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HOW PARENTS AND THEIR ADOLESCENT CHILDREN "TALK THE TALK" IN RELIGIOUS CONVERSATIONS

by

Jennifer Yorgason Thatcher

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Jennifer Y. Thatcher in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

HOW PARENTS AND THEIR ADOLESCENT CHILDREN "TALK THE TALK" IN RELIGIOUS CONVERSATIONS

Jennifer Yorgason Thatcher

Department of Marriage, Family, and Human Development

Master of Science

This study builds on previous research regarding parent-child religious conversations to explore the elements and bidirectional processes of parent-adolescent religious conversations. It employs qualitative analyses of interviews with highly religious parents and adolescents representing the major Abrahamic faiths (Christianity, Judaism, Islam) from New England and Northern California. Variations in content, structure, conversational processes, and bidirectional influence are summarized in a conceptual model. Findings suggest that the quality of conversations is greater for parents and adolescents when they are youth-centered than when they are parent-centered.

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How Parents and their Adolescent Children "Talk the Talk" in Religious Conversations

Religiosity is a significant part of life for at least half of American adolescents and research on adolescent religiosity is particularly relevant because adolescence is a stage in life when society encourages youth to form their own views and identity (Gallup & Bezilla, 1992; Smith, Faris, Denton, & Regnerus, 2003). Adolescents are embedded in an increasingly complex circle of influence including peers, school, and media. In addition, adolescents are granted more independence and responsibility in society; and during adolescence parent-adolescent relationships become increasingly interdependent.

Although adolescence involves increasing autonomy, the influence of family relationships remains significant (Collins & Laursen, 2004). Research confirms that parents are one of the greatest socialization influences on adolescent religiosity and that a major method of influence is parent-child conversation (King, Furrow, & Roth, 2002; Smith & Denton, 2005). Scholarship on the influence of parent-child conversations has moved beyond a focus on "transmission" (a unidirectional influence from parent to child) to the study of how children also influence their parents (Kuczynski, 2003; Pinquart & Silberseisen, 2004). Yet, questions remain when examining religious conversations: What are the elements in parent-adolescent conversations on religious issues? And, how is the bidirectional influence between parents and children manifest in conversations involving religion?

Most research linking family and religion relies on quantitative methods with large samples. Positive correlations between parent-adolescent religious conversations and adolescent religiosity are now substantially supported, but like other areas of the religion-family link, we know less about the *processes* involved (Dollahite & Marks, 2005). Furthermore, most studies in the psychology of religion have focused on individual religiosity (Mahoney & Tarakeshwar,

2005); and, of those that have looked at parent-adolescent religious dynamics, few have used qualitative data to gain more in-depth understanding (Boyatzis, Dollahite, & Marks, 2006). Therefore, for the current study, a qualitative analysis of in-depth family interviews was used in order to learn more about the "intricate details" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11) of parent-adolescent religious conversations that are more difficult to assess through other research methods. The purpose of this study was to explore "thick descriptions" that parents and adolescents provide about their religious conversations (Geertz, 1973).

Consistent with Matthews' (2005) suggestion for writing reports of qualitative research, the review of literature will briefly focus on sensitizing concepts and general ideas. The discussion section will then address connections between findings of the current study and relevant literature.

Review of Literature

This section focuses on studies relating to (a) parent-adolescent communication, (b) parental and adolescent religiosity, (c) bidirectional models of internalization, (d) family religious conversations, and (e) limitations and gaps in the literature.

Parent-Adolescent Communication

Adolescence is a time of many changes, both internal (e.g. biological, cognitive, psychological, spiritual) and external (e.g. social, educational, and vocational expectations). Within the family context there are also changes in the parent-child relationship in terms of interaction and communication. Baumrind (1991) suggested that as the child moves through early adolescence, the parent-adolescent relationship increases in interdependence. Adolescents still need firm guidance and support from parents, but they have more need for autonomy and

freedom in decision making. These changes in the relationship are evidenced by research on parent-adolescent communication.

Parent-adolescent communication has received considerable attention within the vast amount of literature addressing parent-child relationships (Steinberg, 2001). The frequency, content, and perceived meaning of communication between parents and children undergo changes during the adolescent years (Collins & Laursen, 2004). This is due to transformations in interactions (Collins, Gleason, & Sesma, 1997), including a decreased amount of time spent together (Larson, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck, & Duckett, 1996) and changes in how connectedness is expressed (Hartup & Laursen, 1991). As children approach adolescence, they are less likely to be affectionate and participate in joint activities with their parents; however, parents and adolescents engage in more conversation with each other than before, through which they can feel and express closeness although they spend less time together (Hartup & Laursen, 1991; Montemayor & Flannery, 1989). Despite these findings, Laursen and Collins (2004) concluded that there is a lack of research on context-specific features of communication. Religion is a major context in which communication is still understudied.

Parental and Adolescent Religiosity

For "a substantial minority" of Americans, religion is "the single most important influence" in their lives (Miller & Thoresen, 2003, p. 25) and a large proportion American parents are among the highly religious. Ninety-five percent of all parents report religious affiliation (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001), 73% of Christian parents rate faith as very or extremely important in shaping their major life decisions (Smith & Denton, 2005), and 90% of parents desire religious training for their children (Gallup & Castelli, 1989).

Research from the 1970's to the mid 1990's found religion to be an important aspect of life for the majority (60%) of American adolescents (Smith et al., 2003; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1999). Smith and Denton (2005) conducted the most recent and extensive national study of adolescent religiosity and found similar results. They found that 51% of adolescents claimed that religion was "extremely" or "very" important in shaping their daily lives and 55% said they had made a personal commitment to live their life for God. Furthermore, a large minority of the youth reported that they prayed once a day or more (38%), attended church at least once a week (40%), and were currently involved in a religious youth group (38%).

Parent-adolescent relationships. A large body of findings has established benefits associated with religiosity in various areas of family life (Mahoney et al., 2001), including more warmth and satisfaction in parent-child relationships (see Dollahite, Marks, & Goodman, 2004). While comparing adolescents of varying religious activity, Smith and Denton (2005) found that highly religious youth had the best quality of parent-child relationships in every area studied, including levels of honesty, acceptance and understanding, getting along, and feeling loved and close to their parents. Highly religious adolescents and adolescents with religious parents are more likely to exhibit positive behaviors and fewer high-risk behaviors (Muller & Ellison, 2001; Regnerus, 2003). It follows that an increase in positive behaviors and a decrease in high-risk behaviors results in more positive parent-adolescent relationships.

Adolescent religiosity is influenced greatly by parents (e.g., Sherkat, 2003) and is typically consistent with parental religiosity (King et al., 2002), especially when the parents have common religious beliefs (Myers, 1996; Sherkat, 1991). Research is mixed as to which parent has the greatest influence on child religiosity, but some have found that the influence of both parents is greater than either parent alone (Francis & Brown, 1991; Kierun & Munro, 1987).

Recently, some have suggested the need for research to move forward by exploring *how* religiosity and family relationships influence each other (Boyatzis et al., 2006). This suggests that a process-focused approach to answering *how* parents and adolescents influence each other through religious conversations is needed.

Bidirectional Models on Internalization

Child internalization of parental values has been studied by researchers from various fields using two major theoretical models (Flor & Knapp, 2001; Lawrence & Valsiner, 1993). The more traditional model of internalization is unidirectional, which views the process of influence from parent to child, with the child as a passive recipient of parental values (Bao et al., 1999). The second and more recent model is bidirectional, because it views both the parent and child as active agents who continually influence each other (Grolnik & Ryan, 1989; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Ryan & Powelson, 1991). Recent research supports this second model, and a variety of theoretical constructs have been used to explain the complexity of bidirectional processes (Kuczynski, 2003). Recent attention has been drawn to the bidirectional nature of the parent-child relationship when dealing with religiosity. Garland (2002) found that parents and children both play a role in shaping the other's faith behavior, thus supporting a link between the bidirectional model and faith behavior.

Family Religious Conversations

In their recent national study, Smith and Denton (2005) asked adolescents how often they and their families talk together about God, scriptures, prayer, or other religious or spiritual issues. About one-third (34%) said a few times a week or more, 28% reported a few times a month or weekly, while 38% said a few times a year or never. Studies have found that parent-child

religious conversations are the greatest influencing factor on adolescent and young adult religiosity (Boyatzis, 1996), even compared with peer influence (King et al., 2002).

Bidirectional religious conversations. Influenced by the concept of bidirectionality, recent attention has been given to the nature of parent-child conversations. Research has explored whether parent-child conversations are bidirectional or unidirectional, and the implications of each. In a study on bidirectional religious conversations, Flor and Knapp (2001) found the more frequently parents and younger adolescents had bidirectional discussions on issues of faith, the more likely the adolescents were to place importance on religion and to exhibit religious behavior. Boyatzis and Janicki (2003) conducted a study using survey and diary methods among Christians to determine whether religious conversations between parents and their young children involved more unidirectional or bidirectional components. They found bidirectional conversations to be more typical than unidirectional, and to be characterized by the child asking questions, voicing his or her opinion, and initiating and ending the discussion. They urged future research on religious socialization to move beyond seeing children as passive recipients and view them with a more active role.

Limitations and Gaps in the Literature

Previous research on parent-child religious conversations has been informative but typically has the following limitations: small sample size, low ethnic and religious diversity, data from only one region of the country, analysis of conversations only between parents and children or young adolescents, and the use of only quantitative and diary methods of analysis. In addition, the majority of data stems from maternal reports. Myers (1996) argued that "the study of religious inheritance requires that both generations be interviewed," (p. 58) and Collins and Laursen, (2004) stated that "observing only one dyad in a family with more than two members

provides only part of the picture of an adolescent's family relationships" (p. 347) This study attempted to address these gaps and limitations in the literature.

Research Questions

The current study uses a sample of parents and their adolescent children from various faith communities, and relies on qualitative data from family interviews in which parents and adolescents discuss religious topics together. It analyzes "religious conversations" (meaning conversations *about* or *influenced by* religion) using grounded theory, and therefore does not rely on hypotheses. Because current research still lacks a complete exploration of the elements and bidirectional processes of parent-adolescent religious conversations, the following questions will guide this study:

1. What are the elements of parent-adolescent religious conversations?
2. What are the bidirectional processes involved in parent-adolescent religious conversations?

