A few participants expressed being positively surprised by the worldview
neutrality of some professors and also by the coursework being less rigorous than they had anticipated. The data in this section also revealed that avoidance of professors by the participants and by their network of Christian friends was primarily related to poor pedagogy. Secondarily, there was a theme of avoiding professors for their hostility to the Christian worldview, and there was evidence of discussion among other university evangelicals about avoiding professors who were hostile towards the Christian worldview. The data revealed that most participants would not avoid coursework known to be hostile towards a Christian worldview, and the reason that emerged was the students’ expressions of confidence in their own worldview. The data showed that there were no professors favored because they were known to be evangelicals or because they were perceived to be pro-Christian. However, professors were favored for pedagogical reasons and favored if they were known to manifest political, religious or worldview neutrality in their classrooms.

*The challenges to faith.* To the question of classroom challenges to their faith, the majority of participants responded that there were no challenges to their faith in the classroom. Conversely, there were some students who indicated that they had faced challenges to their faith in the classroom. However, the challenges were not significant enough that any of them would consider abandoning their faith or withdrawing from the university. The challenges primarily came from prerequisite courses in humanities, history and rhetoric where student discussion was part of the class structure. A few students expressed some surprise and relief that there was far less academic hostility to their faith than they had expected. The following excerpts deal with the issue of challenges to faith:
F: Was there anything that stood out in your classes from this semester that challenged your faith?

Tami: Some, not very much but a little bit in my philosophy class we’ve been reading some psychology, and I, I remember saying this last time, I don’t really like agree with what I learn in there.

F: What is it, can you give me an example of what you’ve read that kind of disturbs you?

Tami: It’s a lot about myths and some of them talk about many different gods. Like in ancient times they had different Greek and Roman gods and goddesses, I guess. I just think it really distorts, and it talks about really weird things, like it’ll talk about races with giants and they’ll talk about how people are reborn, like reincarnated, I guess. I don’t like reading about that stuff. (4/12/06 INT.)

F: Was there anything that stood out in your classes from this semester that challenged your faith?

David: Prehistoric history. They just teach everything as fact and I’m still going through that. And it’s just like you have to take it with faith as the evidence of the unseen. I finally came to the point that, Satan is going to try to trick us and he’s done a very good job with all of this evidence supposedly they have to come in every day and teach us fact and even ten years ago they did research and it’s like after 5000 years do your accuracy be within that range? That would be like 50%. Then after another 1000 years, this is my estimate, but after you go back another 10,000 years it goes up by 100%. If you go back 20,000, it goes up by a scale of like 200%, but then they don’t say that. They just teach this as fact and I’m sure
they say that there’s been improvement, but you just have to take it by faith as the evidence of things unseen, and I finally had to just fall on that truth, and I’ve struggled. I’ve had to fall on that truth every week, or every time, because without faith, the idea of faith it, I love to prove stuff and that’s what I struggle with, so I finally had to say faith is, you can’t prove faith because that’s what it is. If you prove faith, it’s not part of the scientific law, you can’t prove and that’s the problem that I struggle with the most because I love proving things. And having to struggle with that I finally had to say, “Ok, I really don’t give two cents about what you say. I know what I believe, and I know it’s right.” (5/15/06 INT.)

F: Was there anything that stood out in your classes from this semester that challenged your faith?

Nancy: Mainly, the only ones I can really think of that would, would ever, challenge my faith would be in the arts and humanities sections. Like, math wasn’t really gonna challenge my faith, except, “Why don’t I get this?” But um, the humanities classes we talk about all kinds of things like evolution and ah, certain theories that like, Plato and Aristotle had, uh, Freud and Wilson, just different theories that people have about all kinds of things that got us to think about it or if you disagree, why do you disagree with it? And that caused me to look into your worldview and where you’re coming from and what your religious beliefs are. And for history it’s, uh, mainly it would probably challenge my faith in the sense of I’ve seen how Christians are portrayed in history and how certain actions have quoted the faith of Christianity or, and help the story not to be the
same way. Uh, we can make a difference but at the same time if you’re not careful you can make a difference in the wrong way.

F: So, are you referring to things like the Crusades; is that what you mean?

Nancy: Yes. We didn’t specifically talk about the Crusades, we were just looking at some history. We talked about the Civil War and post Civil War. And the pre Civil War it would be…

F: Christian slave owners?

Nancy: Yes, religious, religion passed down into slavery and (Bible) verses backing that and people who claimed to be Christians owning slaves and fighting. I don’t, it just kind of blows my mind. And then, post Civil War I just think that, even from what like, non-Christian people who claim to be Christians would say or um, make comments about Christianity, like Presidents, just comments about appealing to the sense of morality of the American people but not following through with it. Just, moral things always come into play in history and people’s moral decisions and how they affect everyone else. (4/21/06 INT.)

F: Was there anything that stood out in your classes from this semester that challenged your faith?

Susan: Oh yeah, um, my rhetoric class was very, very challenging because every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, people would, you see what it was, I was, I would talk to these guys in rhetoric class and she would kick us out of the room. Like, after class, and so like we would go and like sit and just talk for hours and debate religion. And every next class period these guys that I debated would come back with something else to try and stump me and try and get me to lose my faith
or tell them that they were right. And I would have to prepare a rebuttal every
double time and it got really annoying because the guys were hard-hearted and,
you know, they were not going to give in. They just wanted me to. So that was
particularly challenging to my faith and some of the things that they said, they
would push me a little bit. And that was disturbing.
F: Like what? You said push, like where you started to question what you
believe?
Susan: Um, not so much. Yeah, pretty much, um, I don’t know. It wasn’t anything
specific, but just how I can be, how can I really believe like I am correct when
only a small percentage of people actually believe what, what we believe. You
know, and like why does everyone else? And it’s, I don’t know. It wasn’t really a
big deal at all. Because, I would, I can answer those questions for myself or go to
the Bible and have them answered. But, it was just, it’s really sad sometimes.
F: Sad in the sense of what? Why, why do you say it is sad?
Susan: Because I mean I can see the truth and I know, I know, I know that the
truth is the truth. And I see all these people around me and they are like, “What’s
the truth?” And I’m like, “Here,” and I tell them what the truth is. And they say,
“No, that’s not the truth. You’re stupid.” You know, and it’s, that’s how, and it
really makes me sad. Because I’ve been talking to this one guy in particular,
named Byron, and I basically told him absolutely everything that I can. And I
have refuted everything he has said. And he has run out of ammunition to attack
me with. And he knows that Christianity in every sense is the logical way to go,
even scientifically. And he just wants to stay with his sins. And, and it makes me
sad that he would live his entire life like that even though he knows, like he is a
very intelligent guy, and I think he is going to, something’s going to happen and if
he doesn’t repent himself, he’s going to you know, like the end times are going to
come or something and he is going to be like, “Oh Susan said that, too bad I
didn’t actually listen to her”. And I’ll be like, “Great, okay.” You know, it is kind
of depressing. (4/13/06 INT.)

Susan also felt that the challenges she had faced had actually strengthened her faith.

F: So, in a sense the challenges that you faced to your faith have made your faith
stronger?

Susan: Yes.

F: So, therefore in a sense the college experience is…

Susan: Beneficial, I guess.

F: Beneficial?

Susan: Yeah, although, but I think that it’s trying to be negative. Like, yeah
obviously. It’s hard to say that because you can’t like pin-down anything, you
know. If you see an attitude and you understand something you can feel it. You
know for the most part. (3/20/06 INT.)

Although some students expressed that they had experienced challenges to their
faith during their freshman year, no participant indicated that they had reached a
threshold or crisis point where they might consider abandoning their faith. Neither did
any participant express anything about their faith challenges being significant enough to
generate thoughts or language of withdrawal. Susan’s indication that her faith challenges
They don’t like our ideas. Regarding the question of whether or not the university values evangelical perspectives, the students’ overall perception was that the university does not value evangelical perspectives on issues. For example,

F: Is it your perception that the university values your Christian perspective on issues?
David: No.
F: Why do you say that?
David: They don’t listen to me. They believe that their perspective is the only right one, and that we’re close-minded, right-wing bigots.
F: You’ve heard them say that?
David: No, but that’s what comes out through their actions and I don’t know, what’s the hard thing is I don’t know how much faculty decides to change lectures, but with students, that’s what it seems like a lot. (5/15/06 INT.)
F: Is it your perception that the university values the presence of Christian students on this campus?
Sonya: No, I think they assume that that opinion is there and that it’s always been there and it’s not important and that’s not scientific, and the school is a very logical school. So, I think that they respect that opinion is there but they don’t, like, they wouldn’t use it as a justification or basis for any issue.
F: So the Christian view is irrelevant.
Sonya: Kind of, yeah. (4/12/06 INT.)
F: Is it your perception that the university values your evangelical perspective on issues? Explain.

Susan: I don’t know about the university in general but I’d say for the most part no. Because Christianity, in its essence, says that some things are wrong, like you know, for example, gay marriage and stuff like that, or not necessarily gay marriage but any type of sexual immorality and people don’t want to hear that. We debated once in rhetoric and people would get so mad. Because, I mean they asked for my opinions just so they could shoot me down. In rhetoric, they, my teacher would call me out and ask me what my opinion was specifically on certain issues. And I would always tell her, and people just thought it was interesting to basically…we have a freak in the crowd and you never knew what she was going to say. You know, push a different button and see what she does basically, because she’s a Christian. (4/13/06 INT.)

Conversely, Gert asserts her perception that the university only values the Christian perspective because it provides a contrasting view that is useful in generating discussions.

F: Is it your perception that the university values your Christian perspective on issues?

Gert: Yes, but in an intellectual sense. Does that make sense? Like, I’m valued for the discussion it created.

F: To have somebody to oppose.

Gert: Yeah, to have somebody to disagree.

F: Because if everybody agreed, if everybody was pro-abortion or pro-gay rights there’s nothing to talk about?
Gert: Right, and everybody would be like, “Yea, yea, yea,” and that would be it.

(4/25/06 INT.)

They tolerate us. When asked about whether they had shared their evangelical perspectives on campus and how well they were received, the majority of students indicated that they had shared evangelical perspectives on campus and most of the reactions were mixed but for the most part the interactions could be described as tolerant.

F: Have you shared any of your evangelical perspectives on campus? How were they received? Please be specific.

Nancy: I was received well. I was just asking people about their religious background and what they believe. There have been three instances that I’m thinking of off the top of my head.

F: Three instances this semester?

Nancy: Or just recently.

F: Oh, wow.

Nancy: Well, the guy that walked me over here, I just started talking, well, he made some religious comment and I was like, “Oh,” well, you know, he just made some comment about going to heaven. And I was like, “Oh, are you sure?” You know, I just asked why he knows he’s going to heaven. And, cause he, I invited him, what’d I say? I dunno, some comment in the past week inviting him to church or something because he doesn’t go to church. And so, I just asked him about it and we were talking about it when we walked up. So it was like, I was asking him what he looks for in a church because he said he has a religious background and he, it sounds like he’s a Christian but he doesn’t go to church.
So, I was just, that was one. There was an incident; the other two instances were close friends. I don’t really know him as well but the other two instances were closer friends who I’d talked to about spiritual things maybe a little bit, we’d get into discussions, but never like these two times. Like, one, like I actually got to share the whole Gospel with this one guy. And he listened to me through the whole thing but he, that’s not stuff he’s ready for right now. He’s really been burned by religion and people who have done things to him in the name of God. That was kind of burdening to hear that he’s been so hurt by someone who was probably not a Christian. And, the other person came to church with me on Easter and they attended the church service with me and then I didn’t see them until that evening. And we were just hanging out and randomly something that my pastor had said in the church service came up in the conversation and through that, because they were offended, said someone was going to hell for not believing in the resurrection, that that’s what Christianity hinged on. And so through that I got to read the resurrection story and the crucifixion story out loud and he’d never read it before or heard it before. So, it was really exciting and he had a whole lot of questions and he was also not ready to take that step. But he was, I would say he’s searching, but just, he’s been burned by religion too. I don’t know, it’s not hard to find people who’ve been burned by people who say they’re Christians or religion in general. (4/21/06 INT.)

F: I am interested in hearing about your religious experience over the past several months. Have you shared any of your evangelical perspectives on campus? How were they received?
Herman: I’ve mentioned to people, I mean, they ask, you know, “Oh, do you go to church?” or “What do you do?” you know, and so I just said, “Oh, I go to a Baptist church down the street,” and so they, especially ones who aren’t religious at all, they might be a little curious about it, but like it’s mostly the people that I live with that I know a little better, that I share that with. So I haven’t gotten really in-depth; my biblical knowledge is not the best in the world, so you know I don’t go really in depth about it. I just kind of briefly mention it, if they ask. (4/14/06 INT.)

Susan’s response is most representative of those students who felt like their religious perspectives were not well received.

F: I am interested in hearing about your religious experience over the past several months. Have you shared any of your evangelical perspectives on campus? How were they received? Please be specific.

Susan: Well, I’ve shared way too many of my Christian perspectives. Like I said in the rhetoric class, we would argue with all kinds of people but there were mainly four guys who made up our group. I would share my perspective with them always. And they were almost all refuting with the same thing. Sometimes they were with interests because people don’t really know you, exactly what it is that Christians believe but sometimes they were interested. But they would mostly be like a tolerance, I’m waiting for you to finish talking, you know, because they weren’t really listening. I would give a Gospel presentation or something and they would just kind of like, you know, sit there and wait for me to shut up.
F: Okay, so basically your feelings toward how you were received were generally not positive, is that safe to say?

Susan: Yeah, it is safe to say that for sure.

F: Nobody ever said, “Yes you are right, sign me up for BSM?”

Susan: No, of course not. I did talk to an Islamic guy once and he was, he was positive about it. And then he was like, “Yes, we share the same God.” And I was like, “No we don’t”. He was like, “Yeah, I understand most of the things you say because I think Islam was pretty much based off of Christianity because it was so successful.” But that was the only near positive response that I received. (4/13/06 INT.)

To the question of whether they had heard others share their spiritual beliefs and the reception they received, the following response is most representative:

F: Have you heard anyone else share their spiritual beliefs on campus? How were they received?

Herman: Yeah, occasionally. I think that they’re accepted, you know, I think that people are willing to hear them out at least. Not all the time will they accept what they believe, you know, the other person, but they’re willing to hear them out. (4/14/06 INT.)

On the question regarding their level of comfort in sharing religious beliefs in classroom settings, the students were least comfortable sharing religious beliefs in the classroom although several indicated that they had shared their religious views in spite of their discomfort.
F: Do you feel comfortable sharing your religious beliefs/perspectives in a classroom discussion? Can you recount a particular instance when you have done that?

Nancy: I feel comfortable if it’s relevant to class discussion because I believe that we’ve paid to come to class to learn certain things and if we’re talking about Calculus and there’s really no, I mean, if it’s not a place for the classroom in a way, but…

F: Assuming it’s a class where it does come into play, where there is some kind of moral issue or some kind of a cosmological issue or, you know, just something like that.

