A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF QUEST-ORIENTED RELIGION

by

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ABSTRACT

This study uses qualitative methodology, specifically a phenomenological interview, to examine the lived experiences of persons who embrace religion-as-Quest. These persons are those identified as "high-questers" according to the 12-item Quest scale (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993). The experiences and "voice" of these co-researchers from more than twenty hours of interview lead to the formulation of an integrative thematic structure. This structure provides rich, insightful and novel voice to religious orientation literature through its analysis of the construct validity of the Quest scale. Importantly, the Quest scale detected persons who experienced spiritual search as originally conceived in Quest-oriented religion. The thematic structure also demonstrated a greater complexity and variety of experiences than those identified by the formal definition of religion-as-Quest. Some of this greater complexity arose through co-researchers' willingness to suffer personal costs, the constraints to "questing," and the holding of religious commitments while "questing." This study provides a practical way for religious ideological surrounds to be included in religious orientation research. Implications for counselling are also discussed.

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Be Thou my Vision,
O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me,
save what Thou art
Thou my best thought,
by day or by night
Waking or sleeping,
Thy presence my light.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Spirituality and searching for meaning within the context of religious life are aspects of the human journey that have remained relevant throughout the ages. Among the members of the human race there is an extraordinary variability in the range and sophistication of the understanding and practice of spirituality and religion (Peck, 1978). Committed researchers in the psychology of religion have laboured many years to better understand and characterize these different approaches as religious orientations (Allport & Ross, 1967; Batson & Raynor-Prince, 1983; Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a, 1991b; Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993; Watson, Morris, Hood, Milliron, & Stutz, 1998). The work has and continues to be driven by discrepancies between religious belief and behaviour as well as the question of, "What might religious maturity truly look like?"

A tendency has emerged for spirituality and religion to be used as interchangeable constructs (Hodge, 2001). For the purposes of this study an attempt has been made to articulate the differences. Post-modern influences, religious fundamentalism, and orthodoxy conspire to create a variety of definitions depending on one's personal ideology and understandings.

Religion often flows from or is a means of expressing one's spirituality (Hodge, 2001). This includes, but is not limited to, traditional, institutionalised, and ritualised forms and practices. Post-modern spirituality includes ideas of self-discovery, actualisation, and moral relativism (McMinn, 2001). Still for some, spirituality is defined as belief or connection with God or the Transcendent (Hodge, 2001). The present research utilized a question designed to engage the co-researcher into discussion that

includes both religion and spirituality in order to tap the greatest breadth, depth, and comfort-level in the sharing of personal experiences and meanings.

The psychological study of religion includes three generally accepted and extensively researched religious orientations. Their purpose is to differentiate the *modus operandi* or stance that a person may take towards religion, spirituality, and religious commitment (religious stance sometimes interchanged with "religiosity" or "religiousness"). Two of these measures come from the work of Gordon Allport and colleagues (Allport 1950; Allport & Ross, 1967). These measures are known as *Extrinsic* (immature or self-serving) and *Intrinsic* (internally motivated, mature) religion. From perceived shortcomings in Allport's measure of mature religion (i.e., Intrinsic), a third dimension arose from the work of Daniel Batson and his colleagues (Batson & Raynor-Prince, 1983; Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a,b; Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993). This new "religious dimension," known as *religion-as-Quest*, was conceived to recapture some of the aspects of religious maturity that Allport originally championed, but then lost through creation of his intrinsic (I) scale (Donahue, 1985).

Religion-as-Quest examined the degree to which a person finds doubt an important characteristic of his or her religion. It also sought to gauge a person's willingness to embrace the full complexity of the existential questions of life. Persons with Quest-oriented religion are unwilling to accept the "pat answers" provided by established religion. Finally, religion-as-Quest looked at a person's readiness to review his or her own beliefs (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a). Batson proposed that in Quest, a person is prone to be less dogmatic, less prejudiced, and more responsive to the true needs of others compared to intrinsic religiousness (Donahue, 1985).

Much of the recent debate in religious orientation literature has centred on religion-as-Quest. A lack of clarity exists as to whether quest measures what it intends to measure (Kojetin, McIntosh, Bridges, & Spilka, 1987). Questions have arisen as to whether it truly relates to religion or is in fact a measure for agnosticism (Donahue, 1985). Conflicting findings (Genia, 1996; Ventis 1995; Watson et al., 1998) have both supported and discounted Quest's positive relationship to mental health. Some studies have also looked at the role that religion-as-Quest may play in identity development (Klaassen & McDonald, in press; Watson et al., 1998).

P. J. Watson, Morris, Hood and their colleagues (Watson, Morris & Hood, 1989, 1992; Watson et al., 1998) have shifted the focus of the debate on religious orientation. They promote a new paradigm where researcher and seeker's personal ideologies are included to temper and lessen the potential for researcher bias in the research process (1998).

In his insightful and extensive meta-analysis on this debate, Donahue (1985) called for the construct of Quest-oriented religion to be strengthened. A continued core focus on construct validity of Quest-oriented religion will hopefully offer greater support in fostering new understandings than those studies that have examined only the peripheral relationships of Quest. McFarland and Warren (1992) assert that the Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Quest scales are all only approximate indicators of the constructs they intend to measure. Others have suggested that there are at least three ways that religion-as-Quest can be interpreted within a Christian context (McMinn, 2001). Interestingly, McMinn proposes that Quest is a true measure of intrinsicness that is unconfounded by social desirability. Beck, Baker, Robbins, and Dow (2001) make a case that religion-as-Quest

must be researched as a multidimensional construct. He asserts that the construct validity of the facets of Quest will give us a clearer picture of the breadth that Quest covers.

The investigation of Quest-orientated religion encompasses several continuing controversies. Does the Quest scale truly draw out, with exclusivity, a particular group of people who all orient to religion a particular way? Does the authentic spiritual search transcend religious affiliation and commitment? Is it a perpetual seeking, wrestling with existential questions, never committing, and always questioning? Does it take on more than one form and, if so, are each legitimate? This qualitative study endeavours, through the use of phenomenological interviewing, to listen closely to people's experience of religion-as-Quest. The depth and richness of information from the experiences shared will cast light on questions about what the Quest scale reflects in the journeys of a group of spiritual searchers.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>Religious Orientation Research</u>

    <u>Intrinsic and Extrinsic Orientations</u>. Gordon Allport's concepts of Intrinsic (*I*) and Extrinsic (*E*) religiousness have had a powerful and lasting impact on the psychology of religion (Donahue, 1985). These concepts have undergone a great variety of research since their inception. According to Donahue, Allport envisioned intrinsic religiousness to define religion for persons genuinely committed to a faith. In this case, one's personhood is defined by religion and subsequent life is concerned with living this out in a meaningful way. Extrinsic religiousness characterized the religion of those who make use of their faith for personal needs or gain. Religiousness becomes the means to various selfish ends (1985). Over the ensuing four decades, much study and research was borne from these constructs.

    Allport (1950) defined religious orientation on a continuum, with mature religion on one end and immature religion on the other. He developed the Religious Orientation Scale (ROS), which included the Intrinsic scale developed from the concept of mature religion and the Extrinsic scale from immature religion. Later, these scales grew into a fourfold typology (Allport & Ross, 1967), as Allport encountered subjects who scored either high on both or low on both.   These persons were labelled as *indiscriminately pro-religious* and *indiscriminately antireligious*, respectively.

    Responding to Allport's work, Daniel Batson concluded that the development of the Intrinsic scale caused Allport to digress from the original richness of his definition of religious maturity (Donahue, 1985). To Batson, the Intrinsic scale had lost the essential elements of maturity (flexibility, complexity, and self-criticism). Instead it had become a

measure of the existence of a pro-social, preservation strategy with religion seen as a

means to relieve the angst of searching for truth and meaning. The intrinsics' rigid

devotion to beliefs was masked by a personal front giving the appearance of social

desirability (Donahue, 1985). In response to the "flawed" Intrinsic scale, Batson and

colleagues developed three new religious dimensions (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a),

including Quest. The Quest scale was designed to tap into religious complexity rather

than recast individuals as having one type of religion or another. Religion-as-Quest was

deemed more flexible, more accepting, and better able to respond to the true needs of

others (Donahue, 1985). The Quest debate was born!

Religion-as-Quest. The conception of religion-as-Quest marks an attempt to

characterize a truly important aspect of religion or spiritual searching. Donahue asserts,

"The necessity for constant spiritual questing and growth is central to what is best in all

religious traditions and has been the hallmark of such twentieth century religious

luminaries as Thomas Merton and others" (p. 414).

Religious orientation, according to Batson (Batson et al., 1993) consists of three

dimensions. The first two, religion as End and religion as Means, closely parallel

Allport's Intrinsic and Extrinsic religiosity. The third dimension is that of Quest.

The specific dimensions of religious experience that Quest attempts to measure

are, "readiness to face existential questions without reducing their complexity,

willingness to be self-critical and perception of religious doubts as positive, and openness

to change" (Batson, Schoenrade, Ventis, 1993, p. 181). Interestingly, according to

Batson's definition of religion, those persons who embrace religion-as-Quest need not

believe in a transcendent reality but have lives that contain a transcendent, religious

aspect (1993, p. 9).

In order to measure these dimensions Batson and his associates (Batson et al.,

1993) developed the "Religious Life Inventory." The inventory contains six questionnaire

scales. Three new scales were developed to measure the End, Means, and Quest

dimensions. Also included in this inventory are Allport's Intrinsic and Extrinsic scales

and an Orthodoxy scale (1993). The religious life inventory finds Quest as a distinct

orientation; this finding has been replicated by a number of studies including Burris

(1994) and Genia (1996).

Burris' (1994) work on curvilinear relationships (between I, E, and Q) showed

these three dimensions to be a useful distinction although not completely conceptually

distinct. He found that the greatest endorsement of Q (and E) came from those who were

neutral or indifferent towards I. Simultaneous endorsement of doubt and scepticism with

being a "true believer" was deemed unlikely.

Recently, Genia (1996) replicated the three-factor solution (I, E, Q) found to fit

even Batson and Schoenrade's (1991b) twelve-item scale. Genia did note that a religious

doubt item failed to load substantially on the Quest-factor.

The factor analytic conceptualization of Quest (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991b) as a

three-dimensional structure (complexity, tentativeness, and change) has not received

unanimous support through numerous attempted replications. Donahue (1985) makes the

observation that Means, End, and Quest are certainly three separate, orthogonal,

replicable dimensions that may not be dimensions of religiousness. Factor analytic

studies will be examined in the next section.

Construct Validity of Quest

Factor Analytic Studies. The development and research into religion-as-Quest has led to many psychometric discrepancies and arguments. An implicit goal throughout the debate has been the attempt to enhance the construct validity of Quest through factor analysis. Factor analysis can be used to assess its accuracy as a distinct religious orientation (scale level analyses) and also to assess the validity of its hypothesized, three underlying facets (item level analyses). Many of these studies continue to be carried out without yet obtaining consensus, seemingly creating a demand for innovative strategies for examining the construct validity of Quest.

In a paper responding to many criticisms of early research on religion-as-Quest, Batson and Schoenrade (1991b) maintained their three facet definition of Quest, asserting its viability in both conceptual and empirical terms. In responding to concerns over its poor internal consistency, Batson and Schoenrade developed a twelve-item Quest scale. The internal consistency of the twelve-item scale showed improvements reaching moderate levels (alphas for the two test samples were .75 and .82). Item level factor analysis on the new scale produced a three-factor solution (and a potential fourth factor with eigenvalue of .97). The three factors combined accounted for 55 percent of the variance. The pattern of loadings supported interpretation of Quest in terms of its three defining facets (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991b) although the facets were clearly not distinct. After conceding a lack of clarity in the factor structure of the scale, Batson and Schoenrade (1991a) nonetheless conclude that [The Quest scale does seem to be measuring a dimension of religious orientation distinct from that measured from the Extrinsic or Intrinsic scale; and moreover, this dimension seems to be very much like the

one the scale was designed to measure] (p. 421). They conclude with the suggestion that

the next step in understanding religion-as-Quest is to build a substantive body of research

with the new 12-item scale.

In response to a number of perceived inadequacies of the original Quest scale,

Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) also developed a revised version of the scale. A major

aim with this sixteen item scale was to have a number of pro-trait and con-trait items in

order to guard against response set biases. This new scale yielded an internal consistency

(alpha coefficient) of .88. An item level factor analysis found all items in the study

loaded on one dominant factor (similar to Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a). It should be

noted that the Batson-Schoenrade and Alteymeyer-Hunsberger scales contain very

different items and it has been suggested that future research attempt to determine if they

are measuring the same construct (McMinn, 2001).

Maltby and Day (1998) also examined the 12 item Quest scale and its dimensions

in order to make the scale more applicable to non-religious persons. Their work included

making minor changes to the wording of questions 7 and 11, which was hypothesized to

make the scale more amenable to persons who were not interested in religion per se.

Their factor analysis of the original items retained five factors of Quest-oriented religion.

In comparison, the altered version (more suited to persons not interested in religion)

found four components. The adjusted Quest scale seemed to have a clearer structure that

was closer to the original three-factor conception of Quest. These results suggest that

there are religious and non-religious orientations encompassed by Quest. If, with minor

alterations, the Quest scale is useful for non-religious cohorts, one might wonder if it is

measuring anything uniquely religious or if it can be considered a religious orientation per se (Donahue, 1985; Watson et al., 1998).

A factor analysis performed by McHoskey et al. (1999) on the 12 item scale largely supported Batson and Schoenrade's (1991b) analysis. They extracted three dominant factors and subjected them to an oblique rotation. Their solution accounted for 58 percent of the variance. According to their results, all three aspects that Quest was designed to measure were clearly revealed (1999).

In another recent work, Beck and his colleagues (2001) found only partial support for a three-factor Quest structure with their final conclusion being that a single factor best accounted for the variation among items. Beck and his colleagues isolated Tentativeness and Change as facets of Quest by creating scales for each construct and examining their relationships with a modified, six item version of the Quest scale, the Intrinsic orientation, and Extrinsic orientation as measured by the ROS. He found that tentativeness in one's religious beliefs was associated with increased existential well being and intrinsic motives, while high change scores were associated with a lower sense of spiritual well being. These discriminations support the contention that Quest is actually multidimensional and not a unitary construct.

