

The Impact of Religious Studies Courses:
Measuring Change in Undergraduate Attitudes

by

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ABSTRACT

In the current context of fiscal austerity as well as neo-colonial criticisms, the discipline of religious studies has been challenged to critically assess its teaching methods as well as articulate its relevance in the modern university setting. Responding to these needs, this dissertation explores the educational outcomes on undergraduate students as a result of religious studies curriculum. This research employs a robust quantitative methodology designed to assess the impact of the courses while controlling for a number of covariates.

Based on data collected from pre- and post-course surveys of a combined 1,116 students enrolled at Arizona State University (ASU) and two area community colleges, the research examines student change across five outcomes: attributional complexity, multi-religious awareness, commitment to social justice, individual religiosity, and the first to be developed, neo-colonial measures. The sample was taken in the Fall of 2009 from courses including Religions of the World, introductory Islamic studies courses, and a control group consisting of engineering and political science students.

The findings were mixed. From the "virtues of the humanities" standpoint, select within group changes showed a statistically significant positive shift, but when compared across groups and the control group, there were no statistically significant findings after controlling for key variables. The students' pre-course survey score was the best predictor of their post-course survey score. In response to the neo-colonial critiques, the non-findings suggest the critiques have been overstated in terms of their impact pedagogically or in the classroom.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In an era where science and technology have come to dominate in both funding and very often in prestige in the university setting, the humanities is often questioned for its role, and ultimately, its value. In response, defenders of the humanities and specifically constituent disciplines such as religious studies, have resurrected traditional defenses such as critical thinking and self-reflection and bolstered them with relatively newer theories linked to ideas of global citizenship and conflict resolution, all the while attempting to tie these “virtues” back toward economic growth and prosperity. But do the humanities really cultivate intellectual virtues or capacities such as those that lead to critical thinking, empathy, and/or social justice?

In the case of religious studies in particular, other questions arise, this time from post-modernists but many of them from its field. These ask whether or not religious studies curriculums perpetuate an understanding of religion reminiscent of its missionary and colonial history and thereby impose a politicized perspective on those they study. This project employs a social science and quantitative methodology to help evaluate both sets of questions as a means of contributing to the wider conversation of the future and direction of the humanities in United States higher education.

Background of the Study

Perhaps because quantitative methodologies fall outside of what is normally employed in the humanities such as religious studies, there is a dearth of

empirical research when it comes to measuring the impact of humanities curriculums on undergraduate students. This purpose of this study is to make a significant contribution to the available evidence that educators can reference in articulating the current status, appropriate expectations, and future goals of religious studies instruction. While quantitative assessments of the broader liberal arts and humanities curriculums have a more established history as discussed in detail in Chapter 2, specific studies geared toward religious studies finds itself in a relatively nascent stage. Lester and Roberts (2006), Walvoord (2008), and Lewis (2008), constituted the key starting points for developing and informing the questions, procedures, and types of data analysis used in this study. While those studies either looked at high school students, focused primarily on theological studies, or were simply observational in nature, this study fills a crucial gap by engaging large public colleges and universities, focusing on concerns particular to religious studies as opposed to theology, and all the while, calling for a longitudinal design. In addition, at this point in time, there has yet to be an attempt to evaluate theoretical concerns that religious studies perpetuates within its students a neo-colonial or universalist understanding of religion. Thus, this study also ties into the lively body of literature concerned with religious studies' implicit role in supporting or maintaining hegemonic forces. As religious studies continues to assert its place in today's university setting, reflection on measurements related to its impact on student attitudes and perceptions is overdue and necessary for mapping out future directions.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The aim of this study is to measure the impact of a variety of religious studies courses on undergraduate student attitudes as they relate to cognitive capacities, awareness of diversity, social justice, religiosity, and certain neo-colonial critiques. It is hoped that this study's findings and the resulting discussion provide a better sense of the possibilities and appropriate roles for religious studies in higher education. In addition, it is hoped that instructors may find additional perspective in forming their course syllabi and/or be spurred to greater creativity in developing new pedagogical techniques for the courses they teach. In addition, with such a minimal history of quantitative assessment, it is hoped that the results of this study will provide convenient benchmarks for improvement and future studies. This study is not exhaustive, but it can be replicated to compare with other institutional settings and/or to evaluate alternative pedagogical approaches. Lastly, for those in decision making capacities who have input and, in some cases, determine the establishment, retention, or expansion of religious studies curriculum, this study not only provides empirical analysis but may also be useful in providing a theoretical overview of strengths and challenges of the discipline.

Overview of Methodology

This study represents the first known longitudinal with a control group study of college level religious studies curriculums. It was conducted over the course of a full semester with differences measured between pre-semester and post-semester student responses, the methodology calls for a control group of

students not concurrently enrolled in a religious studies course and therefore teases out differences attributed to the respective courses.

In the fall of 2009, a total of 1,116 undergraduate students took part in both a pre- and post-course student surveys. The participating institutions were located within Maricopa County, Arizona and included the large public research institution of Arizona State University (ASU) and two of the area community colleges Phoenix College (PC) and Mesa Community College (MCC). The 18 different classes with 16 different instructors (two of the community college instructors provided two distinct sections but of the same course to the overall sample) were surveyed and grouped in the following ways: ASU on-ground Religions of the World, ASU online Religions of the World, Community College on-ground Religions of the World, ASU engineering and political science, and ASU Islamic Studies courses.

The focus of this investigation consisted in comparing the pre-course student survey scores with their post-course survey scores asking what were the differences, if any, experienced within a particular curriculum? Then, how do those within group differences compare with one of the other five groups listed above, or what were the across group differences?

The same fifty-seven item survey instrument administered both before and at the end of the semester included a variety of items that had either been used by previous researchers, or in the case of the neo-colonial questions, were authored by this investigation. The survey was voluntary and confidential. The instrument would ultimately yield, through factor analysis, eight separate constructs

revealing various aspects of student perspectives and attitudes. Chapter 3 outlines in detail the method of data analysis used to compare the mean averages of groups on the constructs. Chapter 3 also discusses a series of ANOVA, t-test, and ANCOVA procedures which revealed both the within group and across group differences.

Research Questions

Four major questions were the driving force of this dissertation: How much of a measurable impact do introductory religious studies courses have on student attitudes in terms of the argued virtues of the humanities such as attributional complexity, sensitivity to diversity, and concern for social justice? Are students prone to develop a non-contextualized sense of religion, or do they indeed develop greater awareness of the forces of time and place in shaping human behavior? Is there a measureable difference in impact between Religions of the World courses and what might be found in courses that focus on one tradition? Does the mode of instruction, on-line or on-ground, make a significant difference?

Research Hypotheses

The intent of this study is to test the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Students exposed to a religious studies curriculum are more likely to experience greater developmental gains in the intellectual virtues (dependent variables) than those not enrolled in this curriculum.

Hypothesis 2: Students exposed to a religious studies curriculum are no more likely than those not taking the class to develop “neo-colonial” attitudes toward the category of religion.

As a quantitative research study, the responses collected will be evaluated based on areas of statistical significance that emerges when comparing pre-course and post-course survey mean scores on the employed constructs.

Limitations

Teasing out the impact of a one-semester curriculum on the attitudes of undergraduate students presents a number of challenges. Today’s college students are influenced by a variety of social, occupational, familial, and educational factors. How these forces converge on a particular curriculum at a particular point in time as well as the self-selection of courses present many challenges. By controlling for a number of demographic variables, however, the methodology attempts to minimize these complicating influences. In addition, the reliance on student self-reported data represents a potential skewing factor as students may wish to describe themselves or their behaviors in ways that may, to them, seem more socially desirable or acceptable.

This study is also limited to the extent that it only references quantitative findings rather than a mixed method which includes qualitative conclusions. Future research may want to address this limitation by including open-ended questions on the post-course student survey or conduct student focus group meetings. The responses could still be accumulated and quantified or alternatively allowed to stand on their own, but to do so would allow to students to use their

own words in describing any changes that they perceived or preferred to have experienced in an ideal classroom. Qualitative data can reveal underestimated, underappreciated, or missed impacts and changes.

This study was also delimited by the researcher in several ways. First, the decision to use a convenient sample of college students in the Phoenix, AZ metropolitan area will limit the ability to generalize findings outside of the area. Second, this sample was selected from large public institutions. Those students enrolled in private educational settings may bear different characteristics and, therefore, limit generalizability of the results in this study.

Related to the limitations in this study are the time-sensitive assumptions when interpreting the impact of the curriculum. The first being that any attitudinal changes will be measured at the end of a four-month semester class and not at some later date, thus missing latency effects that could occur later in one's life. Furthermore, caution should also be exercised in extrapolating the impact measured in this study to upper division levels of religious studies curriculum or at least, more regularized exposure. It is quite likely that greater impact is felt after a number of continuous courses such as a degree with religious studies as a minor or major might receive.

Perhaps, the impact of a religious studies curriculum is most felt after general education requirements have been met and the student has a conceivably stronger foundation for approaching academic material. As a result, it is difficult to pinpoint when maximum or significant impact may occur. One last assumption in this study was that each instructor of the Religions of the World course would

teach the course in the same manner, or at least present similar materials in a somewhat consistent format. As a result, this study was limited in its ability to evaluate individual pedagogical approaches and its conclusions are generalities based on multiple courses.

Definitions of Constructs Used for Analysis

Eight dependent variables were employed and evaluated in this study. Each construct attempts to measure an aspect of student attitudes which could potentially be impacted by religious studies curriculum. Table 3 provides a complete item list and factor loadings for each of the constructs listed below.

Attributional complexity (ATT)

ATT is designed to measure “one’s propensity toward active and causal thinking” (Engberg and Mayhew 2007 p. 248) The ATT includes questions that seek to evaluate the likelihood of perspective taking as well as the ability to recognize the forces of time and place in judging social situations. “I think a lot about the influence society has on other people,” and “When I am upset with someone, I usually try to put myself in their shoes for a while.” The ATT was developed as part of the larger national research project titled *Preparing Students for a Diverse Democracy* and their respective “*Student Thinking and Interacting Survey*” (STIS) (Hurtado et al, 2002). Later, the construct was used by Engberg and Mayhew (2007).

Duke Religious Index (DRI)

(Koenig et al 1997) seeks to discover three primary dimensions of religiosity: the organizational (How often do you attend religious services?), non-

organizational (How often do you spend time in private religious activities, such as prayer, meditation, or scripture reading?), and subjective or intrinsic religious dimensions (In my life, I experience the presence of the divine; my religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life; and I try hard to carry my religion into all other dealings in my life).

Multi-Religious Awareness (MA)

MA was adapted from the “multi-cultural awareness” construct first developed by Hurtado (2002) as a part of the STIS instrument. The instrument is intended to measure student comfort, sensitivity, or likeliness to engage in questions and conversations related to religious diversity. As a result, the important distinction between this construct and its initial conception is the adaptation for this study’s use of “religion” instead of “culture” to match the course content.

Neo-colonial Context (NCC)

NCC inquires about the extent to which religion is influenced by time and place. It asks whether the same religion changes over centuries or if the appearance of religion in different parts of the world will have an impact on its manifestations.

Neo-colonial Enlightenment (NCE)

NCE measures students’ propensity to view the category of religion as a set of beliefs, a moral code, or as non-political in its idealized form in contrast to an emphasis on practice or the importance of religion’s social context.

Neo-colonial Science (NCS)

NCS explores student understanding of religion vis-à-vis science and the likelihood students would understand religion as “fundamentally created by human beings.”

Social Justice Active (SJA)

SJA measures student propensities to write a letter, help organize, sign a petition if they witnessed a minority religious group being disrespected. The social justice survey items used in this study were replicated with permission from a survey given to high school students in Modesto, CA (Lester and Roberts 2006), but the actual construct in this study emerged from the study’s own factor analysis.

Social Justice Public (SJP)

SJP measures student comfort with public displays of religious symbols both outside of people’s clothing and displayed outside of homes on private property. SJP, like SJA, emerged out of questions used by Lester and Roberts (2006).

Definition of Religious Studies

What constitutes the study of religion varies according to specific political, social, and cultural contexts. Geography, demographics of students, backgrounds of faculty, and institutional type (public or private) all share in a particular identity. Defining religious studies is in some ways complicated by the inability to even define “religion” or the object of its religious study. Although other departments may struggle to define art, music, or literature for example,

religious studies and its relationship with “religion” has been particularly contentious especially in light of political activities that have privileged some forms of religion over others – most often to the benefit of hegemonic forces. But more than other reasons, religious studies faces a certain level of suspicion or misunderstanding as to its place within a public or secular educational setting. There is often confusion as to whether the study of religion is indistinguishable from religious practice. As a result, religious studies may invest more time than other disciplines in drawing its disciplinary boundaries with special attention paid to its differences in its assumption and methods in relation to theology and divinity programs.

Alternatively, religious studies chooses to position itself closer to anthropology and other cultural studies and humanities disciplines. An illustration of this potential for confusion occurred at a meeting of, at the time of the newly created, School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies (SHPRS) at Arizona State University. One of the members of the history department, in a seemingly well-intentioned gesture, offered to allow religious studies to begin the meeting with a prayer. The religious studies faculty in attendance were somewhat taken aback. If misconceptions occur at the highest levels of the humanities, they are sure to exist beyond the college campus as well. As a result, it is important that religious studies take an active public role both within and beyond the university to educate and solidify its place on secular campuses.

Nevertheless, with all of these complicating factors, a relatively unified discipline with key similarities can be seen across comparable educational

institutions. This section constitutes a crude census which was drawn from a review of respective department websites. Since this study occurs primarily at Arizona State University, this brief review will include ASU's website along with its some of its peer and aspirational peer institutions in an attempt to define elements, activities, and goals of religious studies at major research settings. In particular, three generalizations of the nature of religious studies emerge and constitute the next three sections of "what is religious studies?" Namely, religious studies is global, interdisciplinary, and a willingness to consider an immense variety and range of "data" as manifestations of religion and objects of study.

Religious Studies is "Global." In no particular order, Temple University describes itself under the heading "A Program Global in Scope" (<http://www.temple.edu/religion/about/index.html>). The University of Florida understands that its curriculum engenders skills to "adapt to a rapidly-changing world" (<http://www.religion.ufl.edu/WhatDoIDoWithAReligionMajor.html>), and Indiana University recognizes religion's ability to "shape people's lives and cultural clashes throughout the world" and in the "increasingly connected world" (<http://www.indiana.edu/~relstud/about/>). The University of Virginia notes its department's ability to provide its students "an opportunity to examine the major religious traditions of human history and culture as well as other traditions that have flourished independently of European or Asian influences" (<http://artsandsciences.virginia.edu/religiousstudies/undergraduate/index.html>). The University of Pennsylvania emphasizes the universality of the category as it is "a major aspect of every human culture ... on all civilizations in the world"

(http://www.sas.upenn.edu/religious_studies/undergrad.html). Arizona State University seeks “students who are attracted to international study” and will provide a “program rich in multi-cultural course work and study abroad opportunities” (http://shprs.clas.asu.edu/religious_studies_undergrad). While the faculty members at ASU are predominantly made up of area specialists, the range of “areas” that can be studied is without limits and designed to be so.

James Foard (1990) provides two of three theories for the global character of religious studies. The first is a genealogical argument where he asserts: “perhaps even the notion of ‘religion’ was born from a global encounter” (p. 163). This “global encounter” was of course a time when European traders, soldiers, explorers, and missionaries returned to Europe with their stories, diaries, and relics. Bodies of knowledge, including religion, were developed to document the encounter between peoples and it was from this European context that comparative religious studies emerged. By constructing, imagining, or identifying “religion” in other lands, Europeans gave religion a cross-cultural meaning. Without comparison and multiplicity, the category “religion” loses its descriptive ability. The second theory Foard proposes for religious studies’ global character is a practical and logistic one. He asserts that the study of multiple traditions is important “in order to deflect suspicions that we were promoting a particular religion” (p.163).

While the religious identity, if any, of public school faculty members in the United States is ideally a non-issue (i.e. in follow with Enlightenment notions of equal access to knowledge) and legally is not to be questioned, this argument

for objectivity is reminiscent of at least one international department in Indonesia. There, in this predominantly Muslim country, it was argued, that “Buddhists teach Buddhism” and “Christians teach Christianity” so as to minimize the suspicions of these minority communities outside of the university (Lewis, 2010).

Ostensibly, by allowing the insider to teach their own tradition, integrity of the course is retained. Whether these “insiders” are less biased than others presents its own set of questions i.e. in the potential to minimize less savory aspects of their religions; it is true that departments are compelled for public perception reasons to appear as objective and balanced as possible.

Along these lines, Columbia University’s website provides clear language for what it does “not” do. It first draws reference to the departments desire to “strive toward objectivity” and then declares that “its purpose is not to promote or ‘disprove’ religion in general or any belief system in particular, but rather to understand how religion or a belief system functions and develops over time. There are no ‘confessional prerequisites.’” Clearly, this is a response to secular suspicions and, to the extent that a global identity undermines this confusion, it will continue to be emphasized by religious studies departments.

A third point, which Foard (1990) does not mention, might be the fact that this “global nature” constitutes a key point of differentiation between religious studies departments and other humanities. Whether English or Philosophy departments, for example, want to cede less of a global reach than religious studies is debatable, but religious studies’ conscious attempt to be geographically unlimited in its cultural studies seems inherent to the discipline.

According to a 2008 study produced by the American Academy of Religion (AAR), the “global emphasis is even becoming more pronounced in recent times” (p. 5). After analyzing course offerings at a wide variety of institutions both in 2000 and 2005, they concluded that the discipline is increasingly offering more non-Christian courses. “The number of sections taught of courses in Islam and Hinduism each almost doubled during the five-year period; by most indications, courses in Christian Theology, Old Testament, and New Testament were all flat or down. Sections of Introduction to World Religions grew in number; sections of Introduction to the Bible declined” (p. 5). Whether this shift is consumerist and student driven or department initiative driven, religious studies departments do seem well equipped to respond to emerging trends in globalization. If today’s students need to be aware of global diversity in an increasingly interconnected world, and a brief review of major news stories replete with religion acting as a social force would attest to that need, religious studies is finding yet another reason to embrace its global identity and reach.

Religious Studies is “Interdisciplinary.” In addition to being global, all programs were quick to acknowledge their interdisciplinary approach to the study of religion. Some referred to other disciplines on the same campus such as anthropology, history, philosophy, and sociology, ethics or simply cultural studies. Arizona State University begins “from a core perspective in the Humanities that engages the social and behavioral sciences” (<http://shprs.clas.asu.edu/front>). In reviewing these sites, it also becomes apparent that a wide variety of methodologies might also be included under the subtitle

interdisciplinary. Brown lists such methods in its approaches as “socio-historical, textual, ethnographical, ethical, and philosophical, among others.”

(http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Religious_Studies/about/)

Penn State University includes “phenomenological” and “artistic” methodologies while they also claim an emphasis on “descriptive, historical, critical and theoretical approaches to the study of religion”

(http://www.sas.upenn.edu/religious_studies/undergrad.html). Iowa State

University presents its interdisciplinary nature more thematically as it advertises “religion in relation to such topics as gender, sexuality, violence, art, science and technology, politics, law, the natural environment, human rights, and moral values.” As if that was not broad enough, Iowa goes onto to disclose “courses may focus on an ethnic group, such as Native Americans or African Americans, or on one or more religious traditions; they may focus on a specific cultural context or study religion cross-culturally”

(<http://www.uiowa.edu/~religion/majpros.html>). Florida State University claims its department is “one of the most comprehensive undergraduate majors in the country examin[ing] the diverse array of religious cultures around the globe from historical, ethical, philosophical, cultural, and social perspectives”

(<http://religion.fsu.edu/undergraduate.html>). The University of North Carolina even went so far as to link its perceived neutrality with its methods “because religious pluralism plays an important role in teaching the value of diversity, the Department is committed to bringing a broad range of perspectives into the study of religion” (<http://religion.unc.edu/undergrad/major.shtml>)

By this list one might be led to ask: What is *not* available to the student and researcher? This dizzying array of geography and approaches can be seen as clear strength of religious studies. After all, social and individual manifestations of religion can be diverse and terribly complex. But as the 2008 AAR study has noted “its strong interdisciplinary content complicates assessment further, as the major often straddles multiple departments” (p. 8). What constitutes religious studies will continue to inform its understood role within the larger university setting. Clear articulation of the role religious studies plays in the academy is important to the extent that it may even prevent it from being absorbed by other departments.

The Data of Religious Studies. To further articulate the realm of religious studies, it might also be asked what is understood as “religion” and what are the “data” that religious studies researchers use when applying one or more of the many disciplinary frameworks or methodologies listed above? While no website reviewed for this project provides an authoritative definition of “religion” due to its relative and constructed nature, clues are given as to common assumptions. At UNC, religion is understood as “a historical and cultural phenomenon” where “texts, beliefs, rituals, and institutions” are studied (<http://religion.unc.edu/undergrad/major.shtml>). Penn State University sees religion as a social force that “helps shape the institutions of law and government, influences family and parenting practices, plays a major role in attitudes toward medicine and science, and resonates in the creative work of artists and writers” (http://www.sas.upenn.edu/religious_studies/undergrad.html). Likewise,

Columbia University says religion “has been and remains to this day one of the most powerful forces shaping human history” and “continues to shape world events, national policies, daily life, and cultural production in communities throughout the world”

(<http://www.college.columbia.edu/bulletin/depts/religion.php?tab=advise>).

This may be helpful in understanding what religion “does,” but the websites also infer the ways in which “religion” becomes manifest. Arizona State University identifies “ideas, values, and practices”

(http://shprs.clas.asu.edu/religious_studies) of religion, and Yale University

“investigates ...institutions, cultural practices, texts, and ideas”

(<http://yalecollege.yale.edu/content/religious-studies>). Meanwhile, Temple

University’s site chooses to emphasize “the comparison of traditions and their encounter with one another” as the data for inquiry

(<http://www.temple.edu/religion/undergrad/index.html>). University of California

at Santa Barbara notes that students “not only learn the substance of religion in various cultures, but they also study the theories that help solve the puzzles about religion in human experience” (<http://www.religion.ucsb.edu/ugprograms.htm>).

In yet another example of the diversity of study and modes of thought, religious studies not only directs its attention to the “substance” of religion including rituals, symbols, and myths, but reflects on the multiplicity of theories that have attempted to interpret or explain religion. At the introductory level, consideration or application of theory is most likely minimal, but majors in religious studies are expected to have this exposure.

Roles Religious Studies Undertake or Advertise. A number of departments see themselves as instilling skills to successfully engage what is framed as a complicated world. Florida State University's curriculum seeks to "broaden their (student) horizons and think about the complexity of the diverse and globalized world" (<http://religion.fsu.edu/undergraduate.html>). Brown University makes a case for the relevance of religious studies by stating "any of today's pressing political and social concerns are illuminated by an understanding of the religious beliefs and practices that lie beneath and within the news headlines" and then states that religious studies is of benefit to students. "By exploring the public and private concerns that religions engage—for example, the nature of community and solitude, suffering and death, good and evil—students discover new ways of interpreting the complex world in which they live" (http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Religious_Studies/about/).

Not unexpected, reading and writing skills along with certain cognitive abilities were stressed nearly universally. Indiana State University states its discipline is "particularly adept at training students to think clearly, speak and write well, and to analyze complex, multi-faceted phenomena" (<http://www.indiana.edu/~relstud/ugrad/>). UVA singled out the "persuasive use of evidence in argument" (<http://artsandsciences.virginia.edu/religiousstudies/undergraduate/index.html>). Brown University seeks to cultivate a capacity to interpreting "contemporary society by not only studying it directly but by applying knowledge of other times and other places" (http://www.brown.edu/Departments /Religious_Studies/about/).

Less common was to see departments connect their activities to civics, although it can be argued that with the others it is implicit to the extent community and understanding are mentioned. Arizona State University does “seek[s] to foster civic responsibility and global awareness” (http://shprs.clas.asu.edu/religious_studies_undergrad) while going even further in calling the study of religious diversity a “political and moral imperative” (http://shprs.clas.asu.edu/religious_studies). Similarly, the University of Iowa’s mission statement includes the intention to “educate students for responsible citizenship in a religiously pluralistic world by teaching them to think clearly and critically about religion” (<http://www.uiowa.edu/~religion/about.html>). It is likely that some departments may have side-stepped the civics argument due to its political implications.

Much safer ground is the knowledge-transmission business or the focus on reading, writing, and skills of argumentation. Furthermore, emphasis on these “tangible” and individual skill sets also segues into claiming religious studies provides the skills employers find desirable when hiring. Many sites drew reference a variety of career tracks including business, law, teaching, pastoral services, non-governmental organizations, along with the pursuit of advanced degrees in the humanities, social sciences, law, education, journalism, and social services. Today’s college students, often funding their own way through school or taking on significant loan burdens, may find this argument more immediate than a civics-oriented one.

Religious Studies in the Context of General Studies at ASU. The

majority of the sample for this study falls under the category of students fulfilling general education requirements at Arizona State University. As a result, this section provides a brief review of ASU's institutional framing of general education requirements and liberal education, of which religious studies plays a pertinent part. It is estimated that approximately 20 percent of all ASU students will enroll in at least one religious studies course during the academic year. (http://shprs.clas.asu.edu/religious_studies) They are popular courses and an explanation of how they fit into general studies expectations might shed light on not only why students enroll but also where religious studies' potential impact is perceived.

General studies requirements at Arizona State are composed of courses in five core areas: literacy, mathematics, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. In addition, three awareness areas are required, and these are cross-listed with the core areas and can be fulfilled concurrently with them. These awareness areas include cultural diversity in the United States, global awareness, and historical awareness. A course such as Religions of the World can be a convenient choice for students as it not only can be applied to the core area of humanities but can also be used to fulfill two of the three awareness areas, and those are global awareness and historical awareness. According to the general studies division, the global awareness requirement should promote "the development of an international perspective," while the historical awareness requirement is intended to engender "an understanding of current human events through study of the

past.” These goals appear to fit well with religious studies self-understanding as global and interdisciplinary.

ASU acknowledges that “a baccalaureate education should not only prepare students for a particular profession or advanced study, but for constructive and satisfying personal, social, and civic lives as well.” Here, the university is not only addressing its economic and academic purpose but also a sense of social and civic responsibility. Furthermore, the “general studies requirement complements the undergraduate major by helping students gain mastery of critical learning skills, investigate the traditional branches of knowledge, and develop the broad perspective that frees one to appreciate diversity and change across time, culture, and national boundaries” (http://catalog.asu.edu/ug_gsr) While these significant references to the values of citizenry and the virtues of awareness, and perspective, may lead one to think the humanities are safe, those arguments are often overshadowed by skills-based arguments. Students, it is argued, must focus on reading, writing, and quantitative reasoning skills in preparation for their major where the opportunities for critical and reflective thinking become appropriate. A skills based approach might perhaps be easier to talk about and is certainly compelling in some level to all disciplines as well as taxpayers. But, can more be accomplished and expected in a student’s first or second year?

Paul LePore, Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences argues against what might be crudely referred to as a model of regurgitation and multiple choice tests. He notes that “general education fails when it is only content based. We need to ask, what is sustainable?” He goes on to claim

“problem solving learning and the asking of authentic questions” is where time and resources are best directed. Those in religious studies departments might be like to think they are well positioned to engage difficult social challenges while also having access to many ‘authentic’ questions dealing with the human condition (Personal Interview, January 5, 2011).

Brief History: The Humanities and Higher Education

Attempts to define and direct the meaning of religious studies is, in some sense, part of the larger story of articulating its role, and more generally speaking, the role of higher education in the United States. With the “democratization” of higher education and a greater percentage of students having access to and understanding the benefits in a globalized world, the assumed roles of colleges and universities continues to evolve. It is no wonder that we see humanities departments actively trying to frame their curriculums to economic realities as just seen in the previous section.

The websites mentioned above, however, belie another reality and that is the tension and alternative motivations regarding higher education’s ultimate role: either attending to the “developmental” scales of imagination, empathy, virtue, civic, aesthetics, and morals or to fulfill a responsibility to industry, efficiency, and production of skilled labor. Defenders of the humanities might argue both are essential and this is a false dichotomy. But in era of limited resources, difficult choices require prioritizing. To what extent the humanities are appreciated for their contributions to the well-being of the society, whether economic, political, or

social, will help in determining its ultimate place on the public college and university settings.

The debate is not without a long history either. Cardinal John Henry Newman, founder of the University of Dublin, once proclaimed “useful knowledge” was a “deal of trash” (Kerr 2001, p. 2). Newman attempted to argue against the burgeoning German institutions and what he believed to be their reliance on the Baconian inspired scientific method, because he found it devoid of revelation and not the intent of higher education. But Newman was correct in sensing the “battle lines” being drawn between the German university model and its more skill and specialization centered approach versus what might be understood as the more reflective and universal aims found in the philosophy, theology, and studies of literature of the time. Newman warned against higher education trading its emphasis of liberal education for professional educations and insisted that the core objective of higher education “is the achievement of a particular expansion of outlook, of turn of mind, habit of thought, and capacity for social and civic interaction” (Kerr p. 2).

Shortly after Newman, across the Atlantic, in the era between the Civil War and World War I, the President of Harvard University was also engaged in navigating traditional roles of the University with changing social conditions. Charles Eliot was lamenting the impact that America’s growing industrialization and the resulting need for specialization was having on its curriculum. Knowledge production required an ever increasing fragmentation and disciplinary divisions as technology advanced. Eliot “felt that students needed something to glue the pieces

together, to enlarge their perspective on specialized studies, to situate knowledge within the business of living as a moral being (Turner & Roberts, 2000 p. 81).

Whether it was Newman's desire to develop healthy "civic interaction" or Eliot's desire to "glue" together disparate studies and cultivate "moral beings," the humanities, which included the Greek and Roman classics as well as Christian theology and divinity studies, were seen as the solution. The perceived lack of coherence in undergraduate education led to the hope that the humanities and liberal arts could rescue the state of affairs. For "the humanities highest merit seemed to lie in their capacity to restore coherence to knowledge" (Turner & Roberts, 2000, p. 92). During this period, the arts and sciences "emerged as the central and regulating core of the university" (p. 10).

However, the perceived synthesizing ability of the humanities was somewhat short lived. The humanities were not necessarily putting together a cohesive framework, rather the scholarly employment of contextualism, reductionism, and historicity continually challenged the dominant western and/or theological narrative in the same way scientific rationalism challenged the once understood "divinely inspired unity" of the natural sciences.

In 1963, Clark Kerr, President of University of California Berkeley, described this continued directional struggle when labeling the modern research university as a "multiversity - an association of often disjointed and confusing sets of subcultures" (Kerr p. 31). His commentary would gain additional traction in the 1980's, a period of time that Kerr would later refer to as "The Great Academic Depression" (p. ix) as America was struggling against foreign competition and

overall economic insecurity. Derek Bok (2006) described a number of sharp critiques, often coupled with a conservative political subtext, that were leveled at perceived failures of academia, specifically liberal arts education, as a responsible party in the struggling American economy and morale of the time. He noted that figures such as Allan Bloom argued “There is no vision, nor is there a set of competing visions, of what an educated human being is” (p. 1). As if to suggest a diversified curriculum including global, gender and ethnic studies was causing America to lose its place in the world.

While these critiques against the humanities and the use of multi-cultural and interdisciplinary studies have quieted with new global realities of interconnectedness along with the economic recovery and expansion in the late 1980’s and into the 2000s, the debate has resurfaced as to the priority the humanities should be granted in today’s economically challenged and profit-motivated realities. Or are the arguments from coherence and cultivation overvalued and that the true and contemporary mission of higher education should be rather narrowly defined as the discovery and transmission of knowledge? It is at this current point in the history that the literature review in Chapter 2 and the methods and findings of Chapters 3 and 4 attempt to address and contribute to the conversation.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. This first chapter has introduced the general problem and issues under investigation, the approaches previously applied to these issues, and the unique approach proposed for this

study. Chapter two reviews the three bodies of literature that lay the important theoretical and empirical foundation for this dissertation. Chapter three details the methodology employed in this dissertation to test the hypotheses concerning the impact of religious studies curriculums and modes of delivery. Samples, instruments, research sites, and analytic techniques are also discussed. Chapter four presents the results of the analysis presented in chapter three. Chapter five discusses implications of this research and suggests further research possibilities.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

This chapter will present the results of the review of three bodies of literature, each being represented by its own section in this chapter. All three of these bodies of literature have informed the hypotheses, methodology, and the interpretations of findings of this dissertation. The first set of literature reviewed engages traditional defenses of religious studies and the Humanities and their perceived importance and roles in both higher education and the wider domestic and global community. The second set of literature explores post-modern critiques of the study and teaching of religion, which suggests that the political and theological vestiges of the discipline's origins may still be at work in the classroom. The last section evaluates existing quantitative studies that have attempted to test some of the theoretical defenses listed in the preceding sections, and includes the contribution the current study hopes to make to the literature on this topic.