Nancy: If it’s relevant, I would feel comfortable saying something or at least questioning what everyone else was saying. If everyone else was saying, “Yes, we came from a blob,” I’d be like, “Where’s the evidence of that?” I don’t know. Probably reference intelligent design or just ask questions. And if they asked me, I’d be like, “Well, I personally believe that we were created.” And if they really want to know more then they’ll ask and I’ll explain further and give reasons to back it up. If I don’t have evidence to back up what I say sometimes, I don’t want to say it because it’s a very intellectual school. Like, if you don’t provide evidence sometimes you just, you’re not taken at face value. No one is like, “Oh, I never thought about that. That must be truth.”

F: You have to have materialistic evidence.

Nancy: It seems that way. It’s kind of frustrating. I don’t know, but, challenging in a good way I would say. (4/21/06 INT.)
F: Do you feel comfortable sharing your religious beliefs/perspectives in a classroom discussion? Can you recount a particular instance when you have done that?

Victor: Am I comfortable? Moderately. In a debate, I wouldn’t be, because even though I’m a strong believer, I don’t know too much Scripture, I don’t know too much of the Word. It’s kind of hard for me to defend. But I would be comfortable saying that I’m a Christian and a firm believer and tell them how much faith I have or something. But beyond that I wouldn’t feel comfortable; I wouldn’t have much basis to go on. (4/11/06 INT.)

F: Do you feel comfortable sharing your religious beliefs/perspectives in a classroom discussion?

Gert: Sometimes, well, no not really.

F: But you have done it?

Gert: Yeah, I’ve done it, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that I am comfortable.

F: Why did you do it in spite of your discomfort?

Gert: Because I felt like I should, because I felt like they were asking for my opinion and I would be chickening out if I didn’t, like that was different than volunteering.

F: Because they specifically asked?

Gert: Yeah, they specifically asked for anyone who believed that or whatever. And because I hadn’t said anything at other times that they had said it, and I felt guilty afterwards. (4/25/06 INT.)
F: Do you feel comfortable sharing your religious beliefs/perspectives in a classroom discussion? Can you recount a particular instance when you have done that?

Tre: If they asked, it depends on the question. If they attack what I believe, if they attack Christianity in a way that’s not right then I’ll probably say something, just because the Holy Spirit will make me. He won’t make me, but He’ll stir my heart and you know I can’t let them. I mean, I’m not gonna talk about it for no reason.

F: It’s okay to talk about it (Christianity), just don’t talk about it incorrectly. In other words, don’t charge Christians with a certain view when they don’t really believe that way. Is that what you are talking about?

Tre: Right, I mean if they attack it then there’s a chance to talk. I mean if he attacks it and then goes on to something else, I’m not gonna stop him half way through. If there’s a chance to say something then I will. I don’t have to deal with it too much because a lot of the teachers know it’s not good to. I mean, any public speaker knows, if you want to persuade an audience from the left side you got to work your way on over instead of blasting what they believe in. It’s like you know, “All that stuff you believe in is totally wrong.” So obviously they’re gonna do it slowly and stuff. Rarely ever does someone say, “Christianity is not true and here’s the reasons why, and I don’t believe it’s right but this is what’s right.” No one really does that. But if that happened, then I would definitely say something.

(4/25/06 INT.)

F: Do you feel comfortable sharing your religious beliefs/perspectives in a classroom discussion?
David: It really depends on the classroom. It’s really, it depends on the professor because did you say political and religious?

F: I said religious beliefs and perspectives.

David: Religious beliefs, on the religious and moral values, oh yeah I have no problem. Except when you get into the gay area because if you say one thing about that, they frame you as an idiot, so I have a hard time on that because…

F: If you say what?

David: If you’re talking about gay and lesbians, I have a hard time on that because I haven’t really researched it as much but if people start talking about that, they frame you and it’s just not easy to talk about that.

F: What do you mean they frame you?

David: They frame you as a close-minded.

F: Oh, by speaking against homosexuality?

David: Yeah, homosexuality, that sort of thing. On other things like, our whole English class, we had a topic on, I chose terrorism, people chose a right to die, people chose divorce in America. Those types of issues I have no problem with. Other spiritual views, I haven’t really encountered any really straight, not straight, hard-core in other religions besides just secularism. Like I haven’t really encountered many Muslims, Hinduism or any other very strong belief besides just the idea…

F: You mean in students?

David: Yeah, in students.
F: So mostly it’s a sort of secular students that win the day or speak in the classrooms for the most part.

David: Yeah, the majority are like that. (5/15/06 INT.)

The data in this section revealed that evangelicals had shared their religious perspectives on campus and the responses by the university community were generally characterized as being tolerant. Several participants had witnessed other evangelicals sharing their spiritual beliefs on campus and the other evangelicals were received similarly, with tolerance. Although there were no accounts of unbelievers embracing evangelical beliefs, most accounts seemingly portray peaceful discourse.

The students were least comfortable sharing religious perspectives in the classroom. They seemed to be sensitive about the appropriateness in specific situations in that several indicated that their willingness to share had to meet certain criteria for them to feel even moderately comfortable. For example, David articulated an unwillingness to engage in any discourse where his personal views on homosexuality might be revealed for fear of being “framed as close-minded.” With the exception of Susan, no participants could be characterized as aggressive about sharing their religious views in class. The group seemed to be saying that they would share if the situation was appropriate and if they were pressed in some way.

The academic costs of Evangelicalism. Regarding the question of their evangelicalism being an academic issue, the majority of responses to this question were simply “No” (Leti 4/21/06 INT) or “Umm, I really can’t think of any” (Natanya 3/22/06 INT). In other words, the majority did not express the perception that there was an academic cost for being a Christian. However, some students explained that the types of
classes that they were attending did not lend themselves to discussions which would reveal a student’s philosophical orientation. They seemed to be saying that to be fair to the question, many classes were not set up in such a way that personal worldview could be discerned and therefore the question could not properly or fairly be answered. However, there were a few students that felt that there were occasions where their evangelicalism was an issue from an academic standpoint. These occasions typically developed as a result of taking an evangelical perspective on a classroom issue. Although these represent a minority experience within the group, the following excerpts provide insights into those perceptions:

F: From an academic standpoint, were there any occasions this semester where your being an evangelical was an issue at this university?  
Sonya: Academic?  
F: Yeah, like, you wrote a paper that a professor disagreed with, like the topic was on, let’s say, abortion, for or against abortion and the professor gave you a poor grade.  
Sonya: Yes, that’s exactly what happened. I wrote a paper on abortion and I was pro-life and my reasoning and my basis was because of my Christian beliefs and he wrote that off as invalid because abortion is a political issue and the American government clearly separates church and state and therefore, that is not a valid argument. (4/12/06 INT.)  

In the above instance, the student describes a situation where points are taken off of a paper because of the expression of a religious viewpoint.
In Gert’s case below, she describes classroom settings where her worldview stances seemingly caused some incongruence through a sense of ideological or worldview isolation from her peers.

F: From an academic standpoint, were there any occasions last semester where your being a Christian was an issue?

Gert: Yes, in one of the first couple of weeks in my history class, which is one of those huge classes that you have to talk in, we talked about modernism and postmodernism and he asked people to raise their hands if they were modernist or postmodern. Of course, no one raised their hands to say modernist, and so I didn’t raise my hand either, but I think later in the semester I would have been more comfortable doing it, but at the time I chickened out because I didn’t want to have to explain. I knew, being one of the only people to raise my hand, that I would have to explain and also like in my rhetoric class we had to do, it was talked a lot about different things in rhetoric my first paper I did on Scripture and I guess like the canonicity of Scripture, but we didn’t ever like discuss that in class or anything but the last thing that we did, we had to do a I guess a visual argument and it had to be controversial or something so I did mine about gay marriage, and I had to get up and present it in front of the whole class and I mean, that didn’t really like you know, it wasn’t really like a discussion, but I did have to get up in front of everybody and show my little thing about marriage being between a man and a woman, and stuff, so.

F: And how was that taken? Were they like booing or…
Gert: No, no, no, but it definitely didn’t have that same reception that other things get, and the only question she posed to the class was, “Is this controversial?” And everyone said, “YES!” or could you argue against this or something like that.

F: Was it one of those occasions where the whole class was really silent?

Gert: Yeah.

F: Like you could hear a pin drop?

Gert: Yeah, it was really quiet, yeah.

F: Okay. Yeah, I’ve experienced that.

Gert: And the girl before me did hers about interracial marriage and it was real cute and there was this, “Awww” kind of thing. Yeah, it was definitely like that.

F: Okay, so, any others come to mind besides the gay marriage presentation and the modernity, postmodernity thing, anything else come to mind?

Gert: No, I don’t…

F: Okay. (3/16/06 INT.)

In the excerpt below, Susan describes a situation where she is only allowed to select a certain topic if she agrees to temporarily suspend her personal worldview and assume a naturalistic one more agreeable to her professor. This communicates that her worldview is irrelevant or at the very least incompatible with the classroom setting as it has been defined by this professor. In this case, spiritual language was forbidden and only human reason or logic is authorized on issues of morality

F: From an academic standpoint, were there any occasions this semester where your being an evangelical was an issue at this university?
Susan: Yeah, like for example, I was talking about the essay that I wrote and stuff. And in that case, it wasn’t so much that I was a Christian but yes my Christian morality was a big deal. And always in that, I was never allowed to write or speak about God and I could only use logic. And my professor told me that specifically. Like I requested to write a paper about abortion and she told me that I could only write it if I did not mention God or anything spiritual at all and had to base it all on logic. So, that’s what I did. And I am sure she wouldn’t have given me a good grade if I had said anything that, so. So she promised she would. (4/13/06 INT.)

F: From an academic standpoint, were there any occasions this semester where your being a Christian was an issue?

David: See, it’s hard because I’m really negative on professors, but when they really don’t wait, (incomprehensible) but to me it’s almost sad because it’s like the comments they make and you can tell it’s their view, but they try to cloak them. So someone hasn’t come out straight and just sort of laughed at me, but through comments through their lectures, not addressed just at me, but you can totally tell their views on religion and their, different stuff, so I would say, not yet.

F: Ever gotten a bad grade on something you wrote?

David: That, no. I purposefully did not write on one topic, but I thought about like gay, homosexuality, but for my English 1, because we had to write all semester on it, I chose something on the war on terrorism which technically practically has been just as bad because professors usually have really strong positions on that but that wasn’t really a religious view on it. So far, probably I’ll meet some more professors that will probably do that next semester. (5/15/06 INT.)
In the following excerpt, Ivan describes a situation where members of his faith group (Christians) are openly maligned in his Rhetoric class.

F: Were there any occasions that you felt like your faith was challenged last semester? By anything in the subject matter or anything that you heard in class?
Ivan: Well from what they like, say. Like they’d …Yes. Like in a big class, you know, they discuss…

F: What class is that?
Ivan: It’s called rhetoric class, 1302, it’s like an oral communication class.

F: So can you give me an example of a time when you felt your faith was challenged?

Ivan: Like they’d say things that really like they… it wasn’t bashing, you know, they’ll say something, something about Christians, you know, like say like sarcastically like the Bible, things they believe. How hypocrisy or whatever, you know, stuff like that.

F: Alright, so they speak about Christians in a negative connotation?

Ivan: Yes, they spoke about Christians negatively. (3/20/06 INT.)

F: From an academic standpoint, were there any occasions last semester where your being an evangelical was an issue at this university?

Susan: Um, not that I can think of. Um, I didn’t really have to write any essays last semester. Although this semester I ended up, she gave me an A on my paper for abortion this semester, but she just wouldn’t talk to me about it like she would have discussions with everyone else but she just kind of handed mine to me. So I wasn’t sure, because I worked on it for like a month. I worked very hard. I had it
reviewed by three different of my, my high school like people. And it was a very well written paper because she basically didn’t have any proof to give me any other grade. But I was very scared and my whole church was praying that I wouldn’t fail the course because of that. So, it ended up not being a problem. But, no, not last semester I can’t think of anything.

F: Okay, were there any occasions last semester in which your faith was challenged that you can recall?

Susan: Um, what do you mean?

F: I don’t know, you know where somebody just came out and said, you know, “If you are a Christian what you believe is nonsense” or any kind of attacks on your faith?

Susan: Oh that happens all the time. Does it all have to be last semester?

F: No, it doesn’t have to be.

Susan: Well, um, I can’t, I wasn’t as involved and I wasn’t as bold, as I was. I am much more bold in my faith this semester than I was last semester because now I’m familiar with the environment.

F: You’re familiar with what?

Susan: The environment and I know people here and I’m comfortable. Oh, but, as I said, just a few hours ago, I was talking to people and this one guy who is an atheist and he was trying to tell me that evolution is true. Basically, anything I said, he just laughed at me. Which I thought was fun, because we debated for several minutes and by the end he admitted that I had “won” and I was like, wow, I didn’t mean to win or anything, I just wanted you to rethink the position. And
so, yeah basically, Christians here are scared to say anything because we know we will be mocked.

F: They’re scared because of what?

Susan: We will be mocked if we say anything. I mean non-Christians and people go out of their way to say that we’re stupid or have really bad views in their eyes so most Christians are scared to say anything. I mean I’m terrified just to say anything in class. Cause, the professors might know more than you and just turn your argument around and fail you. And so, you basically can’t do anything about that. (3/20/06 INT.)

This section revealed some instances of incongruence that were generated in the classroom setting. Ideological isolation, worldview irrelevance, worldview marginalization, negative classroom discourse about Christians, fear of being mocked, and worldview inferiority were all described in this section as sources of incongruence for participants in this study.

It doesn’t work like that. To the question of worldview differences, approximately half of the participants indicated that they perceived a difference between reality as described in the classroom and their personal view of reality. The students that perceived a difference identified three categories – philosophy, cosmology and morality. The group that said they perceived a philosophical difference specifically identified the philosophy as “materialism” or what I have previously described as naturalism or materialistic monism. Those views are expressed collectively in the following excerpts:

F: Do you feel that your view of how the world works differs from the view of the world presented in your classes?
David: I believe, okay, I don’t believe in evolution. I believe that there are spiritual elements based on miraculous works like miracles and right and wrong, devils and angels. I believe…

F: So you would say the spiritual realm…

David: Spiritual warfare, yes.

F: And in the classes it’s presented as the world versus the spiritual realm isn’t just…

David: Oh yeah, it just doesn’t exist. What exists is here and now and that’s it.

F: Have those differences impacted your academics in any way (positively or negatively)?

David: Say it again?

F: Do the differences in that first question, the idea that the worldview of the classes in general and your worldview being opposed, has that interfered with your academics in any way?

David: Not really. I haven’t really let it because I don’t try to write for the professors, but I try to choose, like that one topic, I chose something that was very political, but not something that a professor could really choose to just give you a D because it wasn’t what she wanted. It’s sort of hard because if a professor assigned me something I would not try to mold it to what she wanted, but if she’s going to let me choose something, I’m not going to choose something that could directly affect my grade. So if someone assigns me something…

F: You won’t pick a fight?
David: Yeah, if someone assigns me something, I would write what I believe in and if that got me a C on that assignment, so be it, but if I have a choice of four options I’m not going to go pick that option because it’s almost, I just see no reason in it because I don’t go compromising my beliefs just by not picking it because if you try to pick the hardest thing every assignment, you’re sort of…

(5/15/06 INT.)