Method

Participants

Consistent with Boss' suggestion (1980) that much can be learned by using a sample at the extreme of the variable of interest, this study features a purposive sample (Berg, 2001) of highly religious families. The sample consists of 57 married couples (32 from New England; 25 from Northern California) and their 77 adolescent children (45 from New England; 32 from Northern California; 39 girls, 38 boys). Of the 57 couples interviewed, 84% were Caucasian and 16% were ethnic minorities (2 African American, 4 Caucasian/Hispanic, 2 East Indian, and 1 Malaysian/Caucasian). On average, parents were in their mid-forties, had been married 21 years, and had three children (range 1-11). Of the 57 families interviewed, 21 had two or more

adolescent children participate in the interview. The 77 adolescents ranged in age from 10-20 years old with a mean age of 15.5 (16 for girls, 15 for boys) and had ethnic diversity similar to the parents.

Distribution of faith affiliation among the 57 families included: (a) 6 *Catholic*, (b) 3 *Orthodox Christian* (2 Greek Orthodox, 1 Orthodox Church in America), (c) 12 *Jewish* (2 Ultra-orthodox, 4 Orthodox, 4 Conservative, 2 Reform), (d) 4 *Muslim*, (e) 12 *Mainstream Protestant* (Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Lutheran, Methodist), (f) 12 *New Christian Traditions* (Christian Science, Jehovah's Witness, Latter-day Saint, Seventh-day Adventist, Friends), and (g) 8 *Evangelical Protestant* (Baptist, Charismatic Episcopal, Orthodox Presbyterian, Missionary Alliance, Pentecostal).

These families were quite religious, given that on average they reported they attended religious activities more than once a week, and donated an average of 7% of their income to their faith. The desire was to attain a sufficient number of participants to reach "theoretical saturation" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) where additional families are generally reiterating what others have reported (see Table 1 for summary of demographic information).

Interview Procedures

Data were drawn from family interviews completed in New England in 2002 and Northern California in 2004. After IRB approval was obtained, the interviewer[1] (Dr. David Dollahite) met with 38 congregational leaders from various faith communities in the given areas to solicit names of highly involved families in their congregations. The interviewer then contacted the families through a written letter explaining the aims and procedures of the study, and requesting the approval and participation of parents and their adolescent children. He met with 1-3 families from each congregation, usually in the families' homes. Informed consent was

received, participant confidentiality was protected[2], and all other Human Subjects Committee requirements were met. Participants were offered a monetary compensation as a token of appreciation (New England: $20 per parent and $10 per adolescent; Northern California: $75 per family).

Family interviews were conducted according to suggestions offered by Lofland and Lofland (1995). The interviewer began by giving a brief explanation of the study and an overview of the topics to be covered. He first met with the parents to discuss how their religiosity influenced their marital relationship (not central to this study); next, adolescents joined in (for about 1 hour) to discuss connections between faith and family life, including parent-adolescent relationships. It was made clear when the adolescents joined in the discussion that the majority of the questions were directed to any and all of the participants. The structure was conversational so that all would feel free to speak. The interviews were similar to "focus group interviews" in that something one person said could "spur memories and opinions in others" and moments of disagreement provided "instances of interchange between contrasting perspectives" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 21). Although questions were decided beforehand, the interviews were semi-structured, allowing the interviewer to guide the conversations, while still remaining attentive to the participants' unique ways of expressing their experiences and views. When needed, probe questions were used to seek further clarification (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). This flexible format meant that in some interviews the order, phrasing, and number of questions varied slightly. The families also filled out a demographic information sheet (see Table 1).

Many scholars make the methodological assumption that family members should be interviewed individually to avoid other-influenced responses. The data for this study, however, were collected with the parents and adolescents together in order to observe family processes and

to allow family members to interact and add to, revise, or challenge what others said (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). In support of this methodological decision, Smith and Denton's (2005) research on highly religious parent-adolescent relationships found their communication to be open and honest. Additionally, they found that highly religious teens were more likely than their less religious counterparts to report (a) having the right amount of freedom to develop and openly express their own views on important topics, and (b) being fairly or very comfortable talking with adults other than their parents.

Measures and Questions

Survey. Parents completed a 20-item survey called *Faith Activities In The Home* (F.A.I.T.H.) to evaluate perceived frequency, satisfaction, and meaning of twenty common religious family activities (see Appendix C). Item 10, "family religious conversations" directly related to the current study.

Interview questions. A number of questions were asked to parents and adolescents regarding their faith and family relationships. Data for this study were taken from both sets of interviews (New England and Northern California), but in accordance with a grounded theory approach, the first set of interviews (New England) led to more focused data collection including some revised questions in the second set. Data were drawn from specific content-relevant questions, and then entire transcripts were searched using a Boolean search tool for additional information on parent-adolescent religious conversations. Analyses were conducted on all 57 interviews and relevant data from 52 of the 57 were obtained (30 New England; 22 Northern California).

The following interview questions were most helpful in addressing the research questions: *To adolescents in both locations:* How do your parents share their faith with you? *To parents*

and adolescents in Northern California: When you talk together as parents and children about religion, how does the conversation go? How have your parent-child conversations about religion influenced parents and children? *To parents in New England:* What do you consider to be the most important things for you to be or do as a mother or father of faith? *To parents in both locations:* As parents, how do you share your faith with your children? For a list of all the interview questions, see Appendixes A and B.

Reducing Interviewer Bias

Specific attention was given to maintaining the greatest level of impartiality possible during the interview process. The same interviewer completed all 57 interviews, allowing for congruence in the interview style and atmosphere. He sought for "intimate familiarity" (Lofland & Lofland) with each of the various religious affiliations through the study of sacred texts, attending religious services, and meeting with various denominational leaders (Dollahite & Marks, 2005). This background knowledge helped the interviewer form questions that could be understood by families of various faiths and religious backgrounds. Aware of his predisposition to see the benefits of religiosity, the interviewer decided to offset this by asking questions about the challenges and possible dangers of their religiosity. Furthermore, the questions were formed to be simple and understandable, and avoid being double-barreled (2 questions in one) (Berg, 2001) or leading (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Preliminary questions were reviewed by a team of faculty and student researchers, after which they were pilot-tested in interviews with three couples, and then revised based on feedback.

Analyses

A grounded theory approach was used to explore the elements of parent-adolescent religious conversations (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Accordingly, theory constructed through this

study was based on data and not the preconceived notions of the researcher. However, in order to contextualize this study with theoretical sensitivity from the literature (Gilgun, 2005), research questions were informed by suggestions from current research to be aware of bidirectionality when studying parent-child conversations.

Coding

Relevant interview sections were read and coded as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998), in which the initial step, *open coding*, consisted of a careful line-by-line analysis and labeling. Next, *axial coding* was employed to reassemble data into related categories, according to properties and dimensions of the categories. An important part of the analysis was *coding for process* in an attempt to understand the dynamic and bidirectional nature of parent-adolescent religious conversations. *Selective coding* was then used to integrate and refine the categories into a conceptual model (Lofland & Lofland, 1995) that accurately depicted the major emergent themes from the data. Finally, in order to give greater validity to the findings, attempts were made to search for *negative instances* (Gilgun, 2005) that undermine the proposed conceptual model, to determine whether initial findings remained consistent under scrutiny.

Reducing Analytic and Interpretive Bias

Before and during the analysis, the following measures were taken to assure its rigor and validity: (1) *constant comparisons* to check for accuracy of code definitions and to explore possible reasons for variations across cases, (2) *triangulation* of the data from multiple family members and a faith-scale survey (3) weekly *group debriefings* involving the interviewer and the researcher of this study to clarify interpretations and discuss emerging themes (4) detailed note-taking of the researcher's personal reaction to the findings to assure adequate *reflexivity*. Furthermore, Blea (1995) proposed a method of minimizing interpretive bias by developing

respect for the observed community. The researcher did this by taking courses on Judaism and Islam and reviewing extensively the literature on family life of people from Jewish, Islamic, and various Christian faiths, in order to have a basic understanding of their practices and beliefs.

Results

Participants varied in how they viewed the role of religious conversation in their lives. A few families said they rarely talked about religion, while the majority suggested that religious conversations took place regularly within their families. Results of the F.A.I. T. H. survey found that collectively, families rated religious conversations as the *most meaningful* and the *second most frequent* religious activity (after grace at meals), even when compared with such activities as church attendance and prayer with the children. Interview data were explored for a deeper understanding of the meaning, elements, and processes of the parent-adolescent conversations. The first section addresses how parents shared their faith through religious conversations. The subsequent sections focus on the elements and conversational processes of parent-adolescent conversations. The last section addresses the bidirectional influences of parent-adolescent religious conversations. Although religious conversations varied between and within families, the most common answers are reported.[3] The findings rely on responses from parents and adolescents, even when they are reporting about each other. For example, conclusions of what parents said or did may come from either self-reports or adolescent reports.

Sharing Faith through Religious Conversation

Parent and adolescent responses to a question regarding how the parents shared their faith with their children were analyzed. A variety of methods were mentioned (including parent-child conversation, parental example, family worship, church attendance, and faith traditions), however, religious conversations[4] were mentioned most often (77% of parent responses, 76% of

adolescent responses[5]). Debby, a 44-year-old Baptist mother of two explained:

> Well, I think the biggest one's probably just conversation in everyday life, so it's not just something that you only do on Sunday morning. It permeates, kind of day-in day-out. How we communicate about things or how we try to hopefully teach them to think about things, or view other people, or make decisions.

The second most frequent response on how parents shared their faith was by example (53% of parental responses, 29% of adolescent responses), and some participants explained the relationship between conversation and example. Two parents mentioned the common phrase, "talk the talk and walk the walk." Deborah, a 17-year-old Orthodox Jewish youth, said of her parents, "Well, they're excellent examples. They do exactly as they tell us to do. It's not like they tell us to do something and yet they do not do it." Ibrahim, a 58-year-old Indian Muslim father of two explained:

> Children are very smart. So you can teach them all you want, but if you don't act that way, it's all for nothing. So, part of the teaching, is being a good role model. Doing what you're teaching your children.

Chelsea, a 19-year-old Jehovah's Witness explained why parental example alone is not enough:

> But of course there are different things that help support the example. . . .You have to understand what the example means in order for it to apply.

Jala, an Indian Muslim mother of two reinforced this idea as she mentioned times when her children needed an explanation about why she and her husband lived certain faith practices.

In conclusion, interview and survey findings indicated that for most families, parent-child religious conversations occurred quite frequently and were a meaningful way for parents to share their faith with their children, especially when parental talk was consistent with parental example. Adolescents in particular noted faith transmission through conversation more than any other method. These findings are relevant to the rest of this study since they establish the importance and frequency of parent-adolescent religious conversations; however, it was in

participants' descriptions *about* these conversations that the most meaningful data were found.

Elements of Parent-Adolescent Religious Conversations

Findings pertaining to research question #1 regarding the elements of religious conversations are taken from responses to a variety of questions which elicited references to parent-adolescent religious conversations. The data provide information about the *content, structure, location,* and *frequency* of parent-adolescent religious conversations.