Traditional Theoretical Defenses for Religious Studies and the Humanities

This section will begin with a brief overview of the traditional defenses of the humanities and then be followed with a more detailed examination. Martha Nussbaum (1997 & 2009) argues that cross cultural studies including, most notably, comparative religious studies are imperative for developing “citizens of the world,” and that liberal, post-modernist approaches actually help achieve the premium the Greeks placed on rational reflection and self-awareness. By post-

modern, Nussbaum accepts and validates a plurality of viewpoints including those stemming from differences in gender, ethnicity, and power.

This is in contrast to modernity's apparent reliance and confidence in the meta-narrative of western progress, objective truth, and resulting political authority over those deemed backwards. In today's highly charged political and economic environment, Nussbaum has extended her defense to more precisely ground her arguments for the humanities' role in defending democracy and providing a workforce with the skills required in the global and fast-changing economic landscape. James Foard (1990) notes that the humanities, and religious studies in particular, allow for an efficient development of intellectual faculties. He refers to these intellectual faculties as intellectual virtues that depend on a multiplicity of discourses of which, he maintains, religious studies have a near limitless amount.

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, some proponents of the humanities have pointed out the public service and social role of the religious studies curriculum as a means of promoting an inter-cultural dialogue, which can lead to better understanding and tolerance. As founder of The Pluralism Project at Harvard University, and in her published work such as *A New Religious America*, Diana Eck (2001) asserts that in this new era that challenges American values of religious freedom, it is imperative America increase what she calls religious literacy. In an increasingly global society, Eck argues, Americans cannot remain provincial. Rather, what is required is an aggressive campaign to provide opportunities for discovering ways to promote a cohesive society from the

diversity. Mark Woodward (2009), speaking from a perspective beyond the United States and from Indonesia, adds to this conversation in identifying religious studies' special role in undermining stereotypes and reducing the potential for violent clashes.

Inspired by the ancient Greeks and specific in her endorsement of the Socratic ideal of self-examination, Martha Nussbaum (1997) argues in *Cultivating Humanity* that cross cultural studies, including most notably comparative religious studies, are imperative for developing "citizens of the world" (p. 50). Nussbaum further argues that liberal, post-modernist approaches help to achieve the premium the Greeks placed on rational reflection and self-awareness. In particular, the world religions curriculum, with its nearly limitless supply of voices and perspectives, provides ample opportunities for students and instructors alike to question traditional Western understandings and engage critically the influences of time and place. "The Stoic must, in fact, be conversant with local differences, since knowledge of these is inextricably linked to our ability to discern and respect the dignity of humanity in each person" (p. 61). In addition, she notes: "the task of world citizenship requires the would-be world citizen to become a sensitive and empathetic interpreter" (p. 63).

These virtues of sensitivity and empathy do not arise from constructing false or overly romantic images of others but from critical thinking. She writes: "above all, we can teach them how to argue, rigorously and critically, so that they can call their minds their own" (p. 295). From this foundation, stereotypes and simplistic understandings are replaced with sensitivity and nuance.

Her three recommended capacities “essential to the cultivation of humanity in today’s world” (p. 9) are worth considering. First is the capacity to develop the skills to critically examine oneself and one’s own tradition or background. Second, one should have the capacity to see him or herself not just as part of a local as well as global community by recognizing the interconnectedness of culture and commerce and the impact each can have on each other. Lastly, one needs the capacity to develop a “narrative imagination” (p. 10). By this is meant the capacity of “walking in another’s shoes,” which Nussbaum (1997) feels is crucial to developing empathy and concern for others. The linking of the humanities to virtue and ethics is an important defense against critics who worry that post-modern approaches contribute to hyper-relativism or undermine an individual’s moral compass.

In *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, a book that could be considered a sequel to *Cultivating Humanity*, Nussbaum (2010) expands her argument on the link between the humanities, ethics, and morality. She devotes a chapter to outlining the way in which the humanities engender ethical practices. She begins by asking the following question. “What is it about people that makes it difficult to sustain democratic institutions based on equal respect and the equal protection of the laws? What forces make powerful groups seek control and domination? What makes majorities try, so ubiquitously, to denigrate or stigmatize minorities?” (p. 28).

By drawing upon existing psychological and sociological research, she identifies three circumstances or structures that contribute to negative social

behavior: 1) when people are not held accountable or allowed to remain anonymous, 2) when nobody raises a critical voice and “group-think” prevails, and 3) “when the human beings over whom they have power are dehumanized and de-individualized” (p. 44). Nussbaum (2010) then returns to her argument of defending the Humanities by listing the ways in which the curriculum engenders skills and traits that combat or undermine the potential for these “pernicious” circumstances to emerge. The humanities, she states, encourage independent and critical thinking. When this critical thinking is practiced in the classroom, confidence (to be a dissenting voice) and responsibility (to come out of the shadow of anonymity) for one’s own words emerge. In addition, she posits that the humanities “teach real and true things about other groups to counter stereotypes and the disgust that often goes with them” (p. 45). Those “real” and “true things” would not only suggest more verifiable interpretations of the realities on the ground but also the nature of social construction that lies behind those interpretations.

Alternatively, it should also be noted that many scholars would prefer that the academy have no normative agendas and focus on critical thinking and knowledge production. In the context of economic challenges such as recession, Nussbaum (2010) does not shy from linking the virtues of critical thinking, global citizenry, and moral empathy to the defense of democratic institutions and the building of a vibrant economy. She asserts that the business community needs imaginative and accountable leaders, workers, and consumers. As the Humanities struggle for their legitimacy in today’s university system, which is heavily funded

and geared for science and technology, Nussbaum claims that a citizenry equipped with the virtues of the Humanities is best able to promote a meaningful and decent society concerned with equal opportunities for all people. This, she argues, is essential for a sustainable and flourishing economy.

Critics of Nussbaum, perhaps most notably Robert Posner (2002), challenge Nussbaum's approach as being too anecdotal and removed from empirical and anthropological groundings. There is a sense that the idealism apparent in Nussbaum's work lacks a sense of the tragedy or difficult trade-offs of the human condition. This idealism or universalism, as Posner mentions fails to take into account the local conditions and context, thereby constituting a replay of the human rights versus multiculturalism debate.

Nussbaum's (2010) theoretical leaps from study to democracy, meaning, and morality have also been called into question by scholars such as Simon Stow (2006) who in *Reading Our Way to Democracy* also wondered about the evidence for Nussbaum's views. Stow interpreted the pedagogical approach of Nussbaum, and Richard Rorty (1989) as well, as heavily dependent on reading and literature. Stow questions if it is fair to expect a predictable response such as respect for other viewpoints and the recognition of one's own contingency from diverse individuals. Stow summarizes Nussbaum's argument by writing "citizens will, they believe, be empowered to make better decisions through the empathetic insight that comes through reading" (p. 412).

First, Stow (2006) finds this approach methodologically implausible as it assumes there is only one correct or valid interpretation to a text, which he sees as

“top-down” and authoritarian. He notes that books impact different people in different respects. Second, Stow sees Nussbaum’s and Rorty’s civic education arguments as politically problematic if a reader’s alternative view or interpretation of the text is seen as deficient and he regards this argument as not being very “democratic.” Rather, Stow concludes that literature is useful in the civic context when we understand that by talking about literature, we are in a sense talking about ourselves. Solidarity and empathy do not emerge necessarily through certain messaging in the text, but rather within the context of group and classroom discussion. He claims “coming to see another as a fellow citizen may well emerge from a process of seeing her as a fellow reader, even perhaps a fellow reader of a favorite author” (p. 419).

Moving from arguments on how the humanities “work” and the value of literature in general, this review now turns its attention to specific strengths of religious studies. James Foard (1990) argued for the importance of educating “citizens for a responsible life in a diverse democracy within an international setting” (p. 217). He noted that “the humanities, and religious studies in particular, permit us to develop with unique efficiency certain intellectual faculties in students that I call multiple discourses or intellectual virtues” (p. 167). These virtues include first, narrative imagination or “crudely trying out a religion and imagining if it were true” (p.169), and he notes religious studies has a near limitless supply of this “narrative imagination.” Second, Foard states that the comparative study of religion enhances the ability to identify oneself in time and place (simple location) and see the vastness of human history. Third, it helps one

realize his or her individual, historical contingency (complex location or forces of time and place).

Finally, he comments on religious studies' ability to demonstrate the value, cost, and necessity of human judgment. In other words, actions have consequences and these can be recognized and evaluated. According to Foard, the cultivation of these intellectual capacities depends on a multiplicity of discourses. When pluralism is sacrificed for meta-narratives, such as in the response to advocates of a more "classical education" based primarily on Western history, the pursuit of these intellectual goals is hindered. He notes: "in general the greater the global scope, the more efficiently the intellectual faculties will be cultivated" (p. 174).

Following September 11, 2001, proponents of the humanities, specifically religious studies, tended to shift their defense of religious studies from developing intellectual abilities for nuance and critical thinking to seeing religious studies as an important means to promoting better understanding or tolerance and interfaith dialogue. Diana Eck (2001), founder of The Pluralism Project at Harvard University, has, through her published work, been a most visible proponent for the humanities in general and, in particular, for comparative religious studies. Her research has focused on documenting the changing face of religion in America. She suggests that this changing face of religion has been significantly impacted by the last 40 years of immigration. She argues most Americans are unaware of the vast and significant diversity in their cities and towns. She asserts that in this new era that challenges American values of religious freedom, increasing American

religious literacy is imperative. She specifically links the importance of world religions curriculum to the ideas of citizenship that we have discussed earlier and to the undermining of dangerous stereotypes and prejudices.

In an increasingly global society, Eck (2001) argues that Americans cannot remain “provincial.” Rather, she states that what is required is a “moving beyond laissez inattention to religion to a vigorous attempt to understand the religions of our neighbors” (p. 25) and that cohesive society can emerge from the diversity. She claims:

We must embrace the religious diversity that comes with our commitment to religious freedom, and as we move into the new millennium we must find ways to make the differences that have divided people the world over the very source of our strength here in the US. It will require moving beyond laissez inattention to religion to a vigorous attempt to understand the religions of our neighbors. (p. 25)

Eck acknowledges building on Will Herberg’s (1955) argument that Catholics, Jews, and Protestants should be viewed as bearers of the American experiment. Judging from her chapters, Eck seems to be arguing for an even broader religious identity of America to include, among others, Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims. Eck goes even further to state religious diversity is a “beautiful complexity” and society becomes stronger when religious expression is exercised (p. 11). While some argue that Eck’s approach is overly idealistic in terms of reconciliation, and that too much emphasis on pluralism dilutes the special character of independent religious traditions, she is careful to note that

pluralism is not “valueless relativism” or a “blending of religions,” and that “pluralism is engagement with, not abdication of, differences and particularities” (p. 71).

Still, others claim that her link between social justice and religion has more to do with race and visual differences than particular religious doctrines or practices. Lastly, one may legitimately ask: Why it is important to understand the other? Might it be adequate to be indifferent and just let others live their own lives? Perhaps world events and increasing trends of globalism have shown that political and cultural isolationism is no longer tenable.

Building on Eck’s (2008) notion of civic pluralism, Mark Woodward (2009) writes “the basic choice here would seem to be that between accepting pluralism as a fact of life or fighting it” (p. 27). He notes that “fighting it” has been tried and the historical record unfortunately shows many examples of ethno-religious violence. Woodward exhorts “we must conquer fear of the other. We don’t have to embrace it or call it equal but we do need to learn to live with it without fear” (p. 27). It is in this arena that religious studies can inform how pluralism is addressed and how the academy might “provide people with the kinds of information and knowledge they need to make difficult choices and hopefully can help to counter misinformation and rumors that often circulate in social context combining pluralism and ignorance” (p. 26-27).

Catherine Bell (2008) offers her thoughts on the social benefits of comparative studies in which she argues for the importance of undermining cultural centrism.

While the popularity of the world religions paradigm among teachers undoubtedly rests on many factors, its ability to solve perceived problems of cultural-centrism is certainly one of them. The world religions models appear to invoke a limited sense of equality, especially if the list does not leave off indigenous religions or such major cultural forces in the twentieth century as Confucianism and Shinto. Therefore, the model enables a teacher to introduce students to a great deal of material in a way that minimizes traditional suspicions and prejudices. Setting up the similarities for an array of world religions – whether 5 or 15 – can make the strange less strange; it can moreover give a recognized place to almost all comers to the American classroom. When done well, the model can also invite effective discussions about ideas and structures, the fruits of comparison in any field. (p. 119)

Like Eck and Woodward, Bell notes how comparative religious studies can act as an antidote to dangerous misperceptions or stereotypes through exposure. In summary, the theoretical potentials outlined for religious studies are ambitious and important. To what extent these goals can be realized is part of the larger aim of this study but if the raw materials for engaging critical and reflective thinking while undermining social conflict are available in religious studies, attempts to pedagogically harness them seem worthy of attention.

Post-modern Critiques of the Study and Teaching of Religion

The current study also seeks to evaluate important theoretical concerns that world religions curriculum, and perhaps religious studies in general, suffer

from vestiges of its colonial and missionary past. This body of literature rests on the argument that the discipline, wittingly or unwittingly, perpetuates an ahistorical understanding of religion that distorts reality and likely privileges its Western and Christian origins. Ample space is not available here to do justice to the breadth or the intricacies of these arguments, but it is fair to say that Said's (1978) ground breaking work provided key inspiration to other scholars such as Asad (1993), McCutcheon (1997), and Masuzawa (2005), who have rigorously grappled with the implications of the constructed category of religion. Crucial to these criticisms is the awareness of "religion" as an academic and theological construct capable of politically imposing its values and assumptions on the "other" in ways that have provided cover and legitimacy for political agendas and colonial and post-colonial pursuits.

Masuzawa (2005), in her work *The Invention of World Religions*, a title that aptly sums up her concern with the "constructed" nature of the world religions discourse, demonstrates how varying traditions came to be understood and accepted in the "family" of world religions. She begins with 18th and 19th century academic attempts such as Hume's *Natural History of Religion* (1756) and Hegel's *Philosophy of History* (1830-31), to discover the origins and perceived evolution of religion through time. She posits that this perspective was based on the assumption that "Europe was the triumphant vanguard and all other civilizations and non-European civilizations merely marked various interim phases already surpassed by the people of European descent" (p. 12).

Examples of this can be seen in E.B. Tylor's (1871) notion of religious "survivals" as relics of the past, and J.G. Frazer's (1890) social evolutionary proposal speculating that "primitive" society is identified with the practice of magic, which in time evolved into religious systems and culminated with science as evidenced in modern civilized and European humans. So, to look at the "exotic other" was to go back in time. To speculate on the future was either to predict the demise of religion as a historical artifact or to defend the "most evolved" brand of Christianity as generated by Enlightenment forces.

Masuzawa (2005) then moves to her main contribution in tracing the late 19th century and early 20th century emergence of the world religions classification system. She shows that this classification was closely aligned with the philology of Friedrich Max Muller (1859) and with its corollary, geographical-racial categories that were primarily divided between Indo-European (Aryan) and Semitic language families. This suggests a move from an evolutionary model to a pseudo-geographic model.

However, Masuzawa (2005) rightly maintains that substituting one model for another did not liberate the discourse from elitist and prejudicial perspectives. Using the degree of voice inflection as the barometer of linguistic and cultural "advancement," scholars imagined that inflection resulted "naturally and directly from the innermost spiritual urge of a people" (p. 24). Leaving aside the linguistic merits, or lack thereof, it is worth noting the ethnocentric privileging of "innermost spiritual urge" seen in the works of such figures as Schleiermacher (1799) and James (1902). This Protestant emphasis on personal experience, which

is related to Reformation and Enlightenment trends is in contrast to competing Catholic ritualistic traditions and traditional Church authority, would shape and influence the academy. But, by using inflection as the determining and justifying factor, the Indo-European (Aryan) family of languages that included Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin, were perceived to be most advanced and representative of a higher culture.

Meanwhile, the perceived lack of inflection in the Semitic languages provided an opportunity for religious and cultural denigration as Arabic and Hebrew were considered “decidedly imperfect and inchoate in inflectional capability, and with this imperfection came all the limitations that characterized their native speakers as a race” (p. 25). All other peoples were considered part of a third domain, “consisting of innumerable languages whose genealogical relation was less certain” but were perceived “to be even further removed from the inflection qualities of the Semitic languages” (p. 25).

The result of this understanding was the elevation of Buddhism as the first non-Christian “world religion” for its perceived Indo-Aryan attributes, while “scientifically” justifying and perpetuating anti-Semitism and condemnation of Jews and Arabs as being of the “same stock” (p. 26). Masuzawa (2005) goes on to explore the complicated and fiercely debated eventual inclusion of Islam as an autonomous tradition rather than merely a Christian heresy. In essence, Masuzawa summarizes the western invention of world religions as a product of poorly informed justifications based on linguistic, geographic, and racist underpinnings. Clearly, the original construction of the discourse is most problematic; however,

today's question is whether the discipline has been reformed and wholly rehabilitated or do the origins necessitate an abandonment of the enterprise?

In another suggestive title, *Manufacturing Religion*, McCutcheon (2007) argues that the contemporary academy still harbors ideological and methodological shortcomings. However, rather than focus on the 19th century academy, McCutcheon focuses on the 20th century religious studies icon Mircea Eliade and the persistence the “history of religions” approach. First written in 1957, Eliade’s 1987 edition of *The Sacred and the Profane* proposed that the scholar first step outside the modern world and enter the world of “archaic man” (p. 162). In this primordial world, still in existence in certain tribes and societies and watered down in the industrialized world, human life is lived in the “sacred and the profane” as the “two modes of being in the world” (p. 14). Here, the sacred is “the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world” (p. 11) and the profane is that which is ordinary and “everything else.”

Similar to Lutheran theologian Rudolph Otto’s (1958) understanding of the ‘numinous’ as a mysterious individual human experience, this is the autonomous, universal, and sui generis (a class of its own) element that signals religious activity. McCutcheon (1997) understands this idea of the sacred as a “metaphysically loaded, strictly personal, essential, unique, prior to, and ultimately distinct from, all other facets of human life and interaction” (p. xi). McCutcheon goes on to argue that when viewing religion through this lens, the object of the study of religion becomes largely metaphysical and is insulated from

naturalistic or reductionist approaches of understanding. Furthermore, when the “archaic man” is idealized, before the lamentable consequences of today’s highly technological and industrialized world, to look at the “archaic man” is to rediscover the past and its lost values. Like the evolutionist theories proposed by Tylor (1871) and Frazer (1890), to look at the “other” is to go back in time. These “exotic” or “basic” religions provide clues to the West for how it once acted when it was more “primitive” or “archaic.” In simplistic terms, the East, and often South America and Africa, represent the primordial world living in a world of myth, and the West becomes a maker of history and the arbiter of modernity.

Critics argue that this approach, while valorizing the religious “other,” distorts reality by lifting religious activity from its original context, by downplaying the tradition’s own capacity to serve political, social, and economic forces, and by masking and perpetuating certain theological and political ideologies. Beginning with the theological implications, McCutcheon (1997) asserts that phenomenological approaches, seen in the venerable works of Schleiermacher (trans. 1986), Eliade (1987), Otto (trans. 1958), and others, mirrors not only Protestant identification of religion with personal experience and intuition but also serves a wider Christian need to reconcile their own religion with the reality of autonomous traditions discovered in the age of colonialism. By declaring a mysterious and universal core to religion, scholarship could promote certain Christian theological understandings such as God being active in all times and places, or all nations being under God. By minimizing context and historicity,

this approach promotes a theological universalism – a “universalism through essentialism” (p. 181).

McCutcheon (1997) also notes: “many comparative textbooks continue to presume that the fundamental issue to be addressed in the classroom is the problem of religious plurality” (p. 101). By using “*sui generis*” as a common denominator of all humans, the history of religions scholar is able to reconcile religious diversity in a way that is more akin to a type of theology of pluralism rather than the academic study of religion. He urges instructors to “facilitate the leap from the student’s preexisting folk understanding to scholarly analysis” (p. 102) and leave theology to the theologians. The alternative for McCutcheon is a naturalistic approach that demystifies religion through a rigorous exploration of the factors contributing to religious expression; namely, the historical, social, economic, and psychological forces at work whereby differentiation is not compromised for an artificially constructed unity.

In addition to this critique of “smuggled theology,” Said (1978) and Asad (1993) have forcefully argued the existence of masked political and ideological power motifs at work in “*sui generis*” scholarship. Simply stated, when the “archaic man” is minimized as if he does not have an historical and social context of his own, these societies and their people are reduced to an imagined and primordial core and are rendered without voice or power. They require interpretation and are thus more easily categorized, defined, and ultimately controlled.

In *Genealogy of Religion*, Asad (1993) shows that the discourse of religious studies is ultimately a political discourse and that power dynamics are formative in shaping perceptions of the “other,” specifically, the Muslim world. Asad begins by showing that the category of religion emerges in a particular social-historical moment in Western history and its application as a universal category produces dubious results. Asad argues the enlightenment understanding of religion emerged in a disordered world upon the heels of the wars of religion, the end of the confessional state, and the beginning of the colonial era, and he claims the intellectual community embraced “natural religion” as humankind’s first and common religion.

Withstanding the argument of Schleiermacher (1799) against the “Cultured Despisers,” this universalist agenda produced a normative sense of privatized religion in the political realm that was essentially a moral code intended to contribute to maintaining order, and according to Asad (1993), it would end up benefiting those in power. Religious diversity was seen as a point of conflict, and the promotion of a privatized and “pious” natural religion would result in a more peaceful and “civilized” society. It is only in post-Enlightenment society that religion becomes equated with subjective states of belief or faith, and ritual with symbolic actions.

With this perspective, Asad (1993) argues, academics approached more politically active religions, such as Islam, as being backward, traditional, and in a sense, always playing “catch up” with the West. Conflated with social applications of Darwin’s theories, along with Schleiermacher and Otto’s limited

commentary on Islam, the religion was further entrenched as regressive in nature. For Asad, “religion” becomes an instrument of power as the West becomes the arbiter of modernity and interprets “true meaning” of religion. The translator uncovers implicit meanings in the “text” and has sole authority to decide what is real in another culture. The subject is potentially rendered mute and incapable of self-description. When used in conjunction with political power, the academy can be used to legitimate opportunities to enforce “proper” behavior.

Essentially, the academic embrace of natural religion legitimated, and continues to legitimate, political policies. Asad (1993) reminds us that Christians have long used coercion to instill belief, and in the same way secularism can be a carrier of harsh exclusions. Among Asad’s case studies is his effort to show British repression of immigrant Muslim religious expression while ostensibly embracing multiculturalism. When religious expression falls outside of this expectation, secular powers are legitimated by the academy to suppress behaviors seen as different, emotional, or public. Robert Orsi (2006) notes that the legitimization of dreadful political and judicial actions against African American and Native American popular religion has been useful in masking deeper racial biases. He goes on to suggest that this apparatus privileges nonpolitical, private, and pious expressions of religion, which can at times view Catholicism, Mormonism, and Pentecostalism as terrifying.

Bell (2008) comments “it was only natural for Protestant Enlightenment influenced Christianity to be taken up by scholars in the European cultural milieu as their frame of reference for understanding religion. This frame of reference

became the prototype for “religion in general” (p. 116). Christianity became not only the frame of reference for comparative scholars but also the paragon of religious expression. Coupled often with evolutionary theories and searches for the origins of religion, Christianity was conveniently placed on the top of the evolutionary scale as representative of the technologically advanced state of Europe that played a role in the colonial apparatus in justifying oppression of backwards or uncivilized people.

Religions could be ranked with Monotheism at the highest level and Polytheism at the lowest; literate or non-literate. The religion of others is not seen in a social-political autonomous context. Rather, religion is seen with reference to how it compares to the most enlightened form of religion (Christianity), and symbols, rituals, and myths are seen as ahistorical and thus available for comparison and insertion into the model of religious evolution. Bell (2008) explains, “it was the major tool used to encompass, understand, and dominate the multiplicity that became more evident and immediate” (p. 116).

So if this essentialized notion of religion exists, why does it continue to persist in the academy? McCutcheon (1997) offers a number of explanations. First, for institutional protection of their departments, scholars of religion are sympathetic to the “sui generis” claim that acts to protect their areas of study. Without something distinctly “religious” to study, the field lacks an organizing principle and may simply be absorbed by or explained away by other cultural studies/disciplines such as history, political science, sociology, psychology, or anthropology. Second, it is also suspected that there are many “religious-friendly”

scholars who are comfortable with a phenomenological approach that creates space for the mysterious to operate. On a more pedagogical level, McCutcheon (1997) suggests that with the daunting task of covering world religions in a single semester, the “sui generis” claim provides a convenient lens for instructors to synthesize religious diversity.

Lastly, the popularity of such courses helps justify the existence of the department in a market driven environment. And to question the foundations of this course is to run the risk of “biting the hand that feeds” a department’s autonomy and budget. Nevertheless, McCutcheon’s status as a religious studies scholar himself and Chair of the University of Alabama’s Religious Studies Department would seem to suggest that the discipline can also act in ways that undermine these threats. It is not clear that the majority of instructors are theologically sympathetic nor that the appeal of the class for students is the discovery of universal or synthesizing principles.

Post-modern critiques of enlightenment understandings of religion and its perceived totalizing and universalizing tendencies, is part of the larger question and future of academic comparison. These critiques have proven powerful as Patton and Ray (2000) note. “Comparative studies have virtually disappeared [at the graduate level] in favor of increasingly narrow ‘area’ studies (p. 3).” One might ask if they continue at the undergraduate level merely as a historical remnant. Perhaps the goals of undergraduate and graduate curriculums, such as general exposure versus focused expertise, are so diverse that they warrant different approaches.

Smith (1982) has been highly critical of comparative approaches for its lack of specific rules but has also defended a place for it as well. In *Map is Not Territory* (1974), he goes so far as to state “the process of comparison is a fundamental characteristic of human intelligence” (p. 240). The search for a responsible methodology, or “specific rules” for its conduct as Smith puts it, continues to be a lively debate. As much as self-awareness, positivism, and perhaps focusing on difference more than similarities have helped, some scholars (Patton & Ray, 2000) also defend comparison for its ability to promote mutual understanding and develop self-awareness.

In the case of world religions courses, one may ask if it is indeed a comparative class or a set of serial and truncated “area studies” fit into a survey semester course. On the one hand, one cannot help but consciously or unconsciously compare traditions in a course like this, and on the other hand, the reality of globalism renders “area studies” of Christianity or Islam unlimited. Defenders of self-reflective and difference orientated comparative approaches such as Doniger (2000), Paden (2000), Eck (2000), are similar to the neo-colonial arguments seen earlier in that both see potential problems with biased interpretations. However, they accept, to a certain extent, the inevitability of comparison and retain hope that methods can be improved and useful. This study seeks to discover if undergraduate curriculums do indeed promote or perpetuate a perennial type view of religion where the forces of time and place are minimized.

Evaluation of Relevant Quantitative Studies

Three specific areas of relevant quantitative studies will be reviewed in this section. First, a review will be conducted of quantitative studies of religious studies and the humanities. Second, literature pertaining to quantitative educational studies on ethnic and cultural diversity will be examined. Last, a review of studies in the broader higher educational context will be considered.

Studies of Religious Studies and the Humanities

A pilot study was conducted in the spring of 2007 (Lewis, 2008) as a preliminary step for this project. Research was conducted by means of an online survey administered to a wide cross-section of students at Arizona State University. The findings suggested that those who had taken the Religions of the World course were more accommodating to the idea of religious diversity than their counterparts who had not taken the course. As for the notion that the curriculum perpetuates a universalistic understanding of the category of religion, attempts to scale the dependent variables of “homogenization” and “contextualization” proved unsuccessful. This was a preliminary indication that the theoretical concerns, at least as manifest in the classroom, could potentially be unfounded.

As a result of the pilot study, it became evident that methodological improvements for the research project were needed. These improvements included, but were not limited to, the need for a larger sample size, a longitudinal design measuring change over time rather than observing one point, the use of previously established survey constructs when available, controlling for key

demographics, and a broader range of types of religious studies courses to consider in the analysis. Ultimately, the pilot study was crucial in teasing out the research questions and conceptualizing the more robust methodology used in this project.

Additional optimism for the measurability of the impact of religious studies courses came from Emile Lester and Patrick Roberts (2006) and their empirical study on the impact experienced by approximately 400 students taking part in a 9th grade World Religions curriculum in Modesto, California. They concluded that the course provided a number of benefits including “a positive impact on students’ respect for religious liberty” and the fact that “students were more likely to express their support for the extension of basic religious liberties to all religious groups on surveys and interviews” (p. 6). All these findings supported the school administration’s goals for a safer and more inclusive school environment.

That study also provided an important warning and identified a potential shortcoming. One teacher feared the curriculum may be perpetuating a “warm and fuzzy” (p. 52) approach that would seem to downplay religion’s more unsavory aspects or minimize its complexity. For example, the relationship between religion and violence and the diversity of gender roles are two such areas that call for careful presentation. Another teacher questioned whether it becomes taboo to evaluate critically religion’s impact on society. In addition, “teachers were instructed to avoid the discussion of overly controversial subjects in class” (p.49) to minimize problems that may arise from instructor bias. Concern was also

expressed that when students experienced an “increased appreciation for the similarities between major religions” (p. 7), that attempt to promote tolerance can, in fact, perpetuate the problematic “universalist paradigm” that was just explored in the preceding section of this chapter under neo-colonial critiques.

Nevertheless, the results of the Modesto study provided not only many of the Social Justice Scale items used in the current study’s constructs, but it also allowed for an opportunity to compare the secondary school level used in their study with that of the college and university level students who participated in the current research study.

Walvoord’s (2008) *Teaching and Learning in College Introductory Religion Courses* constitutes an impressive undertaking in scope as she includes data from 12,463 students from 533 courses at 109 colleges and universities. The majority of survey data was provided by the IDEA (Individual Development and Educational Assessment) Center database at Kansas State University. In the audiences and purposes section of her book, she notes her desire to contribute to the existing bodies of knowledge on the “role of higher education in students’ moral, religious, and spiritual development” (p. 3).

Her major findings show that there are differences between faculty and student goals for these courses. The findings also document some of the key pedagogical best practices to achieve those goals. She notes there is a “great divide” between faculty, who overwhelmingly list critical thinking as the most mentioned goal, and students, whose goals are “factual information, and understand other religions and/or their own, and develop their own spiritual and

religious lives”(p. 6). Next, the study identifies three key principles of effective teaching in attaining the goals of “moral, spiritual, and religious development:” instructors who care, who are clear about directions and expectations, and who are effective at facilitating conversation.

Among other student outcomes, Walvoord (2008) relates self-reported student changes in “their religious and spiritual development” as well as “critical thinking, tolerance, and understanding of others’ worlds, in self-direction, and in self-knowledge” (p. 7). At the same time, students also acknowledge “struggle, anxiety, disappointment, surprise, anger, and disassociation“ (p. 7) which might suggest much is happening “under the surface” in academic studies of religion.

Compared to the current study, Walvoord’s (2008) study places more emphasis on the virtues of “theology,” such as religious and spiritual development, rather than the virtues of the humanities as listed in the above sections. While religious and spiritual development may indeed occur in the religious studies classroom, religious studies ostensibly leaves theology to the theologians. There have been many attempts to articulate the differences between religious studies and theological studies, and some, including Wiebe (1998), McCutcheon (2001), and Strenski (2004), have been particularly determined in their attempts to establish clear boundaries between the two disciplines. In their view, the distinction largely rests on the differences between the activities of the insider, or theologian, and the outsider, or religious studies scholar, or to put it simply, between those who *do* religion as opposed to those that *study* religion. As a result of this methodological difference and religious studies’ predominant

location in the public educational setting, religious studies would most likely consider spiritual and religious development of students beyond its learning outcomes and therefore no need to consider a methodology to advise such aims.

The second difference between the current study and that of Walvoord (2008) has less to do with types of research questions as much as the research method employed. It can be inferred that many of Walvoord's conclusions were drawn from qualitative interview responses and the respective coding for various responses in establishing trends. The current study, however, placed emphasis on trying to detect quantitative and statistically significant different changes when comparing pre- and post-course survey findings of the various groups.

Walvoord's qualitative aspect allows her to provide a rich description of the anecdotal challenges and successes found in both religious studies and theology classrooms and make pedagogical recommendations based on what students self-reported about their experiences. However, the qualitative aspect, limits the amount of inference she can make about changes over time or due to the curriculum alone. In other words, levels of statistical significance or changes over time do not enter Walvoord's analysis. Rather, her tables rank percentage responses to the various priorities of students and faculty, pedagogical practices, and perceived outcomes in different categories such as public/private, large class/small class, and database group/best practices group. Her study represents an important contribution in understanding how students and faculty perceive their experiences and goals based on comparing percentage responses at one point

in time, but it leaves a gap for the longitudinal and experimental study conducted here.

