

The Faculty Perceptions of Academic Freedom at Christian Colleges and Universities

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Abstract

Academic freedom is a much-discussed topic in the literature. However, little empirical research has been performed that describes the faculty perceptions of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities, a unique segment of institutions within US higher education. Specifically, little recent research has shown how faculty members at Christian colleges and universities define academic freedom, how they describe experiences where they encountered issues of academic freedom, and how they navigate the interaction between academic freedom and institutional religious doctrines (as found in official statements of faith). The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze how faculty members at Christian colleges and university perceive academic freedom. For this qualitative study, I employed the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954) to collect data from full-time faculty members of Christian institutions. I present the findings discovered through this study, discuss their ramifications, offer recommendations, and draw conclusions.

The Faculty Perceptions of Academic Freedom at Christian Colleges and Universities

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General Audience Abstract

Academic freedom is an important concept for scholars working in higher education. However, little research has been performed that describes how faculty perceive academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities, a unique segment of institutions within US higher education. The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze how faculty members at Christian colleges and universities perceive academic freedom. For this qualitative study, I employed the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954) to collect data from full-time faculty members of Christian institutions. I present the findings discovered through this study, discuss their ramifications, offer recommendations, and draw conclusions.

Dedication

For my father,
Rev. A. Frederick Walz, Jr. (1940-2011),
who encouraged his children to know Jesus Christ
and value Christian higher education

and

Rev. Dr. Dennis F. Kinlaw, Sr. (1922-2017),
his seminary Hebrew professor and friend,
Asbury College president (1968-81, 1986-91),
and my dear friend and mentor,
who exemplified what it meant to be a Christian scholar.

AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM

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Sir Isaac Newton (1675), writing in a letter to Robert Hooke, paraphrased Bernard of Chartres when he declared, “If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” After the completion of this dissertation research study, I feel the same way. Many contributed to its successful completion, I stood on their shoulders, and I gratefully acknowledge their many contributions.

Several family members encouraged and supported me sacrificially during my pursuit of PhD studies. First and foremost among these is my wife, Anita, who endured and persevered faithfully through the many joys and sorrows I experienced during my studies at Virginia Tech. She accomplished the dual feat of being a faithful wife and working fulltime while I studied and worked part-time. She certainly earned the highest degree possible, the “PhT”—pushing honey through—degree. I simply could not have accomplished this without her sacrifice, help, and encouragement. My parents, Fred and Prudence Walz, both first generation college graduates who later earned Master’s degrees, established a home imbued with a love of learning and higher education that made possible my vision for pursuing graduate education. They also sacrificed so that their three children had the benefit of a Christian liberal arts education that was higher in every sense of the term. My siblings, Jennifer and Jonathan, blazed the path toward graduate study and encouraged me along the way, too. Anita’s parents, Richard and Carol Johnson, offered patient encouragement and other support that allowed us to be away at school.

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Rev. Dr. Jonathan Tagg listened and encouraged me at regular Men's Fellowship breakfasts. My best friends, Rev. Dr. William Spencer and Rev. Glen Van Cise, always offered a listening ear, a quick wit, and the comforting assurance that, with God's help, each of us could accomplish all that He asked us to do. Life-long mentors and personal heroes, Rev. Dr. Dennis Kinlaw, Rev. Dr. Roy Lauter, Rev. Dr. Ron Smith, and Dr. Graham Walker, offered sage advice, engaged in meaningful conversations, and provided models of Christian faith and academic distinction that remain clear examples of what it means to be Christian scholars.

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My faculty advisory committee, comprised of Dr. Steve Janosik, chair; Dr. Elizabeth Creamer, co-chair; Dr. Claire Robbins; and Dr. Verna Lowe reviewed numerous drafts, returned annotated comments, edited chapters, offered feedback, and granted approvals that officially finalized my dissertation. Drs. Janosik and Creamer deserve special commendation for being great editors who helped me achieve a final version that is clearly focused. Examining a rough diamond and guiding the stone cutter through all the facets was hard work, but they did it well.

Dr. Rick Ostrander at the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities provided invaluable contacts at CCCU institutions. The participants of this study, including 13 institutions of Christian higher education and 28 faculty members from of those institutions, volunteered their time and shared their perspectives on faculty academic freedom. Their candid conversations provided the insights I could capture and release back to the reader. Their participation made this study possible.

Truly, there have been many occasions in my life when God bore me up on eagles' wings (Exodus 19:4; Isaiah 40:31 ESV). This dissertation is just one more of those occasions. Its completion stands as a testimony that, "With man this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26 ESV). Through His eternal son, Jesus Christ—who lived, died, and rose again to offer "free salvation to all men, and full salvation from all sin"—He has brought me out of Egypt and through the wilderness, and has set me before a land filled with promise. Along with the hymn writer John Newton I sing, "Though many dangers, toils and snares I have already come. 'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace shall lead me home." Surely, "this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23 ESV).

SOLI DEO GLORIA

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

A thunderstorm erupted on the campus of Bryan College, although the rainclouds had been gathering for some time. The flash of lightning and crack of thunder that split the sky came in the form of an announcement from the Board of Trustees. Since some had questioned the college's position on human origins, the college President, Dr. Stephen Livesay, and the college's Trustees thought it prudent to clarify a clause in the college's Statement of Belief concerning human origins (Bryan College, 2014a). The recent clarification stated, "We believe that all humanity is descended from Adam and Eve. They are historical persons created by God in a special formative act, and not from previously existing life forms" (Bryan College, 2014a). Though the college's Statement addressed creation, Livesay had been considering such a "clarification" for a few years (Handy, 2014a). Still, the announcement came as a shock to many faculty members (Devine, 2014; Handy, 2014a, 2014b). They were especially surprised since faculty employment contracts incorporating the Statement of Belief and its newly added clarification were due to be signed in less than six weeks, leaving those who declined to affirm the new statement with little time to find new employment (Devine, 2014). Moreover, Bryan's Statement of Belief originated in the institution's founding more than 80 years ago and is restricted by the college's charter from being amended (Hardy, 2014a). This dissertation investigated the perceptions of academic freedom for faculty in Christian colleges and universities where notions of faculty academic freedom interact with institutional statements of faith in ways similar to the situation at Bryan College.

Bryan College was founded in 1930 to honor former three-time presidential candidate and U.S. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan who assisted in the prosecution of the 1925 Scopes trial of a public school teacher accused of teaching evolution (Jaschik, 2014). It is an

independent, evangelical Christian college located in Dayton, Tennessee. Like other Christian colleges and universities, Bryan requires faculty members to affirm a statement of faith as part of their terms of employment (Jaschik, 2014). Bryan's original Statement affirmed "the origin of man was by fiat of God in the act of creation as related in the book of Genesis; that he was created in the image of God; that he sinned and thereby incurred physical and spiritual death" (Bryan College, 2014b). But now the Statement also includes the "clarification" as previously noted (Bryan College, 2014a).

Fallout from the Trustee's announcement affected faculty in particular. Some faculty members saw this clarification as a narrowing of the College's previous position (Hardy, 2014b). Others expressed concern about the lack of communication or that the clarification was rushed through on short notice (Devine, 2014).

Subsequently, in a flash of lightning, the entire faculty approved a resolution of no-confidence in President Livesay that passed on a 30-2 vote (Hardy, 2014b). Ironically, although the faculty did not assert a right to academic freedom, the students did—more than 300 of the college's 800 students signed a petition arguing in part that the "clarification" threatened the faculty's academic freedom (Hardy, 2014a; Murphy & Baker, 2014). However, President Livesay and the board remained steadfast. "This is pretty basic stuff," Livesay told the college newspaper, "I would say for the majority of students, faculty, and staff, vast majority, that this is right on target, this is what we believe, who we are" (Jones, 2014, para. 8). The Board affirmed Livesay's leadership in a resolution approved just two days after the faculty no-confidence vote (Hardy, 2014b). Nevertheless, after the controversy erupted, the college lost nine of its 44 full-time faculty, including two who rejected the clarified Statement of Belief (Associated Press, 2014).

This anecdote illustrates one of the issues concerning faculty academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities. As noted, many of these institutions affirm—and require their faculty, staff, and administration to affirm—a statement of faith. Such statements provide frameworks within which faculty members agree to teach, research and publish, and speak as private citizens—the core constructs of academic freedom. Sometimes, these statements of faith become the focal point of intramural disputes between faculty and administration concerning the meaning, intent, or implications of those statements. As one observer of the Bryan College situation noted, “Claims of individual rights and organizational liberty are also battling. Does a Christian college, then have the right to insist that its professors say no to a [Christianized] view of Darwinism? Or do professors, once hired, have the freedom to interpret Genesis in a way that allows for theistic [or God-initiated] evolution?” (Olasky, 2014, para. 5). The episode at Bryan College exemplifies, but leaves unanswered, questions concerning the faculty perception of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities.

In this chapter, I establish the foundations for this study by describing the problem I sought to investigate: how faculty members at Christian colleges and universities perceive academic freedom. First, I define academic freedom and explain how it applies to faculty in higher education. Then, I explain the types of institutions in higher education where faculty work; describe Christian colleges and universities; and summarize views of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities. Subsequently, I provide a summary statement of the problem. Next, I describe the purpose of the study: restating the topic, outlining the conceptual frameworks for the study, describing the sample, and introducing the research techniques used for the study. Then, I list the research questions I sought to answer. Finally, I outline the organization of the study.

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is a term often used in higher education to describe the intellectual liberties required for preserving, exploring, or discovering knowledge (Poch, 1993). As one of the most important values in academe, it is considered an essential aspect of American higher education (Alexander & Alexander, 2011; American Association of University Professors [AAUP], n.d.; Kaplin & Lee, 2014; O’Neil, 2011; Poch, 1993). It is the foundation for “active discourse, critical debate, free exchange of ideas, and communication of values that characterize effective scholarship, teaching, and learning” (Poch, 1993, p. 1). At a conference held at Columbia University in 2005, 23 university presidents succinctly defined academic freedom as “the freedom to conduct research, teach, speak, and publish, subject to the norms and standards of scholarly inquiry, without interference or penalty, wherever the search for truth and understanding may lead” (Global Colloquium of University Presidents [GCUP], 2005).

AAUP Declarations

The American Association of University Professors [AAUP] has issued statements that have explained academic freedom as a professional concept and recommended practices to implement it in higher education. The AAUP’s first statement, *General Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom & Academic Tenure*, was issued in 1915 at the organization’s founding (AAUP, 1915/2015a; Byrne, 2004; Spurgeon, 2007; Todd, 2007; White, 2010). The document described three facets of academic freedom. These included “freedom of inquiry and research, freedom of teaching within the university or college, and freedom of extra-mural utterance and action” (AAUP, 1915/2015a, p. 4).

The AAUP further clarified academic freedom by issuing the *1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*, which was approved by both the AAUP and its

counterpart, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, an organization of university presidents and erstwhile opponent of the AAUP concerning issues of academic freedom (AAUP, 1940/2015b; Metzger, 1961, 1993a). This *Statement* also addressed research, teaching, and extramural expression. The *1940 Statement* declared:

Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.

Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of instruction should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment.

College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence, they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution. (AAUP, 1940/2015b, p. 14)

Since being issued, more than 200 organizations have endorsed the *1940 Statement* (AAUP, n.d.; Cain, 2012; Metzger, 1961). In sum, “The AAUP’s *1940 Statement of Principles*

on *Academic Freedom and Tenure* is widely accepted and widely cited as the most influential expression of academic freedom principles to be found anywhere in the extensive literature on American higher education” (White, 2010, p. 802).

Faculty Academic Freedom and Institutional Types

In this dissertation, I sought to study faculty academic freedom. More specifically, I sought to examine faculty academic freedom at institutions of a particular type. Indeed, all faculty members perform their responsibilities and experience academic freedom at different institutions that vary by type, including institutional control (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Kaplin & Lee, 2014) and institutional mission (Bess & Dee, 2007; Finnegan, 2002; Riley, 2005). Therefore, it is important to have a basic understanding of faculty academic freedom and institutional types—topics I discuss next.

Three Categories of Faculty Academic Freedom

As defined by the AAUP *1940 Statement*, academic freedom for faculty has been categorized in three ways (Schrecker, 1983). The first category is the classical one that relates to faculty members’ unique work as *professors*. It includes the core concepts of academic freedom—the freedom to teach, research, and publish without interference (Schrecker, 1983).

The second category emphasizes professors’ constitutional rights as *citizens* to freedom of speech without challenges to their academic standing (Schrecker, 1983). This category of academic freedom, nevertheless, is not absolute and has some qualifications and limits (Metzger, 1993b). Under the Constitution, all individuals in the United States, whether working at public or private institutions, possess First Amendment protections from *governmental* infringement of their rights to religion, speech, press, assembly and petition (Kaplin & Lee, 2014). Some have noted that in the wake of the 2006 *Garcetti* case, faculty members’ speech at public universities

may be restrained, if the speech is a part of their “official duties,” but the Supreme Court has not yet ruled specifically on that point of law (*Garcetti*, 2006; Hutchens, 2009; Kaplin & Lee, 2014; O’Neil, 2008; Spurgeon, 2007; White, 2010). Private institutions, however, may restrain faculty members’ First Amendment rights since they are not governmental actors and absent state action, the Constitution does not apply. To the extent that professors at private institutions do possess constitutional rights, these are provided voluntarily by the institution through employment contracts and are protected under contract law (Kaplin & Lee, 2014).

The third category focuses on the freedom of the faculty as *a corporate body*, guaranteeing that the faculty members collectively control the conditions of their own employment, decide who shall teach and what shall be taught, and set their own criteria for academic decisions without outside interference (Schrecker, 1983). Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter cited The Four Freedoms of the University—to determine for itself on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study—that epitomize this category of faculty freedom (*Sweezy*, 1957, p. 263). Thus, faculty academic freedom exists in three related, but not identical, categories—classical, constitutional, and collective (Schrecker, 1983). The first two relate to the individual freedoms of the professor; the third to the corporate freedom of faculty (Schrecker, 1983).

Within these categories of faculty academic freedom, different issues involve professors’ freedom, and some even challenge or limit their freedom. In the classical category emphasizing teaching, research, and publication, some examples of the challenging issues have included: profanity and other classroom speech, classroom religious speech, other classroom behaviors, grading, pedagogy, course evaluations, determination of course content, teaching assignments, artistic and literary expression, sexual harassment, compelled disclosure, release of research data,

research funding, ideological restrictions on research, and use of university technology (Alexander & Alexander, 2011; Kaplin & Lee, 2014; Poch, 1993). In the constitutional category concerned with freedom to speak as citizens, some of the issues involve professors' speech as private individuals, whether such speech involves a matter of public concern, and whether they do so responsibly as members of a learned profession (AAUP, 1940/2015b; Kaplin & Lee, 2014; *Pickering*, 1968; Van Alstyne, 1993). Finally, in the collective category related to the corporate freedom of faculty members to make their own decisions, the issues of concern echo the Four Freedoms of the University mentioned previously (*Sweezy*, 1957). Other examples include issues of tenure and promotion, other academic matters, shared governance, intramural speech on university policy matters, and freedom of association (Alexander & Alexander, 2011; Kaplin & Lee, 2014).

Institutional Contexts for Faculty Academic Freedom

Faculty members perform their duties and perceive academic freedom in various contexts that can be categorized by institutional type. American higher education has been noted for its institutional diversity—a result of early Supreme Court precedent, the disestablishment of state churches, intense denominational competition, and a deeply engrained suspicion of central government that forestalled any efforts to create a national educational authority to oversee higher education or found a national university (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). When categorizing institutions, one distinction is institutional control; another is institutional mission.

Institutional control or governance structure distinguishes institutions from one another. Public institutions are established, partially funded, and owned by federal, state, or local governments that determine, through legislation, the governance of the institution (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Lovell, 2002). Private institutions are established by nonprofit corporations

chartered under state law; receive financial support from individuals, religious denominations, corporations, or philanthropic foundations; and are owned by boards of trustees that govern the institution (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Finnegan, 2002). For-profit institutions are private corporations that rely almost entirely on tuition and fees from students to generate revenues in excess of expenses, and are owned by the investors and shareholders, who benefit from the institution's profit through increased stock values and dividend payments (Coleman & Vedder, 2010; Pusser & Haarlow, 2002).

Colleges and universities may also be categorized according to institutional mission. Public colleges or universities established by the state are prohibited from establishing institutions with religious missions (U.S. Const. amend. I). However, a significant number of private institutions pursue a religious mission, while other private institutions remain non-religious or secular. This religious-secular dichotomy is a second distinguishing category in American higher education (Finnegan, 2002; Kaplin & Lee, 2014; Riley, 2005). The most recent available data showed that in the United States there were 1,725 public, degree-granting institutions; 853 private, secular institutions; and 916 private, religious institutions (USDOE, 2013). This dissertation focused on nonprofit, degree-granting, private, religious institutions.

Christian Colleges and Universities

There is no easy answer to the question, "What is a Christian college or university?" (Schuman, 2010). One way to define the term is by determining what it is not. A Christian institution is not a Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, or a non-religious public or private one. Similarly, bible colleges or theological seminaries, which only offer education in a few subjects or train clergy, are not considered Christian colleges or universities (Holmes, 1987; Schuman, 2010). Schools that were once Christian and recognize that heritage—but no longer pursue a Christian

education as the core of their mission—also remain outside the definition of Christian colleges and universities (Schuman, 2010).

Key Characteristics of Christian Colleges and Universities

One way to define and identify a Christian college or university is by observing those characteristics that make the institution Christian. Basically, a Christian college or university is an institution of higher learning that maintains an active Christian ethos as its educational mission, which is classically liberal and offers a broad variety of courses and majors (Schuman, 2010). Furthermore, this Christian ethos pervades the entire institution (Litfin, 2004), having direct influence on “institutional identity, mission, governance, administration, criteria for faculty hiring, curricula, student life, campus ministries, policies, operations, and procedures” (O’Connell, 2002, pp. 64). Moreover, this Christian ethos is a public one that articulates a Christian vision of reality, seeks to be expressed in spiritual, moral, and ethical behavior, and has committed persons willing to live out both their Christian faith and the customs and traditions specific to the institution (Benne, 2001). Such institutions often require a personal profession of faith, values, and behavior from students, staff, and faculty (Schuman, 2010). In addition, the curricular and extra-curricular activities have a distinctly Christian nature and regular attendance at worship services may be a requirement for members of the community (Schuman, 2010). Christian colleges and universities synthesize three qualities: a holistic, liberal education; both the transmission and discovery of knowledge, and the worship and theological study of God at the center of the institution (Ream & Glanzer, 2013). In the United States, Roman Catholic colleges or universities, for example, are one group of Christian institutions; another group includes colleges and universities with an evangelical, Protestant perspective (Benne, 2001; Ream & Glanzer, 2007; Schuman, 2010).

Integration of Faith and Learning

Within Christian higher education, the integration of faith and learning is a much-discussed topic (Carpenter & Shipps, 1987; Guinness, 1994; Harris, 2004; Hasker, 1992; Holmes, 1987; Jacobsen, Jacobsen, & Sawatsky, 2004; Kulaga & Vincent, 2009; Marsden, 1997; Morton, 2004; Newman, 1852/1999; Noll, 1994, 2002, 2011; Pelikan, 1992; Peterson, 2001; Smith, 2013; Sterk, 2001; Ream & Glanzer, 2007, 2013; Van Zanten, 2012; Wells, 1996; Wolfe, 2000, 2002). In addition to identifying an institution as Christian, understanding how faculty members view the relationship of faith and learning may shed light on how they view academic freedom: where faith and learning are completely separate, academic freedom remains unchallenged by religion. However, the opposite may be true where faith and learning are completely integrated.

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VIII
Faith and Learning are Separate and Independent	Limited Integration: Integrated in Campus Environment but Not Curricula	Limited Integration Individual and Private but Not Curricular	Limited Integration: Individual and Public but Not Curricular	Limited Integration: The Place of Faith in the Curriculum is Very Limited	The Place of Faith in the Curriculum: Virtually Unlimited because it is Ethics	Complete Integration
Separation ←						→ Integration
<p><i>Figure 1.</i> Patterns of how faculty understand the relationship of faith and learning (Ream, Beaty, & Lyon, 2004)</p>						

Faculty members of Christian institutions have possessed varying attitudes about the integration of faith and learning, which can be arrayed in eight patterns along a continuum moving from completely separated to fully integrated (Ream, Beaty, & Lyon, 2004). Figure 1 lists these eight patterns in order.

At one end of the continuum, the first pattern suggests that faith and learning are separate and independent, and that there is, or should be, no relationship between them—especially since the two domains are incompatible, conflict with one another, or are properly confined to distinct spheres. In the second pattern, faith and learning may be integrated in the campus environment, but not in the curricula. This places the integration of faith and learning within the extracurricular activities of university citizens, primarily students. For the third pattern, the place for integration of faith and learning is perceived to be private and individual, for both faculty and students, but not in the curricula. Faith, like other human expressions, is a particular and subjective matter expressed by those in the university community; still, in this pattern, it has no role in curricular activities. In the fourth pattern, faith is viewed as individual and public, but not curricular. Here faith is about living an exemplary Christian life toward colleagues and students (Ream et al., 2004).

Patterns five to eight reflect a shift toward a greater integration of faith and learning (Ream et al., 2004). In the fifth pattern, faith has a very limited place in the curriculum—only a few courses address faith and there is no role for faith in the remainder. The sixth pattern provides that while faith has a place in the curriculum, it is limited to courses in departments such as philosophy, religion, or theology. The seventh pattern holds that faith has a broad application in the curriculum since most subjects address moral or ethical questions. Finally, the eighth pattern allows for the complete integration of faith and learning in the entire sphere of the university community—individual and corporate, curricular and extra-curricular, public and private. In this pattern, separation between faith and learning is artificial. Furthermore, at a Christian university faith and learning are inextricably linked and cannot be relegated to

mutually exclusive spheres (Ream et al., 2004). Thus, even at various Christian institutions, faculty members hold different patterns of belief towards the integration of faith and learning.

Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Another way to define and identify a Christian college or university is by observing the associations that institutions join. The Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) is an association of Christian institutions of higher education in North America that exemplify the term Christian college and university. As Christian institutions offering regionally accredited, comprehensive curricula in the arts and sciences, most member institutions of the CCCU subscribe to Christ-centered statements of faith outlining their doctrinal commitments (CCCU, 2014a, 2014b). These institutions require full-time faculty and administrators to affirm faith in Jesus Christ as a matter of internal policy, which is a condition of membership in the CCCU (CCCU, 2014b). The statements of faith at CCCU institutions affirm doctrines important to evangelical, Protestant Christians. Such doctrines include, for example, the existence of God in three Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit); the deity of Jesus Christ as God's Son; the inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible as God's Word; God's creation of the universe; the sinfulness of man; salvation by faith in the physical death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the desirability of actively seeking to bring others to Christianity (Schuman, 2010; cf. Asbury University, 2014; Biola University, 2014; Bryan College, 2014b; Gordon College, 2014; Wheaton College, 2014). As a matter of institutional integrity, CCCU institutions hold such doctrines and faith statements sacrosanct and inviolable.

