

OLDER WOMEN OF FAITH CHANGING THE WORLD: THE IMPACT OF OLDER
WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN INTERFAITH
ORGANIZATIONS AND SOCIAL ACTIVISM

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER'S OF ARTS
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S STUDIES
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

BY

DEBRA FRIEDMAN DAYTON, B.S., M.S., Ph.D.

DENTON, TEXAS

MAY 2014

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
DENTON, TEXAS

March 31, 2014

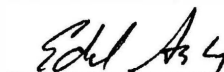
To the Dean of the Graduate School:

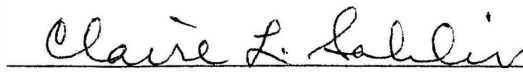
I am submitting here a thesis written by Debra Friedman Dayton entitled "Older Women Of Faith Changing The World: The Impact Of Older Women's Participation In Interfaith Organizations and Social Activism." I have examined this thesis for form and content and recommend that it will be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Women Studies.


Claire Sahlin, Ph.D, Major Professor

We have read this thesis, and recommend its acceptance:


Linda Rubin, Ph. D.


Edward Asbury, Ph. D.


Department Chair

Accepted:


Dean of the Graduate School

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With Deep Appreciation to Daughters of Abraham and most especially to my participants. Thank you for all you have done to help me complete my study and more importantly to make the world a better place.

Deepest gratitude to my committee members, Trey Asbury and Linda Rubin.

Thank you for your time and your support.

A most special thank you to Claire Sahlin, my chair, mentor and advisor.

Thank you for never letting me give-up, for putting up with my questions and panic.

To my son, Ted Dayton for his support and belief. You “put me on the map” and I am blessed that I have you, from your “super-empowered mother.”

And as always to Greg Dayton, my editor, my cheerleader, my best friend and my partner.

We always sail together and you keep my seas calm.

ABSTRACT

DEBRA FRIEDMAN DAYTON

OLDER WOMEN OF FAITH CHANGING THE WORLD: THE IMPACT OF OLDER WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN INTERFAITH ORGANIZATIONS AND SOCIAL ACTIVISM

MAY 2014

This thesis sought to determine whether the values of religious organizations could be consistent with feminist values. Nine members of a women's interfaith organization consisting of Islamic, Jewish, and Christian members participated in semi-structured interviews, and the Brown Locus of Control Scale (BLOCS) and the Women's Spirituality Inventory (WSI) were administered to them. The statistical results produced no significant correlations between the BLOCS and WSI. However, the major qualitative themes were as follows: 1) Joining the organization due curiosity about other faiths; 2) Identifying as womanist or feminist; 3) Believing that people can experience religious prejudice; 4) Identifying as progressive or open-minded; 5) Participating in social activism; and finally; 6) Believing that the greatest barrier to coexistence between members of different faiths was ignorance. It was concluded that this spirituality-oriented interfaith organization was consistent with feminist values of social change and equality.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	1
Literature Review	3
II. THE PURPOSE AND METHOD OF THIS STUDY.....	15
Purpose	15
Method.....	17
Qualitative and Statistical Analyses	22
III. RESULTS	24
The Demographic Characteristics of the Participants and Setting of the Interviews	24
Themes from the Interviews	26
Restatement of the Hypotheses.....	36
Statistical Results.....	37

Results Summary	40
IV. DISCUSSION.....	41
The Research Questions	46
Suggestions for the Daughters of Abraham.....	48
Suggestions for Future Research	49
WORKS CITED	54
WORKS CONSULTED	59
APPENDICES	
A. Demographics and Qualitative Data Questionnaire	60
B. The Brown Locus of Control Scale (BLOCS).....	63
C. Women’s Spirituality Instrument (WSI)	66
D. Announcement, Email, and Phone Script.....	69
E. Consent	72
F. List of Resources	76

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Scores, mean scores, and standard deviations for participants on the Brown Locus of Control Scale (BLOCS) and the Women’s Spirituality Inventory (WSI) (n=9)	38
2. Correlations between the Participants’ Scores on the Brown Locus of Control Scale (BLOCS) and the Women’s Spirituality Inventory (WSI) (n=9).....	38
3. Z Scores comparing participants’ responses on the Brown Locus of Control Scale (BLOCS) and the Women’s Spirituality Inventory (WSI) (n=9)	39

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

As I entered a graduate program in Women's Studies, I, a woman in my fifties, was surprised to learn that my fellow students, most much younger than I, viewed the concept of religion with disdain. It was common to hear women, who described themselves as feminists, say they were spiritual, but rare to hear them describe themselves as religious. While the religious right had placed feminism in a box as the enemy of religion, many feminists seemed to perceive religion as the enemy of social justice. It appeared to me that those of us who practiced a particular faith tradition were all lumped together as religious fundamentalists.

I always saw my religion and many others as means to work together to repair the world. After all, the Reverend Martin Luther King used Christianity as a platform to pursue social justice. My religion, Judaism, uses the Hebrew phrase "Tikkun Olam" to suggest that in our life on earth God expects all humans to seek to repair the world. Muslim women activists do not talk about doing away with the Qur'an, but advocate for interpreting the Qur'an as teaching peace.

My mother told me about meetings of an organization she had joined called the Daughters of Abraham. This spiritual organization of women of three faiths--Jews, Muslims and Christians (both Protestant and Catholic)--comes together once a month for

the women to share their beliefs, traditions, and rituals, thereby learning more about each other and what they have in common. The Daughters of Abraham began in the Fall of 2002 (in response to the treatment of Muslims in America after 9/11), when the wife of a Christian minister, Janice Harris-Lord, asked her husband to approach a rabbi and an imam in order to invite women from each faith to meet and start a group, in order to develop connection and dialogue (Daughters of Abraham; Berman, Harris-Lord, Sturm). I went to these meetings and found the women warm and supportive. I had always been surrounded by Christian friends, but I knew few Muslim women. I began to hear first-hand of the discrimination and bigotry they endure in America, perpetrated by people who lack understanding of their faith. The discrimination and bigotry against Muslims struck me as not unlike the discrimination Jews have endured, and it made me want to be an ally for those who had also been made to feel “other” because of their religion. I saw how we could all talk as women of faith and find the bonds we shared in common. It made me wonder whether our faith could act as a means to link us together, rather than a barrier to connection.

My participation in the Daughters of Abraham led me to ask the following questions: Can religion be a tool for uniting rather than dividing people? May mature women, like me, use religious organizations as a means to work for social justice? How can a spiritual interfaith organization transform women to be social justice advocates? Can these organizations, although religious in nature, advocate for feminist ideals by working for a better world that strives for peace for all? If feminists deny the validity of

all religious institutions are we, as feminists, not isolating ourselves from women and men who value the same goals as us? Because I do not want feminism to be an exclusionary movement, I wanted to pursue these questions in my thesis in order to see whether both religion and feminism can find coexistence that leads to social justice.

Literature Review

Members of many social justice movements often define religion as inherently divisive. For example, activists in the Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transsexual (LBGT) movement have sometimes found religious groups opposed to their obtaining equal rights for religious reasons (*For The Bible Tells Me So*). Feminist activists point out that some religious groups limit how women might dress, where or how they may pray, or what they are allowed to do (Kahana; Associated Press). Some feminists and peace activists emphasize the role of religion in causing wars, identity politics, and hate. The faithful are often perceived, by those without religious affiliation, as identical with fundamentalists, talking in absolutes and seeing only one way to live. This perceived lack of tolerance makes those who are religious appear to be the enemy of social justice movements. For example, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Mary Daly were both critical of organized religion. Ruether sees patriarchal elements in all western religions. For instance, she notes that in early Jewish works the “image of God” [was reserved] “for men alone” (69). Ruether points out that “the Qur’an allowed a man up to four wives” (Ruether 74). According to her, “Christianity, as much or more than other world religions, has harbored a misogynist inferiorizing view of women” (Ruether 76). While Christianity is quite

diverse with many denominations, women cannot be priests in Catholicism or bishops or ministers in some branches of Protestantism. Mary Daly also states that religion and the deity described by the church is inconsistent with feminism. Daly states that “the New Testament gave advice to women (and to slaves) which would help them to bear the subhuman (by today’s standards) conditions imposed upon them” (106). Furthermore, Daly states that “the symbolic glorification of ‘woman’ arose as a substitute for recognition of full personhood and equal rights” (106).

Unfortunately, feminism often finds itself opposed to religion. *The Glossary of Feminist Theory*, quoting the *Oxford English Dictionary*, defines feminism as “advocacy of the rights of women” (Andermahr, Lovell and Wolkowitz 93). Rita M. Gross, a feminist and religious scholar, states in her book *Feminism and Religion*, “the most basic definition of feminism is the conviction that women really do inhabit the human realm and are not ‘other,’ not a separate species” (16). Religions are sometimes seen as organizations of patriarchy that diminish women’s personhood, making them “other.” However, Daly’s negative beliefs about the church and religion do not work to transform religion. Daly’s work on religion denies all that is good about faith and all that meshes with feminism. This mode of thinking is akin to seeing all religious persons as fundamentalists and promotes a skewed vision of individuals of faith. On the other hand, Ruether does not see religion as an obstacle to feminism, but rather sees the need to transform religions.

There are many denominations or methods of worship in just the Abrahamic religions, and some of these are moderate in their beliefs and open to feminist ideas. There are, for example, female rabbis and ministers. Jewish theologian, author, and feminist Judith Plaskow, and many other Jewish feminists, writers, and rabbis do not seem to see Judaism as being inconsistent with feminism. For feminist Jews, Christians, and Muslims, it is important that women not only have a voice in their religion, but help to create their religion. Judith Plaskow, in her book *Standing Again at Sinai*, argues that the spirit of Judaism is social justice (230-231). In addition, some Muslim women are now leading prayers on some occasions as well. In the book, *Muslim Women in America*, Yvonne Haddad, Jane Smith and Kathleen Moore describe how Muslim women have in the past, and continue in the present, to influence their religion and their cultures. Islamic feminists like Riffat Hassan, for instance, believe women can interpret the Qur'an and find equality for women that the prophet Muhammad may have meant for Islam (Haddad, Smith, and Moore, 147-149).

Women can and have changed the course of history and the world. Women have been both silent and sometimes noisy in their activism. However, their power is sometimes unacknowledged by women themselves and the world at large. Every woman's group or church group that fights against a disease, works for peace in a community, or marches for civil rights for themselves or another group changes the world in a positive manner.