Studies on Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

Because this current study will attempt to measure the attitudinal changes that arise out of the study of religious diversity, it will also be closely related to empirical studies that have focused on measuring college students' attitudes toward ethnic and cultural diversity. Impacts can be felt in a number of contexts. Swinger et al (1996) conclude that "participating in a racial or cultural awareness workshop does, indeed, promote the development of more favorable attitudes toward diversity on campus among White students" (p. 6). They point to reflection, perspective taking, and cognitive disequilibrium as key drivers for change.

The idea is that learning occurs in the context of exposing individuals to challenging new ways of thinking about themselves and the society in which they live. Mechanisms for learning include creating opportunities for individuals to reflect, to form pluralistic worldviews through perspective taking, and to experience cognitive disequilibrium, either through pedagogies that facilitate active learning or by creating opportunities for students to interact with diverse peers. Our findings support these concepts. (p. 76)

Henderson-King and Kaleta (2000), arrive at a similar conclusion when they note that in the absence of courses that address social diversity, "undergraduate students became less tolerant of others over a semester of

undergraduate education” (p. 142). When measuring the impact of a required undergraduate course on racial diversity, Chang (2002) states “The findings lend support to the necessity of providing undergraduates with opportunities to critically examine cultural and social groups previously marginalized or ignored in the curriculum so that students can challenge their prejudicial views and assumptions” (p.38). Additional benefits of diversity studies might be seen in more frequent participation in community service (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Gurin, 1999) and higher levels of civic engagement (Milem, 1994). Finally, diversity experiences seem to favorably influence overall satisfaction with the college experience and perceptions of the campus climate (Chang 1999, 2001; Milem & Hakuta 2000).

Hurtado (2001) showed a strong positive correlation among students who enrolled in women’s studies or ethnic studies courses and their critical thinking, leadership, awareness, acceptance, and tolerance of diverse others. Similarly, Gurin (2002), cited in Engberg and Mayhew (2007), also “discovered that enrollment in a diversity course was a strong determinant of a range of democratic outcomes, which included perspective taking, compatibility of difference, and racial/cultural engagement, although these effects differed across racial groups.” Combined, these studies provide reasons for optimism not only for measurable results of attitude changes, but also due to the fact that Religious Studies combines many aspects of ethics, racial, gender, and geographic studies often requiring deep reflections and likely, cognitive disequilibrium.

Studies in the Broader Higher Education Setting

In reviewing the literature on studies that have attempted to understand the general impact of college on students, it quickly becomes apparent what a complex, and at times, highly controversial undertaking it constitutes. Complexity arrives with the multiplicity of social and personal variables that diverse students bring to the classroom, the pedagogical practices employed by the instructors, the various types of institutions and goals for learning, as well as the many areas of studies. The impacts can be understood, though not limited to, a broad range of outcomes such as factually based (command of specialized material), skills based (reading, writing, quantitative reasoning), critical thinking based (deep reflection, analytic reasoning), democratic (respecting of diverse opinions and individual rights), and moralistic (empathy and compassion for others). Furthermore, it is most likely that the ultimate impact will be a confluence of these factors and exposures.

Such complexity makes the work of scholars such as Pasacrella and Terenzini (2005) that much more impressive. Their foundational series *How College Affects Students* reviews nearly 2,500 studies in the decade of the late 1990s and early 2000s to come to general conclusions about higher education. Using a “weight of the evidence” criterion, the researches draw a variety of positive outcomes including factual knowledge and a range of cognitive and intellectual skills. A number of pedagogical best practices are also distilled from the vast number of studies reviewed. These include instructors having good command of the material, being clear in their explanations, avoided vague terms

or complicated language, managing class time efficiently, and having strong relationships with students both inside and outside of the classroom.

Along these same lines there are promising findings regarding the impact of religious studies in higher education. The University of Washington's Study of Undergraduate Learning (UW SOUL) (2003) was a four-year study conducted from the fall of 1999 to spring of 2003. The study tracked 304 students as they moved through their college experience. Some conclusions of the study were: "Learning about others and oneself is a central part of the college experience. Students in majors that engaged them in ethical questions, social issues, conversations about diversity, and conflicting viewpoints may have fostered personal growth more than academic majors that primarily transmitted a body of knowledge and practices" (p. 376).

The authors caution that additional research is needed in this area but would offer those in a discipline such as religious studies with vast opportunities to engage questions of ethics, diversity, conflicting viewpoints, and self-reflection. The University of Washington study found that "students want to be intellectually challenged" (p. 377), that learning comes from many sources but none supersede the role of the professors, and that learning is mediated by the disciplines, and as a result, assessment needs to be centered in the respective department to account for the variations in factual information and how the materials interact with various forms of critical thinking.

Most recently, a quantitative analysis using the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) has garnered much attention not only in the *Chronicle of*

Higher Education (March 2011), which would be a natural forum for these types of discussion, but also in a New York Times op-ed column (March 5, 2011), which uses the study's conclusions to lament that college is becoming too easy, students are socializing more than studying, and grade inflation is rampant. The book resulting from this quantitative analysis, armed with the suggestive title, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*, was published by two sociologists, Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa (2011), who conclude "gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and written communication are either exceedingly small or empirically nonexistent. At least 45 percent of students in our sample did not demonstrate any statistically significant improvement in Collegiate Learning Assessment [CLA] performance during the first two years of college" (p. 1). The researchers go on to place blame for the lackluster results on a number of factors including economic strains on colleges and faculty, a low level of priority on undergraduate learning by college administrations, a lack of student self-reported study time, students choosing to enroll in easy or non-demanding courses, and students reporting rare interactions with professors outside of the classroom.

David Glenn's columns in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Jan 18 – Feb 13, 2011) have attempted to summarize the critiques and the researchers' responses including some questions regarding the motivation students may have to take the test since it is in essay rather than multiple choice format. However, the researchers responded that the methodology controlled for that variable as well as the lack of major specific questions that some view as critically

intertwined with assessing critical thinking. In response Glenn quotes Arum (2011), "I'll just give you an empirical figure in response Thirty-five percent of students report that they spend five or fewer hours per week studying alone. Do we really think that there is going to be a lot subject-specific learning when students are giving so little effort? I actually think that you'd find much the same pattern with subject-specific knowledge" (Jan 18, 2011).

As for discipline significant findings, the researchers conclude that those in math and sciences did best on the essay performance, a conclusion that is rather counterintuitive based on its quantitative rather than verbal emphases. The researchers "suggest that time on task is the biggest factor here. Students in those departments do a lot of homework, and their relatively heavy engagement with their schoolwork seems to lead to broad improvements in their reasoning skills" The book also singles out that in situations when students report high faculty expectations there is a positive correlation in scores (Feb 13, 2011).

A number of inferences might be drawn from this conversation: there is a deep interest and significance placed on the quantitative studies; intellectual capacities in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and written communication are the focus of attention; and there is an underlying unease in the professional academic community of the state of quality of undergraduate education. This dissertation attempts to contribute to the existing literature in each of these three areas.

Conclusion

This chapter presented a review of three bodies of literature which informed the hypotheses, methodology, and the interpretations of findings of this dissertation. The first set of literature reviewed traditional defenses and perceived roles of religious studies and the humanities as they pertained to skill formation, development of a responsible citizenry, global awareness, and conflict resolution. The second set of literature explored post-modern critiques of the study and teaching of religion which raise the concern that the political and theological vestiges of the discipline's origins may still be impacting student understandings of the category of religion. The last section evaluated existing quantitative studies that have attempted to test some of the theoretical defenses listed in preceding sections. It is at the intersection of these three areas of research that this study makes its contribution.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research method used to evaluate and measure attitudinal changes, shifts, and trends experienced by students enrolled in undergraduate religious studies courses. The driving questions reflect the two bodies of theoretical literature found in the preceding chapter. Those questions were first, will the “virtues” of the humanities such as the ability to contextualize, develop empathy, defend democratic institutions, and appreciate diversity be cultivated, and second, will the courses perpetuate a “neo-colonial” understanding of the category of religion. This chapter includes the following sections: conceptual framework, setting and participants, instrument and research variables, data collection procedures, plan of analysis, and limitations.

Conceptual Framework

It is hypothesized that students exposed to a religious studies curriculum are more likely to experience greater developmental gains in the intellectual virtues (dependent variables) than those not enrolled in this curriculum. It is also hypothesized that concerns that the curriculum promotes or perpetuates neo-colonial attitudes has been overstated. Since these assertions require the measurement of attitude, or “how much,” a quantitative method was selected. Future researchers may choose to ask “why” there was a change (if the hypothesis is validated). In that instance, qualitative methods might be more suitable. In this

research study, however, the purpose is to estimate the potential impact that religious studies curriculums may have on undergraduates.

In order to test these hypotheses, students were given the same survey in the beginning and end of the fall semester 2009 to compare their pre- and post-course survey responses. As a result of testing students before and after the course, rather than just once, the design becomes longitudinal. This is in contrast to descriptive studies that measure once, have no intention of changing attitudes or behavior, thereby are limited to only making associations. Eighteen different classes and sixteen different instructors were surveyed and grouped in the following ways: ASU on-ground Religions of the World courses, ASU online Religions of the World Courses, Community College on-ground Religions of the World courses, and ASU mixed on-ground, and online Islamic Studies courses. The intent was to measure differences within groups as well as across groups.

In order to help isolate the effects of the religious studies courses versus other experiences common to the average college student, a control group made up of engineering and political science students was established. If the religious studies results were different from the control group, it could further validate the impact of the curriculum versus other common exposures such as dorm life, club and social activities, and additional curriculum beyond religious studies. The study concluded by comparing the outcome measures of all groups.

Setting and Participants

Field work consisted of entry and exit surveys of students at Arizona State University (ASU), Mesa Community College (MCC), and Phoenix College (PC). All three are public institutions. ASU is a major state research university and MCC and PC are regional community colleges. All three institutions are located in the greater Phoenix, Arizona area. Each offers multiple classes each semester in World Religion. The student bodies at each campus are richly diverse, which helped minimize issues of student self-selection.

ASU is classified as a “research university with very high research activity” (RU/VH) by the Carnegie Classification system. In 2010, its combined graduate and undergraduate student body of 70,440 (68,054 in 2009 and the year of our study) ranked it as the largest public university in the United States. According to its website, 34 percent of its freshman class comes from diverse ethnic backgrounds. In addition, approximately 13,300 students are “out of state” or “international” students. Because this is a mixed study which local community colleges, it is of interest to point out that approximately 6,300 students have transferred to ASU from a community college or other university.

(http://asunews.asu.edu/20100909_enrollment.)

Of the 10 Maricopa Community Colleges, PC, with an enrollment of 13,000 students is considered to be the “flagship” community college, and MCC is the largest of the 10 with 27,000 students enrolled. According to its website, the Maricopa Community College District (MCCD) “ranks as the nation’s largest community college system and the single largest provider of higher education and

career training in Arizona” with a total enrollment of approximately 260,000 students. Within the MCCCD, student demographics include 55% women, 34% Non-Anglo (11% Other/Undeclared), 40% older, 72% part-time, with 41% intending to transfer to a four-year institution, 39% intend to gain or improve workforce skills, and 17% taking courses for personal interest. PC reports that its “diverse student body speaks over 50 different languages, representing over 100 different countries, and is reflective of the multicultural central city community it serves.” At the time of this writing, a demographic student breakdown was not available for Mesa Community College; however, as also serving a large urban population it is likely that the profile would be comparable to that of Phoenix College.

Courses Selected

Students from the following courses participated: Religions of the World (both on-ground and on-line), Islamic Civilization (on-ground), and Islam in the Modern World (on-line). A control group consisting of students from introductory courses in engineering and political science (on-ground) also participated.

REL 100: Religions of the World. Religions of the World courses at ASU fulfill a humanities or a global awareness requirement. The traditional model of the course has been to study the “big five” religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Time constraints on each tradition usually mean a brief chronological overview of the tradition while touching on key figures, practices, beliefs, and geography. Most instructors rarely find time to include more than one section of indigenous tradition(s) such as Chinese religions

(Confucianism, Taoism), or Shinto, or a tradition close to their area of interest or research. More ambitious instructors may try to thematically tie the modules together with attention paid to gender, art, or responses to modernity for each tradition. As an introduction, the first weeks of a course might include lectures intending to problematize the category of religion, define religious studies vis a vis theology. Some instructors will choose to discuss theorists of religion such as Freud, Marx, and Durkheim. Multiple choice or short answer exams normally follow each tradition and writing assignments are kept to a minimum, particularly in the larger classes.

Religions of the World is a popular general education course. The great majority of students who take the course take it as an elective with the intention of fulfilling obligations for their general studies requirement. At ASU, all students must complete 35 semester hours in five “core” areas and three “awareness” areas. In addition to potential student interest in the material, the course fulfills part of both humanities core and global awareness requirements; and in many instances, can be used to satisfy parts of both requirements. At PC and MCC, similar general education requirements are met for the associates’ degree. Furthermore, with the idea many students will transfer to ASU, academic counselors also recognize the usefulness of this course. The registered class sizes at ASU for the on-ground classes used in this study were 442, 296, 130, 37, and 24. For the on-line courses the numbers of registered students in the two courses were 149 and 150 respectively. The community college classes averaged 25-30

registered students. Table 1 reveals the final samples used in the analysis after discounting for attrition, absence, etc.

In reviewing several related syllabi used at ASU, PC, and MCC, common themes emerge in terms of goals and objectives. Whether framed as general knowledge, religious literacy, ability to engage beliefs and practices, or being able to describe similarities and differences among traditions, it is evident that these courses are intended to expose students to global religious diversity. In addition, some instructors declare in their syllabi that an additional intention of the courses was to understand the forces of time and place, differentiate between individual and collective experiences, and explore theoretical and methodological issues involved in the study of religion. Two instructors indicated specific skills objectives including the ability to read and critically evaluate primary and secondary texts, and the ability to combine description and analysis in one paper. It was also evident from the syllabi that some instructors saw their course not only as diversity exposure but as “inspiring critical thinking and life-long learning.”

REL 365: Islamic Civilization, and REL 366: Islam in the Modern World. The courses making up the “Islamic Studies” sample group at ASU include Islamic Civilization (On-ground) and Islam in the Modern World (On-line). The registered class size of each was comparable at 69 and 65 students respectively. Both courses attempted to be global in scope while approaching the transformations in Islamic culture over time. One instructor’s syllabus reflected this intention in her introduction to the course as “inquiring about the problematics of using such categories as religion and civilization without

historicizing them or perceiving of Islam and its civilization as static and bounded entities. We will start with the premise that both categories, Islam and Civilization, are socially and politically constructed and therefore subject to constant change and divergent interpretations.” The most notable difference between the two courses was the fact that course on Islamic Civilization focused on the pre-modern era, presumably before the age of industrialization or the colonial period, while the course on Islam in the Modern World naturally prioritized contemporary issues.

MAE 100: Introduction to Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering & POS 110: Government and Politics: The control group sample came from students enrolled in an introductory engineering class and a political science course. The Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering course is described in the course catalog as introducing “mechanical and aerospace engineering, design process, teaming, the profession of mechanical and aerospace engineering, computer models in engineering, communication skills, CAD tools, and programming tools.” The course was taught twice a week, once in a large lecture hall setting with approximately 220 students and once in smaller lab groups of 30 students each. The Government and Politics class is described as encountering “major institutions of modern government and processes of individual and group political activity, with emphasis on the American experience.” The course met twice a week with approximately 90 students.

Samples, Demographics, and Independent Variables

The same 1116 students took part in the pre- and post-course surveys during the fall semester of 2009. This number reflects religious studies and control group students from ASU, MCC, and PC. There were 1579 surveys originally collected in the beginning of this semester, but due to factors such as class attrition, post-survey absences, or missing/faulty student id numbers, the insured numbers of “paired” samples fell to 1116. When separated into their respective groups, which was required to accurately identify respective course impacts, the sample sizes are as follows: ASU On-ground Religions of the World (652), ASU On-Line Religions of the World (107), combined MCC and PC participants (143), and ASU Control Group (124) and Islamic Studies (90). Each group also had various numbers of sections of particular courses. In order, the ASU on-ground course sample consisted of five different sections with unique instructors, ASU on-line consisted of two sections, MCC and PC combined had seven instructors participate in a total of eight sections (one instructor had two courses participate), and the control and Islamic studies groups each had two sections combined for their sample. See Table 1 for class and aggregate sample statistics.

Table 1: Aggregate Group and Class Sample Sizes Collected

Sample Sizes	Pre-Tests Collected	Post Tests Collected	Final Pairs Matched
ASU Religions of the World On-ground (Total)	803	778	652
Instructor 1	394	372	319
Instructor 2	235	247	192
Instructor 3	116	105	90
Instructor 4	35	34	32
Instructor 5	23	20	19
ASU Religions of the World On-line (Total)	185	126	107
Instructor 1	54	23	16
Instructor 2	131	103	91
Community College On-ground (Total)	213	175	143
Instructor 1	26	16	15
Instructor 2	20	25	17
Instructor 3 (2 classes)	51	44	39
Instructor 4	21	19	14
Instructor 5	22	23	16
Instructor 6 (2 classes)	49	33	28
Instructor 7	24	15	14
ASU Control Group On-ground (Total)	199	177	124
Instructor 1	118	98	60
Instructor 2	81	79	64
ASU Islamic Studies On-ground & On-line (Total)	130	101	90
Instructor 1	69	48	42
Instructor 2	61	53	48

Instrument and Research Variables

The final instrument used in this project emerged from a compilation of multiple sources. These sources include questions from the Duke Religiosity Index (Koenig et al 1997), Student Thinking and Interacting Survey or “STIS” (Hurtado et al 2002), the Lester and Roberts (2006) Modesto CA religions of the world survey, and original survey questions developed for this study in the attempt to measure the neo-colonial question which had not been attempted in any other published research. The final constructs identified through exploratory

factor analysis, and the subject of the following sections in this chapter include the Duke Religiosity Index (DRI) kept in tact in its original form; Attributional Complexity (ATT) and Multi-Religious Awareness (MA) both emerging out of the STIS survey that was adapted by Engberg and Mayhew (2007); Social Justice Public (SJP) and Social Justice Active (SJA) drew its items from the Lester and Roberts survey; while the Neo-colonial Science (NCS), Neo-colonial Context (NCC), and Neo-colonial Enlightenment (NCE) scales emerged out of this studies specific goals and as a result had not been used in previous studies. Lastly, in addition to the social justice scales that emerged from the Lester and Roberts survey (SJP and SJA), individual questions were adopted only for comparison purposes and were not included in the above scales.

The individual items from which these constructs emerged utilized a four, five, or six unit Likert scale depending on past uses of questions. To prevent the need to recode any data, each instrument was presented on escalating scale moving the same direction, for example, “strongly disagree.” “disagree,” “neutral,” “agree,” and “strongly agree.”

Correlation matrices (Table 2) were run with pre-course survey results on what were perceived to be multiple indicators (questions) of the same construct. This insured that the questions were consistent with this hypothesis. When evidence confirmed related items, the scales were created using exploratory factor analysis. Principal axis factoring was employed as opposed to principal components due to the latter’s potential negative consequences as evidenced in Preacher & MacCallum (2003). After the first run at factor analysis with varimax

rotation, the resulting scree plot was consulted to determine the number of factors in the item set by counting the number of points “above the elbow” in the graph. The second run of factor analysis then asked SPSS to provide factor loadings based on the number counted. Factor loadings greater than .4 (usually over .6) were retained in the final constructs with coefficient alpha used to test the internal consistency or reliability for each of the scales (Table 3). Assumptions of normality, linearity, and homogeneity were tested to prepare the data for regression.

Table 2: Correlation Matrices for Dependent Variable Constructs

Correlation Matrix: Religiosity (DRI)

	Item 10	Item 11	Item 12	Item 13	Item 14
Item 10	1	0.691	0.595	0.664	0.694
Item 11	0.691	1	0.677	0.679	0.678
Item 12	0.595	0.677	1	0.697	0.673
Item 13	0.664	0.679	0.697	1	0.854
Item 14	0.694	0.678	0.673	0.854	1

Correlation Matrix: Attributional Complexity (ATT)

	Item 15	Item 16	Item 17	Item 18	Item 19	Item 20	Item 21	Item 22	Item 23
Item 15	1	0.512	0.563	0.5	0.488	0.453	0.387	0.269	0.288
Item 16	0.512	1	0.59	0.528	0.647	0.496	0.392	0.279	0.282
Item 17	0.563	0.59	1	0.607	0.576	0.527	0.361	0.225	0.272
Item 18	0.5	0.528	0.607	1	0.554	0.443	0.431	0.282	0.267
Item 19	0.488	0.647	0.576	0.554	1	0.484	0.402	0.288	0.318
Item 20	0.453	0.496	0.527	0.443	0.484	1	0.391	0.3	0.33
Item 21	0.387	0.392	0.361	0.431	0.402	0.391	1	0.566	0.55
Item 22	0.269	0.279	0.225	0.282	0.288	0.3	0.566	1	0.696
Item 23	0.288	0.282	0.272	0.267	0.318	0.33	0.55	0.696	1

Correlation Matrix: Social Justice Public (SJP)

	Item 26	Item 27
Item 26	1	0.685
Item 27	0.685	1

Table 2 Cont'd: Correlation Matrices for Dependent Variable Constructs
(See Appendix B for Full Description of Items)

Correlation Matrix: Social Justice Active (SJA)

	Item 29	Item 30	Item 31	Item 32
Item 29	1	0.551	0.463	0.415
Item 30	0.551	1	0.454	0.402
Item 31	0.463	0.454	1	0.708
Item 32	0.415	0.402	0.708	1

Correlation Matrix: Multi-religious Awareness (MA)

	Item 35	Item 36	Item 37	Item 39	Item 40	Item 41
Item 35	1	0.475	0.448	0.358	0.559	0.329
Item 36	0.475	1	0.584	0.418	0.462	0.428
Item 37	0.448	0.584	1	0.464	0.437	0.378
Item 39	0.358	0.418	0.464	1	0.42	0.328
Item 40	0.559	0.462	0.437	0.42	1	0.386
Item 41	0.329	0.428	0.378	0.328	0.386	1

Correlation Matrix: Neo-colonial Enlightenment (NCE)

	Item 43	Item 44	Item 46	Item 49
Item 43	1	0.141	0.351	0.093
Item 44	0.141	1	0.139	0.179
Item 46	0.351	0.139	1	0.166
Item 49	0.093	0.179	0.166	1

Correlation Matrix: Neo – colonial Science (NCS)

	Item 47	Item 50
Item 47	1	0.464
Item 50	0.464	1

Correlation Matrix – Neo-colonial Context (NCC)

	Item 52	Item 53	Item 54	Item 55
Item 52	1	0.183	0.451	0.234
Item 53	0.183	1	0.261	0.243
Item 54	0.451	0.261	1	0.333
Item 55	0.234	0.243	0.333	1

Table 3: Factor Items and Reliability

<p><u>Religiosity (DRI) (alpha = .909)</u> How often do you attend religious services or gatherings? [.783] How often do you spend time in private religious activities, such as prayer, meditation, or scripture reading? [.811] In my life, I experience the presence of the Divine. [.782] My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life. [.888] I try hard to carry over my religion over into all other dealings in life. [.890]</p> <p><u>Attributional Complexity (ATT) (alpha =.871) [Factor Loadings bracketed below]</u> I'm very interested in understanding how my own thinking works when I make judgments about people or attach causes to their behavior. [.668] I think a lot about the influence that society has on other people. [.729] I really enjoy analyzing the reason or causes for people's behavior. [.732] I believe it is important to analyze and understand our own thinking and processes. [.704] I think a lot about the influence that society has on my behavior and personality. [.733] When I analyze a person's behavior, I often find the causes form a chain that goes back in time, sometimes for years. [.656] I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective. [.638] Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place. [.515] When I'm upset with someone, I usually try to "put myself in their shoes" for a while. [.534]</p> <p><u>Multi-religious Awareness (MA) (alpha =.818) [Factor Loadings bracketed below]</u> I feel I have a good understanding of issues faced by various religious groups. [.657] I am able to critically think about difficult issues of religious diversity. [.748] I am aware of multiple perspectives on issues of religion and diversity. [.717] I am aware of societal problems related to accommodating religious diversity. [.600] I have a good understanding of various religious groups. [.689] I engage in discussions involving differences of opinion or conflict around religious diversity issues. [.550]</p> <p><u>Social Justice Active (SJA) (alpha = .797)</u> Imagine that you lived in a place where most people disrespect members of a small religious group. How likely would you be to take the following actions? Defend the small religious group when talking to friends. [.647] Sign a petition supporting the small religious group. [.624] Write a letter to the local newspaper defending the small religious group. [.771] Help to organize an association to support the small religious group. [.698]</p> <p><u>Social Justice Public (SJP) (alpha = .812)</u> Students of all religions should be able to wear religious symbols outside of their clothing in public schools. [.749] People of all religions should be able to put religious displays outside of their homes as long as the displays are on their private property. [.749]</p> <p><u>Neo-Colonial Science (NCS) (alpha = .632)</u> Religion is something fundamentally created by human beings. [.695] Science is mostly rational while religion is mostly irrational. [.655]</p> <p><u>Neo-Colonial Context (NCC) (alpha = .613)</u> Religions tend to stay the same over time. [.491] Geography seems to have little influence on established religions. [.421] Christianity today is basically the same as it has been for two thousand years. [.666] Islam is probably very similar whether in Iran or Indonesia. [.491]</p> <p><u>Neo-Colonial Enlightenment (NCE) (alpha = .462)</u> A good definition of religion is a "set of beliefs" [.445] Because of its nature, religion is basically neutral or non-political. [.382] A good definition of religion is a "moral code." [.557] Religion in the modern world has progressed in a positive way in that it has become more rational and intellectual rather than mystical and sensational. [.324]</p>

Duke Religiosity Index (DRI)

In terms of the impact of religious studies courses, the study recognized the importance of measuring the student starting point in religiosity even though the course is secular based mirroring more historical and anthropological approaches. Due to the nature of the subject material, and its capacity to be seen

as highly personal in the American context, the course could impact individual students differently depending on the extent to which the course is seen as personally applicable, challenging, and/or internalized. This variable (Religiosity) was employed both as a control variable (to assist in evaluating student self selection) as well as being analyzed as an outcome variable (and therefore asked again on the exit survey) to determine mean changes, if any, to a student's religious disposition after the potential influence of the course. Religiosity was defined in terms of the DRI (Koenig et al 1997).

The DRI is a five item scale designed to encompass three primary dimensions of religiousness: the organizational (how often do you attend religious services?), non-organizational (How often do you spend time in private religious activities, such as prayer, meditation, or scripture reading?), and subjective or intrinsic religious dimensions (In my life, I experience the presence of the divine; my religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life; and I try hard to carry my religion into all other dealings in my life). This last dimension constitutes a three-item subscale of which the original researchers reported a Cronbach's alpha of .75 for reliability (Koenig et al 1997). When repeated in a 2007 study (Klemmack et al) Cronbach's measure of internal consistency was .83. When analyzed and implemented in work on sexual attitudes of college students, the reliability for the entire five item scale was also strong at .88 (Beckwith 2005: 3).

Used primarily in psychological research to measure the impact of religion on health and wellness, this construct also served this study's interest in assessing

whether a student's own religious disposition affected the impact of the course on religiosity and whether or not the student's religiosity changed over the course of the semester.

Two criticisms were encountered in the use of the DRI. The first criticism was that the instrument was "Protestant biased" in its emphasis on personal beliefs and experience as opposed to communal or ritualistic practice that may be more indicative of Catholic or non-Christian traditions. The second criticism emerged when surveying students in Indonesia for a different study (Lewis 2010). The item asking for frequency in attendance of formal religious services varies widely in the Muslim context i.e. Friday prayers, by gender thereby creating a gender bias.

It is also clear that the challenge in defining religiosity is certainly related to the lively, sometimes contentious debate in religious studies circles about what exactly constitutes "religion" or the object of its study. While it is beyond the scope of this project to enter that conversation or addresses potential criticisms that result, it is recognized that the DRI has its weaknesses from a definitional standpoint. However, defining religiosity in any normative sense is outside the purview of this study. Rather, this study is meant to establish if, in fact, there is a self-selection bias or shift in perspective as defined by the authors of the DRI.

Attributional Complexity (ATT) and Multi-Religious Awareness (MA)

The outcome measures of the ATT and MA were constructed and adapted based on the survey instrument "Student Thinking and Interacting Survey" (STIS). The STIS was developed as part of the larger national research project

titled *Preparing Students for a Diverse Democracy*. “The survey was designed to assess students’ cognitive and social development in the classroom over one term with an emphasis on the mediating effect of students’ interactions with diverse peers” (Hurtado et al 2002). The STIS was first piloted in an attempt to evaluate a diversity course at a University of Massachusetts, Amherst where the reliability of the constructs was evaluated with positive results (Nelson Laird et al 2005).

Later, the STIS was used by Engberg and Mayhew (2007) in their examination of student learning and democratic outcomes on first-year students. Large credit to this study’s general methodology is due to their conceptual framework and survey items. Beginning with the ATT scale, their use revealed valid and reliable constructs including Cronbach’s alpha of .813. The ATT includes questions that seek to evaluate the degree of perspective taking as well as the ability to recognize of the forces of time and place in judging social situations. Five-point Likert scale items include: “I think a lot about the influence society has on other people,” and “When I am upset with someone, I usually try to put myself in their shoes for a while.” (See Table 3 for complete item list and factor loadings). In the final scale of this study, all nine items were used, with factor loadings ranging from .515 up to .729. It is generally accepted to use loadings of .4 or greater so all items were retained. This study’s Cronbach’s alpha was also strong at .871 for a relatively high internal consistency; i.e. how close these items were related as a group.

In terms of the MA scale, one important distinction between the Engberg and Mayhew’s “multi-cultural awareness” scale and our “multi-religious

awareness” scale is the adaptation for this study’s vocabulary to match the course content. Slight modifications in survey items reflected this shift from “culture” to “religion.” This is not to suggest these terms are mutually exclusive. Rather the intention is to focus on religion and its related connotations in the student setting. For example, the item “I engage in discussions involving differences of opinion or conflict around religious diversity issues” was adapted from the original item that left that referenced “diversity issues” versus this study that referred to “religious diversity issues.” It is acknowledged that as a result of these changes, this study’s justification for use of this scale based on the prior positive testing may be slightly compromised. Nevertheless, it was important to frame the questions to match the curriculum under investigation.

The intention was to measure student comfort, sensitivity, or likeliness to engage in questions and conversations related to religious diversity. Do students report gains in their level of understanding and awareness of multi-religious issues and global perspectives? After exploratory factor analysis and retaining items with a factor loading above .550, the resulting measure included six correlated items with an alpha of .818. (See Table 3 for complete list of items and loadings). For their original version of the MA, Engberg and Mayhew reported an alpha of .938 for internal consistency.

Social Justice Active (SJA), Social Justice Public (SJP)

The social justice survey items used in this study were replicated from a survey given to high school students in Modesto, CA (Lester and Roberts 2006). Lester and Roberts analyzed these questions on an item-by-item basis rather than

construct correlated scales. For them, the questions revealed interesting results and provided an opportunity for this study to not only build on previous use but compare with a different age and state demographic with the same course title. After conducting of exploratory factor analysis, two social justice measures emerged out of ten items used in the Lester and Roberts survey.

These two measures were then named Social Justice Active (SJA) and Social Justice Public (SJP) after reviewing the constituent questions and recognizing the thematic difference. SJA measured student propensities to act (i.e. write a letter, help organize, sign a petition) if they had seen a small religious group be disrespected. Factor loadings for the four items ranged from .624 to .771 with Cronbach's alpha of .797 (See Table 3). Alternatively, SJP measured student comfort with public displays of religious symbols both outside of their clothing and their homes. The Factor loadings for both items were .749 with a Cronbach's alpha of .818. Results outside of these scales but still using the Modesto survey questions are discussed under its own section in chapter four.

Neo-colonial Science (NCS), Neo-colonial Context (NCC), and Neo-colonial Enlightenment (NCE)

The Neo-colonial scales used in the current study measure students' propensity to view the category of religion as private, irrational, textual, and/or existing apart from social contexts. This is the first known quantitative survey that attempts to capture theoretical concerns that traditional religious studies discourse promotes a privatized, non-political, belief-centered understanding of the category of religion. As the literature review section noted, some critics assert that courses

such as Religions of the World approach religious diversity through the post-enlightenment Protestant perspective, and also considered by some as an ecumenical prism, that distorts global realities.

The final survey instrument included 16 original items created for this project and designed to evaluate the impact of these courses on student perceptions of the category of religion. Of those 16 items, by way of the process of exploratory factor analysis, 10 items were retained and distributed based on correlations into three distinct factors named accordingly Neo-colonial Science (NCS), Neo-colonial Context (NCC), and Neo-colonial Enlightenment (NCE). NCS explored student linking of religion as being “irrational” versus their ideas science. NCC inquired about the extent to which religion is influenced by time and place such as “Christianity today is basically the same as it has been for two thousand years.” By using never before tested items, the validity, or the degree to which a scale measures what it is suppose to measure, is not always clear. Nevertheless, the importance of these questions to the discipline of religious studies warrants such an attempt.