Throughout these studies, samples were generally quite similar. An exception to this generally homogeneous sample came through the Altemeyer and Hunsberger study (1992) that included student's parents. Interestingly, 80 percent of parents in their sample did not hold a religious faith. Most seekers were introductory or upper level psychology students, receiving course credit for completing the various configurations of questionnaires. Most seekers were also from Christian background.

Factor analysis has been and will continue to be an important part of research into Quest. Current work demonstrates quite tentative status of the construct validity of Batson's Quest scale and makes it apparent that other methods can be make important contributions to the debate about the nature of Quest.

Quest and Orthodoxy. According to Batson and colleagues (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991b; Batson et al., 1993), the Quest dimension was never meant to replace the means and end dimensions. They also claim that there was no attempt to type or cast individuals as having either one orientation or another. With this argument, they carefully leave conceptual room for the potential of a person to orient to religion along all three dimensions.

Earlier research (see Batson et al., 1993) done on Quest and orthodoxy indicated a weak negative relationship between high Quest and orthodox Christian beliefs. Orthodox beliefs measured included the existence of God, the resurrection of Jesus, life after death, and the Bible as the unique authority for God's will (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a; Watson et al., 1998). The Intrinsic dimension of religion, including these orthodox beliefs, was conceptualised to include those who were "true believers" and who had reached religious conclusions. The defining characteristics of the intrinsically religious (orthodox beliefs) seem to put them in opposition to the ability to also fully embrace religion-as-Quest. Nonetheless, Batson and his associates claimed much room left for "high questers" to have strong beliefs, and those who scored lower on the Quest scale to have weak beliefs.

<u>Quest and Psychological Health</u>

Research on religion-as-Quest logically resulted in studies being conducted to address its healthiness to those who adopted this religious orientation. In their text, Batson and colleagues (1993) review the significant amount of research on religious orientation and a number of mental health criteria. Their research does not arrive at a clear relationship between religion and mental health although does conclude several recognisable patterns. Specifically, the evidence they reviewed supports a positive relationship between the quest dimension and measures of open-mindedness and flexibility and a positive relationship between the quest dimension and anxiety (specifically death anxiety but also social anxiety). They conclude with comment on the relationships between religion and mental health being related to how one defines mental health.

Ventis (1995) also conducted a review of the research of relationships in the means, end and quest religious orientations and a set of mental health criteria. He claimed that the Quest orientation is associated with mixed results in relationship to mental health. Ventis observed the Quest orientation to allow a person to fully appreciate the struggle of dealing with existential questions and yet still keep a mindset allowing that conclusive answers may not be found. Quest was associated with complex and flexible thought; this could potentially lead to an increase in personal anxiety because of the absence of answers.

Along this line, Genia (1996) found religion-as-Quest to be associated with more psychological distress. Fulton, Gorsuch, and Maynard's (1999) work found that Quest was slightly negatively correlated with discriminatory attitudes towards homosexuals and

blacks. Burris, Jackson, Tarpley, and Smith (1996) discuss how existential search can be born out of tragedy and conflict. Their study includes the premise that direct empirical support for a presumed core of the quest construct (existential struggle born out of confrontation with tragedy and conflict) is quite limited.

They also state that an authentic Quest (Burris et al., 1996) is a meaningful approach to one's life, implicitly asserting a result of positive mental health. In summary, the psychological healthiness of Quest-oriented religion seems to include a cost of anxiety, but also the reward of meaning and purpose in light of uncertainty.

Contextual Hindrances of Quest

Personal contexts of spirituality and religion likely include a variable span of established moral structures, from which one can determine if experiences, questions, and aspects of the spiritual journey are relevant and meaningful (Watson et al., 1998). Cultural, and historical influences on one's personal spiritual journey must also be considered if we are to form a more complete picture of these religious orientations in question. Cushman (1990), in his work on the *empty self*, presents the argument that a powerful cultural matrix of forces, including historical, familial, and societal, work together to provide a sense of self and to help persons to reach adequate functioning in our daily lives. These same forces work together to create a self that is "empty" and needing to be filled and soothed. An example of these forces is found in the following quote from Thomas Merton (Faggen, 1997).

> …submerged under material concerns, and by the fantastic proliferation of men and things all around him, so that there are so many of everything that one lives in a state of constant bewilderment and fear. One cannot begin to commit to any definite love,

because the whole game is too complex and too hazardous and one has lost all focus.

So we are carried away by the whirlwind, and our children are even more helpless

than we ourselves. (pp. 54-55).

Seekers often look to exemplars in order to ground their experience and instil hope

in a sometimes difficult and lonely process. Merton is now a recognisable figure that

went from "authentic" seeker to reach "enlightenment" as a Trappist monk (Cox, 2001).

From his vantage point he seemed to realize this power of our culture and society to

derail or disempower the authentic spiritual search, speaking poignantly about that which

competes for our commitments and love, keeping us from "playing the game." These

"consumerist" forces, so prevalent in shaping Cushman's *empty-self*, seem both well

known and dealt with in Merton spiritual journey (Donahue, 1985). Their relevance to the

spiritual search will be discussed in further detail in a later section.

Ideological Surround in Religious Orientation Research

An innovative perspective on the study of religious orientation can be taken from

the results of research done by Watson and his colleagues (1992, 1998). This group of

researchers concludes that the psychology of religion will be unable to come to ultimate

resolutions in religious orientation research (i.e., Quest-oriented and intrinsic religion)

using questionnaire methodologies. They claim that this research continues to be

controversial because its unresolved issues are at an ideological level. The unavoidable

pluralistic cultural environment that surrounds the research enterprise leads them to

postulate that "…current operationalizations of quest may not validly measure all forms

of the personal search for meaning" (Watson et al., 1998, p. 153). Looking at religious

ideological surrounds yields a new level of complexity requiring new operationalizations.

New measures would allow for versions or "styles" of personal searching for meaning

that come from a perspective informed by greater idealism (found in the intrinsically

religious) and reduced relativism. Watson and his colleagues stress that an important goal

of this new paradigm to "democratize" the research process so that both the "observer"

and the "observed" have a voice in interpreting research data.

Watson and his colleagues (1992,1998) have worked with the intrinsically

religious as an important group to help with this effort towards "democratization." Their

studies have asked persons to rate the items of Quest scales as "proreligious,"

"antireligious," or neutral. The results of the 1998 study were that two-thirds of all Quest

items rated as "antireligious" by the intrinsically religious group. This demonstration may

mean that the Quest scale potentially operates from an anti-intrinsic sentiment and

possibly distorts the potential for maturity among those with intrinsic commitments.

These studies have begun a tradition of allowing those with particular religious

orientations to explain themselves and thus to have voice in the effect of the culturally

influential findings of contemporary social science (1992). Qualitative research will be a

practical and helpful strategy for complimenting questionnaire research and providing a

voice for research seekers.

The ideological surround within which it operates must shape the process of

defining religion. This ideological surround refers to the normative assumptions of a

sociologically meaningful group that can be supported but not proven empirically

(Watson et al., 1998). The presence of inconsistent definitions of religion within a

particular study can lead to misunderstanding or confusion. Confusion comes as the

human race embraces an extraordinary variability in the range and sophistication of the

understanding and practice of spirituality and religion (Peck, 1978). This diversity results in different people focusing on religious content and process in many numerous ways (Hood & Morris, 1985).

Batson and his colleagues (Batson, Ventis, & Schoenrade, 1993) define religion as "whatever we as individuals do to come to grips personally with the questions that confront us because we and others like us are alive and that we will die" (p. 12). Because this definition can fit for materialists and freethinkers, there does not seem to be the need for the Quest-scale to include the "interest in religion" question. They further detail these forms of existential questioning by illustrating how they are idiographic in nature and also wide ranging. Included in this definition are belief in God and an afterlife, dramatic mystical or conversion experiences, worship and other forms of religious ritual, devout adherence to prescribed code of conduct, prayer, meditation, ascetic self-denial, and so on. Gordon Allport (1954) provided a supportive perspective to the inclusion of co-researcher's perspective in the research process. To him, the task of characterizing religious consciousness was that it ought to be left to the only people capable of knowing what it is; namely, "the individuals who experience it" (p. 6).

Summary

The study seeks to understand the lived experiences of persons who embrace religion-as-Quest. The use of a phenomenological interview provides a methodologically innovative way to examine Quest orientation. Researcher and co-researcher are able to join in describing the "life-world" of this particular religious orientation (Polio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997). Co-researcher is referred to as "seeker" for the remainder of this text. The emerging themes will likely support previous Quest theory and research at the

same time adding new and valuable insight. More specifically, the seeker's experiences

of spirituality and religion will shed light on the crucial question of whether Quest-

oriented religion can be strictly defined by its original criteria (12-item scale and three

defining facets) or whether seekers identified by the Batson scale represent a greater

complexity and variety of existential orientations (i.e., a potential variety of "styles" to

religion-as-Quest).

The qualitative methodology (phenomenological interview) used in this study

examines the validity of Batson's Quest scale. Quantitative procedures have been the

option of choice in religious orientation research and have lead to the production of an

extensive body of research. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the research

endeavour continually stalls on issues of an ideological level (Watson et al., 1992, 1998).

The ideological surround within which a particular religious orientation operates

must be considered if a clearer picture as to the complexity of how religion operates and

the role it plays in the life of the individual is to be reached. The goal of developing a

comprehensive thematic structure from this study is to provide a new source of

perspective.

This study's use of qualitative procedures provides seekers an opportunity to give

voice to what it means to live out Quest-oriented religion, thus incorporating the religious

ideological surround for these persons. Another aspect of giving voice is the

enhancement of self-awareness and a reduced sense of isolation or alienation. Seekers'

being exposed to the fact that others share their personal thought processes and

approaches to spirituality and religion will provide encouragement and perhaps a new

personal framework. Engagement in phenomenological interview will serve as normalization of their experience.

Part of developing new strategies to incorporate the ideological surround also must include the mindset that there may not be a single "mature" religious orientation. It is also important to keep in mind that the complexity of religious orientations and of existential searching goes beyond a focus on specific types. A thematic structure for religion-as-Quest can illuminate the extent to which it reflects both maturity and immaturity, possibly clarifying relationships among religious orientations and place of commitment in religion-as-Quest. Phenomenological approaches are critical to adequately addressing the issue of ideological surround in religious orientation research.

<u>Definition of Terms</u>

Ideological Surround: The normative assumptions of a sociologically meaningful group that can be demonstrated but not proven empirically (Watson et al., 1998).

Co-researcher: Seeker in this phenomenological study. Called "co-researcher" to connote the importance and value placed on their perspective and ability to act as expert on their experience of spirituality and religion.

Seeker: A descriptive name for the co-researcher, identifying one who pursues religion-as-Quest.

Reliability: Repeatability and stability of the meanings as identified in primary theme classification.

Validity: Accurate description of the lived experience of co-researcher's by the shared themes.

Note: These definitions are in addition to definitions placed appropriately throughout the

text (e.g., religion and spirituality in Chapter1.).

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Phenomenological Methodology

       This study uses at its method, a phenomenological interview. Phenomenological methodology is a qualitative research procedure borne from the philosophical perspectives of Edmund Husserl (Osborne, 1990) and developed through the workings of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty (Creswell, 1998). At the heart of phenomenological research is the examination of the essential, invariant structure (or essence) of a particular human experience.

       The concept of 'intentionality' is arguably Husserl's most important contribution to the field (Polio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997). This concept does not refer to its purpose in the everyday sense (Osborne, 1990); rather, it is the descriptive insight that every experience has its direction or "consciousness toward" what is experienced. Osborne notes that consciousness always has an object of focus even when we are not conscious of being conscious of anything. Reality is construed by the observer and mirrored by the object, thus the subject and object are not distinct entities (Polio et al., 1997).

       The intentionality of consciousness is meaning bestowing (Karlsson, 1993). The 'experiencer' has a role in determining meaning in the subjective world and is not a passive receiver of stimuli. The implication is that together, the experience and the world co-constitute one another. Intentionality is not merely an intellectual process, but rather a human experience continually directed toward a world that a person would never possess in its entirety (Polio et al., 1997).

Polio and his colleagues argue that perfect objectivity is unnecessary because people are relatively stable. This stability itself provides an adequate basis for expecting personal meanings to bear coherent, if not identical texts. Changes across contexts are likely to bear systematic relationships that can be understood within a holistic interpretive framework informed by the insights of Wittgenstein and Heidegger, among others (Giorgi, 1985; Karrlson, 1993; Polio et al., 1997). Consistency is found between the contexts of the experience of a person's history and the present-centred nature of remembering in the interview. This is because remembering brings about a temporal fusion of the present and past in which a personal historical understanding undergoes revision in order to accommodate a present perspective (Polio et al., 1997).

Early phenomenological understanding held a traditional Cartesian perspective that a subject contained a pure internal representation of his or her subjective experience (Kvale, 1983). The phenomenological interview was a means to extract internal representations, provided the researcher made an adequate and complete bracketing of his or her biases. The phenomenological researcher's task, therefore, was to give an external, "objective," rendering of the subject's internal "subjective" world. Numerous sources of error make this task exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. Even the presence of an interviewer is often viewed as an intrinsic source of error (Kvale, 1994; Polio et al., 1997).

Bracketing. This researcher's personal biases toward spiritual seeking and prior experiences with religion-as-Quest have been commented on in a section entitled personal bracketing (see Appendix A). Examination of this study by the reader must include an understanding of these biases in order to determine if these have been

appropriately withheld (or incorporated) from the theme construction. Understanding of these biases will provide the basis through which the researcher's interpretations are understood.

Polio, Henley, and Thompson (1997) address the idea of bracketing, providing a detailed argument against asking a "perfect" question and against "perfect" bracketing. They write that even Husserl himself believed that he only attained novice ability to bracket. Entering the phenomenological interview, one must remember that the internal representation of an experience cannot be separated from the experience of personal environment, including both historical past *and experience of the present* (italics added). All knowledge, including self-knowledge, is constructed in social discourse. The description of the experience as it emerges in a particular context *is the experience*.