Content

Families reported having had conversations about a variety of religious topics (see Table 2). The topics reported most often were in the area termed *life situations*; however, conversations about church and religious teachings were also prevalent. Many recalled specific situations they discussed, such as personal or family trials, relationship problems, the child's future, and the media. Others, like Shawn, a 43-year-old Baptist father of four, stated that their conversations dealt with daily life activities: "We kind of debrief the day together. Things will always come up that bring issues that relate to our faith. How are you responding to the situations you're in? How are you looking at the world around you?"

Structure

Family religious conversations varied in structure, but were coded into two main categories: *formal* and *informal*. Informal religious conversations were the most frequently reported, especially by adolescents. They occurred at various places and times throughout the day, and were often prompted by an event, a question, or a situation. As Shawn, a Baptist father said, "It just kind of naturally comes in." Meredith, a 17-year-old Baptist, said "circumstances that come up day-to-day, like if something happens, we talk about it." One Latter-day Saint couple, Heather and Lyndon, spoke of where and how they have informal discussions with their

children:

> **Heather:** Driving in the car, while you're doing dishes, not "we are now sitting down and having this discussion." Part of life, folding clothes.
> **Lyndon:** The question comes up, you answer it. You take the time right then to stop or to continue what you're doing and answer.
> **Heather:** But to have formal as well as informal discussions.

Families reported that formal religious conversations were often part of a structured religious activity, such as family devotions, gospel lessons, scripture study or religious holidays. Ed, a 43-year-old Seventh-day Adventist father of seven told how scripture study leads to family religious conversation: "We share with each other what scripture means to us. Scriptures can be a stimulus for conversation and thought." A 42-year-old Presbyterian mother of three, Tasha, said, "When we have our devotions, I have questions and I try to get them [the children] to think."

Location and Frequency

Families indicated that religious conversations primarily took place at home, and sometimes in the car. Many described having had casual religious conversations in the kitchen area during dinnertime, while preparing meals, or while doing the dishes.

Many participants indicated how much they thought they talked about religion. Five families reported that they did not talk about religion much and ten families said that they discussed religion quite frequently, some even daily. A few parents and adolescents reported that the children spoke more often with the mother than with the father. One family suggested that it was because the mother spent more time with the children. A 14-year-old Latter-day Saint youth, Hailey, said that she talked to her mother more than her father about life situations, such as problems with friends, as well as about scripture questions, and her reasoning was, " 'Cause I'm more comfortable talking to my mom." It is noteworthy that Hailey mentioned that she sometimes got annoyed that her father "always" related faith and scriptures to her life.

There were a few families in which the participants did not agree with each other on how much they discussed religion. This indicates that it may have been difficult for some to ascertain the amount of religious conversation that took place in their family. Lindsay, a 14-year-old Orthodox Christian explained the difficulty for highly religious families to distinguish the religious discussions from non-religious, because "depending on how you look at it" their faith significantly influences who they are, which indirectly contributes to their conversations.

Conversational Processes in Parent-Adolescent Religious Conversations

Not all that was said about parent-adolescent religious conversations was positive. In fact, both parents and adolescents were candid about their frustrations as well as their satisfaction with their religious discussions. Through analysis of the patterns of positive and negative experiences, two main conversational processes were identified: *parent-centered* and *youth-centered*. Out of the 52 families whose interviews directly contributed to this study, 46 (88%) referred to conversations that were parent-centered and/or youth-centered. Youth-centered conversations were mentioned by all 46 families, while 14 of those families (30%) also reported parent-centered conversations. Of the 339 total passages coded for parent-centered and/or youth-centered conversations, only 42 (12%) passages referred to parent-centered conversations.

In response to research question #2, findings suggest that parent-adolescent conversations were more bidirectional when they were youth-centered, and more unidirectional when parent-centered. Parents and adolescents reported that when religious conversation was focused on the adolescent child's needs and interests, the adolescents were engaged, interested, and enjoyed discussing religion. In contrast, when the conversations were tailored more to the parents' desires and needs, the adolescents were more likely to be disengaged and uninterested. The following sections illustrate the processes in parent-centered and youth-centered conversations, and

observations of bidirectional and unidirectional conversations are given.

Parent-Centered Approaches to Religious Conversation

Parents and adolescents both spoke of situations in which religious conversations were not as pleasant or effective for the adolescents. Typically these situations involved an overemphasis on the parents' desires and a lack of attention to the adolescent's interests. They consisted mostly of unidirectional talk from the parent to the adolescent. These situations were categorized as parent-centered approaches to religious conversation. Four main characteristics of parent-centered conversation were: (a) parents talk too much, (b) parents' talk is unsolicited or unwanted, (c) parents give demands without explanation, and (d) conversation is too restrictive for the adolescents.

Parents talk too much. Some parents acknowledged that they had the tendency to talk to their children about religion more than the children preferred. Heidi, a 35-year-old Latter-day Saint mother of four, reported "We talk to them an awful lot more than they want us to." A 40-year-old Lutheran mother of three, Elizabeth, spoke for herself and the children when she said, "Every once in a while, we have to remind Matt [the father] that he's preaching to the choir."

Adolescents reported some frustration with religious conversation when their parents talked too much. Chad, a 12-year-old Episcopalian explained how his parents sometimes made him talk with them longer than he would like:

> Sometimes I ask a question and then I think that they go too far because they start talking too much. . . . And then I say that I don't want to discuss it anymore and I try to walk away and then they have me come back in and I'm, like, really mad.

In Chad's account of this situation, he initiated the conversation with a question, and his parents were willing to answer his question. At first, this could be seen as a youth-centered conversation. However, when his parents insisted on talking about it more than Chad wanted to, it ended up as

a negative experience for him. Devin, a 16-year-old Catholic did not hesitate to say that his parents gave sermons instead of having a discussion with the children. His 14-year-old sister, Tanya, disagreed with him: "No, no, they'll say something then you listen, then we'll say something back to show that we understand or we don't." This discrepancy could indicate a number of things, such as a difference in perception according to age, gender, or parent-child relationship, the desire to defend the parents, or sibling conflict.

Parents' religious talk is unsolicited or unwanted. Some parents and adolescents indicated that at times, the parents spoke to the children about religion when it was unsolicited or unwanted by the child. Hailey, a 14-year-old Latter-day Saint was irritated that her father *always* spoke of religious principles: "He always, for every situation, even something as a math problem, he can relate a scriptural principle. . . . And it can get really annoying."

Some parents also expressed their desire to expose their children to their faith. Joann, a 49-year-old African American Methodist mother of one told how her 16-year-old daughter, Jasmine, reacted when Joann insisted on exposing her to a scripture: "Jasmine just rolls her [eyes], 'cause I feel like you tell them anyway, and if she just says, Mom, I don't want to hear it. It's like, okay fine. Meanwhile, I've said it."

Rachel, an Ultra-orthodox Jewish mother explained that even when they initially gave their children a chance to talk but then took over the conversation, the children did not always listen:

> We have relaxed conversation at the table, and then, we, either my husband or myself, after ten minutes we tell the kids to hold onto their chair, just try to listen. And they don't always listen as well as we'd like them to listen and they sometimes are like "blah, blah, blah."

Parents give demands without explanation. Many parents expressed the need for their children to choose their own faith; however, some reports indicated times when parents told their

child how to behave without providing adequate explanation about the expectation. Alisia, a 43-year-old Catholic Latina mother of two, reported that sometimes when she spoke to her children she told them how to behave, even though she recognized the need to be a an example of what she said. Another mother, Charlotte, a 56-year-old Presbyterian, recounted a conversation in which she made her 14-year-old son, Shane, go to church:

> **Charlotte:** But you've [Shane] made a comment a lot about, "How come we have to go to church? None of my other friends do. Why are we the only ones?" Which we're not.
> **Interviewer:** And how do you respond to that when Shane asks that question? What do you say?
> **Charlotte:** What do I say? Because that's what we do. We're going to church and you'll be better off for it. So get out of bed and get in the car.

This reported conversation was parent-centered because the mother, Charlotte, did not really answer Shane's questions about going to church, but rather, insisted that he go. His questions may have indicated a negative outlook toward going to church, but they were left unanswered.

Although this theme was categorized as negative, it should be noted that not all instances of parents telling their children what to do were met with resistance. Maryam, a 17-year-old Asian American/Indian Muslim, explained:

> In Islam there's rights and duties upon the parents to the child and the child to the parents. And my right and duties, [are that] I have to respect my parents. . . . I have to be kind, I have to obey them, no matter what, except in the case that they would ask me to do something against Islam. . . . I understand what they say, there's a wisdom behind it, and I understand what that is. And I know that it's better for me. If I don't understand it now, I just let it go, because I'm sure I'll understand it tomorrow or ten years from now.

Conversation is too restrictive. Some families reported that when religious conversation was too restrictive for the adolescent children, it was a negative experience. Rachel, a 38-year-old Ultra-orthodox Jewish mother of seven learned that, "If [they] have to sit rigidly—the children of all ages, and . . . you have this long lecture, it can actually be a very negative influence. Too, the kids will feel restricted." Alecia, a 20-year-old Latter-day Saint, said: "When

it comes to family home evening . . . it feels forced sometimes just because we all have to sit here and talk about it." Shannon, a 17-year-old Seventh-day Adventist, responded to her father's suspicion that she did not enjoy the religious holidays as much anymore, by suggesting that he "let [the children] talk too." Shannon's response showed that it was not the religious holidays she disliked, but rather the fact that she had to listen to her father speak so long without a chance to say something as well. Other participants also indicated the need for adolescents to feel free to speak and not to feel coerced.

In summary, less than one-third of the families reported having had unidirectional religious conversations in which parents initiated, controlled, and dominated the conversation. These were termed parent-centered due to the overemphasis on the parental desires, and less attention on adolescent needs. In response to these conversations, adolescents were less interested in listening to and discussing religious issues. All of these families also reported having youth-centered conversations, and many explained that because they had learned that parent-centered conversations were less-effective, they had tried to make their conversations more youth-centered.

Youth-centered Approaches to Religious Conversation

The findings indicate that most parents were aware of their adolescent child's needs during religious conversations, and tried to tailor the conversations accordingly. In contrast to the unidirectional parent-centered approaches to religious conversation, these were much more bidirectional in nature, encouraging or allowing the adolescent to play an active role in the discussions. These responses were labeled youth-centered approaches to religious conversation, and manifested the following characteristics: (a) adolescent talks more and parents listen, (b) adolescent seeks and receives understanding from parents, (c) religion is related to adolescent's

life, (d) conversation is open, and (e) parent-adolescent relationship is nurtured. Findings suggest that youth-centered conversations were the most engaging, enjoyable, and effective in helping adolescents understand their parents' religiosity and explore their own religious beliefs.