Last, NCE explored whether student definitions of religions shifted in a way that more or less closely resembles that of a naturalistic or enlightenment understandings i.e. “a good definition of religion is a ‘set of beliefs’” or “religion is basically neutral or non-political.” These questions were particularly difficult to manufacture as are both relative to different perspectives and rely on a certain level of literacy i.e. in understanding differences between Iran and Indonesia when it came to defining Islam. Nevertheless, these questions do not necessarily

pre-dispose a right answer (again, staying outside of the fray of definitions) but rather seeking if there was a shift in responses that critics have identified for concern. Factor loadings are listed on Table 3 and Cronbach's alpha figures for reliability were .632, .613, and .462 respectively for NCS, NCC, and NCE.

Data Collection Procedure

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for research on human subjects from the three difference institutions, Arizona State University, Mesa Community College, and Phoenix College, materials including ten-response scantron forms, pencils, and enough surveys copied to accommodate the largest class of approximately 450 students were ordered.

The final instrument, delivered to students and compiled from the above sources, was initially piloted in the Summer Semester of 2009 at ASU in both on-ground and on-line formats. For the on-ground course, the administering of the survey was followed by a verbal quiz to insure readability and consistent interpretation of vocabulary used. Factor analysis was not conducted on these surveys. Student reviews were strong with only minor recommendations and edits. The average time spent on the survey was approximately 20 minutes, with some students finishing as fast as 15 minutes and others taking as much as 25 minutes and signaled a reasonable time duration, which limited concerns of survey fatigue. These time durations held consistent throughout the Fall Semester of 2009 when the data for this study was collected. For the on-line course, the pilot study provided an opportunity to insure easy user access to the off-university

platform and Internet collection service used for the online courses (www.surveymonkey.com). The piloted surveys were not included in the final analysis because the short 5 week length of the summer course may have been construed as constituting a different treatment than the surveys collected during the longer four month Fall Semester.

Each group of students who participated in the survey was greeted with a scripted introduction to the project and format of the survey. The students were then informed that a graduate student at Arizona State working with the Religious Studies department intended to use the survey to learn more about students' opinions on a wide variety of topics including, but not limited to, religion. Students were told that there were no "right" or "wrong" answers, that the survey was voluntary, and that confidentiality would be strictly enforced. Students were informed that their instructor would have no access to the individual surveys once complete, that their answers would have no bearing on their grade in the course, and that results would only be shared in aggregate in the form of a research paper or presented at an academic conference.

After asking if there were any questions, gratitude was expressed for their willingness to take the survey. The above information and instruction was given not only to comply with the respective IRB application but to also ensure that students were not influenced to answering in ways they thought more socially acceptable. With that preliminary component completed, the survey, a scantron, and pencil were distributed to each student. The students were then reminded not to write their names but only the last four of their student id number located on

their student id card. Completed surveys were kept in a secure file cabinet off campus to insure safety and privacy. There they remained until joined with the post-tests four months later. In December 2009, the post-course surveys were administered in the same fashion.

A key part of this process was also gaining access to student lists with their corresponding Arizona State University student identification numbers. Because it would be necessary to pair the pre- and post-course surveys at the end of the semester, the student identification numbers were required to insure consistency in data analysis. In addition, to honor IRB privacy concerns regarding the collection of student names, dates of births, or social security numbers for research purposes, only the last four numbers of the school assigned student identification numbers were used.

In some instances, as in the case of new students who may not carry or have memorized their identification number, that number was accessed on the course roster. Access to and recording of student identification numbers was invaluable for tracking reasons, particularly for the two classes at Arizona State University, which consisted of 300 or more students per class. Similar lists were not available for access at the community colleges; however, due to the smaller class size of 15-25 students, it was relatively easy to match the demographic questions (i.e. gender, year in school, religion, etc.) to insure proper matching of the pre- and post-course surveys. This would have been nearly impossible in the larger courses.

The final sample insured that the same set of students that participated in the pre-course survey were those that also completed the post-course survey. This allowed for measurement of change in the individual and not the change in the class. Surveys without matching identifiers (students who dropped the course or were perhaps absent on one of the two survey dates) were discarded since the lack of surveys from both time points for each individual would prohibit a consistent data set. For each group, the number of pre-course survey and post-course “orphan” surveys (pre-course/post-course) were as follows: ASU Religions of the World on-ground (151/126), ASU Religions of the World on-line (78/19), Community College Religions of the World (32/4), ASU control group (53/8), and ASU Islamic studies group (40/11).

Because the survey took place during regular scheduled class time, and because all instructors were cooperative, class capture rate was extremely high. Even though the survey was voluntary and that component was reiterated in the instructions that students received in person and on the survey cover page, only one student in all the classes surveyed elected not to participate. No on-ground students declined participation. The on-line class presented more challenges in this area. It should also be noted that some instructors for the on-line courses did provide extra credit as a small incentive for participation. For this primary reason and the potential for student self-selection, results of the on-ground and on-line studies will be evaluated separately rather than combined.

Data Analysis Plan

In preparing the surveys for analysis, all data was merged into a single Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) file. First, on-line class data was retrieved from surveymonkey.com into an Excel spreadsheet. Second, with the help of the University Testing Services (UTS) and their grading equipment, the on-ground scantrons were delivered to their office and they also collated the responses into a single Excel spreadsheet divided by individual class as well and pre-course and post-course surveys. Once the Survey Monkey and UTS spreadsheets were merged together, the data had to be organized. Individual student pre-course surveys were matched with their post-course survey and ultimately lined up on the same row of the spreadsheet. The first 57 columns were the pre-course survey and the next 57 columns were the post-course survey so that analysis could be run subject by subject. “Orphan” surveys were dropped for the purposes stated above.

For the control group, the surveys did include one question not on the other surveys, namely, “Are you taking a Religions of the World course this semester?” To insure purity of the control group, those that answered in the affirmative were dropped from the sample. In cases where the last four of the student id was the same as another student, demographic information was used to differentiate and match appropriately. Because the on-line survey data used 0 as the first response, all data collected from those surveys were increased by 1, in order to match the same scale as the on-ground surveys.

Variables were then defined in SPSS into their appropriate measurement levels such as scale (i.e. time in school), ordinal (i.e. Likert scales), and nominal (i.e. gender). For nominal variables, missing values were recoded as “99” where it is not appropriate to replace with mean (i.e. gender and ethnicity). For ordinal scale variables, missing values were replaced by series mean. An often used rule of thumb suggests that it is acceptable to replace up to 15% of data by the mean of distribution with little damage to the resulting outcomes (George & Mallory 2007, p.48). For this sample, only seven out of fifty-seven questions had missing data. Of those seven questions, six had only one subject not respond and the remaining question had only two non-respondents, thus falling well under the 15% threshold.

Once the data was prepared, frequencies and cross tabulations were run to insure that data appeared consistent and moving in expected direction with what was to be expected. The final tally of on-line and on-ground surveys yielded 1,116 pairs of pre- and post-course surveys or 1,116 unique students. While demographic information on each participant was collected twice (during the pre- and post-course surveys) the data used and displayed derives from the pre-course survey.

ANOVA tests were then used to identify those demographic and scale factors that significantly influenced student scores. Once these pre course survey differences (primarily student self-selection) were identified, they would be controlled for in subsequent analyses. These independent variables (both fixed factors and covariates) were seen to be significantly different across groups due to

self-selection, and these were confirmed through analysis of variance (ANOVA) for parametric values and Chi-Square tests for non-parametric items. Next, paired samples t-tests were used to understand whether there were mean pre-course and post-course survey differences across the dependent measures for each of the five groups of students. This was done to explore significant “within class” differences between the pre- and post-course surveys.

Finally, a general univariate model (ANCOVA) was constructed for each of the outcomes measures (Time 2) across the five groups, controlling for the pretest measure, gender, year in school, religion, number of diversity courses enrolled in, religiosity, and the outcome measure (Time 1). This method provided a robust procedure for testing differences between the treatment groups (religious studies) and control group (engineering and political science).

Limitations

Quantitative approaches work on the assumption that what occurs in one setting can be used to predict the impact of the same treatment in other settings. This can be particularly helpful in drawing universal conclusions. One potential limitation in the development of this research design was the possibility that changes in student attitudes could be a reflection of significant external events or experiences during the treatment.

For instance, if a major terrorist attack, something akin to what we saw on September 11, 2001 occurred during our semester of treatment, there would be justified skepticism as to what was the driver in student attitudes. From our experimental standpoint, the fall of 2009 was “quiet” in terms of local and

national events. The highly politicized and contentious state of Arizona immigration legislation (SB1070) and the canceling of public school ethnic studies classes in Tucson would come the following year. To what extent these events and circumstances might have influenced the results is difficult to say, but since they both relate to questions and attitudes about diversity and the “other” it might have played a complicating role.

The reliance on student self-reported data represents a limitation as students may wish to describe themselves or their behaviors in ways that may, to them, be more socially desirable. For example, in responding to questions about social justice or multiculturalism, there may be perceived incentives to present oneself in a more socially desirable way than actual current or past actions may dictate. Nevertheless, empirical research projects using self-reported evidence offer a viable alternative to theoretical and anecdotal research.

A third area to address is the built-in assumption that any attitudinal changes will be measured at the end of a four month semester class and not at some later date. It is reasonable to assume that for some students only the seeds are sewn for potential attitudinal changes during the first semester and may only bear fruit at a later date due to some internal or perhaps external event that spurs reflection of past matriculation. However, if the hypothesis that courses in world religions do in fact promote certain aspects of responsible citizenry is supported, regardless if later rather than sooner, this weakness may in fact strengthen conclusions due to missing evidence of delayed successes. Accounting for these latency effects is particularly difficult because even if logistically these same

students could be surveyed at future dates, the potential for additional and complicating influences to be controlled for increases as student experiences widen.

A fourth limitation of this study was the likelihood that results may have varied based on different instructor styles or textbooks used. This study attempted to control this variable by reviewing course syllabi for any dramatic differences as well as drawing on personal relationships with each of the instructors and the corresponding knowledge/comfort with how the course in general is approached i.e. as a survey class moving through two to four week modules of one tradition at a time. This knowledge and the relationships with instructors stem from the researcher having taught over thirty sections of combined undergraduate religious studies courses over the past six years at the three institutions used in this study. Nevertheless, this study recognizes that course impact on students will undeniably be influenced by the effectiveness of the instructor. But rather than be a study on one instructor or particular pedagogical methods, this study intended to better understand the impact of the course and how it is taught in general and across various sections and settings. Nevertheless, this research acknowledges that by pooling over these pedagogical differences, potential sources of variability are overlooked.

In addition to trying to answer “why” questions, future research in this area may also choose a qualitative approach if the desire is to improve the curriculum, pedagogy, and/or delivery of the course. Qualitative methods are more appropriate for discovering why a student chooses to take the course and

why they may experience certain outcomes (often through interview and focus group collection means) rather than how much the average of the class shifts over the course of a semester.

Qualitative research may also be helpful in identifying impacts not apparent to the outside researcher. For instance, in a course like Religions of the World, students may repeatedly disclose some unanticipated result of the course such as a change in their political party affiliation that was not part of the original anecdotal or speculative literature. This could minimize the quantitative method's susceptibility in missing one or more of a treatment's outcome merely because it was not tested for. Nevertheless, the current study's intent to evaluate the scale of a number of claims from the theoretical and anecdotal literature led to a quantitative approach.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results from the methodology employed and reported in the previous chapter. This chapter will present t-test and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) results for each of the outcome measures and conclude with select per item comparisons with the 2006 Modesto, CA study of responses from high school students on similar items measured. Overall, the results from this project were mixed depending on whether results were measured within the groups or after controlling for covariates and testing across groups.

Within group analysis revealed statistically significant differences in pre and post-course survey results for some measures, most visibly in the Multi-Religious Awareness (MA) and the Neo-colonial Context (NCC) scales. However, after controlling for a number of demographic variables through ANCOVA, the study did not show any statistically significant differences *across* groups in answers from the pre- and post-course surveys. The scores for religious studies courses were not significantly different when compared to the control group. For example, while the study did show that those enrolled in religious studies courses were more comfortable with ideas of religious diversity and the issues faced by different groups, it was not significantly different from the control group. From the “virtues of the humanities” standpoint, this would seem to suggest that survey results dealing with perspective taking, multi-religious awareness, and social justice seem more or less neutral to assertions of the value of comparative religious studies. In response to the neo-colonial critiques, the

non-findings suggest that the critiques are unfounded or have been overstated. In all cases, a student's pre-course survey score was the best predictor of their post-course survey score.

General Assumptions

In preparation for conducting t-test and ANCOVA procedures, general assumptions regarding normality, linearity, and homogeneity of variance and of regression slope were applied. In terms of normality, it is assumed that the populations from which the samples were taken were normally distributed. This is rarely the case for scores on the dependent variable in the social sciences, and this study was no exception. Indeed, group differentiation through student self-selection was significant. Fortunately, both t-tests and ANCOVA are reasonably 'robust' or tolerant of violations of this assumption. "With large enough sample sizes (e.g. 30+), the violation of this assumption should not cause any major problems" (Pallant 2007; pg 204).

It is also assumed in ANCOVA analyses that the relationship between variables is linear. Assorted scatter plots, with adequate sample sizes, confirmed that there was no violation of this assumption. Nothing was seen to suggest any curvilinear relationship existing between the variables.

Homogeneity of variance makes the assumption that the variability of scores for each of the groups is similar. For this study, this assumption was complicated in part due to unequal sample sizes. Levene's test for equality of variances was run for each measure and, in each case, was shown to be significant

($p < .05$). As a result, the data violated the assumption. Nevertheless, the analyses proceeded but caution is warranted with regards to statistical significance.

The final assumption, homogeneity of regression slopes, concerns the relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable for each of the groups. In review of the significance level of the interaction source (i.e. the group and the covariate), the significance value was always greater than .05. This means the assumption is tenable and there were no signs of interaction between the treatment and the covariate.

Sample and Self-Selection

General demographic information can be gleaned about this cumulative student sample: 52.8% of participants were female (Table 4), 55% were in their first year of college (Table 5), 50.7% were either Protestant or Catholic, and 22% of participants reported having no religion (Table 6).

Table 4: Gender Frequency and Distribution

Group			Frequency	Percent
ASU Religions of the World On-ground	Valid	Male	267	41
		Females	385	59
		Total	652	100
ASU Religions of the World On-line	Valid	Male	40	37.4
		Females	67	62.6
		Total	107	100
Community College On-ground	Valid	Male	76	53.1
		Females	67	46.9
		Total	143	100
ASU Control Group On-ground	Valid	Male	93	75
		Females	31	25
		Total	124	100
ASU Islamic Studies On-ground & On-line	Valid	Male	51	56.7
		Females	39	43.3
		Total	90	100

Table 5: Year in College

Group		Frequency	Percent
ASU Religions of the World On-ground	First Year	441	67.6
	Second Year	133	20.4
	Third Year	47	7.2
	Fourth Year	25	3.8
	Fifth Year or More	6	0.9
	Total	652	100
ASU Religions of the World On-line	First Year	14	13.1
	Second Year	34	31.8
	Third Year	32	29.9
	Fourth Year	16	15
	Fifth Year or More	11	10.3
	Total	107	100
Community College On-ground	First Year	58	40.6
	Second Year	44	30.8
	Third Year	23	16.1
	Fourth Year	10	7
	Fifth Year or More	8	5.6
	Total	143	100
ASU Control Group On-ground	First Year	95	76.6
	Second Year	10	8.1
	Third Year	10	8.1
	Fourth Year	3	2.4
	Fifth Year or More	6	4.8
	Total	124	100
ASU Islamic Studies On-ground & On-line	First Year	5	5.6
	Second Year	22	24.4
	Third Year	28	31.1
	Fourth Year	20	22.2
	Fifth Year or More	15	16.7
	Total	90	100

Table 6: Religious Affiliation

Group		Frequency	Percent
ASU Religions of the World On-ground	Jewish	20	3.1
	Protestant	180	27.6
	Catholic & Orthodox	182	27.9
	Mormon	29	4.4
	Native American	6	0.9
	Muslim	12	1.8
	Buddhist	9	1.4
	Hindu	13	2
	Other	64	9.8
	None	137	21
	Total	652	100
ASU Religions of the World On-line	Jewish	4	3.7
	Protestant	31	29
	Catholic & Orthodox	21	19.6
	Mormon	6	5.6
	Buddhist	2	1.9
	Hindu	1	0.9
	Other	18	16.8
	None	24	22.4
	Total	107	100
Community College On-ground	Jewish	1	0.7
	Protestant	33	23.1
	Catholic & Orthodox	31	21.7
	Mormon	19	13.3
	Native American	4	2.8
	Muslim	6	4.2
	Buddhist	3	2.1
	Other	18	12.6
	None	28	19.6
	Total	143	100
ASU Control Group On-ground	Jewish	6	4.8
	Protestant	30	24.2
	Catholic & Orthodox	32	25.8
	Mormon	3	2.4
	Native American	1	0.8
	Buddhist	3	2.4
	Other	14	11.3
	None	35	28.2
	Total	124	100
ASU Islamic Studies On-ground & On-line	Jewish	3	3.3
	Protestant	13	14.4
	Catholic & Orthodox	13	14.4
	Mormon	6	6.7
	Muslim	22	24.4
	Hindu	1	1.1
	Other	10	11.1
	None	22	24.4
	Total	90	100

When analyzed separately, significant differences emerge in the self-selection of students into different courses. These variables then became the control or covariates in ANCOVA analysis. In terms of gender for example, significant differences were noted between ASU on-ground Religions of the World class which consisted of 59% women compared to only 25% women in the control group made up of engineering and political science courses.

Large discrepancies were noted between classes regarding age of students, or more precisely, their year in school. Though the ASU on-ground Religions of the World courses and the ASU control group of the introductory engineering and political science courses largely contained freshman or first year students (67% and 76% respectively), the ASU on-line Religions of the World (13%), Community College (40%), and Islamic Studies (5%) courses drew an older or more college experienced student group contained 13, 40 and 5% respectively of first year or freshman (Table 3).

In terms of religious affiliation, a somewhat even spread in most religious categories was noted, such as those identifying themselves as Protestant or Catholic and Orthodox. However, when it comes to the Islamic studies courses, there was an increase in the number of Muslim students (24.4%) while a slightly larger percentage of students in the control group selected “none” (28%) amongst the ten choices of religious affiliation provided (Table 6).

The last covariate accounted for in the analysis was student religiosity as derived from the Duke Religious Index (Koenig et al 1997). A score of 4.5 and higher indicates greater average “religiosity.” The Islamic studies courses

emerged highest (3.35), followed by combined MCC and PC students (3.29), ASU on-ground Religions of the World (3.113), ASU on-line Religions of the World (3.071), and the ASU control group (2.66) (Table 7). Control for the variations on this statistic, as well as the others mentioned above, are warranted. These variables can affect the relationship being investigated. Because a perfectly randomized sample of students was not possible, and rarely if ever are found in social science investigations, the accounting of these variables have been included in the analysis.

Table 7: Religiosity

ASU Religions of the World On-ground	N	Valid	652
		Missing	0
	Mean		3.1113
ASU Religions of the World On-line	N	Valid	107
		Missing	0
	Mean		3.0706
Community College On-ground	N	Valid	143
		Missing	0
	Mean		3.2885
ASU Control Group On-ground	N	Valid	124
		Missing	0
	Mean		2.656
ASU Islamic Studies On-ground & On-line	N	Valid	90
		Missing	0
	Mean		3.3489

Individual Measures Analysis

This section reports the results for each measure or construct developed to test the impact of religious studies courses on undergraduate attitudes. In order, these include Religiosity (DRI), Attributional Complexity (ATT), Multi-Religious Awareness (MA), Social Justice Active (SJA), Social Justice Public (SJP), Neo-

colonial Science (NCS), Neo-colonial Context (NCC), and Neo-colonial Enlightenment (NCE). For each construct, both within-group and across-group results are reported along with box and whisker plot analysis.

Religiosity (DRI – Duke Religiosity Index)

Essentially, this construct was designed for use in two ways. The first use of DRI was to serve as an independent variable. The hypothesis is that how much a student self-reflected or internalized the material in a religious studies course may be correlated to their individual level of religiosity. If so, this is a variable that would need to be controlled for in the final analysis. Second, in response to some outsider concerns, usually emanating from more conservative corners, that the courses undermine student religiosity, an analysis was conducted to compare pre- and post-course survey scores to see if, over the course of a semester, the curriculum had a self-reported impact on individual religiosity.

In our final analysis, it did prove necessary to control for religiosity as an independent or predictive variable. There were significant pre-course survey differences between groups on average pre-course religiosity (DRI) scores as measured by a one-way, between-groups, analysis of variance (ANOVA). After splitting the data file into the five groups (ASU on-ground Religions of the World, ASU online Religions of the World, Community College Religions of the World, Control, and Islamic studies groups) there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .005$ level in DRI scores for the five groups: $F = 4.263$, $p = .002$ (Table 8). Therefore, due to self-selection and these beginning scores, it was determined that religiosity would need to be controlled for in the final analysis.

A similar analysis was conducted for the other fixed factor and covariates including gender, year in college, and religious affiliation, if any. The results of the pre-course survey scores on religiosity (DRI) were, by lowest to highest average (the higher the score meaning “more religious” on a range from 1 to 5.4) the Control Group made up of political science and engineering students (2.66), ASU on-line Religions of the World (3.07), ASU on-ground Religions of the World (3.11), Community College (3.29), and the Islamic studies (3.35). When analyzing the five individual questions that made up the scale, each were discovered to be independently significant across groups as well. The significance values of each item ($p < .05$) are as follows: How often do you attend religious services? ($p = .032$), How often do you spend time in private religious activities i.e. prayer, meditation, or scripture reading? ($p = .004$), In my life, I experience the presence of the divine ($p = .021$), My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life ($p = .010$), and I try hard to carry over my religion into other dealings in my life ($p = .000$). Hence, because self-selection is occurring, it is evidenced in each of the items and therefore not surprising in the scale-level aggregates of the items.

Table 8: Pre-Course Survey Differences for Religiosity (DRI)

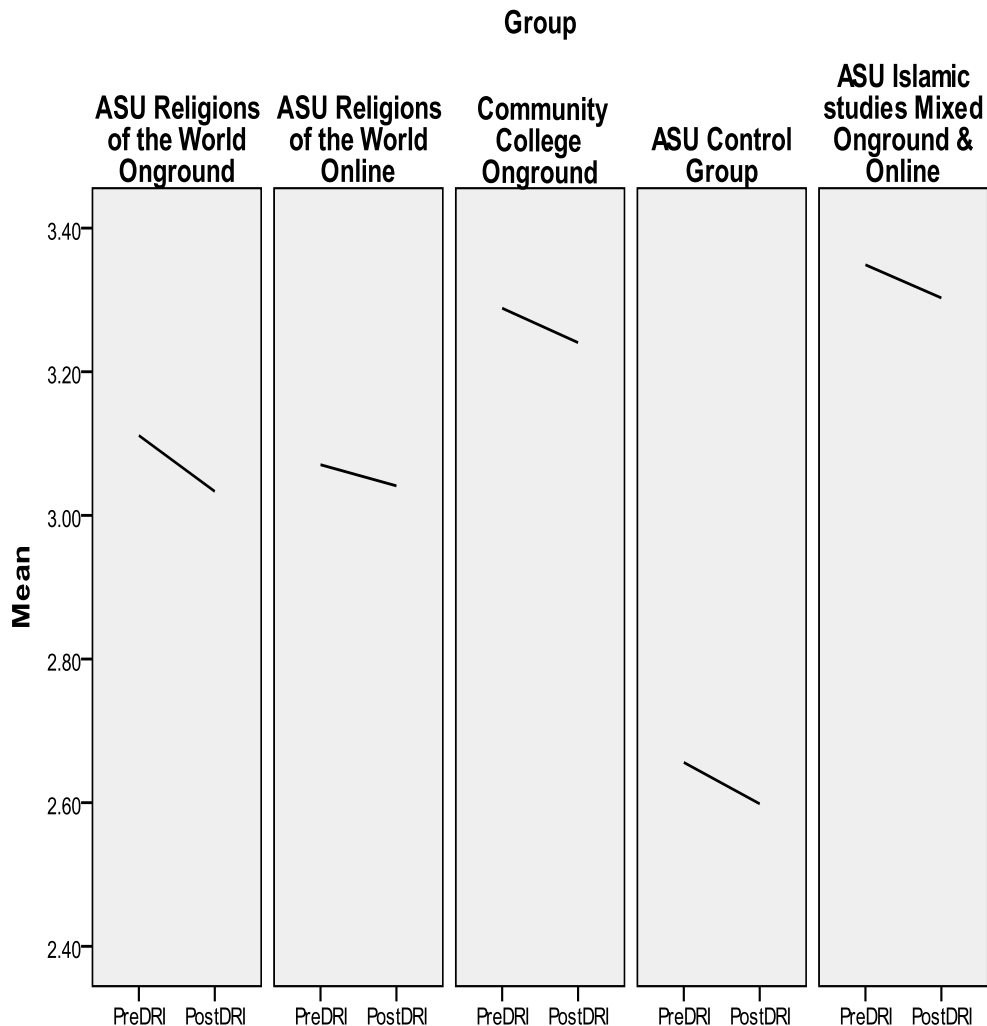
ANOVA

PreDRI

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	35.267	4	8.817	4.263	0.002
Within Groups	2298.02	1111	2.068		
Total	2333.29	1115			

The purpose of the second set of analyses, but this time related to the use of DRI as a dependent or outcome variable, was to measure differences between pre-course and post-course surveys scores. For all five groups, the slopes of the lines connecting pre- and post-course DRI survey scores (Figure 1) indicated that the average score of student group religiosity declined over the course of the semester, suggesting a subtle impact of the college experience overall. This was true for the control group as well as the religious studies groups.

Figure 1: Slope of Average Pre- and Post-Course Scores by Group for Religiosity (DRI)



By way of t-test analysis, of the five groups, only the ASU on-ground Religions of the World showed a statistically significant decline. For this group, there was a decrease in DRI scores from Time 1 ($M=3.1113$, $SD= 1.44145$) to Time 2 ($M=3.0334$, $SD=1.43597$), $t(3.346)$, $p=.001$ (two-tailed). The mean decrease in DRI scores was .07791 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .03219 to .12364. The other four groups of students (ASU online, Community

College, Control, and Islamic Studies) did not experience statistically significant changes (Figure 3). It should be noted that since statistical significance is dependent on sample size, the fact that the ASU on-ground religions of the world course had a population roughly 6:1 greater than the other groups, the threshold for degree of difference is lower. Therefore, with greater sample sizes, while retaining their current slopes, it is reasonable to imagine the other groups may have also approached a level of significance. Furthermore, while the results for the ASU on-ground Religions of the World class imply that the difference obtained between the pre-course DRI and the post-course DRI was unlikely to occur by chance, the calculated effect size of the difference was deemed minor. The eta squared statistic (.017) based on Cohen's (1988), classification indicates a small effect size. (Table 9)

Table 9: t-Test Results for all Outcome Measures

		Paired Samples Test								
		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
Group		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
ASU Religions of the World Onground	Pair 1 PreDRI - PostDRI	.07791	.59462	.02329	-.03219	.12364	3.348	851	.001	
	Pair 2 PreATT - PostATT	-.02043	.71300	.02792	-.07326	.03440	-.732	851	.485	
	Pair 3 PreSJA - PostSJA	.01459	.56834	.02228	-.02915	.05833	.855	850	.513	
	Pair 4 PreSJP - PostSJP	.03911	.80107	.03137	-.02249	.10071	1.247	851	.213	
	Pair 5 PreMA - PostMA	-.12876	.75480	.02956	-.18680	-.07071	-4.358	851	.000	
	Pair 6 PreNCS - PostNCS	-.03852	.06446	.03864	-.11440	.03736	-.937	822	.319	
	Pair 7 PreNCC - PostNCC	.10146	.76058	.03185	-.03881	.16400	3.186	863	.002	
	Pair 8 PreNCE - PostNCE	-.07579	.69560	.02747	-.12974	-.02184	-2.759	849	.006	
ASU Religions of the World Online	Pair 1 PreDRI - PostDRI	.02944	.59224	.02725	-.08407	.14295	.514	196	.608	
	Pair 2 PreATT - PostATT	-.01350	.58184	.02623	-.12498	.09798	-.240	196	.811	
	Pair 3 PreSJA - PostSJA	.00234	.55425	.02558	-.10389	.10837	.044	196	.965	
	Pair 4 PreSJP - PostSJP	.14953	.60740	.02872	.03311	.26595	2.547	193	.012	
	Pair 5 PreMA - PostMA	-.30966	.67280	.06504	-.43861	-.18070	-4.781	193	.000	
	Pair 6 PreNCS - PostNCS	-.11905	.80121	.07819	-.27410	.03601	-1.523	194	.131	
	Pair 7 PreNCC - PostNCC	.19889	.78804	.07751	.04589	.35338	2.578	195	.011	
	Pair 8 PreNCE - PostNCE	-.08805	.67425	.06549	-.21790	.04180	-1.345	195	.182	
Community College Onground	Pair 1 PreDRI - PostDRI	.04780	.66542	.05564	-.06210	.15700	.861	142	.381	
	Pair 2 PreATT - PostATT	-.00728	.72280	.06043	-.12674	.11217	-.121	142	.904	
	Pair 3 PreSJA - PostSJA	.01224	.63518	.05312	-.09276	.11724	.230	142	.818	
	Pair 4 PreSJP - PostSJP	.00634	.70996	.05957	-.06143	.17410	.946	141	.345	
	Pair 5 PreMA - PostMA	-.29627	.77630	.06492	-.42460	-.16794	-4.584	142	.000	
	Pair 6 PreNCS - PostNCS	.11888	1.05142	.08792	-.03493	.28269	1.352	142	.178	
	Pair 7 PreNCC - PostNCC	.12679	.76019	.06425	-.00024	.23381	1.973	139	.050	
	Pair 8 PreNCE - PostNCE	-.01573	.70162	.05867	-.13172	.10025	-.288	142	.789	
ASU Control Group Onground	Pair 1 PreDRI - PostDRI	.05766	.62839	.05643	-.03404	.16936	1.022	123	.309	
	Pair 2 PreATT - PostATT	-.07381	.55684	.05001	-.17280	.02517	-1.476	123	.142	
	Pair 3 PreSJA - PostSJA	.09476	.50244	.05320	-.01055	.20007	1.781	123	.077	
	Pair 4 PreSJP - PostSJP	.02823	.80460	.08124	-.13267	.18003	.347	123	.728	
	Pair 5 PreMA - PostMA	-.04109	.74156	.06659	-.17690	.08773	-.662	123	.509	
	Pair 6 PreNCS - PostNCS	.00826	1.08586	.09871	-.18718	.20371	.084	129	.933	
	Pair 7 PreNCC - PostNCC	.08194	.80481	.07348	-.06355	.22744	1.115	119	.267	
	Pair 8 PreNCE - PostNCE	.07997	.74493	.06690	-.03245	.21239	1.195	123	.234	
ASU Islamic Studies Mixed Onground & Online	Pair 1 PreDRI - PostDRI	.04611	.53455	.05635	-.06585	.15807	.818	89	.415	
	Pair 2 PreATT - PostATT	.02546	.59736	.06297	-.09965	.15058	.404	89	.687	
	Pair 3 PreSJA - PostSJA	-.00562	.58869	.06240	-.12963	.11839	-.090	88	.928	
	Pair 4 PreSJP - PostSJP	.05556	.87873	.08263	-.12849	.23960	.600	89	.550	
	Pair 5 PreMA - PostMA	-.13611	.69518	.07328	-.28171	.00949	-1.857	89	.067	
	Pair 6 PreNCS - PostNCS	-.10674	.80338	.09470	-.20404	.08145	-1.127	88	.263	
	Pair 7 PreNCC - PostNCC	.16766	.75334	.08220	.00417	.33114	2.040	83	.045	
	Pair 8 PreNCE - PostNCE	.08989	.72422	.07677	-.06267	.24245	1.171	88	.245	

From here, a one way, between-groups, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to examine whether the post-course score changes for DRI, and the significance uncovered above for the ASU on-ground Religions of the World group was attributable to the course itself. In other words, by controlling for a number of variables, would the change be found statistically, significantly different from the other groups? While the change was statistically significant within the class, was it statistically significant across groups as well?