Rationale for Research Approach. Batson and his colleagues (1993) postulated that the religious experiences of Quest leave observable "tracks" in the individual's life that could be subject to scientific observation. They warn that these tracks are not to be confused with the experience that produced them. To them, studying "tracks" was a means through which to create hypotheses and test inferences about phenomena in the religious experience. This approach is their alternative to what they see are the perils of both logical positivism and phenomenological methodology. They believe the "symptoms" of the religious experience are not empirically equivalent to the phenomena themselves.

The person's description of the experience of nonverbal cues, and changes in belief and behaviour are all tracks or symptoms that serve as observable criteria. They provide clues both to the existence and to the character of the experience. The

scientist can use these tracks of symptoms as publicly verifiable observations,

making it possible to test explanatory theories concerning the nature and function of

an individual's religious experience. (p. 18)

From the perspective of quantitative methodology, it is logical that Quest is a

complete construct or entity whose governing rules and laws are discernible. A "lived-

phenomenon" like religion-as-Quest would be analysed outside the context within which

it functions. Generally, quantitative analysis assumes that the researcher operates outside

of influencing biases.

Hodge (2001) writes that the application of the quantitative paradigm on the study

of spirituality is problematic. This makes sense in the light when one considers that

spirituality as an inner subjective reality may be difficult to quantify. Specifically,

spirituality manifests differently across the radically different traditions (Batson et al.,

1993; Maltby & Day, 1998; Peck, 1978). In contrast, a qualitative approach to studying

the phenomenon of spirituality attempts to study religion-as-Quest within its social,

systemic context. Hodge argues in support of this, declaring that it is of limited

usefulness to study the personal meanings of religion-as-Quest outside its relevant

contexts.

Quest research continues with an unmet goal of understanding its significance and

relevance as a religious orientation. Questions continue to arise about its relationship to

religion and its construct validity. To date, the qualitative study of Quest does not seem to

exist. Understanding religion-as-Quest, particularly the life-world experiences of those

who embrace Quest-oriented religion, is an important task that has been called for,

directly or indirectly, by several scholars (Klaassen & McDonald, in press; Watson, et al., 1998).

Phenomenological principles call for the acknowledgement of personal ideologies of the researcher (Watson, Morris & Hood, 1992; Watson et al., 1998). This study has the potential to add to this process of shifting the focus of religious orientation research by understanding Quest within its social contexts, both the idiographic human experience, and shared personal meanings. The methodology chosen for this study, explores a rich layer of data that has not been given voice in the debate, as invited "seekers" will be empowered as "experts" on their own experience (Polio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997, p. 29).

Procedure

Selection of Seekers. Seekers were recruited from a larger group of seekers in another study (Gallant, 2001). The sample for the larger study included 341 university students, from a private Christian university and nearby university college. Calls to participate in Gallant's study included a detailed consent form that outlined the basis for the study, its importance, and let seekers know of their chance to win $50 in one of three draws ($50/each) for completing the questionnaires (see Appendix B). The questionnaires administered include a demographics questionnaire, C. Daniel Batson's Revised Quest scale (1991b), the I/E Revised Scales (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989, p. 353). Scores and means were calculated for Intrinsic/Extrinsic and Quest scales and used to determine persons who were high in religion-as-Quest. Examining the "lived-religion" of these high-scorers will allow for examination of the life-world of "questers" (those exhibiting religious maturity) according to Batson and colleagues' theory behind religion-as-Quest.

Seekers who embraced religion-as-Quest were contacted (mean Quest score for inclusion above six on a nine point scale; see Appendix C for Quest scale) for this study by telephone. An attempt was also made to recruit seekers who provided extreme scores (both high and low) on intrinsic religious orientation (see Appendix D for Q and I scores for seekers). Based on current literature, this strategy promised to encourage diversity among the high *questers.* The phone call consisted of the researcher introducing himself, explaining that the potential seeker's name had been garnered from a list of persons who would potentially be interested in psychological research, and a statement asking if there might be enough interest to proceed with a brief introduction to the study. If the "high seeker" agreed, then a brief introduction to the study including its purpose of understanding people's spiritual experiences, the qualitative method that would be used (phenomenological interview), the fact that the interview would be audio-taped, and detailed explanation of what would be done with the transcripts. Next, the potential seeker was asked if they would be interested in joining the study. An affirmative answer led into scheduling of an interview.

Fifteen persons (six males/nine females) entered this study, with a range in age from 20 to 32 years old (for more demographics, see Appendix E). Approximately half of the seekers were from a local university college and half were from a local, private Christian university. Seekers expressed at least a moderate interest in religion. Religious affiliations ranged from "unaffiliated" to mostly Christian/Protestant (for more information about demographics, see Appendix D).

Data Collection. Once seekers were recruited, an expansive interview process began that illuminated and captured the "lived-experience" of persons who embrace

religion-as-Quest or who have a "seeking orientation" toward religion. Interviews were taped using a small tape-recorder set between researcher and seeker. Interviews took place in a number of different locations, depending on where was convenient for the seeker. Most interviews took place either in a library study room or, upon invitation, the home of the seeker. Interviews lasted between one to one and a half hours, with twenty minutes of debriefing upon completion. Debriefing the interview included answering any questions the seeker might have, explaining the origins of the study and why it was considered significant, and explaining again, what was to be done with the interview tapes and transcripts.

Data Analysis. The following are procedural steps employed to analyse the data of these interviews taken from a number of sources of phenomenological protocols (Osborne 1990; Polkinghorne 1989; Polio et al., 1997).

1. The audiotaped interviews were transcribed verbatim.

2. Transcripts were read over to get an overall sense of the spiritual experiences of the seekers.

3. Meaning units directly related to phenomena of Quest-oriented religion were carefully extracted from the transcripts. These took the form of a sentence(s) or paragraph(s) containing both a complete idea and a clear reference to the phenomenon.

4. Themes were constructed to capture the essence of the meaning units. The goal was for them to be accurate yet precise, having understandable meanings that easily discriminate one from the other. These initial themes were labelled as primary themes.

5. Similar primary themes were collected and grouped into broader categories. These categories came to be known as shared themes.

6. Themes were tested for reliability and validity.

7. Results were then integrated into an exhaustive general portrait of the investigated phenomenon of the lived experience of Quest-oriented religion.

Once interviews were transcribed, an extensive period of data analysis occurred. Data analysis first included reading the transcripts over to get a feel for the overall structure and experience(s) of the seekers. Then, the complete transcripts were dividing into significant statements or complete thoughts (meaning units) on the "experience of spirituality and religion and its appearance in the seeker's day-to-day lives." Meaning units were then analysed for the creation of primary themes. Primary themes are statements that are specific enough to describe each meaning unit but broad enough so that there need not be one theme per meaning unit. Once completed, primary themes are collected into similar grouping and shared themes are created. Shared themes represent or capture the general structure or meaning represented by a collected grouping of similarly focused primary themes (see Chapter IV). Throughout the process, an important goal was to incorporate the personal vernacular of the seekers. A final guiding principle was to strive at balance between the general and the specific when it comes to the descriptions of the various experiences.

Examination of Reliability and Validity. To understand the themes driving Quest, one must have a good grasp of phenomenological methodology (particularly open interviewing and data analysis). As stated earlier, interviews must be long enough to allow for the full extent of themes to be drawn out. It is also crucial that a *saturation* of

themes is reached (Sutherland, 1993). When the researcher enters a new interview and is able to characterise all experiences and stories of Quest-oriented religion, saturation has been reached. Saturation can be defined as the continuance of data collection until repetition of data is achieved or until no new knowledge surfaces. By the 12th or 13th interview of this study, the criterion of saturation had been met.

This work also contains a measure of inter-rater reliability that included ten hours of work done with an outside collaborator. Following the work done on inter-rater reliability, a calculation was made of an acceptable kappa statistic to get an adjusted measure of agreement on the primary themes.

Follow-up interviews with many of the seekers assessed and enhanced the validity of the shared themes. Seekers were asked to read over and comment on each theme, describing those that resonated with their own experience and others that maybe did not. If a theme was initially unclear for a seeker it was discussed and then related to that person's interview. Without fail, seekers agreed that shared theme descriptions as either personally relevant or at least partially descriptive of his or her experience. Follow-up interviews included excellent responses on both a technical and personal level related to the accuracy of themes in relationship to seeker experiences.

The final product of shared themes provides a general description of what was experienced and how it was experienced. These themes provide the structure of the life-world of Quest-oriented religion for the seekers in this study (Osborne, 1990).

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Results

      The following pages are the results of this study in an easy to read tabular form. They are meant to represent the thematic structure of Quest-oriented religion, including relevant examples of verbatim interview, for this study. It is important to recall that the researcher has written these after subjecting the interview transcripts to the rigorous methodology detailed in the previous section and in light of the personal bracketing included in Appendix A.

      There are three levels to this table. The first level, under roman (i.e., I-XI) is the shared themes. The shared themes, in the form of bold-faced headings, are statements that represent the groupings of similar primary themes from which they were constructed. The second level in this table is the primary themes. These themes are represented by a square (i.e., □) symbol. These statements represent the themes that emerged directly from the transcripts and many include exact personal phrases or words directly spoken by the seekers. The meaning of these primary themes were scrutinised and eventually collected into the similar groupings that are seen in the following conceptualisation of the lived experience of religion-as-Quest. Finally, the third level of this table includes important (although not exhaustive) quotations from the interviews. These are represented by diamond-shaped bullets (i.e., ♦) and are included to give voice to seeker experiences that led to the construction of the various primary themes.

Table 1

Shared Thematic Structure of Quest-Oriented Religion

I) Powerful experiences of God and the spiritual realm motivate one's spiritual journey (Encountered in a variety of pursuits & events and in numerous forms: perceptions, insights/realisations).

- ❑ Profound and mystical spiritual experiences (with nature, worship, and prayer) act as connections to the transcendent reality and strongly facilitate one's spiritual quest.

    - ♦ "But I would say to this point right now, the greatest times that I have of sensing Transcendent reality or even sensing God…umm. Would be when I am out in nature and uh, there is a communion happening."

    - ♦ "I have had incredible experiences. I don't know where to begin. Like there was a time at the peak of my involvement with Gnosis where I was searching out teachers where I could fly, where I could conjure up objects, where I could pass through walls, telaporte, contact people who were awake. There was one incredible, sort of like a tangible thing, where I communicated a word to that ex-girlfriend…"

- ❑ A powerful conversion experience, often yielding intense clarity and leading either to either a positive or negative impetus in one's spiritual quest.

    - ♦ "There is this whole new rebirth in me and I just feel that God is showing me ways too get out of my old habit patterns of like isolation where for some reason, God has planted people in my life this year."

    - ♦ " Where I asked Jesus to come into my life …I felt so happy and I remember she said, the Holy Presence, I was like drunk in the Spirit

Table 1 (cont.)

and I thought that was just, that was something, from that point on I

started going to church every Sunday and I haven't missed church."

❑   Spirit/God prompts one to act [Note: shared experience across
worldviews].

♦   "Exactly. Yes it's this revelation, this realisation that this needs to be

done. Why isn't somebody doing it? I'll go do it. You see somebody

sitting in the corner and they look like, they have nobody to talk to

them. Its like do I want to talk to them? No. Go talk to them."

♦   "The other was you can just let it go and its done with and you know

that its okay, even though you may not be sure of what's going to

happen, you just are able to trust God that you know that your in the

right direction, do you know what I mean? Its not really like an audible

voice, its more just like a feeling and I don't base my decisions on

feelings, but peace is a kind of feeling that I trust, because there is no

other feeling like it. It's unmistakable, the way that it is. You can't

mistake it for anything else. So that's why I trust it because I've only

had it with like major, major decisions in my life, so I know it's not an

emotional thing."

❑   The spiritual component of one's search can be equated with or includes a
strong emphasis on feelings. [Feelings may be experienced positively,
negatively, or both].

♦   "The thing is I'm a person who goes by feelings more so than by faith

and that's a fact. That's another habit pattern I'm trying…like when I

feel totally discouraged, I'm like oh, I don't feel God is here with me

Table 1 (cont.)

and then I have to be reminded well you don't walk by feelings you

walk by faith."

♦ "Its not really like an audible voice, its more just like a feeling and I

don't base my decisions on feelings, but peace is a kind of feeling that I

trust, because there is no other feeling like it. It's unmistakable, the way

that it is. You can't mistake it for anything else. So that's why I trust it

because I've only had it with like major, major decisions in my life, so

I know it's not an emotional thing."

❑ The Bible is an important and central guide on how to treat others and how to
enhance one's spiritual connection with God.

♦ "…and I know that there was a time when I believed that I may have

lost my parents due to that, but, and the Bible says in order to be part of

the kingdom of God you must hate your parents. That's not saying that

you need to hate your parents but what that's saying is, that 'You need

to be willing to choose me first.'"

❑ Becoming reconciled with God resulting in personal transformation followed by
an intense peace. This process is surrendering to God.

♦ "I just get angry and decide that I'm going to, whatever I guess, be mad

at him. I guess the surrender that comes; it comes before you get that

peace. For me its always been that I fought, and sometimes it depends

what its about, its taken longer than other times…It took me a year and

a half to work myself up to the point that I was so frustrated and so

Table 1 (cont.)

> miserable, where I was just like, I can't take this anymore. It was just like hands up in the air do you know what I mean?"

♦ "That was kind of when things that turned around for me. That's were I felt like I stopped running…and actually, that's interesting that you mention the anxiety because I can remember intense, intense feeling of relief and even when I went back to my old life, or like back after the camp and met with my girlfriends and they could tell right away that something was different. I was more at peace. I just felt so incredibly peaceful, it's just like…."

❑ A recognition (sometimes including gratitude) that God acts as a key motivating force in one's life.

♦ "In all those aspects I've been moved to I think a deeper relationship with God. Different, but deeper because it now takes into account all aspects of human experience. All aspects of spiritual experience, whether deemed healthy or unhealthy by my tradition on other religious traditions. So for sure I've been moved."

♦ "But then you are kind of, like; God has done so much. There are people in the world that have to go through greater obstacles and stuff… Because I've gone through like a lot, that's the last thing I want to do, is to make my relationship with him even worse than it already is."

Table 1 (cont.)

- ❑ Communicating with God (i.e., prayer and listening for God) an essential part of the journey.