Academic Freedom at Christian Colleges and Universities

As previously stated, faculty members at Christian colleges and universities must often affirm the institution's official statement of faith (Benne, 2001; Litfin, 2004; Ream & Glanzer, 2007; Wagner, 2006). As a result, whether and to what extent faculty at Christian institutions have academic freedom remains disputed. On the one hand, secular critics of Christian institutions, including the AAUP (1915/2015a), have argued disparagingly that, if it exists at all, academic freedom is severely restricted at religious institutions (Conn, P., 2014; MacIver, 1955; Wagner, 2006)—especially Christian ones that have adopted an official statement of faith (Matchlup, 1969; Wagner, 2006; Wolfe, 2000, 2002). On the other hand, advocates of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities have retorted that faculty members in such institutions do have academic freedom with a framework of faith (Cavanaugh, 2004; Diekema, 2000; Holmes, 1987; Litfin, 2004; Marsden, 1994, 1997; Ream & Glanzer, 2007, 2013; Wolterstorff, 2004).

Secular Critics of Academic Freedom at Christian Colleges and Universities

The AAUP, from its earliest days, contended that academic freedom applied differently at Christian institutions, which do not “accept the principles of freedom of inquiry, of opinion and of teaching; and their purpose is not to advance knowledge by the unrestricted research and unfettered discussion of impartial investigations” (AAUP, 1915/2015a, p. 5). Such institutions “should not be permitted to sail under false colors,” since genuine “boldness and thoroughness of inquiry, and freedom of speech are scarcely reconcilable with the prescribed inculcating of a particular opinion upon a controverted question” (AAUP, 1915/2015a, p. 5). Even the later *1940 Statement* acknowledged the “limitations” that religious institutions place on their faculty—the only reference to religion in the entire document (AAUP, 1940/2015b). In addition to the

AAUP, secular scholars have criticized the idea that academic freedom exists at Christian institutions, with some conflating political conservatism with religion and both being equally repressive (Marsden, 1994). Many such secular critics view religion as unscientific and non-empirical and therefore unworthy of any consideration (Marsden, 1997) and even “inimical to the integrity of the scholar” (MacIver, 1955, p. 135). For example, one scholar disparaged any college or university that adopts an official religious position, declaring:

Those who advocate that the university should take a definitely religious stand are in their proselyting zeal committing themselves to a total perversion of the function of the university. They would revert to the intellectual confusion of earlier times, when a superimposed prior “truth” retarded the advance of knowledge and thus tended to imprison the inquiring mind. To make the university a center for the propagation of any creed, of any system of values that divides group from group, is to destroy the special quality and unique mission of the university as a center for the free pursuit of knowledge wherever it may lead.” (MacIver, 1955, p. 138)

Others have expressed similar sentiments (Conn, P., 2014; Conn, S., 2014; Fish, 1996; Hofstadter, 1996; Metzger, 1961; Matchlup, 1969; Thomson & Finkin, 1993; Wagner, 2006; Wolfe, 2000, 2002). Some even single out religion as a “threat” to academic freedom (Bowen, Schwartz, & Camp, 2014; MacIver, 1955; Nelson, 2010). Still others have opined that Christian colleges and universities employ “coercion” of faculty members so that they can fulfill their institutional mission, as if trustees and administrators at these institutions are continually “policing a faculty for creedal conformity” (Thomson & Finkin, 1993, p. 422). Clearly there are those who have contested the idea that academic freedom exists at Christian institutions.

Advocates of Academic Freedom in a Framework of Faith

In response, Christian scholars have rejoined that academic freedom does exist at Christian colleges and universities. First, these institutions employ the Voluntary Principle, that is, they employ administrators and faculty “whose personal convictions, developed of their own volition, align them with the college’s publicly stated commitments” (Litfin, 2004, p. 222; cf. Diekema, 2000; Marsden, 1994). The Voluntary Principle rests on the fundamental assumption that an administrator’s or faculty member’s personal commitment to faith developed prior to employment at a Christian institution (Litfin, 2004). A prevalent saying among scholars at Christian institutions is the Augustinian maxim, *credo ut intelligam*—I believe so that I may understand (Marsden, 1997). The Voluntary Principle allows Christian institutions to maintain their core identity and pursue their unique mission (Gordon, 2003; Litfin, 2004; McConnell, 1993), which would be lost otherwise. Second, Christian institutions view academic freedom communally, not individually; that is, they emphasize the academic freedom of the institution first—which allows the institution the freedom to pursue its mission—and that of the individual professor second, an emphasis that is reversed in secular institutions (Cavanaugh, 2004; Jeffrey, 2007; Ream & Glanzer, 2007). Such a communal view echoes the notion that academic freedom is the freedom of the university (*Sweezy*, 1957) or of the faculty corporately (Schrecker, 1983).

Third, while all professors approach scholarship from within some framework or paradigm, faculty at Christian colleges and universities pursue scholarship from within a framework of faith (Cavanaugh, 2004; Diekema, 2004; Marsden, 1994, 1997; Ream & Glanzer, 2007; Wolterstorff, 2004). Even scientists—who claim to be most “objective,” especially in their research—operate from within a framework (Kuhn, 1970; Polanyi, 2003). Such paradigms do not limit the professor’s scholarship; rather they help the scholar establish a research agenda

by limiting the possibilities for research to those areas likely to be most beneficial (Cavanaugh, 2004). For faculty members of Christian colleges and universities, that framework consists of the core religious beliefs held by evangelical, Protestant Christians mentioned previously (Diekema, 2004). This framework is no more exclusive than any other framework, whether based on religious or other views (Marsden, 1997). Finally, most professors at Christian institutions have supposed they have academic freedom and many have believed they have greater freedom than their colleagues at secular institutions (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012). A recent survey found that more than 86% of faculty at Christian institutions agreed that “I possess academic freedom at my college or university” (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012, p. 376). In addition, 54% also agreed, “professors at Christian institutions have more freedom to discuss issues and ask questions than do professors at secular institutions” (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012, p. 376).

Despite contrary assertions, Christian scholars have argued that faculty members at Christian institutions possess academic freedom: by adhering to the Voluntary Principle; by prioritizing communal freedom first and individual freedom second; by administering academic freedom within a framework of faith; and by providing evidence from the faculty members themselves. Establishing Christian academic freedom requires that scholars working in such an environment resolve a dilemma their secular colleagues need not resolve:

Christian institutions of higher education [and Christian scholars] are poised between the demands of free academic inquiry and of committed theological loyalty. Without the first, it is hard to see the Christian colleges preserving intellectual viability, but without the second they will not retain their Christian character. (Noll, 2006, pp. 35-36)

Thus, the idea of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities has remained a challenging and contested concept—one worthy of further investigation.

Statement of the Problem

To summarize, academic freedom is a contemporary term for an old idea (Hofstadter, 1996), which describes the rights and responsibilities of college and university professors (AAUP, 1915/2015a, 1940/2015b; Finkin & Post, 2009; GCUP, 2005; Kaplin & Lee, 2014; Metzger, 1988, 1993a, 1993b, Poch, 1993; White, 2010). While academic freedom, as defined by the AAUP (1940/2015b), is a professional norm that can be accorded to all faculty members (AAUP, 1915/2015a, 1940/2015b; Finkin & Post, 2009; Kaplin & Lee, 2014; Metzger, 1993b), they work at very different types of institutions in higher education (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Finnegan, 2002; Lovell, 2002; Riley, 2005; USDOE, 2013). Each of these institutions applies academic freedom according to state or federal law or to local custom and tradition (Kaplin & Lee, 2014). Christian colleges and universities are one type of institution in the United States (Benne, 2001; CCCU, 2014a; Holmes, 1987; Ream & Glanzer, 2007, 2013; Schuman, 2010). Many Christian institutions often require faculty members to assent to a statement of faith (Benne, 2001; Diekema, 2000; Litfin, 2004; Ream & Glanzer, 2007; Wagner, 2006), which some consider a limitation on academic freedom (Bowen, Schwartz, & Camp, 2014; Conn, P., 2014; Conn, S., 2014; Fish, 1996; Hofstadter, 1996; MacIver, 1955; Metzger, 1961; Matchlup, 1969; Nelson, 2010; Thomson & Finkin, 1993; Wagner, 2006; Wolfe, 2000, 2002). However, Christian scholars dispute that allegation (Cavanaugh, 2004; Diekema, 2000; Holmes, 1987; Litfin, 2004; Marsden, 1994, 1997; Ream & Glanzer, 2007, 2013; Wolterstorff, 2004). While in the literature there has been much written about academic freedom generally—and some written about academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities, specifically—little is known empirically about the faculty perception of academic freedom at these institutions, especially how faculty members at Christian institutions define academic freedom and perceive how the

concept works within their context. Therefore, examining the faculty experience of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities would be an important study to perform.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze how faculty members at Christian colleges and university perceive academic freedom. Three conceptual frameworks informed this study. The first framework addressed academic freedom: it defined the concept and explained its constructs—teaching, research and publication, and extramural speech (AAUP, 1940/2015b; Finkin & Post, 2009). The second framework described how some in Christian higher education construct academic freedom: through institutional autonomy, Christian worldview established through official statements of faith, the Voluntary Principle, and individual freedom within a framework of faith (Diekema, 2000; Litfin, 2004). The third framework described the patterns of faculty perceptions regarding the integration of faith and learning at Christian institutions. This framework included eight patterns of thought arrayed along a continuum ranging from the view that faith and learning should be completely separate at one end to the view that faith and learning should be completely integrated at the other (Ream, Beaty, & Lyon, 2004). Since this study sought to understand how academic freedom synthesizes with Christian faith, the eighth pattern describing the complete integration of faith and learning informed my study most.

To understand faculty perceptions of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities, I invited faculty members currently working at CCCU institutions to participate in the study. The CCCU is an association of Christian institutions of higher education that are all fully-accredited, comprehensive colleges and universities that offer curricula in the arts & sciences (CCCU, 2014a). All CCCU institutions require their faculty members to profess Christian faith and most CCCU institutions have an official statement of faith (CCCU, 2014a,

2014b). Only institutions that require faculty to affirm an official statement of faith were included in the study. All institutions in the study granted Bachelor's, Master's or doctoral degrees. All participants were full-time faculty.

I employed the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954) for my study. Researchers can use Critical Incident Technique (CIT) as an exploratory, investigative tool from within a qualitative paradigm (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005; Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio, & Amundson, 2009; Chell, 1998; Hughes, 2007, 2012; Wolsey, 1986). CIT has been defined as:

A qualitative interview procedure, which facilitates the investigation of significant occurrences (events, incidents, processes or issues) identified by the respondent, the way they are managed, and the outcomes in terms of perceived effects. The objective is to gain an understanding of the incident from the perspective of the individual, taking into account cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements. (Chell, 1998, p. 56)

Use of CIT is appropriate when the researcher wants to learn more about inadequately understood events, incidents, factors, or psychological constructs that significantly affect the performance of some activity or the experience of some event or situation (Butterfield et al., 2009).

CIT offers the researcher a flexible set of principles for data collection that can be modified according to the research problem (Butterfield et al., 2005; Chell, 1998; Flanagan, 1954; Hughes, 2007, 2012; Woolsey, 1986). The flexibility of CIT is evident in that the focus of a CIT study “can range from studying effective and ineffective ways of doing something, to looking at helping or hindering factors, collecting functional or behavioral descriptions of events or problems, examining successes and failures, or determining characteristics that are critical to

important aspects of an activity or event” (Butterfield et al., 2005, p. 476). Although commonly applied in the fields of organizational and industrial psychology (Butterfield et al., 2009), the CIT has also been employed in a diverse set of other disciplines: business, communications, counseling, management, marketing, medicine, nursing, organizational learning, performance appraisal, psychology, social work, and education and teaching (Butterfield et al., 2005; Chell, 1998).

Through CIT interviews, full-time, faculty members provided their definition of academic freedom and described critical incidents illustrating situations in their experience when they encountered issues related to academic freedom in teaching, research and publication, and extramural speech. Documents and other social artifacts also provided additional contextual data. All data were analyzed using qualitative methods to develop categories and themes describing the faculty perception of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided my study:

1. How do faculty members at Christian colleges and universities *define* academic freedom?
2. How do faculty members at Christian colleges and universities *describe* experiences where they encountered issues of academic freedom in the areas of teaching, research and publication, and extramural speech beyond the campus setting?
3. How do faculty members at Christian colleges and universities *navigate* the interaction between academic freedom and institutional religious doctrines (as found in official statements of faith)?

Significance of the Study

My study of faculty academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities held significance for practice, policy, research, and theory. First, regarding practice, this study was significant for different campus constituencies. For prospective faculty members considering employment in Christian higher education, the study helped identify the boundaries within which Christian scholars pursue teaching and research and publication. The study focused on the interaction between notions of academic freedom and institutional doctrinal commitments found in official statements of faith. Thus, the study surfaced the challenges and opportunities for faculty in this unique context in higher education.

The study also held significance for current faculty members pursuing careers at Christian colleges and universities. Through this study, they gained an understanding of how academic freedom actually operates in the context of Christian academe. One benefit of this understanding might be a better alignment between a faculty member's professional interests in teaching or research and the institution's interest in promoting a Christian educational mission.

Additionally, the study was significant for faculty in secular institutions outside of Christian higher education. For these colleagues, the study provided data about how academic freedom works in this context. Such information enhances their understanding and appreciation of the diversity within and among their colleagues in American higher education.

Second, this study was significant for future policy. The study provided data concerning the impact of institutional doctrinal commitments on faculty teaching and research. With this information, provosts might adopt hiring procedures that emphasize the institution's doctrinal commitments before individual faculty members are hired. Alternatively, provosts might revise

promotion and tenure policies in light of the findings of this study—policies that both support the institution’s mission and promote scholarship within a framework of faith.

Similarly, the study provided trustees data concerning the nature of faculty work at Christian institutions. With a greater understanding of how academic freedom works within Christian institutions, trustees might adopt strategic plans that emphasize scholarship within a framework of Christian faith—and provide resources that reward faculty for their efforts.

Third, this study had significance for future research. While I focused on faculty academic freedom across three types of Christian colleges and universities—Bachelor’s, Master’s, and doctoral—one future research study might focus on only one institutional type—research institutions, for example. Such a study would provide greater depth to the understanding of academic freedom at those types of Christian institutions.

Also, a research study of *student* academic freedom at Christian institutions might be performed. My research focused on the *faculty* experience of academic freedom. While both studies pertain to academic freedom, one focused on students would add another dimension to the understanding of the practice of academic freedom at Christian institutions.

Other studies might explore how academic freedom applies in other religious settings. I focused on academic freedom at evangelical, Protestant colleges and universities. Other research might examine academic freedom at Roman Catholic, Jewish, or other religious institutions. Such a study would expand the understanding of academic freedom at religious institutions.

Finally, this study was significant in terms of future theory. To date, academic freedom theory has focused on primarily secular institutions. This study offered insight into academic freedom at religious institutions; specifically, how Christian scholars have defined academic freedom and how academic freedom works within this context. These findings might be used to

expand and elaborate the current theory of academic freedom into a more comprehensive one that encompasses both secular and religious academic freedom.

Organization of the Study

I organized my dissertation into several chapters. Chapter 1 provided an introduction: I defined academic freedom, states the problem, explained the purpose of the study, listed the research questions, and outlined the study's significance. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature relevant to my study: literature related to academic freedom, generally, and Christian academic freedom, specifically. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology, sampling techniques, and procedures used to collect and analyze the data that I employed to conduct the study. Chapter 4 presents the key findings of my study. Finally, in Chapter 5 I discuss those findings in relation to the literature, suggest implications for future practice, research, and policy, and draw conclusions.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

The literature on academic freedom relevant to this dissertation may be arrayed in five groups. The first three groups address academic freedom generally and without specific reference to Christian institutions. These groups include literature outlining the historical development of academic freedom, literature about the different schools of thought for academic freedom, and literature based on research studies of academic freedom at secular institutions. The last two groups encompass literature concerned with academic freedom at Christian institutions. One group presents arguments for academic freedom from a Christian perspective; the other includes research studies examining academic freedom at Christian institutions. The research on academic freedom at Christian institutions is focused on two topics, institutional policies and faculty perspectives. I review each group of literature for this chapter. I conclude by summarizing the literature and showing how my study fills a gap in the literature revealed through this review. Thus, reviewing this literature accomplishes two tasks: it provides the context for the research presented in this dissertation, and it differentiates this study from others.

Historical Development

The history of academic freedom and its development is a long and storied one. Although academic freedom is a modern term, the notion is an old one, originating when professors at the medieval universities secured certain rights from popes and princes (Haskins, 1957; Hofstadter, 1996; Kibre, 1962; Norton, 1971; Rashdall, 1936). During the Reformation, the existing medieval framework of intellectual freedom and authority shattered (Hofstadter, 1996; MacCulloch, 2004). While religious belief remained the guardian of knowledge, after the Reformation universities operated under the authority of various and sundry churches and principalities rather than under one Church and state (Hofstadter, 1996). In the Enlightenment,

as colleges were founded in colonial America, these institutions retained the confessional model inherited from their paternal Protestant English universities, Oxford and Cambridge, even while organizational authority became vested in non-academic, lay trustees and the presidents they hired, and not in the faculty (Hofstadter, 1996). After the Revolutionary War, small colleges proliferated along denominational lines, diluting scarce resources and forestalling the development of higher education and of academic freedom (Hofstadter, 1996).

Following the Civil War, the “old regime” of denominational colleges became eclipsed as some colleges loosened or severed their denominational ties, some colleges grew to be universities, and new universities were founded (Metzger, 1961). At the same time, American college presidents and professors selectively synthesized aspects of German ideas such as *Lernfreiheit* and *Lehrfreiheit* and specialized academic research into the existing American model (Metzger, 1961). Educational reforms took hold and empirical science gained ascendance over religious revelation as the governing educational authority in these new universities (Metzger, 1961). Governance and collegiate philanthropy also changed during this era. While final authority remained in the hands of non-academic boards of trustees, a general change occurred in the types of trustees sought for collegiate boards. Attention shifted from clergymen and religion to businessmen—who were not reticent to exert their influence and power as trustees and donors—and their business interests, sometimes with severe effects for professors whose economic or political ideas conflicted with those of the trustee (Cain, 2012; Metzger, 1961; Veblen, 1918/2007).

In the early 20th Century, due in part to conflicts between professors and trustees and administrators, faculty members from several institutions formed a new association—the American Association of University Professors (AAUP)—and began to codify academic

freedom as a professional concept while starting to investigate cases of its alleged violation by university officials (Cain, 2012; Metzger, 1961). Though their early statements about academic freedom were not widely accepted at first, eventually the *1940 Statement of Principles* was endorsed by more than 200 organizations (Cain, 2012). Despite gaining wide acceptance over time, the promulgation of the *1940 Statement* did not end all disputes about academic freedom, which continued throughout the 20th Century and into the 21st (Bowen, Schwartz, & Camp, 2014; Byrne, 2004; Heins, 2013; Nelson, 2010; Schrecker, 1983, 1986, 2010; Spurgeon, 2007; Van Alstyne, 1993; White, 2010). Some disputes involved legal claims to First Amendment free speech rights of public employees, and academic freedom began to be adjudicated in the courts, with some landmark cases being decided by the Supreme Court of the United States (*Garcetti*, 2006; *Keyishian*, 1967; *Pickering*, 1968; *Sweezy*, 1957; Van Alstyne, 1993). Thus, despite historic events that allowed the growth, development, maturation, and its widespread acceptance as a professional norm and an established prerogative of professors, the concept of academic freedom itself remains fiercely contested.

Five Schools of Thought

The next group of literature reflects different ideas of academic freedom advocated by scholars. Legal scholar Stanley Fish (2014) has identified five schools of thought promulgated by academic freedom scholars. These schools fall between two opposing views of freedom: in one, freedom is “peculiar to the academic profession and limited to the performance of its core duties”; in the other, freedom is “a general, overriding, and ever-expanding value,” and the university is just one setting where it is exercised (Fish, 2014, p. 6). Thus, the five schools of thought can be arrayed along a continuum between these two poles extending from right to left, from professionalism at one end to revolution at the other, from the most conservative view to

the most radical, from an emphasis on academic to an emphasis on freedom (Fish, 2014). Figure 2 illustrates these schools of thought. Each of these schools defines the nature and purpose of academic freedom differently.

Academic freedom as revolution	Academic freedom as critique	Academic exceptionalism	For the common good	It's just a job
Freedom	<i>Emphasis</i>			Academic
Expanding	<i>Purpose</i>			Limited
Political	<i>Professor's role</i>			Professional
Left	<i>Politics of the academy</i>			Right

Figure 2. Five schools of Academic Freedom (adapted from Fish, 2014).

At the right pole stands *The "It's just a job" school* (Fish, 2014). In this school, academic freedom protects only “the distinctive task—the advancement of knowledge—” that professors legitimately perform as paid and trained professionals, and in which they have professional competence, and to which they have been assigned by contract or course catalogue (Fish, 2014, p. 10). Fish (2014), the self-proclaimed sole member of the “*It's just a job*” school, distinguished academic work from the practice of politics. He argued that from the nature of academic work an imperative arises, which he terms “academicizing” (Fish 2014, p. 31). This imperative means discussing classroom topics in an “academic context where inquiries into its structure, history, significance and value are conducted by means of the traditional methods (textual, archival, statistical, experiment) of humanities, social science, and physical science scholarship” (p. 31). Thus, in this version of academic freedom, a topic of discussion is the “object of analysis rather than the vehicle of an agenda” (Fish, p. 32).

Moving to the left, the next school is *The “For the common good”* school. This school shares many similarities with the first, especially the understanding of the academic task as distinctive. However, this school justifies academic freedom by connecting it to democracy, to the refinement of public opinions, to solving society’s problems. Democracy, the argument goes, can only flourish if citizens possess the expertise that will enable them to make wise decisions (Fish, 2014). This is “democratic competence” or “the cognitive empowerment of persons within public discourse, which in part depends on their access to disciplinary knowledge” (Post, 2012, p. 34). According to this school, professors are “the priests of our democracy” whose “special task” is “to foster those habits of open-mindedness and critical inquiry which alone make for responsible citizens, who in turn make possible enlightened and effective public opinion” (*Wieman v. Updegraph*, 1952, p. 196). Scholars should have academic freedom because democracy can only function if the knowledge they produce is available to the citizenry (Fish, 2014). Thus, this school subordinates academe’s professional values to the “higher” values of democracy, justice, freedom, or the common good.

Continuing left, the third school is *The “Academic exceptionalism or uncommon beings”* school, which is a logical extension of the second. Here, proponents argue that since they have an uncommon task—extending knowledge and countering common public opinion—they are themselves uncommon, intellectually and morally, and not bound by the same laws and regulation that apply to ordinary citizens (Fish, 2014). Since they are exceptional, they possess a type of freedom different than ordinary citizens do—academic freedom. Proponents of this school amplify Justice Felix Frankfurter’s notion that professors are “priests of our democracy” (*Wieman v. Updegraph*, 1952, p. 196). Further evidence may be found in federal court cases where state university professors have argued that even though they are employed by the state

they should not be considered “public employees” in the same way other state employees are (Fish, 2014). In one case, some professors argued that a state law, “even if the Act is valid as to the majority of state employees, it violates the First Amendment academic freedom rights of professors...and thus is invalid as to them” (*Urofsky v. Gilmore*, 2000, p. 409). One commentator argued the point differently, but with the same emphasis on academic exceptionalism: “The professoriate...whatever its legal status...should not be thought of in terms of an employment relationship *at all*” (Finkin, 1988, p. 1339).