The independent variables controlled for included gender, year in college, religion, the number of other diversity courses enrolled in and the pre-course survey scores for DRI. These independent variables (both fixed factors and covariates) were seen to be significantly different across groups due to self-selection, and these were confirmed through analysis of variance (ANOVA) for parametric values and Chi-Square tests for non-parametric items. The dependent or outcome variable was post-course survey scores for DRI. Preliminary checks, as referenced at the beginning of this chapter, were conducted for assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, and homogeneity of slopes. As a result of the non-significant p value of .523 for the independent variable “group,” the various treatments (in this case the courses) do not function as a predictor of change in religiosity. Furthermore, the partial eta squared number for “group” was .004 indicating that whatever impact the group does have on the variance is very small (.4%) in the outcome measure or religiosity. In contrast, there was a strong relationship between the pre-course survey religiosity score and post-course survey religiosity score, as indicated by a partial eta squared value for pre-course DRI of .722 ($p=.000$) in that pre-course DRI score explains 72.2% of the variance on post-course DRI. Whatever difference the group may cause, the student’s pre-course score is by far the best predictor of the student’s post-course score. Table 10 reports these ANCOVA results.

Table 10 ANCOVA Results for Religiosity (DRI)

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Post-Course **DRI** scale

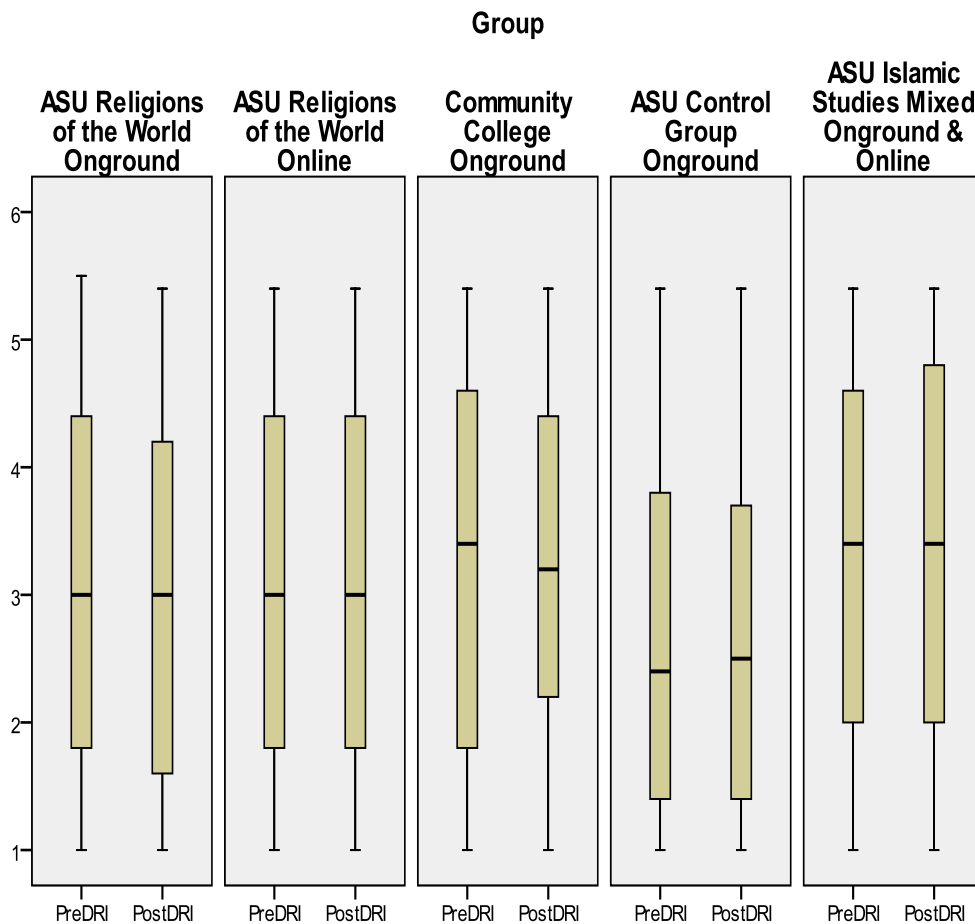
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1981.680 ^a	230	8.616	25.79	0	0.87
Intercept	5.892	1	5.892	17.637	0	0.02
@9DivCoursesthisSem	0.053	1	0.053	0.159	0.69	0
PreRELScale	767.371	1	767.371	2296.96	0	0.722
Group	1.074	4	0.268	0.804	0.523	0.004
@1Sex	0.007	1	0.007	0.022	0.881	0
@2YrsColl	1.631	4	0.408	1.22	0.301	0.005
@3Religion	5.15	9	0.572	1.713	0.082	0.017
Group * @1Sex	0.473	4	0.118	0.354	0.841	0.002
Group * @2YrsColl	5.464	16	0.342	1.022	0.43	0.018
Group * @3Religion	7.445	28	0.266	0.796	0.766	0.025
@1Sex * @2YrsColl	0.757	4	0.189	0.566	0.687	0.003
@1Sex * @3Religion	2.7	9	0.3	0.898	0.526	0.009
@2YrsColl * @3Religion	8.644	29	0.298	0.892	0.631	0.028
Group * @1Sex * @2YrsColl	3.455	13	0.266	0.795	0.666	0.012
Group * @1Sex * @3Religion	2.876	19	0.151	0.453	0.979	0.01
Group * @2YrsColl * @3Religion	13.655	44	0.31	0.929	0.605	0.044
@1Sex * @2YrsColl * @3Religion	5.294	17	0.311	0.932	0.535	0.018
Group * @1Sex * @2YrsColl * @3Religion	7.208	17	0.424	1.269	0.205	0.024
Error	294.994	883	0.334			
Total	12545.33	1114				
Corrected Total	2276.674	1113				

a. R Squared = .870 (Adjusted R Squared = .837)

Once the lack of significant difference across groups while holding all else constant was discovered, box and whisker plots were developed for each group's pre-course and post-course scores (Figure 2). The intent of the construction of these plots was to visually compare the distribution of scores on variables. As anticipated, the charts show a consistent distribution between pre-and post-course survey results across the five sample groups. The location of the median (the line

in the box representing the half-way point of the entire sample) runs consistently in the center of the boxes (representing 50% of the cases) and the location of the box within the whiskers was also centered, thus confirming little, if any, skewed data. Lastly, the lengths of DRI boxes are relatively large, suggesting the spread in scores is rather large than clustered at certain points. These results suggest that there is a wide variation of scores on religiosity (DRI) around the median. There were no statistical outliers present.

Figure 2 Box and Whisker Plots Across Groups for Religiosity (DRI)



Attributional Complexity (ATT)

The Attributional Complexity (ATT) construct was designed to see if, over the course of a semester, the curriculum had an impact on perspective taking. Included were questions related to student's propensity to "walk in other people's shoes," contextualize the reasons for other people's behavior or perspective, or reflect on the influence that society has had on his or her own thinking. See Table 3 for complete listing of scale items.

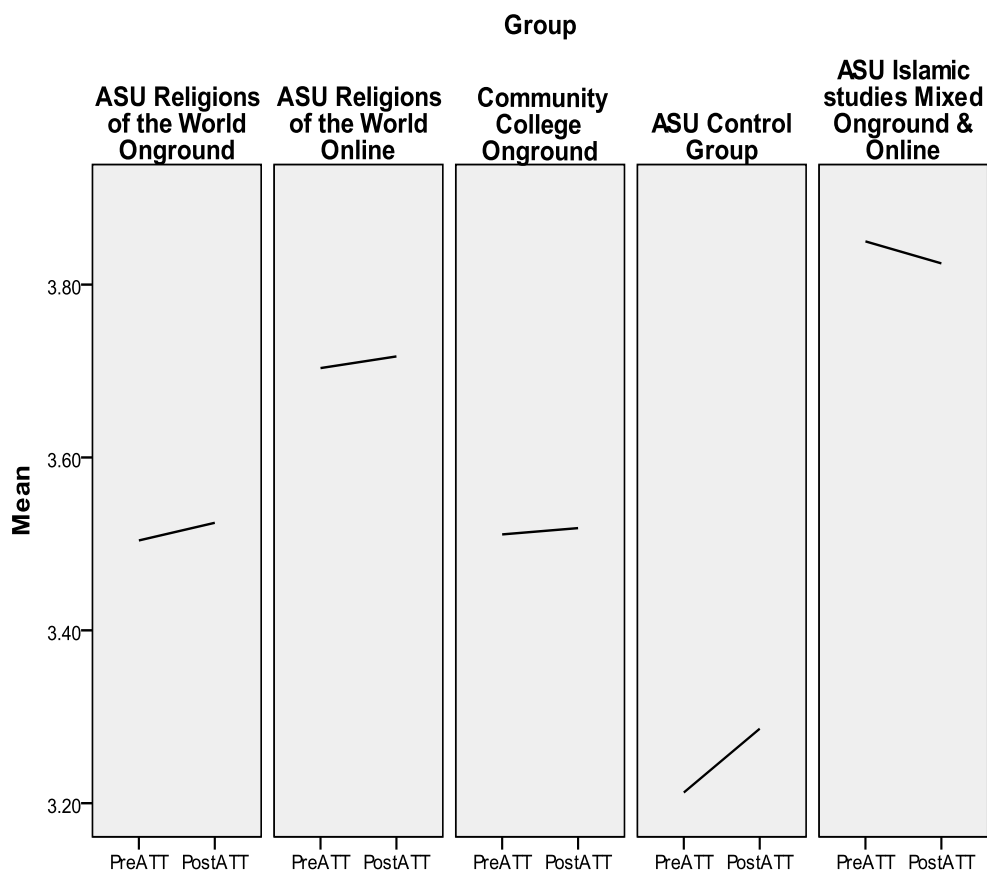
Figure 3 graphs the average scores from pre-course to post-course survey for this construct. Each group is represented by its own columns on a scale of one to five, with five being most active or comfortable with "perspective taking." The average starting points for all three of the Religions of the World groups (ASU on-ground, ASU on-line, and Community College) were very similar at 3.51, 3.70, and 3.51 respectively.

The control group registered lowest on the pre-course survey score at 3.21, while the Islamic studies group was highest at 3.85. These scores indicate that, on average, those that signed up for the Islamic Studies courses are more likely to possess characteristics such as perspective taking. These scores also indicate that the average of Islamic Studies students is higher than the other groups (Table 6) and are made up of nearly 25% Muslim students.

Other classes, in contrast, are predominantly associated with the dominant Protestant/Catholic traditions. The t-tests indicate that the curriculum of a particular course or the semester in which the course is taken does not shift the average in a significant way (Table 9). In viewing the slopes of the average scores

over time (Figure 3), it is interesting to note that even though the slopes do not rise significantly, the control group, while starting lowest, did experience the sharpest rise. In contrast, the other groups experienced a more modest incline. The Islamic studies course showed a negative slope although they began much higher.

Figure 3: Slope of Average Pre- and Post-Course Survey Scores by Group for Attributional Complexity (ATT)



Moving from within group difference to across group difference, ANCOVA results (Table 11) revealed there were no statistically significant differences between groups, holding all else constant. The factor “group” yielded a non-significant value ($p=.657$) and explained only .03% of the variance in

outcome scores for ATT (partial eta = .003). In contrast, this same computation revealed the pre-course survey ATT score explained 38.8% of the variance ($p=.000$, partial eta squared .388). All of this suggested that the best predictor of post-course survey ATT score was, and by a large degree, not the treatment or course they took but where they began on the pre-course survey ATT scale.



**Table 11 ANCOVA results for Attributional Complexity (ATT)
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: PostATTscale

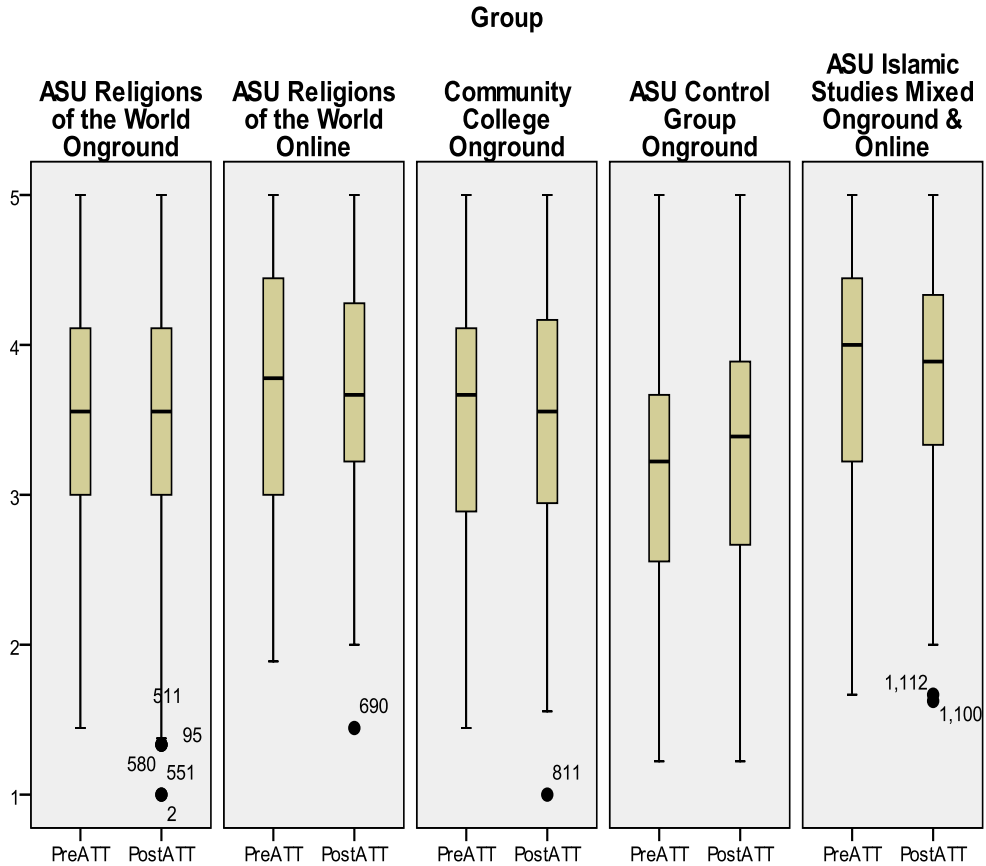
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	422.497 ^a	231	1.829	4.578	0	0.545
Intercept	26.964	1	26.964	67.491	0	0.071
@9DivCoursesthisSem	0.214	1	0.214	0.535	0.465	0.001
PreRELScale	0.849	1	0.849	2.124	0.145	0.002
PreATTscale	223.028	1	223.028	558.239	0	0.388
Group	0.972	4	0.243	0.608	0.657	0.003
@1Sex	0.024	1	0.024	0.061	0.805	0
@2YrsColl	0.719	4	0.18	0.45	0.772	0.002
@3Religion	4.045	9	0.449	1.125	0.342	0.011
Group * @1Sex	1.019	4	0.255	0.637	0.636	0.003
Group * @2YrsColl	6.568	16	0.41	1.027	0.424	0.018
Group * @3Religion	7.896	28	0.282	0.706	0.871	0.022
@1Sex * @2YrsColl	0.557	4	0.139	0.349	0.845	0.002
@1Sex * @3Religion	3.054	9	0.339	0.849	0.571	0.009
@2YrsColl *	8.416	29	0.29	0.726	0.854	0.023
@3Religion						
Group * @1Sex *	4.173	13	0.321	0.803	0.657	0.012
@2YrsColl						
Group * @1Sex *	6.226	19	0.328	0.82	0.684	0.017
@3Religion						
Group * @2YrsColl *	16.158	44	0.367	0.919	0.623	0.044
@3Religion						
@1Sex * @2YrsColl *	5	17	0.294	0.736	0.767	0.014
@3Religion						
Group * @1Sex *	4.361	17	0.257	0.642	0.86	0.012
@2YrsColl *						
@3Religion						
Error	352.376	882	0.4			
Total	14745.174	1114				
Corrected Total	774.873	1113				

a. R Squared = .545 (Adjusted R Squared = .426)

The box and whisker plot for this construct shows minimal changes in the median values of the ATT scores - in addition to the mean values just analyzed. The similar lengths of the boxes, or the spread of the middle fifty percent of the sample, indicated a rather consistent distribution across groups. While there were a few outliers on the bottom of the measure, indicating very low scores, the lowest quartiles of the measures did not show substantive changes across groups. These

box plot interpretations minimize the potential, or undermine the hope, that even with stable medians the bottom was being “pulled up.” As a result, it does not appear there is need to further investigate this construct (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Box and Whisker Plots Across Groups for Attributional Complexity (ATT)



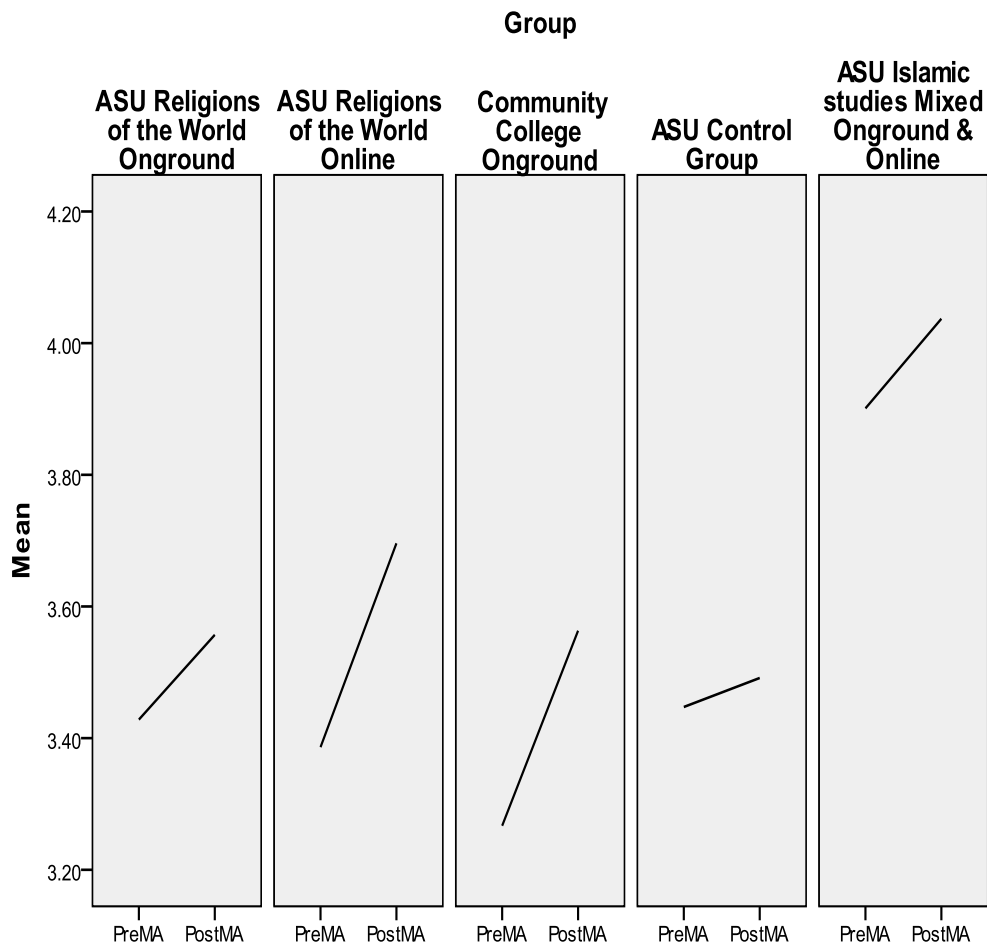
Multi-Religious Awareness (MA)

This construct was used to test if, over the course of the semester, there was a change in the level of comfort, understanding, or awareness of religious diversity and the issues faced by various religious groups. The individual items for this scale are found in Table 3 and consist of questions such as “I am able to

think critically about difficult issues or religious diversity” and “I am aware of societal problems related to accommodating religious diversity.”

The results of the paired samples t tests proved positive and statistically significant for the three groups of the Religions of the World classes (ASU on-ground, ASU on-line, and the Community College), whereas the results for the control group and the Islamic studies courses were not statistically significant (Figure 5). The statistically significant scores for the Religions of the World courses are as follows. For the ASU on-ground group, there was an increase in scores from Time 1 (M=3.4281, SD= .74774) to Time 2 (M=3.5569, SD=.72694), $t(4.356)$, $p=.000$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in MA scores was .12876 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .18680 to .07071. The ASU on-line group, there was an increase in scores from Time 1 (M=3.3863, SD= .78461) to Time 2 (M=3.6960, SD= .69714), $t(4.761)$, $p=.000$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in MA scores was .30966 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .43861 to .18070. Lastly, for the Community College group, there was an increase in scores from Time 1 (M=3.2669, SD=.67458) to Time 2 (M=3.5632, SD=.63110), $t(4.564)$, $p=.000$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in MA scores was .29627 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .42460 to .16794.

Figure 5: Slope of Average Pre- and Post-Course Survey Scores by Group for Multi-Religious Awareness (MA)



Although the respective confidence levels of the group scores show that the results in the Religions of the World groups were unlikely to occur by chance, the effect size was calculated to account for the magnitude of the treatment, in this case the course curriculum. The eta squared statistic for the three groups were (.0283) for the ASU on-ground group, (.176) for the ASU on-line group, and (.128) for the Community College group. Using the guidelines proposed by Cohen (1988) for interpreting the value of effect size for paired samples t-test (.01=small effect, .06 = moderate effect, .14= large effect), it was concluded that

while the effect size on the on-ground group was small, the effect size on the on-line and Community College groups was large.

These positive findings are reflected in Figure 5, which indicates the linear increase over time of the Multi-Religious Awareness (MA) construct. All five groups show the upward trend. The slopes are most aggressive in the ASU Religions of the World On-line class and the Community College group and thereby confirming the calculated effect sizes.

From here, a one way, between-groups, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to examine whether the post-course survey change in average scores for MA were significantly different from the control groups after controlling for a number of variables. These variables included the group, gender, year in college, religion, the number of diversity courses enrolled in, religiosity, and the pre-course survey scores for MA. The dependent variable was post-course survey scores for MA. Preliminary checks, as referenced and explained in the introduction to this chapter, were conducted for assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, and homogeneity of slopes. Table 12 reports the results from the analysis of covariance conducted on MA. The resulting significance level of .445 for the independent variable group indicated that there was not a significant difference in DRI scores for the students in the five different groups. While there were significant difference within groups, once select variables were controlled for, the average scores did not meet a statistically significant level when compared to the other groups. Furthermore, the partial eta squared number for the group factor was .004, which indicated the factor “group”

had a very small impact (.4%) on the variance in the outcome measure. The student's course choice appeared to have very little impact on his/her post-course average score.

Table 12: ANCOVA Results for Multi-religious Awareness (MA)

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: PostMA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	249.677 ^a	231	1.081	2.648	0	0.41
Intercept	72.42	1	72.42	177.433	0	0.167
@9DivCoursesthisSem	0.526	1	0.526	1.288	0.257	0.001
PreRELScale	4.168	1	4.168	10.212	0.001	0.011
PreMAScale	92.21	1	92.21	225.921	0	0.204
Group	1.52	4	0.38	0.931	0.445	0.004
@1Sex	0.098	1	0.098	0.241	0.624	0
@2YrsColl	0.461	4	0.115	0.282	0.889	0.001
@3Religion	6.43	9	0.714	1.75	0.074	0.018
Group * @1Sex	1.288	4	0.322	0.789	0.532	0.004
Group * @2YrsColl	8.703	16	0.544	1.333	0.17	0.024
Group * @3Religion	11.555	28	0.413	1.011	0.45	0.031
@1Sex * @2YrsColl	1.217	4	0.304	0.745	0.561	0.003
@1Sex * @3Religion	1.094	9	0.122	0.298	0.975	0.003
@2YrsColl *	10.458	29	0.361	0.884	0.645	0.028
@3Religion						
Group * @1Sex *	3.162	13	0.243	0.596	0.859	0.009
@2YrsColl						
Group * @1Sex *	2.06	19	0.108	0.266	0.999	0.006
@3Religion						
Group * @2YrsColl *	14.447	44	0.328	0.804	0.815	0.039
@3Religion						
@1Sex * @2YrsColl *	4.199	17	0.247	0.605	0.89	0.012
@3Religion						
Group * @1Sex *	5.45	17	0.321	0.785	0.711	0.015
@2YrsColl *						
@3Religion						
Error	359.99	882	0.408			
Total	15074.48	1114				
Corrected Total	609.667	1113				

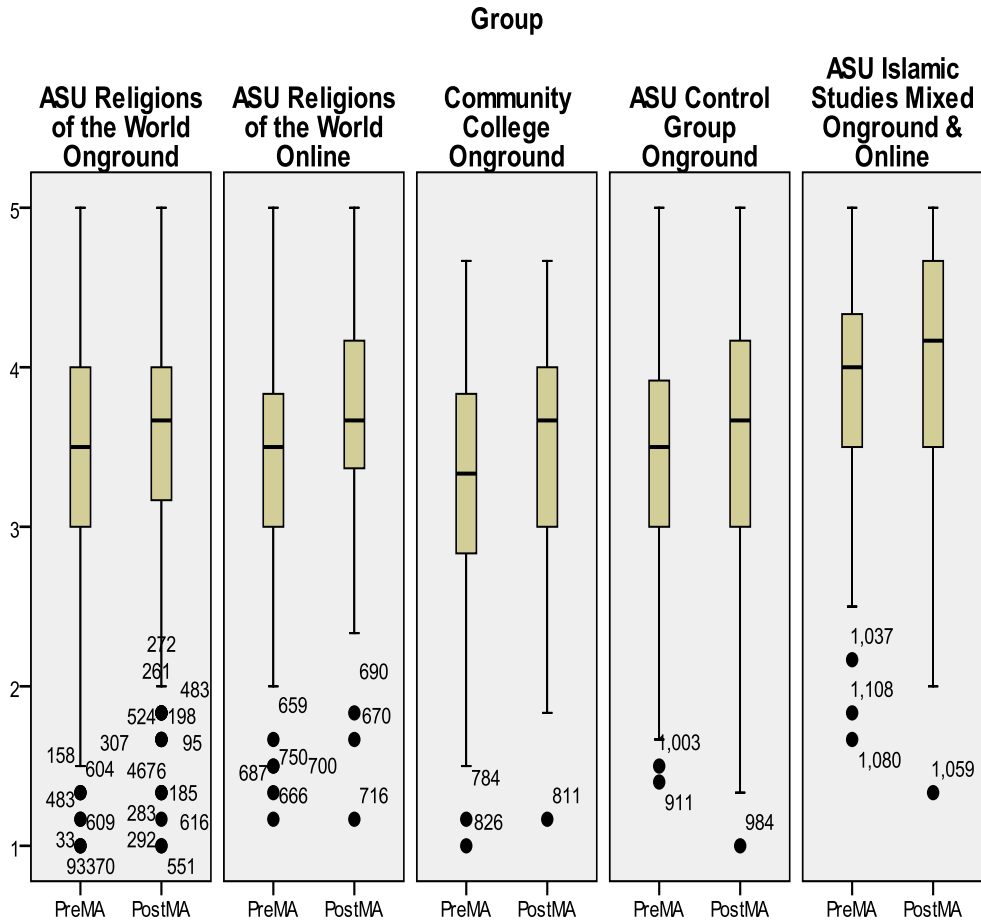
a. R Squared = .410 (Adjusted R Squared = .255)

The box and whisker plot for Multi-Religious Awareness (Figure 6) shows the median score for all five groups to be increasing over the semester. This could point to the overall impact of the socializing effect of the college experience

rather than a particular curriculum. The relatively small size of the boxes suggested that distribution of scores was focused quite narrowly around the median and the distribution does not appear to be skewed. There were outliers on the bottom, but with the relatively large sample sizes, these would have minimum impact on the overall analysis. However, with all three of the Religions of the World groups, both the lower boundary of the box (the inter-quartile of sample below the median) and the first quartile as suggested by the vertical whisker contract over time. Those movements are dissimilar from the non-comparative religion classes or control and Islamic studies groups. While the overall average or mean scores do not appear to change once they are controlled and measured across groups, there does appear to be a trend that lower scoring students get “pulled up” closer to the median score over the course of a semester while enrolled in the Religions of the World course.

Figure 6: Box and Whisker Plots Across Groups for Multi-Religious

Awareness (MA)



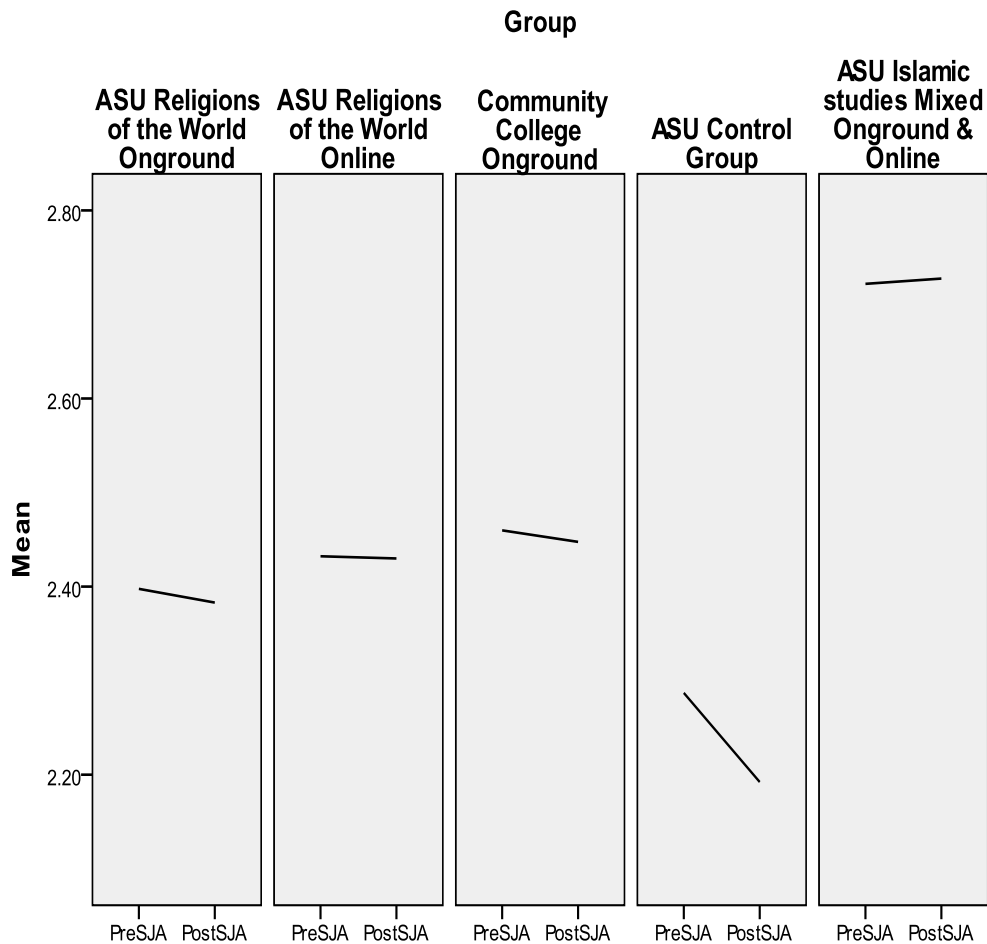
Social Justice Active (SJA)

This construct was used to measure the self-reported change in likelihood that a student would take an active role in support of a disrespected minority religious group. The complete item list can be found on Table 3.

Figure 7 indicates that these constructs show similar average starting points on a four point scale with Religions of the World groups scoring 2.397 for ASU on-ground, 2.436 for ASU online, and 2.459 for the community college. The

control group trailed at 2.28, and the Islamic studies courses lead the others at 2.72. On average, students who signed up for the Islamic Studies courses were statistically more likely to self-disclose as students willing to support a minority group. Based on the demographics discussed under the Attributional Complexity (ATT) findings, this does make some intuitive sense.

Figure 7: Slope of Average Pre- and Post-Course Survey Scores by Group for Social Justice Active (SJA)



The results of the paired samples t tests for the courses did not demonstrate a statistically significant change in the SJA average attitude in any of the five groups (Table 9). Without being able to show any significant difference within groups, the likelihood ANCOVA would reveal across groups significance declined and was confirmed. The “group” factor registered a non-significant p value of greater than .05 ($p=.216$) with a partial eta squared of .007, which meant that the “group” factor could only explain .7% of the variation in scores. In comparison, the pre-course survey score did show a high ability to explain the post-course survey score with a partial eta squared of .262 ($p=.000$) or ability to explain 26.2% of the variance. This was not completely unexpected for a social science experiment because groups are rarely, if ever, completely random. However, with the current item construction of this scale, the treatment appeared to have had little impact (Table 13). As would follow, the box and whisker plots for this construct show virtually no movement between pre- and post-course survey scores on SJA (Figure 8).