F: Do you feel that your view of how the world works differs from the view of the world presented in your various classes? If so, have those differences impacted your academics in any way (positively or negatively)? Explain?

Dirk: Yes, because my view of the world is more than just physical, it includes a spiritual realm as well. Occasionally, when I am in a crowded place like the graduation ceremony today, I get the feeling we are all really here for one purpose, to live our lives to glorify God but how many people just don’t understand that so …

F: So, the issue has to do with the purpose and meaning of life?

Dirk: Yes. Because a lot of the purpose and meaning of life in the classes is go out and succeed, make money, blah blah, but I have never really heard anything about death. I have never heard anything about after death; it’s always about what you will do after college and whether you will succeed or not.

F: Die with the most toys and you win?

Dirk: Right.

F: If so, have those differences impacted your academics in any way (positively or negatively)? Explain?
Dirk: Sometimes the papers I write will include little things pointing to hope or faith, things beyond a career, but I don’t remember any teacher’s comments in particular. I don’t remember any teachers responding in any way negatively or positively.

F: So, maybe it goes back to the idea of neutrality that we discussed earlier?

Dirk: Yes, which has been surprising to me because I had always thought that college was supposed to be a hard place for Christians in that you were gonna get a lot of opposition so the neutrality is kind of surprising to me.

F: So, that would be a good surprise?

Dirk: Yeah. (5/13/06 INT.)

This same philosophical difference was described by James when answering the question regarding the university valuing the presence of evangelicals.

F: Is it your perception that the university values the presence of Christian students on this campus?

James: I don’t think to the university it affects the balance. I don’t think that religion matters much at all. I think the school is very oriented toward head knowledge, you know? Especially analytical head knowledge and because of that, issues like religion don’t really matter. What’s material matters. What you can see, touch, taste, feel and click in a computer code. Things like that.

F: Okay, so you’re saying it’s a materialistic worldview. (4/19/06 INT.)

F: Do you feel that your view of how the world works differs from the view of the world presented in your classes?

Leti: Yes.
F: How?

Leti: I feel like maybe in, in classes it’s just surviving and succeeding and material things and you know? Life is a, I don’t know. Do you understand what I’m saying? You just have to get a job and make money and that’s how the world works and you have to be selfish and look out for you. And I think that’s different than the Christian perspective.

F: And the Christian perspective being what?

Leti: Serving God and doing things, doing His will rather than what you want.

F: Has that difference impacted your academics in any way? The idea that, that the way the world is presented in class and your view of it. Has it impacted your academics in any way, positively or negatively?

Leti: If I’m completely honest, I don’t actually see academics as extremely important like, you know what I mean? It’s, it’s not, it’s not what it’s all about, so I guess if I don’t do well. It’s not like I don’t try because I do, but I just think it’s not about how well you do in school, so you know?

F: What’s it about?

Leti: Your God!

F: Okay. So to, okay…

Leti: Sorry, does that not make sense?

F: No, it does. I think, I’m just trying to make sure that I have it accurately. It makes sense to me. So you’re saying that the way the world is projected in class and the way you view it differ, and one way that they differ is that they value
academics and you’re saying you don’t necessarily value academics as much as you do God?

Leti: Yeah, I don’t view academics as highly as they do, as in if you don’t do well that’s the end of your life, type of thing.

F: Because it’s all about…

Leti: Succeeding, making money.

F: Having the most stuff to play with?

Leti: Yes.

F: Okay, kind of like that bumper sticker that says, “He who dies with the most toys, wins?”

Leti: Yeah. (4/21/06 INT.)

F: Do you feel that your view of how the world works differs from the view of the world presented in your various classes?

Kelsey: No, not really, because in my science classes and stuff, we talk about how the world works and the only thing that would differ is that I hold it in a broader perspective of that’s how God made the world to work rather than that’s just kind of how it is…that’s about it.

F: Ok. So their presentation of the way the world works minus God would be the distinction. It would just be they try to describe things without God and you know the reality that God is behind it.

Kelsey: Well, they just give the facts, like this is how this works, this is how a cell was formed, blah, blah, blah, but I always keep it in the broader perspective like God made the cells like that, God made …and I’m learning in chemistry about all
these really crazy little, tiny things that work in our bodies like that make us live
and walk and talk and breath and I’m like well that’s so cool that God could
create that, but they don’t necessarily say well “God did this,” they just say “This
happened, and here we are.” (4/17/06 INT.)

F: Do you feel that your view of how the world works differs from the view of the
world presented in your various classes?

Natanya: Umm, well since we’ve last talked I know how I was, you actually
challenged me to think more about evolution and I guess the Genesis chapter
where God created.

F: You mean the questions I asked?

Natanya: The questions, right, on the survey. I thought more about them and
umm, I guess now I believe that, I believe not as much in evolution, so I guess
that would conflict. I believe that God…

F: Ok, so you are saying that because you have kind of departed to a certain
extent from evolutionary ideas, that now that probably puts you in more conflict
with what the university teaches? In your…

Natanya: In my science classes.

F: Particularly in your science classes. Ok.

Natanya: Uhmhm. (4/14/06 INT.)

F: Do you feel that your view of how the world works differs from the view of the
world presented in your classes?

Gert: Yeah.
F: If so, have those differences impacted your academics in any way (positively or negatively)?

Gert: This semester it didn’t really come up as much as it did last semester. Last semester there were a couple of projects that I did that were about my worldview, but I didn’t feel like they were graded differently or like they were received differently.

F: But you didn’t feel they were, you didn’t get a poor grade because…

Gert: No, I didn’t feel I got a bad grade because…

F: Okay, what, what is the difference, you said, you identified, “Yes, it is different,” but the impact is minimal. What would you say is the primary difference between your view of the world and the way it is presented in the classes?

Gert: Absolute right and wrong. A lot of things are presented as that’s what’s right for them or that’s what’s right in this situation or for this person, but there are alternatives, or you know what I mean? But from a Christian worldview, there are absolute rights and wrongs and it applies to everyone whether they live in Africa or not. And in a lot of ways, that was, you know, the idea of relativism and different cultures believe different things and have a different system of right and wrong. (4/25/06 INT.)

F: Do you feel that your view of how the world works differs from the view of the world presented in your various classes? If so, have those differences impacted your academics in any way (positively or negatively)? Explain?
Susan: It’s certainly different. I think deep down everyone knows how things work or how things should work, according to morality and stuff like that. I mean everyone has a conscience. And so, oh, it’s hard to explain, um. Yes, they teach different things. People ignore the consequences of their own sins and so they live life and teach in a special way that they try to ignore the consequences of their actions. For example, I wrote a paper on why sex before marriage is wrong, like I mentioned earlier. And I say that’s wrong because it is wrong. But not necessarily because I had to prove it was wrong with fact, and so I would say stuff like unwanted pregnancy which results in abortion and STD’s and stuff like that. And they want to, I mean they will always ignore the spreading of STD’s and stuff like that or try and prevent it which won’t really work. So, I think everyone knows that things are wrong, but they, they teach it, like, I don’t know it is hard to explain, do you understand what I am saying?

F: If I understand, it’s kind of like, “Sex in the City” where [yeah] those girls, you know, have like multiple affairs and stuff constantly and nobody ever gets pregnant, nobody ever gets kind of ah [yeah, yeah exactly] venereal diseases and they just go on happily ever after. [yeah] Is that what you mean?

Susan: Yeah, that’s exactly. Yeah and they deceive themselves and they teach in the classroom that things are okay, and they don’t teach the consequences when everyone really knows, if you think about it, the consequences are obvious and they live their lives like that. And I’m the only one who will say, no that’s wrong, you’re stupid. And they are like, “Shut up! We want to live our lives and have as much fun as we can.” Because they don’t know what real fun is. (4/13/06 INT.)
Approximately half of the students in this study indicated that what they were studying was consistent with their evangelical beliefs. Several of them qualified that by stating that the classes that they had taken were generally factual in nature (math or computer programming) and therefore the courses did not reveal potential philosophical differences. However, the group of students that perceived an inconsistency are presented in the following excerpts:

F: Would you say that what you are learning is consistent or inconsistent with your beliefs as a Christian?

Tami: Well, most of my classes are like science classes or my, like classes where we talk about ideas and stuff and sometimes it’s inconsistent with my beliefs.

F: Does that disturb you?

Tami: Well, not really because I know that God’s ways are different than the world’s ways, so I kind of expect it to be inconsistent.

F: Okay. (4/12/06 INT.)

F: Would you say that what you are learning is consistent or inconsistent with your beliefs as a “born-again Christian?” Explain.

Tre: It really has nothing to do with my faith I don’t think. I would say overall inconsistent. I’m not really too emotionally upset about it because I kind of expected it at UTA. My astronomy teacher, I can’t decide if he believes in creation or not but he definitely supports the big bang so he thinks the chances are low that the universe is ten thousand years old for some scientific reason. I couldn’t think of anything scientific to disprove him so it was kind of annoying. Because I’m not one of those Christian science people that wants to explain
everything, but it really is good to know from a practical standpoint. Obviously, I believe that the Bible is the ultimate authority and we believe in the trinity and Christian values but you want to be able to have things that do show that science does back up the Bible. There’s so much that it’s hard to know enough to back it against science. You want to be able to do that. I don’t know as much as I should to be able to do that. (4/25/06 INT.)

F: Would you say that what you are learning is consistent or inconsistent with your beliefs as a Christian?

Leti: They don’t really overlap, it’s that, like I haven’t, I guess inconsistent, I don’t know. I’m not really…

F: You haven’t really thought about it?

Leti: No. The only example I can think of, I’m in a gender studies class, and it’s kind of all about power to women and I guess I don’t really think that…

F: Well, why don’t you think that?

Leti: I just feel like in the Bible it kind of says, you know men and husbands should, I don’t know, be in control, and I don’t, I guess I’m not really sure, but do you understand?

F: I do. Okay, so you’re saying, that would be an example because they’re teaching sort of a feminist view of reality and you’re saying, “No, that’s not what the Bible says,” so that would be an inconsistency.

Leti: Umhmm (yes). (4/21/06 INT.)

F: Would you say that what you are learning is consistent or inconsistent with your beliefs as a Christian?
Gert: Like, well, like I said a lot of the ways they interpret things are not consistent with what I believe. But if you can ignore that, you can see how it works with what you believe, does that make sense?


Gert: Like in a history class, they might tell you that what the framers believed about everyone being created equal with just cultural things, but that’s not actually true, or, it’s wrong for us to choose, or apply our morals of what’s right and wrong to everyone else, but at the same time if you can discard and sift through the parts that are their relativistic views, then you can see it has a deeper meaning, if you look at it from a Christian perspective. Especially things like history, because you can see God’s providence in our country’s history or in other history in the world and that is interpreted differently by a secular professor.

F: Okay.

Gert: I haven’t really had any science courses yet. I haven’t really had to deal with evolution or anything like that yet, so, I would anticipate that would probably be an issue in biology classes or, but I haven’t taken anything like that.

F: So the issues that have arisen for you, specifically, have been more related to either moral, your problem with moral relativism and how moral relativism seems to be their kind of prominent thinking and also in the sense of the way that history is interpreted? Those two issues?

Gert: Yeah.

F: So it’s a…

Gert: More philosophic than I guess, scientific.
F: What type of historical frame do you recognize in what’s being presented? Can you identify the name? Like we talked about moral relativism from a moral standpoint. Moral absolutes. From a historical standpoint, do you, can you tell me what the philosophy is that’s being presented? Do you recognize the philosophy? Gert: I can’t tell you a name of it.

F: Okay, you just recognize that it’s different than what you believe.

Gert: Yeah, it’s not…

F: Okay. (4/25/06 INT.)

F: Would you say that what you are learning is consistent or inconsistent with your beliefs as a “Christian?”

James: Mostly just history class, the history professors, how they believe…

F: Inconsistent?

James: Inconsistent. I mean they skew history about the pilgrims and undermine the founding fathers, talking about all their flaws, making them seem like they were hypocritical people. Some of them may have been … it just carries it to a level too far where it’s more propaganda than fact. And it seems to be provisional history. Other than that though… (4/19/06 INT.)

F: Would you say that what you are learning is consistent or inconsistent with your beliefs as a Christian?

David: Depends on the classes. History at least now that we’re done with most of the history, we’re done with week 5. The prehistoric was the hardest part. I will probably take some more history classes because, you can’t really, prehistoric is always the worst because that’s evolution, that’s the Darwin, we’ve been here 6, 4
billion years, we’ve been here, the Neanderthals, the blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, so that was probably the hardest one, but English, Math, and Speech, I wouldn’t really say were contrary to my beliefs. (5/15/06 INT.)

F: Would you say that what you are learning is consistent or inconsistent with your beliefs?

Susan: Um well, inconsistent for sure. Yeah, everything I mean, it’s hard to find something that I will be taught that is the same thing that I believe. Like the age of the earth, evolution, and the standard of morality is all different. (4/13/06 INT.)

The data from this section reveal that the participants recognized a worldview distinction between their Christian worldview and what was taught in the classroom. However, the distinctions are at a level that they seem to be able to tolerate. Some, like David, expressed techniques like being deliberate and cautious about topic selection for papers. He discussed selecting topics that were less controversial or topics that were less revealing about his worldview distinctions. The worldview conflicts that the participants described did not appear to have any adverse affect upon their grades or their ability to succeed academically. A couple of participants expressed that the worldview distinctions were something that they expected.

Social and Academic Integration

The important question of fit. Most of the students expressed academic or social reasons in support of the majority view, which was that they saw themselves as a good fit for their university. In fact, there were no reasons offered that were not clearly academic or social. Although they generally thought of themselves as a good fit, there was a self-perception among evangelicals that they were members of a minority group because of
their evangelical commitment. There were a few participants who expressed doubts about their fitness for the university. One of those students (Dirk) withdrew from UTA at the end of semester one because of a lack of academic and social integration. In the following excerpts, David, Tre, Gert and Leti all question their fit based upon their evangelicalism. However, it must be emphasized that these excerpts are clearly representative of a minority thread within the case.

F: Do you feel like you are a “good fit” for this university?
David: That’s a weird question. Like a good fit as in, there’s so many different ones. Academic, social, religious, well, I feel like I’m a minority in the, of course, social view. That includes religious because even though people claim to be secular humanists, their religion is that, it’s not that they are [unintelligible]…

F: Okay, so you are going to put social and religious together?
David: Yes, that is correct.

F: How do you feel you are a good fit from a social/religious standpoint?
David: I would say I’m not because I’m in the minority. And by the minority, it’s everything in my morality and beliefs are contrary to what the school is. I don’t mind that, but …

F: And academically? A good fit or not?
David: I don’t know. I like academics. I study, study, so it’s so hard to say academically because of course I think I’m a little above average with only A’s in my first semester, I have one B this semester but it really, academically, well, fit doesn’t really make sense because it’s all in what you apply to your time. People who make D’s and C’s could apply more time, it’s just they don’t want to. If you
get A’s maybe they’re geniuses, but they also study, study, study. So, academically I would say I probably apply more time than a lot of freshmen I would say, but I would say I’m a good fit. (5/13/06 INT.)