Still further left sits *The “Academic freedom as critique”* school. In this fourth school, the professor’s responsibility is to offer dissent and critique everything— “to see through the conventional wisdom and expose its contradictions” (Fish, 2014, p. 12). This requires academic freedom because it “protects those whose thinking challenges orthodoxy” (Scott, 1996, p. 163). Even accepted scholarly practices that makeup professional norms are open to critical scrutiny: “as long as voices of dissent are only admissible if they confirm to accepted professional norms, then dissent itself is limited so that it cannot take aim at those norms that are already accepted [and] new fields or disciplinary paradigms” will not be discovered (Butler, 2006, p. 114). In this way, academic freedom not only protects dissent, but also propels political engagement and social progress, which, as liberals argue, is the sole possession of the political left, since conservative thought protects the status quo and is reactionary (Fish, 2014). With the lines blurred between the academic profession and political activism, academic freedom is almost boundless (Fish, 2014).

Finally, at the extreme left on the continuum, there is the fifth school, *The “Academic freedom as revolution”* one. Here, academic freedom is radical, individual, and unlimited, and professors act as iconoclasts (Fish, 2014). This allows professors to advance social justice

through education defined as political action, even breaking free from the “constraints” of the “corrupt” university and academy (Fish, 2014). Teaching includes fighting for

“an inclusive and radical democracy by recognizing that education in the broadest sense is not just about understanding, ...but also about providing the conditions for assuming the responsibilities we have as citizens to expose human misery and to eliminate the conditions that produce it” (Giroux, 2008, p. 128).

Under the protection of academic freedom, professors remain entirely free to design their own curriculum and coursework (Freeston, 2009). Dennis Rancourt exemplifies this approach (Fish, 2014). Having turned an advertised course on environmental physics into a seminar on revolutionary activity (Fish, 2014), Rancourt is known for the practice of “academic squatting,” a term that describes what happens when a professor radically transforms a given teaching assignment into a course on political activism (Rancourt, 2007). In this school, academic freedom has no bounds, except those adopted by the individual professor (Fish, 2014). Thus, five schools of thought explicate academic freedom and the shift of controlling concepts—from academic to freedom, from professional to political—is complete. The historical and conceptual literature about academic freedom provides a great deal of context. However, it does not encompass empirical literature that includes research studies on academic freedom at secular institutions, the subject I address in the next section.

Research on Academic Freedom at Secular Institutions

The third group of literature includes general, empirical research studies on academic freedom at secular institutions. It can be arranged in two groups: qualitative studies, and quantitative ones. The qualitative research provided findings related to how faculty members learn about and define academic freedom at a public university (Goodell, 2005); what meanings

adjunct faculty members participating in an electronic mailing list attach to academic freedom (Martindill, 2008); and how faculty of color experience academic freedom (Locher, 2013).

In the research examining how public university faculty members learn about and define academic freedom, a key finding was that faculty members understand academic freedom to include freedom of teaching and research, but do not have a common understanding of the responsibilities attached to it or what its limitations (if any) are (Goodell, 2005). There was greater agreement concerning how faculty members learned about academic freedom: they learned through informal discussions with colleagues or observing others whose teaching or research were called into question and not through institutional policies or employment orientations (Goodell, 2005).

When examining the postings by adjunct faculty members to an electronic mailing list, a key finding emerged (Martindill, 2008). Adjunct faculty members sought employment constructs that support academic freedom. These included continuous or permanent appointment, negotiable employment contracts, authorization to develop course materials, an open teaching evaluation process, and for women faculty, access to maternity leave. When these are secured, then adjunct faculty members will perceive they have academic freedom (Martindill, 2008).

For faculty of color at public institutions, academic freedom played an important role in supporting their teaching, research and service (Locher, 2013). However, they also perceived that their social identities as persons of color, ethnically or racially, could affect the efficacy of their academic freedom. Some faculty members of color reported that they did not feel fully protected by academic freedom until they attained tenure. Others reported self-censorship as a result of others' biased attitudes toward their academic discipline or research. Nevertheless,

faculty of color believed that academic freedom supported their agency to promote diversity and pursue social justice (Locher, 2013).

The quantitative research on academic freedom at secular institutions included studies with disparate purposes and institution types. One sought to understand differences in the understanding of faculty and administrators at a community college (Blanton, 2005); another proposed to determine if tenure continues to foster honest judgment and independent criticism at top-ranked research and liberal arts institutions (Ceci, Williams, & Mueller-Johnson, 2006); a third investigated whether tenure status affects satisfaction with academic freedom at a public university (Mahamane, 2011); and one more examined perspectives of academic freedom at a national university in the Persian Gulf (Romanowski & Nasser, 2010).

The findings of these studies were as varied as their purposes. For example, faculty members at a university in the Persian Gulf reported that academic freedom was affirmed by their university, that they felt positive about publishing or discussing ideas with others, and that they had autonomy in the selection of course materials and readings, but that their academic freedom was tempered by the culture and tradition of the local region (Romanowski & Nasser, 2010). However, others revealed that while academic freedom was important to them, they were not certain they understood the concept (Blanton, 2005). Additionally, faculty members reported being moderately satisfied with their academic freedom and that there were no differences between tenured and non-tenured faculty in this regard (Mahamane, 2011). However, all faculty members in one study suggested that others were more likely to exercise academic freedom than they themselves were and that promotion to full professor, rather than the granting of tenure, was a better predictor of who is more likely to exercise academic freedom (Ceci et al., 2006).

Finally, in a study of faculty at private baccalaureate colleges that mixed faculty members from secular and religious institutions, a researcher found several significant predictors of faculty satisfaction with academic freedom (Barger, 2010). Positive predictors of faculty satisfaction included being a faculty of color, belief that the administration supports academic freedom, clear protections in the faculty manual, belief that faculty can change academic freedom policies, support from the college administration, changes made to protect academic freedom, and protections in teaching, publishing, and extramural speech. Negative predictors included violations of academic freedom at a past institution, violation of academic freedom at the current institution, and academic freedom has been a topic of grievance. Of those significant variables having interaction effects, two variables regarding religion are worth mentioning. In the final regression model in this study, violations due to religion at the institution were seen as a negative predictor of satisfaction of academic freedom, but level of religious control was seen as a positive indicator (Barger, 2010). This finding seems counterintuitive and is worthy of further exploration. While this literature about academic freedom at secular institutions generally addresses the topic of academic freedom, it does not address academic freedom in Christian institutions, which is the subject of the following two sections.

Views of Academic Freedom at Christian Universities

In Chapter 1, I outlined the arguments for academic freedom at Christian universities that exist in the literature, so only a brief summary is required here. Christian scholars have argued that Christian institutions employ the Voluntary Principle, that is, they only employ administrators and faculty “whose personal convictions, developed of their own volition, align them with the college’s publicly stated commitments” (Litfin, 2004, p. 222; cf. Diekema, 2000; Marsden, 1994). The Voluntary Principle rests on the fundamental assumption that an

administrator's or faculty member's personal commitment to faith developed prior to employment at a Christian institution (Litfin, 2004). Additionally, Christian institutions view academic freedom communally, not individually; that is, they emphasize the academic freedom of the institution first—which allows the institution the freedom to pursue its mission—and that of the individual professor second, an emphasis that is reversed in secular institutions (Cavanaugh, 2004; Jeffrey, 2007; Ream & Glanzer, 2007). Finally, all professors approach scholarship from within some framework or paradigm; faculty members at Christian colleges and universities pursue scholarship from within a framework of faith (Cavanaugh, 2004; Diekema, 2004; Marsden, 1994, 1997; Ream & Glanzer, 2007; Wolterstorff, 2004). For faculty members of Christian colleges and universities, that framework consists of the core religious beliefs held by evangelical, Protestant Christians mentioned previously (Diekema, 2004). This framework is no more exclusive than any other framework, whether based on religious or other views (Marsden, 1997). Thus, despite contrary assertions, Christian scholars have argued that faculty members at Christian institutions possess academic freedom: by adhering to the Voluntary Principle; by prioritizing communal freedom first and individual freedom second; and by administering academic freedom within a framework of faith. In addition to this literature that conceptualizes academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities, there is literature that includes empirical research on academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities.

Research on Academic Freedom at Christian Colleges and Universities

In the literature on academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities, two main topics have been examined: institutional policies and faculty perspectives. Studies related to institutional policies mostly employed qualitative methods; only one employed a mixed-methods approach that combined descriptive survey data with qualitative methods. Similarly, studies

related to faculty perspectives also mostly employed qualitative methods or descriptive survey and qualitative data to gain an understanding of faculty academic freedom. Only one used statistical research to apply factor analysis to survey data. In all these studies the denominations represented varied tremendously from Catholic to Protestant, historic Mainline to modern Evangelical, to Baptist to Presbyterian, and included almost as many combinations of institutional types as there were studies. Only a handful of studies (Callen, 1983; Harris, 2005; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012; Swezey & Ross, 2011) specifically examined institutional policies or faculty perspectives of institutions affiliated with the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities. In this section, I first examine the literature about institutional policies at Christian colleges and universities. Then, I consider the literature concerning faculty attitudes.

Institutional Policies

Several research studies examined academic freedom policies at a variety of Christian colleges or universities. A few of these were case studies of specific institutions (Snell, 1996; Odenwald, 2015). Other studies compared and contrasted academic freedom policies of selected institutions—some affiliated with a variety of Christian denominations and others that were secular institutions (Horner, 1983; Poch, 1990; Woodruff, 1995). Finally, one study investigated tenure policies and reported their relation to academic freedom at Christian institutions affiliated with the CCCU (Harris, 2005).

The case study of St. Olaf College investigated the tension between academic credibility and religious identity (Snell, 1996). The purpose of the study was to investigate how a Protestant church-related college had maintained its religious identity and thrived academically. The research suggested that St. Olaf was successful in this dual task and offered several reasons why. The open and tolerant stance of Lutheran theology and educational philosophy was found to be

particularly helpful in this regard. The college's faculty members adopted the notion of following the evidence wherever it might lead, thereby eschewing extreme denominational sectarianism and being open to scientific theories such as Darwinism. Like other universities emerging from the late 19th century, St. Olaf synthesized scientific research and teaching into its existing curriculum. From the late 19th century forward, faculty members were hired from doctoral programs at universities such as Johns Hopkins University that emphasized research and specialization. Lastly, within the university's associated denomination, another Lutheran institution, Roanoke College, had already emerged from an academic freedom controversy with the college president having supported the professorate and its teaching, thus establishing a strong precedent for academic freedom that St. Olaf was able to follow. Thus, St. Olaf could successfully maintain its Christian identity and its academic integrity.

Another case study examined the changes made to academic freedom and governance policies as Louisiana College's trustees sought to change the theological orientation of the Southern Baptist institution (Odenwald, 2015). In this study, the selection of a new president and trustees caused changes in the academic freedom policies of the college. A resurgence of theologically conservatives within the Southern Baptist Convention served as background to the college's own struggle between theological factions. Taking a more specific stance toward academic freedom, the administration began to define it within the mission of the college that incorporated a theological statement adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention that was called the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*. Defining academic freedom with the context of the college's mission was something that had not been done previously. With the change in administration, the president assumed the authority of final appeal for granting permission to use classroom materials. This led to a pivotal crisis when a faculty member included a book

considered controversial in his course curriculum. In the end, the administration ruled that the controversial book could be used, but had to be contrasted with the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message* statement. The president and trustees also adopted a new faculty handbook that outlined specific Christian commitments and lifestyle requirements for faculty members. Because of these changes, 69% of the faculty left the college either through resignation or retirement within a three-year period. In this case, the institutional leaders chose to adopt boundaries on academic freedom they felt were more consistent with the college's mission.

Other studies compared and contrasted academic freedom policies of selected institutions. One research study considered the policies on academic freedom at 20 liberal arts colleges: nine secular and 11 religiously-affiliated colleges of various Christian denominations (Horner, 1983). These policies were compared to a dozen propositions about academic freedom derived from the historical literature. Generally, it was found that no single standard of academic freedom existed for Christian institutions since the colleges maintained diverse missions and applications of those missions. This suggested the need for a clearer standard of academic freedom for Christian institutions.

Specifically, different models of academic freedom policy emerged from the data (Horner, 1983). The Secular Model provides no limitations on academic freedom, since the institution maintains neither a religious affiliation nor a religious mission. In the Sponsor Model, the institution is supported by a denomination or religious group or has a religious mission, but provides faculty members with all the academic freedom allowed in a secular institution. The Catholic Model is characterized by a lack of institutional neutrality on all matters of truth—some policies are impacted by Church teaching—but these have little impact relating to academic freedom. The Synthesis Model is moderate in the extreme: while institutions in this model have

an explicit Christian mission, they also remain open to a diversity of views among its faculty members, even those in conflict with its Christian mission. The Evangelical Model includes institutions that set boundaries around academic freedom according to what the institution affirms as Christian orthodoxy where certain essential religious truths have precedence over other views, even those reached through scholarly investigation. Finally, the Fundamentalist Model comprises institutions that insist their faculty members adhere to institutional dogma that cannot be contradicted thereby restricting faculty academic freedom and being insensitive to its necessity. Thus, a broad spectrum of academic freedom policies exists at Christian liberal-arts colleges aligning from full conformity to the historic norms of academic freedom at some to the rather extensive limits at others (Horner, 1983). However, “the claims of some who have suggested that there is virtually no academic freedom at such colleges can be shown to be as fallacious as those who would claim that such colleges, in general, provide more academic freedom than their secular counterparts” (Horner, 1983, p. 289).

Another study compared and contrasted the academic freedom policies of randomly selected religious institutions (broadly defined), public institutions, and private, non-religious institutions (Woodruff, 1995). Most institutions had academic freedom policy statements, but religious and public institutions had them more frequently (approximately 90% of the time) than private, non-religious institutions (70% of the time). There were more similarities found between academic freedom policy statements at religious and public institutions but greater differences between these two groups and private institutions. Additionally, the policy statements of religious institutions more frequently referenced the AAUP’s *1940 Statement* than the policy statements of public or private institutions. The academic freedom for faculty was routinely referenced in all the policy statements, and only three religious institutions mentioned

academic freedom for the institution. When comparing intra-group differences for 13 components of academic freedom policies, public and religious institutions had policies with more similarities than private institutions. Finally, the data suggested that private institutions had the fewest restrictions on academic freedom and that religious institutions do not place more restrictions on academic freedom than at public institutions, but that each has different kinds of restrictions.

The third study to compare and contrast institutional policies of academic freedom analyzed policy statements from colleges or universities affiliated with traditional, mainline denominations: Roman Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian (Poch, 1990). The freedom to teach was commonly found among the academic freedom policies of the institutions examined. The boundaries of this freedom were sometimes shaped by the denominational affiliation of the college or university. While restrictions on the freedom to research and publish were found among institutions associated with each denomination, the restrictions varied according to the denomination's commitment to religious orthodoxy. Some institutions maintained policies restricting the freedom to speak outside the institution, but instances of such policies were rare and, if present, were vague and provided little guidance or definition. In general, a large number the institutions surveyed endorsed the AAUP's *1940 Statement* in their policy documents. The primary limitations of academic freedom found included maintaining respect for institutional religious commitments and the non-advocacy of ideas or beliefs contrary to those commitments. Those institutions that were dedicated to the preservation and promotion of a particular orthodoxy emerged as the most restrictive, while other institutions committed to an ecumenical Christian unity were the least restrictive. These latter

institutions placed less emphasis on the preservation of specific Christian doctrines or the promotion of sectarian differences.

The last study examined tenure policies and their impact on academic freedom at CCCU institutions (Harris, 2005). Sixty-five of the 94 CCCU institutions participated in this study. A sizable majority of these institutions (68%) granted tenure. Those institutions granting tenure represented many different denominational affiliations and tended to have larger enrollments. The primary reasons reported for adopting tenure policies were the protection of academic freedom, a mutual commitment between the faculty member and the institution, and the ability to recruit and retain faculty members. While some institutions did not grant tenure, of those that did, 77% of those that had written tenure policies addressed academic freedom. Additionally, a majority of all the faculty handbooks of CCCU institutions addressed academic freedom and the majority of the CCCU institutions tenure review practices protect academic freedom. The data suggested that some schools directly adopted the AAUP 1940 Statement for their academic freedom policy; others simply borrowed language from it. Finally, that data revealed that the academic freedom policies and practices of CCCU institutions remained largely consistent with the AAUP 1940 Statement, while ignoring the 1970 interpretive comments concerning religion. Doing so allows institutions to bound academic freedom as long as such boundaries are officially documented and stated at the time of employment. Thus, these policies and practices are placed within the context of the institution's theological commitments and mission.

Faculty Perspectives

In a few studies, faculty perspectives concerning academic freedom were gathered through qualitative studies that included faculty members from single institutions (Bohall, 2005; Jacobs, 2011; Swezey & Ross, 2011). At these three different institutions—one Evangelical

Protestant, one Roman Catholic, and one only identified by the pseudonym, “St. Rathan University”—researchers found a common theme: that a tension exists between the institutional mission and the faculty’s academic freedom. At one of these institutions, faculty participants felt that the institutional statement of faith and their allegiance to their personal faith bounded their academic freedom through self-regulation or self-censorship (Swezey & Ross, 2011). At another institution, the faculty participants also experienced self-imposed limitations, but they resolved this tension by incorporating their faith into their workplace experiences (Bohall, 2005).

Another common theme was that faculty members described academic freedom differently. At the Roman Catholic institution, faculty members construed academic freedom as free speech that was either completely unfettered or somewhat qualified (e.g. speech undergirded with right reason and evidence or speech that was appropriate and germane to the classroom), but they only reported about classroom speech, which was the specific focus of the study (Jacobs, 2011). Similarly, faculty members at a different institution limited their understanding of academic freedom to teaching, although this study was not limited only to classroom speech (Bohall, 2005). At the evangelical Protestant institution, academic freedom was also defined in diverse ways: it was linked to Christian theology, educational philosophy or political ideology by various faculty respondents (Swezey & Ross, 2011).

Faculty at different institutions in this study expressed disparate themes. At one institution, faculty participants reported that academic freedom was supported not by institutional policy, but by trust in the current top administrators; there was also a corresponding concern about a change in that environment of trust if the administration were to change (Bohall, 2005). At the Roman Catholic university faculty members promoted classroom speech that values and promoted the public mission of the institution, while being unlikely to integrate the institution’s

religious mission with classroom speech (Jacobs, 2011). However, the same faculty members did promote classroom speech that addresses the generic values and morals that can be adopted beyond the classroom. Lastly, faculty members at the evangelical Protestant university reported their perception that professors at all institutions operate with some tension, whether religious or political (Swezey & Ross, 2011). However, they also felt that they retained greater freedom than their colleagues at public institutions since they could apply their Christian faith within their academic discipline and scholarship, something they feel they could not do if working at a public university (Swezey & Ross, 2011).

In another set of studies, researchers inquired about faculty perspectives of academic freedom from participants representing multiple institutions. One study incorporated Christian faculty from six institutions (four doctoral, two liberal arts; three Baptist, two Catholic, and one Mormon (Parker, Beaty, Menchen & Lyon, 2007); another focused on faculty from nine Christian institutions in Canada (Hiebert, 2010); and two included institutions associated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (Callen, 1983; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012). The one common theme from all of these studies related how the integration of faith and learning affected the faculty perception of academic freedom. Faculty participants reported a sense that academic freedom at Christian institutions allowed them to integrate their Christian faith and worldview with their research, something that would not be possible for their secular counterparts (Hiebert, 2010). While accepting both academic freedom and doctrinal absolutes appears to be a paradox and Christian institutions provide clear examples of this paradox, faculty members reported that these dual commitments are not destructive of either (Callen, 1983). To the contrary, the faculty participants supported the paradox, seeing it as a dynamic and creative tension rather than a debilitating dilemma (Callen, 1983). Moreover, when asked, the faculty

participants reported neither a high level of academic freedom violations nor a significant dilution of the academic process (Callen, 1983; Hiebert, 2010). In another study, they also indicated that they are in accord with the professional norms of academic freedom, but also support the integration of faith and learning (Parker et al., 2007).

Quantitative data have also revealed insights into faculty members' views of academic freedom. In one recent survey, most professors at CCCU institutions have supposed they have academic freedom and many have believed they have greater freedom than their colleagues at secular institutions (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012). The survey found that more than 86% of faculty at Christian institutions agreed with the statement "I possess academic freedom at my college or university" (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012, p. 376). In addition, 54% also agreed, "professors at Christian institutions have more freedom to discuss issues and ask questions than do professors at secular institutions" (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012, p. 376). Asked about restrictions on academic freedom in teaching, 68.5% disagreed with the statement "I am hesitant to address certain important issues in class because I teach a Christian college/university," although almost one quarter agreed, while the rest were neutral (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012, p. 376.).

Another survey that included faculty members from a wide variety of religious institutions (e.g., Baptist, Roman Catholic, and Mormon, etc.), provided a variety of findings related to the professional norms of academe and the faith-based norms of religious institutions (Parker et al., 2007). Specifically, the survey generated data pertaining to the relevance of personal belief and religious practice in faculty hiring, the level of academic freedom when there are conflicts with institutional religious doctrines, and the appropriate role of the integration of faith and learning. In general, the data revealed that most faculty members supported religious criteria in hiring, but rejected religious constraints on academic freedom. This seeming

contradiction was reconciled by a high degree of commitment to the integration of faith and learning.

The survey also provided findings concerning academic freedom (Parker et al., 2007). It revealed that faculty members with the same religious affiliation as the university where they were employed were more likely to support religious constraints on academic freedom. Also, faculty members in the arts and sciences were less supportive of constraints on academic freedom than their colleagues from other campus divisions. Similarly, female faculty members were less likely to support constraints on academic freedom than male faculty members. Roman Catholic faculty members were less likely to support constraints on academic freedom than colleagues from other institutions. Finally, the integration of faith and learning had a strong causal effect on academic freedom that reduces the commitment to professional norms.

Conclusion

A great deal of scholarly literature about academic freedom exists. Some of this literature discusses the historical development of academic freedom—an old notion for a modern idea (Haskins, 1957; Hofstadter, 1996; Kibre, 1962, MacCulloch, 2004; Metzger, 1961; Norton, 1971, Rashdall, 1936). With the approach of the 20th Century, religious constraints were supplanted by others such as business or financial ones (Cain, 2012; Metzger, 1961; Veblin, 1918/2007). Although statements defining academic freedom were adopted in the early 20th Century and gained widespread acceptance (Cain, 2012), disputes about academic freedom, including legal ones, continued into the 21st Century (Bowen, Schwartz, & Camp, 2014; Byrne, 2004; Heins, 2013; Nelson, 2010; Schrecker, 1983, 1986, 2010; Spurgeon, 2007; Van Alstyne, 1993; White, 2010).

At the same time, five schools of thought about academic freedom emerged (Fish, 2014). These schools of thought, arrayed along a continuum, fall between two opposing views of freedom, from “*it’s just a job*” to “*academic freedom as revolution.*” Accordingly, these views place relative emphasis on academic or freedom, have a limited or expansive purpose, see the professor’s role as professional or political, and traverse the politics of the academy from right to left.

Some of the literature contained empirical research studies on academic freedom at secular institutions. The qualitative research provided findings related to how faculty members learn about and define academic freedom at a public university (Goodell, 2005); what meanings adjunct faculty members participating in an electronic mailing list attach to academic freedom (Martindill, 2008); and how faculty of color experience academic freedom (Locher, 2013). The quantitative research on academic freedom at secular institutions included one that sought to understand differences in the understanding of faculty and administrators at a community college (Blanton, 2005); another that examined whether tenure continues to foster honest judgment and independent criticism at top-ranked research and liberal arts institutions (Ceci, Williams, & Mueller-Johnson, 2006); a third investigated whether tenure status affects satisfaction with academic freedom at a public university (Mahamane, 2011); a fourth that examined perspectives of academic freedom at a national university in the Persian Gulf (Romwnowski & Nasser, 2010); and a last one that found several significant predictors of faculty satisfaction with academic freedom (Barger, 2010). While informing general ideas about academic freedom, this literature fails to address academic freedom within a religious or Christian context.