    - ♦ "…but I would just go and listen for you know, 3 or 4 hours,

        sometimes I'd just fall asleep out there and not pray, not you know

        sing, not think. Not do anything. Just listen. And often enough, I would

        begin to think and my mind would start going on things and depending

        on where it was going I would either bring it back; because of that I've

        become good at focusing. Just call on your thoughts, you know…."

    - ♦ " That's another big one. I think for me prayer…. I've never had an

        experience where I've been praying as like talking to God and I've

        heard anything back…like I feel it's an effort to try and connect with

        God? A lot of things that I have asked for in prayer I've got and a lot of

        things I prayed about. For example when I was engaged, I didn't get at

        all and so I really think, well God can have more wisdom and that he

        takes control of situations when we can't…or when we're going the

        wrong direction; that's like a whole other question that has to do with

        the sovereignty of God with when it comes to asking for things like

        healing and the whole concept of like changing God's mind?"

II) Spirituality is a mystical phenomenon: both in a personal and communal sense.

- ❑ Human beings have an innate spiritual component or need that calls for examination to foster spiritual growth.

    - ♦ "That's a good one. I think I'm learning more about spirituality. Kind

        of in the same contexts as you know how you learn about sexuality?

Table 1 (cont.)

> Even though I'm not married or even not in a sexual relationship, you're still a sexual being and I see that the same as spirituality. It's even if someone's not a Christian or does not have a religion, whatever, then they're still a spiritual person because we still have something inside of us that isn't typical…"

♦ "That beginning was as you call spirituality, you use those terms…um…I would say...I would look back and say, it's not spiritual. A kid never knows if it's spiritual ...it seems natural. And if they have that innate presence of God that… He exists…that seems natural for them... They don't think of it as something spiritual, another realm."

❑ Religion relates with spirituality in a number of ways: religion can be truly spiritual, religion can exist without inherent spirituality, and religion can be a means through which to express one's spirituality.

♦ "Spirituality and religion are…can be exclusive of each other. But I think that they can also, they can also mix…I think a lot of people mix the two but I think ah…the ultimate goal is ah…is spirituality but I think that people's path to spirituality is different. (Hmm) to me, religion is ah…means ah…some sort of ah…sigh…I guess organisation. An organised way towards spirituality…that a lot of people need. Some need it, some… I've met people that are spiritual. I consider myself a spiritual person, but not necessarily religious. So um…yeah but…Into what…what I mean by…if I say spiritual, I always try and figure out what I mean by that, I guess."

Table 1 (cont.)

♦   "Religion is more, ah, organised, or a system of things that governs how you behave? Spirituality is a little different, it's more of a felt, ah, experiential-type existence. Yes. That's exactly how I feel. And sometimes the two coincide."

❑ Spirituality is a shared energy or force that permeates both the earth and humanity.

♦   "Well, the earth is filled with energy, you know like the wind…the different elements. The energy of different people…it has to come from somewhere. Yeah…they say that energy never dies, and people are made up of energy. It has to go somewhere. Maybe back into the earth somehow."

♦   "When I say "spiritual" I think In terms of energy. And I think, ah...I think that you have to be…I think the goal is that you have to build yourself up to be the most energetic…ah, with positive energy…like a good flow, like a…sort of…like a positive aura about you, like something that people are attracted to and something that enables you to ah you create energy around you that attracts other people around you so that it enriches your life."

❑ Spiritual journeying includes a desire to make appropriate life-choices based on personal core beliefs.

♦   "But I try to live my life and do my daily activities based on what I think is right. And when I do things, I don't necessarily think about

Table 1 (cont.)

> what God is thinking of me, I'm thinking more of, 'Will I be able to
>
> live with myself if I do this?'"

♦ "You just got be open to…do deal with the meaning of your
environment kind of thing. Well what…Things happen that can change
your life, you just have to make a decision as to how you want to treat
that. Choices…it's all about choices. You want to make…you want to
make the right choices…"

❑ Decision to maintain a belief in God's existence despite potential doubts,
anxieties, and unanswered questions in one's faith.

♦ "I think even when we don't jump into fear, its kind of another learning
thing for him, almost like a discipline thing, like he's not like a scary
God where its like, 'Oh … you didn't say that word, you're going to
like, have insomnia for three months now!'"

♦ "So the doubt is not over with. It's not taken care of. I just choose not
to go into that. Not to put too much mind thought into it…as to, did I
really go the right way? No, you went the right way. I have to admit
that I did the right thing."

❑ The questioning process important only to the extent that questioning does not
lead to doubting.

♦ "Yes. Questioning but not doubting so much. Like I don't want to...I
don't feel that I doubt God. Because I'm not thinking about the
communal life or that of becoming a Buddhist…nothing like that. But I

Table 1 (cont.)

> definitely have questions and maybe they are questions you know that will
>
> never be answered."

❑ An exploration of truth in other religions seen as potentially helpful to the extent there is not contradiction of core beliefs.

♦ "And though, I probably would agree that anything that directly

contradicted the revelation of scripture I wouldn't be inclined to believe

that. But I think that there's a lot of leeway that we don't allow

for…umm…within the confines of scripture that you could say that

God is revealing himself to a Hindu, to a Mormon, to whoever…"

♦ "I don't know how valuable that would be. Maybe it would be. I can go

there and appreciate what they do, but I'm not sure that it's going to

solve all my problems, which I don't think it would. It may help shed

some light on them but I don't know, your question is a good one and I

have had some experiences that have been really good in other

traditions, but some there are just kind of same old, same crap different

pile, kind of thing..."

III) Spiritual growth is a process of critical evaluation and exploration of one's own and other religious traditions with the intent of broadening personal stance on religion and spirituality.

❑ A major point of tension in one's spiritual growth coming from the question, "Is it possible that my religious identity or affiliation is a product of my surrounding culture rather than the result of me finding or being called to the Truth?"

Table 1 (cont.)

♦ "I think one question that was haunting me for a long time is. 'What if I grew up in another place would I have gone to some kind of Buddhist school? Or would I have joined a monastery?' I was here so I ended up going to a Bible College."

♦ "I think because we live in a Western society that Christianity is that…big influence over everybody. There is no question. I know people that are…just don't go to church or never been influenced directly by it, but because they celebrate Christmas just like Christians would or Easter, or they just you know, don't…associate directly with the Holy Bible, or stuff like that, but they are being heavily influenced by it."

❑ A realisation (or "awareness") that truth exists outside of one's own worldview and that it must be examined.

♦ "So, you know, all these questions start going through your mind. So you start reading church history, which I did…I read some stuff on the mystics, I read things from other religions…Judaism, and other religions how they get close to God and I thought "hmm, interesting are their commonalties between all these world religions and some of the things they're doing to get close to God that I could learn. How do they do it, what thinking do they have?

♦ " I consider I've met a range, a good cross section of religious groups. Ah, I would say…it seems to me that they are objective is very…is very similar for most groups. And that is…they are looking for I guess

Table 1 (cont.)

> a purpose. And they're trying to find out what is spirituality, and ah…why are they on earth? What is the objective here?"

❑ Being sustained by a clear hope that one's questions about life will eventually be answered.

♦ "Yeah, it's good, I like it. I like being a Christian a lot. I don't think I would live any other way. I think it makes it a richer experience when you can think about hard questions. Eventually, we are going to figure them out."

❑ Spiritual growth and connection to God seen as an evolving process.

♦ "And there is a whole learning process that I went through and I'm still convinced today that there is not going to be any time in my life that I want to get to the end of things."

♦ "Exactly. And I hope it would be for anybody who honestly is trying to find, I guess, spirituality. Truth and spirituality. I don't think it should ever end. I don't accept, believing like I had believed before…that I had heard the voice of God or whatever. I'm not so sure that any person can claim to be so ego free that they can see that clearly. I don't know…"

❑ Critical examination or rejection of parental faith or beliefs in striving for congruency in one's personal beliefs.

♦ "So I think part of my journey was sifting through that and saying, okay, what's valuable and what's not. So I don't know if I consciously ever made a choice; I'm going to reject their faith it was more of I don't

Table 1 (cont.)

like the rules they are trying to impose on me and I'm going to make

up my own mind and choose to be whoever I want to be and I think I

kind of resented, I resented what they stood for and what the church

kind of stood for because at that point in my life it seemed really

legalistic. And I was that I was fighting over its structures and it

boundaries and trying to figure out who am I. So I don't think it was a

conscious rejection of God, it was more of, I don't like these rules and

they are associated with God so I'm just going to get away from that

for a while."

❑ Conclusion that different religions have equal validity and that all extend from a common thread.

♦ "But when you actually look at them all they all have like these

common threads and the religions, yeah and I mean that's more what I

believe in, those common threads it means you can bring down not

necessarily like Biblical stories or anything, that I believe in, I believe

in like, the like, I guess the foundation of it but I do believe in some

sort of higher power but I don't know what it is."

❑ Inability to determine if one's spiritual experiences have reflected God or some other spiritual force.

♦ "Um, I've always felt a presence of spirituality, but I've never been

able to label it…um in any shape or form, at this point in my life, at

least. Um… as a child."

Table 1 (cont.)

♦ "Yeah I think that spirituality is everywhere. Um, like in nature just when you look outside you just feel that Higher Power or whatever it is. I don't know if it's a specific God, or if it's just inside people, I really don't know that yet."

IV) The practice of spiritually seeking requires relational, emotional and sometimes spiritual costs.

❑ Feeling misunderstood, alienated and treated with suspicion from persons in one's religious tradition (or general community) due to the nature of voiced questions and concerns.

♦ "You'd get reactions that make you feel very misunderstood and alienated and not in an active, kind of shunning like you said, not so much in that way, but more in the sense that your on a path where no one else really cares to understand and it's a really lonely place, I think, and your excitement isn't really shared by people and your healthy deconstruction is not appreciated. I think just kind of a passive, I don't know how I said it before, but people not knowing how to react to you because those things that you are involved in are outside of the realm that they are used to, so they can't relate and they can do nothing, but kind of back away sometimes."

♦ "I realise that I can only share my opinions with certain people, certain people that are open to the questioning. A lot of these questions that you ask, they're just not acceptable for people to look at. They see them as a lack of faith, or Liberal or um, you know um, blasphemous even,

Table 1 (cont.)

you know…But overall, yah, for what you're saying, I don't think

that…these kinds of questions aren't too permissible."

❑ Questions focusing on finding God's will and the consequences of rejecting God and religion yield variable levels of anxiety.

◆ "I don't know, I find that, I, I was always really uneasy when I was,

just like, oh there's no religion or whatever, God doesn't exist there is

nothing out there. Because then it's like you live your life for no reason

and then you die…and like you become dust and your soul is nothing

and it just, it didn't sit well and it made me very uneasy and I was

miserable, miserable, miserable person…"

◆ "Yeah, it's not a fear now, but it's a fear, on the times where I do kind

of question and think: 'what if I was to look into the religion?' Then I

have the fear of doing that. I don't have a fear now…for now I'm fine,

maybe if I were to look into it, I might find something that I don't

like?"

❑ Inability to consistently maintain one's search on a conscious level and on a day-to-day basis.

◆ "I go through very many dry spells where I just, either I don't care,

even for minutes at a time or an hour at any time, I'll just be like, I'll

question, I'll will do whatever."

❑ An inability to sense or relate to God in a way previously attainable leads to a dark time in one's journey.

◆ "But how I understand what God looks like has been modified, because

initially when I became a Christian, the Christians that I knew, were

Table 1 (cont.)

saying that through bible reading and through all this stuff, 'you will

know God,' and all this stuff. Big promises! I did all of this stuff, and I

think I did it, to use the word 'religiously.' And I did, you know… I

was praying my guts out, I was praying…I think I told you this before,

I was praying two-three hours a day. I was pretty disciplined, pretty

pursuant of these spiritual things. Reading my bible every day. I mean

I dedicated my life to it in ministry. Um…all of the stuff that is

supposed to make you understand and experience God more, I did.

Well not all of it…you know…but I tried anyway. And like I said, I

found it wanting. Okay, I did all this stuff and I don't feel any closer.

You know it eventually got worse…Prayed more and it seemed

emptier. Read more…it seemed emptier. Did more, it seemed

emptier."

❑ One's spiritual journey including dark times facilitated by the devil or dark
spiritual forces.

◆ "I was lying in bed one night just praying in Tongues and I got this

weird sensation in my hand and it started to shake and then I thought I

was demon possessed."

◆ "Why am I letting Satan get this little hold on me, why, and I went to

some elders in my church and I told them. I said this is what I've been

going through. Will you pray for me?…I open up my life; I open up

that door to the Devil. The Devil comes in and starts asking me all the

questions."

Table 1 (cont.)

❑ An experience of abandonment by God leading to an increased struggle of wrestling with tough questions about spirituality and religion.

♦ "Its bad because I feel abandoned again, like we were talking about,

yes. Because that I know that I'm trying to be good so now I don't see

it so much as me. But it is difficult. Frustrating. I think that kind of

even worse than knowing that you did something, because you can

always change you, but you can't change him and so I feel helpless

because you don't know what you should be doing, but you could be

doing more? And so I think that that's the most confusing thing about

it. Its just difficult because you are trying to be good and trying all

these things and you know you are not doing bad things or you don't

kind of know what the problem is. It's hard though in those times to

really maintain your relationship with him and try and be faithful

because I don't feel satisfied anymore spiritually."

V) Healthy scepticism seen as an essential part of the identity of the seeker.

❑ Change and growth in personal identity results from struggles that are part of spiritual development.

♦ "…In being able to worship in a community or with a community of

people giving myself to those people and at the same time wrestling

with questions and wondering if there is something else and right now,

its too dichotomized for me to do both but I think it can be done in a

way. It can be resolved, but the resolution is that you just live with

Table 1 (cont.)

        those two wholes with tension in-between…and I think I can handle

        that, as kind of an answer, even though it is a non-answer in a way."

♦ "So I had to let my old self almost die…now there is a new birth in

     me and I just feel so strongly that that's what has happened ever since

     February, because it feels like I'm still me, but God has transformed

     my heart so much."

❑ One's personal curiosity acting as an influence behind spiritual questioning.

♦ "In one sense I know its just part of who I am and it's a choice to ask

     difficult questions, it's a choice to wrestle with your paradigms and to

     choose kind of a life that includes uncertainty and ambiguity. And I

     know that that will always be with me. I'm fine with that I thrive on

     that. It motivates me and I know that's a big part of what compels me."