Tre: I haven’t met many people like me so I guess that’s good, I don’t know.

F: When you say people like you…

Tre: Well, I know that sounds really judgmental but…

F: No, I don’t think so. It could just be how you perceive reality.

Tre: A lot of people are against this whole Christianity idea.

F: What?

Tre: Against Christianity. A lot of people, they seem to have humanistic views by the way they talk in class, their comments…

F: Do you mean the students?

Tre: Right, yeah, I just haven’t met that many friends from the school. (2/23/06 INT.)

Gert: No, no my school is a math and science and engineering and business and all those kinds of things and I am there because James [her fiancée] is there, so we have a teeny, teeny, tiny arts and humanities program and that’s pretty much all I’m interested in, but no, I chose my school because of James, not because…

F: So you’re, okay, so your fit, your focus is on academics, so do you feel like you’re a fit, do you fit in all the other areas, do you fit like philosophically, do you fit socially, do you fit, you know, the other parts of it beyond academics?

Gert: No probably not philosophically. It’s a pretty liberal, and you know if you’re not liberal, you’re Islamic, and socially I mean I…
F: When you say that, “when you’re not liberal, you’re Islamic,” is that the way…

Gert: The majority of the student body.

F: Oh, okay, I see. Okay. So there are two divisions, there are basically liberals and Islamics?

Gert: Yeah, yeah, it’s pretty much like that. (3/16/06 INT.)

F: Do you feel like you are a “good fit” for this school?

Leti: No.

F: No, why not?

Leti: I mean, actually it’s worked out perfectly. I’m happy and I’m just going to stay here and it’s fine, it’s just I don’t feel like, I’m just not the same, I don’t know, I guess because I’ve traveled a lot, like been overseas, because everyone here is from Texas.

F: So, you feel out of place, in some sense, because you’re more savvy about the world, in some sense, or?

Leti: Well, for example, everybody talks about Texas and I don’t know anything about Texas, like not that I know more, you know, but actually more of the reason I don’t feel like I fit in is this school is like math and science and I am just not a math and science person, and also with the whole religious thing. It’s not exactly, I mean, it just seems like Christianity is not a big part of this campus, and I wish it was.

F: Why do you wish it was?

Leti: I think it’s really important to be surrounded by people that share the same faith.
F: Why?

Leti: I think it gives you more strength to do, you know I think you’re influenced a lot by the people you spend your time with, and I think I could be a stronger person and make better decisions if I were surrounded by people who were encouraging that. (3/17/06 INT.)

Once again, those expressing doubt regarding fit were clearly expressing a minority view. The majority of this group perceived themselves to be a good fit for their respective university. Many of the students expressed a gratitude for being where they were and a few of the students said that they “love” their school. For example, when asked about whether she was a good fit for this university, Katrina said,

I think so. (laughing)

F: Why?

Katrina: I don’t know. (laughing) I love it here. I think it fits me as an individual. It’s big enough that I meet people every day, but small enough that I can be at home and comfortable. I like the classes and I like the teachers and I like …. (3/2/06 INT.)

Similarly, in the case of Ronald,

F: Do you feel like you are a “good fit” for this university?

Ronald: Yeah.

F: Why is that?

Ronald: I don’t know. I don’t really know how to explain it but like I just feel like I’m where I’m supposed to be here. It just feels like home here.
F: Does it have anything to do with the sort of the academic focus with sort of the…a lot of the students talk about the school kind of being a …students with math and science orientations that are pretty committed students for the most part… is that kind of what…?

Ronald: Probably more of like the campus.

F: What about the campus makes you feel at home?

Ronald: I don’t know. I can’t really explain it. It’s just like walking around it just feels like home.

F: Is it because of the people on the campus or the structure?

Ronald: I don’t know, probably both. (4/15/06 INT.)

When asked whether she was a good fit, Sonya said,

Yes.

F: Can you explain why?

Sonya: Because, that’s a very good question. Can I just say why I love UTD? Will that work for me?

F: Yeah, sure.

Sonya: Okay. Well, I love UTD because of all the closeness here. It feels a lot like high school for me, where you know a bunch of people in your classes and you’re not drowning, you know, in a 160-person-class. Um, and you get to know your professors. I really enjoy the different opportunities that are presented here, all the different groups and how it’s not like, they’re not hard to be a part of. I just really enjoy going here. (4/12/06 INT.)
The students’ perceptions about both universities were that they were both academically oriented schools. Several of the students indicated that their positive assessment about their personal fit with the university had to do with the academic focus of the schools in that the student population was, generally speaking, academically motivated. In response to the question about fit for example, Evan responded,

Evan: Um, yeah I think so.
F: Why would you say that? Why do you feel that way?
Evan: Because it’s not like other colleges. I’ve been on other campuses and stuff and I’ve seen how they have really strong school spirit and the athletics and everything and, you know, they’re always partying and stuff. But at this school it seems to be a lot different. It seems pretty much just academically focused. I thought that was pretty good. (3/18/06 INT.)

In a similar response to this question of whether she was a good fit, Chelsea said,

Chelsea: Yes.
F: Why?
Chelsea: Because it’s not a party school, and I’m not a party girl, so it’s perfect for me. Because there’s a lot of serious people here who, all or most people here want to go onto a graduate school and they’re serious about school and that’s how I am. Like I know Texas State is a real big party school, and I wouldn’t fit well there. (3/22/06 INT.)

Additionally, there was a thread that had to do with the perceived technology and science orientations of both campuses. The students felt a sense of belonging or fit because they
shared common interests with the “techies and the geeks and the nerds” (Susan, 4/13/06 INT). To the question of fit for example, Paul said,

Actually, yes I do, because this school seems to be… alright, it does seem to be diverse, but the one thing it does seem to have a lot of is, a lot of “nerds”, people that seem to be like me. They like to play video games and know a lot about computers and stuff like that. Basically, definitely the “pcs” majors, they seem to have a lot of people like that. I think it seems to fit me well. (3/20/06 INT.)

Disappointments and issues. The biggest disappointment that was commonly shared was the surprise or realization that on campus they were a racial minority, a religious minority or both. For example, a few of the White students expressed surprise by the small number of Caucasians and the relatively small number of Christians.

Another disappointment theme had to do with improperly managing their new freedom or the discovery that they lacked self discipline or skill in time management. Another repeated experience was the disappointment of observing the negative consequences of poor moral decisions on the part of close friends.

Susan: Um, the biggest disappointment? Um, probably that some of my friends that I met like at the very beginning of year, we were all the same. We had the same morals, the same values. And I had a best friend and she kind of went down the drain and like used the freedom to a bad, you know, like I mean, she was a good Christian girl and… The biggest disappointment is probably seeing others fall around me, yet I’m still being friends with them to help them up and yet I don’t want to be their mom and slap their hands and say, “Hah, you’re doing things that are stupid.” That’s the way, you know.
F: So you had friends that came here that were, that you knew from before (uh huh) that were believers (uh huh) and they came here and, you said their morality doesn’t line-up anymore with what they believe?

Susan: Right, right and they know it too. They know that the things that they do are wrong and based on the consequences. And yet they talk to me and ask like “Why does this happen?” And I’m like, “Hello.” But now they are kind of addicted to certain things that they don’t know much about. And now I’m rooming with one next year, so. And I mean like, I love her to death but I mean I don’t want to, I mean I feel like her mom because she doesn’t want to tell me things because she thinks that I will judge her because I don’t do things like that, you know.

F: What is she addicted to?

Susan: Um, well it’s the irrelevant things. Her mother was in a sorority when she was younger and it wasn’t nearly as bad back then. She is a great Christian girl and she joined a sorority and they, and she took-up cussing and um and not complete sex but having certain types of sexual relations with guys that are not, not complete sex with different guys, that are, that I consider sex and is not full-on stuff. I don’t know, she hangs out with the wrong crowd and she drinks now too. (4/13/06 INT.)

Academic related issues were identified as the most prominent issues relating to the college experience. Several students expressed concern about living accommodations for their sophomore year. Time management and personal discipline were often cited.
Nancy: Well currently, it’s finals. But sometimes it’s time management. Sometimes I’ll find myself where I have a couple hours gap and it’s rare but I have nothing to do; this is incredible! So, deciding what to do with that time. And then, deciding how involved to get in certain things, whether it be with church or intramural games or friendships/relationships, just how involved to get. And, sometimes making sacrifices; deciding, well, like it’s a relationship issue or something or a friendship issue or like some personal issue that comes in conflict with the class, like, what happens. You’re always in class no matter what if your friend, it’s just like, sometimes it seems almost like a moral issue, like you’re almost trying to decide what’s more important here. Cause I mean, at this school, academics are really important to most people I would say, to a lot of people at least. Sometimes it’s hard to deal with it because, like, I tend to deal with it that way but I’m not as, like I, I tend to rebel against it too because I don’t want to be so hard core grades that I don’t have room to do anything else. (4/21/06 INT.)

To this question, James replied,

Probably what I spend the most time focusing on is setting up good study habits and making sure that I set aside enough time to study because whenever I was in high school I was not organized at all about my study methods. I kind of was like a loose gun, so it’s been a big issue just making sure I discipline myself that has probably been the primary issue. (4/19/06 INT.)

Similarly, Victor replied,

Issues? Um, more with myself, like laziness. I said it’s more with self, like self discipline and all that good stuff.
F: And so that’s kind of, it’s a prominent issue in the sense that it’s sort of, you’re kind of being aware of it and trying to overcome it, is that what you mean?
Victor: Yeah, yeah…especially with like time management. I think everybody has that. (4/11/06 INT.)

Maintaining Christian moral purity and spiritual devotion was also considered a prominent issue.

F: Okay, what are the most prominent issues regarding you college experience up to this point?
Susan: Um, besides, well my number one concern is always my spiritual life because I see others falling around me. So I have two accountability partners now and we’re trying to not destroy ourselves but, gees it’s a load (laugh), but um. (3/20/06 INT.)

Advice to incoming freshmen. Regarding the question of advice to incoming freshmen, the most often cited response to this question was consistent with the high value this group placed upon social integration. There was also an emphasis on developing time management and being committed to a schedule which is in the category of academic advice. Consider the following responses:

Susan: Um, be social. Like, be social and set your standards. Because, I don’t know, I mean, everyone in this university, if you are not social in the beginning then you end up sitting in your room the entire time. I mean I met my boyfriend and everyone who not, um necessarily Christian activities. We were having Halo 2 tournaments at my place and that’s how I met my boyfriend. You know, so, be social so you don’t get stuck in your room for the rest of the year. And, um, set
your standards because people would come here with kind of shady morals for themselves. You know like they would really talk for themselves or make a statement or anything. And they end up breaking their standards that never existed and they just get deeper and deeper into, you know, like, or they compromise their standards and do stupid things that they will regret later. (4/13/06 INT.)

Similarly,

Herman: Just to be open to new ideas. Don’t be locked in your apartment. Kind of get out there. You know, be involved.

F: Be involved socially?

Herman: Socially, you know, yeah, for the most part socially. I think. Don’t be just a bookworm all the time, be up in your apartment. But that was my point of view at first, I was like “Oh, I just need good grades, nothing else matters.” But then I realized, “You’re going to have a boring 4 years; it’s not gonna…” you know, you learn new things to make your life more meaningful. (4/14/06 INT.)

Natanya: Uh, to become involved. Don’t just sit in the corner of your room and study. It helps more, umm, if you stay involved you have more of a schedule and you can time-management is a big thing.

F: So involvement will help you learn time management?

Natanya: Right. Take chances. You’re going out meeting new people, go sit by someone in a classroom instead of sitting in a corner.

F: What’s been your experience of those who, who, I think what you’re talking about is really a self-isolation in some sense, right? What’s been your observation? Have you noticed anything negative happening to those students that
tend to isolate themselves? I mean, do you know any students that have isolated themselves and have they left or are they going to leave or that kind of thing?

Natanya: Umm, some of the people I’ve met are transferring out because they don’t feel like they’ve met many people, I guess, but it’s more of a, I guess a personal experience because I came in with my dad telling me, Natanya, you have to do pre-med, if you don’t study hard and keep your grades up then you may not make it, you know just trying to motivate me, and so he would tell me, just go in your room and study, I guess it was more of a protective issue too, don’t trust any boys, you know that sort of thing, but it’s more of a sit in your room and study, don’t get involved. You don’t need all of this Christian stuff, that’s what he’d tell me, actually,

F: Oh, is that what he said?

Natanya: And I’ve kind of done the opposite, and I feel like I am benefiting ten times more than I would have if I would have just not done anything. I probably would be bummed out by school. I’d probably be so sick of it. (4/14/06 INT.)

Ronald: Not to overload themselves.

F: Not to overload themselves in terms of their course work?

Ronald: Class load.

F: Any other advice?

Ronald: Get involved.

F: When you say, “get involved” do you mean socially?

Ronald: Yeah.

F: Why?
Ronald: Because I mean I think what you do like learning how to get to know people is going to more important than a lot of your education. Learning how to interact with people. Plus it will make it a lot more fun. (4/18/06 INT.)

Again,

Sonya: Get involved.

F: What happens if they don’t get involved?

Sonya: I would say that getting involved is the most important because it allows you to be introduced to a bunch of new people and build relationships with people and if you aren’t involved then a lot of times you’re just at home and you’re studying. I think that if all you do is study that you’re gonna go crazy because the courses here are very hard and sometimes you just need a break and you need to have that community where you can go to chill and have fun. So, that’s more important.

F: Have you seen students who were suffering as a result of not being engaged socially? Um, have you seen examples of what you’re talking about, people who have closed themselves off in a room?

Sonya: Well, they keep their doors closed so I’m not sure.

F: So you can’t actually see them?

Sonya: That’s what I’ve heard, and I’m pretty sure that’s how it would be with me had I not…(4/12/06 INT.)

As indicated previously, a portion of the advice they would give to incoming freshmen related to academics. In particular, the general theme had to do with personal discipline, personal accountability and a recommendation for good time management from the
outset of the freshmen experience. There were also a couple of spiritual recommendations which are represented in the last excerpt from this section. Consider the following excerpts on academic advice for incoming freshmen:

James: Don’t ….it’s really easy to get caught up and hang out with friends and forget about your study time. You know, just make sure that you make commitments to certain study times. Even if your friends are kind of like “ahhh… you’re such a dork” or whatever, you know, “you just kind of have to hang out a little longer.” You know just stick to the schedule that you set out for yourself. At the end of the year when everybody’s complaining about, “Oh man, I’m not ready for this or that.” You’ll be like “it’s a breeze for me?” I’ve seen a lot of people who have slacked over the year and ended up doing too much crunching at the end of the year. You need to stay on top of things back to back. (4/19/06 INT.)

Chelsea: Incoming freshman, I’d say just work on your grades and make sure you stay on top of everything. (4/12/06 INT.)