The remaining literature addresses academic freedom in a Christian context. Christian scholars argue that academic freedom at Christian universities is based on the Voluntary

Principle (Litfin, 2004; Diekema, 2000; Marsden, 1994); prioritizes institutional academic freedom ahead of individual academic freedom (Cavanaugh, 2004; Jeffrey, 2007; Ream & Glanzer, 2007); and places scholarship in a framework of faith, just as other scholarship adopts an organizing framework (Cavanaugh, 2004; Diekema, 2004; Marsden, 1994, 1997; Ream & Glanzer, 2007; Wolterstorff, 2004).

Empirical literature consisting of research studies on institutional policies of academic freedom at Christian colleges or universities also exists in the literature. A few of these were case studies of specific institutions (Snell, 1996; Odenwald, 2015). Other studies compared and contrasted academic freedom policies of selected institutions—some affiliated with a variety of Christian denominations and others that were a mix of Christian and secular institutions (Horner, 1983; Poch, 1990; Woodruff, 1995). The last study concerned with institutional academic freedom policies investigated tenure policies and relation to academic freedom at Christian institutions affiliated with the CCCU (Harris, 2005).

Finally, there were empirical studies of faculty perspectives on academic freedom. A few of these collected data from single institutions of varying religious affiliation—one evangelical Protestant (Swezey & Ross, 2011), one Roman Catholic (Jacobs, 2011), and one masked with the pseudonym, “St. Rathan University” (Bohall, 2005). Another set of studies also sought data on faculty perspectives of academic freedom, but from faculty members of multiple institutions (Callen, 1983; Hiebert, 2010; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012; Parker et al., 2007). Only two of these sought views of faculty members of institutions associated with the CCCU (Callen, 1983; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012). One might be considered obsolete, since the findings are more than 30 years old (Callen, 1983); the other presented only descriptive statistical data and its findings are therefore limited (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012).

A great amount of the literature reviewed for this dissertation dealt with the conceptual nature of academic freedom. Little empirical literature exists on academic freedom at secular institutions, generally, or at Christian institutions, specifically. My study adds to the literature on academic freedom in four ways. First, it illustrates how faculty members at Christian colleges and universities describe experiences where they encountered issues of academic freedom that changed their perspective; none of the literature addresses academic freedom in this way. Second, it contributes to the literature on views about academic freedom by adding faculty perspectives from a segment of higher education—Christian academe—whose views are largely absent from the literature. Third, this study adds to the empirical literature about academic freedom at Christian institutions by explaining how faculty members navigate between commitments to institutional religious doctrines and professional scholarly commitments to academic freedom. Finally, of the studies on faculty perspectives on academic freedom among institutions associated with the CCCU, one only considered a single institution, another provided only descriptive statistical data, and one is more than thirty years old and may be considered obsolete. My study updates this literature with current data from multiple institutions that describes the faculty perspectives of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

I designed this study to elicit data illustrating how faculty members at Christian colleges and universities perceive academic freedom. I wanted to understand how faculty members define academic freedom for themselves, describe incidents significantly affecting their views about academic freedom, and understand how they navigate between academic freedom, which exists as a scholarly professional norm, and statements of faith, which explain official religious beliefs affirmed by the institution. Specifically, I asked three research questions:

1. How do faculty members at Christian colleges and universities *define* academic freedom?
2. How do faculty members at Christian colleges and universities *describe* experiences where they encountered issues of academic freedom in the areas of teaching, research and publication, and extramural speech beyond the campus setting?
3. How do faculty members at Christian colleges and universities *navigate* the interaction between academic freedom and institutional religious doctrines (as found in official statements of faith)?

For the overall design of the study, I employed basic qualitative research (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Basic qualitative research involves understanding “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” with the overall purpose of understanding how people make sense of their lives and experiences (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). The specific methodology I employed is a modified version of the five stages of Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954). CIT has been considered a qualitative research method, meeting the descriptions offered by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) and Creswell (2013): “[the] research takes place in a natural setting; the researcher is the key instrument of data collection; data are collected as words through interviewing, participant

observation, and/or qualitative open-ended questions; data analysis is done inductively; and the focus is on the participants' perspectives" (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005, p. 482). The following sections describe how I designed this study using the five stages of Critical Incident Technique. These stages address the requirements necessary for all qualitative research: sample selection, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of the data, and ensuring the trustworthiness of the data (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009).

Critical Incident Technique

Critical Incident Technique (CIT) was created during World War II to evaluate military personnel and practices (Flanagan, 1954). The technique was further developed thereafter and applied in a number of different ways, including job design, performance, proficiency, and training; motivation and leadership attitudes; counseling; and psychotherapy (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954). As its creator described it, CIT involves

a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles. The critical incident technique outlines procedures for collecting observed incidents having special significance and meeting systematically defined criteria. (Flanagan, 1954, p. 327)

More recently, CIT has been described in ways that expand its original purpose. Chell (1998), for example, described it as a "a qualitative interview procedure which facilitates the investigation of significant occurrences (events, incidents, processes or issues) identified by the respondent, the way they are managed, and the outcomes in terms of perceived effects" (p. 56).

Some experts (e.g., Butterfield et al., 2005; Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio, & Amundson, 2009) have suggested that CIT be considered another qualitative tradition alongside the five

(narrative, phenomenological, Grounded Theory, ethnographic, and case study) that Creswell (2013) described according to each tradition's focus, origin, data-collection methods, data analysis, and narrative forms. The features that distinguish CIT from other qualitative methods have been described as follows:

- (a) Focus is on critical events, incidents, or factors that help promote or detract from the effective performance of some activity or the experience of a specific situation or event;
- (b) Discipline origin is from industrial and organizational psychology;
- (c) Data collection is primarily through interviews, either in person (individually or in groups) or via telephone;
- (d) Data analysis is conducted by determining the frame of reference, forming categories that emerge from the data, and determining the specificity or generality of the categories; and
- (e) Narrative form is that of categories with operational definitions and self-descriptive titles. (Butterfield et al., 2005)

Indeed, these are the key features of CIT that distinguish it from other qualitative traditions (Butterfield et al., 2005).

CIT was appropriate for my study for several reasons. First, it supports a qualitative approach involving research in a natural setting, through interviews, with inductive analysis focused on participants' perspectives. Second, while CIT had its origins in organizational and industrial psychology, it has been applied in a wide variety of disciplines, including education. Third, CIT offers a flexible research framework that can be adapted to the question under investigation. Fourth, CIT supports the exploration and investigation of inadequately understood events, incidents, processes, or issues—from the perspective of the participants closely involved in the activity. Finally, CIT focuses data collection on incidents that have had a significant

impact from the participants' point-of-view, thus eliminating data that is of little importance to the participant.

When using CIT, researchers may employ various means for data collection including observations, questionnaires, or interviews (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954). CIT has been frequently used to collect data based on observations reported from memory and elicited through interviews (Flanagan, 1954). Indeed, "recalled incidents can be relied on to provide adequate data" so long as "full and precise details are given" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 340). Criteria for assessing the value of recalled incidents collected through interviews include recording a detailed account of the experience, determining whether the respondent observed it first-hand, making certain the respondent considers the experience "critical," and ascertaining the reasons why the respondent considers the experience significant (Flanagan, 1954). Provided that these concerns are addressed by the research protocol, interviews are an appropriate form of CIT data collection. In essence, a CIT interview asks the respondent to tell a story and explain why the story is critical for the context (Kain, 2004).

Executing a CIT study occurs in five states that are not different from any other qualitative study: (1) ascertaining the general aims of the activity being studied; (2) making plans and setting specifications; (3) collecting the data; (4) analyzing the data; and (5) reporting results (Butterfield et al., 2005; Butterfield, et al., 2009; Flanagan, 1954; Kain, 2004; Woolsey, 1986). At the center of the process, CIT involves asking participants to describe events or experiences that were "critical" or significant for some purpose (Kain, 2004). Once collected, the researcher analyzes the incidents to develop commonalities or generalizations from the collected incidents (Kain, 2004). In the next sections, I describe how the five stages of CIT applied to this study.

Ascertaining General Aims

The first stage is to ascertain the general aims of the CIT activity (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954). Originally, Flanagan (1954) developed CIT as a scientific means to objectively investigate human behaviors from a positivistic viewpoint (Butterfield et al., 2005; Chell, 1998; Hughes, 2012). However, CIT has since been adapted for use as a qualitative tool for investigation of personal experiences from an interpretivist viewpoint (Butterfield et al., 2005; Chell, 1998; Hughes, 2012). When adapting CIT for an interpretivist study focused on personal experiences, the initial tasks of qualitative research are substituted for the requirements of Flanagan's first step (Hughes, 2012). Therefore, in a modified CIT study such as this one, the first stage includes determining the research purpose, developing a conceptual framework, and conducting a literature review (Hughes, 2012). Chapters One and Two addressed these topics. In the following sections of this chapter, I describe the remaining four stages of the CIT as it applied to this study.

Making Plans and Setting Specifications

The second stage of CIT research involves decisions about selection of participants and identification of critical incidents: (a) identifying the individuals or group to be investigated, i.e. the participants in the study, (b) determining who will conduct the study, and (c) specifying what critical incidents will be examined (Flanagan, 1954; Kain, 2004; Woolsey, 1986).

Selection Criteria

For this study, I established two sets of criteria for participants. The first set involved the institution. The college or university had to be a Christian institution with an official statement of faith that offers a broad curriculum in the arts and sciences and integrates faith and learning. Christian institutions were selected since many maintain statements of faith that assert their

Christian identity and strongly influence their institutional mission, distinguishing the institution from other private or religious institutions. Membership in the Council for Christian College and Universities (CCCU) served as an indicator of these criteria: as conditions of membership, CCCU institutions must have a Christian mission that integrates faith and learning; be an accredited, higher education institution offering comprehensive programs in the arts and sciences; and maintain a policy of only hiring full-time faculty who profess a Christian faith (CCCU, 2014b). Most CCCU institutions also have an official statement of faith and, although this is not a requirement of CCCU membership, it was a requirement for inclusion in the study. The second set of criteria involved the faculty members themselves. To be eligible for the study, participants had to be full-time faculty members at a Christian college or university with a statement of faith.

In CIT research, self-reported observations collected through interviews are appropriate (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954; Kain, 2004; Woolsey, 1986). Because I wanted to understand academic freedom from the emic perspective of the faculty members, I reasoned that the best observers would be faculty members themselves. Therefore, I asked them to self-report their own personal experiences during a semi-structured interview. Regarding the experiences to be observed, I asked the participants to report any personal experience that they felt significantly affected academic freedom. I set this parameter broadly since I wanted to capture a wide range of academic freedom experiences from the faculty participants in the study.

Sample Selection Process

The sample selection process involved several steps to identify and recruit faculty respondents. First, I compiled a list of the 118 CCCU member institutions in the United States from the CCCU website. Next, I appended several pieces of data to the list from most recent

(Fall 2013) release of the final data from the IPEDS database: basic Carnegie classification, amount of research expenditures, and number of full-time faculty (USDOE, 2013). To identify highly-ranked, well-regarded institutions, I also appended the ranking from the latest U.S. News and World Report Survey of Colleges and Universities (2014). Since the definition of academic freedom includes teaching, research and publication, and extra-mural speech, it was important to identify institutions where there was a strong likelihood of finding faculty involved in all three activities, supposing that the more difficult aspect to find would be research and publication. Thus, institutions with research expenditures or a doctoral Carnegie classification seemed more likely to have faculty members involved in all aspects of academic freedom. Based on this additional data, I sorted the CCCU list into three groups. In Group 1, I placed any institution that reported research expenditures or was classified as a doctoral institution; this yielded 25 institutions. In Group 2, I placed the 36 remaining Master's institutions. In Group 3, I placed the 57 remaining Baccalaureate institutions.

Now that I had identified and sorted institutions, the next steps involved recruiting a pool of potential participants. I approached the CCCU Vice President of Research and requested a list of CCCU Chief Academic Officers (CAO) and their contact information. Beginning with Group 1, I selected five institutions based on research expenditures, national reputation and number of full-time faculty members. Next, I contacted the CAOs at these campuses with a letter (see Appendix A) sent via U.S. Mail, with a follow-up via email several days later. CAOs are the gatekeepers for institutional participation in research studies and had access to faculty contact information. I explained what the study was about, stated the criteria for participation, and requested permission to conduct the study at that institution. When CAOs agreed to participate, I asked them to confirm the eligibility criteria, including that the institution has an official

statement of faith that is available in university publications or on an Internet website. I also made two requests: (a) that they point to where I could find any official documents relating to academic freedom or the Statement of Faith at their institution and (b) that they forward a Call to Participate email to full-time faculty members at the institution. The Call to Participate email (see Appendix B) described the study, the eligibility qualification for faculty participants, and included a link to a pre-screening survey.

The pre-screening survey (see Appendix C) was used to confirm participants' eligibility to participate, to collect contact information, to identify the subject area of the participant's current academic appointment, to determine if the participant's research or teaching involves issues of academic freedom, to ask if the participant was familiar with the institution's statement of faith, to select a best day and time to conduct the interview, to indicate their preference for a web-based or telephone interview, and to secure informed consent for the study. As necessary, I repeated the recruiting process with the remaining institutions in Group 1, Group 2, or Group 3. I stopped recruiting when I had a large enough pool of potential participants that would yield approximately 25 to 30 individual interviews.

The final steps of the sample selection process involved scheduling faculty interviews. Based on a sort of the list, I emailed (see Appendix D) eligible participants to confirm a specific interview date and time. In this email, I included a copy of the consent form (see Appendix E), the interview protocol and instructions for connecting for the interview. A reminder email was sent 48 hours before the scheduled interview.

Collecting the Data

The third stage of CIT, data collection, includes describing the instrument and procedures to be used to collect data (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954; Kain, 2004; Woolsey, 1986).

When using CIT, researchers may employ various means for data collection including direct observations, questionnaires, or interviews (Butterfield et al., 2005). I provided participants the option of selecting either a face-to-face interview by WebEx, a web-based platform that allows for two-way audio and visual communication via the Internet, or by telephone. By using these two types of communication, I could include faculty members from several different institutions. It also allowed greater flexibility with regard to the time when interviews could occur. Thus, the number of respondents available to provide data was maximized.

Instrumentation

To facilitate these interviews, I developed a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix F), which consisted of a series of questions arranged in five separate sections: (a) Opening, (b) Defining Academic Freedom, (c) Sharing Critical Incidents, (d) Navigating Academic Freedom and Statements of Faith, and (e) Concluding. I prepared lead questions in each section and follow-up prompts designed to clarify or extend the participant's answer. The interview protocol was reviewed by a panel of experts and revised based on their feedback. The protocol was pilot tested with two faculty members from an eligible institution who offered feedback on the clarity and utility of the questions. The protocol was revised after the pilot interviews.

The final interview protocol included a series of questions. The Opening section of the protocol contained one warm-up question to focus the interview on academic freedom. In the next section, Defining Academic Freedom, the protocol contained questions asking participants to provide their own definition of academic freedom and describe what that definition meant to them. The third section of the protocol pertained to Critical Incidents. Here, the protocol entailed asking participants to describe as many as three, recent, and noteworthy incidents—

positive, negative, or neutral—when they felt their perceptions of academic freedom had been significantly affected. This could be any experience that challenged their own ideas about academic freedom or caused a change in their thinking, feeling, or action. I encouraged the participants to report first-hand experiences, but also allowed the possibility of sharing second- or third-hand experiences so long as they considered them significant and could describe the effect of the experience. To ensure accuracy, the protocol included follow-up questions to clarify the context and nature of the incident, the effect the incident had on the participant, and any additional information that would clarify the incident (Chell, 1998; Woolsey, 1986). The fourth section of the protocol contained one question concerning the interaction of academic freedom and institutional religious doctrines. The protocol's last section included one question to clarify the main points of the interview and allow any final comments from the participant.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection began after I received approval from the Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects at my university (see Appendix G). Then, I began contacting CAOs from Group 1. Afterward, I contacted faculty participants who had responded to the pre-screening survey to schedule interviews. I confirmed the date and time of the interview with each participant via email, 48 hours before the scheduled interview. Then, I conducted interviews.

Once I had connected with the participant I confirmed that I had received their informed consent to conduct and record the interview. When we were both ready to begin the interview, I started the recorder and confirmed the respondent's authorization to record the interview. Then, I conducted the interview using the semi-structured protocol. After the interviews concluded, I thanked participants, informing them that a copy of the summary of findings would be sent to

them once it was prepared. Finally, I closed the WebEx or telephone connection, making sure to save the audio recording file.

After each interview, I downloaded the digital recording to my laptop computer and named each file according to a participant pseudonym and date of the interview. Next, each interview was transcribed word-for-word into word processing documents by a professional transcriptionist. All transcriptions were prepared so that confidentiality of participants and institutions were preserved. All personally identifying information, such as proper names, was masked. After the first interview prepared by the professional transcriptionist was completed, I reviewed the work to ensure proper formatting and confidentiality had been preserved before other interviews were transcribed. All transcriptions were saved using a similar filename as the digital audio file. All electronic files were encrypted and stored in a password protected location on my laptop computer and backed up to a password-protected Google drive location. To ensure accuracy of each transcription, I reviewed the transcript for completeness and accuracy, and, after listening to the recordings where the transcript was garbled, words were missing, or sentences did not make sense, corrected any obvious mistakes. These procedures for data collection continued until I had interviewed between 25 and 30 participants, yielding between 50 to 100 critical incidents, a sufficient number to enable meaningful data analysis according to established CIT procedures (Flanagan, 1954; Hughes, 2007; Schluter, Seaton & Chaboyer, 2008).

Analyzing the Data

Data analysis is the fourth stage of the CIT research process (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954). The objective of CIT research is “to provide a detailed, comprehensive and valid description” of the experience reported by the participants (Wolsey, 1986, p. 249). To

produce such a description, the researcher employs thematic analysis guided by inductive reasoning (Butterfield et al., 2005; Woolsey, 1986). Thus, CIT research lends itself to standard methods of qualitative analysis (Merriam, 2009).

Data analysis began during the interview. Throughout the interview, I asked follow-up questions to clarify comments made by the participant and to ensure that I correctly understood the meaning of what was expressed. I made brief notes as the interview progressed, writing down key ideas that came to mind and topics that I wanted to pursue further. At the conclusion of each interview, I summarized the major points I noted during the interview. For example, I reviewed the participants' main ideas regarding how they navigate between academic freedom and institutional religious doctrines. Then I requested some immediate feedback to ensure that I had accurately captured participants' sentiments. As soon as possible after the conclusion of each interview, I reviewed my field notes and completed a contact summary form (See Appendix H). A contact summary form (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) is designed to capture the researcher's initial impressions of each field contact and to summarize the main points from the contact. After the transcript was completed, I reviewed the transcript for completeness and accuracy, and added any pertinent information to the contact summary form.

The next major step in the data analysis process involved coding each transcript using the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Codes are short phrases that represent the concepts associated with the data or its meaning (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Using the constant comparative method and coding is appropriate for CIT research (Butterfield et al., 2005; Chell, 1998; Flanagan, 1954; Hughes, 2007; Woolsey, 1986). The process of coding is accomplished first through open coding, which involves identifying manageable pieces of data that are descriptive and concrete, and are relevant for answering the research questions

(Merriam, 2009). As a unit of analysis, I employed the comment—a sentence or paragraph that reflected ideas relevant to academic freedom. Data with similar properties or concepts were initially assigned the same descriptive code.

To begin open coding, I read each transcript at least twice to ensure familiarity with the data. To further data analysis and develop preliminary categories, I first coded each participant's contact summary sheet. Then, since I was familiar with each interview, I began coding the entire transcript using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. For the research question related to defining academic freedom, I open coded for elements of the participant's definition. For example, a participant might say, "Academic freedom allows me the space to present new ideas reported in the literature within my assigned subject as a teacher." Such a response might be coded "teaching" indicating that the definition involves instruction; it might also be coded "share new ideas," since it involves presenting the latest research in class; and it could be coded "positive attitude" since the participant expresses something affirmative about academic freedom.

For the research question related to navigating academic freedom and official doctrines, I open coded for strategies the participant reported. For example, a participant might say, "Most of the time I can ignore the statement of faith. My research does not create controversy or challenge the religious position of the college. So, I can avoid any potential conflicts." These statements might be coded "avoidance strategy" since the participant does not address contentious research topics, thus steering clear of conflict.

When coding each critical incident, I incorporated some predetermined steps. First, I began by assigning it to one of three categories derived from the theoretical framework for academic freedom: teaching, research and publication, or extra-mural speech. Then, I started

coding the critical incidents with some tasks in mind: to identify the main actors, what action occurred, whether the experience involved religious doctrine, how the situation was resolved, and how the participant's views changed. All segments of the interview were open coded for attitudes concerning academic freedom so that subtle differences between explicit statements might be compared with other statements expressing more implicit perspectives.

During open coding, I described concrete concepts that emerged from the interviews. For example, I asked participants to describe a critical incident that affected their view of academic freedom. One participant may have responded:

After recent events at XXXX College where some alumni questioned a professor's teaching about creation and evolution, I had my lecture notes for my Introduction to Biology class reviewed by the department chair. Although there is no explicit prohibition on teaching evolution, I want to make sure my lectures don't cause a stir. Since the review was voluntary, I didn't feel my attitude toward academic freedom needed to change.

Another participant may have said:

Evolution has been a hot topic. Some trustees are concerned about what the professors in the biology department teach about the biblical account of creation, so the department chair was briefed by the Provost about the trustees' concerns, and then he requested our course materials so he could review them. I suggested that I had the academic freedom to develop my own course, but the department chair insisted saying that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. Nothing came of the review, so I assumed I had the freedom to continue teaching as I had been.

Finally, a third participant may have replied:

I have complete freedom when teaching, even somewhat controversial topics like evolution. While I have been outspoken concerning my views—I remain skeptical on the theory and believe in intelligent design. I teach evolution as theory but not as fact, along with the biblical account of creation to my students and no one has raised any objections. In fact, after a periodic review that included my instructional materials, I won a teaching award for integrating faith and learning in my classroom.

All of these excerpts could be assigned certain descriptive codes. For example, each excerpt could be assigned the code for “teaching”, since each one involves classroom instruction. Furthermore, they could be identified for the topic involved, “evolution.” When coding for the actors involved, the third incident would be coded only with “professor”, while the first incident would be coded “professor” and “department chair” and the second incident coded “trustees”, “provost”, “department chair”, and “professor”. Each could also be coded “peer review,” since each professor’s teaching material was reviewed by a fellow faculty member. Since the religious topic of “creation” was mentioned in each excerpt, I would add that as a code for each interview segment. Finally, each passage could be coded “no change,” because nothing in the incident suggested the professor’s thoughts, feelings, or actions changed.

The second stage of the coding process entails further developing the categories initially discovered during open coding; this is called analytical or axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam, 2009). Data with similar descriptive codes were grouped together so that they could be compared within and across interviews. Then, descriptive categories were refined and sub-categories added as needed to fully describe the data. In the mock examples described previously, the code “peer review” could be further broken down into “voluntary” and

“involuntary,” because one example shows the professor was required to submit teaching materials while the other two did so voluntarily.

With either type of coding, when new data were incorporated to the analysis, the codes were revised and refined, and the data coded or recoded as necessary to reflect the developing understanding of the code. As a result, similar codes were grouped together to develop categories and to describe the properties and dimensions of each as it emerged from the data. As the categories emerged, I attempted to identify any broad themes that were embedded in the data. I required that at least three references from the data to support a category or theme. In the mock examples described previously, the data suggest a theme of “scrutiny of teaching controversial topics” since each episode involved a controversial topic and peer review of the professor’s teaching.