Adolescent talks more and parents listen. Some parents shared their discovery that with their adolescent children, they needed to listen more and talk less. Rachel, an Ultra-orthodox Jewish mother, said, "We find the older kids get, they have so much to say, and . . . after a whole day of school, they come home and they don't want to hear us talk, they want to talk." Kira, a Lutheran mother responded why she thought it best to use fewer words: "I've learned that less words are better because sometimes if you just plant the seed, their mind will work on it." She referred to the need for children to think and come to conclusions on their own, instead of being lectured to. Earlier on in her interview, Kira reported her tendency to want to speak up when she disagrees with her children. She had learned from her husband's example that it's better to listen more than talk:

> I tend to react when they say something and I have learned from Aaron [husband] to listen. I've got two ears, one mouth. . . . He can talk to them or listen to them and throw out one or two words and they feel very comfortable.

Brent, a Jehovah's Witness father suggested that by letting his adolescent children express themselves, he could better understand them: "And also understanding what their thinking patterns are, and what they're going through. And allowing them to communicate that."

One Latter-day Saint family spoke of how they let their children speak more during formal religious activities. The mother, Charlene, explained that during family scripture study, they have each child read and then explain the meaning of the verse and then "if anybody has any thoughts, 'Oh that's like when this happened' or anything like that, then people say that." Her 13-year-old son, Bradley added, "sometimes we [children] teach the family home evening

lesson."

Adolescent seeks and receives understanding from parents. One of the most commonly mentioned youth-centered ways that parents and adolescents communicated was through questions solicited by either parents or adolescents. Parents asked the adolescents questions to get their feedback, to prompt them to think, and to test their level of understanding. The adolescents asked questions on topics of interest. For some adolescents, these questions were in response to peer, school, or media influences. Questions were commonly about religious beliefs, values, or how to treat others. A comment by Lyndon, a 35-year-old Latter-day Saint father of four, suggested not only the need to answer the child's questions, but to "take the time right then." Mandy, a 15-year-old Missionary Alliance youth commented about her parents' readiness to answer her questions: "And they're always willing to talk to me about any questions I had. And they explained what they believed to me."

When trying to help their children understand religion, the parents did not always know the best answer to their child's questions. Sophie, a Presbyterian mother, said, "Sometimes I have an answer for him [adolescent child] and sometimes I go, 'you know, you've got a point.'" Kelsey, a 13-year-old Orthodox Christian, commented, "Sometimes my parents don't know the answer so then it's kind of a discussion because they don't have the answer to give me." Mindy, a 15-year-old Lutheran, also explained how difficult questions led to a conversation, and even a joint family search for an answer:

> A lot of times it's me and Natalie [10 year-old sister] coming up with questions. And it's usually when we're all sitting in the living room together and a question will pop into our head. We'll ask, "Dad, what is this? What does that mean?" And we always have a Bible around and it's amazing because then we'll look it up in the Bible and we'll talk about it.

Another way that parents tried to help their children understand their religious views was by reasoning on the child's level. Yuusif, an Indian Muslim father, said that one element of

religious conversations is "explaining to them [his children] in a way they can understand. . . . and reason[ing] with them." A 43-year-old Presbyterian father of three, Thomas, explained a similar way of "reasoning together" by saying, "I take the approach of coming alongside rather than trying to parent down to them."

Religion is related to adolescent's life. Parents and adolescents recognized the importance of having religious conversations that link faith beliefs with the adolescent's life. Scott, a 14-year-old Catholic spoke of his parents: "I just feel like they always try to bring religion into our lives and to make us better." Paul, a 46-year-old Christian Scientist father of two said, "I think the time where it comes most to its surface is applying what we know and believe at times of conflict." Yuusif, a Muslim father, said:

> We try and take every situation that they face, the children, and show them the faith perspective of each thing that happens, good or bad, and to remind them when something good happens, that this is from God and how they should be thankful to Him. And when something happens by way of a trial, how to be patient and also to be assured that there's going to be good in that too, because it has come from God with a purpose that we have not understood at this moment.

Similarly, Julie, a 55-year-old Latter-day Saint mother of three, said they looked for opportunities to relate their faith teachings to their life:

> I think we're pretty open and verbal about what we believe and if we think that the moment is teachable and we use that to teach Beth [16-year-old daughter] about Heavenly Father, and the Holy Ghost, and what's happening in the world today.

Some families spoke of connecting religion to their child's life during formal religious discussions. Shawn, a Baptist father said the following, when speaking of family devotions: "there's always the challenge of, 'okay let's really make this relevant,' or helping them see the usefulness." Ed, a Seventh-day Adventist father illustrated how during family devotions, he used the scriptures to ask questions about issues in their own lives:

> This is what the scriptures say, what are we going to do now? How is that speaking to

> each of us individually? How is that going to change our life? Where does our life need to change? Where are we falling short? Where do we need to focus our attention? Where are we deficient in our own relationships?

Conversation is open. There were many families who spoke about how they valued openness in their religious conversations which allowed everyone to speak their minds. Alecia, a 20-year-old Latter-day Saint, gave an adolescent perspective when she said she enjoyed casual conversation where she could talk:

> If it's a one-on-one conversation, it's usually pretty interesting. It's interactive. I enjoy talking about religion. . . . Most of the time when we're just talking as friends more than anything like on a casual basis, it's usually pretty cool. . . . I'll say something to [my mom] about religion and she'll be like, "Yeah, that's awesome. I have a story that goes with whatever you were talking about." And I'm like, "Oh that's really cool." And you know we can talk about it casually and not have to worry.

Kira, a Lutheran mother, thought openness is best, but explained why this is difficult for her:

> Just let them have their ideas and their thoughts and . . . I tend to flip out because I'm afraid, "Oh my gosh, they're going down the wrong path" and to realize that's all part of growing up, testing out their own faith, challenging us. . . . I'm still in the process of learning that.

For some families, their open conversations were usually calm and respectful. Elizabeth, a Lutheran mother, and her 15-year-old daughter, Mindy, said:

> **Elizabeth:** There's lots of times where, "I see it," "No I see it this way." "But what about this?"
> **Mindy:** But it's usually calm.
> **Elizabeth:** It's calm, but everybody has a view. And some of us are more passionate about our views than others.

Aisha, a 46-year-old African-American Muslim mother of 11, said:

> We talk a lot. We have very in-depth conversations because you can see they're very verbal. They have their opinions. And we've always told them that you can always say what you need to say, but just say it with the right tone. You know, so they're allowed to express themselves, even if they disagree with us. We don't have a problem with that, it's just how you say it.

This Muslim family had guidelines on how comments were made, although content was open.

Some families reported that the level of openness in their religious conversations allowed for arguments. Some Jewish families explained that openness and even arguing were a welcomed and positive part of their culture. Arella, a 42-year-old Conservative Jewish mother of two, said "Jews are very open. They always tell it like it is. They're just open, they're out there. No one holds back anything." Esther, a 12-year-old Conservative Jewish girl explained, "Well it's kind of a stereotypical thing that we [Jewish families] argue a lot, but it's true."

Parent-child relationship is nurtured. Some parents spoke of religious conversation in connection with their desire to be close to their children by spending time with them, seeking to understand them, and encouraging them. Kari, a Missionary Alliance mother articulated the importance of being available for conversation with her children when they needed her: "Be there to talk to them and help them through things and love them unconditionally through hard times that do come, and good times as well. Spend time together." Yuusif, a Muslim father spoke of the need to be "constantly alert with them and close to them in understanding what they're going through." Amy, a 45-year-old Baptist mother of two expressed her efforts to compliment her children and be a good friend to them:

> And I think also trying to encourage them and to just and let them know how much I respect and admire them and appreciate them as people and who they are and how proud I am of them. . . . I still play with my kids; and I'm very affectionate and I hug them. And even though I'm their mother, I'm also their friend.

The participants suggested that religious conversation can help foster a healthy parent-adolescent relationship. Jack, an18-year-old Baptist, told how his friends' parents neglected the parent-child relationship while still trying to transmit beliefs:

> I've seen some of my friends have acted, where parents are slamming Bible verses in their face, and really not loving them, not helping them grow. It's more like a forceful thing, at unnecessary times. When it really would have been helpful just for them to sit down and talk with their kid.

In sum, 88% (46/52) of families provided some description of youth-centered conversations; and, many had recognized the need to adjust their religious conversations to be more youth-centered. They reported that youth-centered conversations were bidirectional, which fostered adolescent interest and engagement in the conversations.

Observed Conversations

In addition to and while speaking *about* their conversations, these parents and adolescents *had* conversations. This section reports on those "observed conversations." General observations of parent-adolescent communication during the interviews generated illustrations of bidirectional and unidirectional conversations. While reporting about their religious conversations, a Conservative Jewish mother, Miriam, and her 12-year-old daughter, Esther, carried on a bidirectional conversation in which both took an active part and played off the other's comments:

> **Miriam:** We really talk about the stories in the Bible a lot and we talk about God and what would you do if God asked you to do this thing like take your son up to the mountain and sacrifice him. How would you feel? How would you feel if you were the wife? If you were Abraham's wife?
> **Esther:** Or if you were Isaac?
> **Miriam:** Or if you were Isaac, how would you be feeling? Because Isaac was, I think, it's my understanding,
> **Esther:** 30.
> **Miriam:** Isaac was not a baby . . . He was actually an older guy. What would you be thinking?
> **Esther:** Never thought about that. I don't usually think about him being an older guy.

Another observed conversation that illustrates bidirectionality occurred when a Presbyterian mother and 16-year-old son were respectful to each other in letting the other get a chance to talk. In the end, the mother let the son be the one to explain:

> **Sophie:** Eric was just talking about religion today.
> **Eric:** Yeah, I was just going to mention that, Mom, do you want to say anything?
> **Sophie:** Go ahead. You talk.

Some interviews revealed observations of parent-centered conversations that were more unidirectional. In the following interview excerpt, the parents contradicted their 14-year-old son, Shane, and then provided an illustration of a unidirectional conversation:

> **Interviewer:** So do you guys ever have conversations about religion? About spiritual things? About God?
> **Shane:** Not really.
> **Charlotte:** Well sometimes we do.
> **Shane:** I said not really. That means sometimes but not a lot.
> **Justin:** Well we'll have, you'll say when we get out of church, "I don't believe in God, blah blah blah, this is not real." Then we'll have a little bit of conversation about, "You should think about it" and we're not prescribing that you must believe in God. You can't prescribe that. But you can say, "You can go, you can listen, we can fulfill our responsibility that you be exposed to this, you get to make your own choice."
> **Charlotte:** And it's also as much your life education as going to school or anything else. You have to take care of your inside as much as you do your mind and your body.