Table 13: ANCOVA Results for Social Justice Active (SJA)

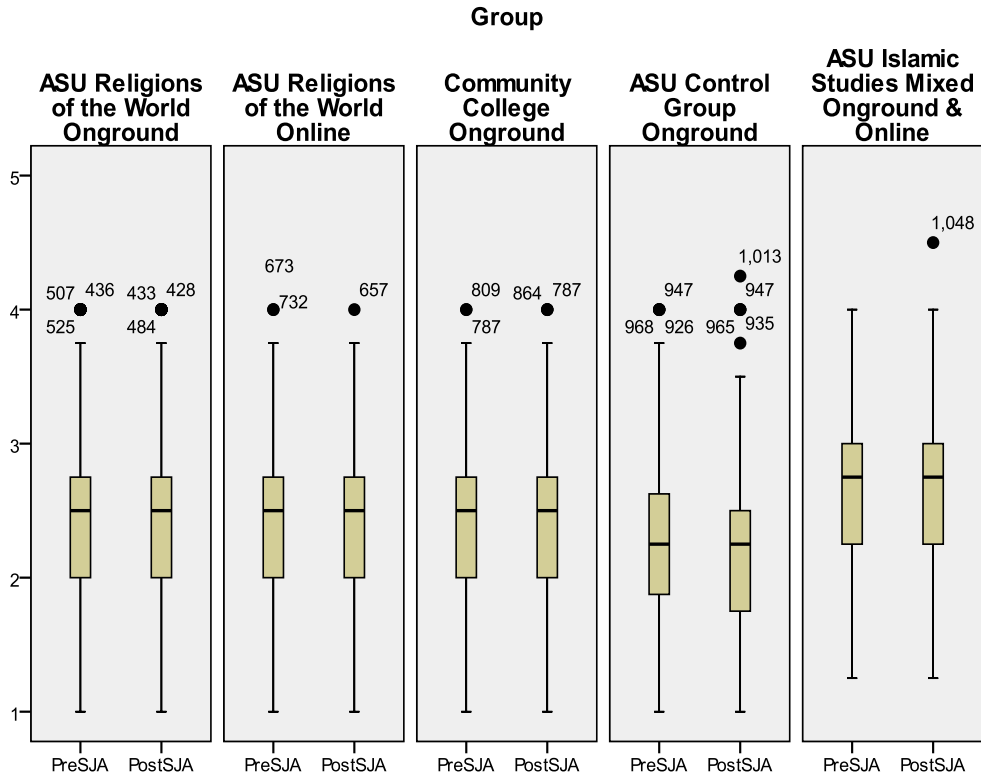
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: PostSJA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	206.086 ^a	231	0.892	3.547	0	0.482
Intercept	28.861	1	28.861	114.736	0	0.115
@9DivCoursesthisSem	0.005	1	0.005	0.022	0.883	0
PreRELScale	0.951	1	0.951	3.781	0.052	0.004
PreSJactiveScale	78.727	1	78.727	312.973	0	0.262
Group	1.458	4	0.364	1.449	0.216	0.007
@1Sex	0.575	1	0.575	2.285	0.131	0.003
@2YrsColl	0.535	4	0.134	0.531	0.713	0.002
@3Religion	0.743	9	0.083	0.328	0.966	0.003
Group * @1Sex	2.383	4	0.596	2.368	0.051	0.011
Group * @2YrsColl	4.753	16	0.297	1.181	0.277	0.021
Group * @3Religion	8.59	28	0.307	1.22	0.201	0.037
@1Sex * @2YrsColl	1.357	4	0.339	1.349	0.25	0.006
@1Sex * @3Religion	0.653	9	0.073	0.288	0.978	0.003
@2YrsColl * @3Religion	5.461	29	0.188	0.749	0.829	0.024
Group * @1Sex * @2YrsColl	4.764	13	0.366	1.457	0.128	0.021
Group * @1Sex * @3Religion	8.514	19	0.448	1.781	0.021	0.037
Group * @2YrsColl * @3Religion	12.242	44	0.278	1.106	0.297	0.052
@1Sex * @2YrsColl * @3Religion	6.872	17	0.404	1.607	0.056	0.03
Group * @1Sex * @2YrsColl * @3Religion	6.291	17	0.37	1.471	0.098	0.028
Error	221.36	880	0.252			
Total	6847.54	1112				
Corrected Total	427.446	1111				

a. R Squared = .482 (Adjusted R Squared = .346)

Figure 8: Box and Whisker Plots across Groups for Social Justice Active (SJA)



Social Justice Public (SJP)

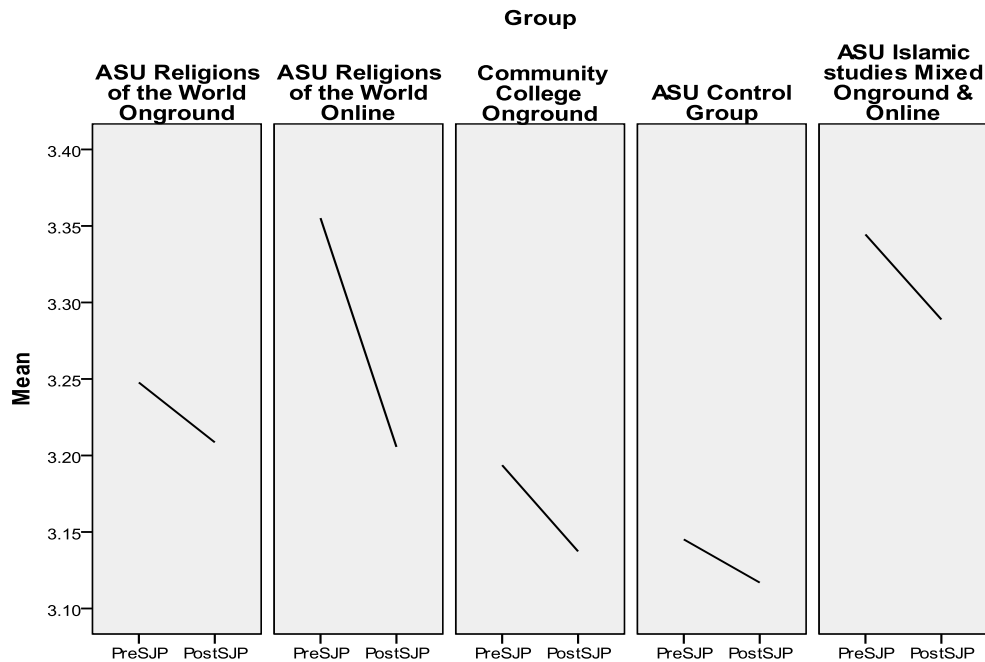
SJP sought to measure any change in attitude of students in terms of five-point Likert scales related to public displays of religious items on private property or outside their clothing at public schools. (See Table 3 for full item description and factor loadings).

The results of the paired samples t tests for each of the groups yielded a significant change only for the ASU on-line Religions of the World group. The paired samples t-test on the SJP measure for this group showed a significant decrease in scores from Time 1 (M=3.3551, SD= .54517) to Time 2 (M=3.2056,

SD=.62175), $t(2.547)$, $p=.012$ (two-tailed). The mean decrease in SJP scores was .14953 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .03311 to .26595. The eta squared statistic (.057) indicated a moderate effect size. The other groups of students (ASU on-ground, Community College, Control, and Islamic Studies) did not experience significant changes within their group (Table 9).

However, for all five groups of students, the slope of the line connecting average pre-course survey results and post-course survey results moved downward indicating less comfort with public displays of religiosity after having taken the course (Figure 9). The average score for all groups moved in a downward direction but only the online group moved to a statistically significant extent.

Figure 9: Slope of Average Pre- and Post-Course Survey Scores by Group for Social Justice Public (SJP)



From here, a one way, between-groups, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to examine whether the post-course survey changes for SJP were attributable to the courses themselves while controlling for a number of variables. The independent variables included group, gender, year in college, number of diversity courses enrolled in, religious affiliation, religiosity, and pre-course SJP score. The dependent variable was post-course survey scores for SJP. Preliminary checks, as referenced in the introduction to this chapter, were conducted for assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, and homogeneity of slopes. Table 14 reports the results from the analysis of covariance. The resulting significance level of .538 for the independent variable “group” did not indicate a statistically significant difference in SJP scores for students in the various groups. Furthermore, the partial eta squared number was .004 indicating the factor “group” had a very small impact (.4%) on the variance in the outcome measure. Similar to the social justice active construct (SJA), the public construct (SJP) was best predicted by the respective average score of the pre-course survey measure. In this case, the SJP pre-score explained 14% of the variance (partial eta squared = .141).

Table 14 ANCOVA Results for Social Justice Public (SJP)

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: PostSJP

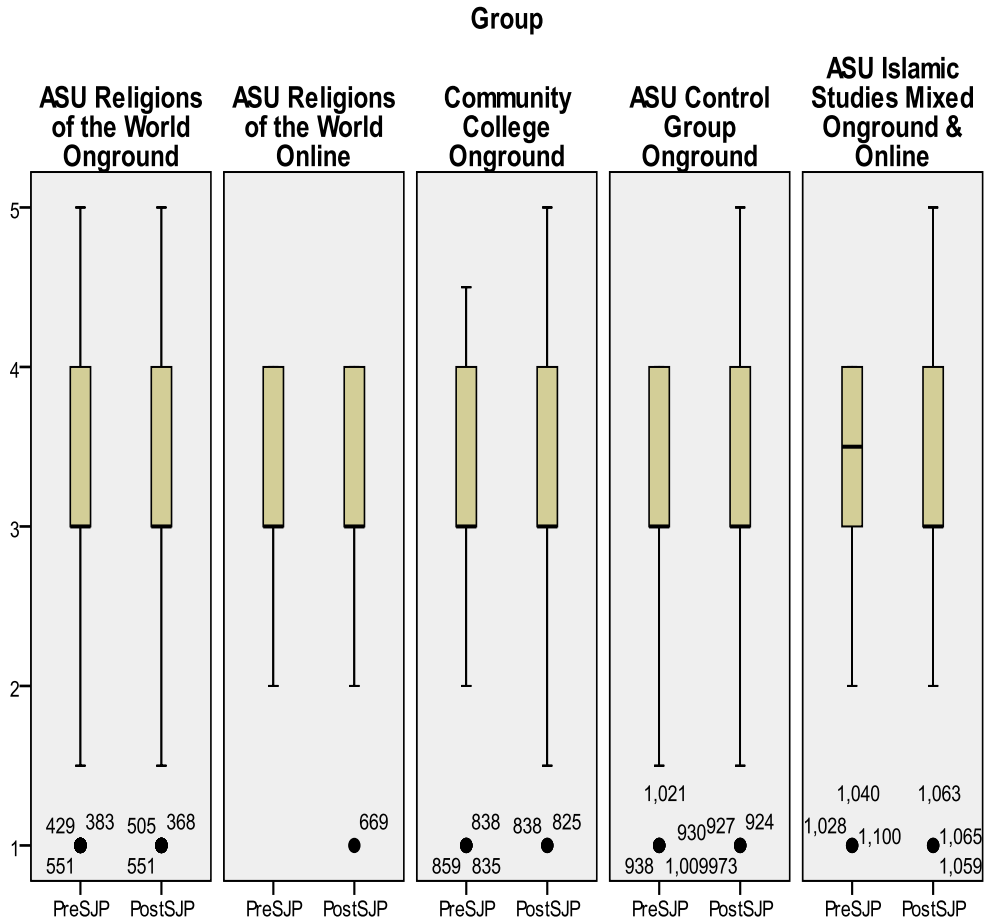
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	195.797 ^a	231	0.848	2.013	0	0.345
Intercept	60.842	1	60.842	144.48	0	0.141
@9DivCoursesthisSem	0.002	1	0.002	0.006	0.94	0
PreRELScale	5.426	1	5.426	12.884	0	0.014
PreSJpublicScale	60.766	1	60.766	144.3	0	0.141
Group	1.315	4	0.329	0.78	0.538	0.004
@1Sex	0.138	1	0.138	0.328	0.567	0
@2YrsColl	1.196	4	0.299	0.71	0.585	0.003
@3Religion	4.23	9	0.47	1.116	0.348	0.011
Group * @1Sex	0.472	4	0.118	0.28	0.891	0.001
Group * @2YrsColl	7.124	16	0.445	1.057	0.393	0.019
Group * @3Religion	10.38	28	0.371	0.88	0.646	0.027
@1Sex * @2YrsColl	1.475	4	0.369	0.875	0.478	0.004
@1Sex * @3Religion	7.727	9	0.859	2.039	0.033	0.02
@2YrsColl *	12.368	29	0.426	1.013	0.448	0.032
@3Religion						
Group * @1Sex *	5.018	13	0.386	0.917	0.535	0.013
@2YrsColl						
Group * @1Sex *	10.305	19	0.542	1.288	0.182	0.027
@3Religion						
Group * @2YrsColl *	18.105	44	0.411	0.977	0.516	0.047
@3Religion						
@1Sex * @2YrsColl *	5.709	17	0.336	0.797	0.697	0.015
@3Religion						
Group * @1Sex *	5.186	17	0.305	0.724	0.78	0.014
@2YrsColl *						
@3Religion						
Error	371.004	881	0.421			
Total	11934.5	1113				
Corrected Total	566.801	1112				

a. R Squared = .345 (Adjusted R Squared = .174)

The box and whisker plots (Figure 10) show very similar median points. Worthy of note, however, is that the median points for all groups (except for the pre-course survey score for the Islamic studies courses) is found at the bottom hinge of the box revealing that a large majority of students answered very similarly in the second quartile, so the value of the first quartile is really close to

the median. And compared to means discovered in the t-test analysis, the medians were quite a bit lower than the means. This suggests that a significant number of students who were comfortable with public displays of religion or individual rights to wear religious symbols outside their clothing felt quite strongly in that area and “pulled up” the average event though the majority were quite a bit lower on the scale. This may suggest this measure is a particularly polarizing one. In other words, the plots capture an intensity of sentiment at both ends. However, without a normal distribution in the samples, broad generalization may be difficult to defend.

Figure 10 Box and Whisker Plots Across Groups for Social Justice Public (SJP)



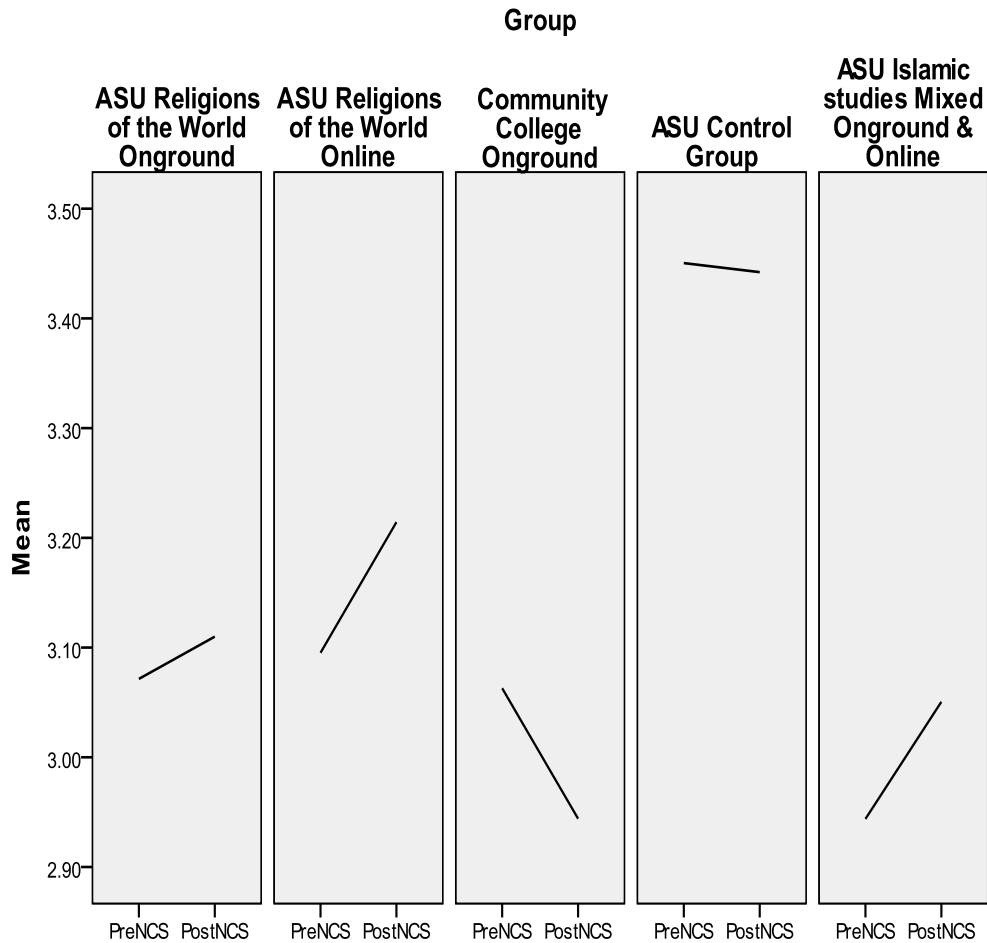
Neo-colonial Science (NCS)

This is the first of three constructs used to measure self-reported change in a student’s perception of the meaning or understanding of “religion.” In this case, the student was asked his/her level of agreement on a five point Likert scale with items such as religion is “something fundamentally created by human beings.” They were also asked whether they see “science being mostly rational and religion being irrational.” The intention was not to assess toward a particularly

“right” answer but to inquire if attitudes shifted over the semester. See Table 3 for complete item listings, factor loadings, and reliability.

In reviewing Figure 11, the graphs of these constructs show similar pre-course survey results or starting points. With the range being one to five and five being “strongly agree,” the Religions of the World groups scored similarly around at 3.078 ASU On-ground, 3.094 ASU online, and 3.070 for the Community College, while the control group registered even higher levels of agreement with the instrument’s statements with an average score of 3.450. The Islamic studies students were less inclined to agree with the instrument’s statements having an average score of 2.944. While this places the Islamic Studies student responses on the negative side of the 3.0 or “neutral” level, the responses are not significantly different from the roughly 3.081 level of the religious studies groups. These results indicate that, on average, those students who signed up for the engineering and political sciences are more likely to agree with the statements made about the nature of religion as “constructed” and “irrational” than their religious studies counterparts.

Figure 11: Slope of Average Pre- and Post-Course Survey Scores by Group for Neo-colonial Science (NCS)



We note different trends, however, when viewing the slopes on the graphs connecting pre- and post-course survey scores (Figure 11). The Community College group seems to be the anomaly among the other religious studies courses in that it moves in the downward direction. In other words, students in this group appeared to develop less agreement with the statements regarding the “constructed” or “irrational” nature of religion than their counterparts at ASU. The amount of change is not statistically significant within the group, but nevertheless moved in a counter-direction. Similar to the community college

students, the results of the paired samples t tests for the other courses did not demonstrate a significant change in the NCS average attitude within any of the five groups (Table 9).

For further analysis, a one way, between-groups, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to further understand the variables driving the respective outcomes as well as understand if, after controlling for certain variables, any significant across group differences would emerge. The independent variables included group, gender, year in college, number of diversity courses enrolled in, religious affiliation, religiosity, and pre-course NCS score. These independent variables (both fixed factors and covariates) were seen to be significantly different across groups due to self-selection and confirmed through analysis of variance (ANOVA) for parametric values and Chi-Square tests for non-parametric items.

The dependent variable was post-course survey scores for NCS. Preliminary checks, as referenced in the introduction to this chapter, were conducted for assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, and homogeneity of slopes. Table 15 reports the results from the analysis of covariance. The resulting significance level of .918 for the independent variable “group,” indicates there is not a statistically significant difference in NCS scores for students in the various groups. Furthermore, a partial eta squared number of .001 indicates the group had a close to zero impact (.01%) on the variance in the outcome measure. Similar to other measure findings, the best predictor of post-course survey score was the pre-course survey score. In this case, the pre-course

survey NCS score explained 12.9% of the variance (partial eta squared .129, p=.000).

Table 15 ANCOVA Results for Neo-colonial Science (NCS)

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: PostNCS

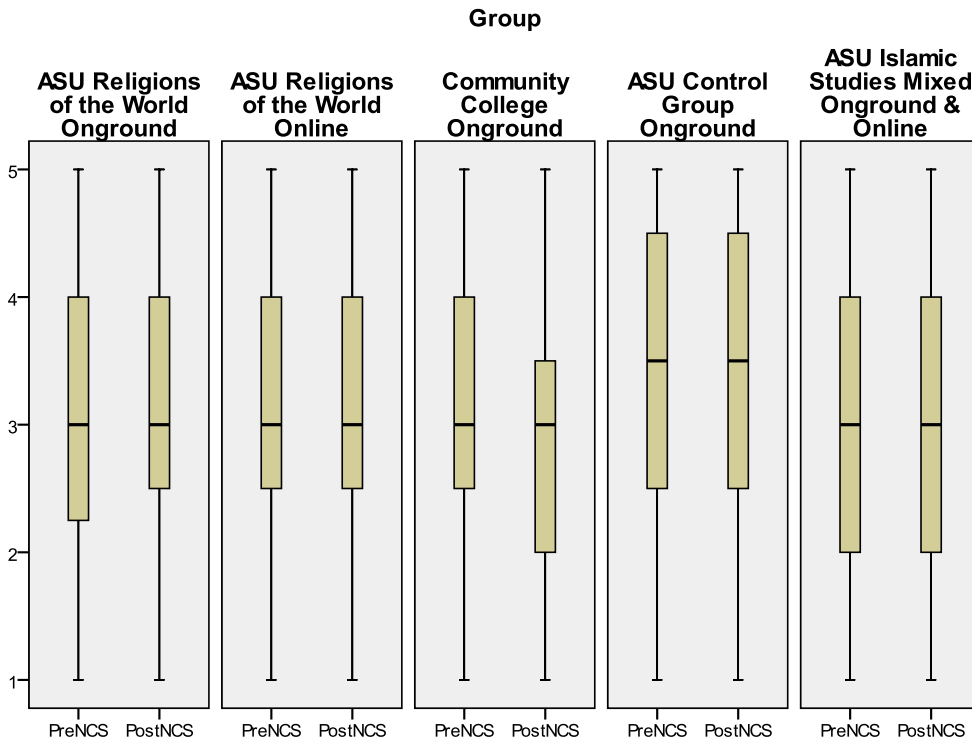
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	726.948 ^a	231	3.147	4.97	0	0.575
Intercept	108.926	1	108.926	172.043	0	0.169
@9DivCoursesthisSem	0.579	1	0.579	0.914	0.339	0.001
PreRELScale	35.6	1	35.6	56.229	0	0.062
PreNCsciScale	79.471	1	79.471	125.519	0	0.129
Group	0.61	4	0.152	0.241	0.915	0.001
@1Sex	0.061	1	0.061	0.097	0.756	0
@2YrsColl	0.778	4	0.194	0.307	0.873	0.001
@3Religion	16.192	9	1.799	2.842	0.003	0.029
Group * @1Sex	1.17	4	0.292	0.462	0.764	0.002
Group * @2YrsColl	10.642	16	0.665	1.05	0.4	0.019
Group * @3Religion	22.617	28	0.808	1.276	0.155	0.04
@1Sex * @2YrsColl	1.288	4	0.322	0.509	0.729	0.002
@1Sex * @3Religion	8.605	9	0.956	1.51	0.14	0.016
@2YrsColl *	22.855	29	0.788	1.245	0.176	0.041
@3Religion						
Group * @1Sex *	8.822	13	0.679	1.072	0.38	0.016
@2YrsColl						
Group * @1Sex *	12.606	19	0.663	1.048	0.402	0.023
@3Religion						
Group * @2YrsColl *	28.804	44	0.655	1.034	0.413	0.051
@3Religion						
@1Sex * @2YrsColl *	12.167	17	0.716	1.13	0.319	0.022
@3Religion						
Group * @1Sex *	12.137	17	0.714	1.128	0.322	0.022
@2YrsColl *						
@3Religion						
Error	536.267	847	0.633			
Total	11829.25	1079				
Corrected Total	1263.215	1078				

a. R Squared = .575 (Adjusted R Squared = .460)

The box and whisker plots (Figure 12) show a near identical median value of three (right in the middle of the one to five point range) for all the religious studies groups. As would be expected from the mean, the median of the control

group is also higher. The responses seem to have a relatively even distribution with no outliers. The relatively “long” boxes suggest a broad distribution with substantial numbers of students spread throughout the spectrum. In addressing the anomalous community college results, the results indicate that the median remained static in the pre- and post-course survey scores. Those students who scored in the middle 50% of the sample shifted downward rather than those in the outer quartiles shifting. This suggests those that answered more emphatically on one side of the spectrum continued to feel strongly whereas there was some shifting “in the middle.”

Figure 12 Box and Whisker Plots Across Groups for Neo-colonial Science (NCS)



Neo-colonial Context (NCC)

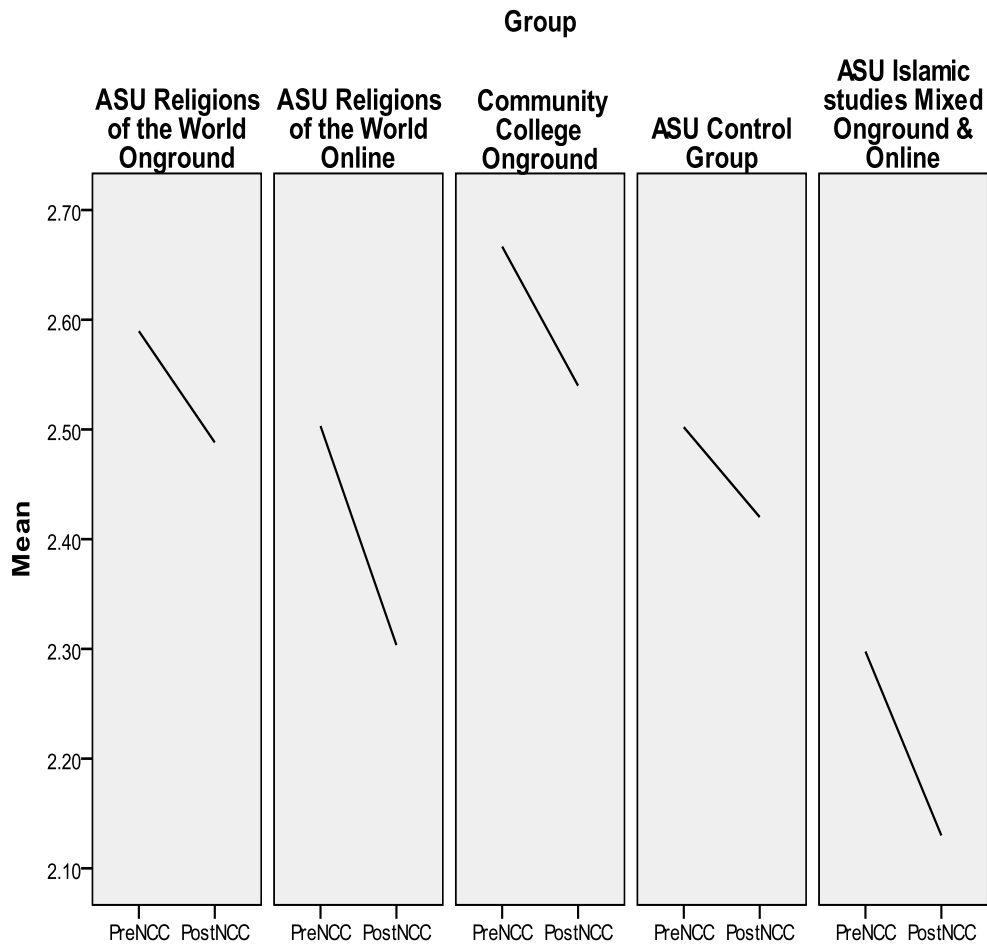
The NCC was the second of three constructs emerging through factor analysis from the complete group of “neo-colonial” survey questions. Like the others it was designed to measure changes in student perceptions of the category of religion. This time, however, the purpose of the NCC was to assist in recognizing the forces of time and place in producing variations in religious belief or practice. Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with context based statements such as “religions tend to stay the same over time” and “geography seems to have little influence on established religions.” In a sense, the questions were designed to assess the propensity towards a universalist attitude and/or understanding of religion. For a complete description of the items along with factor loading and alpha statistics for reliability see Table 3.

The results of the paired samples t tests suggested that students in the religious studies groups (all three of the Religions of the World groups as well as the Islamic studies group) were less likely after a semester, at a statistically significant level, to hold non-contextual attitudes toward the category of religion. In other words, they were more likely to see the impact of time and place on religious phenomena than before. The control group, in contrast, did not show a significant average change in perception (Table 9) although its slope connecting the average at Time 1 with the average at Time 2 decreased slightly along with the other four groups (Figure 13). Given these results, it is possible that part of the change in the religious studies groups is attributable to the overall college experience as well as the religious studies curriculum, but the changes in scores

emerging at the level of significance within the religious studies groups appears to point to greater levels of context awareness.

The significant measurements for each group are as follows. For the ASU on-ground group, there was a decrease in scores from Time 1 ($M=2.5896$, $SD=.74949$) to Time 2 ($M=2.4882$, $SD=.76768$), $t(3.186)$, $p=.002$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in NCC scores was .10146 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .03891 to .16400. For the ASU on-line group, there was an decrease in scores from Time 1 ($M=2.5031$, $SD=.71371$) to Time 2 ($M=2.3035$, $SD=.77188$), $t(2.576)$, $p=.011$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in NCC scores was .19969 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .04599 to .35338. For the community college group, there was an decrease in scores from Time 1 ($M=2.6667$, $SD=.72847$) to Time 2 ($M=2.5399$, $SD=.73777$), $t(1.973)$, $p=.050$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in NCC scores was .12679 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -.00024 to .25381. Lastly, for the Islamic studies group, there was an decrease in scores from Time 1 ($M=2.2976$, $SD=.81724$) to Time 2 ($M=2.1300$, $SD=.85351$), $t(2.040)$, $p=.045$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in NCC scores was .16766 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .00417 to .33114. These results show that in terms of this construct, the change in the attitudes of the religious studies students was not by chance. The effect size (eta squared statistic) or magnitude of these significant findings falls between small and moderate as measured by the eta squared statistic (ASU on-ground =.02, ASU online =.05, community college =.03, and Islamic studies courses =.05).

Figure 13: Slope of Average Pre- and Post-Course Survey Scores by Group for Neo-colonial Context (NCC)



From here, a one way, between-groups, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to examine whether the post-course survey scores changes for NCC were attributable to the courses themselves once key variables were controlled. These independent variables were gender, year in college, the number of diversity courses enrolled in, religion, religiosity, and the pre-course survey scores for NCC. Independent variables (both fixed factors and covariates)

were seen to be significantly different across groups due to self-selection and confirmed through analysis of variance (ANOVA) for parametric values and Chi-Square tests for non-parametric items. The dependent variable was post-course survey scores for NCC. Preliminary checks, as referenced in the introduction to this chapter, were conducted for assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, and homogeneity of slopes. Table 16 reports the results from the analysis of covariance.

As a result of the significance level of .441 for the independent variable “group,” there is not a statistically significant difference in NCC scores for students in the various groups. Furthermore, the partial eta squared number is .005 meaning the group has a very small impact (.5%) on the variance in the outcome measure. The promising t-test findings seem to be undermined when controlling for certain variables and comparing across groups. While there were statistically significant findings within the groups, yet after controlling for a number of variables, there were no significant across group differences i.e. variables besides the curriculum seem to play a greater role in student propensities to contextualize religious phenomena.