At various stages in the analysis, I reviewed the emerging codes, categories and themes with an expert qualitative researcher to ensure accuracy of analysis. As open and axial codes emerged through the data analysis, I created a coding dictionary, sometimes referred to as a “codebook” (Patton, 2015), where I identified and defined and described each code based on the data. Throughout the data analysis process, I wrote memos (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) to describe and analyze the categories and themes as they emerged and were refined. These memos helped to connect codes to categories and themes. They also served as a means for reflection on the analysis and interpretation of the data. The process of data analysis continued until saturation, the point at which no new categories or themes emerged from the data and the categories and themes that emerged are fully developed (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Flanagan, 1954).

Reporting Results

The final stage of CIT research involves interpreting and reporting the data (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954; Kain, 2004; Woolsey, 1986). Reporting includes making the research findings explicit, as well the value of those findings. Additionally, any biases or limitations that might bear on the transferability of the findings to other situations should be reported (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954).

I presented the findings in sections organized according to each research question: defining academic freedom, sharing critical incidents, and navigating between academic freedom and official doctrines. Within each section, I presented the categories and themes that emerged from the data. For example, for the section on defining academic freedom, I explained the similarities and differences between the definitions participants offered. For the section about navigating academic freedom, I described different strategies participants used. In for the section on critical incidents, I presented incidents organized around the sub-topics of teaching, research and publication, and extramural speech; I also noted the actors, actions, and outcomes, found in the data. Throughout the findings, I used rich, thick description and quotes from particular interviews to highlight the major themes that emerged. Finally, I developed a frequency matrix (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) that illustrated where I found categories across the interviews, further demonstrating how themes emerged. Once a draft summary of findings was complete, I emailed each participant a copy, asking them to comment on the plausibility of the findings and tentative interpretation of the data. Then I completed the final summary of the findings.

Reflexivity of the Researcher

One of the distinct aspects of qualitative research is that the researcher is the key instrument for data collection (Creswell, 2009). As such, it is important for those performing research to clarify and explain their worldview, assumptions, or predispositions that may affect their research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

I graduated from one of the Christian colleges and universities included in this study. Like many who benefit from higher education, my four-and-a-half years at a Christian college were formative. During that time, I embraced the Christian faith (from a Protestant, evangelical perspective) as my own. I developed both intellectually and spiritually, and came to believe that faith and learning were not only compatible with each other, but could be fully integrated, especially within the framework of the Christian faith. I also came to understand that the fullest expression of such an integration was realized through participation in an entire community dedicated to both faith and learning. Thus, one bias relevant to this study is my appreciation of and preference for higher education institutions that strive to integrate faith and learning within the context of the Christian faith.

After college, I gained valuable experience working in nonprofit Christian organizations. My interest in politics and government took me to a Washington, DC-based, Christian think-tank that performed research and public advocacy on issues involving the nexus of religion and democracy. My tenure at the think-tank allowed me a vantage point from which I could view and participate in many of the current cultural, religious, and political debates over issues confronting contemporary society. During these years, my sensitivity towards understanding people and organizations through a political paradigm (Morgan, 2006) became more acute. This vantage point also allowed me to see how tenuous the position of many Christian institutions—

churches, schools, or colleges—once revered in our society, has become. For me, this is regrettable since I have benefited greatly both from my personal experiences in the church and in Christian higher education. Thus, for this research, being cognizant of this bias was an important consideration.

As a scholar, I have benefited from academic training at a liberal arts college and two research extensive universities. I have been taught to question deeply, research rigorously, and to think critically. The genesis of this study began during a graduate seminar on higher education law, where I studied how academic freedom had been adjudicated in the courts. Taking the suggestion of a friend involved in Christian education, I decided to combine my interests in politics, Christian faith, and higher education and investigate academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities.

Each of these predispositions affected the research at various stages, from determining the research questions, through sample selection, to instrument development, and concluding with data analysis. The purpose of surfacing such biases is not to eliminate them, but to increase the credibility of the findings by allowing the reader to more fully understand how the researcher arrived at a particular interpretation of the data (Merriam, 2009).

Trustworthiness of the Data

Rigorous qualitative research incorporates various strategies that address trustworthiness of the data (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). In qualitative research, trustworthiness entails checking for accuracy of the findings by using recognized procedures (Creswell, 2009). It also involves ensuring that the findings make sense and are consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 2009). To be considered trustworthy,

qualitative research must provide “the reader with a description in enough detail to show that the author’s conclusion ‘makes sense’” (Firestone, 1987, p. 19).

In this study, I ensured the trustworthiness of the data in several ways. First, I practiced reflexivity. When practicing reflexivity, the researchers critically self-examine their own worldview, assumptions, and biases and how these may affect the research (Merriam, 2009). Second, I made an effort to increase the accuracy of the data collected. A panel of professional faculty researchers familiar with qualitative methods reviewed the research questions and interview protocol, a form of expert review (Merriam, 2009). I also pilot tested the protocol with two professors from a Christian university who were eligible for the study, another method to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative data (Merriam, 2009). Based on feedback from participants in the pilot study, I revised the interview protocol so that the protocol would elicit data necessary to answer the research questions. Additionally, I took steps to ensure that the data were accurately preserved for analysis (Butterfield et al., 2005) through digital recording and word-for-word transcriptions of each interview.

Third, I incorporated member-checking into the research design. Member checking involves taking data and initial interpretations back to participants and asking if they are plausible (Merriam, 2009). Asking follow-up questions for clarification during interviews was also employed, which may be considered another form of member checking. I asked participants to review a draft summary of the findings and to comment on the tentative interpretation of the data. If there were subsequent questions that arose during data analysis, I contacted the participant and asked for clarification. These various forms of member checking helped to ensure that the data and interpretations were consistent with the participants’ views and experiences.

Fourth, when analyzing the data, I determined that at least three different sources of data were required to support a category or theme—a form of triangulation, which involves building the justification for findings based on multiple sources of data (Merriam, 2009). Fifth, I ensured that there was adequate engagement in data collection (Merriam, 2009). This entails spending sufficient time collecting data so that the categories or themes reach saturation—the point at which no new categories or themes emerge and which categories are fully described (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Adequate engagement may also involve looking for data that provide alternative explanations for the emergent findings (Merriam, 2009). I continued data collection until saturation and purposefully looked for variation, thus ensuring adequate engagement. Sixth, I employed rich, thick description. Thick description means presenting sufficient detail of participants' experiences and their context to make the findings realistic for the reader, and to allow the reader to evaluate whether the findings are transferrable (Merriam, 2009). Finally, I employed expert review (Merriam, 2009). Expert review is the practice of consulting with individuals who have expertise in the topic or methodology of a study. To accomplish this, I asked a panel of faculty members experienced in higher education and qualitative research to examine the procedures for data collection, including the interview protocol, and to evaluate the findings as they emerged during data analysis to ensure congruency with the data (Merriam, 2009). All of these techniques were employed to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the data.

Limitations

As with all research, this study had several limitations. Three limitations related to sample and one related to method. With regard to sample, this study focused on faculty members at evangelical, Protestant institutions with an official statement of faith. I selected

Christian institutions since many of these institutions promulgate statements of faith that might limit academic freedom. Excluded from this sample were faculty members working at other Protestant institutions that eschew official statements of faith (e.g. some Baptist, Disciples of Christ); faculty members at Roman Catholic institutions; and faculty at other religious, but non-Christian institutions (e.g. Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, etc.). Depending on the researcher's frame of reference and how broad or narrow it is, or which institutional affiliation is studied, data and conclusions may be different.

Another significant related to sample. This study included faculty members only from institutions that chose to participate. While invitations to participate in the study were sent to several CCCU institutions in the United States, not all institutions participated. Thus, if a greater number of institutions had participated, the data available may have differed in important ways.

Perhaps the most important limitation with regard to sample included participants' self-selection bias, where the faculty participants may have chosen to participate in the study because of strong personal views pertaining to academic freedom or religious doctrines, or because of an extreme experience related to academic freedom, either extraordinarily good or extraordinarily bad. Also, while it would be an important finding, faculty that may have had insignificant or neutral experiences with issues of academic freedom, may have chosen not to participate, thus skewing the data and findings.

Finally, there is at least one limitation associated with the Critical Incident Technique. The unit of analysis for this methodology is the incident, which could have occurred at any time in the participant's past. Although this does inform the research about faculty perceptions of academic freedom, it may not account for how views and experiences are influenced by the historic or cultural context of the institution.

Despite these limitations this was a worthwhile study to perform. There is a gap in the literature related to how faculty at Christian colleges and institutions define, for themselves, and perceive their experience of academic freedom, especially regarding official statements of faith. This study described and analyzed how faculty members at such institutions perceive academic freedom to fill that gap in the literature.

In conclusion, I designed this study to understand the faculty experiences of academic freedom at institutions that also require assent to an official statement of faith and how they navigated between the two concepts. The qualitative methodology of my study provided the data required to answer the research questions of the study.

Chapter 4 – Findings

This study elicited data illustrating how faculty members at different Christian colleges and universities perceived academic freedom. While each participant contributed to the overall findings in general, many participants also contributed specific examples that illustrated a concept showing their perceptions of academic freedom. As the data elicited from this study illustrate, faculty members of Christian colleges and universities, just as any group, may not be considered a single monolith—like any natural marble, they have similarities and differences, variations in style and substance, contours of texture and appearance. The purpose of this chapter is to show the most significant general findings that emerged from the data and to understand some of the variations to those findings that existed within and among the participants.

Part I – Overview

Different characteristics generally describe the institutions and individuals who participated in this study, framed the context, and informed the data elicited from participants. Participating institutions exhibited various general and religious characteristics; individual faculty participants differed by gender and educational and employment experiences. The critical incidents shared by faculty participants involved different categories of academic freedom, different issues challenging academic freedom, and variations according to whether the incident involved the official statement of faith.

Institutional Participants

Faculty members from 13 institutions with membership in the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) participated in the study. There were differences among these institutions in region, Carnegie basic classification, faculty employment, and student

enrollment. Table 1 enumerates these characteristics. Most institutions were from the Midwest, granted Master's degrees, employed between 100 and 200 faculty members, and enrolled between 2,000 and 4,000 students. Table 2 shows the variation in theological tradition, denominational affiliation, and relationship between the institution and sponsoring denominations. While spanning a broad theological spectrum within Protestant Christianity—from Anabaptist to Methodist to Reformed—and representing many different denominations, most institutions that participated in the study maintained an affiliation with a sponsoring denomination: a few participating institutions were under direct ownership or control of a sponsoring denomination; the majority were independent institutions but maintained some affiliation through shared constituencies (alumni, donors, students, or trustees), funding, or theological affirmation.

Faculty Participants

Faculty participants varied by gender, and educational and employment experiences. Table 3 illustrates these differences. Most participants were female and completed their undergraduate degree at a Christian college or university affiliated with the CCCU, but were not currently employed by their undergraduate alma mater. For their graduate education, almost all faculty participants graduated from secular institutions and earned a Ph.D. On average, participating faculty had nine years of experience at their current institution and had achieved the rank of associate or full professor. Most participants were members of departments in the humanities or social sciences—bible and theology, education, history, and sociology or social work—but a large minority were from the sciences—biology, kinesiology, nursing, or math.

Table 1

General Characteristics of Institutional Participants

(N=13)

Characteristic		N	Mean	Median
Region				
	Northeast	3		
	South	2		
	Midwest	5		
	West	3		
Carnegie Basic Classification [†]				
	Baccalaureate	3		
	Master's	10		
	Doctoral	0		
Study Classification [†]				
	Baccalaureate	0		
	Master's	7		
	Doctoral	6		
Faculty employment				
Small	Less than 100	5		
Medium	100 to 200	7	120	102
Large	Greater than 200	1		
Student enrollment				
Small	Less than 2000	5		
Medium	2000 to 4000	6	2815	3082
Large	Greater than 4000	2		

[†]For purposes of this study, any institution reporting research expenditures was considered a doctoral institution, regardless of its Carnegie Basic Classification.

Table 2

*Religious Characteristics of Institutional Participants**(N=13)*

Characteristic	N
Theological tradition	
Anabaptist	2
Methodist	7
Pentecostal	1
Quaker	2
Reformed	1
Denominational affiliation [†]	
Christian and Missionary Alliance	1
Church(s) of God	1
Church of the Nazarene	2
Evangelical Friends	2
Free Methodist Church	2
Mennonite Church(s)	2
Reformed or Presbyterian Church(s)	1
The Wesleyan Church	2
Denomination-to-Institution relationship	
Owned or controlled	4
Affiliated	9
Independent	0

[†]To protect the confidentiality, where only one institution from a particular denomination participated, categories have been merged to accommodate a greater number of possible participants.

Table 3

Characteristics of Faculty Participants

<i>(N=28)</i>		
	Characteristic	N
Sex		
	Female	19
	Male	9
Undergraduate education		
	Public	10
	Private	
	Christian (CCCU)	15
	Other Christian	1
	Secular	2
	For-profit	0
Graduate education		
	Public	16
	Private	
	Christian (CCCU)	2
	Other Christian	2
	Secular	8
	For-profit	0
Alumnus/a of Current Institution		
	Yes	10
	No	18
Alumnus/a of CCCU Institution		
	Yes	16
	No	12
Highest Degree completed		
	PhD	18
	EdD	4
	JD	2
	DMA	1
	MFA	1
	MA or MS	2

Table 3 (continued)

Characteristics of Faculty Participants

(N=28)

Characteristic	N
Years employed at current institution	
Mean	12.2
Median	9
Max	43
Min	1
Current academic Rank	
Professor	9
Associate Professor	10
Assistant Professor	9
Other	0
Current faculty department	
Art	2
Biblical Studies, Theology, Philosophy	3
Business	1
Communications	1
Education	4
History	4
Music	2
Science (Biology, Kinesiology, Nursing, Math)	7
Sociology, Social Work, Counseling	4

Table 4 shows how participants answered pre-interview survey questions about their views regarding academic freedom, Christian beliefs, and the institution's statement of faith. Most agreed that their personal Christian beliefs were relevant to their scholarship, that they were familiar with and comfortable affirming the institution's statement of faith. Most also agreed that academic freedom was critical their work as a Christian scholar, but differed widely whether their scholarship involved issues of academic freedom. Finally, most strongly agreed that they possessed academic freedom at their current institution, but a large minority also disagreed.

Critical Incidents

Faculty participants described a total of 57 separate critical incidents, which are characterized in Table 5. Overall, most incidents involved the institution's statement of faith. When analyzed by type of academic freedom involved, *Teaching* was the most frequently reported category, while *Institutional Academic Freedom* was the second most frequently reported category. The three of the top four most reported issues involved institutional statements of faith and controversial issues: *Human Sexuality* (including abortion, gender roles, portrayal of nudity or sexual abuse, and homosexuality or same-sex marriage), the *Debate over Human Origins* (i.e. creationism versus evolution); and *Interpretation of the Bible* (how passages of scripture are understood and explained); the other most reported issue, *Needlessly Offensive Behavior* (e.g., abuse of power, plagiarism, or provocative speech), did not involve institutional statements of faith.

Research Questions

Through this study, I sought to understand how faculty members defined academic freedom for themselves, described incidents significantly affecting their views about academic

Table 4

*Survey Results from Participants**(N=28)*

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#1. Academic freedom is critical to my work as a Christian scholar.	21	5	2	0	0
#2. I possess academic freedom at my current college/university.	22	0	0	6	0
#3. My personal Christian beliefs are relevant to my scholarship.	18	5	4	1	0
#4. My scholarship involves issues of academic freedom.	7	5	9	5	2
#5. I am familiar with my institution's official Statement of Faith.	25	3	0	0	0
#6. I am comfortable affirming my institution's official Statement of Faith.	14	12	2	0	0

Table 5

*Characteristics of Critical Incidents**(N=57)*

Characteristic	N
Category of Academic Freedom	
Teaching	25
Research & Publication	10
Public Speech	5
Institutional	11
Collegial Interaction	6
Key issue involves Statement of Faith?	
Yes	31
No	23
No issue involving academic freedom	3
Key issue involving academic freedom	
<i>Human Sexuality</i>	17
<i>Needlessly Offensive Behavior</i>	11
Human Origins	10
Interpretation of the Bible	7
Miscellaneous Issues	9
No Issues involving academic freedom	3

freedom, and how they navigated between academic freedom, which exists as a scholarly professional norm, and statements of faith, which explains official religious beliefs affirmed by the institution. Specifically, I asked three research questions:

1. How do faculty members at Christian colleges and universities *define* academic freedom?
2. How do faculty members at Christian colleges and universities *describe* experiences where they encountered issues of academic freedom in the areas of teaching, research and publication, and extramural speech beyond the campus setting?
3. How do faculty members at Christian colleges and universities *navigate* the interaction between academic freedom and institutional religious doctrines (as found in official statements of faith)?

Each of the following sections of this chapter presents the findings that answer each of these three questions. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

Part II – Defining Academic Freedom

This section answers the first research question, how do faculty define academic freedom? Based on the interviews, participants defined academic freedom primarily as *Engaging Students*¹, but also acknowledged *Pursuing TRUTH*², and *Practicing Scholarly Activities* as definitions. Regardless of how they defined academic freedom, faculty participants described a freedom—and it was a freedom—that existed along with other values important to them as Christian scholars. Initially, these values were understood as boundaries, limits, or parameters, but further analysis suggested that participants were describing values important to

¹ Title case and italics are employed to indicate a conceptual category that emerged during data analysis, e.g. *Engaging Students* or *Doctrinal but not Dogmatic*.

² Participants differentiated between TRUTH, by which they meant a fundamental, absolute, and fixed reality, as opposed to truth, which they meant a relative or socially constructed meaning. Small caps are used to indicate the former meaning.

them as faculty scholars. The existence of these additional values suggested that academic freedom coexisted as just one among several values within Christian academe. Thus, while most participants defined academic freedom primarily as *Engaging Students*, they acknowledged that in addition to academic freedom, other important values existed and these also shaped their scholarly activities.

Definitions

Participants primarily defined academic freedom as *Engaging Students*, but acknowledged that *Pursuing TRUTH*, and *Practicing Scholarly Activities* were also important definitions of academic freedom. The first emphasized developing learners—a pedagogical concept. The second recognized academic freedom as a philosophical concept. The last understood academic freedom as a professional one.

Engaging Students. The primary way faculty participants defined academic freedom was *Engaging Students*. Basically, this meant placing the professor's professional focus on students, where professors saw their primary role as meeting their students' needs, both inside and outside of the classroom. This involved having the ability to teach—to disseminate knowledge, to inculcate analytical and critical thinking, and to discuss significant issues on a wide-range of topics, whether personal, political, legal, social, ethical, moral, Biblical, or spiritual. It also meant having opportunities to assist students in the pursuit of their own paths of academic and spiritual discovery, guiding them to meaningful educational experiences and encouraging them in their spiritual journeys. For participants, *Engaging Students* did not mean indoctrinating them, pushing a personal agenda or political ideology on them, or converting them to the professor's point of view. Rather, meant spurring students to think and perform for themselves. Anna, an assistant professor of music educated at public universities and with three

years' experience at a small university in the Northeast, talked about teaching in one way that emphasized *Engaging Students*, and how the concept sharpened her understanding of academic freedom:

I embrace the idea of teaching a class, having full freedom to shape and structure that class in the best way that you see fit for the benefit of your students. So, when you add that last part of the sentence, that changes or that shapes the first half of that statement. Personally, when I approach teaching or I approach a class, I am recognizing that the students that are sitting there are paying huge, huge numbers of dollars for the privilege of sitting in that chair, and that there are particular goals for their lives and for them as people. And so, for me to use a classroom for my own sort of particular agenda is not really the best use of their time, and may not allow them to reach those particular goals. So, I believe in complete autonomy as long as the welfare of the students is of utmost importance. And then I think what that does is that really it keeps people from wondering too far off the path.

Engaging Students was the single most reported concept that participants related when asked to define academic freedom. Perhaps it was more important than other academic activities, such as research or professional service, because this study's participants work at Christian universities, noted for their liberal arts curricula, residential campuses, and small class sizes that afford greater opportunity for student-faculty interactions inside and outside the classroom.

Pursuing TRUTH. Another definition of academic freedom entailed *Pursuing TRUTH*, in which participants defined academic freedom as an abstract, philosophical and theological concept. According to their understanding, the term "TRUTH" is an absolute reality originating in God and understood through His revelation in scripture and creation. For some participants,

TRUTH was something to be discovered, not created. Based on this understanding, academic freedom entailed *Pursuing TRUTH* or seeking the ultimate and absolute realities that exist in the universe, whether spiritual or natural. Thus, Christians may ask any question, since they acknowledge that both moral and physical knowledge can be discovered in the universe. Academic freedom, then, is defined as *Pursuing TRUTH* in a scholarly manner wherever it leads. Ultimately, for the faculty participants defining academic freedom in this way, *Pursuing TRUTH* meant encountering the revealer of all TRUTH and knowledge—God.

Practicing Scholarly Activities. The final way faculty participants defined academic freedom was *Practicing Scholarly Activities*. Such activities included conducting academic research and publishing the results, engaging in wide-ranging intellectual conversations with students or colleagues, exercising critical thinking and expression, and devising pedagogy—designing curricula or coursework, or selecting classroom activities, discussion topics, and textbooks.

In sum, participants primarily defined academic freedom as *Engaging Students*, placing their professional focus on them, and addressing their needs both inside and outside the classroom. Additional notions of academic freedom entailed *Pursuing TRUTH* and *Practicing Scholarly Activities*. These two concepts were variations on the general theme, and while present in the data, were overshadowed by the definition of academic freedom as *Engaging Students*.

Coexisting Values

Regardless of how they defined academic freedom, faculty participants also suggested that academic freedom functioned in a scholarly environment alongside other important values. For these participants, even though it was broad, generous, or wide-ranging, academic freedom was neither absolute nor limitless, but relative and limited in specific ways by other important,

coexisting values. Such values acted like invisible forces. They were not boundaries or limits, but centripetal forces that kept faculty member's scholarly activities within the orbit of the university. These values included *Personal Beliefs or Principles*, a *Concern for Students*, *Christian Orthodoxy*, *Professional Standards or Ethics*, and *Institutional Identity*.

Personal Beliefs or Principles. One set of values coexisting with academic freedom included *Personal Beliefs or Principles*. In this concept, participants expressed individual commitments that they also considered important. These were not boundaries imposed by outside authorities; participants imposed these commitments on themselves. Such *Personal Beliefs or Principles* included individual values—ideals such as common sense, integrity, civility, respectfulness, or self-control—as well as religious beliefs. Judith, an alumna and professor of art with degrees from public universities and more than 40 years' experience at her current, medium sized, Master's institution, shared a colorful illustration of how her own *Personal Beliefs or Principles* included religious beliefs and individual values—which she described as screens used to sort between trash and recycling—that informed how she exercised her self-control to choose what to read or not:

I just don't think of my head as a trash truck that's just going on picking up trash on a Monday morning. I don't need that in my brain. [I screen some things out.] But there is recycling that I find very helpful, to go through what's being recycled. There's a little bit more [value] ... placed [on] what we recycle, than what we throw out in trash cans. I'm very happy to explore the recycling bin. I'm not terribly excited about reading and spending much time in the trash truck.... [My] screens are the things that are faith-informed, values-informed, belief systems that have practices, traditions that [have] stood the test of time that can continue to inform the thinking and probing process because

those are the things that become the standards by which we're measuring the recycling bin compared to others in [the trash]—some people certainly find a truth in the garbage heap as well. That's not to say that it isn't there. But people make personal choices about what they want to take into their minds.