The three observed religious conversations provided above illustrate how youth-centered and parent-centered conversations were evident during the interviews. They offer concrete examples of what the researcher considered to be bidirectional and unidirectional religious conversations between parents and adolescents.

Bidirectional Influences of Parent-Adolescent Religious Conversations

In addition to the evidence of bidirectional and unidirectional processes in conversation, the interview data also suggest an overall bidirectional influence between parents and adolescents that took place around religious conversations. Parents and adolescents were unique in the attributes which they contributed to and then obtained from religious conversations together.

What Parents Contribute

The data reflected certain attributes that parents contributed (in varying degrees) to parent-child religious conversations, including: (1) religious conviction, (2) religious life experiences, (3) desire for their adolescent to be religious, (4) an example of religious beliefs and

practices, (5) willingness to teach their adolescent religious beliefs and practices, and (6) a realization that their adolescent must choose their own beliefs. The following quotes illustrate each of these attributes (excluding religious conviction, which was inferred throughout the interviews). The number in parenthesis refers to one of the six attributes:

> (2) (Miriam, a Conservative Jewish mother): We talk about the difference between when I was a child, when we rarely discussed Biblical events or stories.
>
> (3) (Ali, a Muslim father): I told them. . . . There's nothing that you could do in this life that would be better than being a Muslim.
>
> (4) (Dustin, an Episcopalian father): This standard that we represent in how we live our lives, good and bad.
>
> (5) (Michelle, a Christian Scientist mother) At every opportunity I would say we [share our beliefs with our children], and anytime they are dealing with a challenge of any kind, we help them to understand how God can be an immediate aid to them.
>
> (6) (Carlos, a Catholic father): Understanding that they're different, they're not me. And I have learned the hard way, but I cannot mold them to be me. So I respect that identity.
>
> (6) (Vickie, an Episcopalian mother): Know that they'll make their own decision at some point. Try not to force it too much, down their throats, but just giving the opportunity to learn what it's about . . . and giving choices and set them free at some point.

What Adolescents Contribute

Data indicated that adolescents also contributed in large part to parent-child religious conversations. The most commonly mentioned attributes that adolescents contributed to conversation were: (1) life experiences and questions that need explanation (influenced by peers, school, religion class, church, and media); (2) the need for autonomy in exploring and expressing thoughts, feelings, and beliefs; and (3) the desire to speak more than be spoken to. Some of these ways adolescents contributed to religious conversation have been evident in previous quotes, but the following quotes illustrate additional points (again, the numbers refer to the numbered attributes):

> (1) (Maryam, a 17-year-old Asian American/Indian Muslim): [Future marriage] is something that I discuss with my parents a lot. I'd like them to help me and I want to be able to follow Islam in regards to marriage, the best I can.
>
> (1) (Charlotte, a Presbyterian mother): As Shane has taken science classes, we've gotten into some discussions about well God didn't really put all this here and in science it says that this happened or the Big Bang theory.
>
> (2) (Devin, a 17-year-old Baptist): But I think that [my parents] not putting up those road blocks, and not being legalistic and not being controlling in an unhealthy way, has really been for our long term good.
>
> (2) (Tina, a Latter-day Saint mother): You have to get to the point that [they] have to make [their] own decisions; have to face [their] own consequences. And as a parent, that's a really hard thing to deal with, because you know if they'd just listen to you, they'd be happy.
>
> (3) (Rachel, an Ultra-orthodox Jewish mother): the older kids get, they have so much to say . . . they don't want to hear us talk, they want to talk.

Influence on Parents

Parents were often explicit about how religious conversations with their children had influenced them. Angela, a Catholic mother of five, said, "It's a very commonly held understanding that parents mold their children, but the longer I'm a mother, the more I realize my children mold me to [be] a different person, I know, than I would have been if I hadn't had children." Parents reported changes such as: (1) gained knowledge about religion, self, and adolescent, (2) increased in religiosity/spirituality, (3) adjusted method of talking about religion with their adolescent as the child matures, and (4) satisfied in knowing they were doing their part to expose their adolescent to their religion, even if the adolescent ends up choosing differently. The following are quotes illustrating these ways parents were influenced:

> (1) (Miriam, a Conservative Jewish mother): We talk about those kinds of things and they influence my way of thinking about justice a lot.
>
> (1) (Heidi, a Latter-day Saint mother): We can answer their hard questions, or we can look and study and find the answers to their questions.

> (1, 2) (Amy, a Baptist mother): We are constantly learning from our kids. And especially as they have grown and matured, and they keep us honest. And they challenge us on things. And they motivate us spiritually. They both get input from their own spiritual walks and people they come in contact [with]. And they bring all of this home and talk about it and stuff. If we're out of line, they'll call us on it, which is good.
>
> (2) (Susan, a Methodist mother): There would be a wisdom that would come from something they said. I have felt on occasion, through my children, to be very close to God.
>
> (3) (Emily, a Baptist mother): And I'm finding as they get older, how we do all this is changing.
>
> (3) (Brent, a Jehovah's Witness father): Helping them prepare talks where they would have to speak on a Bible subject. When they were younger we were very much involved in [preparing church talks] with them, and eventually the ability to reason on a certain subject using the Bible. Eventually they are able to do it on their own. Then we're just like "Here, what do you think?" They put it together.

Many parents indicated that their acknowledgement of needing to make conversations more age-appropriate for their maturing adolescents helped them change their conversational approach. Rachel, an Ultra-orthodox Jewish mother, observed that as her children mature, they want discussion in which they get to talk. Emily, a 45-year-old Baptist mother of four, noticed how her son's need for autonomy has caused a change in how the parents approach their religious conversations:

> They have to make their own decision about what they're going to end up believing, and how they're going to live their lives. And Jack [18-year-old son] is really kind of at that point, where it is shifting, in terms of how we relate to him, and kinds of conversations we have, or how we have conversations . . . we have started to change, where appropriate, how we interact with the kids. . . . I do a lot more listening and a lot more question asking, at least I hope I am, than direct telling you what you should do, though there are times when we do that.

Influence on Adolescents

Adolescents were not as explicit as parents in stating how they were influenced by religious conversations. However, as previously stated, the data reflected a dichotomous influence of positive and negative reactions by adolescents depending on the conversation

process. When the conversations were parent-centered and unidirectional (e.g., "preaching"), families reported that the adolescents were uninterested, "annoyed," "really mad," and "don't want to hear it" because it "feels forced." There was also some indication that in reaction to parent-centered conversations, adolescents were less likely to initiate future religious conversations with their parents. However, when conversations were youth-centered, adolescents were more likely to report them as "interesting," "interactive," and enjoyable. As a result of youth-centered conversations, adolescents seemed open to initiating more conversations.

Discussion

This study analyzed the processes manifest when highly religious parents and their adolescent children were involved in religious conversation. Specifically, it explored (a) conversation as a means for parents to share their faith with their children, (b) the elements of parent-adolescent conversations, (c) the processes in these conversations, and (d) the bidirectional influences of religious conversations.

In the discussion and conceptual model, no attempt to claim cause and effect will be made. However, since parents and adolescents themselves suggested certain patterns and outcomes of religious conversation, a careful analysis of their responses allowed for the construction of a conceptual model which suggests concepts and processes based in the data.

Core concept. The core concept (LaRossa, 2005) of this study is*: a youth-centered orientation and process is more likely to result in mutually satisfying and effective parent-adolescent religious conversations.*

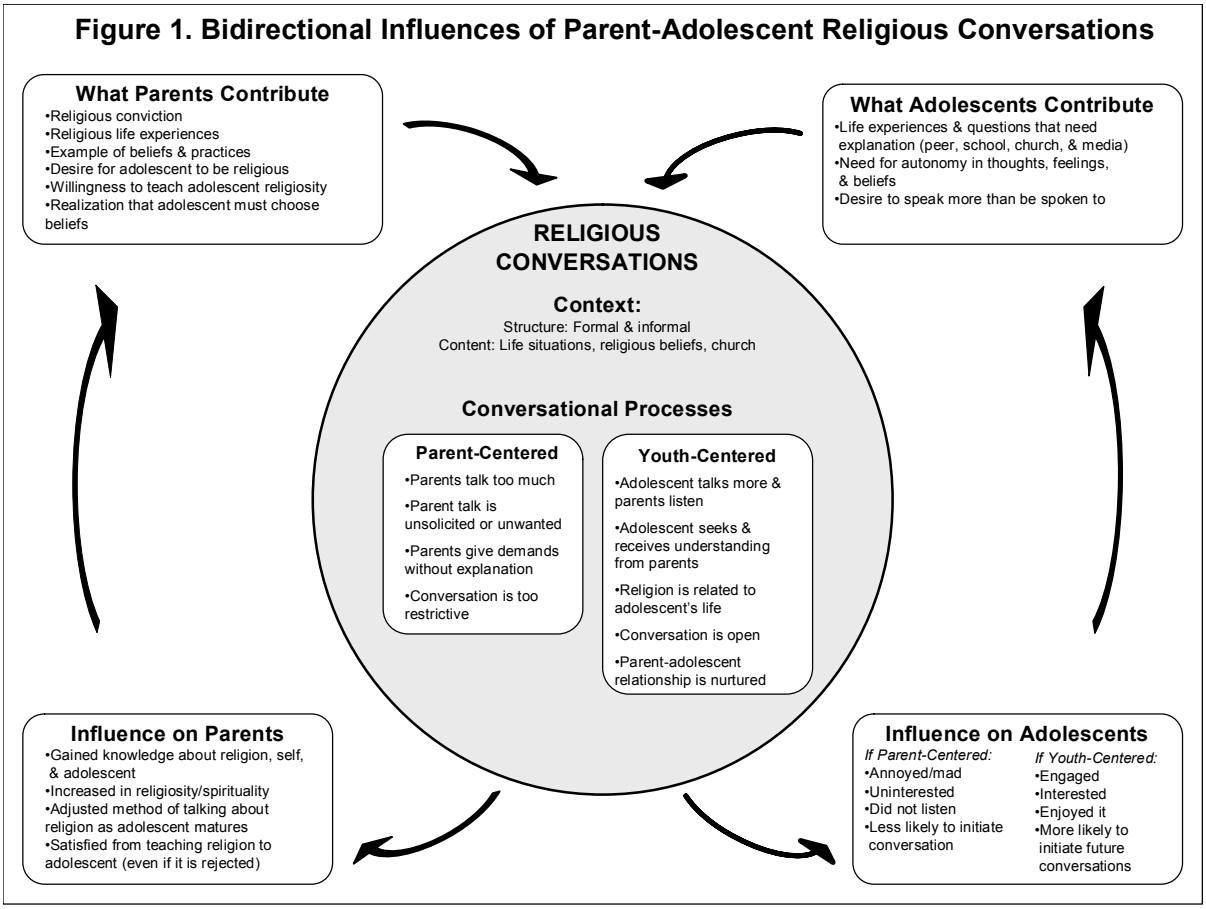
Conceptual Model

The conceptual model (Figure 1) illustrates the main findings including the bidirectional interaction between parents and adolescents as they engaged in religious conversations.