There are even many women of faith who feel obligated to work for social justice because of their church, synagogue, or mosque. Christians, Jews, and Muslims all believe in providing for the needy or doing good works, as do most faith traditions. Many of these charitable acts or good works take the form of acts of passive resistance in the fight for social justice, rather than simply advocating for monetary acts of charity. For example, the Black churches gave a platform to the civil rights movement in America, and Martin Luther King came out of these churches. Acts of social justice in Christian religion are not just limited to the civil rights movement. For instance, Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, in her article, “Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation,” describes Bible study classes for women in a battered women’s shelter, empowering women to see that Christianity does not mean they must return to men who abuse them (302-313). Instead of telling women to ignore their faith, this approach enlightens and empowers women to see the intent of their faith—to be loved and to love themselves.

Furthermore, peace work has also been the province of faith-based non-governmental agencies (NGOs). Activists like John Paul Lederach, in his 1999 book, *The Journey Toward Reconciliation*, show that religion can have a voice in conflict resolution by getting people to break bread together and see each other without stereotypes (47-50; 134). The disciplines of social psychology and political science have examined the process of bringing religious groups together to work on conflict resolution (Sherif 1998). Esra Cuhadar and Bruce Dayton in their article, “The Social Psychology

of Identity and Inter-group Conflict: From Theory to Practice,” examined the work of these faith-based NGOs in light of what is known from previous conflict resolution work. Individuals from religions or cultures that are in conflict, such as Palestinians and Israeli Jews, can learn to get along and work together if given a common purpose. Cuhadar and Dayton describe several required elements: groups need continued exposure or experiences of working together, not one or two isolated meetings; individuals must be representative of average members of the group, in other words ordinary people and not just the elite; and individuals must be allowed to be members of their own identity group, though still part of the larger group or community—“dual identity strategy” (287-289). An example of such conflict resolution would be Israeli and Palestinian water experts working together (Cuhadar and Dayton 289). I believe it is possible that belief in a deity or the many other commonalities among most religions (such as a call for good works, a golden rule ethic, and a belief in a soul) can facilitate such bonds or at least provide a basis for commonality and communication.

The qualities that most religions hold in common, such as their advocacy for good works and love of peace, have been used by organizations and religious leaders in order to create a dialogue between those at war. Numerous faith-based organizations have created dialogues for peace. I will give two examples of such dialogue-generating approaches. One of these examples is a Christian peace activist who has worked in Latin America, and the other is an Israeli and Palestinian women’s organization that formed a link over doing good works in their own community and thereby working for peace.

John Paul Lederach is a Mennonite and international peace activist who used the common ground of faith dialogue among warring groups as means for advocating peace. To Lederach, people must accept the stranger and make them welcome rather than alienate and isolate individuals. Lederach advocates listening to the other and uses “biblically based concepts” (Lederach 64). In his book, *The Journey Toward Reconciliation*, he states that the utopian universal he works for is peace (201). This utopia is peace and equality for all everywhere. This dream is not so different from the one some feminists discuss.

Tami Amanda Jacoby writes in her book about the Jerusalem Link, whose roots came out of a 1989 conference, and which works for peace between Israel and Palestine (75). Unlike Lederach’s work, the Link is formed solely of women. The Jerusalem Link is the connection of the “Israeli Daughters of Peace in West Jerusalem, and the Palestinian Jerusalem Center for Women in East Jerusalem” (Jacoby 79). The women come together over environmental issues that impact both communities. However, through the years, the women were encouraged to invite each other to their homes to see what life was like for each nationality. This organization sought to give women a voice in the political peace process, a concern for women of both groups (Jacoby 75). Their work focused on the common experience of being women and mothers. The Jerusalem Link is an example of an interfaith group that works for peace.

The multi-faith or interfaith movement has been in existence for a very long time. According to Wesley Wildman, the oldest documented example of an interfaith

organization in the modern day was the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago (1-10). Although the World's Parliament of Religion's included mostly Christian leaders, it also included speakers who were Buddhist, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, and Shinto, as well as those who represented Confucianism, Taoism, and Jainism (Wildman 2).

While this was the first organized interfaith movement, Eboo Patel demonstrates in *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice and the Promise of America* that informal interfaith movements started long before 1893. Patel points out, for instance, that the interfaith movement in America started with members of the dominant group not tolerating the oppression of individuals of other faiths and how individuals from the dominant group became allies of the oppressed (13). In the early history of New York Edward Hart defended the Quakers, who were then an oppressed group. Hart was a member of the dominant Protestant group. Hart, as a member of the dominant group who was opposed to the Quakers, was able to organize the citizens to prevent discrimination and allow "pluralism" in the new community (13). This example of religious allies working together against discrimination dates back to 1657 in the U.S. (13).

There are also groups in cities across the United States in which individuals of several different religions work together using their faiths as a vehicle for connection and social justice. The Multicultural Alliance (MCA) began in 1927 with the creation of the National Conference of Christian and Jews (Multicultural Alliance). In 2006, the national organization disbanded in order to form separate local chapters to deal with

community injustices. In Tarrant County, Texas, the local version became the MCA. MCA's brochure states that their "mission is to promote inclusion, diversity, and understanding and to work toward eliminating bias, bigotry and oppression in our community." Their membership includes individuals from Muslim, Christian and Jewish faiths, and individuals who are from varying cultures (Multicultural Alliance). Members of the MCA also work with businesses in the community, run a seminary retreat for religious leaders to learn about other faiths, and run a camp for teens that my own son attended, in which children from all cultures and faiths in the community live together for five days and discuss their cultures and beliefs (MCA).

Today, there are numerous examples of interfaith organizations. For example, James Wiseman describes the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, D.C. In addition, the Interfaith Youth Core was started in Chicago by Eboo Patel and has over 10,000 participants now (Goodstein 2; Patel 67-74). Patel stated in *Sacred Grounds* that he wanted to motivate youth on college campuses, for he remembered his own youth and his push to change the old prejudices and rectify injustices. For Patel, as he was growing up, the important issue focused on by college students was race, but as he, a Muslim in America, grew older, he began to see that religion also was a way people experienced discrimination (107-128). Patel quoted a 2007 Pew Study which found that "only 32% of people who did not know a Muslim expressed favorable views toward the community, but of those who did know a Muslim 56% had positive attitudes" to the community (77).

Prejudices may be eliminated just by knowing someone of another faith. This fact alone supports the need for such groups.

Kate McCarthy, in her book *Interfaith Encounters in America*, suggests that males tend to dominate the religious interfaith discussions. The men are often the religious leaders who speak for the group. Since the men are the ones speaking for their religion, members of other faiths may get a one-sided view of a religion; that is, they do not hear about women's participation in the religion since men are telling the story (39-41). This biased view may lead people to form stereotypes or misinterpretations of women's roles in other faiths and thereby underestimate these women.

While in the past men generally dominated religious organizations and have historically been the primary leaders, the new community-based interfaith organizations are giving women a chance to flourish and take charge. Women who have worked in not-for-profits and for-profit companies are creating interfaith programs of their own, and these community based- organizations are making a difference. In fact, some of the greatest contributions have been from women. Katharine Rhodes Henderson pointed out, in her book *God's Troublemakers: How Women of Faith are Changing the World*, that women have always made a difference in charitable organizations, but rarely got credit. More recently, women leaders of faith have created organizations that use interfaith ideas to make a difference for all people locally and sometimes worldwide. Henderson herself is responsible for creating *Face to Face/Faith to Faith*, a program that facilitates interfaith dialogue, for instance, between Israeli Jews and Palestinians. Henderson is a

feminist and believes whether these women call themselves feminists or not, these women leaders of faith act as feminists (Henderson 136).

Amy Caiazza, in her report for the Institute for Women's Policy Research "Called to Speak," confirms Henderson's work by also demonstrating that women are assuming more leadership and political roles due to their participation in interfaith organizations, although in general women are less politically active than men. In the arena of interfaith activism, women of faith become leaders and heads of national organizations. This behavior would also be consistent with a feminist model that gives women equal footing in politics and leadership.

In *Interfaith Encounters in America*, Kate McCarthy described two types of interfaith organizations with three purposes. There are interfaith organizations that are created out of religious organizations and those like Patel's and Henderson's that originate in universities. The first purpose is for social healing. Groups whose purpose is social healing are utilizing conflict resolution; this approach is consistent with John Paul Lederach's work (McCarthy 20-21). The second purpose is spiritual. The nature of this group is to dialogue and build relationships between members of different faiths; examples of this would be the "Milwaukee Association for Interfaith Relations (MAIR)" or in Chico, California, "Celebration of Abraham" (McCarthy 21; 113-116). Jnanic groups represent the third purpose. The purpose in Jnanic groups is "conceptual or truth telling" (McCarthy 22). Jnana comes from a Sanskrit and means "knowledge" but "Jnana" or Jnanic is the whole experience of a religious event. Here, the plan is to

understand from an academic standpoint the differences between the religions; an example of a Jnanic group is “the Pluralism Project” (22). The Pluralism Project studies the experiences of religious difference by ordinary people of a given faith (McCarthy 22). Most authors appear to agree that all types of interfaith dialogue can lead to conflict resolution. By understanding the other, fears and misconceptions are dispelled and with mutual listening people of differing faiths can learn from each other. This learning engenders mutual respect.

According to McCarthy’s classification, the Daughters of Abraham is a spiritual organization in the North Texas area. The Daughters has branches in Colleyville, Fort Worth/Arlington, and Dallas. As stated on their website, the Daughters is a group of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian women, who “actively work toward peaceful and non-violent solutions to problems” that affect people of a community no matter what their faith (Daughters). Although their projects have included helping crime victims, assisting immigrants, and providing aid to victims of disasters, their meetings are primarily spiritual in nature, getting together to compare notes on different faiths. Their goal is community awareness and dialogue “in pursuit of interfaith understanding and peace” (Daughters).

Literature indicates that working together in such a group may empower women by allowing them to contribute to the world and develop friendships with other women. Donna Burns-Castañeda and Alyson L. Glover suggested that friendships are critical for women (343). Friendships and contacts can help women give voice to their feelings and

be heard. The relevance of friendships for women is important, since not only are interfaith groups helping those who might be discriminated against, creating the possibility of peace, and allowing people to get along for a better world, but they allow the individual women to feel empowered and part of something much larger than themselves by making connections. These connections may create confidence to change things in their community.