Dirk: Study hard. Don’t come in with a big head. One of my best friends was an absolute brainiac in high school and he went into college with a big head and he really struggled because of that so I would say to freshmen, be prepared for a completely different world academically and socially. The social standard definitely isn’t you know like high school. Everybody seems to be coming in off of the high of high school in their first year so prepare to move into a more mature stage. And I think it’s definitely healthy to mature in college cause there are definitely some that don’t and just maintain that party attitude and it kind of
messes up a lot of their stuff. So I guess, just maintain your focus on studies and study hard and keep your head on your shoulders. (5/13/06 INT.)

Tre: I think it really helps to get a partner to study with. You know for a guy to find a guy and a girl to find a girl. You know, to keep accountable with your studies. Next semester I’m going to be David’s roommate.

F: Oh, you guys finalized that?

Tre: Yeah.

F: That’s great.

Tre: Yeah, we’re also going to be taking some of the same classes together. It’s good to have a partner like that to keep you accountable and not go and hang out all of the time with your friends. Cause everybody’s on a different schedule and you know you can say well if he’s going then I guess I have time to go. You know, entertainment is not the foremost purpose of going to school. Even when you think it is, and it feels like it is. (4/25/06 INT.)

Victor: Always be prepared, don’t let your guard down…don’t relax. Especially like about the academic life, like studying. Like many times you’ll come in here and you will see that I mean here you still see people brag like “Oh, I didn’t study, oh, I didn’t have a look at that, but I still did pretty well. I didn’t look too high upon the semester, and I still did well,” but you shouldn’t let that affect you, you should attend class.

F: So don’t listen to the guys say…

Victor: Yeah, that merit on like being lazy.

F: Okay. Basically don’t be lazy.
Victor: Yeah. Don’t thrive on it.

F: Don’t be lazy and don’t listen to those who are.

Victor: Yeah, yeah. Simple enough! (4/11/06 INT.)

The strongest theme that emerged from this section was similar to the previous section on advice to incoming evangelicals. That is, a majority of students stressed the importance of social integration for all incoming freshmen. The secondary theme from this section was the issue of developing self-discipline as it pertains to study time. Related advice had to do with being intentional about developing in the area of time management.

**Spirituality**

*The impact of college on the spiritual life.* Every participant indicated that their spiritual life was being influenced by the college experience in some capacity. In fact, counter intuitively, there was not one participant who did not indicate that the overall college experience was positively impacting their spiritual lives. When asked for a reason for that influence, the primary reason had to do with the influence of other Christians and the teaching they were receiving from campus ministries and the college ministries of the local churches. Most of the students expressed awareness that they had experienced spiritual growth as a result of the entire college experience. For example, when Katrina was asked whether the college experience was influencing her spiritual life, she explained,

Katrina: Yes, I’ve definitely grown so much more um…since I’ve been here and I’ve been on my own. In that way I don’t think anything has been a negative aspect on my spiritual life. I… I…kind of had Christians, Christianity or being a
Christian kind of pressured and put on me my entire life. My parents always went to that church, I grew up in that church so it was very… so coming here wasn’t about. If I choose to leave this lifestyle it’s going to be … have a better impact for me and I’m going to grow more because it’s something I want and I’m pursuing it instead of just somebody spoon feeding it to me. That’s a big change from where I’ve come from. So, I don’t regret it. It’s been a positive thing.

(3/2/06 INT.)

However, when pressed further, the students indicated that their participation in college ministries and the influence of the evangelical friends were the sources of their spiritual growth. For example,

F: Do you believe that your college experience is influencing your spiritual life? Please explain.

Victor: Yes, very much so, after the New Orleans trip.

F: In what direction would you say, is it positive or negative?

Victor: Very positive.

F: Does it being positive have anything to do with the social structure of the university itself? For example, the social interactions that you have with classmates and the coursework itself or does it have more to do with your involvement with the campus ministries?

Victor: No, it’s because of the campus ministries.

F: So, it’s positive but it’s positive because of the ministries.

Victor: Yeah.
F: What would your experience be like if all of the Christian groups were evicted from campus?

Victor: Well, if I hadn't joined BSM my experience would actually be pretty miserable. I wouldn't have anything to look forward to or have positive about.

F: How long have you been attending BSM?

Victor: Just in the last month. I went to 2 meetings between last semester and this semester and it just so happens that at one of those meetings the mission trip [for Katrina victims in New Orleans] was being discussed. (3/23/06 INT.)

Similarly,

F: Last time, you shared a lot about your life in general and about your spiritual life and beliefs. In general, how do you feel you have changed in this first year of college?

Paul: I’ve learned a lot more about how my relationship with God needs to be. In both semesters I’ve been in a Bible study whether it be a small group or the whole BSM. But like what I’ve learned about the spiritual disciplines about trying to become better… have a better spiritual life and stuff like that. So that’s really helped me.

F: How has it helped you?

Paul: It’s made me realize things I need to do, or I need to try and do. Like, there’s been spiritual disciplines like praying, studying the Word that I don’t do a whole lot but I need to try and do a lot more. (4/21/06 INT.)

Those that indicated both positive and negative influences cited an immoral university ethos as the primary negative influence on their spiritual lives. For example,
when Dirk was asked whether the college experience was influencing his spiritual life, he replied,

Dirk: Probably both positive and negative. We’ll start with negative, I guess. There were a lot of boundaries that were broken down such as that there weren’t a lot of evangelicals that were around so maybe I found myself influenced by certain events that were taking place around me in the dorm, not that I participated in any but just kind of, you know that whole conscience thing that gets worn down the more you are around those who could care less about it. It was just one of those things where I was at the point where I was just you know, whatever, I can’t really stop them type of thing. I don’t think I was ever influenced to the point of jumping in and saying “hey why not?”, but it was hard spiritually to see these things going on.

F: What things?

Dirk: Roommates having girls over for the night, sex signs in the windows (soliciting for sex), you know it’s hard spiritually seeing those things. It’s like, is there anybody else that cares? To close this thing negatively, it was destructive spiritually. It was feeling like a losing battle kind of a thing.

F: Was it that you felt alone because there weren’t enough people that would say this is wrong or people that would change it? You just sort of said this the way it’s gonna be, and I have to live with this?

Dirk: I know I wasn’t the only one but you know those ties when it’s more like a psychological thing where it’s like I’m alone basically and when you’re not it just feels that way. Does that make sense?
F: Yeah.

Dirk: I don’t know how else to describe it really. But positive…all that resulted in future growth just learning to depend a lot more on what God has around the corner rather than what’s right in front of you. You know what He could be trying to teach you through the semester of seemingly bad experiences by just depending on Him. So I’d have to say my biggest spiritual encouragement was just faith and learning to walk by that rather than trying to sort things out and go with the knowledge that I had of what I thought college would be like. Does that answer the question? (2/18/06 INT.)

Similar to Dirk, Evan believed that the college experience was influencing his spiritual life in both directions. Like several others, Evan attributed his spiritual growth to the spiritual challenges that he faced as a college student.

F: Do you believe that your college experience is influencing your spiritual life? It could be positively, negatively or could be even both?

Evan: Yeah, definitely both. It’s just more open, you know, like I said earlier. More freedom just to explore things but it challenges your faith which makes it stronger. My spiritual life has definitely grew since I’ve started college but it’s also been a lot harder too, you know. It’s a struggle.

F: What’s the struggle over?

Evan: Ah, everything. You know, just pressure, temptations, you know, lust and ah just everything. You know, laziness, got to fight that all the time. It’s just a constant attack because I’m definitely growing and the people that I’ve met here and everything, so I guess Satan doesn’t like that.
F: In the positive direction, let me go back to that last question for a minute, what’s positive spiritually is that you’ve been challenged and therefore there’s been struggle and therefore that’s helped you to grow. In regard to the conflict, you mentioned the words pressure, temptation, lust, and laziness in that conflict. That’s actually promoted your growth?

Evan: Yeah. (3/18/06 INT.)

Closer to God. To the question of general and spiritual changes and what accounts for those changes during the freshman year (Interview 2, question #23), there was unanimity in that every participant perceived themselves to have grown personally and spiritually during the freshman year. Participants indicated that they had grown in the area of improved social skills. They also expressed growth in becoming more personally accountable and responsible for themselves. There were no students that indicated that the college experience had convinced them to abandon their faith. In fact, positive spiritual growth was mentioned by all twenty students. This seems to be one of the most counterintuitive findings in this study. The challenges of college in general and the campus ministries were the most oft cited reasons for growing in the faith. The participants indicated that depth of spiritual understanding and biblical knowledge was the foremost area of spiritual growth. The fact that the college experience gave them the freedom to own their own faith was also mentioned as a major catalyst for growth.

F: Last time, you shared a lot about your life in general and about your spiritual life and beliefs. In general, how do you feel you have changed in this first year of college? In general how have you changed?
Leti: I really think I’ve grown a lot, you know I think this is the time when you
either lose it or grow and I really feel like I have grown a lot.
F: Anything else? When you say grown you mean in a, from a standpoint of
maturity, from a standpoint of spirituality, a standpoint of both?
Leti: Both, I guess and just also learning.
F: Okay, academics?
Leti: Yeah.
F: So, as the whole person, maybe just simplify it and say as a whole person
spiritually, academically, socially you’ve grown? Is that all accurate?
Leti: Yes.
F: Can you tell me if any of your spiritual beliefs have changed since the
beginning of this year?
Leti: I guess I realized a lot of things that I have been doing wrong in my life, but
I guess that goes with spiritual growth. You change.
F: What do you think accounts for that change in recognizing, recognizing the say
the laws or the…
Leti: Just as you learn more about God and have a deeper relationship with Him, I
think He reveals to you what you are doing wrong in your life, and also like
reading the Bible and going to Bible studies and watching other Christians and
having them as role models you see what you’re doing wrong. (4/21/06 INT.)
F: Last time, you shared a lot about your life in general and about your spiritual
life and beliefs. In general, how do you feel you have changed in this first year of
college?
Victor: Begin to get to be more realistic about certain things about college; of course, since I’m in college, I really think about how much work I have to do, about time, even though I haven’t fixed those. And um, spiritually like, how have I changed, right? Is that the question?

F: Actually, yeah, one of my questions is spiritual and uh, so let me just…I’ll put spiritual as a general, and then I’ll ask for some detail on the spiritual….any other changes besides realistic about college, realistic about work and time and spiritual life? Anything else, in general?

Victor: Uh, I’ve made more friends, but yeah, that’s about it.

F: Made more friends from the sense of the beginning of the year.

Victor: Yeah. I haven’t really learned more academically.

F: Okay. Can you tell me if any of your spiritual beliefs have changed since the beginning of this year?

Victor: I’ve gotten in touch with my spirituality, with God, with religion, and all that.

F: Does that suggest that you were out of touch before?

Victor: Yes, I guess so, yes. I was…I was a strong believer before, but certain practices like I’m trying to learn more scripture and more… yeah, I’m getting more guidance, both by others and by the Bible. And I’m seeking guidance. Before, I was trying to base everything on kind of like self-knowledge and all that…even though I was a firm believer.

F: If yes, what accounts for that change?
Victor: The New Orleans (Hurricane Katrina missions) trip with them and the friends that I made. (4/11/06 INT.)

F: Last time, you shared a lot about your life in general and about your spiritual life and beliefs. In general, how do you feel you have changed in this first year of college?

Evan: Yeah.

F: How would you say that you’ve changed?

Evan: I think I have a lot more experience.

F: You have more experience?

Evan: Yeah, spiritually.

F: Spiritually?

Evan: Here I’ve become slightly spiritually stronger, haven’t changed too much but yeah, I have changed. It’s just hard to pinpoint.

F: When you say your slightly spiritually stronger can you explain what you mean?

Evan: Um, I go to the Bible studies and stuff and I most services and the Word and knowledge and everything. I’m starting to be able catch on a little more to the spiritual side of things, just what God’s trying to say to me and learning the Word (the Bible) through other people.

F: The last question is: Can you tell me if any of your spiritual beliefs have changed? You said you’ve become more sensitive to what…you’ve become deeper spiritually because you’ve become more sensitive to what God’s trying to communicate to you. That is a form of change, any beliefs change though? That’s
more of a growth kind of a thing, whereas anything like you started here and you believed this way and now you believe another way? Anything like that?

Evan: No.

F: So would you say that really the change again would be in terms of depth?

Evan: Yeah, spiritual growth.

F: Spiritual growth and depth. How do you account for the spiritual growth and depth?

Evan: Continual fellowship with the brothers and Christians on Campus and the sharing my faults and letting them share with me.

F: Didn’t you say you’ve developed good friendships through your… how many good friends have you been able to gain by affiliating with those organizations?

Evan: Five or six.

F: Five or six, that’s great! (4/24/06 INT.)

F: Last time, you shared a lot about your life in general and about your spiritual life and beliefs. In general, how do you feel you have changed in this first year of college?

James: Like I said earlier in this interview, one of the biggest and exciting things about college was freedom and responsibility. Freedom and responsibility I had the option of depending upon myself for a lot of things or depending on God for a lot of things. I want to really lift up specific things to God in prayer, you know, and watch Him work. That’s been a really exciting thing to do. Sometimes it’s kind of weird praying to God about something, like a car or something like that. It kind of sounds funny when I do it, and then I wonder if I have enough faith that
He’ll accomplish it. But fast, you know, you pray and say it’s really counting on Him to make things happen. It’s a good experience.

F: So what you’re saying is you’ve become more willing to rely on the Lord as opposed to your own resources?

James: Yeah, I mean do whatever I can with what He’s given me and definitely …but there’s things that are out of my reach unless God works in a special way or provides an opportunity. So we just pray that He would provide an opportunity and make things happen. Sometimes it seems so odd when He actually opens a door and makes it happen you think wow He really had His hand in this. He really made it work the way it was supposed to work out. He made it work out the best way possible that it was supposed to work out. I see that sort of thing in financial problems but also in the way He’s been working in people’s lives and in my life and Jacob’s life.

F: Can you tell me if any of your spiritual beliefs have changed since the beginning of your freshman year?

James: Nope. Still as staunch of a Calvinist as ever!

F: Change doesn’t necessarily imply abandoning anything… have you developed at all? Do you feel like, in terms of your doctrinal or Biblical knowledge have you experienced any sort of growth…

James: I’ve been doing a class this semester. We’ve been going through the Westminster confession of faith and discussing that. Not that necessarily I’m running into a lot of stuff that’s new it just explains better, clear understand if that makes any sense. I’m familiar with all the concepts that we’re talking about and
I’m not really learning anything new but I’m hearing it explained better and it makes completely more sense on a more comprehensive level.

F: So could you say that you…Would you say that your increase in knowledge increased your faith?

James: I think to a certain degree, yes. To another degree especially running over the doctrine of election and I just had to look at my life and the things that I struggle with and how I can be a “dog returning to my own vomit” sometimes. Reading over those things and then feeling convicted about my own sins, I’ve … to a certain degree have doubted my salvation at times. But I don’t think that that’s necessarily an unhealthy thing. I think that that’s something that makes you search more and when you rebound from that your faith’s even stronger, you know? I think that there’s been a growing process in my faith definitely this year.

(4/19/06 INT.)

One theme that emerged out of several different interview questions was the perception on the part of most of the participants that the overall college experience had forced them to take ownership of their own faith. For example,

F: Do you believe that your college experience is influencing your spiritual life?