Specifically, it shows what parents and adolescents contribute to religious conversations, the processes involved in their conversations, and how they are influenced by the conversations. The arrows show a circular pattern indicating that parents and adolescents continually influence each other through religious conversations.

Figure 1.

Conceptual model



Sharing Faith through Conversation

Interview data indicate that conversation was the most common way parents shared their faith with their children. Adolescents, in particular, were most likely to mention informal religious conversations as a way their parents shared their faith. This suggests there may be a greater religious influence from parent to adolescent through religious discussion than through other means. This finding is consistent with those from other studies on the connection between family religious discussions and adolescent internalization of religion (Boyatzis, 1996, Flor & Knapp, 2001).

Participants suggested an interesting relationship between religious conversation and personal modeling or example: (1) conversation is not an effective way for parents to share their religious values with their adolescents if the parents' lives were not consistent with what they said; and (2) parental example is not always sufficient without an explanation of the purpose behind the parental religious practice. Theories on parental socialization of values have also highlighted the influence of modeling (Oman & Thoresen, 2003) and its combination with verbal instruction (White & Burnam, 1975), but findings from this study suggest the need to learn more about the relationship between modeling and verbal communication as means of religious socialization.

Life Conversations

The most meaningful findings from this study on elements (content, structure, location, frequency) of parent-adolescent conversations were about content. Topics of parent-child religious conversations change somewhat when the child moves through adolescence. Boyatzis and Janicki (2003) found that conversations between parents and young children (ages 3-12) were most commonly about God, Jesus, and prayer. These were also common topics among

participants in this study consisting of parents and youth ages 10-20; however, they were most often discussed in conjunction with questions and comments about *life situations* encountered by the adolescents. This is similar to findings from Garland's (2002) study that an individual's faith is shaped within the context of the family, by conversations that arise due to family crises and other life experiences. Moreover, this is consistent with theories on adolescent development. Elkind (1967) theorized that adolescents tend to be egocentric in viewing everything as it pertains to them personally, and Fowler's theory of faith development views adolescence as a time when faith is used to make meaning out of past and future life experience (Fowler, 1991). Findings from this study support the idea that adolescents have a strong need to talk about and make meaning out of past, present, and future events in their lives, and parents can play a key role in this process if they engage in youth-centered conversation.

Conversational Processes

Findings suggest that the quality of parent-adolescent conversations was distinguished by how youth-centered they were. This is congruent with models that hypothesize the quality of the parent-child interactions has more influence than the specific content that parents are trying to teach (e.g. Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). Interview data indicate that both parent-centered and youth-centered conversations influenced adolescents, but the latter was related more with positive adolescent reactions.

Research on other aspects of parenting also has compared parent-centered and child-centered approaches. Hastings and Grusec (1998) analyzed how parental goals determine parent behavior in times of conflict with their children. They found that parent-centered goals (in which the aim was for the child to comply to the parental desires) led to controlling behavior; whereas, child-centered goals (which focused on the child's needs) led to open communication in which

parents reasoned with their child. Findings from the current study are consonant with and add to these findings by illustrating how parent-centered and youth-centered approaches to religious conversations result similarly in parental control or openness. One significant difference is that Hastings and Grusec (1998) also explored relationship-centered parenting goals, whereas this study viewed relationship-building practices as part of the youth-centered approach.

Parent-centered Conversations

Participants indicated that negative responses by adolescents were most often in conjunction with parent-centered conversations. These were characteristic of parents dominating the conversation in terms of what, when, and how much was said, thus allowing the adolescent very little influence on the conversation. Conversations were too rigid and controlled, thus stifling the adolescents' ability to add to or change the discussion. It seemed that parents were talking *to* their adolescents, rather than *with* them. A number of issues discussed in the literature relate to findings from this study on parent-centered conversations. This section will address the following: (a) adolescent perception of values, (b) transmission of values , and (c) adolescent autonomy.

Adolescent perception of values. Grusec and Goodnow (1994) suggested that internalization of parental values is based partly on the child's accurate perception of the values. Accordingly, findings from the current study suggest that if the adolescent perceives the conversation as being forced or controlling, he or she may not attend to the content. Chad and Tanya illustrated sibling disagreement on perception of parental lecturing (p. 37), suggesting that the same parental behavior may be perceived differently by different children, due to various child characteristics.

If adolescents perceive parents as unwilling to structure conversations to fit adolescent needs, the adolescents may lose interest. In turn, parents may initiate fewer conversations to avoid a negative reaction, or become more adamant in expressing their views, resulting perhaps in the adolescent becoming more opposed to future conversation. In sum, the current study illustrates how adolescents' perception of parental values may vary, depending on the child characteristics, and whether the conversational processes of religious conversations are parent-centered or youth-centered.

Transmission of values. Lee, Rice, and Gillespie (1997) analyzed different family worship patterns among Seventh-day Adventists to distinguish which patterns were most likely to lead to child internalization of religious values. They found that when parents led the faith discussions and excluded child participation, the child had less active faith than those who did not worship at all. Findings from the current study highlight the need for adolescents to be involved in religious conversations, rather than passively sit and listen. In sum, findings support other studies: parental "transmission" of values through "one-way conversations" (preaching to, talking at) is not the best method for transmitting faith to children (Flor & Knapp, 2001; Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003).

Adolescent autonomy. Research on parent-adolescent relationships has found that when parents are restrictive in conversations, they inhibit expression and discovery of self. In contrast, when parents encourage their adolescent to express his/her own opinions, even when they go against those of the parent, it can foster sense of identity, self-confidence, and autonomously chosen values (Barber & Harmon, 2002; Quintana & Lapsley, 1987). The current study contributes to this literature by providing in-depth detailed accounts from parents and adolescents illustrating and explaining how the lack of psychological and verbal autonomy can

be stifling or frustrating in religious conversation. Findings also illustrate how parents recognize these changing needs in their adolescent children and attempt to adapt their own conversational styles to meet the adolescent's needs.

Youth-centered Conversations

This section will discuss how the findings on youth-centered conversations relate to existing literature. It will specifically address (a) bidirectional conversations, (b) open conversations, and (c) the parent-adolescent relationship.

Bidirectional conversations. Boyatzis and Janicki (2003) found that religious conversations between parents and younger children typically were bidirectional, characterized by the child taking an active role in asking questions and ending conversations. The current study supports these findings in that the great majority of the families (88%) had, or were striving to have, youth-centered or bidirectional conversations because parents had learned that these were most effective for the adolescents. This study also provides insight about how parent-adolescent conversations can be bidirectional. In addition to findings from Boyatzis and Janicki (2003) about children taking an active verbal role by asking questions, and initiating and terminating conversations, this study found that youth want to be even more involved verbally than when they were younger, and they have more of an influence on the purpose, content, and processes of conversations. This study is also unique in that it provides insight into parental recognition and sensitivity to adolescent cognitive, verbal, and identity development, and illustrates how parents adjust accordingly.

Flor and Knapp (2001) found that more frequent bidirectional conversations predicted greater adolescent internalization of parental religious values. The current study helps clarify *why* youth-centered conversations and bidirectional processes are more influential. Findings

suggested that youth have an increasing need to talk and be heard, to understand the world around them, and to choose their own religious identity. Lee, Rice, and Gillespie (1997) found that for adolescents, "family worship which encourages exploring and sharing personal insights may increase the likelihood of internalizing and applying concepts to daily living" (p. 373).

Open conversations. Findings from the current study on the importance of open religious conversations in which adolescents feel comfortable exploring their personal thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, are consistent with other research on adolescent development. Adolescence is a time of identity formation; but until late adolescence, values and beliefs are likely to be exploratory, with continued searching and questioning (Steinberg & Scott, 2003). When adolescents are not allowed to explore and form their own religious views, they may end up accepting someone else's religious identity as their own without true conviction, or rejecting religion altogether (Marcia, 2002; Markstrom-Adams, 1992).

Parent-adolescent relationship. Interview data suggested that youth-centered religious conversations are a means to foster the parent-adolescent relationship, and usually result in positive adolescent perceptions of religious conversations. Given that the parent-child relationship is the greatest influence in shaping many important decisions made by adolescents (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, & Bornstein, 2000), parent-adolescent religious conversations may be a mediator influencing important decisions made by adolescents. Future research should explore this possibility.

Findings from this study support the claim by Collins and Laursen (2004) that regardless of variance in family relationships due to cultural and ethnic differences, "family environments that emphasize mutuality, respect for the child's opinions, and training for maturity seem to be

most effective" (p. 354). Findings suggest that adolescents are eager to involve their parents in this discovery process if they feel the conversation is open, safe, and helpful.

Future research might compare these findings on parent-centered and youth-centered conversations to parent-adolescent conversation about various age-relevant topics, such as school, friends, extra-curricular activities, future goals/career, and ethnic identity.

Bidirectional Influences of Conversations

Steinberg (2001) called for a new perspective on the family that "emphasizes the different viewpoints and stakes that parents and adolescents bring to their relationship with each other" (p. 1). The current study sought not only to understand what parents and adolescents "bring to the table" of religious conversations, but also how they are mutually influenced by these conversations. Findings illustrate how parents and adolescents contribute to and are influenced by joint religious conversations. This is consistent with developmental systems theory, which recognizes the "reciprocal or bidirectional relations between the individual and the contexts of which he or she is a part" and therefore views the adolescent as an active producer of his or her environment by bringing unique characteristics to it, such as desires, needs, and understandings (Galambos, 2004, p. 239). Current findings highlight that adolescents have these characteristics in the context of religious conversations, and that these unique characteristics contribute to the types of conversations adolescents engage in with their parents.

Youth-centered authoritative conversations. Pinquart and Silbereisen (2004) conducted a quantitative study using a large sample of parent-adolescent dyads (431 mother-child dyads; 346 father-child dyads) to analyze the link between parenting styles and bidirectional intergenerational transmission of values. They found evidence supporting the transmission of faith values from parents to adolescents and from adolescents to parents. But the level of

adolescent transmission of faith values to parents was highest when parents had high levels of authoritative parenting.

This study confirms that an authoritative parenting approach to conversation is most effective when speaking with adolescent children about religion. Maccoby and Martin (1983) explained Baumrind's term "authoritative" parenting as high in reciprocity and bidirectional communication. In contrast, "authoritarian" parenting is characterized by parents dominating the conversation, thus restricting the children from expressing their own opinions. Data from the current study clearly demonstrated that youth-centered conversations were encouraged by an authoritative parenting style, while parent-centered conversations demonstrated a more authoritarian parenting style.