CHAPTER II

THE PURPOSE AND METHOD OF THIS STUDY

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis was to ask the following question: What, if any, impact does participation in a spiritually-oriented, interfaith organization, like the Daughters of Abraham, have on participants' self-efficacy, community activism, and understanding of their own religious values in relation to those of others? Self-efficacy is measured in this study as internal locus of control. Internal and external locus of control was first defined by Julian B. Rotter in 1966. It came out of the work on how rewards affected an individual's behavior (Rotter). Locus of control has to do with human beliefs about whether individuals control the events (internal locus of control) or whether the events are caused by forces outside themselves (external).

My thesis also asked the following question: can the behavior of these middle aged and senior women be viewed as feminist? Although there is a great deal written on interfaith organizations by writers like Eboo Patel, Katherine Rhodes Henderson, and Kate McCarthy, there is little scholarship on the activism of the 50-to-80-year-old women involved in interfaith organizations. Although these authors examine the experiences of women, the works of McCarthy and Henderson do not divide these women into a specific age group. Furthermore, the 2012 study by I. Tucker Brown, Tianzhi Chen, Nathan C. Gehlert, and Ralph Piedmont, "Age and Gender Effects on the Assessment of Spirituality

and Religious Sentiments (ASPIRES) Scale: A Cross-Sectional Analysis,” “examined differences in spirituality across gender and across the life span.” This study utilized “over 1500 women and over 600 men” and demonstrated that women tend to score higher on “measures of spirituality and religious involvement” than men (Brown, Chen, Gehlert, and Piedmont 7). This study also showed that the expression of religiousness or spirituality may be different across the life span (Brown, Chen, Gehlert, and Piedmont). However, their study did not examine women in an interfaith organization.

I hypothesized that contrary to many who hold that religious organizations are simply patriarchal, and therefore in opposition to feminism, my study’s results will show that women’s interfaith organizations that are spiritually-based can unite women, teach tolerance, improve self-efficacy or internal locus of control, and lead to greater social activism that is aligned with the principles of feminism. I hypothesized that religion can be a means to unite middle-aged and senior women, who might not have thought of themselves as feminists, but who can work for feminist causes while being allies to those of other faiths. I anticipated that my study would show that a spiritually-oriented, interfaith women’s group has “social capital” (Patel 74). Eboo Patel borrows the term “social capital” coined by Robert Putnam, and defines it as the concept that “the activities that strengthen our civil society, from volunteering and voting to giving money to charity, are based on social networks and civic organizations” (74). Patel goes on to explain that “probably the most important source of social capital in America is religious communities” (75). In other words, if my hypothesis was accurate, I anticipated

demonstrating that these interfaith organizations are effective in making changes in their members that lead to greater tolerance in communities and generalization of this behavior on a broader scale by members influencing their friends in their faith community and in larger world (Patel 74). I hoped to perform this study to determine whether the values of religious organizations can be consistent with feminist values. If feminist values mean creating a path to repair the world, then feminist values may be consistent with religion.

Method

In this study, I hoped to learn (1) whether the values of the women of the Daughters of Abraham are consistent with feminist values; (2) whether the organization has social capital by increasing the women's activism when not in meetings of this organization; and (3) whether the women feel empowered by their participation in the organization. In my study I will attempt to address these questions through structured interviews and assessments. My thesis was to be a pilot study. Later, it is my hope, that other studies can be done using a greater sample size, but these studies would be based on this first work.

I interviewed a total of nine members from the Tarrant and Dallas county chapters of the Daughters of Abraham, using a semi-structured interview. The interview approach was open-ended so that the women could use their own words. Their responses were recorded and then transcribed. Each volunteer was informed verbally and in writing about the purpose of the project and signed a consent form. The women's actual names were not be included in the thesis, but their ages, years of participation in the organization, and

race, culture, and religion were noted. Demographics, such as education, years in the group, marital status, children, and membership in other spiritual or social justice activities, were also gathered to get a better picture of these women. I recruited members of all three faiths, equally.

As stated earlier, I am not only an observer and interviewer for this study, but I am also a member of the Daughters of Abraham. This created both a problem and an asset for study. My membership allowed me to access its members and therefore made it easier to recruit volunteers for the study. Since I am a member, I was able to make an announcement about my study in the meeting that I attend. Furthermore, an announcement was made in all other Daughter's meetings since I asked Janis Lord, one of the founders and a leader of the Daughters, to send out an email to all members of all Daughters of Abraham groups about the study, in order to invite all members to participate. As I will discuss later, being a member also helped in members' willingness to allow me to enter into their home and interview them. Therefore, participation was improved by the fact that I am a member of the Daughters of Abraham. However, because I am a member there is the possibility of bias in how I interviewed the women and my effect on the data. In research where the examiner is also a participant there is always the potential for experimenter bias or reactivity. Some participants knew me from meetings we had attended together; however, since I interviewed members from other Daughters of Abraham groups in other parts of the Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex, some participants and I had no prior acquaintance. For the women who knew me the fact that I

was a member of their group may have predisposed them to respond in a way that they thought would please me or help my study. If they knew that I was Jewish and they were of another faith they may have answered questions a certain way for fear of offending me. They may have also kept some information to themselves that they would have disclosed to an interviewer who was not a member of the Daughters of Abraham. In addition, it is possible if I had not been a member of the Daughters, I would have phrased some questions differently, since I might be less concerned with offending women I might see again. I might have also asked different follow-up questions. There is a long history of participant-observers in the social sciences, so these are not new concerns. Even when an experimenter tries to remain detached and strictly an observer, their behavior can affect a participant's response (Brown and Gilligan 8-10). However, I had to weigh this risk of my being a member of the Daughters against my ability to actually obtain an honest interview and obtain participants. By being a member of the Daughters, I believed I could be more authentic with my participants and more easily elicit honest, open responses to my questions.

Kahaleel Mohammed, in his article, "The Art of Heeding," suggested some useful questions to ask in a qualitative approach with interfaith groups. His suggestions, along with my own ideas, were used when formulating some of the questions for this study. Subjects were asked open-ended questions about feminism, their feelings of empowerment, their feelings about members of other faiths, and their perceptions of how their views changed since entering the organization (see Appendix A).

In addition, each woman was given the Women's Spirituality Instrument (WSI), a new instrument by Oksana Yakusko that attempts to define and assess "feminist spiritual values" in women (198). This measure attempts to assess feminist-oriented values in spirituality, such as feminist language, concerns about nature, recognition of women's body or menstrual cycle, social justice, and activism. This measure's assessment of feminist-oriented spirituality was seen as necessary to provide a quantitative measure to assess feminism and spirituality. The WSI, which is made up of 16 questions on a "Likert-type scale" with ratings from strongly agree (6) to strongly disagree (1), examines attitudes toward religion and "feminist self-identification" (196). When developing the instrument, Yakusko used 426 females' responses and did two factor analyses, establishing convergent validity with a correlation analysis using the WSI and "feminist self-identification" (197). Yakusko noted that "women with adherence to feminist values endorse support for women's or feminist religiosity and spirituality to a much greater degree than those who are not feminist" (198). The criterion-related validity showed that neither the demographics nor the women's attendance at faith meetings were "correlated with the WSI total score" (197). Factor loadings for questions ranged from .47 to .85. The internal consistency was .90. Since this is a newly created measure, it was believed that further testing would be useful in helping to establish its reliability. Furthermore, the purpose of the WSI ties well to this study, since it links feminist values to feminist spirituality. The WSI is only 16 items and takes about 10 minutes to administer. "Negatively phrased items are reverse scored," and the results are

determined for obtaining a mean for the test (total the score and divide by 16) (Yakushko).

Finally, the Brown Locus of Control Scale or BLOCS was used to evaluate the self-efficacy or locus of control of the participants (Brown and Marcoulides 1996). Locus of control is defined as an individual's belief about their sense of control over events. In other words, locus of control refers to beliefs about whether individuals themselves control events—both good and bad—that make up their lives, or whether it is the interactions between others that cause events to occur (Rotter). Locus of control is viewed as either internal (i.e., the view that individuals control the events in their own lives) or external (e.g., others control the events in individuals' lives) (Rotter). Additionally, besides the usual internal and external locus of control, the BLOCS also identifies a third factor in evaluating self-efficacy. Ric Brown identifies the concept of external other, the belief that some fate, god, or destiny determines an individual's future. The BLOCS was seen as an ideal measure for this study since if women in the Daughters of Abraham tended to score higher on internal locus of control this high score would be consistent with feelings of empowerment. Furthermore, the BLOCS uses a "6 point Likert-type scale with 25 items," has a "test-retest reliability coefficient of .90" and "the internal consistency coefficient alphas for the subscales were .83, .87, and .77," suggesting internal validity (Brown and Marcoulides 1996). It takes about 20 minutes to administer. The items load into one of three factors: internal locus of control, external locus, or external other.

Qualitative and Statistical Analyses

This thesis is primarily a qualitative study. As stated above, I interviewed the participants and attempted to write down their answers as consistently as possible. Since it is difficult to write down what participants say verbatim and interviewing them is a difficult task for anyone, but a trained speed writer or stenographer, participants' answers were recorded and then transcribed by a transcription company. This improved accuracy and decreased any bias on the part of the examiner in reporting participants' responses, since the examiner's opinion about what participants said was not a factor. The transcriptions noted how I, as the examiner, phrased and followed up on questions, therefore allowing the reader to judge whether or not there were biases in my behavior as examiner. I noted any patterns that occurred in the responses of the participants. For instance, I examined whether there were any changes in participants' views of members of other faiths before or after becoming a member of the Daughters. I observed whether participants educated family members, friends, or members of their own congregation about the beliefs of members of other faiths or whether they corrected misinformation in the community in any way. I analyzed all the participants' responses for any common themes across respondents. In the Results section I then illustrated these themes with specific examples from my participants' responses. Furthermore, the participants' scores on the WSI and the BLOCS were compared to their responses to the semi-structured interview questions. I did this by obtaining average score for all participants on the WSI and assessing whether the average response for all participants tended to be internal,

external or external other on the BLOCS. I then discuss these statistical scores compared to the qualitative themes. Since this is only a pilot study and I had a very small sample, an extensive statistical analysis was not possible.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The Demographic Characteristics of the Participants and Setting of the Interviews

The study included of a total of nine women (3 Jewish, 3 Muslim, and 3 Christian), residing in both Dallas and Tarrant Counties, and between 51 and 80 years of age. The demographic questions indicated the following: two of these women were divorced and seven were married; six were White, two were Pakistani/Americans, and one was African American. All nine participants had children. Although many of the participants were retired, all but one had once held a primary occupation outside the home. The one participant who labeled herself a homemaker had worked in retail establishments for a short period of time.