♦ "Yes, yes. I've learned to appreciate that part that God's made me. I

     used to be annoyed. I'm just kind of one person who watches and

     thinks about things. I don't get really involved…I'm a lot more

     extraverted than I used to be …than I used to be, but I used to admire

     people who could talk…but there is value to just sitting and listening

     and just thinking and processing. Being a Psych major you analyse

     things more than maybe others, but it was neat, I came home and

     wrote in a journal about it…Very meaningful. You know that

     mountain top experience except I could carry it with me."

❑ Scientific reasoning (i.e., ideas of logical reasoning, testability, and proof) is one of the guiding principles in one's spiritual journey.

Table 1 (cont.)

♦ "Maybe, but I think, yes, that is true in terms of human

organisations, but I think in terms of a personal lock, the Gnosis

has the most tangible personal results. The most, the proof that in a

sense that you can see and feel and touch."

♦ "I think it has to be. And it's not like a proof that you can show

another person it has to be I think coming…. it's subjective I

guess you could call it, but to yourself. It's immutable..."

❑ Spurring others to questioning results from one's own personal questing. In
some cases there exists concern this may disrupt their faith.

♦ "I like it. A lot of people ask me for my opinion on things. Like

last night I got asked my opinion on homosexuality and maybe it

leads to...maybe when you are a questioning person, people can

learn to grow with you."

♦ "And I would be very cautious about who I would tell because it

might disrupt their faith. It might sway them or something. They

might not be ready to look at those questions. So not even in a

sense that I am afraid that I would offend people or they'll get mad

at me. It's not that I'm even concerned about that all the time. I'd

be concerned about causing them to sway away from things that

they, in health, believe right now and that are a good thing to

believe. I wouldn't want to push them away from; maybe they

couldn't handle those kinda thoughts. So anyway, I'm just saying

that I would want to be sensitive to people."

Table 1 (cont.)

❑ A negative reaction to the word "religion" stemming from a belief that Religion does not capture the fullness of spirituality or one's spiritual journey.

♦ "Yes…and when you say religion I kind of "ughh" (negative tone). To me that's just associated…it's been associated with so much legalism and criticalness. But I don't like the term, "What's your religion?" I usually say, you know, I have a relationship with God. To me it's very different."

VI) Questioning and seeking is constrained by personal core beliefs and commitments.

❑ Questioning and seeking is guarded by internal beliefs and commitments and external relationships.

♦ "Yes. Questioning but not doubting so much. Like I don't want to...I don't feel that I doubt God. Because I'm not thinking about the communal life or that of becoming a Buddhist…nothing like that. But I definitely have questions and maybe they are questions you know that will never be answered. Like…creation...That's a big one that everyone wants to know and everybody thinks they are right?"

♦ " I would probably be more of a seeker if I were single. I love my wife and we have a good relationship, but I don't experiment with seeking the way I would if I was single."

VII) Spirituality and spiritual development are intertwined with one's relationship and connection with God or the Transcendent.

Table 1 (cont.)

- ❑ A sense that God reveals his desires for the seeker's life through his Holy Spirit.
  - ♦ "I don't have to think about all the jobs I didn't get. That I applied for this job, I handed him to be there, didn't get it or all the schools I would have liked to have gone to, all the degrees I might have, you know, been good at, all the talents that, oh I should have tried this sport when I was a youth, No. Forget all of that, whatever issues I made up might have been wrong. It doesn't matter right now, this is what God wants me to be and I think that's essentially it. You can say life in the spirit…"

- ❑ Part of one's spiritual journey including a belief that God communicates with us, participates in our lives, and wants to guide us.

  - ♦ "It's really hard to explain. I'm not sure if it's my own voice that's saying it? Or if it's another voice or if it's just a gut instinct. Often enough, it will be a gut instinct and there is no voice, there is no recognisable voice to it, its just, I need to do that right now."

  - ♦ "I have been wrestling with that, I don't know, you know, if it is God or the Devil talking to me…Do I really know the voice of God? Um…sometimes it can be so clear, but this one time I just described to you, it was just a sense that was in my heart. And I didn't know what to think of it. It was…I talked to Molly after, after I got this. It was in my church service. I said, 'you know, what do you think? Then she said, 'I don't know what to think. If it's God you have to do it.'

Table 1 (cont.)

❑ Experience of connection with God or a Transcendent being. These experiences vary on a continuum of intensity.

♦ "Levels…I would say that levels, levels…no, yah you're right. Levels would not probably fit I would probably say continuum. It's just like riding a bicycle down the hill, the steeper it is and the longer the hill is, the faster and faster you go. The longer that I'm on and allow myself to be…uh…in that area and I contemplate on it and I think on it and also you just kinda, quieten your spirit. Let all the outside noise dwindle, then it" just like the bicycle gets going faster and faster. Rather than like I've come to…you know…blocks on the way down the hill."

♦ "I guess the best way to describe it would be a scale. The river was near one end and complete non-spirituality would be at the other. I guess I'm probably some where around the middle most of the time."

❑ Spirituality described as a conscious pursuit of connection with God.

♦ "I'd say a lot of spirituality, of my spirituality, in a way, has to do with a conscientious regard for another person. That other person being God. And this other person whom I love very much and who I would regard to say that I love him more than my parents and that I love him more than anything else, okay, and its always a hard thing to go to."

♦ "I think the way I view spirituality is my soul connection with God…Soul to the spirit of God. You have to have a relationship, a connection with God, with someone higher than yourself."

Table 1 (cont.)

VIII) Spiritual journeys involve asking questions, wrestling with many issues, and/or forming personal integrations while addressing meaning, purpose, and direction in life.

- ❑ Actively engaged in wondering about and struggling with existential issues and issues around life's purpose.

  - ♦ "I guess I'm not really sure if I believe in heaven and hell and all of that. I do like to believe that death is not the end of things. I like to think that it leads to somewhere else to be, somewhere better. Whether it's just coming back into the energy of the world or heaven and whatever. I'm not sure, but there must be something."

  - ♦ "I don't know…I think it's so deep or the longing is so strong…that I've spent a lot of time thinking about it. If you didn't, you probably wouldn't have spent the time I have, contemplating and rethinking. Constantly…it means a lot to me. And so I think my dedication is very great to it."

- ❑ One's spiritual journey or search including a desire to translate personal faith and religion into an appropriate direction for one's life.

  - ♦ "I spent a month there this year and then I went up to Whitehorse and farther in the Yukon and that's a whole other Mission field where it's kind of like that Philippines because it's and remote and it forgotten by "a lot of people…and they don't realise that there are communities of 50 people that are trying to get their lives going. I like being up there. It definitely affected the whole course of my life."

Table 1 (cont.)

❑ Spiritual journey may include the integration of truths from several religions into a personalized religion. This process includes expressed fear that to have one's entire faith placed in one religion is a dangerous option as there is no real insurance that one's path is correct.

◆ "I think I could believe in all religions. Or…part of all religions.

I've had native friends and they'd be telling me about their religion

and I'd say, "I can believe that." And then my Punjabi friend would

say, 'this is what we believe,' and I'd say, 'I can believe that too.'

Even with Arianne, I'd say, 'yeah, I can believe that too.' And then

there are my own little theories that…"

◆ "But at this point, like I've taken religion courses and I've tried to

figure it out but I think, I don't know, I have a, my eyes much, like

they're open to a whole pile of different religions but I don't see

myself leaning to one any which way. I'm firmly set on the fact that

I should start my own religion."

❑ One is secure enough to proceed in one's journey of spiritual growth and development despite: single or multiple questions, fears, doubts.

◆ "No, because I don't know. I can never know. I've gone like, of

knowing in different directions. I've become a different person so

many different times that I can't say that for certain. But it feels like it

because it's…I don't know, I've tried it again, like I think I've tried

really honestly and I don't feel like I had any answers or…actually

no…At the beginning of the last semester I think I guess I just changed

again because I felt like I had something."

Table 1 (cont.)

♦ "…She just kept saying, 'no, you've got to accept it. You have to go
through this now and so every time I get out of the car.' Okay, jump
into this fear, jump into the fear and I've got to class…jump into this. I
look at the classroom and jump into this fear and I'd be like shaking
and I'd go…"

VIII) Perceptions and conclusions about religion lead to a tentative abandonment of
one's religious tradition to facilitate the drawing of new and personal ways of
thinking about spirituality and religion.

❑ Negative experiences associated with relationships and religion (often
Christianity) leading to a personal incongruence and a heightened focus on
one's spiritual journey.

♦ "And then I worked up at a museum, up in Yale. It was a church, an old
church…and a lot of people would say now 'Do you go to church every
day?' And I would say 'well…no…' And they'd say 'Well why not? I
want to save you…help me save you.' And that just pushed me further and
further away from it."

♦ "But I've also met a lot of ah, like negative religious people as well. And
that's ah…I'm a little bit confused about that. Um, ah… I'm a little bit
confused about how …religion…would…like religious philosophies
would restrict people in some ways from doing what they want to do to be
happy… you'd like to think they're doing it for the good of the person, but
I'm not always sure that that's the case."

Table 1 (cont.)

❑ Returning to an original (often parental) belief system with a new and personalized stance after (a) negative experience (s) with religion or church that lead to a time of spiritual exploration

♦ "Oh, the reason why all my standards are in my head, I guess. I think most of them are taught to me from the time before I was in grade six… Cause I always went to church when I was always growing up. So, I think that's where I must have got them, but I think they're good."

♦ "That experience at family camp? It was I hate clichés but they always seem to remind me of…like meeting an old friend. So to speak, you know, that kind of experience of, click 'I've been waiting for you, where were you. Here you are again. Let's get on with your life' kind of thing."

❑ Frustration against narrow-mindedness in organized religion that acts as an impetus for the development of a more inclusive position towards religious taboos and other religions.

♦ "…You can be of any sexual orientation, I don't care and uh I thought that was really, really wrong…and there was a whole pile of, there were some more things that were just, they were getting so judgmental and it just blew my mind how they could call themselves…"

♦ "Because I think that God is stretching his hand out to everybody, um they might be pursuing that better than I am. I can learn from them. So I don't think that those kinds of thoughts really fit too well with evangelical Christians. That I can learn from a Hindu on emptying yourself before God or something. I think that a lot of people would…and I've had people kinda just start to 'Okay, let's change the subject.'"

Table 1 (cont.)

❑ A perception of the lack of integrity of persons involved in religion seen as a major turning point in one's spiritual life.

♦ "…It felt like, I'll use Freud's analogy, A Child Finding out that the Stork doesn't really Bring Babies. Like I've been fooled this whole time, in that truth does not reside beyond the Evangelical tradition. I was a bit upset I guess. I wouldn't have been able to pin that feeling down then, but it's kind of the beginning. Or a real turning point."

♦ "A feeling of something missing I think. It was a realisation I think of maybe spiritual leaders in the family that I had looked up to in the past; their humanity, their personal corruption, their hypocrisy, especially the mother and the grandmother."

VIII) Spiritual journeys include being played out in the important context of interpersonal relationships.

❑ A significant impetus for one's spiritual journey coming through some form of parental influence; either encouraging the journey or acting in a rejecting or constricting manner that lead the searcher into a spiritual journey as a reaction.

♦ "I think my Mom was kind of disappointed in me because when they were younger, because she is from Slovakia. They were a totally religious, devout Catholic family and they has four daughters and they always wanted one of them to be a nun, but none of them did and so I think I kind of let my Mom down a bit even though she wouldn't like come out and say it, but I could see it. Those made me feel even worse than the whole Parishioner thing and stuff."

♦ "I kind of went through a phase where I was trying to figure out, is this my

Table 1 (cont.)

parent's belief or is this my belief? So when I was about 16 I kind of

decided I don't want anything to do with them or what they believe, I

wanted to figure this out for myself. And I went, down more of a

rebellious path."

❑ Inspiration and sustenance for one's spiritual journey coming through profound experiences and relationships with peers or role models.

♦ "…And so relationally its kind of area in which I've got

sustenance…because I found people on that same path and so their

thoughts and what they are reading and the discussions we have is right

now for me a really an important part of my spirituality."

♦ "I wanted to stop her and say, 'you know what? I'm so into church and its

because of you,' but she was in a hurry; I still drive by elementary school

and I'm so tempted to just go in there to say, 'hey, you know what? You

totally planted a seed in my heart,' but like I'm going to do that, I just

don't feel that's the right timing, because she was such an amazing person,

I just totally, just like she was so inspirational and yeah."

❑ An essential component of one's personal spiritual journey or quest is that it takes place within the context of interpersonal relationships.

♦ "I believe it's important to be with a church body. I believe Jesus loves the

church and we are the church and it's a place of, I don't know, I believe in

having like…having a church body. I believe that so strongly. Because I

believe we all need each other."

Table 1 (cont.)

♦ "I think it's um…I think it's through…I think it's through experience and

relationships…I think you get security out of some relationships…positive

relationships…I think there is also short-term relationships that are you

know experiences. Like say, I went…when I went travelling I would meet

people for a short period of time, you know I gain a lot (mm hmm), In just

a… you know you share something. I think it's a combination…"

XI) Profound and challenging experiences seen to mould and shape one's personal

religious journey.

❑ Inspiration to ask questions of meaning and purpose either beginning or being amplified due to a religion-based university course or university experience in general.

♦ "But more recently, I've been just last semester I took a course…which

was amazingly boring, but still, kind of, it made me think. It made me

think about different kinds of superior beings and like the type of journey

that they went through; because that was the focus of the course, the

textbook was called the Hero With a Thousand Faces, I don't know if your

familiar with that. Written by Joseph Campbell…"

♦ "I think it's really a lot to do with my classes. Like how now I'm taking

the New Testament and even then because they talk a lot about how we

see Jesus in our Western context, but how in the Bible he was in a Jewish,

buried 2000 years ago context and …a lot of…not in our Western world.

Table 1 (cont.)

> So that right there and I mean you think a lot about, like Whoa, do I make
>
> Jesus out to be the way Anglo-Saxon Protestants are? Yes, that's just a
>
> small example."

- ❑ One's journey including significant experiences with cult-based religious group(s) that greatly influenced one's spiritual perspective and the next steps in the continuing spiritual journey.