The current study provides qualitative data of parents and adolescents that tells a similar story about their bidirectional influence through religious conversations. Parents who demonstrated authoritative parenting in conversation were more likely to foster youth-centered conversations, which have a bidirectional nature in which parents are open to hearing to their adolescents' views. However, data from the current study also indicate that parents who are less authoritative (more authoritarian) foster parent-centered conversations that are less effective for adolescents, whereas Pinquart and Silbereisen (2004) did not find a significant difference in parental faith transmission when levels of authoritative parenting varied.

Limitations

Sample. This study used a purposive sample of religiously homogamous, two-parent, highly religious families, and therefore, its findings are not necessarily generalizable to the general population. However, because the aim of this study was to build theory about religious conversations, the purposive sample was preferred. Further research will be needed to determine

whether the theoretical ideas and empirical findings of the current study are present among families who (1) are only moderately or minimally religious, (2) have religious heterogeneity, (3) include non-religious members, (4) only have one parent involved in the faith, or (5) have a single-parent home.

The sample's ethnic diversity was broader than that of most previous studies on religious parents and adolescents, yet it was still too narrow to achieve theoretical saturation concerning differences in parent-adolescent religious conversations due to ethnicity. Given that religion often holds great importance for ethnic minority families (Dollahite et al., 2004), future studies may seek a more ethnically diverse sample to explore differences in parent-adolescent conversations.

Although the sample consisted of adolescents ages 10-20, there were not enough of each age to do a meaningful comparison of responses from differing age groups. The stage in development plays a role in behavior, emotions, cognition, psychopathology, and relationships with their parents (Susman & Rogol, 2004); therefore, differences in adolescent behavior and responses may have been influenced by a variety of outside factors. For this reason, this study is not able to infer direction of effects.

Methods. The methodological decision to interview parents and adolescent-children together was intended to produce data rich with parent-child interactions; yet, it also presented some obvious limitations. Some studies have found a tendency for participants to report an exaggerated amount of religious activity (Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003), and the nature of the family interviews in this study were not exempt from that possibility. In addition, it is possible that in each other's presence, some parents and adolescents may have presented socially or relationally desirable answers, thus withholding negativity or disagreement. The interviewer and researcher

observed what might have been a few cases of this, but also noticed times when parents and adolescents were open about disagreement. In these cases, the family members worked through the discussion until they all expressed their opinion, which resulted in a more complete answer. Therefore, it is possible that they were more honest together, since they were aware that other family members were listening and would not allow them to misrepresent their family life.

A desire of the researcher was to analyze observed parent-adolescent conversations throughout the interview, and then compare those with the reported conversations. This proved to be too methodologically challenging. Although it was somewhat easy to identify interesting passages of observed parent-adolescent communication, it was quite difficult to interpret them accurately. This limitation is partly due to the fact that the researcher was not present in the interviews to observe the non-verbal interactions. To overcome this limitation, future research may need to focus efforts during the interview on observing parent-adolescent religious conversations, and then ask participants for an explanation of what was observed. Future studies may also do as Nurmi (2004) suggested when seeking to determine the direction of influence: that is, use cross-lagged longitudinal data.

Conclusion and Implications

Despite the limitations, several valuable conclusions can be drawn from the current study. First, conversation is one of two most important ways (modeling or example is the other) that religious parents share their faith with their adolescent children, especially in associating the meaning of faith beliefs with daily life events. Second, bidirectional influence occurs between parents and adolescents through religious conversations. Specifically, some parents are influenced as they recognize the need to adjust methods of conversation with their adolescent children in order to allow the adolescent to freely initiate, direct, and contribute to the discussion.

When parents do not adjust their conversational approach to meet the changing needs of adolescents, they control and dominate the discussion, resulting in adolescent children who are uninterested, unengaged, and less likely to participate in future religious conversations.

Findings from the current study have implications for practitioners. Family therapists and religious leaders working with religious families may suggest that parents evaluate their approach to religious conversations with their adolescent children, and seek to have a youth-centered approach. They may suggest having more conversations that allow adolescents to contribute as equals, and assist parents and youth to learn how to communicate with one another in this way. Findings suggest that it is not detrimental for parents to initiate religious conversation with their adolescent, assuming they then follow cues and tailor it to the conversational needs of the adolescents.

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Table 1.

Report of Participant Families' Demographic Information (Northern California and New England)

	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Husband Age (*n*-57)		35	74	48
30 - 39	8			
40 – 49	32			
50 - 59	15			
60 >=	2			
Wife Age (*n*-57)		35	59	45
30 – 39	6			
40 – 49	34			
50 – 59	16			
60>=	1			
Male Adolescent Age (*n*-38)		10	20	15
Female Adolescent Age (*n*-39)		10	20	16
Husband & Wife Race/Ethnicity(*n*-57)		NA	NA	NA
Caucasian	48			
African-American	2			
Caucasian / Hispanic	4			
East Indian	2			
Malaysian / Caucasian	1			
Adolescent Race/Ethnicity (*n*-77)		NA	NA	NA
Caucasian	64			
African-American	5			
Hispanic	2			
Mixed Hispanic/Caucasian	3			
Indian/Malaysian	3			
Husband Education (*n*-57)		9	24	17
High School Minus (12<= Years)	1			
High School Plus (12-15 Years)	14			
Bachelors Degree Plus (16-17 Years)	12			
Masters Degree Plus (18-19 Years)	17			
Doctorate Degree Plus (20>= Years)	13			
Wife Education (*n*-57)		5	23	16
High School Minus (12<= Years)	1			
High School Plus (12-15 Years)	16			
Bachelors Degree Plus (16-17 Years)	19			
Masters Degree Plus (18-19 Years)	16			
Doctorate Degree Plus (20>= Years)	5			
Years Married		5	38	21
5 – 15	12			
16 – 25	34			
26 – 40	11			
Adult Religious Affiliation		NA	NA	NA
Catholic	6			
Protestant –Mainstream	13			
Protestant – Evangelical	8			
New Religious Traditions	11			
Jewish	12			
Muslim	4			
Orthodox Christian	3			

	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Adolescent Religious Affiliation		NA	NA	NA
Catholic	11			
Protestant –Mainstream	12			
Protestant – Evangelical	8			
New Religious Traditions	20			
Jewish	14			
Muslim	7			
Orthodox Christian	5			
Adult Religious Attendance		NA	NA	NA
Occasionally or Bi-monthly	2			
Monthly	5			
Weekly	27			
More than weekly	23			
Family Hours/week in faith based activities		0	71	18
0-9	24			
10-29	22			
30 >=	11			
Percent of income donated to faith		0	15%	7%
0% – 5%	25			
6% - 10%	26			
11% - 15%	6			
Number of Children (by Age)		1	11	3
Age 0-9	40			
Age 10-19	98			
Age 20 >=	24			

Table 2.

Content of Parent-Adolescent Religious Conversations

Content area	Description
Life situations	Situations the adolescents, parents, or others are in (difficult situations, relationship problems, etc.)
	Beliefs, standards or values about things they encounter or in the media
	Past and future events (of parents and adolescents, ancestor experiences)
Religious Beliefs	God/Allah
	Religious texts
	Jesus/Forgiveness/Prayer
	Difficult theological issues (e.g., role of priest, the creation)
Religion/church	What they learned or did in church
	Other religions and tolerance for those of other faiths
	Family religious background and history
	Religion class or prep for Bat/Bar Mitzvah

Note. Content areas and descriptions are listed in descending order by frequency of times mentioned.

Appendix A
Interview Schedule on Faith and Family Life
New England

<u>Faith and Family Relationships</u> (Married Couple and Adolescent/Young Adult child(ren))

The second part of the interview asks about connections between your faith and your family life, that is between your relationships with God and with family members. I would also enjoy any personal experiences that might illustrate the influence of your faith in your family life.

1. What are *God's purposes for families* and how does this fit into God's purpose for life?
2. What *role* does God play in your life as parents?
3. Do you feel that God has ever *directly intervened* in your family life? If so, in what way?
4. How *central* is your faith in God to the way you are as a parent?
5. Which *faith practices/traditions* hold special meaning for you as a family? (Prayer, scripture, Sabbath)
6. Have you ever had a *spiritual experience together* as a family?
7. How does your *faith bless* or strengthen your family life? (vice versa)
8. What would you say to someone asking for *evidence* of the value of your faith for your family relationships?
9. Does your *faith provide* your family with important things that secular society does not?
10. As parents, how do you *share your faith* with your children? (How does this compare with how your parents shared their faith with you?)
11. How has your *faith helped you when your kids have struggled* for meaning or guidance?
12. How has your *relationship with God influenced* your relationship with your children? (vice versa, example?)
13. Are there ways that child(ren) in your family are asked to *sacrifice for their faith*?
14. *How important* to you is it that your child(ren) *follow in your faith*?
15. What are your *deepest hopes for your child(ren)* in relation to their faith and future family life?
16. [To the adolescents] 1) In what ways does your faith influence your *sense of identity* as a person?
    2) In what ways does your faith influence how you *think about your future* marriage and family life?
17. [To mother] What do you consider to be the *most important things* for you to be or do as a mother of faith?
18. [To father] What do you consider to be the *most important things* for you to be or do as a father of faith?
19. Does your faith influence what aspects of the broader culture to *let in or keep out* of your family life?
20. What are the *greatest challenges* to your faith and family relationships *from the*

surrounding culture?

21. How do you *respond to challenges* to your faith and family from the surrounding secular culture?
22. Have the tragic *terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001* affected your faith and family relationships?
23. Has your family experienced any *major stressors or challenges* that your faith has helped you deal with?
24. What part of living your faith is *most challenging* or difficult for the child(ren) in the family?
25. Most parents and adolescents have some conflict. What affect, if any, does your faith have on *avoiding or reducing parent-child conflict*? (forgiveness)
26. Do you feel there are any religious beliefs or practices that, if *misunderstood or misapplied*, can be harmful to family relationships?
27. Are there any scriptural stories/teachings or hymns that give you special guidance or inspiration as parents?
28. Do the lives of *Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar* in the Bible have any meaning to you as a family of faith?
29. Are there ways you would like to *strengthen links* between your faith and your family relationships?
30. Is there anything else about the links between your faith and your family life you consider important or interesting to mention?

***Were there any questions or other aspects of the interview process that you considered particularly hard to answer or perhaps offensive for some reason?*

Appendix B
Interview Schedule on Faith and Family Life
Northern California

<u>Faith and Family Relationships</u> (Married Couple and Adolescent/Young Adult Child(ren))

The second part of the interview asks about connections between your faith and your family life; that is between your relationships with God and with family members. I would also enjoy any personal experiences that might illustrate the influence of your faith in your family life.