The location for the interviews sometimes posed a problem in the study. With one exception, all of the women were interviewed in their own homes. After changes to the methodology agreed upon by the Internal Review Board, one woman was seen at a mutually agreed upon location, a private meeting in a house of worship (a synagogue). Many of the women stated that they would not have agreed to participate in the study with an interviewer who was not a member of the Daughters of Abraham, due to the fact that they would have felt uncomfortable meeting a stranger (such as a research assistant) in their home. In addition, some of these women stated that they did not like driving to places with which they were not familiar; therefore, they were unwilling to drive to the

investigator's home. The women's homes were considered most preferable; due to confidentiality concerns I could not agree to meet in a coffee shop or a hotel, for example, as had been suggested by two participants.

Obtaining equal numbers of participants in each religious group was not always easy. Due to the timing of Ramadan, it was difficult to obtain Muslim participants during the summer months. A fourth Jewish woman had to be interviewed in place of a third Jewish woman, since the majority of participant G's interview (a Jewish woman) had not been recorded due to a technical error by the investigator. Christian women were the easiest volunteers to obtain. Indeed, additional Christian women volunteered, but were not able to be included in this study. To keep the numbers from each faith tradition equal, these additional Christian women were put on a waiting list in case there was a need for them in the future.

The interviews appeared to be comfortable occasions for the participants. After the interview and questionnaires were all completed, the investigator and the participants often discussed their experiences with the interviews and completing the assessment instruments. Many of the women stated that they enjoyed discussing their feelings about the Daughters or getting a chance to put their thoughts into words about the group. Most of the women, however, commented they did not like the questions on the two Likert scale instruments, saying that the forced number choices did not allow them to clarify their answers, or that the questions themselves were unclear. In one case a question was left blank on one questionnaire, and in another case two answers were circled on question

2 of the BLOCS instrument. When no answer was given, it was scored 0; when two answers were chosen for the same question, the lower of the two answers was chosen since the participant seemed to be emphasizing it although she had not completely crossed out the other answer.

Themes from the Interviews

In all nine interviews with participants, there were certain recurring and dominant themes. All responses that were repeated by more than one participant were noted, but if five or more of the participants gave the same response this was considered a significant theme. These themes included the following: 1) joining due to curiosity or lack of knowledge about members of other faiths (7 of the 9 indicated this theme); 2) self-identification as feminist or womanist (8 of the 9 indicated this theme); 3) having experienced prejudice oneself, and/or a belief that others are discriminated against or experience hate because of their religion (Islamophobia or anti-Semitism) (9 of the 9 identified with this theme); 4) describing one's self as "progressive" or "open-minded" (9 of 9 indicated this theme); and finally 5) having a history of or currently engaging in activism (8 of 9 identified with this theme). When asking what they felt were the barriers or obstacles for members of different Abrahamic faiths getting along, there were usually several responses given, but since five of the participants indicated one response 6) "ignorance" or lack of exposure or knowledge about people of other faith traditions, became the final theme.

Being curious or having very little experience with members of other faith traditions was the most common reason for joining the Daughters. Seven of nine women indicated this theme in their interviews. Participant B, for example, stated that she was “fascinated” by the “diversity.” When asked about her fascination, she admitted she was curious about other people and found them interesting. Participant I stated she did not know any people of the Islamic faith until joining the Daughters.

All but one of the women identified herself as a womanist or a feminist. Even the one woman (Participant J) who did not declare herself to be a feminist in any way still believed in “equal pay for equal work” and for equality in “freedom of thought and expression.” For a couple of women, the term “feminist” was too narrow to label them, since they defined feminism as just dealing with gender inequality. Participant C, a 64-year-old Christian, said she was a “womanist.” When asked what this meant to her, she responded, “Womanism makes me conscious and thoughtful of the need to consider everyone, of the need to look at the voiced and the voiceless, the spoken and the unspoken in any kind of economic, social, religious context.” She credited womanism with making her aware of “race,” gender, and “class.” In other words, for her the word womanism is broader than feminism in its definition, by including all the means by which a person can be left out of society by lack of privilege. Feminism, she explained, “doesn’t take the intersection of things.” Participant E did not use the term “womanism,” but stated something similar. When asked how she defined the term feminism she asked,

“but a feminist is just for women, right?” She continued, “It centers around women. So my feminism is—as it were, encompasses everyone.”

Eight of the nine subjects discussed the theme of religious prejudice; however, not all stated that members of their own faith tradition were victims of prejudice. Some expressed awareness that members of other faiths experience prejudice. For instance, although women of more than one of the represented faiths sometimes mentioned awareness of prejudice against Catholics in the past, most stated that Christians didn’t experience prejudice in the United States in present times. Therefore, if participants were Christian, they indicated they would be unlikely to experience religious prejudice, although they were generally aware of people of other faith traditions experiencing prejudice.

There were some other themes in the interviews with which all nine women agreed. All of the women described themselves during the open-ended interviews as “progressive,” defined for the purpose of this study as being “open-minded” in one’s beliefs or accepting the philosophies of all people, and being open to social justice or change in society. For example, Participant A, when discussing her background, stated:

I had parents who were very open. My father worked as a civilian employee at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, and I grew up thinking that everybody was okay. You always try to find the best in people. Black people started moving into their neighborhood when I was in college. I could not believe the words coming out of my parents’ mouth. I mean it was just like ‘whoa’, where is this coming

from. And so I think I've, I don't know, I feel very fortunate that I formed the opinions that I did early in life being more open.

At least one participant of the nine used the word "progressive" to refer to her own orientation and motivations for joining the Daughters. Participant C stated that she wanted to meet members of other faiths because "I mean I guess you call it progressive, open-minded." This theme of open-mindedness or progressive liberal thinking may be what encourages these women to join an interfaith group like the Daughters. They are "open" to knowing people of other faith traditions. They often join with the hope of conquering prejudiced ideas from forming in their psyches or combating prejudice they hear in the community. For example, Participant E, when asked her opinion of members of other faiths before she joined the Daughters, stated:

I fought against stereotypes, and I didn't know and I do not like to make decisions unless I know, but I had to fight the stereotype of what I perceived all Muslims, and I put that in quotes, "all Muslims." You know how you hear Muslims are this or Jews are that, and because I fight the idea that all Jews are anything or all Christians are anything, I had to fight the urge not to lump Muslims together. So I don't know that I really had one.

Only one woman during the interview said she may have had more negative views of members of other faiths prior to joining the Daughters, after which her views became more positive. Most of the others stated that their views of members of other faith traditions were neutral or already positive before they joined the Daughters. This

suggests that joining the Daughters did not change participants' views of members of other faiths. Rather, it appears that once members of the Daughters joined, they obtained supportive evidence that their views--that most people are more alike than different and should not be stereotyped--were validated. This openness or progressive attitude--that people are more the same than different and should be treated with equality and without stereotyping--appears to be, therefore, a significant theme.

In addition, although not a significant theme, four of the nine women reported that their reason for joining was to educate their friends and deal with misconceptions about other faith traditions. In other words, nearly one-half of the participants joined because they wanted factual evidence about members of other faiths, based on direct personal experiences, so they might better educate their friends who held more generally negative views of other religions (e.g., Christians educating their Christian friends, or Jewish women educating their Christian or Jewish friends that Muslim people were no different than themselves). By joining the Daughters, they would have experience with members of other faith traditions and might be able to be seen by their friends as having experiential and more credible knowledge. Therefore, joining to educate members of one's own faith, although not a theme, was a common response among participants.

Another commonality among several of the women was that they were a religious convert or married a convert (one originally Christian woman had become Jewish; a second originally Christian woman had become Muslim; and a Jewish woman's husband had converted to Judaism). In other words, three of the nine members had

converted or had a spouse who had converted to their faith. Participant I, a Christian woman who had converted to Judaism, stated, "If you just take out that pesky, little Jesus business, there's not that much difference between Disciples of Christ and Reform Judaism." This commonality is seen as important since if a person has had intimate experience with people of more than one faith tradition, it is possible they may be willing to listen to the ideas and values of people of other faiths.

Like being progressive or open, current or past participation in activism was a common theme among the women. Eight out of nine of the women reported participating in activities to educate peers about members of other faith traditions, working with underserved or needy populations, or protesting against issues they felt strongly about. A few women even mentioned a history of activism in their youth. For instance, Participant I stated the following about her college activities: "I did a lot of anti-war protests, a lot of pro-feminist protests – all that kind of stuff." Participant B, who is 80 years old, stated, "In the '60s, we were young and fiery, and we never did march, because we had no children, but we were big into trying to integrate the schools in our small town. Did not make us very much loved."

Participant H also had a history of activism in college:

I guess so. I've been a member of Palestinian Solidarity Organization.

Not really, you know, terribly involved, but it's an important issue for me.

And when I was much younger I got, like when I was in college, I got involved in the efforts to stop the United States from hogging the geostationary orbit.

Although they did not always label their current activities as activism, but rather perceived their activities as their duty as sometimes defined by their faith, such behavior was identified in this study as a form of activism, since it worked for social change or social equality and required time and effort on the part of the participant. For instance, Participant J, a Muslim homemaker, gives talks on Islam and about the Daughters at Texas Christian University and at churches. Participant A, a Christian woman who is retired drives homeless men and brings them to a shelter located in her church. Finally, Participant C, a 64-year-old minister who had just moved to a new church, at first said "no" to the question about whether she had ever engaged in social action or activism; however, when the question was rephrased to ask whether she had engaged in any social action or activism in her role as pastor, she stated yes.

She described being in a prayer group to help women who wanted to get out of the sex trade and then she described her activities with persons with HIV/AIDS as follows:

Samaritan Supper Club, which is a home for persons who are living with HIV/AIDs over in Hemphill, and this the third, actually it's the third time.

I started with them when I wasn't even in ministry at the time and we would take meals over there for the Supper Club.

She went on to say that she would have performed this same work and organized her parishioners to do this work at her last congregation, but they already had "made sandwiches" for "a night shelter."

Only one woman identified herself as having no history of activism or activities to promote social change. As previously stated, although some women, when directly asked, stated that they had no history of activism, further questioning about their activities revealed they had participated in a variety of very positive social activities that sought to change the social landscape. They talked to schools, classes and groups, educating them about their faith, in order to promote peaceful dialogue; they escorted homeless individuals to shelters; or they volunteered their time for such issues as hunger or racial equality. Many women had a history of activism from their youth.