Thus, *Personal Beliefs or Principles*, including religious beliefs and individual values, was a concept faculty participants identified as a value that coexisted in addition to academic freedom.

Concern for Students. *Concern for Students* was another concept where faculty members identified a value that coexisted with academic freedom. Different participants emphasized different facets of *Concern for Students*. Some expressed *Concern for Students* when they reported that their scholarship, especially teaching, would benefit their students, support their personal wellbeing, address their instructional needs, or help students attain their individual goals. Others emphasized that *Concern for Students* included ensuring that teaching was targeted for students' level of personal and intellectual development. Still others noted that *Concern for Students* involved meeting students' satisfaction as clients. Rebekah—a professor of music educated at public universities with 15 years of teaching at her medium sized, Master's level, Christian institution in the Northeast—provided an example of *Concern for Students* when she reported how the institution's statement of faith related to student satisfaction:

[The statement of faith] pertains to student satisfaction. I want to serve the students in the best way. Our clients, our customers, I don't know what—our students, they are our customers. And they're coming for a certain reason, and if we're not staying on track with our faith, if we're veering off and becoming too wide, then well, maybe they don't want to come to [this university]. Who are we? I think we need to remember who we are [and who we serve] There seems to be a lot of freedom. And so, my concern is maybe

there's too much freedom. That may sound really weird because we're supposed to like freedom. Because freedom's a good thing. Academic freedom is awesome. But if it leads to veering off the narrow path, any good thing can become a not-so-good thing. Hence, although they emphasized different aspects of the concept—students' development, satisfaction, or wellbeing—participants recognized that *Concern for Students* was a value that coexisted in addition to academic freedom and shaped their scholarly activities.

Christian Orthodoxy. Another value that coexisted with academic freedom included *Christian Orthodoxy*. When participants talked about *Christian Orthodoxy*, they referenced essential Christian religious beliefs or doctrines that had some authority, to which they willingly consented, over their scholarly activities and which existed alongside academic freedom. Examples of such doctrines included acknowledging Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, understanding that one God exists as in a Trinity of three persons as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or affirming the lordship of Jesus over all things. For these Christian faculty members, *Christian Orthodoxy* related to the traditions and teachings that have been handed down through the Church to succeeding generations of Christians for more than 2,000 years, even if those conflicted in significant ways with the contemporary cultural climate. Indeed, many Christians hold tradition and orthodoxy in high esteem, as Isaiah—a professor of history working for the past 31 years as at a Christian university located in the Midwest that had a small faculty but a medium-sized student enrollment and was affiliated with a denomination in the Wesleyan theological tradition—acknowledged:

Even though we don't have a Pope and we don't have official tradition the way the Roman [Catholic] Church does, there's obviously a tradition of the way that the [universal] Church has understood scripture for 2,000 years. And so, we expect that

people will understand truth from that perspective, and thus...some things have already been decided. Not everything is up for grabs.... It's [a paradox] to say that you have to follow truth wherever it leads you, but God has revealed some things clearly enough that they aren't up for discussion anymore.... There's some issues that our tradition has settled...almost the way the Roman Catholic Church has dogma. You know, there are a lot of things that are doctrine and they're up for grabs, but some of the things the [universal] Church has decided—these are dogma.

Consequently, when participants talked about *Christian Orthodoxy*, they understood that traditional Christian beliefs and doctrines comprised influential values that coexisted alongside their academic freedom.

Professional Standards or Ethics. According to participants in this study, *Professional Standards or Ethics* formed another set of values that coexisted with academic freedom and guided scholarly behaviors. This concept comprised any measure of excellence established by experts or specialists in a field of study. John holds graduate degrees from leading state flagship universities and was an alumnus and current biology professor who worked at a large, baccalaureate, Christian institution in the Midwest. He described some scientific *Professional Standards or Ethics* this way:

I think that, as a scientist, there are certain boundaries that we operate within, one certain area of reality, and so there are rules there. I have academic bounds just as a scientist in general that I would have [even] if I was not at a faith-based [university] too, that we operate sort of in rationality, and we collect empirical data, and it has to be fairly collected and objective, those sorts of things. There are certainly those bounds.

Other participants mentioned *Professional Standards or Ethics* such as: doing no harm; maintaining academic or intellectual honesty and integrity; providing for the informed consent, health, and safety of research participants; adhering to methodological rules like supporting findings based with previous literature, new evidence, and reasoned argument; or preserving appropriate relationships with students, not taking credit for their work or being abusive towards them. Thus, *Professional Standards or Ethics* formed an additional set of values coexisting along with academic freedom.

Institutional Identity. Finally, the last value that coexisted with academic freedom was *Institutional Identity*. Participants noted academic institutions of every different type—public or private, religious or secular, research or teaching—maintain some type of *Institutional Identity*. Some participants noted that a university’s affiliation with a denomination formed one aspect of *Institutional Identity* (see Table 2 for the religious characteristics of institutions in this study). Such an affiliation with a denomination impacted *Institutional Identity* since denominations, church officials, or local parishioners influenced the university through direct control, funding, supplying students, or mere association. Lydia, an alumna and current associate professor of biblical studies at a small baccalaureate university owned by a denomination in the Northeast, articulated the importance of *Institutional Identity* and its religious nature in this way:

I do feel strongly that Christian institutions should be able to have a particular identity. And to maintain a particular identity, this is where I think having the statement of faith is a really important and good thing. So, that's the other side of it. I guess if I came in and I was trying to recruit people to Eastern Orthodoxy, even though this is an evangelical college, I don't think a person should have the freedom to do that either. So, that's not exactly harm, but it's harming the institutional mission in a sense. So, yeah, watching that

thing unfold at Wheaton this year [where a professor separated from a Christian university over a Facebook post claiming God and Allah were the same]. I know the person, I know Larycia Hawkins, but—and I don't really know how it all played out, I don't know why everything worked the way it worked—but there was part of me who was saying, "Okay, but it is a good, an intrinsic good, that Wheaton has an identity that they preserve." Because if they don't, just look at all the Catholic colleges and universities in this country that as soon as they stop requiring people to be Catholic, after a while, they just become a generic university. They completely lose their identity as a particular version of Christianity, and I think that's sad. And I hope that doesn't happen for some of these smaller Christian colleges, even though they have this pressure not to adhere to in any sort of doctrinaire profession. And they're trying not to be doctrinaire, but the other end of the spectrum isn't good either. So, I don't know how exactly that relates to academic freedom, but I do feel like the identity of the institution is important in this conversation.

In addition to religious aspects, participants also reported other aspects of *Institutional Identity*. Some mentioned behavioral expectations that have become cliché at Christian universities—abstaining from: using alcohol, tobacco, or drugs; viewing R-rated movies or gratuitous displays of nudity; and having sex outside of heterosexual marriage. Others identified issues that were controversial at their Christian universities and the positions taken on each issue that contributed to the *Institutional Identity*. These included the *Debate over Human Origins* (evolution versus creationism) and *Human Sexuality* (abortion, gender roles, portrayal of nudity or sexual abuse, or homosexuality and same-sex marriage). Accordingly, participants

considered *Institutional Identity*—its religious, behavioral, and controversial aspects—as an important value that coexisted with academic freedom.

To summarize, in answer to the first research question, participants in this study defined academic freedom primarily as *Engaging Students*, while at the same time acknowledging that academic freedom could also be defined as *Pursuing TRUTH* or *Practicing Scholarly Activities*. Regardless of their preferred definition, participants also reported that the academic freedom they possessed was not absolute, but operated beside other coexisting values: *Personal Beliefs or Principles*, *Concern for Students*, *Christian Orthodoxy*, *Professional Standards or Ethics*, and *Institutional Identity*. As important values for faculty scholars working at Christian institutions, they operate in the same environment with academic freedom as equally important principles necessary for the Christian scholarly endeavor. However, as will be shown in the next section, at times these values conflict, even if they generally coexist harmoniously.

Part III – Describing Critical Incidents

Faculty participants related 57 different critical incidents that sharpened their perceptions of academic freedom at Christian colleges or universities. When asked if there was an incident that affected their ideas about academic freedom or caused a change in their thinking, feeling, or action regarding academic freedom, participants shared incidents that could be identified in three ways, according to: the type of academic freedom involved; what issue impacting academic freedom was involved, especially those incidents that involved a significant interaction between a controversial issue and the institution's statement of faith; and the outcomes of critical incidents that sharpened their perception of academic freedom. Notably, only three participants reported having *Experienced no issues* regarding academic freedom. Table 5 portrays these characteristics of the critical incidents narrated by faculty participants. Most of the critical

incidents involved statements of faith, and these incidents are emphasized in the following analysis since this was directly related to the research questions.

This section answers the second research question concerning how do faculty members describe critical incidents that affected their thinking, feeling, or actions regarding academic freedom. It briefly outlines the categories of critical incidents based on the type of academic freedom or the type of controversial issue involved, but then focuses on the ultimate outcomes of the critical incidents themselves, and the important qualifications that added context to the general findings. Hence, this section analyzes the critical incidents that shaped participants' ideas about academic freedom and what outcomes occurred as a result. Overall the incidents suggested that operating in a complex value system such as a Christian college or university requires regular recalibration.

Categories of Academic Freedom

In the scholarly literature, academic freedom has been described as granting faculty freedom in teaching, research and publication, and public speech (cf. AAUP, 2015b; Finkin & Post, 2009; Fish, 2014; among others). As expected, participants in this study narrated critical incidents that involved these traditional aspects of academic freedom. *Teaching* (including course design, classroom instruction, and advising students), *Research and Publication* (involving traditional investigatory activities and written dissemination of the results), and *Public Speech* (involving utterances shared openly with the community) comprised the traditional categories of academic freedom assumed by professional faculty associations to be the core scholarly activities to which academic freedom applies. However, participants also reported one additional category, *Institutional Academic Freedom*.

Institutional Academic Freedom. When they discussed *Institutional Academic Freedom*, participants related critical incidents involving the ethos or identity of the entire college or university community that affected the participant's perception of academic freedom. In this concept, an authority such as the board of trustees, officers of administration, or other officials initiated an action that the faculty member felt impinged on their individual academic freedom. For example, Deborah—an alumna and current associate professor of sociology with seven years' experience in a large, baccalaureate university owned by a denomination in the Reformed theological tradition, but who disagreed that she possessed academic freedom at her university—related an incident which she called “Memogate” that involved the administration issuing an official policy concerning homosexuality and same-sex marriage without prior consultation with the faculty or employing the university's governance system. While many participants acknowledged their administration's prerogative to establish and maintain an *Institutional Identity*, a few participants who experienced such critical incidents also recognized that doing so may cause conflict between faculty members and the institution.

Significant Issues and Academic Freedom

Another way to understand the critical incidents that sharpened participants' perception of academic freedom entailed identifying the central issue that caused the participant to change their perception of academic freedom. Most of these critical incidents involved cultural issues such as *Human Sexuality* and the *Debate over Human Origins* and how those related to biblical teachings articulated in the institution's statement of faith. Incidents of *Human Sexuality* involved prominent social issues such as abortion, gender roles, depiction of nudity or sexual abuse in the media, and homosexuality or same-sex marriage. The *Debate over Human Origins* involved controversies over accepting the scientific theory of human evolution, the scriptural

belief of divine creation, or some combination of the two. Whether creation, evolution, or some combination was affirmed depended upon whatever view the administration found acceptable, which caused conflict when a faculty member held a contrary view. Other critical incidents entailed differences about *Interpretation of the Bible*. These incidents focused on specific theological or religious concerns where a faculty member's publication or speech conflicted with a generally accepted Christian belief or specific doctrine found in the institution's statement of faith. These issues created *Occasional Dissonance* and became more prominent after a change in administrations, when the new leadership assumed a more pronounced, conservative position on these controversial issues that lead to increased concern among the faculty participants about the extent of academic freedom at their institution. Only a minority of miscellaneous critical incidents did not involve the institution's statement of faith. Thus, when controversial issues—*Human Sexuality*, the *Debate over Human Origins*, and *Interpretation of the Bible*—conflicted with the institution's statement of faith, these incidents sharpened participants' perceptions of academic freedom, in some cases leading to increased concern among the faculty participants about the extent of academic freedom at their institution.

Outcomes of Critical Incidents

In addition to analyzing critical incidents according to their category or controversial issue, the incidents could be examined in a third way—by the incidents' final outcomes that sharpened participants' perception of academic freedom. The outcomes comprised *Thoughtful Introspection*, *Stewardship of Voice*, and *Employment Status Extremes*. Most of the outcomes were positive: they taught participants how to act appropriately or wisely in their positions as professors or they affirmed the professor's own practice. A few outcomes were negative and directly impacted the employment status of a colleague, often entailing a separation from the

university. Overall, the outcomes of the critical incidents illustrated that faculty participants' understanding of academic freedom changed because of their professional practice, not by direct instruction or personal research. That is, participants learned by doing—as a concept, academic freedom was “caught and not taught.” Put another way, the incidents suggest that regular recalibration is necessary for operating in a complex value system such as a Christian college or university in combination with other professional standards.

Thoughtful Introspection. By far the most frequently reported outcome of the critical incidents that participants reported entailed *Thoughtful Introspection*. When participants shared notions of *Thoughtful Introspection*, they indicated that the critical incident simply caused them to think and reflect about what the incident meant for their understanding of academic freedom. For example, experiencing others' negative behavior—such as requiring students read one's own book even though it was not germane to the course, domineering a junior faculty colleague co-teaching a course, plagiarizing a speech, concealing one's own denominational affiliation different from one's employer while simultaneously proselytizing students, or saying in class that New York City deserved the 9/11 terrorist attacks—all while claiming academic freedom to do so, affected participants' perceptions of academic freedom. After such a negative experience, participants took to heart the encounter and resolved never to act in such a negative way in the future. They learned that academic freedom was not something to be misused or abused, but rather to be used respectfully and with the consideration of others in mind. In these incidents, the outcome involved personal reflection and not immediate action.

Stewardship of Voice. Another common outcome described by most of the faculty participants entailed the concept of *Stewardship of Voice*, whereby professors recognize the authority they have when speaking, and learn to discipline their voices according to the context.

The concept also meant, on only a few occasions, a willingness to self-censor one's own speech, thus avoiding unnecessary controversy, scrutiny, or even reprimand. David—who was an associate professor of bible and theology and alumnus from the medium sized, Master's institution in the West where he has worked for the past 23 years—articulated the concept that others similarly described:

It's what we call "Stewardship of Voice." We have a voice and that voice has power. It comes with our positions. It comes with our relationships within the institution in relationship to students. So, the use of power has this moral dimension to it and we have to be aware of it and then steward it. That is to say, "We know we have power. We're going to use it in ways that are responsible, that are defensible, that are relationally and intellectually and theologically defensible. We're going to do it out in the open."

Participants invoked *Stewardship of Voice* when engaging colleagues in dialogue, ensuring that one offered a proper level of respect and civility for those engaged in discussion.

Employment Status Extremes. Finally, more than half of the participants reported incidents representing *Employment Status Extremes*. Such incidents involved controversial issues that conflicted with the institution's statement of faith and frequently resulted in outcomes opposite to one another: affirmation of the faculty member's actions resulting in retention, or condemnation of the faculty member's actions ending with separation. When the university affirmed the faculty member, the administration took steps to accommodate the faculty member's action, or protect the faculty member from criticism, calls for separation, or other outside interference. For example, Abigail—a professor of social work in her 32nd year and educated at secular institutions who strongly agreed that she had academic freedom at the medium-sized, Master's level, Christian institution in the Midwest—narrated an interaction she

had with her dean about an incident involving *Human Sexuality* in the 1980s when she desired to invite an LGBT individual to address her social work class, something that would have been taboo at the time. The dean supported her efforts, provided accommodations were made to hold the class off campus and to allow students to opt out of the class session. Other participants reported being supported through incidents relating to the *Debate over Human Origins* or *Interpretation of the Bible*. Conversely, others reported that when the university condemned a faculty member's actions, sometimes the faculty member separated from the institution—often because of a perceived conflict with the institution's statement of faith. For example, participants reported the Wheaton-Hawkins incident—where a professor agreed to leave the university after publicly stating that Muslims and Christians worship the same God—as a prime example. Others reported similar incidents that involved the *Debate over Human Origins* or *Human Sexuality* where the conflict ended in separation. Whether the views of the faculty member were supported or condemned depended on the degree to which the issue causing conflict with the institution's statement of faith was controversial and what view the administration ultimately accepted, which varied from institution to institution.

To summarize, in answer to the second research question, almost all participants identified critical incidents that led them to refine their views about academic freedom. Some of these incidents related to what type of academic freedom was involved: *Teaching, Research and Publication, Public Speech, or Institutional Academic Freedom*. Other incidents involved conversations about the relationship between controversial issues—such as *Human Sexuality*, the *Debate over Human Origins*, and other issues of *Interpretation of the Bible*—and institutional statements of faith that further refined participants' perceptions of academic freedom. Many of these types of incidents directly involved the institution's statement of faith, but others involved

miscellaneous issues and did not. Finally, the outcomes of the critical incidents—engaging in *Thoughtful Introspection*, practicing *Stewardship of Voice*, and observing the *Employment Status Extremes* of full support or termination—reported by faculty participants also sharpened faculty perceptions of academic freedom. Most of the adjustments faculty participants made because of the critical incidents were comfortable ones that could easily be accepted; a very few were uncomfortable adjustments, especially when the incidents involved highly controversial issues or resulted in separation from the university.

Part IV – Navigating Academic Freedom and Statements of Faith

Christian scholar Mark Noll (2006) has observed the challenge that confronts Christian faculty and institutions:

Christian institutions of higher education [and Christian scholars] are poised between the demands of free academic inquiry and of committed theological loyalty. Without the first, it is hard to see the Christian colleges preserving intellectual viability, but without the second they will not retain their Christian character. (pp. 35-36)

This section addresses the third research question, and describes how faculty participants working at Christian colleges and universities navigated, with some exceptions, between commitments to academic freedom and institutional doctrines found in official statements of faith. One theme emerged from the interviews: in general, faculty participants reported being able to maintain their commitments to academic freedom and institutional religious doctrines since the statements of faith themselves afforded extensive freedom. The following sections explore this theme before summarizing how faculty participants navigated between academic freedom and Christian faith.

Statements of Faith Afforded Extensive Freedom

Faculty participants reported that one reason they could navigate academic freedom and statements of faith was because statements of faith afforded extensive freedom, even though a few participants narrated incidents that qualified this general theme. There were three reasons why statements of faith afforded extensive freedom. First, the statements of faith provided opportunities for participants to infuse scholarship with faith, alloying together all aspects of a participant's life, whether personal and professional, spiritual and temporal, or sacred and secular. For these participants, faith and scholarship were *Seamless, Combined, or Without Differentiation*, that is, participants understood that faith and scholarship worked together hand-in-hand, not as separate and distinct concepts, but as connected and similar ones. Second, the statements of faith outlined broadly Christian beliefs and eschewed fundamentalist theological particularities, which might have excluded a wide range of orthodox Christians from the university faculty; that is, the statements of faith were *Doctrinal but not Dogmatic*. They were doctrinal in that they maintained the core teachings of orthodox Christianity, but they were not dogmatic in that they did not insist on upholding narrow or parochial understandings of Christian doctrines. Third, participants reported that *Self-selection* in hiring reduced potential conflict between individual faculty members and institutions, thus making navigating between academic freedom and statements of faith easier to accomplish. Finally, while most participants affirmed that statements of faith afforded extensive freedom, a few offered incidents that qualified the general theme. These were incidents where faith and scholarship were *Separated*, denominational affiliation adversely affected academic freedom, and controversial issues such as *Human Sexuality* conflicted with statements of faith, and thus made it difficult for some

participants to navigate their commitments to both academic freedom and their university's statement of faith.

Seamless, Combined, or Without Differentiation. While three participants perceived faith and academic freedom as *Separated*, a majority of participants reported little conflict between the two, and suggested that faith and academic freedom appeared to be *Seamless, Combined, or Without Differentiation*. By this, participants meant that faith and scholarship were amalgamated, not separated or compartmentalized. Faith and scholarship infused or permeated each other in such a way or to such an extent as to be largely indistinguishable and indivisible; they alloyed together. When asked to characterize the relationship between academic freedom and the university's statement of faith, Leah—an assistant professor of education with one year of experience at a medium-sized Master's university in the Midwest—commented, “Actually for me it's been very seamless. I don't even really notice any bound[aries] to anything, it's very free.” Moreover, the integration of faith and scholarship was not something that was forced, as if one had to work hard to put them together. Rather, for many, combining faith and scholarship was easy and effortless—like breathing, a process that just occurred naturally—and something so fundamental that it was unnoticeable.

Some participants who considered faith and freedom to be *Seamless, Combined, or Without Differentiation* had difficulty distinguishing between the two, since they saw no conflict or tension between them. Sarah—a retired public middle school teacher who is now an assistant professor of education with three years of experience at a Master's institution with a large student enrollment but a small faculty—captured it best when she said:

When Jesus was on this earth he engaged in incredibly difficult conversations. He was in his own right a Rabbi and scholar.... And he was very open to engaging the tough

questions of that day. So, I've never seen academic freedom and matters of faith to be in conflict with one another.

Accordingly, several faculty participants suggested that their personal faith and scholarly activities that involved their academic freedom were *Seamless, Combined, or Without Differentiation*.

At the same time, a very few participants indicated that faith and scholarship were *Separated*, meaning that there was little interaction between the two. For example, Naomi—an assistant professor of biology with degrees from public institutions who had four years' experience working at a small Master's level institution in the South—said that faith and scholarship were “aligned in parallel and don't cross too many times.” Others echoed this sentiment, for example, Mark—an alumnus of a sister CCCU institution different from the one where he taught as a professor of biology with more than a decade of experience at a small, Northeastern, Master's institution—explained that faith and scholarship were *Separated*, “Since science is a purely empirical pursuit that we practice as a separate...area of thinking as compared to the spiritual realm...in other words the scientific process cannot delve into questions of metaphysics or spiritual existence or properties.” Hence, while there were many who described personal faith and scholarship as *Seamless, Combined, or Without Differentiation*, very few said they remained *Separated*.

Doctrinal but not Dogmatic. Greater than three-fourths of faculty participants perceived that statements of faith were *Doctrinal but not Dogmatic*, while a less than one-fourth indicated that institution's relationship with the affiliated denomination, depending on how close it was, had some effect on their academic freedom. Therefore, another reason why some faculty participants perceived that statements of faith afforded extensive freedom was because they

considered their scope and range to be broadly Christian, that is, they considered them to be *Doctrinal but not Dogmatic*. Primarily, as Rebekah—a professor of music educated at public universities with 15 years of teaching at her medium sized, Master’s level, Christian institution in the Northeast—said, “[Our] statement of faith is very general—at our school anyway. It’s general enough where the salvation message in Christ...is emphasized, and that’s the key component. So, it really leaves utmost freedom academically.” When faculty participants described statements of faith as *Doctrinal but not Dogmatic*, they indicated that even though the university and its official religious beliefs were generally orthodox or even adhered to a specific theological tradition, the statements of faith were not so fundamentalist or parochial that other believers whose convictions might have been different or aligned with another Christian tradition would be necessarily excluded. In fact, participants mentioned that faculty members from their universities worshipped at churches from a diverse array of Christian denominations: The Assemblies of God, the Church of Christ, the Church of God, The Episcopal Church, The Evangelical Friends Church, the Mennonite Church, the Nazarene Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Church, the Wesleyan Church, and the United Methodist Church; as well as Baptist churches, independent or non-denominational churches, and churches from other branches of Christianity, namely those in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic communions.