James: I think that the fact that I’ve lived at home my whole life and that I’ve gone to private school and home school my whole life and now going to college I realize how much of my faith has been riding in the back seat of my parents’ car. My parents’ car being their faith and they’re driving because it’s their faith. Me riding in the back seat of that car along for family devotions and prayer times and things like that. And I’ve never really been forced to make my faith my own. And
going into this experience I’m not around all the time for family devotions and prayer time and things like that. And I realize how much I failed to make my Christian walk my own, because I’ve always just been in a Christian atmosphere. Now it’s time for me to sit in the driver’s seat of my own faith walk and, well of course, Christ is the one who is ruling in my life as opposed to piggybacking on my parent’s, you know, it’s my own walk now. And, you know, disciplining myself in that walk has been somewhat of a struggle and so in coming to that realization wasn’t something that happened right away. So I think that now that I’ve made that realization it’s a positive thing. Because I realize what I have to work towards and, you know, it’s a growing process. But I think if I didn’t make that realization it could have been a bad thing. It couldn’t have been a very negative thing. I might of…either I would of…just continued to be less and less involved in my Christian walk or I could of ended up always just being a baby like it says in Hebrews, you know, who are nursed on milk not being able to move on to bigger and better things like the meat of the matter, you know, the meat of the faith. (4/19/06 INT.)

Many of these students indicated that their participation in spiritual activities had increased since they came to the realization that it was now their own personal decision to participate. They recognized they were no longer passengers in their parent’s spiritual vehicle; they were now operating their own spiritual vehicle.
Chapter Five:
Conclusion

Overview

This overview section is organized around the original research questions. I will begin by attempting to address the foundational research question of this study. The premier question that this study attempted to answer was the following: Are evangelical students experiencing alienation at American colleges and universities? Perhaps this question is more accurately stated in the following manner: Are evangelical freshmen students experiencing alienation at the University of Texas at Arlington and the University of Texas at Dallas? To answer that question, it might prove useful to review the definition of alienation one more time.

For the purposes of this study, student alienation was defined consistent with a component of the Tinto model called malintegration. For the purposes of this study, malintegration was considered a form of student alienation. Malintegration is defined as the absence of social and academic integration. As it was previously pointed out, Tinto did not use the term alienation in his model. Rather, Tinto used the terms incongruence and isolation which, in combination, comprise malintegration. Tinto (1998) defined incongruence in the following manner:

…what is sometimes referred to as lack of institutional fit, refers to that state where individuals perceive themselves as being substantially at odds with the institution. In this case, the absence of integration results from the person’s
Incongruence refers in general to the mismatch or lack of fit between the needs, interests and preferences of the individual and those of the institution. Reflecting the outcome of interactions with different members of the institution, it springs from the individual perceptions of not fitting into and/or of being at odds with the social and intellectual fabric of institutional life…Typically, incongruence is manifested in the individual’s judgment that the institution’s intellectual climate is unsuited or irrelevant, perhaps even contrary, to his/her own intellectual preferences (p. 50-51).

Incongruence occurs when integration is perceived as something undesirable from the student’s standpoint. Incongruence can be experienced through a wide range of formal and/or informal interactions - from the college’s policies and regulations on academics to daily interactions with faculty, staff, and students in the classroom and outside the classroom. Incongruence involves a student’s perceptions of and reaction to the overall ethos of the institution.

The second component of malintegration is isolation which is what occurs when students find themselves removed from the daily activities of the institution and the individuals and groups that collectively comprise the institution. “Isolation …refers to the absence of sufficient interactions whereby integration may be achieved” (Tinto, 1993, p. 50). Though incongruence and isolation are closely related, the difference between them is that incongruence arises from a student’s perceptions of the character or quality of interactions while isolation results from the lack of interactions.

One of the real problems or weaknesses in alienation research that was revealed by the review of the literature (Chapter Two, Section Two) was the lack of a base or
reference point whereby researchers can measure alienation intensity or increases and decreases between cases, etc. To this point in the history of alienation research, attrition alone seems to provide the lone yet seemingly inadequate baseline. If alienation in its simplest form is “the absence of social and academic integration” and attrition is the reference point or base, then for this particular case, evangelical freshmen are not alienated. However, this is too simple and does not adequately cover all of the data. Nonetheless, my first argument will support the notion that evangelicals in this study are not alienated as alienation has been defined.

The evangelicals comprising this case were academically and socially integrated at relatively high levels. This is supported by academic achievement (the relatively high mean GPAs for both semesters) and the importance of social integration to the participants. This is also supported by the obvious success in social integration that was manifested by all but one of the participants in this study. In general, the participants expressed that the transition to college was a smooth one. In fact, in terms of successful assimilation as college freshmen, one could make an initial argument that this case could be used to set an ideal assimilation standard for the freshman experience. Please consider that this group accomplished the following during their freshman year: 1) They experienced high academic achievement at relatively prestigious institutions in rigorous majors; 2) They substantially increased the number of quality relationships in their lives; 3) They successfully avoided many of the moral and self-destructive pitfalls of college life; 4) They recognized positive growth (time management, responsibility, etc.) in their personal lives; 5) They acknowledged the development of improved social skills; and 6) They acknowledged that positive spiritual growth had taken place, particularly in the
following areas: their awareness of taking personal ownership of their evangelical faith, their Biblical understanding, and their level of spiritual depth. It is important to note that not a single student expressed any movement away from their faith. In fact, they expressed the exact opposite (positive spiritual growth). This was one of the most counterintuitive findings of the study. With the exception of the spiritual growth because it may not be important to nonreligious parents, they achieved what many parents (secular and religious) hope for as they drop their children off at the university. In some sense, these participants might be considered poster children for quality assimilation and at first glance could appear to be a marketing boon for their respective universities.

Another critical point is that there is almost no evidence of participant attrition from college due to worldview alienation. In fact, the majority of participants perceived themselves to be a “good fit” for their school and the majority also expressed that they generally like or even “love” their school. Only one (Dirk) of twenty participants expressed any doubts about reenrollment. In fact, Dirk withdrew from his university during the course of this study, and I believe he experienced alienation through social isolation and poor academic achievement that eventually led to his withdrawal. I do not believe that Dirk’s withdrawal was due to alienation caused by his evangelicalism or what I previously called worldview related alienation. In fact, Dirk was one of several participants who expressed surprise by their perception of the worldview neutrality of several of their professors. Although he did express extreme moral discomfort (particularly in his dorm life) which is related to his evangelicalism, in my opinion, the data is more supportive of the idea that his withdrawal was related to his being unprepared, particularly with regard to study habits, personal discipline and time
management. It is also important to note here that all of the participants in this study expressed various levels of discomfort with the moral ethos of the university, yet no other participants withdrew or suggested they might withdraw because of the moral ethos.

From a social standpoint, he experienced extreme shock at the transition from a homeschool environment to the university. Dirk’s only educational experience prior to his freshman year at UTA had been homeschooling. He indicated that his mother had been his primary instructor with the exception of a couple of years when he was able to attend a homeschool co-op (an informal arrangement of homeschool parents that pool their respective areas of expertise across the academic disciplines and provide classroom instruction to groups of homeschool children one day a week). Other than his aversion to the moral ethos, Dirk’s worldview had little to do with his withdrawal. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that this study suffered no worldview related attrition. Consequently, if any malintegration was evidenced in this study related to worldview, it never reached the magnitude of participant withdrawal. Additionally, there was no mention of withdrawal which certainly should have manifested in the interviews were those thoughts present in the participants.

It seems to me that Dirk’s withdrawal and the comments of other participants really emphasize the importance of the connection with evangelical groups. During the first semester, Dirk indicated that he had not participated in any campus ministry, and he lamented that fact as he reflected back on his first semester experience. His failure to connect with a campus ministry was even more significant when one considers that UTA had no organized dorm-sponsored, social integration plan like the one that existed at UTD. I believe it is significant that Dirk was the only participant in the study to withdraw
from the university during the freshman year, and he was also the only participant who
did not have a regular connection with a Christian group (campus ministry or church).

Although the study group was a success from a retention standpoint, to conclude
that evangelicals were not alienated as defined and simply stop there would not be
faithful to the data; there is a larger story to tell. Although it is true that this group, as a
distinct unit, did successfully assimilate, there are some incongruence’s that need to be
discussed further in order that the entire story might be told. The whole story is far less
idyllic than what has been described thus far. For the sake of further discussion, I think it
may be fruitful to maintain the research questions but replace one key word in order to
properly conclude the study (tell the whole story). The adjustments are to combine
questions 2 & 3 and to replace the word alienation with a less encompassing alienation
component known as incongruence. Therefore, the “adjusted” research questions are the
following: 2 & 3) What are the prevailing types and sources of incongruence for
evangelical students? 4) What are the dominant themes with regard to evangelical student
coping strategies? 5) What are the dominant themes that emerge that threaten or impact
the evangelical student’s academic success and/or persistence/retention? 6) How do the
student’s perceive the institutions reaction to them as they manifest their Christian
worldview on campus?

*The types and sources of Evangelical Incongruence.* Although it did not become
a retention issue, the participants in this study did experience incongruence as defined by
Tinto (1998). In fact, these participants perceived themselves to be members of a distinct
minority group and that status was exclusively related to their evangelicalism. As a
minority group, they perceived themselves to be at odds with the campus mainstream on
a couple of fronts. Being Biblicists and therefore moral absolutists, they perceived themselves to be at odds with the moral ethos of the university that they described as “liberal” and relativistic though also expressing surprise that campus morality was not as bad as expected. They were also at odds with what they perceived to be a mainstream university philosophy that they described as being “materialistic” or antisupernatural. The materialism that they described had two faces. The first face was one of materialistic monism or the philosophy that all that is real exists exclusively in the natural realm (with the requisite denial of the existence of a supernatural realm). Thus, they were at odds with a mainstream campus philosophy that relegated their worldview to irrelevance. The second face was a prevailing philosophy of self-centered hedonism that gave preeminence to the accumulation of wealth and the gratification of pleasure. Although this later philosophy was mostly ascribed to students, they indicated that it was manifested by some professors as well.

**Evangelical student coping strategies.** The main student coping strategy manifested by this case had to do primarily with social integration. The evangelicals in this case all became members of campus organizations in similar fashion to another minority coping strategy identified in the alienation literature as ethnic enclaves. The idea of the existence of ethnic enclaves on majority campuses was first introduced into the alienation literature by Loo and Rolison (1986). In their study of Anglos, Chicanos, Asian Americans, African Americans, Filipino Americans and Native Americans, conducted at a small, public university in the California system, the researchers assessed and compared the extent and nature of sociocultural alienation and academic satisfaction among ethnic minority students and Anglos. They found that social alienation for minority students was
greater than that for Anglo students. The authors introduced a term they called “ethnic enclaves” which they defined as a social unit in which an ethnic subculture could be expressed in a supportive, yet isolated environment. White students perceived these ethnic enclaves as manifestations of lingering racial segregation whereas the minority students saw them as entities necessary for survival in a larger, threatening and generally unsupportive environment. Additionally, the successful (low alienation) institutions in the Richardson et al. (1987) study were those institutions that formally recognized, supported, and promoted these ethnic enclaves as positive entities that could enhance the campus climate for minorities.

The data in this study does seem to suggest that for evangelicals there are enclaves that were formed based upon the recognition that the evangelical community exists in a state of tension with the surrounding campus. Although the tension is not sought nor is it welcomed, it is certainly perceived. Participants in this study clearly perceived themselves to be a distinct minority group operating outside of the mainstream of university life. That is, there is strong supporting evidence for the existence of evangelical enclaves that function like ethnic enclaves but where ethnicity is not the organizing factor, worldview is. For the evangelicals in this case, the evangelical enclaves were multiracial and provided the most significant platform for social integration. In this case, the evangelicals were using the evangelical enclave to help them survive in what they perceived to be an environment that has real enmity towards them as evangelicals. In light of some of the responses that came from my question regarding the hypothetical removal of the enclave entities, survival is not too strong a term here. The most often cited area of conflict seems to be in the area of morality although the data
provided several other reasons for enclave membership: emotional support, prayer support, genuine care and love, social support, academic accountability, counseling, spiritual mentoring, social networking, a platform for community outreach, worldview compatibility, Bible study, etc.. The evangelical enclave also serves the function of providing a worldview alternative or counterweight to the materialistic monism that was described as being the dominant philosophical system presented in the classroom. Almost all of the participants gave the credit for their spiritual growth to their membership in an evangelical entity. The evangelical enclave that emerges from the data includes the following groups: the campus ministries, the local churches, all evangelicals on campus (cross denominational or interdenominational inclinations with the recognition of the existence of a brotherhood of all believers), and evangelicals in the larger community to include Christian intellectuals and teachers. According to the data, the importance of the evangelical enclave to the successful assimilation of this group cannot be overstated.

With some participants, the enclave provided the sole social integration platform and some participants had social lives that operated almost exclusively within the confines of the enclave. The need for an evangelical enclave is also supported by the case’s consensus that there was a perceived social cost for their evangelicalism which limited their ability to integrate into the larger university community. This was also manifested in the case’s self-perception that they operated socially more on the level of a community within the university community rather than as members of the university community at large.

Another coping strategy that emerged was the expectation and recognition that the university was going to operate within worldview boundaries different than the Christian
worldview. As Biblicists, the participants expected to be at odds with an opposing worldview because this expectation is consistent with the Biblical narrative. The Bible teaches the existence of a world philosophical system that stands in direct opposition to God’s system. In fact, the Bible warns believers that they need to take caution, “… that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8). That is, several of these participants understood from Scripture that there is a world system that desires to take them captive and they are admonished against allowing this to happen. Another similar passage says, “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind…” (Romans 12:2). This passage teaches Christians that there is a world system that seeks to conform them into a system of thought that stands in direct opposition to God’s system. These participants understood that the way to avoid being “conformed” was through regular Bible study and through regular affiliation with other Christians (both are Biblical imperatives). However, the critical point here is that these participants were not surprised by a different worldview system at the university. In fact, they expected it because it is described in Scripture. Their coping strategy was simply to believe God’s Word as true and act accordingly.

Emerging threats. There were no themes that emerged directly related to retention. However, I believe that the data so heavily demonstrates the importance of the evangelical enclaves to social integration, that anything that the university would do to limit or deny access to campus ministries would be highly detrimental to evangelical assimilation. For universities that value a diversity that includes an evangelical presence,
institutional intentionality in building and/or strengthening bridges with existing campus ministries might be a significant step forward in both recruitment and retention of evangelicals. Another way of stating this question might be the following: How can the university improve the college experience for evangelicals? Perhaps a more important question is: Are universities interested in improving the university experience for evangelicals? Assuming that evangelical recruitment and retention is important, the following points are submitted for consideration. Although the treatment of evangelicals in this study was far less hostile than they or I anticipated, there was a strong thread of negative interactions with secular students and faculty that were clearly instances that generated participant incongruence. Conversely, evangelical students held atheistic and liberal professors in high esteem when they felt those professors treated them with respect as human beings. They also valued those that could take positions of neutrality on controversial debates between students. The students were quick to acknowledge professors who treated them with dignity and sensitivity and who could bring a sense of fairness and civility into academic debate. They particularly disliked when evangelicals or an evangelical position or doctrine was mischaracterized. Essentially, promoting positive interactions and reducing the number of threatening interactions would make for a less incongruent experience. Another potential step that universities could take that might improve the college experience for evangelicals is more evangelical presence among the faculty.