When asked about barriers to getting along with members of different faiths, members sometimes named more than one, but the predominant barrier mentioned (by 5 of 9 participants) was "ignorance," or a lack of exposure or knowledge about members of other faiths. Some of the women blamed the "media" for "misinformation" causing this

ignorance. Participant H stated, “Because they’re victims of media, I don’t hold it personally against most of them. But, it seems to be a pattern in the United States where there’s got to be somebody who’s I guess the target of a lot of misplaced hate, hatred.”

Another barrier to interfaith understanding, which was mentioned by two of the women, was the proselytizing nature of certain individuals of other faiths and religious groups that they had previously encountered. Participant D, a Jewish woman, talked about the “proselytizing aspect” of Christianity, citing a (non-Daughters) multi-faith group that a friend of hers had joined, which left her friend with a negative impression of Christianity. “They weren’t dialoging like we do now in Daughters,” this Jewish participant noted; “it was more of proselytizing kind of teaching that turned her off from that [other multi-faith group].”

Another barrier listed by two participants was the inability to ask honest questions for fear of offending the other person. Participant F stated, “Sometimes I think we don’t open up enough to be critical of each other.”

Another barrier was simply described by two participants as “politics.” What they meant by this, unfortunately, was not always followed up on in the interviews. It was not always clear to this investigator whether the women were referring to the politics of foreign cultures or countries, American political groups and their agendas, or another, more personal, meaning.

Finally, a lack of knowledge of one’s own faith was noted by two participants as a barrier to creating a willingness to learn about members of another faith. Participant A stated, “Obstacles for Christians are they don’t know their religion well enough.” Participant F, a Muslim woman, said that “85 percent of Muslims do not speak Arabic, so they have

learned how to recite the Qu'ran without knowing what it's saying." This woman continued, "And what happens, especially in the underdeveloped countries, [is that] the people who become religious leaders are really not very educated. And they give sermons in the mosque, they say whatever they want."

As mentioned previously, many of the participants joined the Daughters to educate other people. Participant A stated she wanted to educate her friends whom she heard say negative things about Muslim women, stating the following: "I thought, well, this is a way to stand up for something, just the fact of saying I belong, or went to those meetings." She reported that by participating in the Daughters, she gained credibility in educating her friends. Her real-life experience with members of other faith traditions allowed her to have more authority with dispelling her friends' stereotypes. In other words, because she knew Muslim people who were nothing like the stereotypes her friends had heard, she could argue against their misconceptions. "And it's given me some credibility beyond what I already had in speaking to some of my friends," said Participant A, "to try to convince them that they need to think a little differently, since I have a broader knowledge now." She even reported she was able to convince a friend who was writing derogatory emails about Muslim people to come to a meeting, and that now "she has changed her tune." Participant F, a Muslim woman, stated that, [the Daughters] "gave me a platform to talk to people and explain to them what you're watching on TV is not all Islam." Her educating efforts were not limited to non-Muslims, but to other Muslims overseas in Pakistan. "You should see me fighting with

them, because I tell them you don't know the real Americans. What you're watching is of the government and the politicians' making. But if you really knew the Americans, they have the biggest heart and open mind, which a lot of our countries don't have." This woman stated that she never spoke publically about her faith before 9/11. After that day, she joined the Daughters and began speaking to various groups about her faith. When one of the Daughters' founders received emails criticizing the founder for starting the group, Participant F asked that she be able to meet in person with the members of the founder's church who were writing her critical emails:

"She invited them to her house because they kept telling her that Muslims are this and Muslims are that. And I told ... [the founder that] I'd rather talk to them face-to-face and then their mind will change. So we did. It was a really nice experience."

Restatement of the Hypotheses

I had hypothesized: 1) that a women's interfaith organization that was spiritually-based or religious in nature could unite these women, teach tolerance, improve self-efficacy or internal locus of control and lead to greater social activism in these women. I had hypothesized: 2) that the values of the women of the Daughters of Abraham are consistent with feminism. Whether these women call themselves feminists or not, there behavior would be consistent with feminism. Finally, I had hypothesized: 3) the Daughters of Abraham are effective in creating an environment that leads their members, through their tolerance and social activism, to spread a message of tolerance in the wider

communities beyond this organization and lead to generalization of this tolerant accepting behavior on a much broader scale.

Statistical Results

Since there were too few participants it was not possible to do a meaningful statistical analysis on the qualitative themes from the interviews, as a result only the BLOCS and WSI were compared. SPSS was used to obtain mean scores and standard deviations of all three measures on the BLOCS and the WSI (Table 1). Pearson Product Correlation Coefficients, as well as Z scores, were also obtained, so that the measure could be standardized and therefore compared. Perhaps as a result of the small sample size ($n=9$), no statistically significant results were obtained. However, there are some trends in the data that can be discussed. Although not statistically significant, Table 2 indicates an indirect relationship between WSI and External Other on the BLOCS ($r = -.577$, $p = .104$). This negative correlation suggests that the women who had a feminist-oriented spirituality tended to be less likely to believe that unknown external forces controlled their destiny. The relationship was much weaker for the External Social factor and the WSI ($-.227$). Therefore, it is possible that women who have a feminist-oriented spirituality may still be influenced by friends and other people in their environment. In addition, Internal Locus of Control was not correlated with the WSI ($.438$), as hypothesized.

The Z scores (Table 3) of all three Muslim women on the WSI were below the Mean, suggesting that these Muslim women held a less feminist-oriented spirituality.

Two Christian women and only one Jewish woman received high scores on the WSI. In addition, 2 of the 3 Muslim women and one Jewish woman had Z scores below the Mean on Internal Locus of Control. Two Christian women received Z scores above the Mean on Internal Locus of Control.

Table 1

Scores, mean scores, and standard deviations for participants on the Brown Locus of Control Scale (BLOCS) and the Women's Spirituality Inventory (WSI) (n=9)

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
BLOCS: Internal Locus of Control	35	48	41.78	5.094
BLOCS: External Social	25	35	29.00	3.122
BLOCS: External Other	18	30	23.56	4.003
WSI	55	85	68.33	11.124

Table 2

Correlations between the Participants' Scores on the Brown Locus of Control Scale (BLOCS) and the Women's Spirituality Inventory (WSI) (n=9)

		BLOCS: External Social	BLOCS: External Other	BLOCS: Internal	WSI
BLOCS: External Social	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.600 .088	-.259 .500	-.227 .557
BLOCS: External Other	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.600 .088	1	-.159 .683	-.577 .104
BLOCS: Internal	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.259 .500	-.159 .683	1	.438 .238
WSI	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.227 .557	-.577 .104	.438 .238	1

Table 3

Z Scores comparing participants' responses on the Brown Locus of Control Scale (BLOCS) and the Women's Spirituality Inventory (WSI) (n=9)

Partici- pant	BLOCS: Internal	BLOCS: External Social	BLOCS: External Other	WSI	ZInternal	ZExternal Social	ZExternal Other	ZWSI	Faith Tradition
A	45	27	18	79	0.63261	-0.64051	-1.38768	0.95886	Christian
B	47	28	25	71	1.02526	-0.32026	0.36080	0.23972	Christian
C	48	28	19	79	1.22158	-0.32026	-1.13790	0.95886	Christian
D	36	25	26	69	-1.13433	-1.28103	0.61058	0.05993	Jewish
E	42	35	30	64	0.04363	1.92154	1.60971	-0.38954	Jewish
F	46	32	27	56	0.82893	0.96077	0.86036	-1.10868	Muslim
H	35	26	21	57	-1.33065	-0.96077	-0.63834	-1.01879	Muslim
I	41	30	21	85	-0.15270	0.32026	-0.63834	1.49822	Jewish
J	36	30	25	55	-1.13433	0.32026	0.36080	-1.19858	Muslim

Results Summary

In order to summarize the statistical data, it is necessary to point out that the correlations suggest no statistically significant results between the factors on the BLOCS and the WSI ($p < .05$). While not statistically significant, there was a tendency for participants who scored high on the WSI to score low on External Other. There may be individual differences among the participants, however. Participants may have responded differently to the measures based on their faith tradition or religious teachings, but again since there are only three women from each religion with a total of only nine, the small number makes this only speculative.

The qualitative themes produced more fruitful results. The most significant of these themes were that: 1) All nine saw themselves as open-minded or progressive; 2) Eight of nine of the women identified as feminist or womanist; 3) All nine mentioned their belief that people of other faith traditions or their own faith tradition can be victims of prejudice or discrimination; 4) Eight of nine participated in some form of social activism; 5) Seven of nine joined due to curiosity or a desire to increase their knowledge about members of other faith traditions; and 6) Five of nine believed that the greatest barrier to coexistence between members of different faiths was ignorance.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Although participation in the Daughters did not tend to change these women into progressives, it appears the group has “social capital,” since members are educating friends and family about Islam, Judaism, and Christianity (Patel 74). These women, the participants in the Daughters, were already progressive or open-minded prior to joining this organization, and therefore it can be said there may be an element of preaching to the choir about the Daughters, since they are already accepting of people of all faith traditions. By preaching to the choir, I mean that members of the Daughters may be more willing to listen to people of other belief systems; learning what people of other faiths believe may be the reason they joined this organization in the first place. However, by becoming members of the Daughters, participants develop credibility among members of their own faith tradition by having factual and experiential information about other faith traditions, and therefore they develop the ability to educate members of their own church, synagogue or mosque. Once they inform those near and dear to them about what they learned about members of other faith traditions, Daughters no longer preach to the choir, but educate a larger world. Because participants are already seen as women of faith, they may have a greater influence with other women of the same faith than would individuals outside the faith community or secular individuals. Participation in the Daughters creates

greater opportunities for dialogue between different faith traditions, and therefore diminishes one of the barriers to social change, which is ignorance or lack of knowledge. Participants in this study dispute the misinformation and media bias about religious traditions by allowing stereotypes to be questioned and by creating meaningful dialogue.

Furthermore, although some of these women may have already been activists, some who had never previously participated in activism became instruments of social change by communicating what they have learned about other faith traditions to their family, friends, and religious community. Therefore, being in the Daughters may encourage and model activism for women who have never participated in such activities or found a cause about which they can be vocal. Yet, the question remains: what is social activism?

Like Patel and Henderson, I contend that like ripples in a pond, the change that one person makes can be huge. Henderson talks about the roles that mentors and female role models have played in the lives of women who became leaders. Women who speak up about their experiences, who talk about their faith, and who befriend members of other faiths, can be role models in their own faith communities. Patel discussed the Dalai Lama's visit to Chicago and how the Dalai Lama arranged for members of several different faiths to be on a panel. Patel points out that although the watching audience came to see their own religious leaders participate, what they saw were members of several faiths getting along (92-93). These religious leaders were now activists because they, as role models to their religious community, sent a message of social change: a

message that individuals of different faiths could dialogue and get along (Patel 92-93). Patel quotes Putnam and Campbell's study, which shows "that people's regard for entire religious groups improves through positive meaningful relations with even one member of that group, often formed through a common activity" (78). Therefore, I contend that simply by being in the Daughters, forming panels to educate others, or participating in a charitable work together, these women are performing a significant form of social justice activism.