At the same time, some participants also noted that the relationship with the institution’s founding denomination, depending on how close it was, qualified their academic freedom. They indicated that scrutiny from a founding denomination or its church members could sometimes, but not always, negatively impact a faculty member’s academic freedom. Also, some participants noted that controversial issues such as *Human Sexuality*, the *Debate over Human Origins*, or *Interpretation of the Bible* sometimes sparked conflict that made it more difficult for

faculty members to navigate between academic freedom and statements of faith. Thus, most participants described the statements of faith at their universities as *Doctrinal but not Dogmatic*, which allowed Christians with diverse church affiliations to participate in the life of the university. However, some also noted two qualifications: for some participants, a university's denominational affiliation could affect academic freedom, and controversial issues could spark conflict that made navigating between academic freedom and statements of faith more challenging.

Self-selection in Hiring. Finally, participants reported that navigating between academic freedom and statements of faith was made easier by *Self-selection* in hiring. This entailed taking care during the faculty hiring, promotion, and tenure process to appoint faculty members with a confirmed interest in Christian higher education, emphasizing qualities important to the university, both religious and scholarly, or to screen out potential candidates that would not be a good fit for the university, especially those who could not subscribe to the institution's statement of faith. Priscilla—who attended public universities for her degrees, was an associate professor of social work with four years of experience at her current institution, a medium-sized Christian university in the Midwest—said it this way:

Well, first, our particular statement of faith, in many ways it determines who are my colleagues, and who of us work here, because you must ascribe to the statement of faith at our university to be employed. For me personally, I work at a Wesleyan school, I am a Presbyterian, but our statement of faith is doctrinally fairly similar, I would say, even to the Apostles' Creed. I wouldn't say it's very Wesleyan.... So basically, I concur with the statement of faith, and it affects not just what I do as a professor, but pretty much how I live most of my life, or all of my life, in an attempt anyway. So, I can't say that I'm

always thinking, "Oh, the statement of faith says this," because I believed those things before I started to work here, but I would say that the beliefs that are outlined on the statement of faith impact what I do, hopefully on a moment-by-moment basis.

Thus, *Self-selection* reduced conflict between individuals and institutions and made navigating between academic freedom and statements of faith easier.

To summarize, in answer to the third research question, faculty participants generally navigated both academic freedom and official religious doctrines found in statements of faith because the statements themselves afforded extensive freedom: academic freedom and religious faith were viewed as *Seamless, Combined, or Without Differentiation*, the statements of faith were *Doctrinal but not Dogmatic*, and faculty and institutions engaged in *Self-selection* in hiring, which made navigating academic freedom and statements of faith easier since it reduced potential conflicts between individual faculty members and the institution. However, some participants offered important qualifications to this otherwise predominant theme: sometimes faith and freedom were *Separated*, denominational affiliation affected academic freedom, and controversial issues sometimes conflicted with statements of faith, and thus made it difficult for some participants to navigate their commitments to both academic freedom and their university's statement of faith.

Part V – Summary of Findings

To summarize, analysis of data from faculty participants lead to the creation of four broad themes. Table 6 presents a frequency matrix (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) that illustrates where categories and themes emerged from the interview data. First, faculty primarily defined academic freedom as a freedom to engage students for their well-being. Regardless of how they defined the concept, the academic freedom participants described was broad, generous,

Table 6
Coding Frequency Matrix (N=28)

Research Question/ Theme /Category	Sources																												
	Abigail	Anna	Caleb	David	Deborah	Esther	Ethan	Hannah	Isaac	Isaiah	Jacob	Joanna	John	Judith	Leah	Luke	Lydia	Mark	Martha	Mary	Naomi	Priscilla	Rachel	Rebekah	Ruth	Sarah	Susannah	Tabitha	Total
Research Question 1																													
Defining Academic Freedom																													
Engaging Students	1	1				1										1	1			1		1			1		1	1	9
Pursuing Truth			1	1		1				1	1			1	1		1				1		1			1		1	8
Pursuing Scholarly Activities					1		1	1	1			1	1					1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	16
Coexisting values																													
Personal Beliefs or Principles		1	1	1	1	1			1	1		1		1	1	1												1	12
Concern for Students	1	1										1		1	1							1	1	1		1			9
Christian Orthodoxy			1	1		1		1		1		1	1									1	1			1		1	9
Professional Standards or Ethics				1	1	1			1				1				1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	14
Institutional Identity			1	1			1			1		1	1	1			1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	16
Research Question 2																													
Requires On-going Recalibration																													
Categories of Academic Freedom																													
Teaching	1		1		1	1	1	1		1		1	1	1	1	1			1		1		1	1			1	1	17
Research & Publication		1							1	1			1				1					1					1		7
Public Speech		1				1					1		1					1											5
Institutional Academic Freedom			1	1	1			1						1		1		1				1	1			1	1		11
Issues of Academic Freedom																													
Human Sexuality	1		1	1	1	1		1						1		1			1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	15
Human Origins			1					1	1				1					1				1		1		1	1		8
Interpretation of the Bible										1	1		1				1	1											5
Outcomes of Academic Freedom																													
Thoughtful Introspection	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	24
Stewardship of Voice		1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	1		1	1		1		1	1		1			1	1	1	18
Employment Status Extremes	1					1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1			1	1				1	1		1	1	1	1	16
Research Question 3																													
Statements of Faith Afford Extensive Freedom																													
Seamless, Combined or Without Differentiation	1	1	1			1			1	1			1		1	1			1		1		1		1		1	1	15
Doctrinal but not Dogmatic	1		1	1		1	1	1	1	1				1			1	1		1		1		1	1	1	1	1	19
Self-selection		1					1			1	1	1	1	1		1		1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	16

or wide-ranging. However, second, it was neither absolute nor limitless, but relative to and limited by other important, coexisting values. Such values acted like invisible forces. They were not boundaries or limits, but internal, centripetal forces that kept scholarly activities within an orbit that linked different aspects of faculty roles. These values included *Personal Beliefs or Principles*, a *Concern for Students*, *Christian Orthodoxy*, *Professional Standards or Ethics*, and *Institutional Identity*. While frequently existing in harmony, sometimes these values conflicted with one another, particularly when faculty perceived that the university's leadership made unilateral decisions without faculty members' input.

Third, the critical incidents described by participants suggested that operating in a complex value system such a Christian college or university requires on-going recalibration of the relationship between important scholarly values from time to time. Such recalibration of one's perception of academic freedom occurred when faculty participants personally or vicariously experienced an incident that challenged their previous understanding of the concept. A Christian college or university is a complex value system not only because academic freedom is one among many important values operating in the system, but also because controversial cultural issues involving *Human Sexuality*, the *Debate over Human Origins*, or differences of *Interpretation of the Bible* challenge the existing religious beliefs found in institutional statements of faith. Most of the incidents requiring adjustments were comfortable ones that could easily be accepted; a very few were not, especially when the incidents involved highly salient or controversial issues. For participants in this study, when recalibration of their understandings of academic freedom was necessary, such adjustment took the form of engaging in *Thoughtful Introspection*, practicing *Stewardship of Voice*, and observing the *Employment Status Extremes* experienced by their faculty colleagues.

Finally, faculty participants suggested being able to maintain their commitments to both academic freedom and institutional religious doctrines because the statements of faith themselves afforded extensive freedom. Rather than conflicting with each other, participants generally perceived commitments to academic freedom and religious doctrine were alloyed together; that is, faith and scholarship infused or permeated each other in such a way or to such an extent as to be indistinguishable and indivisible from one another. Additionally, most participants perceived that the statements of faith were written in such a non-sectarian way that they allowed Christians with orthodox but diverse theological views or church affiliations to fully participate in the university community. Lastly, a contributing factor that made keeping commitments to academic freedom and religious doctrine easier for the individual and institution was the selection, promotion, and tenure process. These university processes screened faculty members according to the university's religious vision, mission, and values, especially those official religious beliefs found in institutional statements of faith. At the same time, a few participants perceived difficulty navigating between academic freedom and statements of faith because of the university's relationship with an affiliated denomination or because faculty members held views different from the university on specific controversial issues.

Chapter 5 – Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze how faculty members at Christian colleges and universities perceived academic freedom at their current institutions. The design entailed basic qualitative research that also employed a modified version of Critical Incident Technique. To elicit data for the study, 28 faculty members from 13 Christian colleges or universities that have an official statement of faith were interviewed using WebEx, an online telecommunications platform that afforded video and audio communication. After the interviews were transcribed, they were analyzed to understand the categories and themes that emerged from the data and answered the research questions. These questions asked: first, how faculty *defined* academic freedom; second, how they *described* incidents involving academic freedom; and third, how they *navigated* between academic freedom and official statements of faith.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings and draw conclusions. First, I present and discuss the key findings according to each research question in relationship to the literature. Then, I discuss the contributions of the findings to the literature and a few limitations to the study. Finally, I present implications for research, practice, and policy as well as some concluding observations.

Defining Academic Freedom – Research Question 1

Two themes emerged from the data solicited from faculty participants that concerned the first research question—how faculty at Christian colleges and universities *defined* academic freedom. The first theme related to how faculty defined the term: primarily for the benefit of students. The second theme related to whether participants sensed academic freedom was limited or what boundaries there were for academic freedom. Rather than limits or bounds,

however, what participants described was better conceived as coexisting values that faculty felt were important to their work as scholars.

Faculty Academic Freedom Primarily for the Benefit of Students

In answer to the first research question—how faculty *defined* academic freedom—, faculty participants defined academic freedom primarily as promoting students' well-being, but also acknowledged other definitions. The literature is replete with definitions of academic freedom that affirm this finding. The American Association of University Professors (1915/2015a; 1940/2015b), for example, has repeatedly emphasized teaching, which supports this finding. The studies that Poch (1990) and Bohall (2005) conducted also support this finding, since they revealed, respectively, that at Christian institutions academic freedom policy commonly entailed teaching or that faculty participants defined academic freedom in terms of teaching. Furthermore, my analysis suggests that their definition of academic freedom is more akin to the first school of thought, the *It's Just a Job* school, described by Fish (2014), which also embraces the academic freedom of teaching.

In contrast, however, my analysis in this study indicates that while teaching was their primary professional concern when it comes to academic freedom, participants defined the concept more broadly to include not only classroom instruction but also their students' overall intellectual and spiritual well-being whether inside or outside the classroom. Thus, this finding contradicts Swezey & Ross (2011) whose findings suggested that faculty members of a single evangelical Christian university defined academic freedom to include Christian theology, educational philosophy, or political ideology. It also contradicts Jacobs' findings (2011) where participants at a Catholic institution defined academic freedom in terms of free speech. Moreover, it contradicts the other four schools of thought that Fish (2014) described, which

understand academic freedom as emphasizing the common good, academic exceptionalism, scholarly critique, or social revolution.

Academic Freedom is One Among Other Values

Although participants described an academic freedom that was broad, generous, or wide-ranging, it was neither absolute nor limitless, but relative to and limited by other important, coexisting values. This second finding also addressed the first research question—how faculty *defined* academic freedom. Participants were asked to describe limits or boundaries of academic freedom as they defined it. The analysis revealed that participants described academic freedom not as having limits imposed by external authority, but rather as one among other internal values they felt important to their work as scholars in a Christian institution. These values acted as centripetal forces that kept scholarly activities within an orbit that linked different aspects of faculty roles. Such an understanding refocuses the view of academic freedom away from religious belief as a limitation toward a view that religious belief is an important value in addition to academic freedom and others that coexisted within the context of a Christian university. This finding contradicts the previous literature by secular scholars that have viewed individual religious beliefs and institutional statements of faith as limitations imposed on academic freedom (Bowen, Schwartz, & Camp, 2014; P. Conn, 2014; S. Conn, 2014; Fish, 1996; Hofstadter, 1996; MacIver, 1955; Metzger, 1961; Matchlup, 1969; Nelson, 2010; Thomson & Finkin, 1993; Wagner, 2006; Wolfe, 2000, 2002). The prime example of this phenomenon is the AAUP's *1940 Statement* (1940/2015b), especially its "Limitations Clause," which admonished religious institutions to state prior to employment any constraints of academic freedom due to the religious nature of the institution.

It also contrasts with other literature where Christian scholars have responded to their secular colleagues, but still employed the notion of limitation rather than reframing the argument differently. For example, Diekema (2000) and Litfin (2004) have contended that even if religious belief is a limitation, it is a voluntary one. Others have also argued that faculty members of Christian universities perform scholarship within a framework of faith (Cavanaugh, 2004; Holmes, 1987; Marsden, 1994, 1997; Ream & Glanzer, 2007, 2013; Wolterstorff, 2004). The few empirical studies found in the literature also viewed religious belief as a limitation of academic freedom, not only when examining institutional policy as Horner (1983), Poch (1990), and Woodruff (1995) suggested, but also when analyzing faculty perspectives, as Bohall (2005), Joeckel & Chesnes (2012), and Swezey & Ross (2011) did. Regardless of their specific findings, these scholars approached the question of academic freedom at Christian institutions from the perspective that religious belief is a limitation, which the findings in this study contradict.

Concurrently, the analysis in this study suggests that faculty members of Christian colleges and universities also understand that institutional identity is an important value. What others (Cavanaugh, 2004; Jeffrey, 2007; Ream & Glanzer, 2007) argued conceptually, the findings from this study affirm empirically. By showing that faculty participants perceived that academic freedom may be valued both individually and institutionally, this study's findings affirm the paradox that Callen (1983) discovered and Noll (2006) articulated: free academic inquiry and committed theological loyalty may exist together, and such dual commitments are not destructive of one another.

Thus, this study contradicts previous views that understood religious beliefs as limitations of individual freedom and that eschewed the idea that academic freedom applies to institutions as well as individuals. It re-conceptualizes the relationship between academic freedom—both

individual and institutional academic freedom—and religious belief as values that coexist together within a Christian university. Such reconceptualization does not envision religious belief as an outside boundary limiting academic freedom, nor does it understand academic freedom as absolute nor limitless. Rather, it understands academic freedom is relative to and constrained by other important, coexisting values, including religious beliefs as well as other values. All such values acted like invisible forces. They were not boundaries or limits imposed externally, but internal, centripetal forces that kept scholarly activities within an orbit that linked different aspects of faculty roles. Such a reconceptualization is a major departure from the existing literature that views academic freedom at Christian institutions as being limited by an externally imposed religious belief.

Describing Critical Incidents – Research Question 2

Based on the critical incidents they described in answer to the second research question—how they *described* incidents involving academic freedom—, faculty participants related incidents that involved *Teaching, Research and Publication, Public Speech* as a private citizen, and *Institutional Academic Freedom*. While the first three categories view academic freedom from an individual perspective, the last category focuses on academic freedom from an institutional perspective. *Teaching* included activities such as course design, classroom instruction, and advising students academically, socially, and even spiritually. *Research and Publication* involved traditional investigatory activities and the written dissemination of the results. *Public Speech* involved utterances shared openly with the community outside of the university. In addition to these traditional categories of academic freedom, participants also reported a further one, *Institutional Academic Freedom*. When they discussed this category, participants related critical incidents involving the ethos or identity of the entire college or

university community that affected the participant's perception of academic freedom. In this category, an authority such as the board of trustees, officers of administration, or other officials initiated an action that the faculty member felt impinged on their individual academic freedom. Much of the literature supports these findings that academic freedom consists of individuals' freedom of *Teaching, Research and Publication*, or *Public Speech*, or the corporate freedom of *Institutional Academic Freedom* (AAUP, 1940/2015b; Alexander & Alexander, 2011; Cavanaugh, 2004; Diekema, 2000; *Garcetti*, 2006; Hutchens, 2009; Jeffrey, 2007; Kaplin & Lee, 2014; Litfin, 2004; Metzger, 1993b; McConnell, 1993; O'Neil, 2008; *Pickering*, 1968; Poch, 1993; Ream & Glanzer, 2007; Schrecker, 1983; Spurgeon, 2007; *Sweezy*, 1957; Van Alstyne, 1993; White, 2010).

Navigating Academic Freedom and Statements of Faith – Research Question 3

Two themes emerged during data analysis that answered the third research question—how participants *navigated* between academic freedom and official statements of faith. The first theme suggests that academic freedom requires recalibration from time to time. The second theme indicates that statements of faith afford extensive freedom.

Academic Freedom Requires Recalibration from Time to Time

While indicating that academic freedom was one among other values important to their scholarly work, faculty participants further suggested that operating in a complex value system such as a Christian college or university requires regular recalibration, especially because contemporary issues—for example, issues relating to *Human Sexuality*, *Human Origins*, or *Interpretation of the Bible*—sometimes conflict with religious beliefs found in official statements of faith. Such recalibration is necessary and ongoing because personal values, professional ideals such as academic freedom, and the university's interpretation of its own mission

occasionally come into conflict. This finding makes explicit what was only implicit in the previous literature—that faculty perceptions of academic freedom change from time to time. Barger (2010), Bohal (2005), Goodell (2005), and Odenwald (2015) all suggested that faculty members' perception of academic freedom may change from time to time.

However, this study contradicts each of these previous studies regarding the cause of the change. The analysis in this study revealed that perceptions of academic freedom change when challenged by certain controversial issues. This finding does not contradict Bohal (2005) and Odenwald (2015) who suggested that perceptions of academic freedom change when a new administration takes charge, but it does add another reason why faculty views can shift. In other research, Barger (2010) observed both positive and negative predictors of satisfaction with academic freedom, but did not address whether or how such satisfaction indicators affected a change in perception. Similarly, Goodell (2005) addressed how faculty members learned about academic freedom—through informal discussions with and observations of other colleagues—but did not address when or under what conditions their perceptions changed.

The analysis in this study revealed that the faculty perceptions of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities changed from time to time when the existing perception was challenged, especially when salient, controversial issues conflicted with the interpretation of the institution's statement of faith. This finding expands the understanding available in previous literature. Like faculty members in Goodell's (2005) study, faculty members at Christian institutions in this study learned about academic freedom through conversations with and observations of their colleagues. However, this study's findings suggested that such learning occurs when controversial issues challenge existing faculty perceptions of academic freedom and those challenges initiate a recalibration in the perception of academic freedom.

Statements of Faith Afford Extensive Freedom

Also in response to the third research question—how participants *navigated* between academic freedom and official statements of faith—, faculty participants in this study suggested that although there are difficulties at times, they could maintain their commitments to both academic freedom and institutional religious doctrines because the statements of faith themselves afforded extensive freedom. This finding is supported by Joeckel & Chesnes (2012) who reported that 86% of faculty at Christian institutions agreed with the statement “I possess academic freedom at my college or university” (p. 376).

Previous studies of institutional academic freedom policy—the ones that Poch (1990) conducted at colleges and universities affiliated with traditional, mainline denominations, and Snell (1996) conducted at St. Olaf College, a Lutheran, church-related institution—also support this finding. They suggested that faculty perceptions of academic freedom are positively affected by eschewing extreme denominational sectarianism and by allowing a broader interpretation of institutional statements of faith. Their analyses support this study’s finding that since statements of faith were broadly Christian, navigation is possible, albeit with difficulties from time to time.

Finally, other research examining faculty perspectives of academic freedom supports the finding that statements of faith afford extensive freedom, albeit with occasional difficulties. Swezey & Ross’s (2011) research supports this finding since they explained that academic freedom at all institutions operates within some tension, whether religious or political. The investigation of Parker et al. (2007) also supports my finding because it also demonstrated that faculty members at religious institutions manage academic freedom and statements of faith by self-selection in hiring, and by a high degree of commitment to integration of faith and learning.

Faculty participants in this study similarly reported both concepts, which supports the theme that statements of faith afford extensive freedom.

Contributions to the Literature

This study contributes to the literature on academic freedom in four ways. First, it illustrates how faculty members at evangelical Protestant Christian colleges and universities—a segment of higher education whose perceptions are largely absent from the literature—defined academic freedom differently from colleagues at other institutions. It shows that participants defined academic freedom primarily as benefiting students—an emphasis not found in previous empirical studies. Second, it reframes academic freedom as one value among others that Christian faculty perceived as important to the higher educational endeavor. Most of the existing scholarly literature views individual or institutional religious belief as a limitation of academic freedom (Bowen, Schwartz, & Camp, 2014; Conn, P., 2014; Conn, S., 2014; Fish, 1996; Hofstadter, 1996; MacIver, 1955; Metzger, 1961; Matchlup, 1969; Nelson, 2010; Thomson & Finkin, 1993; Wagner, 2006; Wolfe, 2000, 2002). This study demonstrates that Christian faculty members view religious belief not as a limitation but as one important value, among others, that acts as centripetal forces keeping faculty members' scholarly activities within an orbit that linked different aspects of faculty roles. Third, this study contributes to the notion that faculty perceptions of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities require regular recalibration from time to time. This contribution is based on faculty members' experiences where they encountered issues of academic freedom that changed their perspective. None of the prior literature addresses academic freedom in this way—and none of the previous literature suggests that faculty perceptions require recalibration, nor when or under what conditions such recalibration occurs, something that this study accomplishes. Finally, this study adds to the

empirical findings about academic freedom at Christian institutions by explaining how faculty members navigate between personal religious commitments to institutional statements of faith and professional scholarly commitments to academic freedom: by working at institutions where statements of faith afford extensive freedom. While previous literature (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012; Poch, 1990; Snell, 1996) foreshadowed this finding, this study uniquely adds to the literature since it was reported by the faculty members themselves and it describes how such navigation occurs. Thus, this study updates, expands, and fills a gap in the current literature with current findings based on recent data from multiple institutions that describe the faculty perspectives of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities.

Limitations

Every research study has limitations which are important to recognize. One of this study's limitations related to sample size. Only six participants who completed the pre-interview survey and subsequently were available for interviews disagreed that they possessed academic freedom at their current institution. Having access to a larger pool of participants who had concerns about academic freedom at their institutions may have provided additional data that might have enhanced the findings of the study.

A second limitation also related to sample size. Only four institutions that participated in this study had strong ties with a denomination that directly influenced the college or university. The remaining institutions were affiliated with denominations, but remained independent with weaker ties to a denomination; no participating institution was completely independent. A sample with a greater number of institutions with strong denominational ties may have provided more data concerning the role that denominations may play in related higher education institutions and how this impacts faculty academic freedom.

A third limitation concerned the study's sample. More than half of the participating institutions identified themselves with the Methodist theological tradition; other theological traditions were represented, but no more than two institutions from any other theological tradition participated in the study. Different theological traditions may have philosophical or theological views of higher education that contrasts from others. If so, such an over sampling of institutions from the Methodist tradition—although unintentional—may have influenced the findings of the study.

The last two limitations dealt with the study's qualitative methodology. Critical Incident Technique relies upon the memory of participants to provide data related to the research questions. Even though participants were encouraged to share recent incidents in the past five years, some shared incidents that were older than that. While participants were instructed to share "critical" incidents that had a significant influence on their thinking, feeling, or action regarding academic freedom, participants who related incidents from the more distant past may not have remembered as many of the pertinent details of those incidents, thus affecting the data.

Finally, one other limitation related to research methodology. One aim of qualitative research is to understand why and how phenomena occur. Such research accomplishes this goal by eliciting thick, rich data from research study participants. Thus, qualitative research focuses on depth of investigation with a few participants, rather than a breadth of inquiry with many participants. Therefore, qualitative studies, by their nature, are not generalizable. They are, however, considered transferrable, with the caveat that one should understand the particular context before applying qualitative findings to that context. Although this study has limitations, they failed to affect the integrity and worthiness of the study.