*Student perceptions about university reactions to them.* The participants perceived that there was an overall “secular” mindset manifested by the majority of the students and the faculty that generally held evangelicals and their viewpoints in low
regard. The participants also perceived that there was a disdain for them or general
hostility toward them as evangelicals, not only from a religious perspective but also from
a political one. They also perceived that there was a social cost for their evangelicalism.
In spite of these negative perceptions, I think it is very important to understand that the
participants expressed a hope for the well-being of their university on a number of fronts.
They indicated that they regularly prayed for other students and the university in general.
They also saw themselves as bringing “light” (moral purity), hope, and a sense of positive
encouragement to their campuses. They also saw themselves as servants to the university
community by seeking to meet the physical and spiritual needs of believing and
unbelieving students alike. The group also saw themselves as bringing a sense of
worldview diversity to the campus that they believed would not otherwise exist were
evangelicals not present. This was evidenced by the perceptions that professors would
deliberately call on known evangelicals in order to provide contrasting viewpoints during
classroom discussions. Some participants suggested that a secular uniformity of thought
existed to the extent that only the evangelical perspective allowed for some diversity in
viewpoints and the invaluable use of contrast as a teaching tool. They expressed a desire
for the overall well-being of their universities and tried to respond to the perceived needs
of others. Several students expressed a hope that their campuses would come to know the
love of Christ. Although evangelicals perceived hostility towards them as a group, they
expressed concern and hope for the university community at large. They were not only
concerned about fellow believers experiencing moral failures, but they expressed concern
for the morality of the entire university community. They held professors whom they
described as neutralists in very high regard. They also expressed some positive surprise
that the university had not been as hostile toward their worldview as they had expected or
had been told it would be like. The main points here are that evangelicals deliberately
sought avenues to contribute and be a part of the community and also perceived
themselves to be contributors to the university community.

The participants perceived that the university was intentional in presenting a
secular worldview and one of the ways to execute that was by only hiring secular or what
some of the students called “liberal” professors. It is important to note here that the
successful institutions (those with the least perceived amount of alienation) studied in the
Richardson et al. (1987) study had by policy determined to actively pursue the hiring of
minority faculty as a strategy for reducing minority alienation. The participants in this
study recognized the scarcity of evangelical faculty and perceived that that scarcity was
by institutional design.

Summary. Based upon the definition of alienation selected for this study
(alienation = malintegration = incongruence + isolation), evangelicals were not alienated.
This was supported by the relatively high levels of academic and social integration
manifested by the participants. This is also supported by the fact that there was no
evidence of worldview related attrition. However, evangelicals did experience
incongruence. The sources of the incongruence were: 1) As Biblicists, they were at odds
with the moral ethos of the university. 2) They were at odds with a materialistic monism
of the university that led to irrelevance or marginalization of their Christian worldview.
3) They were at odds with the self-centered hedonistic materialism of the student body. 4)
They perceived the university to be at odds with them as evangelicals.
The study revealed that evangelicals coped with their incongruence through membership in the evangelical enclaves. They also coped through their expectation that the university was going to be hostile towards their Christian worldview. This expectation is consistent with the Biblical narrative and seemed to have been developed prior to the freshman year. The participants perceived an overall “secular” mindset held by students and professors that generally held evangelicals and their viewpoints in low regard, and they perceived disdain or hostility towards them for both religious and political reasons. They perceived a social cost for their evangelicalism. They also perceived the university to be intentional about presenting a secular worldview and one way of doing that was by hiring secular or “liberal” professors. They saw themselves as being intentional in seeking ways to contribute to the university community, and they also saw themselves as being contributors to the university community in a variety of ways.

Significance

This research is significant because it broke new ground as the first study to consider whether students’ worldview could contribute to their alienation. This study also was the first study to focus on whether evangelicals were experiencing alienation. Additionally, this study is important in light of the high evangelical presence in American higher education based upon the data from the HERI project (2005). Another reason this study is significant is because I believe that the Spiritual Questionnaire (Appendix B) proved to be useful in determining the authenticity of each participant’s evangelicalism. Although determining a person’s faith commitment is impossible from a human standpoint, I believe that the instrument helped me have confidence that I was working
with authentic evangelicals based upon their answers, their mean scores, and the interview data. I used the questionnaire and the interview data together in determining the authenticity of the participants’ evangelicalism or the level of their faith commitment. There was nothing expressed in two hours of interviews that would invalidate the high mean scores of the questionnaire data. I believe this instrument might prove useful to others seeking to study evangelicals.

Implications for Future Research

One of the strengths of this study proved to be its greatest weakness. The strength was the social connectedness of the case. As a researcher new to campus and approaching in the middle of the freshman year, the social connectedness of potential participants to the enclave entities did provide me with access to authentic evangelicals. However, in retrospect, a thriving enclave entity that is strongly supporting evangelical students is probably not the best place to find highly alienated evangelicals. The reason is because a component of alienation is social isolation. Through the snowballing and interview processes, a couple of the participants mentioned less socially connected evangelicals whose college experiences were not assimilation success stories but retention failures. In fact, my efforts at contacting these individuals were met with silence. This makes sense as those evangelicals in the process of seriously questioning or abandoning their faith are not likely to be regular attendees at a campus ministry or want to talk with someone studying evangelical students. They would likely be withdrawing from that community and avoiding other evangelicals. Therefore, for future research studies with this population, I recommend identifying participants before they arrive on campus for the fall semester. This would require a shift away from campus ministries as a primary
recruiting source. Therefore, I recommend the evangelical secondary schools as the primary recruitment source for future studies.

Although the university environments under study did not prove to be alienating enough for any participant to abandon their previous faith commitment or withdraw from their university, there were enough negative interactions for me to reasonably conclude that evangelicals are experiencing noticeable incongruence. However, there are a couple of factors that make this study less transferable. For one thing, the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex has a very strong evangelical presence compared to other parts of the country. With the exception of the Midwest, I have lived in many other areas of the country and found the north Texas region to be more heavily influenced by evangelicalism than any other area. In my mind, this potentially makes perceived anti-Christian bias on these campuses a lot more costly to these universities. What university can afford to alienate itself from its immediate community? Therefore, it is possible that anti-Christian rhetoric in these classrooms might be far tamer than what might be experienced by evangelicals in other locations. In light of my conclusions about the existence and importance of evangelical enclaves, I believe that this group of evangelicals had far more enclave support than could likely be found in many other places. This enclave support makes this case far less alienating than the intensity of alienation likely to be perceived in areas where the evangelical enclave is less pervasive. In that case, it would not be as transferable. Therefore, I believe that evangelical alienation should be studied at other institutions, particularly in geographical areas manifesting a less pervasive evangelical influence.
There are some emerging themes from this study that might become the impetus for future research. In general, student participants in this study who attended public high schools seemed to experience less incongruence than their peers from home school or Christian school backgrounds. Future research might explore whether there is a relationship between the evangelical’s level of incongruence and his educational background (public, Christian, home school, etc.). Because many participants indicated that they expected to be treated worse (experience higher levels of incongruence) than they actually were, future research might focus on how and where those expectations were formed and whether those expectations influence perceived incongruence.
References


Appendices
Appendix A: Interview Guides

Interview Guide #1: Personal Worldview History and Recollection of Semester One

Introduction:
1) Please tell me a little about yourself. For example:
   a) Where did you go to high school?
   b) Where are you from?
   c) Do you consider yourself a good student? Explain.
   d) What are you looking forward to as part of your continued college experience?
2) How has your adjustment to college been up to this point? What do you anticipate to be your greatest challenges for the remainder of this semester?
3) What is your academic major?

General Questions
4) Is your college experience different than what you thought or what you were told it would be like (prior to your arrival)? Please explain. Probe for concerns and successes.
5) What do you hope your college experience will do for you?

Academic & Social Integration
Social Integration:
6) Do you feel like you are a “good fit” for this university?

7) What groups and clubs have you joined or participated in? Campus activities? Campus ministries?

8) How would you describe the overall moral character of the student body?

9) Have you found a good set of friends here? How did you meet them?

10) How often do you go home?

Academic Integration:
11) How did your classes go last semester?

12) Were you happy with your grades?

13) Do you think you were prepared for college coursework? Was it more or less challenging than you thought it would be?

14) Did you have any professors last semester that you will avoid in the future? Without mentioning their name(s), tell me about that.

15) Among your Christian friends, (without mentioning professors by name) are there any professors that they discuss as being one’s to avoid? What reasons did they give for avoiding particular professors?

16) Were there specific courses that you or your Christian friends deliberately tried to avoid? For example, would you be comfortable taking a zoology or a biology course?
Appendix A. (continued)

17) Are there certain professors that are favored or more highly regarded by your Christian group? Explain?

18) From an academic standpoint, were there any occasions last semester where your being an evangelical was an issue at this university? Probe for occasions and challenges to faith.

Social Integration
19) In terms of your social life at college, have you ever found being an evangelical was an issue?

20) Are nonevangelical students aware of your evangelicalism? If so, do you perceive that they respond to you differently than other students?

21) Do you believe that your college experience is influencing your spiritual life? Please explain.

*Administer Questionnaire at the end of the interview – paper & pen
General Questions

1) Last time, you told me X was going well for you. To date, what else (aspects, events, courses, professors, etc.) have you liked most about your college experience?

2) In general, what about college was a surprise to you (in the good sense), and what was your biggest disappointment?

3) What are the most prominent issues regarding your college experience up to this point? Explain.

Academic & Social Integration

Social Integration:

4) Do you feel like you are a “good fit” for this university?

5) What groups and clubs have you joined or participated in? Campus activities?

6) How would you describe the overall moral character of the student body?

7) Tell me about your social life? Do you feel like you are a part of the university’s community or part of a community within the university? Explain?

Academic Integration:

8) How are your classes going this semester? Do you anticipate getting good grades?

9) Now that you have been in class for two semesters, how do you feel about what you are learning?

10) Did you have any professors this semester that you will avoid in the future?

Without mentioning their name(s), tell me about that.

11) What advice would you give to incoming freshmen to this university?
12) Was there anything that stood out in your classes from this semester that challenged your faith?

13) Is it your perception that the university values the presence of evangelical students on this campus? Explain.

14) Is it your perception that the university values your evangelical perspective on issues? Explain.

15) Does evangelical student presence on campus add anything positive to the university? Explain.

16) I am interested in hearing about your religious experience over the past several months.
   a. Have you shared any of your evangelical perspectives on campus? How were they received? Please be specific.
   b. Have you heard anyone else share their spiritual beliefs on campus? How were they received?
   c. Do you feel comfortable sharing your religious beliefs/perspectives in a classroom discussion? Can you recount a particular instance when you have done that?

17) What advice would you give to incoming freshmen who are “born-again” Christians? What advice would you give to religious students in general?

Social Integration

18) In terms of your social life at college, have you ever found being an evangelical was an issue?

19) Have you met with any other Christians since we last talked? How important would you say your connection with other Christians has been up to this point in the year?
Appendix A. (continued)

*Academic Integration*

20) From an academic standpoint, were there any occasions this semester where your being an evangelical was an issue at this university?

21) Do you feel that your view of how the world works differs from the view of the world presented in your various classes? If so, have those differences impacted your academics in any way (positively or negatively)? Explain?

22) Would you say that what you are learning is consistent or inconsistent with your beliefs as a “born-again Christian?” Explain.

23) Last time, you shared a lot about your life in general and about your spiritual life and beliefs. In general, how do you feel you have changed in this first year of college? Can you tell me if any of your spiritual beliefs have changed since the beginning of this year? If yes, what accounts for that change?
Appendix B: Spiritual Questionnaire

This brief questionnaire will be included and evaluated as a distinct unit in both student interviews. The purposes of this questionnaire are to understand or identify how a participant believes with regard to critical doctrines of evangelicalism, and to determine a participant’s level of ideological commitment to evangelicalism as it has been previously defined.

_Spiritual Questionnaire_

Directions: Please respond to each statement below by circling the number that most accurately reflects your personal view.

1) I consider myself to be born-again.

   1  2  3  4  5
   Disagree Uncertain Agree

2) I have come to the place in my spiritual life where I know for certain that if I were to die today I would go to heaven.

   1  2  3  4  5
   Disagree Uncertain Agree

3) All of the information contained in the 66 books of the Bible is information that God provided (revealed) to humanity. Therefore, the Bible is authoritative above all other forms of knowledge, to include all other human and religious texts.

   1  2  3  4  5
   Disagree Uncertain Agree

4) The Bible does not accurately portray reality (the universe that exists and the human condition).

   1  2  3  4  5
   Disagree Uncertain Agree
Appendix B. (continued)

5) Since so many believe that there are multiple paths to spiritual success, Jesus was probably wrong when He said that He is the only way to a restored relationship with the Father.

   1  2  3  4  5
   Disagree  Uncertain  Agree

6) The one true God exists as three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

   1  2  3  4  5
   Disagree  Uncertain  Agree

7) Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was crucified, was buried, rose from the dead in bodily form, and will return again.

   1  2  3  4  5
   Disagree  Uncertain  Agree

8) The most significant human problem is human sin?

   1  2  3  4  5
   Disagree  Uncertain  Agree

Directions: In the space provided, please provide short answers for the remainder of these questions.

9) If you were to die today and God were to ask you, “Why should I let you into my heaven?” What would you say?

10) How long have you considered yourself to be born again?

11) Briefly explain how you came to be born-again?

12) Where did you attend church prior to coming to college?

13) Do you attend church now?  Where?

14) Would your parents also identify themselves as being born again?
15) How would you rate the importance of your spiritual life at this time in your life? Please circle the number that represents the most appropriate response.

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Appendix B. (continued)
Appendix C: Participant Recruitment Guide

The following guide will be used as a tool for recruiting prospective participants for this study. The purpose of this guide is to reduce the possibility of biasing the participants in any way. I intend to say the following in each recruitment approach:

“Hi, my name is Joseph Fox, and I am currently a Ph.D. student in Higher Education Administration. I am currently doing research as part of my doctoral dissertation. I understand from _________ that you are a student at this university and that you also happen to be a born-again Christian. Is that correct? I am currently doing research on what I consider to be a very important question. I am trying to find out what it is like to be an evangelical student at a large state university. Would you be willing to consider being a participant in this study?”

If the student says “no”, then this recruitment event is terminated. However, if their answer is “yes”, then I proceed to the following:

“Great. As I said earlier, I am doing research trying to understand what it is like to be a Christian at a large state university. I believe that this is a very important and timely topic since a recent national study on college freshman indicated that 26% of all college freshmen classified themselves as being “born-again”. I believe that through your participation in this study there is some real potential to be of benefit to other college students and of potential benefit to colleges and universities in gaining a greater understanding of this portion of the student population. The way that I am attempting to answer this research question is through two personal interviews that would occur once in the first half of the semester and once toward
Appendix C. (continued)

the end of the semester. Both interviews would last approximately one hour.