Participating in the Daughters of Abraham encourages further activism, as demonstrated in the cases of Participants F and J, who had never been activists before, but were now were educating church members and TCU students about Islam. Participation in the Daughters allows members to educate their own religious community with facts, rather than stereotypes. Finally, these women recruit new members, asking friends to join and taking what they learn home to their family, their children, and their grandchildren. Their actions, like ripples on a pond, are a form of activism that creates meaningful social change.

Statistical results from an analysis of the BLOCS and the WSI must be considered with caution, given the small number of women in the study. With that in mind, however, it was noted that the WSI results indicated all three Muslim participants used less feminist-oriented terms and were more traditional in their expressions of religious faith; however, this may not be a true reflection of these women's feminist attitudes. The interviews suggested that two of the three Muslim women identified as feminists, as did

all three of these women's actions and activism. However, the fact that the Prophet Mohammed is male, that God is always referred to as male in the Islamic religion, and that clerics in mosques are almost always male may cause Muslim women to feel discomfort with using female pronouns in reference to religious prayers or liturgy. Less emphasis too, may be placed on the work of the wives of the Prophet, especially his first wife, Khadija, in discussions in the mosque.

However, the patriarchal elements of Islamic practice may be solely matters of culture, but not a result of the faith itself. As Houston Smith discusses in *The World's Religions*, "the Koran [Qu'ran] leaves open the possibility of women's full equality with man" (251). Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, Amira al-Azhari Sonbol, and Riffat Hassan also point out that while Islam and the Qu'ran describe equality among women and men, the "social practices" lead to interpretations that may emphasize more traditional expressions of the faith (Haddid, Smith and Moore 147-151).

Another factor that may cause some Muslim women to use more traditional and less feminist-oriented language in regards to their faith is the pressure in Western society to conform to the Christian norm. By Christian norm, I am referring to the fact that while the United States encourages religious freedom, only Christian holidays such as Easter and Christmas are considered legal holidays in many workplaces and school settings. The Christian norm is reflected also in the way we do not stare at women wearing a crucifix on the neck, but often pay unwanted attention to women wearing a headscarf or a man or woman wearing a skullcap. Traditional language may be embraced by Muslim

women, in order to clarify their Muslim identity for themselves and others in the face of the Christian norm.

A feminist-oriented spirituality may be seen as the ideal of White, Western feminists, rather than the equality and activism practiced by Muslim women outside the mosque. While Muslim women engage in activism, their speech and rituals in the mosque are often rooted in traditional behavior. Some versions of White, Western feminism are spiritually oriented, but not necessarily religiously oriented. Furthermore, religions vary on gradations of traditional behavior. The External Other was high on the BLOCS in the case of some participants, possibly due to the fact that the Islamic teachings include a strong belief in divine predestination. Reform Jews may talk more in their synagogues about Sarah and Miriam, as well as Abraham and Joseph, but Conservative Jews are more rooted in tradition and less likely to give emphasis to the matriarchs. Like Islam, tradition is the fabric of the Jewish religion. Torah is still written on Sheepskin by hand as it was in the past. There are still many more male rabbis than female. Depending on how traditional is the synagogue or the upbringing of the Jewish women, her likelihood to use feminist or gender-neutral language in synagogue or for the deity may vary.

The use of traditional rather than gender-neutral or feminist language (using female pronouns instead of male) is also apparent when a comparison is made of liberal Christian churches with more fundamentalist churches. It is noted that one of my three Christian participants was a female minister. In addition, it is likely that the Christians I

interviewed all came from very liberal Christian denominations, where feminist language or gender-neutral language may be more accepted, rather than fundamentalist churches.

The aforementioned examples make it is clear that feminist spiritually-oriented language-or the lack of it-may not necessarily be an adequate reflection of feminist behavior. It may matter little if a woman includes the natural world, feminine pronouns for the deity, or women's menses cycles in her faith tradition, if the activism she displays toward equality for all in her daily life is present. The use of the term "womanist" by one participant and the various ways that participants defined the term "feminism" show that in asking for the definition of feminism, one is likely to get different answers from different women. Although many women state that they are feminists, they may not agree about the definition of the term feminism. The lack of agreement about how to define feminism may be why so many of the women in this study had a hard time with the forced choice measures of the WSI; they limited these women in their answers about their feminism and their expression of their faith tradition.

The Research Questions

I had hypothesized that a women's interfaith organization that was spiritually-based like the Daughters of Abraham could unite women, teach tolerance, improve self-efficacy or internal locus of control, and lead to greater social activism that is aligned with the principles of feminism. Although most of the participants in this study had already been involved with social activism before they joined, the Daughters gives them a platform and support to make their voices heard, allowing them to participate in speaking

engagements and discuss their faith traditions. It allows them to discuss and counter issues of prejudice.

I hypothesized that religion can be a means of uniting middle-aged and senior women, who might not have thought of themselves as feminists, but who could work for feminist causes, while being allies to those of other faiths. This proved true among those whom I interviewed. To be in the Daughters means one is a member of an organized religion; this is the common primary thread that unites these women.

While the women do appear united, since they meet regularly, work for charitable causes, and work together to educate the community, their attitudes of tolerance seemed to be already ingrained in the members before they joined the organization. They were open-minded women before they joined, and because of their open-mindedness or progressive nature they wanted to get to know people of other faiths or change inaccurate stereotypes in their community. Participation in the organization did not change the members' attitudes; rather, the women who choose to be members of the Daughters of Abraham were already progressive and wanted to make a difference or change in the world toward tolerance.

These women, though middle-aged and more advanced years, do appear to hold feminist values, although not all may use feminist language. The pronouns they use in their houses of worship may be masculine, but their concern for a world where equality exists for all is evident. The WSI did not indicate that they necessarily use feminist language in religious contexts, but their qualitative responses indicated that the majority

view themselves as feminist or womanist. Religious values can be consistent with feminist values, but the language may need to be more flexible. In other words, feminist language may not be necessary for the participants to be considered feminists. Women who follow a traditional path in their religion can still advocate equality and social change. It appears feminist values such as gender equality, racial equality, and religious equality can be consistent with religious values, as this study demonstrated.

Suggestions for the Daughters of Abraham

One participant in the study indicated that perhaps in being so friendly and careful with each other, members of the Daughters of Abraham neglect to ask the difficult questions that may make dialogue more meaningful. This participant suggested that in being overly polite and politically correct, commonalities between different faith traditions emerge, but that differences remain relatively unaddressed. In other words, members may have not voiced questions about differences in dress, political issues (that are discussed on the news), or differences in how worship takes place, possibly due to the fear of offending another Daughter. The participant who raised this issue seemed to suggest that more controversial topics and issues could be raised and could be beneficial to the multifaith dialogue. Further education about multiculturalism can be relevant in moving away from a melting pot concept to an understanding that differences are good and should be maintained. Examples of different religious practices, such as Orthodox Jews who keep their head covered, or Catholics who have ash marks on their forehead after attending Ash Wednesday services, could be discussed at meetings with great

benefit to improvement in our understanding. Perhaps greater exposure through education (readings and lectures) as well as volunteer experiences may resolve these concerns and be enlightening.

Suggestions for Future Research

It has been suggested that it would be beneficial and less biased in future research for the investigator to not be a member of the Daughters. It is possible that since I was a member of the Daughters, participants gave responses in a manner they thought might be helpful to me. If I was known to a participant, they may have said they were a feminist, knowing that I am a women's studies major. As a guest in their home they may have been more likely to try to appease me, by making themselves sound more feminist or more progressive. Since participants know I am a member of the same organization as they are, they may be unlikely to say anything negative about the organization or their experience in it for fear that they might offend me. Furthermore, my own biases may have influenced how I phrased questions and what responses I pursued during the semi-structured interview. Pauline Rooney, in her article "Researching From the Inside—Does it Compromise Validity?: A Discussion," covers many of these problems with insider research. Rooney states that "With insider research, the concept of validity becomes increasingly problematic because of the researcher's involvement, the researcher is no longer 'objective' and their results may be distorted" (6). As an insider I see things as a Daughter of Abraham and this may bias the questions I choose to ask, and my follow-up on interview questions, since I am not objective about this organization.

However, the question remains if any researcher is truly objective about the subject they research. In many anthropological studies participants are also observers and researchers. Sue Wilkinson and Celia Kitzinger, in "Representing Our Own Experience: Issues in 'Insider' Research," suggested that researchers are not objective bystanders (251-255). They point out that "traditional mainstream psychology remains (more than any other social science) deeply committed to a concept of objectivity that treats insider research as contaminating the production of knowledge" (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 251). They point out there is a long history of "insider research" even in psychology (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 251). Wilkinson and Kitzinger, themselves, have used the fact that one of them is a lesbian and one a breast cancer survivor as a subjective factor in their own studies when relevant. Finally, they point to the fact that because insider/outsider status changes with time, true objectivity or subjectivity may not be "fixed" as a measure through the course of a study (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 251-252).

It is questionable whether the participants in this study would have volunteered or been as forthcoming in their interviews if I had not been a member. It is not clear if the members of the Daughters would have allowed strangers to interview them. Kitzinger and Wilkinson described different ways feminist researchers have conducted "their own 'insider' experience (252). I have used my participation in the Daughters as a way to obtain research participants, what Wilkinson and Kitzinger would describe as a "utilizing" strategy (252-253). "Utilizing" strategy is described as the researcher declaring themselves an insider to obtain access to a hard to reach population (252-253).

By declaring myself one of the Daughters I gained access to this population. This would have been hard to achieve if I had not been a member. These women may not have given their time as freely to a non-member and might have been less forthcoming in their interviews.

Since this study, due to its small size, is more of a “pre-study” to suggest further avenues of research, it is possible that research assistants might be used in the future. They might come to meetings and since these meetings are held in a church, mosque, or synagogue, there may be private rooms where participants could be interviewed. This may help with the issue of inviting strangers to a respondent’s home, making the women more willing to be interviewed.