    - ♦ "Yes and cults for sure…some dangerous actually. I'm worried about this

        Scientologist. They are still hounding me. The pass around your name and

        address and you get hand-written letters as if you're a friend, from all

        these different people. I don't know if it's because they found out I was

        going to the Christian School or something, but yes, they are still bugging

        me. I know that they come down on you if they think you're an enemy of

        Scientology."

    - ♦ "And we had to do; he called it a church project. And we had to go to a

        religious service of some sort. So I chose pagan because I had a lot of

        information from her and uh and I met this girl and started reading all

        about it and there is so many common threads even between pagan

        religion and Christianity. Like it's unbelievable."

- ❑ A crisis or difficult life event seen as a significant turning point and reference that significantly affected one's spiritual journey and/or one's relationship with God or Transcendent being.

    - ♦ "I'm glad I went through it. It was like something I would never

        change for the world. And people are like…aw…you know no-o. It

        was good. Like I feel so much stronger now even though I'm not as

Table 1 (cont.)

stable or stuff like that. Still there are internal problems and struggles and stuff like that. But at least I know what I'm capable of kind of handling and stuff and I know what God asks of us a lot more than I did before. So I'm maybe not as naïve as I was before kind of. So yes, I think it was good that I went through it and stuff."

♦ "I finally came to the point where. Okay God, if you do this, your obviously going to help me through this and give me what it takes, and I can remember this incredible peace. It passes all understanding, you know, that verse really hit home and that became a very strong reality for me. And I can remember that night or the night after where one of my girlfriends called to find out how I was. She asked how my sister was. I said you know she's not doing so good, she might die, but you know, God's going to help me through it and she was like, What?"

<u>Reliability and Validity</u>

        <u>Reliability</u>. Phenomenological research must concern itself with reliability for its results to have applied meaning. Specifically, reliability is concerned with the ability of objective, outside persons to classify meaning units with the appropriate primary themes. A high degree of agreement between two independent judges will indicate a high level of reliability in classifying the categories. Generally, a level of 80 percent agreement indicates an acceptable level of reliability (Wong, 2000).

        To establish the reliability of this study, a master's level student with basic grounding in qualitative research was recruited. The student was given the list of primary themes and instructed to read and familiarize himself with them for as long as needed. Once ready, the student was given 24 pages of interview transcript that were randomly selected from the interviews. This number represented approximately 10 percent of the total number of pages. It is important to note that less than 1 percent of transcript content was unrelated to the interview focus (e.g. One seeker wondered aloud about the mark she got in a religious studies course and commented that she liked the professor).

        The student was instructed to read the transcripts then fill in the appropriate primary theme that corresponded with each meaning unit. After approximately six and half hours the student completed the task.

        The student was then asked to justify his answer for each meaning unit. If his answer was incorrect, he was presented with the correct theme and a discussion would follow. The discussion resulted in the student either recognising that his answer was incorrect, or the researcher conceding that the two themes were too similar and should be combined.

The percent agreement between researcher and the student was 78 percent. The coefficient for reliability was a kappa score of 76 percent. This statistic was derived by taking the percent agreement between researcher and seeker, of matching meaning units with their corresponding primary theme and entering it into a formula that takes chance agreements into account.

Validity. Validity in phenomenological research refers to whether the results (shared themes) of content analysis are believable or trustworthy and whether they resonate with people who have had some experience with the phenomenon under investigation. Nine out of fifteen seekers were involved in validation of this study by reading the shared themes and discussing with the researcher if and how these themes resonated with their experience. The results were overwhelmingly favourable, with all nine seekers able to agree that each of the eleven themes captured his or her experience. One exception to this came in the response of those who did not believe in God, to theme seven that originally read, "Spirituality and spiritual development are intertwined with one's relationship and connection with God." All seekers, who did not believe in God, felt that they could accept this theme only if it included the idea of "Transcendent." These concerns lead to the theme including the concept of the "Transcendent."

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The seekers in this study (seekers) are people whose personal spirituality and spiritual journey are of great consequence to their lives. A number were involved in and committed to a particular religion. Others were in the process of exploring various religions. Most were attempting to develop greater personal awareness and understanding while striving to follow their own perspectives on spirituality and religion in their day-to-day lives. The shared themes that emerged from this study exemplify richness and complexity in thinking and experience, born from an existential search (Klaassen & McDonald, in press) that takes many forms. To ignore spiritual and religious questions would do great injustice to important personal longings and curiosities.

Experiences of religion and the spiritual realm encountered here were broad and diverse, yet shared a common core. To some, spirituality was a component of their human make-up that had to be consciously addressed if it was to be fostered. Others lived out their spirituality as a connection with or conscientious regard toward God that included exploration and understanding. Spirituality, for some, was encountered as an energy force that thoroughly permeated humanity and the earth. Searching for positive, meaningful relationships allowed more of this energy to be encountered and integrated. Across the myriad of experiences there existed a common similarity of spirituality as a mystical phenomenon, intensely personal and often communal, whether it addressed God or some other transcendent force.

Spirituality was a fundamental aspect that was evolving and unable to be ignored in the quest for a fuller life. A central aspect of this growth came through the context of interpersonal relationships discussed in shared theme ten. Parental and family influence,

positively or negatively, occurred in almost all life-worlds examined. Role models and groups of like-minded seekers both challenged and gave sustenance during periods riddled with anxiety or doubt.

For one seeker, his spiritual eyes were opened through a relationship with a mentor and friend. This person challenged him to continually ask questions as to why he thought certain ways, why he took certain approaches and stances on religion and spirituality, and importantly pushed him to examine the depths of his motivation for religious life. This mentor also helped unlock a sense that, even though commitments had been made, the process of seeking, asking questions, and growing on a spiritual level was constant and never to reach an end. The further one gets into the mystery of the spiritual realm, the larger this realm grows.

This study provides a keen exploration of Quest-oriented religion. The rigorously developed themes build a bridge to discussion through a global validation of the construct validity of Batson's Quest-oriented religion. Several of this study's themes (e.g., shared themes three, five, eight, and nine) suggest that Batson's formal concepts of openness to change, self-criticism and doubt seen as positive, and willingness to embrace complexity (Batson et al., 1993) have been illustrated. The religion and spirituality expressed in this study also lend new credence to a number of current research threads on facets of Quest including that religion-as-Quest may come in different versions and the importance of the ideological surrounds of religious orientations (Beck et al., 2001; Klaassen & McDonald, in press; Watson et al., 1992, 1998). This research also included engaging the life-worlds of those whose Quest-oriented religion included religious commitments. Access to this cohort allowed for examination into the lived experiences of seekers that were also

developed along the Intrinsic or End dimension. Previous research has spoken of the

possible existence of this cohort (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991b; Burris et al., 1994;

Watson et al., 1998) although the concrete life world of their spiritual journeys has never

been explored.

A phenomenological interview process seemed to normalize the spiritual and

religious mindset of many of the seekers. Only three seekers confessed to having an overt

personal identification as a spiritual "quester" or seeker before the study. The other

seekers still experienced the same deep desire to address life's existential questions with

a goal of reaching personal reflective and personal conclusions, but only as the questions

arose, and not in any sort of sustainable and conscious, day-to-day manner. Phillip

Cushman's (1990) work on the "empty self" helps with understanding why some seekers

might not identify themselves as spiritual seekers and why religion-as-Quest might be

unsustainable (according to Batson's definition, 1993). He asserts that the development

of a meaningful self-concept is hindered by a combination of historical and modern day

forces. These same forces can hinder an explicit and sustained spiritual journey. The

intention of this discussion is to allow for the thematic structure to speak to the formal

definition of Quest-oriented religion and to examine possible variations or "styles" of

lived spirituality as defined by the 12-item Quest scale.

<u>Batson's Definition of Quest</u>

The thematic structure of this study demonstrates the central features of religion-

as-Quest according to the Batson and Schoenrades' 12-item Quest scale (1993). These

are the now familiar characteristics of readiness to face life's existential questions in their

fullest form, a view of self-criticism and religious doubts as positive, and openness to

religious change (Batson et al., 1993). This section provides a partial validation of the

Quest scale through elaboration of the shared themes.

Values of meaningful lived-religion and spirituality that emerged from the shared

themes included scepticism, critical evaluation and questioning, tentativeness, and

change. These can be found in *shared themes three, five, eight, and nine* (Chapter IV). In

many cases, the central picture painted was religion as a critical evaluation of spirituality

and religion including a time of stepping away (possibly due to doubt) in order to

personalise spiritual and religious perspectives. For many, this time of "pulling-back"

included *personal criticism* and asking questions as to why certain personal beliefs were

held. Healthy scepticism and the inclusion of scientific principles of testability and

verifiability were also common aspects that seekers combined with their spiritual search.

As mentioned, spiritual growth included the essential component of asking

profound and difficult questions seen in shared theme eight. This theme also

demonstrates that seekers wrestled with questions of meaning and purpose, exemplifying

the phenomenon of *embracing life's existential questions in all their complexity* as

described by Batson and associates (Batson et al., 1993). It is important to be reminded

that for many, these questions were not constantly sought out but were more likely to be

dealt with as encountered.

Interestingly, the specific idea of *embracing religious doubts as positive* did not

receive broad support, with only few seekers comfortable with the word doubt.

Nonetheless, doubts seemed an important impetus for asking questions or for stepping

back from personal faith and religion for evaluatory purposes. Questions were a key

component of religion, taking the "seeker" through broad ranges of experiences with the goal of personal integrations.

Openness to change was moderately supported through the experiences of these "seekers." Many persons were willing to abandon (for a time) or even reject their religious traditions and many of their beliefs. The depth of openness to change seemed to relate to degree of religious commitments.

Seekers included some who were committed (at some level) to a religious faith and others who were not. In all cases, questions were seen and held as the way to develop one's spiritual life. The topic of shared theme six is the constraints that seekers experienced to their seeking and were a moderating force on openness to change. For some, lack of unhindered seeking was related to development along the End dimension and subsequent religious commitments. Some would not abandon a personal belief in God or other underlying core beliefs, and were thus kept them from arbitrary openness to change. For many, regardless of intrinsic commitments, personal and relational constraints as well as busyness and lack of time, were underlying reasons behind a deeper, more full and sustained search.

For many seekers, questions and searching served as a means for the development of a personal religion or personal stance toward religion as illuminated in shared theme two. In most cases, seekers had some early experience with organised religion. Almost all were either forced to attend and accept particular doctrines or had come to a realisation that continued participation would lead to a life that was not congruent with their personal beliefs. An interesting similarity reached by many, was that to place one's entire

faith in one religion, without discovering truth through personalized questions and

searching, would be tantamount to the fallacy of having "all one's eggs in one basket."

One telling story (repeated in several forms) saw a female seeker attend church

for a number of years with her brother and mother, not understanding and never being

told the reasons for attending church. After a number of years, the family stopped going

to church and no explanation was given. During her time at the church, this seeker had

experienced an encounter with a child's church leader trying to "scare her into a

conversion." From that point, she decided that a religion like this did not have integrity or

compassion and did not fit in her life. Her seeking life now includes relationships with

friends of many religious and cultural backgrounds, all of whose traditions she has

attempted to incorporate into her own personal religion and spirituality. She shared that

at times, she does regret that she views the church (as an entity) from the perspective that

all are similar to this child's church leader.

The experiences of the seekers in this study have led to a shared thematic

structure that demonstrates in part, the essence of religion-as-Quest as outlined by Batson

and his colleagues (1993). The shared themes also include experiences that suggest

evidence of different versions or "styles" of religion-as-Quest. These are discussed and

elaborated on in the following sections.

Versions of Quest

This study examines the question, "What does the Batson and Schoenrade's

(1991a) 12-item Quest scale measure?" Specifically, it provides evidence that the Quest

Scale measures a greater complexity and a broader scope of motivations behind Quest-

oriented religion than has been suggested by Batson and his colleagues (1993).

Sustainability of Quest. In their text, *Religion and the Individual*, Batson and his colleagues (1993) define religion as whatever one does to reconcile the challenging questions that arise from the awareness that we are others like us are alive and will one day face death. This suggests the idea that if one has dealt with existential questions, whether temporarily or once and for all, they have thus ceased to be religious. In addition to this, item two on the Quest scale asks the reader to rate the statement, "I am *constantly* (italics added) questioning my religious beliefs" (Batson et al., 1993, p. 170). It seems only likely that a personal identity of (or including) religious seeker would likely be the result of striving to live a consistent religious life. As mentioned, many of the seekers, as selected by their responses to Batson's 12-item Quest scale, do not fit this picture.

Of fifteen seekers, only three persons matched the passion called for by these two aspects of Quest-oriented religion. Most did not overtly view themselves as seekers but were happy to discover that there were others who held similar thought processes and approach to spiritual and religious questioning. These two groups shared many similarities, but exploration into these and other differences in personal religious identity adds credence to other postulations that Quest lends itself to the possibility of more than one version (Beck et al., 2001; Klaassen & McDonald, in press).

Sustainability of religion-as-Quest also relates to the constraints that many seekers experienced to seeking. A core conclusion reached by many seekers was that one's spiritual search or "quest" could only go as far as fundamental beliefs or other restrictions would allow. This phenomenon of 'constraints to seeking' is found in shared theme six. Asking questions remained a necessary component of spirituality and religion as personal identities that included curiosity and healthy scepticism could not be ignored.

Nonetheless, at various times and for various reasons directions of questioning were altered depending on where it was leading and whom it affected.

Intrinsic Religion, Quest, and Commitment. Batson and colleagues (1991b, 1993) charge that religious orientation is a multidimensional construct that is more complex than focus on typologies will allow. They accept that one can be developed in the Quest dimension but also along the intrinsic, end or means dimensions as well. Accordingly, seekers reported varying degrees of intrinsic orientation as well. The idea of persons developed in both the intrinsic and the Quest religious dimension has been given speculative examination elsewhere in the literature. As an example, Burris (1994) hypothesizes their existence while commenting on curvilinear relationships among religious orientations, but does not discuss or give voice as to what life might be like for these persons. Genia (1996) also found that high quest scorers were equally likely to be affiliated with traditional religious groups as not. She goes on to suggest the idea that her findings suggest that spiritual inquisitiveness and intrinsic commitment are not exclusive.