1. Which *religious practices/traditions* hold special meaning for you as a family?
2. Can you recall a particular time when these practices/traditions really helped your family?
3. Is your religious congregation important to your family? Your marriage? (EXAMPLE)
4. Which of your religious beliefs have the most influence on your family life?
5. How *central* is your religion to how you are as parents and as children in this family?
6. Can you think of a time when you believe God *directly influenced* your family in some way?
7. Are there ways in which your religious beliefs or practices influence things in and around your home? (for example the foods you eat or don't eat, the clothing you wear or don't wear, or the way your home is designed or decorated, the way you spend/manage your money)
8. What do you believe are *God's purposes for marriage and family*?
9. As parents, how do you *share your religious beliefs and identity* with your children? (EXAMPLE?)
10. *How important* to you is it that your child(ren) *follow in your faith*?
11. [To the adolescents] Does your religion guide your life? How? (EXAMPLE?)
12. [To the adolescents] What does your religion mean to you? (EXAMPLE?)
13. [To the adolescents] Are there ways that you have been asked to *sacrifice for your faith*? (EXAMPLE?)
14. [To the adolescents] Why do you feel you are willing to make these kinds of sacrifices for your faith?
15. [To the adolescents] Does your religion influence how you *think about your future* marriage and family life?
16. [To the adolescents] How has your religion influenced your efforts to define who you are? (EXAMPLE?)
17. To what extent are you connected with and rely on the people in your church/synagogue/mosque?
18. Are there any important things that your religion provides you that nothing else does?
19. Do your religious beliefs influence what you *let in or keep out* of your family life?
20. What challenges arise from being a religious family in the surrounding culture? How do you *respond to these challenges*? (EXAMPLE?)
21. What would a non-religious person say that your family sacrifices for your faith?

22. Has your family experienced any *major stressors or challenges* that your faith has helped you deal with?
23. Most parents and adolescents have some conflict. What affect, if any, does your faith have on *avoiding or reducing parent-child conflict*?
24. When you talk together as parents and children about religion, how does the conversation go?
25. How have your parent-child conversations about religion influenced parents and children?
26. Are there members of your extended family (grandparents, aunts/uncles) who have significant influence on your religious life?

***Do you have any feedback on the interview process you would like to share with me or any suggestions for other things I should ask about?*

Appendix C
Faith Activities In The Home (FAITH)
David C. Dollahite, PhD

This measure assesses faith activities at home and should be completed by the parents. On the scales below:
(1) please indicate the **FREQUENCY** your family is involved in these various activities.
(2) Please indicate your level of SATISFACTION as parents by circling the **OK** if you are satisfied with the frequency, + if you wish you did it *more*, and - if you wish you did it *less* often. If you have different degrees of satisfaction, please use a **square for the husbands** view and a **triangle for the wife's** view.
(3) Please indicate the *MEANING* each activity has for you as parents using the scale below. If there are family activities not listed, please add and rate them in the space provided.

FREQUENCY:
0 = NEVER
1 = YEARLY
2 = A FEW TIMES A YEAR
3 = MONTHLY
4 = A COUPLE TIMES A MONTH
5 = WEEKLY
6 = A FEW TIMES A WEEK
7 = AT LEAST DAILY

MEANING:
0 = NO MEANING
1 = A LITTLE MEANING
2 = SOME MEANING
3 = GREAT MEANING

SATISFACTION:
OK = SATISFIED WITH FREQUENCY
+ = WISH WE DID THIS MORE
- = WISH WE DID THIS LESS

FAMILY FAITH ACTIVITIES	**FREQUENCY (0-7)**	SATISFACTION **OK + -**	***MEANING* (0-3)**
1. family prayer (family together other than at meals)	_____	**OK + -**	_____
2. family reading of scripture or other religious texts	_____	**OK + -**	_____
3. family singing, listening to, or playing religious music	_____	**OK + -**	_____
4. family religious gatherings (e.g., family home evenings)	_____	**OK + -**	_____
5. watching religious videos together as a family	_____	**OK + -**	_____
6. listening to religious tapes together as a family	_____	**OK + -**	_____
7. parent giving/speaking blessings to child	_____	**OK + -**	_____
8. Sabbath meals together as a family	_____	**OK + -**	_____
9. home-based religious activities (e.g., prayer gatherings)	_____	**OK + -**	_____
10. family religious conversations	_____	**OK + -**	_____
11. religious celebrations at home (Passover, Easter, Eid al-Fitr)	_____	**OK + -**	_____
12. attending religious services or meetings together as a family	_____	**OK + -**	_____
13. saying a blessing (grace) at meals	_____	**OK + -**	_____
14. parents praying with child or listening to her/his prayers	_____	**OK + -**	_____
15. eating meals together as a family	_____	**OK + -**	_____
16. husband and wife praying together without others	_____	**OK + -**	_____
17. fasting as a family for religious purposes	_____	**OK + -**	_____
18. eating certain foods together with religious meaning	_____	**OK + -**	_____
19. using religious objects in your home (menorah, rosary, cross)	_____	**OK + -**	_____
20. wearing certain clothing for religious reasons	_____	**OK + -**	_____

Appendix D
Consent to Be a Research Subject
(Parents or Young Adult >18)

This research study seeks to understand the relationship between faith and family life among religious families with at least one older adolescent or young adult child (15-25). The questions focus on the aspects of religious beliefs, practices, and community believed to be most meaningful for marriage and family life and relationships and how and why religious beliefs and practices assist family members with personal and family stresses and challenges. Husband, Wife, and Child will be interviewed together. Dr. David Dollahite, a professor at the BYU School of Family Life, is conducting this study. Your name was provided by the leader of your religious community.

The interview consists of 16 questions on marriage (couple only) and 26 questions on parenting (couple and child) and should take a total of about two hours (which we can divide into two interviews if you desire). There are minimal risks to participation in this study which could include some potential discomfort in discussing the personal issues of religion and family life. There is no benefit to you as a research participant. Other religious leaders and families may benefit from the knowledge gained from this research regarding ways to strengthen faith and family life.

Participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate and the right to withdraw before completing the interview without penalty. Strict confidentiality will be maintained. No individual identifying information will be disclosed. All interviews will be stored in a secure area and access will be given to only people associated with the study. You are free to decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer and at any time you wish you can end the interview with no penalty.

The interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed. Each family who participates will receive $75.00 as a token of appreciation for their participation. If you decide to end the interview early you will still receive the full amount of money.

If you have any questions regarding this study you may contact Dr. David Dollahite at 801-422-4179 (office) or 801-376-1749 (cell). If you have questions concerning your rights as a participant in a research project, you may contact Dr. Shane S. Shulthies, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, 120 RB, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602; phone (801) 422-5490.

I_____acknowledge that I have had the purposes of this project explained to me and I hereby give my consent to be interviewed for this research project. I understand that the research project I am involved in is interviewing families to better understand the connections between religion and family life. It has been explained to me that there are minimal risks and no benefit to me from my participation in this research. I understand that my privacy will be protected by the researchers in the following ways: (a) my name and the name of my family member will never be used when the experiences I share are discussed in written publication based on this research (unless I specifically and in writing request that my name and child's name be used), (b) during the interview, I may request the interviewer to delete from the written transcript of the interview any statements I make that I would prefer not be part of the transcript. I understand that I am free to decline to answer any question I do not wish to answer and that at any time I wish I can end the

interview without penalty. I understand that our family will receive $75.00 for our participation in this research project.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent, and desire of my own free will and volition, to participate in this research study.

Research Subject _____ Date _____

Appendix E
Consent to Be a Research Subject
(Adolescent <18)

This research study seeks to understand the relationship between faith and family life among religious families with an older adolescent or young adult child (15-25). The questions focus on the aspects of religious beliefs, practices, and community that are believed to be most meaningful for family life and relationships and how and why religious beliefs and practices assist family members with personal and family stresses and challenges. Dr. David Dollahite, at the BYU School of Family Life, is conducting this study.

The interview consists of 26 questions and should take about an hour. There are minimal risks to participation in this study which could include some potential discomfort in discussing the personal issues of religion and family life. There is no benefit to you as a research participant. Other religious leaders and families may benefit from the knowledge gained from this research regarding ways to strengthen faith and family life.

Participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate and the right to withdraw before completing the interview without penalty. Strict confidentiality will be maintained. No individual identifying information will be disclosed. All interviews will be stored in a secure area and access will be given to only people associated with the study. You are free to decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer and at any time you wish you can end the interview with no penalty.

The interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed. Your family will receive $75.00 for participating. If you decide to end the interview early you will still receive the full amount of money.

If you have any questions regarding this study you may contact Dr. David Dollahite at 801-422-4179 (office) or 801-376-1749 (cell). If you have questions concerning your rights as a participant in a research project, you may contact Dr. Shane S. Shulthies, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, 120 RB, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602; phone (801) 422-5490.

I (the child)_____acknowledge that I have had the purposes of this project explained to me and I hereby give my consent to be interviewed for this research project. I understand that the research project I am involved in is interviewing families to better understand the connections between religion and family life. It has been explained to me that there are minimal risks and no benefit to me for my participation in this research. I understand that my privacy will be protected in the following ways: (a) my name will never be used when the experiences I share are discussed in written publication based on this research (unless I specifically and in writing request that my name be used), (b) during the interview, I may request the interviewer to delete from the written transcript of the interview any statements I make that I would prefer not be part of the transcript. I understand that I am free to decline to answer any question I do not wish to answer and that at any time I wish I can end the interview without penalty. I understand that our family will receive $75.00 for our participation in this research project.

Adolescent _____ Date _____
signed

As the parent of _____, I give my permission for my child to participate in this research project.

Parent _____ Date _____
signed

Endnotes

1. The "interviewer" refers to David C. Dollahite, the thesis chair, whose data was used for this analysis. The "researcher" refers to the author, Jennifer Y. Thatcher, who completed the analysis.
2. Assigned pseudonyms were used for all quotes and references to participants in order to protect confidentiality.
3. Responses from all participants were coded, but some of the most articulate participants are quoted more often than others in the findings. Meaningless phrases including "like," "um," and "you know" have been omitted from quotes to eliminate distractions from responses.
4. The criteria used for determining whether responses referred to religious conversation included any report of one or more family members talking about religion. The majority of the responses clearly mentioned two-way parent-child religious discussions; however, responses including one-way talking, recollections of conversations, and teaching (only when it strongly referred to or implied verbal teaching) were also counted because they were mentioned by participants.
5. If only one of the parents or one of the adolescent children mentioned conversation, then it was counted for that family as a parent or adolescent response.