This study was a pilot study and as such, it employed a necessarily small sample. Future research should use a greater sample size which might be achieved by using several interreligious groups, not just the Daughters. Members of churches, mosques, or synagogues could be compared to members of the Daughters of Abraham or other interreligious groups to see if the progressive, feminist, or social activist nature is the same for women who are not members of the Daughters. Comparisons among younger to older women can be made in the future. This study included women whose ages ranged from 51 to 80. It would be interesting to compare this group to 20 to 40- year-old women and to see what their level of activism was or how they defined themselves. A comparison of women’s interfaith organizations with groups that are made up of both men and women, and with groups that are all men, might be useful. It would also be

useful to find out how often women socialize outside of Daughters activities. Finally, it may be useful to answer some questions about the significance of national politics as a barrier for people of diverse faiths to getting along.

Neither structured questionnaire showed much utility in this study. It is not clear if participants developed internal locus of control or self-efficacy by being a member of the Daughters, or if they joined due to the fact they already had this quality. The interviews suggest their self-efficacy or internal locus of control may be the reason they joined the organization in the first place. Doing this study again with a larger sample size, I might not use the BLOCS. The BLOCS did not appear to add any new information. In addition, the forced choice format appeared frustrating to the women in the study. It is not clear if the WSI would add more information either, since feminist language may not be present in more traditional faiths. It might be more appropriate to continue using qualitative interviews, and in addition, to find a statistical questionnaire that simply assesses belief in social justice, and does not limit the sign of commitment to social justice to the language used in a feminist-oriented spirituality

The Daughters of Abraham is just one women's interfaith organization, yet its members create a dialogue that may cause a big change. These religious women create social change that is consistent with feminism. Some of these women, who may be middle aged or older, have borne witness to the inequalities that exist in society. Their faith leads them to want a better world without discrimination. By being part of the interfaith dialogue, each woman can bring information back to her home, her church, and

her community that may discredit false stereotypes about members of other faiths. The fact that these women are women of faith is not a detriment to their social justice activism, but a way for them to connect with each other. The fact that they are all women of faith is what they have in common; they all belong to Abrahamic faith traditions. This commonality can be the conversation starter. The ending could be peace and a better world, but we won't know until we start the conversations. As Layli Maparyan states in *The Womanist Idea*, "there are two basic steps to performing miracles and changing the world: Step 1 change yourself (the inner work)" and "Step 2 change the world (the outer work)" (125). I believe these women of faith are on the road to creating the miracle of changing the world.

WORKS CITED

- Andermahr, Sonya, Terry Lovell, and Carol Wolkowitz, eds. "Feminism." *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*. New York: Oxford UP, 2000. 93-9. Print.
- Associated Press. "Middle East: Saudi Woman to Get Lashes for Driving, Ruling Comes on Heels of King's Vow to Protect Women's Rights." *Dallas Morning News* 28 Sept. 2011, weekday ed.:11A+. Print.
- Berman, Julie, Janice Harris-Lord, and Carole Sturm. "Planting the Seeds of Respect Between Faiths." *American Muslim Family*. Spring (2005): 22-23. Print.
- Brown, I. Tucker, Tianzhi Chen, Nathan Gehlert, and Ralph Piedmont. "Age and Gender Effects on the Assessment of Spirituality and Religious Sentiments (ASPIRES) Scale: A Cross-sectional Analysis." *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. 10.1037(2012):1-13. Web. 8 Oct. 2012.
- Brown, Lyn Mikel, and Carol Gilligan. *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls Development*. New York: Ballantine 1992. Print.
- Brown, Ric, and George Marcoulides. "A Cross-Cultural Comparison of the Brown Locus of Control Scale." *Educational and Psychological Measurement*. 56.5 (1996): 858-863. Print.

- Castañeda, Donna, and Alyson L. Burns-Glover. "Women's Friendships and Romantic Relationships." Eds. Florence L. Denmark and Michele A. Paludi. *Psychology of Women: A Handbook of Issues and Theories*. Westport: Praeger, 2008. 332-350. Print.
- Caiazza, Amy. *Called to Speak: Six Strategies That Encourage Women's Political Activism, Lessons from Interfaith Community Organizing*. Washington DC: Institute For Women's Policy Research, April 2006. Print.
- Cuhadar, Esra, and Bruce Dayton. "The Social Psychology of Identity and Inter-group Conflict: From Theory to Practice." *International Studies Perspectives* 12 (2011): 273-293. Print.
- Daly, Mary. "The Church and the Second Sex." *Women's Studies in Religion: A Multicultural Reader*. Eds. Kate Bagley and Kathleen McIntosh. Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2007. 105-113. Print.
- Daughters of Abraham. *Daughters of Abraham-TX*. 3 Sept. 2011. Web.
- For the Bible Tells Me So*. Dir. Daniel Karslake. Featuring Bishop Gene Robinson, Archbishop Desmond TuTu, Zachary Mayer, Dick Gephardt. First Run Features, 2007. DVD.
- Goodstein, Laurie. "An Effort to Foster Tolerance in Religion." *New York Times*. 12 June 2011. Web. 21 July 2012.
- Gross, Rita. *Feminism and Religion: An Introduction*. Boston: Beacon P, 1996. Print.

Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck, Jane I. Smith, and Kathleen M. Moore. *Muslim Women in America: The Challenge of Islamic Identity Today*. New York: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.

Hassan, Riffat. "The Issue of Woman-Equality in the Islamic Tradition." *Women's Studies in Religion: A Multicultural Reader*. Eds. Kate Bagley and Kathleen McIntosh. Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2007. 143-149. Print.

Henderson, Katharine Rhodes. *God's Troublemakers: How Women of Faith are Changing the World*. New York: Continuum International, 2006. Print.

Jacoby, Tami Amanda. *Women in Zones of Conflict: Power and Resistance in Israel*. Quebec: McGill Queen's UP, 2005. Print.

"Jnana." *Britannica Online Encyclopedia*. Encyclopedia Britannica, 2013. Web. 13 Jan. 2013.

Kahana, Menahem. "Jewish Gender Segregation Campaign Turns Violent." Yahoo! News. *news.yahoo.com*. Web. 26 Dec. 2011.

Lederach, John Paul. *The Journey Toward Reconciliation*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald P, 1999. Print.

McCarthy, Kate. *Interfaith Encounters in America*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP. 2007. Print.

Mohammed, Kahalel. "The Art of Heeding." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*. 43.2 (2008): 75-86. Print.

Multicultural Alliance (MCA). *Multicultural Alliance Website*. 2010. 14 July 2012. Web.

- Patel, Eboo. *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice and the Promise of America*. Boston: Beacon P, 2012. Print.
- Plaskow, Judith. *Standing Again at Sinai*. New York: Harpercollins, 1990. Print.
- Rooney, Pauline. "Researching From the Inside—Does it Compromise Validity?: A Discussion." *Dublin Institute of Technology*. 3.3 (2005): 1-19. Web. 1 April 2014.
- Rotter, Julian B. "Generalized Expectancies For Internal Versus External Control of Reinforcement." *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied*. 80.1 (1966): 1-28. Print.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Integrating Ecofeminism Globalization and World Religions*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield. 2005. Print.
- Sherif, M. "Experiments in Group Conflict." *Human Emotions: A Reader*. Eds. Jennifer Jenkins and Keith Oakley, Maiden, MA: Blackwell, 1998. 245-252. Print.
- Smith, Huston. *The World's Religions*. 50th Anniversary Edition. New York: HarperCollins, 1991. Print.
- Thistlethwaite, Susan Brooks. "Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation." *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*. Eds. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ. San Francisco: Harper, 1989. 302-313. Print.
- Wilkinson, Sue and Celia Kitzinger. "Representing Our Own Experience: Issues in 'Insider' Research." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 37.2 (2013): 251-255. Print.

Wildman, Wesley. "World Parliament of Religions, 1893." Ed. Derek Michaud and Joas

Adiprasetya. *Boston Collaborative Encyclopedia of Western Theology*, 1994.

Web. 21 July 2012.

Wiseman, James A. "The Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington." *Journal of*

Ecumenical Studies 34.2 (1997): 223. Web.

Yakushko, Oksana. "Preliminary Validation of the Women's Spirituality Instrument:

Development of a Measure to Assess Feminist Religious and Spiritual Attitudes."

Psychology of Religion and Spirituality 3.3 (2011): 194-200. Print.

WORKS CONSULTED

Dayton, Debra Friedman. "Self-Concept, Level of Acceptance, and Locus of Control in Siblings of the Mentally Retarded." Diss. California School of Professional Psychology: Fresno, CA, 1990. Print.

Fernandes, Leela. *Transforming Feminist Practice : Non-Violence, Social Justice, and the Possibilities of a Spiritualized Feminism*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2003. Print.

Heschel, Susannah. "It's Not about Equality—It's about Who's in Charge!" *Yentl's Revenge*. Ed. Danya Ruttenberg. New York: Seal P, 2001. xv-xvii. Print.

Idliby, Ranya, Suzanne Oliver, and Pricilla Warner. *The Faith Club: A Muslim, A Christian and a Jew –Three Women Search for Understanding*. New York: Free P, 2006.

Maparyan, Layli. *The Womanist Idea*. New York: Routledge, 2012. Print.

Plaskow, Judith. "Feminist Judaism and Repair of the World." *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*. Ed. Carol J. Adams. New York: Continuum, 1993. 70-83. Print.

---. "Jewish Theology in Feminist Perspective." *Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies*. Eds. Lyn David man and Shelly Tenenbaum. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1994. 61-84. Print.

Sahlin, Claire L. "On Feminism and Religion/Spirituality." Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX 26 April 2011. Lecture/Handout.

APPENDIX A

Demographics and Qualitative Data Questionnaire

Demographic and Qualitative Interview Questions

Demographic questions:

What is your age?; What is your race?; What is your country of origin?; What is your faith?; Are you married?; Do you work outside the home?; If so what do you do for a living?; Do you have children?; How many and their ages?; Are you a member of any other organizations or faith based groups? How long have you been a member of the Daughters?

Qualitative Questions:

What led you to join the Daughters?

How frequently do attend meetings of the Daughters of Abraham?

What impact, do you feel, that your participation in the Daughter has made on you personally?

How many _____ (*names of two other religious groups not their own-Jews, Muslims or Christians*) did you know before you joined? If you knew people from these other faiths how well did you know them?

What was your opinion of people from these other faiths before you joined and now?

Do you feel that American people of these other faiths are subject to bigotry or discrimination? Describe.

Identify what you perceive to be the main obstacles to dialogue among members of the Abrahamic faiths.¹

¹ This question was suggested in Mohammed, Kahalel. "The Art of Heeding." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 43.2 (2008): 75-86. Print.