Implications for Research, Practice, and Policy

The findings of this study have implications for future research, practice, and policy. Considering future research, understanding how academic freedom operates at secular institutions is just as important as know how it works at Christian ones. Therefore, this study's findings have implications for academic freedom research in secular public or private institutions. Understanding whether faculty at these institutions esteem academic freedom as the preeminent value or whether they understand it as one among others would reveal a deeper understanding of faculty perceptions at institutions that make up the majority of institutional types in higher education. Likewise, one might also conduct a study similar to this one, but refocusing the participant sample to include Christian faculty working in secular institutions.

One option for future research might also be examining the perceptions of academic freedom from the perspective of university administrators or trustees. A study might include leaders from secular or religious institutions, comparing their perceptions. Such research would reveal how these key university decision-makers perceive academic freedom operating at their institutions. Since little is known about the perspectives of academic freedom from these individuals, this type of study would fill a significant gap in the literature.

Of course, this study has significant implications for researchers investigating academic freedom at Christian institutions. Only six participants in this study reported that they disagreed that they possessed academic freedom at their institution. A future scholar investigating academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities might focus on this sub-group of faculty members. Investigating further why some Christian faculty members perceive they do not possess academic freedom may lead to additional findings about why this is so.

Another opportunity for future research includes exploring the relationship between Christian institutions of higher education and affiliated denominations and how this relationship affects faculty academic freedom. Only four institutions in this study maintained strong ties to an affiliated denomination, that is, they were directly owned or controlled by the denomination; the remainder were affiliated but independent institutions. Accordingly, understanding whether or to what extent denominational affiliation affects faculty academic freedom remains a question worthy of further investigation.

Similarly, most institutions participating in this study were of a Methodist theological perspective. While other theological viewpoints were represented in the sample, it remains unknown whether, to what extent, or how theological perspective affects faculty academic freedom. Future studies may clarify whether and to what extent that a relationship exists between faculty perceptions of academic freedom and institutional theological orientation.

Finally, theologians also have an opportunity to research the theological foundations that might support Christian notions of academic freedom. Not only is there a dearth of literature where scholars address academic freedom in this way, only a few participants in this study even mentioned that academic freedom might have such a theological foundation, let alone articulated what that foundation might be. Theological research that expands beyond mere citation of one or two Biblical passages which only provides a shaky religious rationalization is critically needed. Rigorous scholarship that advances a Biblical theology of academic freedom and applies it to the Christian endeavor of higher education would thus fill this gap in the existing literature.

This study also has implications for practice. In Christian or secular contexts, critical incidents should not be the only means available to faculty members to learn about academic freedom and how it applies generally, or at a specific institution. Additionally, for Christian

institutions, it is insufficient to indicate that the statement of faith impacts faculty work in faculty employment contracts. Such a practice is hardly satisfactory for ensuring that institution and individual understand the nature and role of academic freedom at an institution. Rather, trustees, presidents, provosts, and faculty leaders should engage an ongoing dialogue that will educate the others concerning their philosophy and practice of academic freedom, and will address any concerns about academic freedom at their institutions, regardless of institutional type or religious affiliation. Regular discussions—during new faculty orientation, for example, but also as a recurring topic of faculty development seminars or of faculty retreats—would be one beneficial action that institutional leaders could take. Likewise, leaders, perhaps in conjunction with faculty members, might also develop a repository of other resources such as webinars, white papers, or a list of citations to other scholarly literature that clarifies best practices of academic freedom, whether in secular or Christian institutions. Such resources would be helpful not only for constituents of the institution but for others outside the institution as well.

As the practice of shared governance indicates, faculty members should also be appropriately involved in policymaking that affects academic freedom. Several of the critical incidents described for this study involved occasions when the decision-making process failed to include faculty members. While trustees, provosts, and presidents may be confronted with instances when expediency requires quick decisions, such instances should nevertheless provide opportunities for faculty input. As Barger (2010) indicated in his study, the belief that faculty can change academic freedom policies is a positive indicator of satisfaction with academic freedom. Adopting the practice of involving faculty in the policy-making process would provide opportunities for a broader base of input, thus avoiding unnecessary angst over seemingly snap decisions, especially over highly controversial issues such as human sexuality or human origins.

Finally, this study has implications for policy. Knowing that academic freedom is one among other values important to faculty members at Christian colleges and universities is only a first step. Institutional policy makers such as trustees, presidents, provosts, or deans working at Christian institutions should act to define what academic freedom means at their institutions. Together with their faculty members, these policy makers should also clarify how and under what circumstances academic freedom operates in this religious context. Institutional policies, including but not limited to faculty manuals, should be periodically reviewed and updated to reflect the most current views of academic freedom held by the institution.

Likewise, institutional policy makers should explain the relationship between controversial issues and institutional statements of faith, doing so proactively, if possible. This should entail engaging both professional and theological experts since academic freedom in a Christian institution should reflect both, as well as address the controversial issues that challenge faith and academic freedom. Since faculty perspectives of academic freedom require recalibration from time to time, it seems probable that institutional perspectives will also need periodic adjustment. Doing so in a calm and dispassionate environment is preferable to one that is volatile and extreme, but doing so before controversy erupts requires vision and leadership.

Lastly, since academic freedom is one among other, and perhaps many values that faculty perceive as important, faculty leaders should endeavor to bring to light those other values that are important to faculty members at their institution. Subsequent discussions can then consider the relative importance of those values to each other, and what emphasis leaders believe should be given to particular values relative to others. For example, understanding that faculty members perceive students' well-being as more important than research or that personal Christian beliefs are more important than the institution's identity would be important to know. Based on an

understanding of their colleagues' values, faculty leaders can then begin to guide their colleagues from where they are to where they all desire to be.

Conclusion

The scholarly literature contains many perspectives about academic freedom and whether it exists at Christian colleges and universities, but there has been a lack of research on what faculty members of Christian institutions actually perceive about academic freedom and how it functions at their institutions. This study fills that gap in the literature by showing that faculty members of Christian colleges and universities define academic freedom primarily as engaging students, consider it as one among other values important in Christian academe, recognize that faculty perceptions of academic freedom require recalibration from time to time, and that even though there are exceptions, upholding commitments to academic freedom and institutional religious doctrines is possible because official statements of faith afford extensive freedom.

In other words, faculty participants in this study reported that they have succeeded in accomplishing the twin challenges to Christian higher education that Mark Noll (2006) perceived: maintaining intellectual integrity as scholars while simultaneously remaining true to their religious identity as Christians. As one participant, Sarah, put it best:

When Jesus was on this earth he engaged in incredibly difficult conversations. He was in his own right a Rabbi and scholar.... And he was very open to engaging the tough questions of that day. So, I've never seen academic freedom and matters of faith to be in conflict with one another.

Indeed, Jesus himself—when confronted with the question of whether it was lawful to pay taxes to the Roman government occupying Israel—urged, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's” (Matthew 22:21, ESV). Although not without

occasional difficulties, that is exactly what many Christian faculty members participating in this study have done—given to the academy those things that belong to the academy and to God the things that are God’s.

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Appendix A – Invitation Letter to CAOs

[DATE]

[CAO NAME]

[INSTITUTION]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY, STATE, ZIP]

Dear Dr. [CAO Last name]:

In conjunction with [the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities and] faculty members in the Virginia Tech School of Education, I am conducting a dissertation research project that investigates the faculty perceptions of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities. After graduating from Asbury College in 1996, I served on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Evangelicals from 2005 to 2008.

As an exemplar of Christian higher education, I have selected [COLLEGE] and request permission to conduct this research project at the institution you represent.

The research is concerned with how faculty members define academic freedom, describe experiences where they encountered issues of academic freedom, and navigate the interaction between academic freedom and institutional religious doctrines (as found in official statements of faith). Both my dissertation committee and Virginia Tech's Institutional Review Board have approved the project.

There are some required criteria for the institutions and individuals participating in the project. First, a participating institution must be a Christian college or university; have an official statement of faith; offer a broad curriculum in the arts and sciences; and seek to integrate faith and learning. Second, participating faculty members must be employed full-time. **All data collected for this project will remain confidential.** No institutions or individuals will be identified in any of the findings from the project.

Should you grant permission to participate in this research project, I will make two requests: (a) that you forward three email messages (a Call to Participate, a 2nd Reminder, a Final Reminder) to full-time faculty members at the institution and (b) that you point to where I could find any official documents relating to academic freedom or the Statement of Faith at your institution. Participation is voluntary, but your participation in this study is important.

Within the next few days, I will send a follow-up email. Please reply to that email indicating your willingness to participate in this research project.

Upon the completion of the research, I will gladly provide you a copy of our findings. You may request an executive summary by emailing me at the address below. At all times throughout this study, the identities of institutions and individuals participating in this research project will remain confidential. Again, **your cooperation with this study is very much appreciated.** Should you have any questions, please email them to me at jhwalz@vt.edu.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request. I look forward to hearing from you by [DATE].

Sincerely,

Jerald H. Walz
PhD Candidate - Higher Education
Virginia Tech
jhwalz@vt.edu • 703-408-2305

Appendix B – Faculty Call to Participate Email

Subject: Call to participate – study on Academic Freedom

Dear faculty member:

I invite you to participate in a research study that will investigate the faculty perceptions of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities. This study is undertaken with the cooperation of [Institution,] [the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities,] and faculty members in the Virginia Tech School of Education. You are receiving this email because you are a full-time faculty member at [Institution].

The research is concerned with how faculty members define academic freedom, describe experiences where they encountered issues of academic freedom, and navigate the interaction between academic freedom and institutional religious doctrines (as found in official statements of faith).

All full-time faculty members employed at [Institution] are eligible to participate. Participants agree to complete a short [pre-interview survey] and a WebEx interview via Internet (from a computer with a good Internet connection that has a microphone and speakers) or telephone that should last approximately 60 minutes. All data collected for this project will remain confidential. No institutions or individuals will be identified in any of the findings from the project. Your participation is voluntary.

Upon the completion of the research, I will gladly provide participants a summary report of the findings. At all times throughout this study, the identities of institutions and individuals participating in this research project will remain confidential. Again, participation in this study is very much appreciated.

To begin participating, please complete the [pre-interview survey]. This survey collects important data necessary for your participation, including your contact information, the best days and times for an interview, your current academic appointment and rank, your educational experience, and verifies your full-time employment status. This data will only be retained and analyzed if you complete an interview. To indicate your willingness to participate in the study, please click [here] and complete a pre-interview survey.

After you complete the survey, I will contact you to set a date and time for an interview, and provide you with an informed consent document.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request. I look forward to hearing from you by [DATE].

Sincerely,

Jerald H. Walz
PhD Candidate – Higher Education
Virginia Tech
jhwalz@vt.edu • 703-408-2305

[[hyperlink to pre-interview survey](#)]

Appendix C – Pre-screening Survey

Academic Freedom at Christian Colleges or Universities

Q1 The Faculty Perceptions of Academic Freedom at Christian Colleges and Universities
A dissertation research project being conducted by Jerald Walz, a PhD candidate in the School of Education at Virginia Tech

Pre-interview Survey

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research project investigating faculty academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities. The research is concerned with how faculty members define academic freedom, describe experiences where they encountered issues of academic freedom, and navigate the interaction between academic freedom and institutional religious doctrines (as found in official statements of faith).

All full-time faculty members employed at Christian colleges or universities with official statements of faith are eligible to participate. Participants agree to complete this pre-interview survey (approximately 5 minutes) and complete an interview via Internet or telephone (approximately 60 minutes).

All data collected for this project will remain confidential. No institutions or individuals will be identified in any of the findings from the project. Your participation is voluntary, and important.

Please complete this survey that collects important data necessary for your participation.

The survey asks for your contact information, educational experience, academic appointment, academic rank, the importance of academic freedom and institutional statements of faith, the best day and times for an interview, and for your informed consent for participation in the research. Please complete all the questions that follow, which should take 5 minutes or less.

Q2 Please enter your contact information:

Title (Dr, Prof, Mr/Ms, etc.) (1)

First name (2)

Last name (3)

Telephone number (4)

Email address (5)

Q3 Please tell me about your educational experience:

Q4 Where did you complete your UNDERGRADUATE education?

Q5 Where did you complete your GRADUATE education? (Please list more than one, if necessary)

Q6 What is the highest degree you have earned? (Please select one)

Bachelor's (BA, BS) (1)

Master's (MA, MS) (2)

MDiv (3)

MFA (4)

MBA (5)

LLB, JD (6)

MD, DDS (or equivalent) (7)

Other first professional degree beyond BA (DD, DMin, DVM, etc.) (8)

EdD (9)

PhD (10)

Other degree (11) _____

None (12)

Q7 Please tell me about your CURRENT academic appointment:

Q8 Do you have a FULL-TIME academic appointment?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q9 In what DEPARTMENT do you hold your appointment?

Q10 What is the SUBJECT of your academic appointment?

Q11 How many years have you held an academic appointment at your current institution?

Q12 What is your academic rank?

- Professor (1)
- Associate Professor (2)
- Assistant Professor (3)
- Lecturer (4)
- Instructor (5)
- Other (6) _____

Q13 Do you Agree or Disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
Academic freedom is critical to my work as a Christian scholar. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I possess academic freedom at my current college/university. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My personal Christian beliefs are relevant to my scholarship. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My scholarship involves issues of academic freedom. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am familiar with my institution's official Statement of Faith. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am comfortable affirming my institutions' official Statement of Faith. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q14 Are you willing to participate in an interview that lasts approximately 60 minutes?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q15 What is the BEST option for scheduling an interview?

What is the best DAY of the week for an interview? (Select one) (1)	<input type="radio"/> Monday (1)	<input type="radio"/> Tuesday (2)	<input type="radio"/> Wednesday (3)	<input type="radio"/> Thursday (4)	<input type="radio"/> Friday (5)	<input type="radio"/> Saturday (6)

Q16 What is the best TIME for you to be interviewed? (9 am to 9 pm, your LOCAL time)

Q17 What is an ALTERNATIVE option for scheduling an interview?

What is the alternative DAY of the week for an interview? (Select one) (1)	<input type="radio"/> Monday (1)	<input type="radio"/> Tuesday (2)	<input type="radio"/> Wednesday (3)	<input type="radio"/> Thursday (4)	<input type="radio"/> Friday (5)	<input type="radio"/> Saturday (6)

Q18 What is an alternative TIME for you to be interviewed? (9 am to 9 pm, your LOCAL time)

Q19 What is your LOCAL time zone?

- Eastern (1)
- Central (2)
- Mountain (3)
- Pacific (4)

Q20 Do you prefer to conduct the interview via Internet or Telephone?

- Internet (1)
- Telephone (2)

Q21 THANK YOU for completing this pre-interview survey. Interviews will be scheduled on a rolling basis during the spring semester 2016.

I will contact you soon to schedule an interview at a date and time convenient for you and to provide an interview consent form. I look forward to speaking with you soon. Thanks again for participation in this study of academic freedom at Christian colleges and universities.

Jerald Walz
PhD Candidate, Virginia Tech
Email: jhwalz@vt.edu
Mobile phone: 703-408-2305

Appendix D – Email inviting faculty to interview participation

Dear [Title Last Name]:

Thank you for completing the pre-interview survey indicating your interest in participating in the research study entitled “Faculty Perceptions of Academic Freedom at Christian Colleges and Universities.”

I would like to schedule an interview with you. An interview should last approximately 60 minutes.

Before we begin the actual interview, I need to secure your informed consent to participate. Please review the attached Consent Form and print a copy for your files. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at any time. Please feel free to contact me at jhwalz@vt.edu or 703-408-2305.

At the time of our scheduled interview, I will ask you to confirm your consent to participate, that you have read and understand the consent form, understand the conditions of the research project, and have had all your questions answered. You may indicate your consent to participate verbally at that time.

Again, thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.

Please confirm that you are available for an interview on [date] at [time].

I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Jerald H. Walz
PhD Candidate – Higher Education
Virginia Tech
jhwalz@vt.edu • 703-408-2305

Appendix E – Informed Consent Document

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: The Faculty Perceptions of Academic Freedom at Christian Colleges and Universities

Investigator(s): Jerald Walz jhwalz@vt.edu / 703-408-2305
PhD Candidate, Higher Education

Dr. Steven Janosik sjanosik@vt.edu / 540-231-9702
Associate Professor, Higher Education

Dr. Elizabeth Creamer creamere@vt.edu / 540-231-8441
Professor, Educational Research and Evaluation

I. Purpose of this Research Project

The purpose of this research study is to describe and analyze how faculty members at Christian colleges or universities perceive academic freedom. This is a qualitative study that collects data from semi-structured interviews. Approximately 30 participants will be involved in the project. Participants will include full-time, faculty members involved in teaching, research and publication, and extramural speech as a public citizen from Christian higher education institutions that are members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. The results of this study will be used for completion of a dissertation and for future presentation and/or publication.

II. Procedures

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in an audio-recorded WebEx interview via the Internet or telephone. You may choose the location of your interview, provided that the location is one where you will have at least 75 minutes of free, uninterrupted time. Also, at the interview location you will need access to a telephone, or a computer with a good Internet connection that has a microphone and speakers (a camera may be used for face-to-face communication, but is NOT required and no video will be recorded). Interviews may last approximately 60 minutes (10 minutes to connect via the Internet, 45-50 minutes for questions and discussion). Interviews will be conducted during the spring semester 2016.

Based on a semi-structured interview protocol, you will be asked a series of questions related to your perceptions of academic freedom while serving as a faculty member at a Christian college or university. You may be asked to elaborate on your answers.

Your interview will be audio-recorded; the interviewer will transcribe the interview proceedings or may have recordings transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The researcher will use information from these interviews to complete a doctoral dissertation, and possibly for presentation at professional conferences and/or for submission to scholarly journals for publication.

III. Risks

Potential risks include emotional discomfort from recalling past events that may have been traumatic or uncomfortable and/or breach of confidentiality. However, any such risks are not greater, in and of themselves, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. Therefore, the risks associated with participating in this study are considered to be minimal.

IV. Benefits

You will not receive direct or indirect benefits for taking part in this study. However, you will receive the intangible benefit of participating in a study that benefits society at large. For example, benefits to the larger society include the addition of empirical research on academic freedom; research that provides a greater understanding of faculty work at Christian colleges and universities; and research that enlightens the topic of faculty academic freedom at Christian institutions.

No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

Data you provide may contain personally identifying information. However, all data collected will remain confidential. Any identifying information will be stored separately and securely from confidential files. At the start of the interview I will assign you a pseudonym. This pseudonym will serve as a code referring to you and any files derived from your interview. Your interview recording will be stored in a password protected, secure location. The interview recording will be transcribed word-for-word into word processing documents. During transcription, all personally identifying information, such as first or last name, institutions where you studied or worked, etc., will be masked. All transcriptions will be stored electronically using the same filename as the digital audio file. Both audio and transcript files will be stored in a password protected location on my laptop computer and backed up to a password-protected Google drive location.

Persons with access to research data containing identifying or confidential information will include the researcher, the faculty co-chairs of the dissertation committee (who are also co-investigators), and the professional transcriptionist. At no time will the researcher release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent.

The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

No compensation will be available to you for participating in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

It is important for you to know that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer any questions that you choose or respond to what is being asked of you without penalty.

Please note that there may be circumstances under which the investigator may determine that a subject should not continue as a subject.

Should you withdraw or otherwise discontinue participation, you will be compensated for the portion of the project completed in accordance with the Compensation section of this document.

VIII. Questions or Concerns

Should you have any questions about this study, you may contact one of the research investigators whose contact information is included at the beginning of this document.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the VT IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at moored@vt.edu or (540) 231-4991.

IX. Subject's Consent

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ Date _____
Subject signature

Subject printed name

(Note: each subject must be provided a copy of this form. In addition, the IRB office may stamp its approval on the consent document(s) you submit and return the stamped version to you for use in consenting subjects; therefore, ensure each consent document you submit is ready to be read and signed by subjects.)

Appendix F – Interview Protocol

Name: _____ Pseudonym: _____

Date/Time: _____ Institution: _____

Opening

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. The purpose of this study is to understand how faculty at Christian colleges perceive issues of academic freedom in their scholarly activities. I am completing this research for my doctoral dissertation in the Higher Education Program at Virginia Tech.

I expect the interview to last between 45 minutes and an hour. With your permission, I will begin recording now. (START RECORDING)

You received the informed consent statement previously. Before we begin, I'd like to answer any questions you have about participating in the research project. Do you have any questions?

Please verify that you have read the Consent Form, understand the conditions of this project, and have printed a copy for your files, that you have had all your questions answered, and that you agree to participate in the study. Do I have your consent to participate? (Yes or No).

Navigating Academic Freedom and Statements of Faith

First, I'd like to ask for your perceptions about how academic freedom interacts with institutional statements of faith.

- How familiar are you with your institution's statement of faith?
- What role does the statement of faith play in your scholarly activities?
- How would you characterize the relationship between academic freedom and religious doctrines?
- How do you *navigate/manage/handle/deal with*/ the interaction between academic freedom and institutional religious doctrines (as found in official statements of faith)?

Defining Academic Freedom

Next, I'd like to learn about your understanding of academic freedom.

- What is your personal definition of academic freedom?
 - What is the purpose of academic freedom?
 - What are the boundaries or limits that you see, if any, of academic freedom?

Sharing Critical Incidents

In this part of the interview, would you please tell me about some concrete examples of experiences you have had with issues of academic freedom. Incidents may have been experienced first-, second-, or third-hand, but should have affected you, i.e. challenged your ideas about academic freedom or caused a change or was a turning point in your thinking, feeling, or action regarding academic freedom.

- What is the first (second or third) incident you would describe?
- What were the circumstances and nature of the incident?
 - What happened?
 - How did it happen?
 - Who was involved?
 - Did the incident involve religious doctrine?
- How was the incident resolved?
 - What were the outcome(s) or result(s) of the incident?
 - Immediate
 - Long-term
 - How did the person involved deal with any consequences?
- What was the effect of this incident on you (thinking, feeling, action)?
 - How did your views/understanding/perception of academic freedom change?
- Is there anything you'd like to add or clarify?
- Is there another incident you'd like to describe?

Closing

Finally, THANK YOU for your time today.

- Is there anything else about academic freedom that you would like to add?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this interview.

(STOP RECORDING.)

(SAVE RECORDING; DOWNLOAD & FILE)

Appendix G – Virginia Tech IRB Approval



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0969
email irb@vt.edu
website <http://www.irb.vt.edu>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 4, 2015
TO: Steven M Janosik, Jerald Henry Walz, Elizabeth Creamer
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires July 29, 2020)
PROTOCOL TITLE: Faculty Perceptions of Academic Freedom at Christian Colleges and Universities
IRB NUMBER: 15-1037

Effective November 3, 2015, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the New Application request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

<http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As: Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 6,7
Protocol Approval Date: November 3, 2015
Protocol Expiration Date: November 2, 2016
Continuing Review Due Date*: October 19, 2016

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

Appendix H – Contact Summary Form

Contact type: Visit _____ Phone _____ (with whom)	Site: _____ Contact date: _____ Today’s date: _____ Written by: _____
--	--

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck you in this contact?

2. Summarize the information you got (or failed to get) on each of the target questions for this contact:

Question	Information
RQ1 Navigating	
RQ2 Defining	
RQ3 Sharing CI	
RQ3 Sharing CI	

3. Anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating or important in this contact?

4. What new (or remaining) target questions do you have in considering the next contact?