Would you be willing to participate?”

If the person answers affirmatively, then I would proceed to cover the specific administrative details to include setting up the first interview appointment and other administrative topics like informed consent forms, optional participant journaling, optional emails, voluntary withdrawal, audio-taping of interviews, etc.
Appendix D: Coding Keys

Coding Key

AI  Academic Integration
AI-AC  "" - Academic Challenges
AI – Acom "" – Academic Accommodation
AI – AO  "" – Academic Orientation
AI – ACS  "" – Academic Costs
AI – ADF  "" – Advice to Freshmen
AI – AVGS  "" – Average Student
AI – CLR  "" – Curriculum Lacks Relevance
AI – CR  "" – Curriculum is Relevant
AI – ETE  "" - Easier Than Expected
AI – FG  "" – Focused Goals
AI- FN  "" – Faculty Neutrality
AI – GP  "" – Good Pedagogy
AI – GS  "" – Good Student
AI – SH  "" – Study Habits
AI – Ship  "" - Scholarship
AI – SC  "" – Spiritual Commitment
AI – WLS  "" – Workload Structure
AI – PD/TM  "" – Personal Discipline/Time Management
AI – PA  "" – Pedagogical Avoidance
AI – NPA  "" – No Pedagogical Avoidance
AI – PAF  "" – Poor Academic Fit
AI – GAF  "" – Good Academic Fit
AI – PH  "" – Profs Helpful
AI – PP/PI  "" – Poor Pedagogy Or Pedagogical Issue
AI – QAF  "" – Questions Academic Fitness
AI – FTP  "" – Favorable Toward Profs
AI - RP  "" - Research Profs In Advance
AI – WP  "" – Well Prepared
AI - WV
AI – NWVD  "" – No Worldview Discomfort
AI – NWVA  "" – No Worldview Avoidance
AI – NWVI  "" – No Worldview Incompatibility
AI – WVD  "" - Worldview Discomfort
  WVDS  Worldview disagreements – students
  WVDP  WV Disagreements – Profs
  WVI  Worldview Irrelevance
  MWV  Majority Worldview
  WVR  Worldview Rejection
  WVM  Worldview Minority
  WVC  Worldview Conflict
  WVAE Worldview Alienation Expected
Appendix D. (continued)

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<td>SI – C</td>
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<td>“” – Cultural Barriers</td>
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<td>“” - Campus Ministry</td>
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<td>SI – COBO</td>
<td>“” – College Offers Better Opportunities</td>
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<td>“” – Dorm Activities</td>
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<td>“” – Local Church</td>
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<td>“” – SI Negatively Impacting AI (or reverse)</td>
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<td>“” - Non Religious</td>
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<td>SI – NR(C)</td>
<td>“” – Non Religious (Classroom)</td>
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<td>“” – Uncertain About Fit</td>
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<td>SI – PO</td>
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<td>Home Visitation</td>
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<td>ISU</td>
<td>Increased Spiritual Understanding</td>
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<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Educational Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UTA</td>
<td>Pre-Med, Life Sci., Computer Sciences, Psychology, Math, History, Undec.</td>
<td>M=3.27</td>
<td>M=3.34</td>
<td>White=15, Asian=3, Hispanic=1, Black=1 (Minority=5)</td>
<td>F=11; M=9</td>
<td>Public=8, Homeschool=3, Christian=3, Hispanic=2, Black=1, Catholic=1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix F: Spiritual Questionnaire Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Score on Key Evang. Doctrines (Qs. 1-8)</th>
<th>Born-again Testimony (Qs. #9+11)</th>
<th>Born-again for how long? (Ques. #10)</th>
<th>Parents self identify as born-again? (Ques. #14)</th>
<th>Importance of Spiritual Life (Ques. #15)</th>
<th>Christian Denomination</th>
<th>Campus Ministry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>40/40</td>
<td>Faith in Christ</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Southern Baptist</td>
<td>Campus Crusade for Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gert</td>
<td>40/40</td>
<td>Faith in Jesus &amp; grace</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>Campus Crusade for Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>40/40</td>
<td>Trust in Jesus; His death &amp; resurrection</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonya</td>
<td>40/40</td>
<td>Faith &amp; Grace &amp; Lordship</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Yes (Mom only)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>Baptist Student Ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>40/40</td>
<td>Faith &amp; Prayer of Salvation</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bible Church</td>
<td>Christians on Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor</td>
<td>33/40</td>
<td>Belief that Christ died for my sins</td>
<td>4 years, 6 months</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>Baptist Student Ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leti</td>
<td>37/40</td>
<td>Asked Christ to come in and forgive sins</td>
<td>2 years, 2 months</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Southern Baptist</td>
<td>Baptist Student Ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelsey</td>
<td>39/40</td>
<td>Faith that Christ died for sins &amp; God’s grace</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Assemblies of God</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan</td>
<td>38/40</td>
<td>Faith that Christ died for sins &amp; acceptance of God’s grace</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>United African Presbyterian</td>
<td>Campus Crusade for Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>35/40</td>
<td>Accepted Christ</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>BSM &amp; CCFC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tami</td>
<td>39/40</td>
<td>Belief that Jesus died for my sins &amp; accepted Jesus into my heart</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Assemblies of God</td>
<td>BSM &amp; Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herman</td>
<td>40/40</td>
<td>Asked Christ to forgive sins and to come into his life</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Southern Baptist</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald</td>
<td>40/40</td>
<td>Accepted Christ as savior</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bible Church</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>40/40</td>
<td>Forgiven through the sacrifice of Christ</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>Campus Crusade for Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natanya</td>
<td>37/40</td>
<td>Led to Christ and saved by Christ</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Roman Catholic &amp; Methodist</td>
<td>BSM &amp; Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea</td>
<td>40/40</td>
<td>Accepted Christ as Lord &amp; savior</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Yes (only 1)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dirk</td>
<td>39/40</td>
<td>Faith &amp; trust in Christ &amp; Christ alone</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tre</td>
<td>40/40</td>
<td>Accepted Christ as Lord and savior through Christ’s sacrificial death</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bible Church</td>
<td>Cornerstone Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>40/40</td>
<td>Faith &amp; trust in Christ’s death and resurrection</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bible Church</td>
<td>Cornerstone Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Katrina</strong></td>
<td>38/40</td>
<td>Belief in the death of Jesus for her personal sins</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>Breakthrough Church &amp; COC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Means**: 38.75/40  
9.225 years  
34/40  
4.45/5

| Summary |  
|---------|---
| Baptists=5 | Bible Church=4 
| Presbyterian=4 | Southern 
| Baptist=3 | Methodist=2 
| Roman Catholic=1 | Assemblies of God=2 
| BSM=6 | CCFC=5 
| Focus=5 | COC=2 
| Cornerstone=2 | Breakthrough=1 |
University of Texas at Dallas

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Research Project: Evangelical Students in American Higher Education

Investigators: Contact Number
[Principal Investigator, Joseph C. Fox, Ph.D.]: [940-367-6214]
[Faculty Sponsor, Fred Fifer, Ph.D.]: [972-883-2496]

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to find out the perceptions that evangelical students have about their freshman college experience.

Description of Project: The procedures, which will involve you as a research subject, include: Two interviews where you will be asked 20-30 questions. Only you and the interviewer will be present during the interview. You will be audio-taped during the interviews. Also, at the end of the first meeting you will be asked to take a written survey which has 15 questions on it.

Number of Participants: There will be approximately twenty participants in this study.

Possible Risks* The possible risks and/or discomforts of your involvement include: We believe the risks in this study are minimal. However, it is possible that participating in this study may cause psychological discomfort. If you feel that participating in this study is increasing your discomfort level, you can withdraw at any time. If you feel that you need to speak with a campus counselor, a counselor may be reached at (972) 883-2575.

Possible Benefits to the Participant: Participants will not likely receive any direct benefit for participating in this study. Your participation in this study may assist colleges and universities in understanding this large group of students that you are a member of, and the information you provide may be used to improve the college experience for those who follow you.

IRB Approval.
FWA 00001669
IRB Number: 104-376
From 3/15/2006
Thru 2/7/2007
Appendix G. (Continued)

Alternatives to Participation: Individuals may choose not to participate or they can withdraw without any penalty or change in student status.

Reimbursement of Expenses [or Payments to Participate]: Participants will not receive any reimbursement for participation in this study and there are no financial costs to you the participant.

Voluntary Participation: All individuals have the right to agree or refuse to participate in this study. Individuals who consent to participate also have the right to change their minds while they are experiencing the experimental procedure. Participants may tell the investigator that they no longer wish to participate. Refusal or withdrawal of participation will not involve any penalty or loss of benefits to which non-participants are entitled. Refusal to participate will not affect participant’s legal rights or the quality of services they may wish to receive at UTD.

Records of Participation in this Research: Information Stored at the University of Texas at Dallas
All of the information participants provide to investigators as part of this research will be protected and held in confidence within the limits of the law and institutional regulation. A roster of participant's names will include a random number which will be assigned to each name. The Informed Consent document and the coded roster of participants will be kept locked in the Multipurpose Building, Room 3.218, on the campus of UTD. No other identifiable data will be collected. The only persons who will have direct access to the identifiable data will be Joseph C. Fox, the Principal Investigator, who has been trained in methods to protect participant confidentiality.

Information Available to Others:
Members and associated staff of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Texas at Dallas, the University of Texas at Arlington and the University of South Florida may review the records of your participation in this research. An IRB is a group of people who are responsible for assuring the community that the rights of participants in research are respected. A representative of the UTD IRB may contact you to gather information about your
participation in this research. If you wish, you may refuse to answer questions the representative of the IRB may ask.

**Publications Associated with this Research:** The results of this research may appear in publications but individual participants will not be identified.

**Contact People:**
Participants who want more information about this research may contact any of the investigators listed at the top of page 1 of this document. Participants who want more information about their rights as a participant or who want to report a research related injury may contact:

Sanaz Okhovat, Research Compliance Manager 972-883-4579 UTD
Office of Vice President for Research & Graduate Education

The University of South Florida's Office of Research Compliance at 813-974-5638

Karshina Valsin, Research Compliance Manager  817-272-2775
UTA Office of Research Integrity and Compliance
Additional information is available upon request.

Signatures

A participant’s signature indicates that they have read, or listened to, the information provided above and that they have freely decided to participate in this research and that they know they have no given up any of their legal rights.

__________________________
Participant’s Name (printed)

__________________________
Participant’s Signature

Date

__________________________
Name of Researcher Obtaining Consent

__________________________
Signature of Researcher Obtaining Consent
INFORMED CONSENT

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Joseph C. Fox
TITLE OF PROJECT: Evangelical Students in American Higher Education

This Informed Consent will explain about being a research subject in an experiment. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to be a volunteer.

PURPOSE: The purpose(s) of this research study is/are as follows.
The purpose of this study is to find out the perceptions that evangelical students have about their freshman college experience. A recent nationwide study in 2005 revealed that 1 in 4 college freshmen identify themselves as being born-again or evangelical students, making your group one of the largest student groups in the nation. To date, there has been little research done about how your group perceives the college experience. Your participation in this study may assist colleges and universities in understanding this large group of students that you are a member of, and the information you provide may be used to improve the college experience for those who follow you.

DURATION
You will be asked to spend about five months (one semester) in this study. The study will last this long because we hope to understand how your perceptions about your freshman experience may change over time. However, during that period, you will only be asked to meet with the principal investigator twice for approximately one hour each meeting. There will be twenty participants in this study.

PROCEDURES
The procedures, which will involve you as a research subject, include:
During both meetings you will be asked 20-30 questions in an interview. Only you and the interviewer will be present during the interview. The interviews will be audio-taped. Also, at the end of the first meeting you will be asked to take a written survey which has 15 questions on it.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS
The possible risks and/or discomforts of your involvement include:
Although we believe the risks to be minimal, it is possible that participating in this study may potentially add to the psychological stress associated with attending college. If you feel that participating in this study is increasing your stress, please call the person in charge of this study (Joseph Fox) right away at 940 367-6214 or if you experience stress during the interviews please tell the person in charge of this study so that the interview can be promptly terminated. The person in charge of this study will provide you with contact numbers of campus counselors upon request. Last Revised 01/31/06
Appendix G. (continued)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Joseph C. Fox

TITLE OF PROJECT. Evangelical Students in American Higher Education

POSSIBLE BENEFITS

The possible benefits of your participation are:
For the society, it is possible that your participation may increase knowledge about evangelical students and how those students perceive their college experience. This increased knowledge may be valuable to many of the nation’s colleges and universities that have large numbers of evangelical students in attendance at their schools. Information that you provide may be helpful toward enhancing the college experience for other evangelical students across the country.
For you, the individual, there is no direct benefit other than the satisfaction of knowing that your participation may potentially help other students.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES / TREATMENTS

The alternative procedures/treatments available to you if you elect not to participate in this study are:
There are no alternative procedures that might be available or advantageous to the subject.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in Nedderman Hall Room 504 for at least three (3) years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the UTA IRB, the University of South Florida IRB, and personnel particular to this research (Joseph Fox and Dr. R. Stephen Gibbs, UTA) have access to the study records. Your (e.g., student, medical) records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

FINANCIAL COSTS

There is no financial cost to you as a participant in this study.

FEB 02 2008

APPROVED BY THE UTA-IRB
The IRB approval for this consent Document will expire on FEB 01 2007

Last Revised 01/31/06 (page 2 of 3)
Appendix G. (continued)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Joseph C. Fox

TITLE OF PROJECT: Evangelical Students in American Higher Education

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, problems or research-related medical problems at any time, you may call (Joseph Fox) at (940 367-6214), or (Dr. R. Stephen Gibbs, UTA) at (817 272-3470). You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 817/2721235 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject. You may also call the USF Office of Research Compliance at 813/974-5638.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this research experiment is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or quit at any time. If you quit or refuse to participate, the benefits (or treatment) to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected. You may quit by calling Joseph C. Fox, whose phone number is 940 367-6214. You will be told immediately if any of the results of the study should reasonably be expected to make you change your mind about staying in the study.

By signing below, you confirm that you have read or had this document read to you. You will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. You have been and will continue to be given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your participation with the investigator. You freely and voluntarily choose to be in this research project.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: ____________________________  DATE

__________________________  DATE

SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER

FEB 02 2000

APPROVED BY THE UTA - IRB

The IRB approval for this consent Document will expire on

FEB 01 2007

USF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
FWA00001669

APPROVED
About the Author

Joseph Fox currently serves as Headmaster of the Providence Christian Academy, a classical and Christian school. He has served as a teacher and administrator in Christian Education for fifteen years. In 2004 and 2006, he successfully started two Christian school campuses as part of a multi-campus Christian school system known as Coram Deo Academy. He has been recognized as a teacher, having been named “Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers” in 2000 and 2001. Prior to serving in management for Airborne Express Corporation, Joseph served for eleven years as a United States Marine Corps officer. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science in 1985 from the University of Florida. In 1995, he completed a Master of Education from Widener University. A year later, he earned a Certificate of Biblical Studies from Philadelphia Biblical University and was honored as valedictorian of PBU’s Institute of Jewish Studies.