The research of Watson and his colleagues (1985, 1989, 1992, 1998) has begun to uncover the perspectives of adherents to intrinsic religion toward the Quest scale and paradigm. Their recent research has been based on the perspective that ideological factors play a critical role in the psychological study of religion. As has been discussed, they consider it essential to promote religious orientation research that takes into account different religious ideological surrounds. Their work has begun to focus on intrinsically religious persons to help play a role in the process of "democratizing" the research process.

Watson and colleagues' research (1992, 1998) has included the rating of Quest scale items as either consistent or inconsistent with personal beliefs. This has led to focus on intrinsically religious persons who have labelled as many as two-thirds of the items as "antireligious," according to their personal, religious perspective. Watson and his associates suggest that if the Quest scale operates from anti-intrinsic assumptions, then claims to the psychological consequences of carrying religious commitments (i.e., they are a pro-social, self-preservation strategy) may be distorted.

Beck and his associates (2001) found that distinguishing and independently assessing the hypothesized facets of religion-as-Quest gave a potential new voice for seekers with a higher degree of development (i.e., religious commitment) along the intrinsic dimension. They asserted that someone with a degree of committed to personal religion can load on the Tentativeness not Change dimensions (facets of Quest). Depending on their level of commitment, they can still experience high levels of purpose and meaning. These conclusions seem to capture the life experience of many of the committed seekers, in the present study, who experience religion-as-Quest.

As has been mentioned, many of the seekers in this study held religious commitments ranging from only a core belief in God to a number of denominational commitments. The experience of religion for these persons included relational, emotional, and sometimes spiritual costs as discussed in shared theme four. Relational and emotional costs came as a result of serious spiritual questions such as asking about the assumptions behind the basic tenets of one's tradition or faith. In a number of cases, this resulted in the seeker being pushed to the fringes of his or her tradition. Spiritual costs for a number of seekers came after embracing a life of spiritual seeking. In many

cases, this led to the experience of a time where the God they once knew and related with (on various levels) seemed to have abandoned them (i.e., as a result of their questions).

Seekers, including those whose religion included intrinsic commitments, held that mystical spiritual experience was an important part of their experience. Spirituality emerged as a mystical phenomenon, both in a personal and communal sense. For all seekers, the spiritual dynamic of their lives included an intensely personal and mystical aspect that was difficult to articulate in a concise way.

One seeker, who considered himself a committed Christian, described a particular late night mountain-bike ride that lead to an experience with the Northern Lights. This experience began as a general admiration of nature that moved into a rich and profound captivation with the scene and the moment. Through this, he received a "supernatural" sense of affirmation from a world beyond his own that had a dramatic affect on his personal spiritual identity. He eventually left this experience with a new belief that he was called to have a part in the mystery of what was beyond normal experienced life. This event was powerful but incomplete enough that it affirmed for him that it was right for him to be a seeker.

Another seeker, also developed along the intrinsic dimension, talked of a significant spiritual experience while in a dangerous part of downtown Vancouver with her friend while attempting to provide aid to prostitutes. Early in the night, both women experienced a tremendous sense of unease and fear that was felt on an intensely spiritual level. Both felt as if in some sort of "bondage," the seeker describing the feeling of a heavy, wet towel wrapped around her. In response to all of this, this seeker prayed to God with a fervent intensity and soon after both women experienced a release from their

"oppression" and a sensation of warm and comforting peace that allowed them to continue. This seeker held dearly to her religious beliefs and through her seeking of God through prayer was led into a very mystical spiritual experience.

The emerging themes from this study were able to illustrate the lives of a number of persons who both embrace religion-as-Quest and were intrinsically religious, holding varying degrees of religious commitments. These experiences, as detected by Batson and Schoenrade's 12-item Quest scale (1991a) demonstrate that this scale measures a form of spiritual journey that holds varying levels of faith commitments as essential. As has been discussed, Batson and Schoenrade (1991b) detail the possibility of development along two dimensions in light of the orthogonal relationship between Quest and intrinsic. That said, in light of their definition of religion (discussed earlier), it seems that the belief in religious content of the intrinsically religious might contradict the purpose of continued questioning and seeking without knowing, thus demonstrating incompatibility with the formal definition of religion-as-Quest. In seeking to understand the lived experiences of these persons, the use of phenomenological interview provided a way to incorporate the religious ideological surround in understanding this cohort of people. This supports Watson and his colleagues (Watson et al., 1992) who intimate that inclusion of the ideological surround allows for the intrinsically religious to hold religious commitments and yet be on a modified version of religious Quest.

Several of the seekers in this study had gone through experiences with death or with near death experiences. These are captured in the profound and challenging experiences of shared theme eleven, which includes a primary theme of experiencing a major crisis or difficult life event. Without fail, these events shook the seeker's personal

and spiritual foundations ultimately leading to a decision for or against the tentatively

abandoned religion or faith from shared theme two.

Profound and challenging experiences, for a number of seekers, included the

experience of a loss of a loved one or a severe car accident. One such story included a

seeker who was in a period of rejection of the faith of her parents. This person had

reached a point where she had decided that her parent's religion was not for her and she

was going to live in such a way that suited her feelings and perceptions about life. One

day, while driving to school, she, her sister, brother, and family friend were struck by

another car. The accident was horrific and her sister was seriously injured. In the

moments following the emergency, her sister's life hung in the balance. This female

remembers clearly wrestling with God, laying down an ultimatum that if God took her

sister, then she would turn her back on him. This "wrestling match" went on for a number

of hours until she reached a peace where she knew that God loved her and was present,

and that no matter what happened, He would provide strength for the family. The core of

this experience was reconciliation with God, and a level of new commitment that would

still allow her to search and question, but to be dedicated to the God who cared deeply.

The Costs of Quest

Choosing a life of asking questions, for those committed to religion, included

sacrifices and costs on a relational, emotional and spiritual level. Sometimes these costs

came through the experience of dark times on one's journey with the seeker feeling that

dark forces may be orchestrating these experiences. Being pushed to the fringes of

friendship or religious community because of the types and depth of questions asked

leads many of these seekers to a lonely existence and the experience of varying degrees of anxiety.

Several seekers went through a dark time of feeling abandoned by God, unable to relate to him in ways they previously could. For one seeker, this time has now lasted for some years. Once passionately devoted to his Christian faith, perceiving the lack of integrity in people who professed to espouse the Christian lifestyle, his personal faith was drastically challenged. He went from devoted Christian to full-time seeker, delving into various different cult-based and other religions as well as looking to astrological studies to help him make sense of his world turned upside down. Abandonment by God led to tumultuousness and powerful times of seeking, "If God had abandoned him, perhaps God didn't exist or had died." Abandonment has created a pervasive angst that does not allow for peace or restful periods. This seeker's conclusion that God has died led him into more passionate seeking, reflection, and growing.

Many seekers experienced powerful experiences with either God or the spiritual realm. These experiences brought a new clarity to life and greatly influenced the way life was approached. These experiences took place in nature, during worship or prayer, or came in the form of foundation shaking perceptions, insights, and realizations. M. Scott Peck (1978), in the *Road Less Traveled*, includes a quote from Jones (1977) that speaks to the impetus for these forms of spiritual and religious searching.

> One of our problems is that very few of us have developed any distinctive personal life. Everything about us seems second-hand, even our emotions. In many cases, we have to rely on second-hand information in order to function. I accept the word of a physician, a scientist, a farmer, on trust. I do not like to do this. I have to because

they possess vital knowledge of living of which I am ignorant. Second-hand

information concerning the state of my kidneys, the effects of cholesterol, and the

raising of chickens I can live with. But when it comes to the questions of meaning,

purpose and death, second-hand information will not do. I cannot survive on a

second-hand faith in a second-hand God. There has to be a personal word, a unique

confrontation, if I am to come alive. (p. 194.).

For a number of the seekers in this study, willingness to search for "a personal word

or a unique confrontation," came at a price they were willing to pay, at least for a time.

Contextual Hindrances to Quest

Philip Cushman's work (1990) on the *empty self* provides important insight into

the role that cultural, social, and historical forces play on people in our society.

Investigation of these various forces on the self can aid the psychology of religion in

continuing to form a more complete and useful picture of the complexities of religious

orientation, religious maturity and pathways of existential search. The following does not

represent an exhaustive view of Phillip Cushman's arguments but is offered to help focus

on to contextual hindrances on Quest-oriented religion.

Cushman (1990) proposes that it is essential to examine the self from a

contextualized perspective in order for adequate understanding of its motivations,

tendencies, and pathologies. He argues, from a social constructionist perspective, that the

current western construction of the self is empty. More specifically, this western self is

"characterised by a pervasive sense of personal emptiness and is committed to the values

of self-liberation through consumption" (p. 601).

The forces that work to create this personal emptiness have culminated in the post World War II era, in a continued progression of society from agricultural to industrial, from religion to science and from communal perspective to an individual perspective. The self has gone through a movement toward focus on "self-contained individualism" becoming the "bounded-masterful self." Cushman speculates that the problem of *empty self* is also partly due to loss of extended family, community, tradition, and shared sources of meaning. In the past, these acted as sources for personal identity and fulfillment, providing a stable context from which to relate to the world. Loss of significance and focus has resulted from focus on self-reliant, rugged individualism and an air of entitlement perpetuated by the advertising industry. The loss of these and the result of an empty self is that people are always in need.

Importantly, Cushman states that the shift in the identity of self has moved from a focused centrality on religious character towards the importance of the secular character. Western North American culture has created a self that needs to be soothed, organized, and made cohesive by filling itself up through psychotherapy or advertising (Cushman, 1990). These solutions also create the problem by acting as a temporary solution (consumerism), or by perpetuating the problem (psychotherapy treating the self as empty). The forces of culture are not always overt sometime infusing into people's lives. Culture acts to form and shape how one develops a self-concept in relation to the world, how they view others, and how they make choices in the everyday world.

It is reasonable to argue that the social and historical dynamics that have created the *empty self* also compete against the energy level and focus required to fully embrace religion-as-Quest (1990). The unexamined life will be susceptible to desire to fill the

empty self with cultural solutions, potentially neglecting the spiritual journey as a source

of meaning and fulfilment. From a systems perspective (Peck, 1993a), an examination of

the current milieu of the day suggests that for many people there exists a dearth of

consciousness about the effects of historical forces, organisations, and systems. This lack

of consciousness of larger systems leads to an unconscious and passive acceptance of the

larger world's influence. Passive acceptance implicitly results in negative effects on

people's spirituality and religion, as many beliefs seep through popular ideas of culture

and are often accepted without question.

Understanding spiritual growth in the context of the identity of the self (Cushman,

1990; Fowler, 1991; Klaassen & McDonald, in press) and a larger systems perspective

(Peck, 1993a) helps to shed light on the forces that conspire against consistent and deep

searching. Increased research and understanding of the role that cultural, social and

historical forces play on motivation for religious life will allow for spirituality and

religion to take a meaningful option in the lives of those aware and willing to wrestle

with and against the empty condition of the self.

Relevance to Counselling Psychology

The vital domain of spirituality has made its way into secular therapy. The most

recent *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fourth edition (DSM-IV;

American Psychiatric Association, 1994) includes a category for religious or spiritual

problems that may occur in counselling. Psychospiritually competent professionals are

able to honour the diverse roles that religion, spirituality and spiritual journey play in

client resource capabilities. Competency in this realm includes a counsellor first

becoming aware of his or her own spiritual and religious beliefs, values, and spiritual

journey (Fukuyama & Sevig, 1997). Counsellors need to realize their own biases and religious schemas and not fall into the role of spiritual advisor or lose sight of the presenting problems or issues. Counsellors must have enough knowledge of religion and spirituality to know the healthy aspects and inherent dangers that must be addressed in providing thorough spiritually sensitive counselling (Hodge, 2001). Personal limitations must be known and include a willingness to make referrals when necessary.

The rich themes from this study provide a new understanding of the potential for client's religious and spiritual systems to lay dormant or unconscious despite being in operation. Psychospiritual competency (Fukuyama & Sevig, 1997) will aid counsellors in being grounded in an understanding of the spiritual journey, its strengths, its seasons, and its pitfalls.

Normalization of religion-as-Quest was a powerful process that left many seekers with a new, albeit not complete, sense of ease and courage to face the spiritual path they had chosen. All seekers commented that this was the first time they had told their story in its complete form and the first time they could focus holistically on the experience and meaning of their experience of spirituality and religion. This study served as a powerful means with which to bring an already existing, but implicit spiritual search into consciousness. In light of the climate of spiritual relevancy in counselling, counsellors must have knowledge of the role that spiritual searching (religion-as-Quest) can play in a client's life. He or she must be ready and able to help identify, facilitate, or provide a safe place for the process to begin to unfold.

Future Research

As this seems to be the first phenomenological study of religion-as-Quest, it is necessary to suggest that further phenomenological study take place. Qualitative strategies will only help to unravel and expound upon the complexity of religious orientation. Further study such as this will serve the necessary purpose of verifying the diverse and shared experiences of the seekers in this study. Second, more phenomenological work could continue to analyse the Quest scale and shed additional light on the hypothesised versions of Quest-oriented religion. Third, it is important to look again at the dynamic of high intrinsic and "high quest" searchers, especially in light of Watson and colleagues work (1992, 1998), which finds that the intrinsically religious rate some Quest, scale items as anti-religious. Fourth, tracking the process of one's spiritual journey through a series of longitudinal interviews would add to information about lifelong "quests" as well as have potential for adding confirmatory evidence and other new information to theories on linear spiritual development (Fowler, 1991; Peck, 1993b).

Perhaps these endeavours will lead to the development of a new (combined) religious orientation or dimension that can help to depict the richness that is yet to be well articulated. The goal of ever-deepening construct validity of Quest (whether as a single construct or as independent facets) frees the research paradigm focused on mature religion to move forward in new and different ways (McMinn, 2001).

Limitations to the Present Research

One limitation of this research comes in the construction of shared theme structure. Primary themes have a closer tie to the original transcript and often include the

personal vocabularies of the seekers. They are specific and include a richness and vividness of experience and thought. Moving from primary themes to shared themes it is inevitable that a level of ambiguity and inclusivity be maintained in order to give rise to themes that represent the shared experience of those who embraced religion-as-Quest. It is therefore important that an in depth examination of the "lived experience" of religion-as-Quest include examination of the entire thematic structure (Chapter IV and Appendix F).