What activities have you participated in in order to correct or educate others about your experiences with members of other faiths? What, if anything, would you have done before you joined?

Have you ever been involved in social action or activism before now? If yes, when? Please describe.

Do you consider yourself a feminist? Why or why not? How do you understand the term “feminism”? If you do consider yourself a feminist, how does your feminism relate to your religious beliefs and/or your participation in the Daughters of Abraham?

APPENDIX B

The Brown Locus of Control Scale

(BLOCS)

Participant code _____

Likert Scale

BLOCS

1=Strongly disagree

2=Disagree

3=Slightly disagree

4= Slightly agree

5= Agree

6=Strongly agree



- | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. My Friendships depend on how well I relate to others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 2. Accidental happenings have a lot to do with my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 3. Rules and practices that have been around for many years should determine what will happen to my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 4. I am fairly able to determine what will happen to my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 5. Religious faith will get me through hard times. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 6. The government will run whether I get involved or not. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7. Getting ahead is a matter of pleasing people in power. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 8. Generally it's not what I know, but who I know. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 9. I make mistakes—accidents just don't happen. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 10. Being in the right place at the right time is important for my success. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 11. My friends determine my actions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 12. The ideas that have been around since time began have an influence on my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 13. Most of the time I control what happens in my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 14. Strong pressure groups determine my role in society. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. My plans will not work unless they fit into
the plans of those in power. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 16. My close relationships with people don't just happen--
they need to be worked on. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 17. Some powerful force or person predetermined most of
what happened in my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 18. My life is often affected by fate. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 19. My actions determine my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 20. Hard work will get me where I want to go. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 21. I can generally take care of my personal interests. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 22. I have to work with others to get a job done | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 23. My ability without pleasing people in
power makes little difference. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 24. My life is often affected by luck. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 25. I can usually carry out plans that I make for myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

APPENDIX C

Women's Spirituality Instrument

(WSI)

Women's Spirituality Instrument

The following questions focus on your views about spiritual and religious practices as a woman. Please answer them in ways that reflect your own current opinions and experiences:

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = slightly disagree

4 = slightly agree

5 = agree

6 = strongly agree

(1) I believe it is important to have images of the Divine or God as feminine,

(2) I believe that using traditional language and masculine pronouns in one's

spiritual practices continues important traditions and is simpler;

(3) I believe that spiritual traditions should include focus on women's physical or

embodied experiences (for example, menstruation and menopause),

(4) I believe that spiritual truth is found primarily through reading religious texts

and attending religious services and meetings;

(5) I believe that having connections with Nature and environment should be an

essential part of one's spirituality,

(6) I believe that there is one true faith and I do my best to grow in my

understanding and practice of it;

- (7) I believe it is acceptable to change those parts of one's religious or spiritual tradition that are contrary to women's own experiences,
- (8) I believe that human diversity and social justice orientations should be significant parts of one's spiritual practices,
- (9) It is best to follow the age-old spiritual traditions in one's spirituality
- (10) I believe it is important to create one's own religious or spiritual rituals
- (11) I believe that one's spiritual and religious practices and beliefs should not be in conflict with one's beliefs about women's rights
- (12) I believe that it is best that women not take the most prominent leadership positions in their spiritual communities
- (13) I believe that spiritual and religious traditions should teach women about important roles they must have in their families and communities
- (14) I believe that women should be able to lead or teach within their religious or spiritual communities
- (15) In my opinion, feminism and spirituality or religion are not compatible
- (16) I believe that spiritual and religious services should use gender-inclusive language.

Instructions for scoring: Items 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13, and 15 are reverse coded. You can use a total score or mean score across 16 items.

APPENDIX D

Announcement, Email, and Phone Script

Announcement and Email / Phone Script

Debra Dayton, a licensed psychologist, as well as a member of the Daytime Daughter's group, is working on her thesis in Women's Studies at Texas Woman's University. The title of her study is: "Older Women of Faith Changing the World: The Impact of Older Women's Participation in Interfaith Organizations and Social Activism," and she is assessing how and if women in Daughters are transformed by their participation in this organization.

For this purpose she needs to interview nine members total, from the three Tarrant county chapters of the Daughter's. She would like to interview and give two brief questionnaires to three Jewish members, three Muslim members and three Christian members between ages 50 to 80. The time to take the two questionnaires and the interviews should take between hour and half to two hours and will be recorded. However, all participants' names will be kept confidential and not be included in the actual thesis. Participation in this study is of course strictly voluntary. She will give feedback about the results of the studies to all participants. She is hoping to get this published. So hopefully in the future this may give more publicity for the Daughters. Please call her at 817-909-7283 or email her at twoshinks@sbcglobal.net if you might be interested in participating or if you have more questions. Thanks.

Script for phone

Debra: "Hi

This is Debra Dayton. You indicated you were interested in being in my study? I really appreciate your time. This should take between 1 ½ to 2 hours of time. I will need to know your age (if they are between 50 to 80 they are accepted into the study). I need to know where and when would be convenient for you? We can meet at my home or at yours. Thank you again for your participation. I will need your full name, your phone number, and your email address. I look forward to seeing you on *(specified date and time)*.” If the person on the phone is not age 50 to 80, I will explain I appreciate their call, but for my study they have to be in that age group. If participant wants to meet at my home I will email them directions and the time and date confirming two days before appointment. If they wish to meet at their house I will ask them for their address and basic directions. If we are to meet at their house I will email them confirming that we will still meet at their house at specified time two days before the appointment.

APPENDIX E

Consent

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: Older Women of Faith Changing the World: The Impact of Older Women's Participation in Interfaith Organizations and Social Activism

Investigator: Debra F. Dayton, PhD.....twoshinks@sbcglobal.net/817-909-7283

Advisor: Claire Sahlin, PhD.....CSahlin@twu.edu/940-898-2255

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study for Debra F. Dayton's thesis at Texas Woman's University. The purpose of this research is to determine whether and how women in the Daughters of Abraham may be transformed by their participation in this organization. Furthermore the study will explore whether they impact the community by that change or change the views of others. Finally, this study is looking at the social activism of middle aged or senior women, which are women ages 50 to 80. You have been asked to participate since you are a women age 50 to 80 who is a member of the Daughters of Abraham.

Description of Procedures

As a participant in the study, the researcher will ask you questions and interview you about your experiences before, during, and after joining the Daughters. She will ask whether and how your opinions of members of other faith groups have changed and how you have approached this topic of members of other faiths with members of your own religious community. These interviews should take between an hour to an hour and a half and will be audio recorded and then written down so that the researcher can be accurate when studying what you have said. The audiotape will be given to a transcriber to type up afterwards. The researcher will also take notes. You will also be asked to complete two assessment tools: the Women's Spirituality Instrument (WSI) and the Brown Locus of Control Scale (BLOCS). The WSI requires you to complete a total of 16 questions rating each item on 1 to 6 scale. The WSI should take you approximately 10 minutes to complete. The BLOCS is composed of 25 items which you will rate on a 1 to 6 scale and should take you 20 minutes to complete. Therefore your total time commitment for the interview and both questionnaires will be one and a half to two hours. You and the researcher will decide together on a private location where and when the interview will take place. Although the researcher will address you by name, in the final study your name will not be disclosed and will be kept confidential. You must be between the ages of 50 and 80 and a member of the Daughters of Abraham to participate.

Potential Risks

As a participant in the study, you may disclose information that you have not revealed previously. If you had previous or have current prejudices, it may be difficult or embarrassing to discuss. You will be discussing your level of participation in the

community and in your organization. This may also possibly cause embarrassment or feelings of guilt or discomfort. Questions asked may cause discomfort, embarrassment, or guilt. You may become tired. If you become tired or experience any form of discomfort with these questions you may take breaks as needed. You may also stop answering questions at any time and end the interview. In case you feel the need to talk to a professional about any discomfort that may arise from your participation in this study, you have been provided with a list of resources to assist you.

Another risk to you will be the loss of time. Your total time commitment for this study is one and half to two hours. The researcher and you can agree on a comfortable private location. You are welcome to have food or drink as needed and can get up or sit down in order to ensure your comfort. However the researcher is aware your time is valuable and will attempt to be respectful of your time.

Another risk in this study is loss of confidentiality. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading and internet transactions. The subject pool is very small so it is possible members of the Daughters of Abraham who participate in this study or who read the results of this study may be familiar to each other. However every effort will be made to ensure your confidentiality. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. The interview will be held at a private location that you and the researcher have agreed upon. A code name, not your real name, will be used during the interview and on the two questionnaires. No one but the researcher will know your real name. The transcriber will hear only the code name. The tapes, questionnaires and the written interview will be stored in a locked cabinet and in the researcher's home. Notes will be made on a password protected computer. Only the researcher, her advisor, and the person who writes down the interview (transcriber) will hear the tapes or read the written interview. The tapes, questionnaires and the written interview will be shredded within 5 years after the study is finished. The transcriber will sign a Confidentiality Agreement agreeing to keep all information strictly confidential. Although questions about age, race, children and marriage will be asked, they will not be tied to your name and therefore you should not be identifiable. The results of the study will be reported in scientific magazines or journals but your name or any other identifying information will not be included. This consent form will also be kept in the locked file cabinet in the researcher's home until the study is complete then they will be turned over to the Internal Review Board (IRB) at TWU. The researcher will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researcher know at once if there is a problem of any kind and she will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Participation and Benefits

The researcher will give information about the results of the study to all participants. She is hoping to get her study published. So hopefully in the future her research may give more publicity for the Daughters of Abraham. This would be beneficial to the organization's growth. Furthermore, publicity would benefit the interfaith mission by educating the public about diversity and acceptance.

Questions Regarding the Study

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researchers; their phone number are at the top of this form. If you have question about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940 898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

Please contact Debra F. Dayton, the researcher, at 817-909-7283 or email her at twoshinks@sbcglobal.net if you might be interested or if you have more questions.

Thank you for your help.

Signature of Participant

Date

*If you would like the result of this study please give your address or email below:

Email: _____ or
Address: _____

APPENDIX F
List of Resources

List of Resources

1. Mental Health Association of Tarrant County....call 211 or
www.unitedwaytarrant.org
2. Mental Health Mental Retardation (MHMR) 24-hour crisis line...817-335-3022
3. Women's Center of Tarrant County.....817-927-4040
4. Texas Muslim Women's Foundation.....469-467-6241 or Social Services Hotline
Number: 972-880-4192 <http://www.tmwf.org/>
5. Jewish Family Services.....817-569-0898
6. Catholic Charities.....817-534-0814