Table 16: ANCOVA Results for Neo-colonial Context (NCC)

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

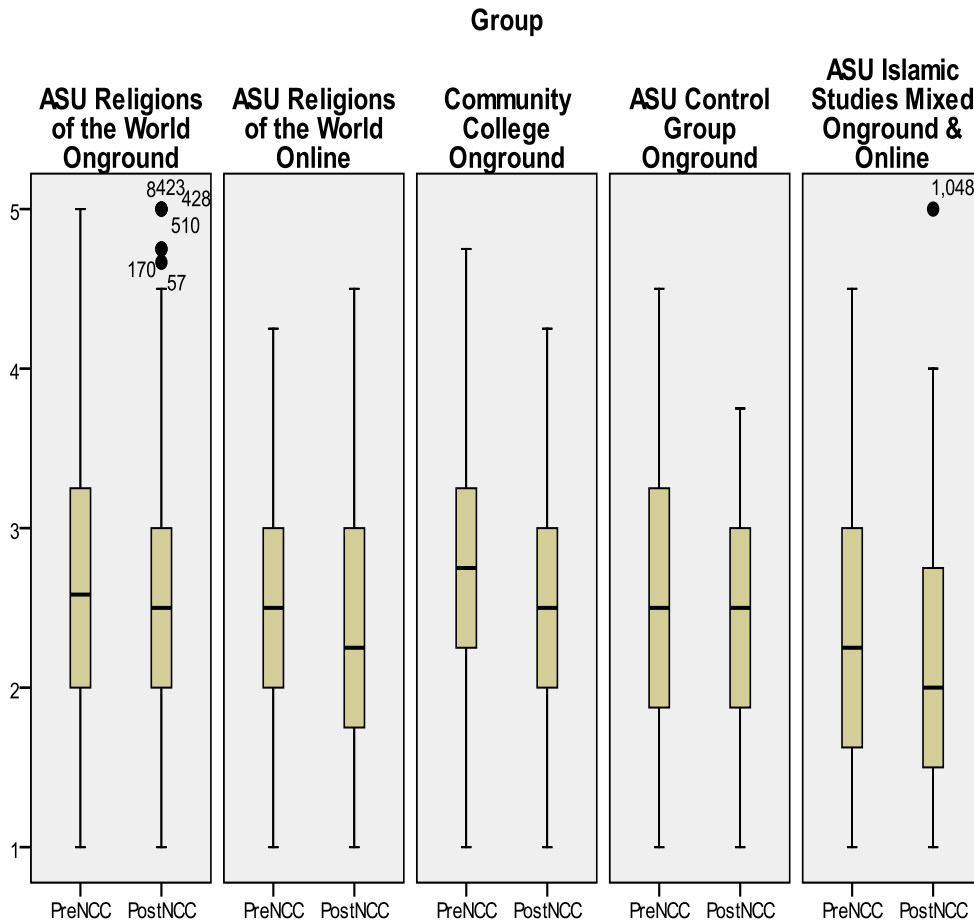
Dependent Variable: PostNCC

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	266.026 ^a	231	1.152	2.612	0	0.43
Intercept	26.228	1	26.228	59.493	0	0.069
@9DivCoursesthisSem	0.168	1	0.168	0.38	0.538	0
PreRELScale	1.319	1	1.319	2.991	0.084	0.004
PreNCcontextiScale	88.579	1	88.579	200.922	0	0.201
Group	1.654	4	0.414	0.938	0.441	0.005
@1Sex	0.002	1	0.002	0.003	0.953	0
@2YrsColl	1.806	4	0.451	1.024	0.394	0.005
@3Religion	4.314	9	0.479	1.087	0.37	0.012
Group * @1Sex	1.198	4	0.3	0.679	0.606	0.003
Group * @2YrsColl	9.353	16	0.585	1.326	0.174	0.026
Group * @3Religion	11.889	28	0.425	0.963	0.521	0.033
@1Sex * @2YrsColl	1.516	4	0.379	0.86	0.488	0.004
@1Sex * @3Religion	1.809	9	0.201	0.456	0.904	0.005
@2YrsColl *	12.858	29	0.443	1.006	0.458	0.035
@3Religion						
Group * @1Sex *	4.53	13	0.348	0.79	0.671	0.013
@2YrsColl						
Group * @1Sex *	9.421	19	0.496	1.125	0.32	0.026
@3Religion						
Group * @2YrsColl *	20.521	44	0.466	1.058	0.373	0.055
@3Religion						
@1Sex * @2YrsColl *	5.964	17	0.351	0.796	0.699	0.017
@3Religion						
Group * @1Sex *	5.158	17	0.303	0.688	0.817	0.014
@2YrsColl *						
@3Religion						
Error	352.69	800	0.441			
Total	6758.375	1032				
Corrected Total	618.716	1031				

a. R Squared = .430 (Adjusted R Squared = .265)

The box and whisker plots for the NCC construct showed unanimity in terms of distribution and, with the median lines positioned toward the middle of the inter-quartiles, there appears to be little skewing of the data (Figure 14).

Figure 14 Box and Whisker Plots Across Groups for Neo-colonial Context (NCC)



Neo-colonial Enlightenment (NCE)

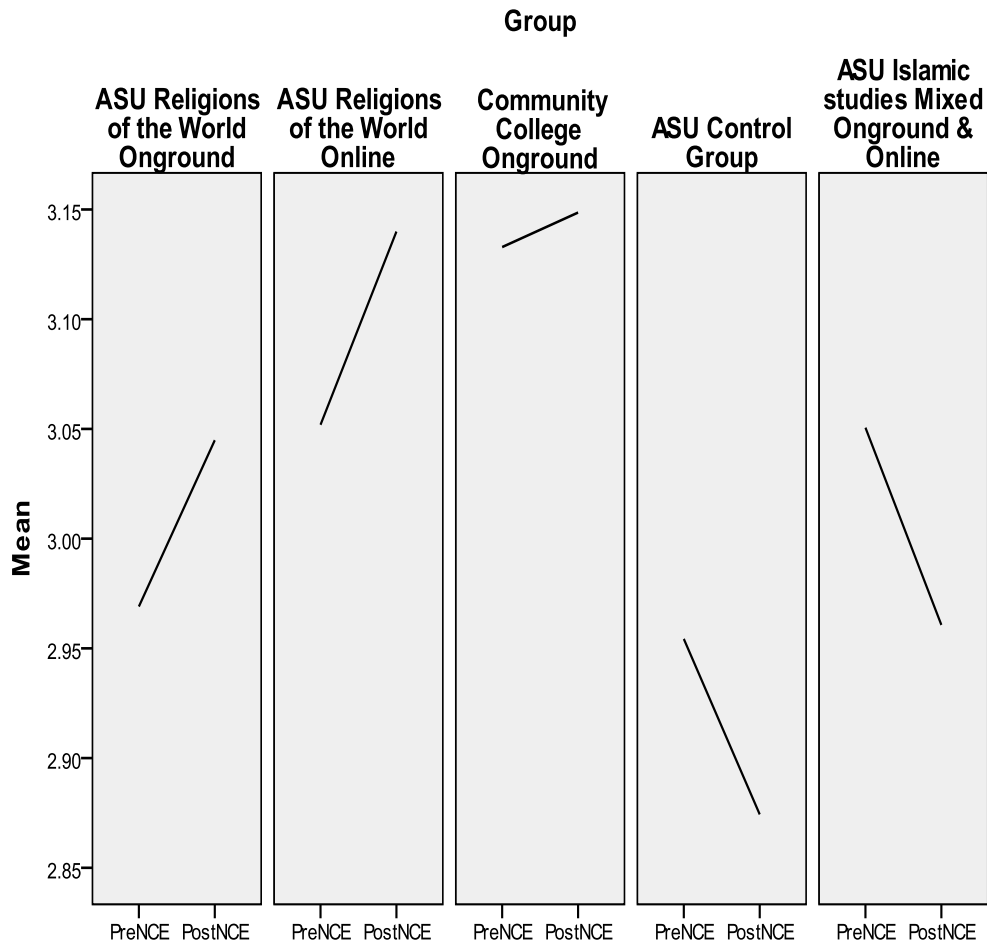
The NCE is the final construct of factor analysis used for the purpose of measuring changes in student perception regarding the category of religion.

Essentially, NCE sought to understand if students were more or less likely, over the course of the semester, to view religion as something akin to a “moral code,” “set of beliefs,” and/or being “non-political” in nature. The three Religions of the World groups and the Comparative Religious Studies groups all have a positive slope. In other words, their scores indicate they are more likely to see religion

defined as mentioned above. In contrast, the control group and the Islamic studies courses show a rather pronounced declining slope. This may suggest the reverse is occurring in those contexts where a more politicized understanding of religion is emerging.

The results of the paired samples t-tests for within group changes demonstrated a statistically significant change in favor of these definitions for the ASU on-ground group only. Statistically significant changes were not revealed in the other four groups (Table 9). The statistically significant increase in scoring on NCE for the ASU on-ground course were from Time 1 (M=2.9691, SD= .67467) to Time 2 (M=3.0449 , SD=.62517), $t(2.759)$, $p=.006$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in NCE scores was .07579 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .12974 to .02184. The eta squared statistic (.012) indicates a small effect size. The large sample size in the on-ground class appears to help move the results into the “significant” range compared to the slope in the ASU online class, which appears as equally vertical but does not register a significant finding (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Slope of Average Pre- and Post-Course Survey Scores by Group for Neo-colonial Enlightenment (NCE)



Next, a one way between-groups, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to examine whether the post-course survey score changes for NCE are attributable to the courses themselves while controlling for a number of variables. These independent variables were gender, year in college, religious affiliation, the number of diversity courses enrolled in, religiosity and the pre-course survey scores for NCE. Independent variables (both fixed factors and covariates) were

seen to be significantly different across groups due to self selection and confirmed through analysis of variance (ANOVA) for parametric values and Chi-Square tests for non-parametric items. The dependent variable was post-course survey scores for NCE.

Preliminary checks, as referenced in the introduction to this chapter, were conducted for assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, and homogeneity of slopes. Table 17 reports the results from the analysis of covariance. As a result of the significance level of .135 for the independent variable “group,” there is not a statistically significant difference in NCE scores for students in the various groups. Furthermore, the partial eta squared number is .008 meaning the group has a very small impact (.8%) on the variance in the outcome measure. The box and whisker plots confirm the irregular findings of the groups as there is not a consistent movement of means or hinge locations from pre- to post-course survey scores (Figure 16).

Table 17: ANCOVA Results for Neo-colonial Enlightenment (NCE)

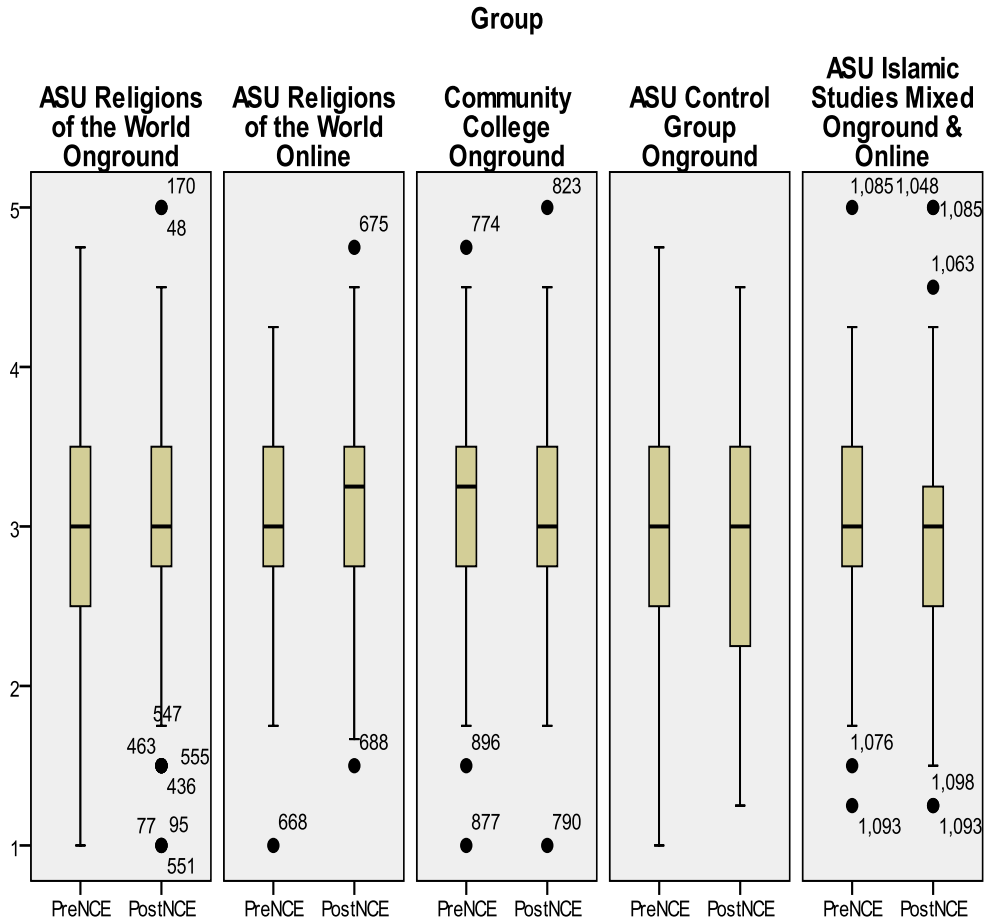
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: PostNCE

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	183.805 ^a	231	0.796	2.497	0	0.399
Intercept	71.585	1	71.585	224.684	0	0.205
@9DivCoursesthisSem	0.147	1	0.147	0.461	0.497	0.001
PreRELScale	0.857	1	0.857	2.69	0.101	0.003
PreNCEnlighScale	55.169	1	55.169	173.159	0	0.166
Group	2.242	4	0.561	1.759	0.135	0.008
@1Sex	0.199	1	0.199	0.623	0.43	0.001
@2YrsColl	1.197	4	0.299	0.939	0.441	0.004
@3Religion	6.243	9	0.694	2.177	0.022	0.022
Group * @1Sex	0.596	4	0.149	0.468	0.759	0.002
Group * @2YrsColl	6.095	16	0.381	1.196	0.265	0.022
Group * @3Religion	6.833	28	0.244	0.766	0.804	0.024
@1Sex * @2YrsColl	0.653	4	0.163	0.513	0.727	0.002
@1Sex * @3Religion	2.151	9	0.239	0.75	0.663	0.008
@2YrsColl *	11.399	29	0.393	1.234	0.185	0.04
@3Religion						
Group * @1Sex *	2.714	13	0.209	0.655	0.807	0.01
@2YrsColl						
Group * @1Sex *	6.067	19	0.319	1.002	0.456	0.021
@3Religion						
Group * @2YrsColl *	12.464	44	0.283	0.889	0.678	0.043
@3Religion						
@1Sex * @2YrsColl *	6.507	17	0.383	1.201	0.256	0.023
@3Religion						
Group * @1Sex *	5.452	17	0.321	1.007	0.448	0.019
@2YrsColl *						
@3Religion						
Error	276.868	869	0.319			
Total	10635.43	1101				
Corrected Total	460.672	1100				

a. R Squared = .399 (Adjusted R Squared = .239)

Figure 16 Box and Whisker Plots Across Groups for Neo-colonial Enlightenment (NCE)



Modesto Study Comparison

Emile Lester and Patrick S. Roberts (2006) published their findings after surveying and interviewing approximately 400 students before and after they took a nine-month long course on world religions. Select questions from their survey were adopted into the current survey with the intention of making inferences between potential differences in high school and college students. Key differences in this study versus the Modesto study include length of the treatment (one

semester here versus one academic year in Modesto) as well as the overt intentionality among the Modesto faculty to endorse and include “respect for religious freedom” as “an explicit and central purpose of Modesto’s world religions course” (p.5). Whereas at ASU it can be argued that while this may be one of the intentions of some instructors, it is largely part of a “hidden” agenda in higher education. Nevertheless, in comparing only to ASU on-ground students the sample size is relatively similar - 400 in Modesto versus 650 in Tempe.

For the item “it is important that Americans today try to learn more about Islam,” Lester and Roberts (2006) results showed 42% of students agreed or strongly agreed with that statement before taking the class, and 50% agreed with it after taking the class. In contrast, the ASU on-ground pre-course survey results revealed 52.9% agreed or strongly agreed, and post-course survey results were 55.8%. One complicating factor is the ASU survey item was based on a five-point Likert scale including an option for “neutral,” whereas the Modesto survey used a four-point scale. ASU respondents answered 36.0% neutral on the pre-course survey and 32.7% neutral on the post-course survey. This would be difficult to decipher which direction they might have moved if that option had not appeared.

Alternatively, for the two items that constituted the SJP scale (“Students of all religions should be able to wear religious symbols outside of their clothing in public schools” and “People of all religions should be able to put religious displays outside of their homes as long as the displays are on their private property”) the Lester and Roberts (2006) survey showed a five percentage point increase over the academic year from 80% to 85% agreeing on the clothing

question and an eight percent increase from 81% to 89% on the religious displays question. For ASU students, the rate of response of those who agreed slightly decreased from 86.1% to 83.9% on the clothing question and decreased again 88.4% to 86.2% on the religious displays questions. These populations appear to be moving in opposite directions but perhaps some of this can be explained with the difference in age group and setting. For example, in the ASU sample, many of these students were in the first semester of school at a large public university. The early socialization process may encourage more “blending in” while slowly finding one’s place in an unfamiliar and perhaps challenging environment. It was addressed earlier that this two item scale for ASU on-ground students did indeed show a negative or downward slope as the percentages confirm, but it was not a statistically significant drop. However, this hesitancy to support public displays of religiosity was consistent across all five groups and statistically significant for the ASU on-line Religions of the World group.

In another civic related question, students were asked if they would support a candidate regardless of religious affiliation if they agreed with most of the candidate’s policies. The responses provided in both studies were atheists, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, or would vote for the candidate regardless of her religious background. In the Modesto study, 75% of students stated they would not exclude a candidate before taking the course. That figure moved to 78% after taking the course. At ASU, the responses were 74.7% before and 72.7% after the courses.

For the items which Lester and Roberts (2006) “intended to measure changes in active respect” (p. 34), they acknowledge “mixed” results. On the positive side for their study, Lester and Roberts asked students what they would likely do “if one student insults another student’s religious beliefs.” Before taking the course, 56% of students responded that they were willing to take action by informing school authorities or confronting the insulter. After taking the course, 65% of students stated they were willing to take action. While Lester and Roberts saw a 9% increase in the high school students’ willingness to take action when another student’s religious beliefs were insulted, the ASU students of this study, answering the same question and selecting from the same number of choices, responded 68.5% and 66.7% respectively in terms of willingness to take action which constitutes a 1.8 percent decrease.

More mixed results appeared when Lester and Roberts included additional questions designed to measure the same change in propensity to act – this time in defending vulnerable religious groups. These questions centered around the likelihood of a student defending a group while talking to friends, signing a petition supporting a religious group being disrespected, or writing a letter defending the same group. The pre- and post-course survey responses for Lester and Roberts were essentially unchanged. This was true for the ASU students as well. These questions were included in the SJA scale using Lester and Roberts’ wording and available responses.

The last item for which the Lester and Roberts (2006) did not see “noticeable change” was in the measuring of whether a student’s support for a

political figure would be affected if that “member of Congress insulted a religious group.” In contrast, responses to the pre-course survey indicate that 29.3% of the ASU on-ground group would not vote for such a member of Congress under any circumstances. That number fell to 23.9% in post-course survey responses. In addition, before their course began, 27.4% of the ASU on-ground students would only vote for such a member of Congress if he/she apologized. After the course, that number rose to 31.4%.

Conclusion

Five general areas of student impact were undertaken for analysis in this study. In no particular order they were Religiosity, Attributional Complexity, Multi-Religious Awareness, Social Justice, and “Neo-colonial” perspectives on religion. In terms of religiosity, students who enroll in religious studies courses did tend to be more religious (as defined by the instruments) than their engineering and political science counterparts. All groups in this study, however, experienced a decline in the level of religiosity over the course of the semester. ANCOVA results suggest that this decline was not the result of any particular curriculum.

In regards to Attributional Complexity, also referred to as perspective taking, no statistically significant findings were found for any of the groups; however, in general religious students scoring on this measure tended to be higher pre- and post-course survey questions in this area than the non-religious studies students. Of the religious studies students, those enrolled in one of the Islamic studies courses, such as Islamic Civilization or Islam in the Modern World, scored

the highest. Perhaps most promising were the statistically significant findings for an increase in Multi-Religious Awareness, or sensitivity to issues of religious diversity, for students taking Religions of the World at ASU on-ground, ASU on-line, or at one of the community college. The same statistical significance in change was not found in the Control (Engineering and Political Science, or Islamic Studies) group.

The social justice scales found one case of statistical significance with ASU on-line students becoming less comfortable with notions of public religiosity in terms of clothing or on display at private residencies, but all groups showed a decline in this over the course of a semester. In terms of taking an “active” social justice role such as defending a religious minority group, no statistical significant change was found. Religious studies students did, however, on average score themselves higher in this category than the control group.

The non-significant ANCOVA findings for the Neo-colonial scales (NCS, NCC, NCE) provided the first quantitative response, as well as challenge, to those who suggest the current academy is perpetuating an a-historical, and perhaps theological, understanding of religion reminiscent of the colonial era. Critics argue that an approach that privileges the moral, private, and belief-centered aspects of religion not only mirrors Protestant Christianity but has been used to justify hegemonic political forces seeking exercise control over the “other” by delegitimizing alternative traditions. t-tests did discover significant results within the Religions of the World groups whose students, to a statistically significant degree, over the course of the semester became more aware of the forces of time and

place in understanding religious phenomenon. The control group and Islamic studies groups also experienced the same trend toward greater contextualization but not to the same statistically significant extent as their comparative religion counterparts.

The results of this study also indicated that pre-course survey scores were the largest driver or predictor of post-course survey scores. This should not have been entirely unexpected as it is often true that the first time point measurements account for much of the score at the final time point - especially with such a short time frame from beginning to end of the term. This selection effect is always evident unless students are randomly distributed and in social science research this rarely, if ever, occurs.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research study was to measure the impact of religious studies courses on undergraduate attitudes pertaining to religiosity, attributional complexity (perspective taking), multi-religious awareness, social justice propensities, and select theoretical concerns regarding whether or not the curriculum is perpetuating a “neo-colonial” outlook on the category of religion. While there have been many attempts in recent times to evaluate humanities curriculum, this study represents one of the few quantitative impact studies of religious studies in particular, and the first to measure theoretical claims that the discipline may be, wittingly or unwittingly, promoting a theological and imperialist agenda as residual “baggage” from its missionary and colonial origins. In addition to these “in the classroom questions,” the urgency of the study is reflected in today’s wider, and sometimes hostile, economic and political context that seeks and requires justification of humanities courses and their role in the higher education setting.

The Economic Challenge

In her manifesto *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Martha Nussbaum (2010) claims there is a “silent crisis” whereby “the humanities and the arts are being cut away, in both primary/secondary and college/university education in virtually every nation of the world” (pg 2). She asserts that political and educational leaders are compromising “education for democracy” for “education for profit” where a curriculum’s value is measured for its economic

impact rather than what she believes are the essential skills for a stable democracy built on respect and concern for what. Nussbaum further asserts that “humanities are widely perceived as inessential, so it seems fine for them to be downsized” (pg. 123) and “where departments are not closed, they are often merged” (p. 128)

The geographic location of the present study has not been immune to this global trend to downsize the humanities. In 2009 cost-containment move by the Arizona Board of Regents, Arizona State University merged its previously independent departments of Philosophy, History, and Religious Studies to a new interdisciplinary structure named the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies (SHPRS). While presented as an opportunity to “cross boundaries,” the general consensus among faculty and graduate students was a compromising of independence and the adoption of a model more likely to be found at the community college level. There, the “liberal arts” are usually grouped together in one department as it serves its primary function to teach survey and introductory courses. Alternatively, at major research universities such as ASU, the traditional self-understanding of the roles of humanities departments was to not only teach introductory level courses but to also conduct world-class research, train graduate students for professional careers, and offer upper level undergraduate courses at the same time. For many, this merger signaled a slippery slope of marginalization and was perceived as a lack of appreciation for the particular methods and approaches these disciplines bring to their respective fields of study.

How should the humanities defend itself in today's economic climate?

According to Nussbaum (2010), the argument lies essentially in providing a convincing argument that the humanities play a crucial role in developing an alert and critical thinking citizenry necessary for building just and democratic societies, which is also essential for a flourishing economy. She cautions, however, that the argument should not merely focus on economic impact but include more profound questions regarding the *type* of society that should be pursued. Using South Africa under apartheid as an example, she notes economic growth does not always correlate with human dignity and opportunity. When taught properly, she argues, the humanities and arts are particularly effective at instilling “faculties of thought and imagination that make us human and make our relationships rich human relationships rather than relationships of mere use and manipulation” (p. 2). These faculties form citizens who can think for themselves rather than blindly follow tradition or “cheap rhetoric,” transcend local loyalties and approach world problems as “citizens of the world,” and “imagine sympathetically the plight of another person” (p. 3).

While Nussbaum (2010) defends all of the humanities and arts, she singles out religious studies as playing a key role in her argument. She promotes religious studies as being “equally crucial to the success of democracies [along with the knowledge of the history and interconnectedness of the global economy] is the understanding of the world's many religious traditions” (p. 83). She continues “there is not one area (except, perhaps, sexuality) where people are more likely to form demeaning stereotypes of the other that impeded mutual respect and

productive discussion” (p. 83). Nussbaum’s defense is both ambitious and, in a sense, anecdotal. Defining the larger social impact of the humanities and/or religious studies, is not a simple or necessarily direct one.

One may wonder if she is arguing more for Socratic teaching rather than a particular set of curriculums. To what extent is the type of material more or less important to how that same material is engaged? There also may appear to be the presumption that the technical, “hard” sciences, or business departments are not aware, capable, or driven to make ideas of citizenry, ethics, or meaning a part of their approach or responsibility. But it does seem quite natural to intuit, based on the humanities areas and content of inquiry such as the human experience and its many manifestations in language, literature, religion, and the arts, that the humanities is, indeed, most situated to cultivate a nimbleness and a sensitivity to “others” and a context of “ourselves” when that is the object of study. These abilities seem a natural pre-requisite for a citizenry more likely to defend democratic institutions, push for social justice, navigate diversity in an increasingly complex and globalized setting, and apply critical thinking skills in search of solutions to troubling social challenges. Nussbaum (2010) argues that all of these are crucial skills not only for a vibrant economy, but, more important are crucial skill to promoting justice and decency. But as Nussbaum notes, her work is “non-empirical” and uses primarily “representative samples” of what? (p. 121). This study is one attempt to fill the gap and evaluate quantitatively the ‘virtues’ of the humanities.

The Political Challenge

Questions around the need or intentions of humanities curriculums, however, do not just emanate from a financial bottom line, they also emerge out of political concerns tied to the larger “culture wars” that have divided America in recent times. In the 1980’s, the attacks against “liberal elites” and multi-cultural agendas grew out of concern that the United States was losing its global position to the emerging power of Japan and, as a result, was sacrificing the educational model which had “made it great,” namely its emphasis the Greek-Roman-Western European intellectual traditions.

It was further argued that by studying non-Western traditions, as well as topics such as gender, race, ethnicity, and religion that emerge in multi-cultural societies, American universities were producing nihilists and relativists, and according to these conservative critics, undermining the fabric of its society. Thirty years later, similar national debates are still waged, and once again, Arizona is no exception. In an attempt to abolish a Mexican-American studies program in the Tucson school district, the state schools Superintendent pressured lawmakers to approve a state law banning ethnic studies. Proponents of the law claimed the courses were catering to one ethnic group leading them to feel oppressed and act disobediently. Advocates of the course, cited their own internal study that indicated “students who took Mexican-American studies scored higher on the AIMS (Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards) test [a standardized state-wide test requiring a certain level of proficiency to graduate], were more

than twice as likely to graduate, and were three times as likely to go on to college” (Arizona Republic, Jan 3, 2011). The debate was not *whether* the courses were having an impact but rather *what* impact the courses were having.

Nussbaum (2010) predicted these political battles when she noted “educators for economic growth will fear the arts ... it is easier to treat people as objects to be manipulated if you have never learned any other way of seeing them” (p 4). She then goes on to link the debacles of Enron, WorldCom, and the failures of NASA shuttle components to “a culture of yes-people, where authority and peer pressure ruled the roost and critical ideas were never articulated” (p 53). In Tucson, Arizona, this seems to be the debate on the role of public education. Should educators be producing “yes-people” and a docile workforce more likely to follow authority, or students with the intellectual skills and confidence to question authority and existing social structures that may be inhibiting opportunity and advancement? Disciplines engaged and focused on studies of culture, history, and the interplay of power and resources may not be able to escape being political, or at least identifying underlying political interests, if methodologically they continue to question “all things” in their pursuit of knowledge.

Interpretations and Implications

While the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) measures of across group changes did not reveal significant changes in student attitudes, much can still be gleaned from these and the within group results in terms of implications on course goals and delivery practices. In the case of the neo-colonial criticisms, the non-

findings suggest that the critiques have been taken seriously and remedied or perhaps have been simply overstated. In this section of the chapter, interpretations and implications are provided for each area of measurements – Attributional Complexity, Multi-Religious Awareness, Social Justice, Religiosity, and the Neo-colonial critical discourse.

Attributional Complexity

Student self-revealed propensities to “walk in the other’s shoes” or try to analyze people’s behavior as a product of time and place proved mostly negligible. It does appear that religious studies students are predisposed to be slightly more in tune to these processes than their counterparts as judged by their pre-course survey responses. But, over the course of the semester, the curriculum did not produce statistically significant *across-group* or *within-group* changes. The slopes from pre- to post-course survey scores show a slight increase in the comparative religious studies course in the on-ground, on-line, and community college courses, but not in the Islamic studies courses. This might suggest an inherent advantage in a survey course such as Religions of the World to cultivate perspective taking as opposed to those courses that focus on only one tradition.

As a result of these findings, an argument can be made that the special nature of religious studies courses, and the Religions of the World course in particular, are beneficial in that they provide students with exposure to a near limitless supply of “perspectives.” However, the results also indicate that the control group experienced the steepest increase in slope in Attributional Complexity. In part, this can be explained by the fact that this group started with

the lowest pre-course survey scores and, therefore, had the most “room to grow” thus pointing toward larger socialization processes at work, if not their curriculum as well. All of this combined to make for somewhat muddled results.

If one of the goals of religious studies is to develop empathy, sensitivity, or more specifically, a capacity to contextualize the human experience in a variety of times and places, there is room to improve. It may very well be that large classes (the ASU on-ground sample drew from 450 and 299 student capacity classes with one instructor and one TA respectively) and distance or internet learning (one class capacity was 150 students with one instructor and no TA) are not conducive to this type of learning. These findings would not surprise Nussbaum (2010) either, “Teaching large courses without sufficient critical engagement with students too often faculty allow regurgitation to lead to success” (p. 124). With this many students, there are little or no opportunities to break into small groups for discussion or to provide feedback on written assignments. In other words, the class size presents little opportunity to push and prod students toward deep thinking.

As a result, the classes, while rich in information and potential, leave much of the heavy lifting of contextualizing and abstract thinking to the vagaries of the individual students. This fact-centered approach may be more than appropriate for developing religious literacy alone, but it may be a stretch to expect increases in more cognitive construct like the Attributional Complexity scale used here. These results also imply that students are not the only ones paying the price. Nussbaum identifies the cost to the department as well. She

writes “To the extent that universities fail to achieve the goals that I have defended, it becomes much easier for outsiders to depreciate humanistic studies” (p.124). The argument that exposure to religious diversity alone “can’t help” but force students to self-reflect on the context and forces of time and place that shape themselves and others may not be compelling.

These large courses become a “double-edged sword.” In private conversation, one of the early members of the faculty of Religious Studies at Arizona State University alluded to the fact that the mere popularity of the course “Religions of the World” as one of the legitimating reasons for the disciplines place at the university. Because large student enrollment provides “supply” to student “demand,” the economic and consumer interest has been met regardless of the quality of instruction. Not completely unrelated, this has further armed the post-modern critics who claim the reason this course continues to persist is one not of academic integrity but of economic relevancy.

Beyond the logistical and format constraints, there may be other pedagogical areas to review. Would a thematic-centered approach such as using categories of art, ritual, and symbols, yield different results than a tradition-based approach such as Hinduism, Buddhism, or Confucianism? Textbooks that use a thematic-centered approach such as Ninian Smart’s *Dimension of The Sacred* (1999) might argue that the approach equips students with lenses to view nearly any religious tradition rather than learn just about five or six potentially disparate and unrelated human activity. Perhaps this provides more opportunities for students to contextualize and see others as themselves through similar categories.

But the thematic-centered approach largely fell out of favor with other comparative projects and interpretations. Of concern are the political and historical implications when diverse social realities are made, or have been made, “to fit” Western or hegemonic categories. If an instructor continues with the tradition-based approach, Nussbaum (2010) makes one particular pedagogical recommendation for improvement. She asserts that there should be an effort made to at least study one tradition in more depth than the others. “Once students learn to inquire and learn what questions to ask, they can transfer their learning to another part of the world with which they might be dealing in their work” (p. 92). A large class scenario is, perhaps, one way to manage attention and grading by having different students rotate their requirement for at least one in-depth study or writing assignment on that specific tradition as it comes up during the course of the semester.

Alternatively, an instructor may choose to introduce various religions through literature, biographies, or current events in which representatives of that tradition are seen to laugh, cry, love, and suffer in a way which personalizes traditions most susceptible to stereotype or caricature. Richard Rorty (1989) speaks of literature’s ability to engender “contingency” and “solidarity.” In his schema, contingency refers to an ability to be self-critical and recognize one’s perspective as just one among many, while solidarity refers to empathy and sensitivity to the plight of others. This approach has its appeal, but at the same time, the instructor is left with the messy task of choosing which “voice” he or she will let speak on behalf of an entire tradition that may expand thousands of years

and be global in geographic reach. This is, after all, a survey course with pressing time constraints and choosing one voice as authoritative may be more dangerous than not choosing one at all. The ultimate answer will invariably have its own tradeoffs, but if Attributional Complexity is indeed a goal of the curriculum, large class sizes coupled with multiple choice testing of textbook facts may not lead students any further than a basic religious literacy.