Another limitation in this study can be found in the inter-rater reliability score in relation to the primary themes. The percent-agreement between this researcher and an independent judge came to 78 percent. The adjusted percent-agreement score (agreement by chance factored out) came to a Kappa score of 76 percent. This is slightly below the generally accepted level of 80 percent. Future research will hopefully reach this generally agreed upon structure.

Conclusion

The complex task of understanding and giving voice to the "lived-experience" of the existential search was a significant, worthy and rewarding undertaking. This study has demonstrated that the Quest scale draws out more versions of Quest-oriented religion than the original one described by C. Daniel Batson and his colleagues (1993). It also establishes the necessary addition of qualitative research to the psychology of religion study of religious orientation. This study does not attempt to promote qualitative research as a saviour for religious orientation research; rather, it is suggested that it will work wonderfully in concert with already existing quantitative methodologies. The interviews with those who embrace religion-as-Quest uncovered a source of richness of experience

and thought, glaringly absent from the continuing debate. Phenomenological research has provided a way to further develop and suggest new directions for the construct validity of religion-as-Quest. This process of inquiry received validation through follow-up interviews with the seekers.

This thesis project yielded numerous new sources of exciting new information, several of which beg continued study. The shared theme structure demonstrated the existence of costs as part of spiritual seeking as well as constraints to engaging in complete, authentic search. Many seekers in this study, did not overtly see themselves as such and were unable to sustain questioning and seeking in the way called for by the original definition and understanding of Quest (Batson et al., 1993). Examination of a cohort of persons who both embraced religion-as-Quest and intrinsic religion gave insight into the existence of different versions of Quest, especially one that allowed for various levels of religious commitment.

For persons who are spiritually searching or who have inclination toward this process, understanding the costs, constraints, and feasibility of including various levels of commitments might keep the spiritual "quest" from the sabotage of the forces of the "empty self" (Cushman, 1990). Of what value is this new knowledge if it does not bring normalization and empowerment for those who experience anxiety and loneliness in relationship to spirituality and religion? Understanding and dialogue between various religious "styles" is a worthy goal to provide for the next generation of seekers and for the next generation of religious orientation researchers. This dialogue, started here, will make the religious ideological surround an essential part of the research enterprise.

The importance, complexity, and varieties of the search for truth, meaning, and purpose can be made much more accessible through a new paradigm of research in religious orientation. A new climate of research where personal biases are acknowledged and both researcher and seeker are given opportunity to interpret data provides a big step in the right direction.

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APPENDIX A

Personal Bracketing

Entering this study, my knowledge of the spiritual quest or Quest-oriented religion has been quite limited. Being raised in a Christian tradition (Baptist denomination), I experienced religion in a family and social context participating because it was expected. Part of these experiences included what would be considered a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, but again, this occurred without significant questions being asked and without any investigations into the assumptions behind the Christian faith. An important aspect or teaching from the family throughout this time was that there would come a time in my life, where I would have to choose whether I would continue in the faith of my parents. I believe that this option of choice kept me from rejecting religion at an earlier age.

This personal faith in God and religious experience continued and developed throughout the high school years. University began a time of struggling with idea of how or if I was to make my religion and spirituality my own, and included beginning to evaluate the church through observation and questioning. During this time my personal belief in God did not waver although I developed a lack of trust in church tradition and practice.

One year out of university, I came to the conclusion that personalization of my religious faith was a process and began to work out what it would mean for my life to be a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ on a day-to-day basis. Importantly, this process has not come through rejection of God or religion or through explicitly wrestling through with difficult questions or significant periods of doubting. Nonetheless, I did maintain an

open stance and a willingness to discuss my faith. I have also remained willing to continue to learn more about that to which I had committed my life.

Regarding Quest-oriented religion, I carry the assumption that the authentic spiritual journey can exist in different forms depending on the characteristics of population. I believe that it is possible to have commitments to particular belief systems and yet still be on a "quest."

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine relationships between spirituality & psychological well-being. Research seekers in this study will be asked to complete the following questionnaire as it reflects their current experience. This task will take approximately 30-45 minutes. Following the completion of the questionnaire, seekers will be entered in a draw for three prizes of $50 each. A summary of the study will be placed on the world wide web.

As a follow up to this study, we will conduct interviews with several seekers to understand their answers better. If you do <u>NOT</u> want to be contacted about this opportunity, please indicate this below.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All research seekers can decide to discontinue the study at any time without any penalty. While the information gathered will serve as data towards possible future publications, all information gathered in this study will be kept strictly confidential, anonymous, and secure. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, please DO NOT write your name or any other identifiable information on the following pages of this questionnaire.

Should you have any concerns or questions, feel free to contact the Project Coordinator for information:

Dr. Marvin McDonald   Phone: 513-2034, ext. 3223
Trinity Western University   E-mail: mcdonald@twu.ca
Counselling Psychology Department
7600 Glover Road
Langley, BC V2Y 1Y1

        I have read and understand the description of the study and I willingly consent to participate. I want my name entered in the draw for $50.

Name: _____(please print)

Phone & Email: _____   _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

☐   I would NOT be willing to be contacted about a follow-up interview (please check).

APPENDIX C

<u>Quest and I/E Scales</u>

I/E-REVISED

Directions: The following items deal with various types of religious ideas and social opinions. We should like to find out how common they are. Please indicate the response you prefer, or most closely agree with, *by circling the corresponding to your choice in the right margin.* If none of the choices expresses exactly how you feel, then indicate the one which is closest to your own views. If no choice is possible, you may omit the item. **There are no "right" or "wrong" choices**. **There will be many religious people who will agree with all the possible alternative answers.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neutral	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I enjoy reading about my religion. 1 2 3 4 5

2. I go to a place of worship because it helps me make friends 1 2 3 4 5

3. It doesn't much matter what I believe so long as I am good 1 2 3 4 5

4. It is important to me to spend time in
    private thought and prayer..1 2 3 4 5

5. I have often had a strong sense of God's presence...1 2 3 4 5

6. I pray mainly to gain relief and protection 1 2 3 4 5

7. I try hard to live al my life according to my religious beliefs 1 2 3 4 5

8. What religion offers me most is comfort in times of
    trouble and sorrow...1 2 3 4 5

9. Prayer is for peace and happiness...1 2 3 4 5

10. Although I am religious, I don't let it affect my daily life 1 2 3 4 5

11. I go to a place of worship mostly to spend time with my friends...........................1 2 3 4 5

12. My whole approach to life is based on my religion 1 2 3 4 5

13. I go to a place of worship mainly because I enjoy seeing
    people I know there...1 2 3 4 5

14. Although I believe in my religion, many other things
    are more important in life..1 2 3 4 5

15. The main reason I pray is so that I will be protected in times of trouble……………………..1 2 3 4 5

16. Religion is primarily needed for a basis of good laws………………………………………..1 2 3 4 5

17. After I make new friends at my place of worship, I seldom attend the worship services…….1 2 3 4 5

18. Without religion I would struggle to find purpose for my life……………………………..1 2 3 4 5

19. What prayer offers me most is relief and comfort in times of trouble………………………..1 2 3 4 5

20. Religion mainly helps me learn more about myself…………………………………………..1 2 3 4 5

21. The primary reason I go to my place of worship is to meet new people……………………..1 2 3 4 5

22. My religious faith is important because it answers many questions about the meaning of life…………………………………………………………………………………………..1 2 3 4 5

23. I mainly go to my faith when I feel threatened…………………………………………………1 2 3 4 5

24. What religion offers me most is comfort when I feel threatened………………………………1 2 3 4 5

25. My primary goal in my religious faith is to develop a strong sense of purpose in my life…..1 2 3 4 5

26. I go to my place of worship mainly to socialize with other people of my same religion…….1 2 3 4 5

27. My whole approach to life is based on my religious faith……………………………………1 2 3 4 5

28. The main reason I pray is to ask for and receive protection…………………………………1 2 3 4 5

29. I believe in the teaching of my religion primarily so I will live a good life…………………1 2 3 4 5

30. The primary reason I attend my place of worship is to meet a potential spouse……………..1 2 3 4 5

31. Although I am religious, I don't let it affect my daily life……………………………………1 2 3 4 5

32. The primary purpose of prayer is to gain relief and protection………………………………1 2 3 4 5

33. Society should encourage religion solely because it helps keep people moral………………1 2 3 4 5

34. If I could meet equally good people someplace else, there would be no reason for me to attend my place of worship……………………………………………………………………1 2 3 4 5

35. My religious commitment does not provide the purpose for my life…………………………1 2 3 4 5

36. My religion's main role is to help me get past trouble……………………………….………1 2 3 4 5

37. I only look to my religion for my moral standards……………………………………………1 2 3 4 5

38. I am religious solely because my faith helps me chart a path for my life……………………1 2 3 4 5

39. Although I am a religious person I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday affairs……………………………………………………………………………..1 2 3 4 5

40. The primary strength of my religion is its moral standards…………………………………..1 2 3 4 5

41. Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important in my life………..1 2 3 4 5

42. The most important part of my religion is that it tells me how to behave righteously……….1 2 3 4 5

Quest Scale

This questionnaire includes some commonly heard statements about one's religious life. They are very diverse. Your task is to rate your agreement or disagreement with each statement on a 9-point scale ranging from **strongly disagree (1)** to **strongly agree (9)**. Try to rate each of the statements, not leaving any blank. If you find a statement particularly difficult to rate or ambiguous, please circle your response and explain the difficulty in the margin. Work fairly rapidly, not brooding over any one statement too long. **There is no consensus about right or wrong answers; some people will agree and others will disagree with each of the statements.**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Disagree								Strongly Agree

1.   I am interested in religion... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2.   As I grow and change, I expect my religion
     to grow and change 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3.   I am constantly questioning my religious beliefs. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4.   It might be said that I value my religious
     doubts and uncertainties... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5.   I was not very interested in religion until I began to ask questions
     about the meaning and purpose of my life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

6.   For me, doubting is an important part of what
     it means to be religious.. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

7.   I do not expect my religious convictions to change
     in the next few years... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

8.   I find religious doubts upsetting. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

9.   I have been driven to ask religious questions out of a
     growing awareness of the tensions in my world and in
     my relation to the world.. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

10. My life experiences have led me to rethink my
     religious convictions... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

11. There are many religious issues on which my views
     are still changing. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

12. God wasn't very important for me until I began to ask questions
     about the meaning of my own life 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

12. Questions are far more central to my religious experience than are
     answers…………………………………………………………………………1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

APPENDIX D

Table 2

Demographics and Mean Scores for the Seekers in this Study

Code	I-Scale	Q-Scale	Rel-Interest	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Religious Affiliation
a33	5.00	6.42	9	f	18-22	European Descent	Unaffiliated
a40	3.79	8.25	9	m	23-27	Other	Other
a48	4.14	6.42	9	f	18-22	European Descent	Unaffiliated
a65	4.50	6.50	9	f	18-22	European Descent	Reformed
a87	2.57	6.92	8	f	18-22	European Descent	Unaffiliated
a234	2.50	6.75	6	f	18-22	European Descent	Mainline-Protestant
b73	2.79	8.67	6	f	18-22	European Descent	Unaffiliated
c4	2.63	6.67	6	f	18-22	European Descent	Unaffiliated
c26	4.50	6.75	7	f	18-22	Other	Catholic
c37	4.36	6.75	9	f	23-27	European Descent	Conservative-Protestant
c93	4.50	7.17	9	m	23-27	European Descent	Conservative-Protestant
d61	2.29	6.33	6	f	18-22	European Descent	Mainline-Protestant
d98	3.07	7.33	9	m	23-27	European Descent	Conservative-Protestant
e102	4.50	7.08	9	m	23-27	European Descent	Unaffiliated
b83	3.21	6.83	9	m	28-32	European Descent	Conservative-Protestant
e118	3.28	6.00	5	m	28-32	European Descent	Unaffiliated

Note. Intrinsic scale scores may range from one through five. Quest scale scores

may range from one through nine. The mean for the Quest scale scores is 5.02.

The standard deviation for these scores is 1.26. The mean for the Intrinsic Scale is

3.89. The standard deviation for these scores is .67. The sample size for these

scores is N =341.

APPENDIX E

Research Protocol

A) Focal Question

This study will endeavour to examine the meanings and experiences of persons who

place high emphasis on critical questioning and spiritual seeking. The focal question is,

"What is the lived experience of a person who has chosen a life of spiritual that actively

incorporates critical questioning?"

B) Protocol

Invitation: The invitation for seekers will come through the consent form found on the

first page of the concurrent quantitative study of Quest (Gallant, 2001). Seekers who do

not endorse the statement; "I would NOT be willing to be contacted for a follow-up

interview", will be considered for recruitment. Once analysis of quantitative data begins,

persons will be contacted who are found to score high (and thus, will likely place a high

value) on the Quest scale and will be selected for interviews. Telephone callbacks will

invite seekers to participate in a follow-up interview.

Interviews: The initial interview will last for approximately one hour. Seekers will be

asked, **"Please describe your approach to spirituality and/or religion & how it**

affects your day to day life?" Probes and clarifying questions will be skilfully employed

to draw out the rich data of the seeker's experience. At approximately forty-five minutes

into the interview, if the researcher feels it necessary, a semi-structured interview will

take place and a number of questions from a possibility of four will be asked and

explored. The purpose of this interview being a follow-up to explore the seeker's

motivation for choice of spiritual orientation and lifestyle.

Potential Follow-up Questions:

" What, if any, events facilitated your choice to live the type of spiritual life you now

lead?"

"What comes to mind when you hear the word 'religion?'"

"What role has your family played in your choices concerning spiritual things?"

"Could you please talk about any role models or inspiring examples you have (or have

had) that have helped shape your spiritual life?"

"What role do certainty and doubt play in your faith?"

"What is your reaction to traditional, institutionalised faith groups, such as churches,

denominations, etc?"

A possibility exists for more questions to be added if it is deemed necessary.

Telephone follow-up: The purpose of this interview will be to read the themes that the

researcher (and inter-judge raters) has drawn from the interviews and see if they resonate

with each seeker. Dialogue will follow as to themes with which they agree or disagree.

This interview will last for approximately ten minutes.

Second Telephone follow-up: The purpose of this interview will be to make sure that the

seekers have nothing more to add to the process. This interview can be considered a final

validating interview.