Multi-Religious Awareness

In terms of within group changes, this measure yielded the most statistically significant findings of the study. All three of the Religions of the World groups (on-ground, on-line, and community college) showed significant gains from their pre- to post-course survey scores. The Islamic studies group was close to being statistically significant but just higher than the .05 threshold ($p=.067$). The control group of political science and engineering experienced no-significant changes ($p=.509$). After controlling for key demographics, there was no across group statistical significance, meaning the particular curriculum, when compared to others, did not statistically impact the Multi-Religious Awareness scale score. Nevertheless, the within group changes are a sign for optimism as they do represent a statistically significant increase in students' awareness of issues and challenges related to religious diversity.

The lack of findings in the Attributional Complexity scale compared to the within-group changes in the Multi-Religious Awareness construct, is in line with comments received from Mark Engberg (2011) Assistant Professor at Loyola University School of Education, whose work on the impact of a first-year

“success” course was mirrored methodologically for this study and from which the Attributional Complexity and Multi-Religious Awareness survey questions were adapted. In an email conversation (January, 2011), Professor Engberg commented that the “results seem fairly consistent with what I would expect - we tend to see larger differences in relation to increasing awareness and less change in the cognitive and social justice realm. It does appear that the courses improve religious awareness - even if not significant - compared to your control group.” So one many infer that, surface learning such as exposure-based learning is more likely to show statistically significant findings than perhaps the deeper learning of perspective taking.

This seems reasonable considering this short, one semester duration of the treatment in addition to some of the critical concerns about impact of class size and mode of instruction voiced above in the Attributional Complexity section. It might also be fair to assert that measuring “awareness” might be more applicable to a quantitative assessment than what one does with, or how one’s attitude is influenced by, that new-found awareness or information.

By measuring this area of diversity awareness, the current study attempts, in some respects, to assess the goals of those like Stephen Prothero (2007) who advocate for the importance of religious literacy, rather than those like Nussbaum (2010) who are more inclined to advocate intellectual capacities and skills. But both approaches share a similar concern for cultivating a responsible citizenry. Prothero’s argument rests on the premise that a general “religious illiteracy” is “dangerous because religion is the most volatile constituent of culture, because

religion has been, in addition to one of the greatest forces for good in world history, one of the greatest forces for evil” (p. 5). He goes on to argue that religious literacy is needed “in order to become an effective citizen” (p. 11) because without religious literacy “how could we act responsibly as citizens.... when religion is implicated in virtually every issue of national and international import?” (p. 12). But does knowing something about a religion or a people adhering to one necessarily (arrow) there any concern for people?

Here, the argument is not one of developing deep, reflective, or necessarily critical learning, but an awareness and a vocabulary to interpret local and global events beyond short “sound bites” or rhetorical arguments. This in turn, according to Prothero, allows for the beginnings of responsible public dialogue and a capacity to engage religion in each of its myriad of contexts. This is a clearly more manageable and measurable set of goals. Nussbaum, in contrast, is concerned with merely teaching “facts” because students still need to have the skills to differentiate and evaluate competing “facts” or perspectives. How will students differentiate between reality and stereotype? Without this ability to discern larger moral and justice issues go unaddressed.

Prothero’s (2007) argument is also based on an assumption that there is a mutually agreed upon understanding of religious traditions. It suggests that the academy and its textbooks really does know what constitutes a “Hindu” or a “Muslim” and can and *should* speak authoritatively on it. There is a rich body of literature, discussed in Chapter 2, which problematizes these categories and descriptions. Much attention has been drawn to the academy’s political role in

authorizing which forms of religious traditions may be legitimate or not. Those rightly sensitive to this critique are more inclined to see college-level curriculums as opportunities to rigorously deconstruct these categories and emphasize the historical and political strands that run through any social construction or identity.

However, the average freshman Religions of the World student, often taking the course as an elective in their first or second semester of college, may be in greater need of “constructing” in order to have the basic vocabulary to later “deconstruct.” This argument suggests students need to be met where they are regardless of whether the instructor needs to grossly simplify or reify stereotypes or what constitutes a particular religion or adherent. This may be no different than a math instructor speaking of the infinite nature of a line in a way that suggests it actually exist while theoreticians may argue it does not. One tenured Religious Studies faculty member at Arizona State University, when confronted with this challenge, said: “You bet. I’ll tell them what a Hindu is. They have enough confusion in their lives without us making it worse.” In a sense, she is arguing that a basic literacy needs to be established before deep thinking can emerge - the question is can they be accomplished in the span of one semester? It probably depends on the ability and maturity of the individual student. Broadly speaking though, it may be more realistic to reserve these more advanced modes of inquiry and deconstruction for the 300 and 400 level courses. Unfortunately, as a general studies and elective course, the chances that these students will return to the religious studies classroom is more limited.

At Arizona State University, while conducting this project, faculty would share their own opinions with this researcher on the relevancy of a course like Religions of the World. One tenured faculty member noted “its a chance to show students how big the world really is” and another commented “it has something to do with not being so parochial – we are doing an injustice if someone finishes college and has no clue as to what is a Hindu or a Muslim.”

Social Justice and Comparison with the Modesto, CA Study

Building on select survey questions used by Lester and Roberts in a 2006 study of high school students in Modesto, CA, this study asked the same questions and eventually found two emerging constructs that were named Social Justice Active (SJA) and Social Justice Public (SJP). SJA measured student propensities to act by writing a letter, helping organize, or signing a petition if they had seen a small religious group be disrespected. Alternatively, SJP measured student comfort with public displays of religious symbols both outside of their clothing and outside people’s homes on private property. The logic as to why one might expect change in these areas begins with exposure to diversity which then theoretically leads to empathy and the ability to sympathize with people and their plights. If the course encourages independent thinking and finding one’s own voice, while developing the confidence to question tradition or authority when circumstances warrant, students may be more willing either to assist those that might be in the minority or protect various forms of self-expression. Similar to the Attributional Complexity scale, little statistical significance was found in support of the Social Justice hypotheses. Of the five

groups or courses being assessed on these two measures (SJA and SJP), the on-line Religions of the World group was the only group found to have a statistically significant within-group shift, and that shift occurred on the SJP measure, indicating the members of this group were less accommodating towards public displays of religious symbols after taking the course. No *across-groups* statistical significance was found for either SJP or SJA.

The SJP and SJA findings may be further evidence that the “hidden agenda” approach may not be making an impact to a measurable degree, at least after one semester. Perhaps, if these “hidden agendas” were made explicit to the students at regular intervals during the semester, the results would be more pronounced. In personal correspondence, Mark Engberg (January, 2011) noted that “part of the success we have seen in other courses in creating changes lies in the intentionality of the curriculum in addressing issues of identity, privilege, and power at both the individual and societal level. To what extent do these courses encourage in class learning activities, reflection, and/or structured interaction or leave these to chance. That too can make a big difference.” The importance of intentionality also surfaced in correspondence with Emile Lester (January, 2011) who said: “One possible factor, of course, is the differences in the courses and their framing. The Modesto course spent two weeks at the beginning emphasizing the history of religious freedom in the Americas and the centrality of this freedom to American democracy.” But Lester continues by stating: “Even with the framing and the pedagogical advantages of high school teachers, the positive results we found in Modesto, while statistically significant, were often modest, as we

acknowledged in our monograph. Similarly, we found that the Modesto course did not increase active tolerance or the willingness to take steps to protest injustice except in one instance. We chalked this up, in part, to the strong current of political apathy that pervades not only teenagers but the American population at large.” Yet, as reported in Chapter 4, the Modesto, CA study, while “modest” in findings according to Lester, did seem to be tracking in the positive direction in contrast to this study that saw trends more or less stable or in a reverse direction. Care should be taken to make conclusions without sufficient instances of statistical significance. Nevertheless, intentionality may be one of the keys for instructor success in terms of attaining their own goals.

It would be rare to find such strong civic signals within the religious studies course at the large public institutions studied in this project. The reasons may be many, but perhaps one key factor is that pedagogical or classroom strategy training for instructors is often minimal at best. This is coupled with the fact that a significant percentage of Arizona State University undergraduate courses are taught by graduate students or faculty associates with differing levels of experience and not by tenured or tenure-track professors of the department. So, while well trained in their own field of study, pedagogical techniques such as *intentionality* may not be readily apparent to instructors selected to teach introductory courses. But could it be we avoid promoting “values” or at least doing so explicitly?

The doctoral program in Religious Studies at Arizona State University has, however, made a major step in addressing this concern by requiring all of its

students to take a one-semester course called Teaching Religions of the World as a part of their required curriculum of study. Also to be considered is the fact that many instructors may feel that giving these strong civic signals is outside their understanding of what constitutes higher education. These instructors may feel the real purpose of the class is one of knowledge transmission or critical thinking without making the leap to what could be understood as normative social justice agendas. As a result, reluctance can emerge from a political concern of not wanting to be criticized for doing this.

Neo-colonial Measures

Neo-colonial/post-modern critiques of the academic study of religion have not only questioned current scholarship, but the textbooks and learning in which students may be engaged while taking religious studies courses. In response, a number of items intended to measure these concerns were developed and included in the survey. Through factor analysis, three “Neo-colonial” scales emerged and were named Neo-colonial Science (NCS), Neo-colonial Context (NCC), and Neo-colonial Enlightenment (NCE). All three scales sought to explore how religious studies curriculums may influence how students view of religion and how that view may change over the course of a semester. These three scales constituted the first statistical attempt to capture and assess these concerns.

In essence, the survey included questions designed to evaluate whether students were more or less likely to view religion in ways reminiscent of the enlightenment and colonial eras, that is, religion understood as being private, individualistic, non-political, universal, moral directed, and/or belief-centered.

This view would be in contrast to social, communal, political, cultural-specific, ritual, and practice-oriented view of religion. If, indeed, these pedagogical concerns were legitimate in the first place, the results suggest that the neo-colonial and post-modern critics have accomplished their goal and helped reform the discipline in raising awareness and reshaping textbooks. Across-group differences were not statistically significant when comparing the religious studies groups to the control group. In other words, students' views of "religion" were not significantly impacted if they were in a religious studies class or the control group. Furthermore, and different from the control group, the NCC measure for each of the religious studies groups did show positive within-group statistically significant findings for greater appreciation of the forces of time and place in understanding religion.

The great majority of instructors participating in this study have, to varying levels, all been trained at ASU graduate studies programs where post-modern critiques are seriously and regularly engaged. It is not surprising that the findings of this study were contrary to the concerns of the critics and are, perhaps, the results of their efforts for reform. It may be also worth considering that "pious," "quiet," and non-political understandings of religion were more prevalent in an earlier generation (Cady 2011). With the "resurgence of religion" (Shah and Toft, 2006) as a political force seen in nearly every corner of the globe in contradiction to the secularization theories of the 1960's on the demise of religion, the concern that today's students may not already have a public or social notion of religion seems removed.

If this issue is settled, the conversation may then turn to the normative and ask what understanding of religion in fact should the curriculum promote? Linell Cady, Director of ASU's Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict and Professor of Religious Studies surmised that the discipline "tries to get students to appreciate religion as an area of life that can be subjected to intellectual inquiry. Religion is not just irrational or removed from reason" and the discipline can play a role in undermining the "reluctance to think about religion from a constructive and critical way; but rather, begin to show it is possible and urgent to talk about religion" (Personal Communication, January, 2011). Beyond contextualizing religion, or showing how religion emerges out of the forces of time and place, instructors have an opportunity to de-mystify religion as a critical first step in bringing it into the public arena.

This presents religious studies with an opportunity to promote a construct of religion as available and necessary for rigorous examination. In this way, religion moves out of the auspices of relativist protectionism where religion is "off-limits" in the public square due to its deeply "personal" nature, to one in which revelatory or otherwise potential claims for universal applicability can be met simultaneously with both sensitivity and critical inquiry. This capacity to speak of religion as a lively, changing, and multi-layered social force is particularly important for social cohesion in large and culturally diverse secular democracies like the United States.

Religiosity

Some have questioned if religious studies impacts deleteriously student religiosity. In an April 15, 2007 New York Times column, Stanley Fish, in concluding his critique of religious studies and its perceived bracketing of truth claims, thereby rendering religion an “empty shell,” closes his column with a quote from Duke University theologian Stanley Hauerwas: “The only requirement for being a member of a religious study department is that you not believe in God” (April 15, 2007, *Religion Without Truth, Part Two*). If taken further, and confirmed by anecdotal instances of a student asking a professor if he or she will “lose their faith” by taking the course, the argument suggests religious study instructors are in the business of actively disseminating atheistic perspectives.

There are several unsubstantiated assumptions expressed in the above rationale and fears including, but not limited to, a rampant atheism of religious studies faculty and an overly malleable student population. Nevertheless, these assumptions lend support to the fact that religion is a sensitive subject and skepticism abounds on both sides. This includes the comments of one tenured faculty member at ASU who remarked privately in 2007 that “it is better that the Arizona Board of Regents think we are a seminary. We do not want them to really know what we do.” Whether the Board of Regents has this understanding or not is beyond the scope of this study, but what was implied by what religious studies “does” is historicize religious traditions in a way that attempts to interpret and explain religion as products of time and place.

This approach can be seen in sharp contrast to particular insider accounts for example, which tend to interpret their tradition using more of a metaphysical and/or revelatory language. When these two viewpoints converge, there may not be much middle ground. However, as we have seen in some of the neo-colonial discourse, there is the additional concern that religious studies faculties are overpopulated with instructors that are too “religious friendly” and teach courses such as Religions of the World in an idealized, ecumenical, and non-historical fashion such that “all religions are the same.”

Perhaps these suspicions, along with the economic and political factors outlined in the beginning of this chapter, are the biggest challenges in wide-spread implementation of the Supreme Court’s recommendation for inclusion of religious studies when Justice Thomas Clark (1963) stated that one’s “education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization.” There is a lot at stake in the religious studies classroom, and it is not surprising many institutions have focused their curriculum’s elsewhere.

The data collected in this study suggests that the impact of one religious studies course on a student’s religiosity is not significantly different than what happens to a student during the normal process of a semester of college – a slight overall decline. This should be good news for those who fear a particularly negative impact of the religious studies curriculum. Once key variables such as gender, year in school, religious affiliation, number of other diversity courses, and pre-course survey religiosity scores were controlled, the across course differences

were not statistically significant. The particular curriculum, whether it is a religious studies course or a control group course in engineering and political science, is not a statistically significant predictor for change in a student's religiosity.

Interestingly, what the statistics do reveal is that those who sign up for religious studies courses tend to exhibit greater levels of religiosity than their counterparts in political science and engineering. This is true for on-ground, on-line, community college, and Islamic studies classes. In addition, it would, therefore, seem that since these groups start out higher on the scale, they would have "more to lose." This was not necessarily the case. The one significant *within-group* decline in religiosity, occurring in the ASU Religions of the World on-ground courses, appears to have more to do with its larger sample size. When graphed (Figure 4.2), the slope of that ASU Religions of the World course had a trajectory similar to both the other religious studies groups as well as the political science and engineering group. The findings of this study may quiet the fears of both outsiders and insiders, or religious and 'neo-colonialists,' regarding the course's impact on religiosity.

Limitations of the Study

Teasing out the impact of a one-semester curriculum on the attitudes of undergraduate students is no easy undertaking. Today's college students are influenced by a variety of social, occupational, familial, and educational factors. Furthermore, the methodology employed is not without gaps and shortcomings. This section will explore some of the key limitations that became evident in the

course of this study. It is hoped that the discussion found below on the limitations of this study will encourage further research inquires.

Questions of Timing and Extents of Exposure

The amount of time for a curriculum to have an impact varies from course to course. For example, one would hope a Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) course might have a more immediate, measurable impact than a “deep” learning course such as a religious studies or humanities course. Some of the impact of a “deep” learning course might be visible by the end of one semester, but it is also reasonable to assume it might not be as quickly measured as other styles of learning such as memorization. Subtle or incomplete change may still be significant in its own way even if not statistically significant.

As a result, it is important to consider the potential latency effects whereby an event occurring later in life triggers a new meaning or significance to an earlier time in life and curriculum. For example, it is conceivable that the global impact of a tragedy such as September 11, 2001 might inspire newfound reflection as religion forcefully entered the national conversation. Perhaps a more ordinary occurrence, such as a new immigrant moving into the home next door might cause reflection as well. In a sense, the impact of a Religious Studies curriculum may be dependent on when insight takes place or, to put it colloquially, “when the light bulb goes on” The timing of this experience will vary from student to student. It may be naïve to think this occurs for a substantial amount of students within this first semester of exposure.

As alluded to earlier, with differences in class sizes and content, caution should also be exercised in extrapolating the impact measured in this study to higher levels of Religious Studies curriculum or at least, regularized exposure. Perhaps greater impact is felt after a number of continuous courses such that a degree with religious studies as a minor or major might receive. Or perhaps, the impact of a religious studies curriculum is most felt after general education requirements have been met and the student has a conceivably stronger foundation for approaching academic material. It is difficult to hypothesize when a “tipping point” might occur. In most circumstances, the experience of this “tipping point” would be individual specific.

It also seems worthwhile to question whether taking a religious studies course as an elective would be different than if one were planning to major in that field, since very few students taking the Religions of the World course will actually become Religious Studies majors. Anecdotally, some students have noted that elective courses should be “fun” classes where one does not have to “work as hard.” There is an expectation of ease, and when students hear from instructors, or experience first hand, that the courses have been made more demanding, they tend to complain vigorously. This speaks to a number of issues beyond the scope of this study including the consumerist culture of today’s colleges and universities. Nevertheless, in terms of this study on the impact of a particular curriculum, it may have a very real implication on the quality and expectation of instruction and level of student engagement and retention.

Make-up of Control Group

One particular challenge of this study was the make-up of the control group. Of the 124 students in this sample, 70 came from a political science course titled American Government and the other 54 from an Introduction to Aerospace Engineering class. Both courses were 100 level courses and were made up of first-year students. This make-up matched the preponderance of students attending the Religions of the World courses. While it was relatively easy to recruit the religious studies students to participate in the study through the personal relationships this researcher has with the instructors as well as the support of the department chair, it was, on the other hand, not as easy to find willing instructors outside the Religious Studies Department and, more generally speaking, outside of the humanities.

While deeply grateful for access to students in the political science and engineering courses, it is reasonable to assert, as one colleague noted, that “there are certain forms of critical thinking that are learned in all university courses, and certainly political science is not so incredibly different from religious studies that the lessons from that course would have nothing to do with insights into religion” (Personal conversation, January, 2011). In order to try to temper this potential for “cross-fertilization,” the methodology developed a variable for the “number of diversity courses” in which a student was enrolled that semester. Students were removed from the control group who were also enrolled in Religions of the World. Nevertheless, to completely tease out one curriculum from another would be highly difficult and a class such as American Government would not be

considered a “diversity” course per se, but most certainly would deal with government navigation and response to a diverse citizenry. These are topics it would share in common with many religious studies courses.

A separate question might be asked regarding the difficulty in finding other control groups. While no reasons were explicitly articulated, a number of factors are possible. One factor was that the time allotment needed was approximately 20-30 minutes of in-class time at the beginning of the semester and again at the end of the semester to complete the post-course surveys. And while the researcher was introduced as a member of the same ASU community, it appeared there was a general reluctance. Perhaps there was a concern on the part of some instructors outside the Religious Studies department that this study was either an endorsement of religion or that not much was to be gained by subjecting their students to a series of questions that directly asked their views on what is often seen on the secular campus as a mostly private matter.

Self-Reported Data

It is possible that in a survey which seeks information on attitudes and perspectives rather than command of data or sets of problems to solve, students would be inclined to answer the questions in ways they feel are more socially acceptable rather than provide answers that indicate what they might actually do in reality. This seems particularly poignant with the scales dealing with acceptance of diversity and social justice. Despite that fact that students were assured complete anonymity and that their responses would have no effect on their performance in the course, students may still have given the researchers

“what they wanted.” Secondly, with most first hand accounts, there is the tendency for a student to put forth a “preferred” rather than accurate image of him or herself. Therefore, it is acknowledged that these human inclinations and susceptibilities may cloud our findings to some extent.

The Instrument

It should also be noted that some survey questions raised some skepticism from academic colleagues who reviewed the first draft of the findings. One noted that the Attributional Complexity (ATT) scale contained “some questions which seem to ask respondents what they enjoy doing or often do, as if knowing how to do something or even valuing it implies that you enjoy doing it or often do it.” This comment was in reference to particular ATT items that asked, for example, if students enjoyed analyzing people’s behavior rather than asking if students felt it important to analyze people’s behavior. Whether this type of restructuring would yield significant changes may be a question worth further study, but high correlations between the items used to construct the measure would also seem to downplay the odds that one or more of these questions functioned as “outliers” or skewed the data.

Objections were raised that some Neo-Colonial scale items did not have “correct answers,” “pitted ‘facts’ against each other,” or “assumed multiple understandings of religion.” It may be true that these questions may be deemed unfair on an objective level, as the study does not purport to have a “right answer,” but the intent of the questions was not to assess ‘correct’ answers but to identify potential shifts in how students might view the category of religion or

what constitutes “religion.” As stated in Chapter 2, there is a lively debate in the religious studies academy as to what indeed is the object of the scholar’s study. There was, therefore, no attempt to “grade” student answers but rather to explore any potential shifts in perspectives. The extent to which questions with no “right” answers may have confused students or caused them to become withdrawn is unclear.

Finally, in terms of the instrument, it would have been helpful to include some open-ended and qualitative items on the post-course survey. The responses could still be quantified or studied individually, but it would have allowed to students to use their own words in describing any changes that they perceived. It may have also encouraged reflection and revealed underestimated or underappreciated impacts and changes. In addition, validation of new and changed measures would have provided additional confidence in the findings.

Variation in Instructors and their Pedagogical Approaches

A major assumption in this study was that each instructor of the Religions of the World course would teach the course in the same manner, or at least present similar materials in a somewhat consistent format. Methodologically, it was crucial to combine multiple sections and instructors to establish the large sample size. But to have truly consistent treatment, it would be helpful to implement some baseline standards that could be replicated across courses and regions. On the other hand, it could be argued that since Religions of the World is a survey course and often criticized for being a “mile wide and an inch deep” with information, some of the potential for pedagogical delivery differences may be

undercut. Finally, to be able to judge the curriculum and not the instructor, it may actually be of benefit to have multiple teaching exposures to allow the impact of the general curriculum to surface beyond the variances found in each classroom. Nevertheless, clear differences could arise in variations on differences in teaching emphases, textbooks, and class locations and times. Indeed, from a development or assessment of pedagogical techniques standpoint, it would be most helpful for future researchers to tease out best practices from particular courses that score at a higher rate than others. This study, however, sought to evaluate the curriculum in more general terms.

Generalizability of Findings

While the overall sample size was robust, it is still limited to one metropolitan area. Perhaps there is an unexplored characteristic of these particular students, professors, or classes that explains some of the non-findings. The Phoenix area contains a significant diversity that would come with being the fifth largest metropolitan area in the United States. It is, however, located in a state that has traditionally been criticized for its quality and the related commitment to public education. In 2010, the National Center for Education Statistics ranked Arizona 49th in state spending per student.

As a result, the community colleges and the state university that serve these students may be dealing with a different set of political and social issues than other regional areas in the United States. It is also be fair to imagine that the course's impact would change in a private school environment where, due to potential differences in socio-economic backgrounds, a student's educational

experience may be less complicated by factors such as outside employment, commuting demands, and/or English as a second language challenges. On the whole, private institutions are likely to have smaller class sizes, more opportunities to interact with the instructor outside of class, and instructors who are tenured faculty members rather than graduate students. For all these reasons, the findings here may not be representative of other social and educational contexts and therefore difficult to generalize to all religious studies populations.

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APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL

To: Joel Gereboff
ECA

From: Mark Roosa, Chair
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 05/21/2009

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 05/21/2009

IRB Protocol #: 0904003923

Study Title: The Humanities, Citizenry, and Neo-colonialism:
A Study on the Attitudinal Effects of Introductory Religious Studies Courses

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(1) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX B
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Opinion Survey

You are invited to participate in a research study. This is a way to learn more about students' opinions. If you decide to be a part of this study, you will be asked to answer the following set of questions.

INFORMATION

We'd like to ask your opinions on religion. We take your views very seriously, so take as much time as you need to fill out the survey and please read the questions carefully. It should take about 15 minutes to complete.

BENEFIT

This survey will benefit researchers and administrators who want to know what students think about religion, politics, and other issues.

CONFIDENTIALITY

When we are finished with this study we will write a report about what was learned. This report will not include your name or that you were in the study, so please do not write your name on the survey. No one except the research team will have access to the completed surveys. We do, however, request that you include the last four digits of your student id number. This will only be used to track your survey. No one except the research team will have access to the completed surveys.

CONTACT

If you have any questions about the study, or about what you are doing in the study, you may ask Bret Lewis, Department of Religious Studies, Arizona State University. bretlewis@asu.edu

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate you may change your mind and hand in a blank or partially completed survey. Participants can skip questions if they choose.

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Thank you very much for participating! But before you start,

On the bottom left corner of your scantron form, you will find a highlighted box for your student identification number. Please enter ONLY the LAST FOUR digits of your student id number and bubble in the corresponding circles under the number. Do not write your name. (If you do not know or do not remember your student id number, please raise your hand and the proctor will assist you).

Now, let's begin with some background questions.

1. Sex

- A. Male
- B. Female

2. How many years have you been in college? This is my

- A. First year
- B. Second year
- C. Third year
- D. Fourth year
- E. Fifth year or more

3. How would you identify your religious affiliation?

- A. Jewish
- B. Christian Protestant
- C. Catholic or Eastern Orthodox
- D. Mormon
- E. Native American/American Indian
- F. Muslim
- G. Buddhist
- H. Hindu
- I. Other
- J. None

4. How much have you been exposed to information and activities devoted to understanding other religious/cultural groups and inter-religious/cultural relationships in specific courses, readings, lectures, and discussions?

- A. Not at All
- B. Little, some
- C. Quite a bit
- D. A great deal

5. What was your grade point average in high school?
- A. 4.0 or higher
 - B. 3.5 – 4.0
 - C. 3.0-3.5
 - D. 2.5-3.0
 - E. 2.0-2.5
 - F. Below 2.0
6. How long have you lived in the United States?
- A. My whole life
 - B. At least 5-10 years
 - C. Between 1-5 years
 - D. Less than a year
7. What grade do you expect to receive in this course?
- A. 90% and higher
 - B. 80 – 90%
 - C. 70 - 80%
 - D. 60 – 70%
 - E. Below 60%
8. Has there been a course or program while you have been in college that has had an important impact on your views of religious/cultural diversity and multiculturalism, or your attitudes about any religious/cultural group in American society?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
9. How many courses this semester are you enrolled in that deal with ethnic/cultural studies, general diversity issues, or women’s studies?
- A. None
 - B. One
 - C. Two
 - D. Three or more
10. How often do you attend religious services or gatherings?
- A Rarely or Never
 - B. Once a Year
 - C. A few Times a Year
 - D. A few times a Month
 - E. Once a Week
 - F. More than once a week

11. How often do you spend time in private religious activities, such as prayer, meditation, or scripture reading?
- A. Rarely or Never
 - B. Once a Year
 - C. A few Times a Year
 - D. A few times a Month
 - E. Once a Week
 - F. More than once a week
12. In my life, I experience the presence of the Divine.
- A. Definitely not true
 - B. Not So Much
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat True
 - E. Definitely True
13. My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life.
- A. Definitely not true
 - B. Not So Much
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat True
 - E. Definitely True
14. I try hard to carry over my religion over into all other dealings in life.
- A. Definitely not true
 - B. Not So Much
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat True
 - E. Definitely True
15. I'm very interested in understanding how my own thinking works when I make judgments about people or attach causes to their behavior.
- A. Not at all like me
 - B. A little like me
 - C. Somewhat like me
 - D. Quite a bit like me
 - E. Very much like me
16. I think a lot about the influence that society has on other people.
- A. Not at all like me
 - B. A little like me
 - C. Somewhat like me
 - D. Quite a bit like me
 - E. Very much like me

17. I really enjoy analyzing the reason or causes for people's behavior.
- A. Not at all like me
 - B. A little like me
 - C. Somewhat like me
 - D. Quite a bit like me
 - E. Very much like me
18. I believe it is important to analyze and understand our own thinking and processes.
- A. Not at all like me
 - B. A little like me
 - C. Somewhat like me
 - D. Quite a bit like me
 - E. Very much like me
19. I think a lot about the influence that society has on my behavior and personality.
- A. Not at all like me
 - B. A little like me
 - C. Somewhat like me
 - D. Quite a bit like me
 - E. Very much like me
20. When I analyze a person's behavior, I often find the causes form a chain that goes back in time, sometimes for years.
- A. Not at all like me
 - B. A little like me
 - C. Somewhat like me
 - D. Quite a bit like me
 - E. Very much like me
21. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
- A. Not at all like me
 - B. A little like me
 - C. Somewhat like me
 - D. Quite a bit like me
 - E. Very much like me

22. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

- A. Not at all like me
- B. A little like me
- C. Somewhat like me
- D. Quite a bit like me
- E. Very much like me

23. When I'm upset with someone, I usually try to "put myself in their shoes" for a while.

- A. Not at all like me
- B. A little like me
- C. Somewhat like me
- D. Quite a bit like me
- E. Very much like me

We would now like to ask you some questions regarding your perception of religion and American society

24. The American tradition of respecting the rights of many different religious groups is one of the reasons for the success of the United States.

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Disagree
- C. Agree
- D. Strongly Agree

25. Imagine that you agree with most of a candidate's policies, but that you also find out her religious background. Are there any religious groups the candidate might belong to that would make you not consider voting for her?

- A. Atheists
- B. Muslims
- C. Hindus
- D. Jews
- E. I would vote for the candidate regardless of her religious background.

26. Students of all religions should be able to wear religious symbols outside of their clothing in public schools.

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Disagree
- C. Agree
- D. Strongly Agree

27. People of all religions should be able to put religious displays outside of their homes as long as the displays are on their private property.

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Disagree
- C. Agree
- D. Strongly Agree

28. Let's say that you generally agree with the policies of Congressman Jones. If Congressman Jones makes an insulting comment about a group because of that group's religion, what would be your most likely response?

- A. It would not affect my support for Congressman Jones at all.
- B. It would somewhat affect my support for Congressman Jones.
- C. I would only vote for Congressman Jones if he apologized.
- D. I would not vote Congressman Jones under any circumstances.

Imagine that you lived in a place where most people disrespect members of a small religious group. How likely would you be to take the following actions? For each action, mark a letter from A to D.

29. Defend the small religious group when talking to friends.

- A. definitely would not B. probably would not C. probably would D. definitely would

30. Sign a petition supporting the small religious group.

- A. definitely would not B. probably would not C. probably would D. definitely would

31. Write a letter to the local newspaper defending the small religious group.

- A. definitely would not B. probably would not C. probably would D. definitely would

32. Help to organize an association to support the small religious group.

- A. definitely would not B. probably would not C. probably would D. definitely would

33. If one student insults another student's religious beliefs, what would be your most likely response?

- A. do nothing
- B. let the student who made the insult know he's done something wrong
- C. inform school authorities about the incident
- D. not sure

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements

34. It is important that Americans today try to learn more about Islam.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
35. I feel I have a good understanding of issues faced by various religious groups.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
36. I am able to critically think about difficult issues of religious diversity.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
37. I am aware of multiple perspectives on issues of religion and diversity.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
38. I often engage in interesting discussion around religious diversity issues.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
39. I am aware of societal problems related to accommodating religious diversity.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

40. I have a good understanding of various religious groups.

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Somewhat Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat Agree
- E. Strongly Agree

41. I engage in discussions involving differences of opinion or conflict around religious diversity issues.

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Somewhat Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat Agree
- E. Strongly Agree

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following:

42. The most authoritative way to learn about a religion is to read its sacred texts i.e. the Torah, Qur'an, or New Testament.

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Somewhat Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat Agree
- E. Strongly Agree

43. A good definition of religion is a "set of beliefs"

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Somewhat Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat Agree
- E. Strongly Agree

44. Because of its nature, religion is basically neutral or non-political.

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Somewhat Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat Agree
- E. Strongly Agree

45. Religion is better defined as what a person thinks rather than what he or she does.

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Somewhat Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat Agree
- E. Strongly Agree

46. A good definition of religion is a “moral code.”
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
47. Religion is something fundamentally created by human beings.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
48. In the study of religion, belief in spirits, ghosts, coincidences, etc., is not as important as the study of a religion’s sacred texts.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
49. Religion in the modern world has progressed in a positive way in that it has become more rational and intellectual rather than mystical and sensational.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
50. Science is mostly rational while religion is mostly irrational.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
51. People of most religions believe basically the same thing.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

52. Religions tend to stay the same over time.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
53. Geography seems to have little influence on established religions.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
54. Christianity today is basically the same as it has been for two thousand years.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
55. Islam is probably very similar whether in Iran or Indonesia.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
56. Religion is a private matter more than a social one.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
57. Religion has been a force for good in world history.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Somewhat Disagree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Somewhat Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

END OF SURVEY
Thank you for your participation.

