

Building capacity and transforming lives:**Anthropology undergraduates and religious campus-climate research on a public university campus**

This paper tells the story of how undergraduate researchers participating in an applied and participatory anthropological research project at Utah State University have used their research experience to help make our campus a more welcoming place for all who orient around religion and spirituality differently. The campus-climate research project described herein was designed to investigate the relationship between diverse religious and spiritual commitments and feelings of discomfort or well-being on our campus. Students who worked on this project gained valuable skills as researchers. Additionally, they became student leaders of a movement to promote a more welcoming climate on campus. Both kinds of experience—as student researchers and as campus-change-agents—have provided these students with value-added skills and knowledge that will increase employability. Far from a “degree to nowhere,” applied and participatory anthropology has prepared these undergraduates to meet the challenges of a world that needs the anthropological lens now more than ever before. [campus-climate research, student capacity-building, engaged anthropology]

Introduction

In a religiously-diverse world, the ability to interact appreciatively with people who orient around religion differently is an increasingly marketable skill as well as a prerequisite for civic (and civil) engagement (Patel and Meyer 2011).

These aptitudes for “interfaith cooperation” include (1) showing respect for everyone’s religious or nonreligious identities, (2) building mutually inspiring relationships that allow for disagreement and difference, and (3) creating opportunities where people of differing religious identities can come together for the common good. They draw upon orientations that are well aligned with our most deeply held objectives in cultural (and especially applied) anthropology—respecting difference, honoring diversity, and building capacity for positive interactions among culturally distinct groups in ways that improve the lives of all concerned. As we prepare our undergraduate students for future careers in applied and engaged anthropology, if we simultaneously prepare them with the necessary skills to engage in coalition building with people of diverse religious traditions and worldviews, their value-added expertise will most certainly translate into career opportunities that are only now emerging.

Many of our anthropology undergraduates will eventually work in the private or public sectors, domestically or internationally, in economic development, health care, politics, business, social services, or heritage protection (Copeland and Dengah 2016). They will apply skills they learn while in our program toward conducting community needs/assets assessment, designing, implementing and/or evaluating programs, and developing, implementing, or evaluating policy. Their experiences doing applied research on topics that promote interfaith cooperation are sorely needed in a world where increasing religious complexity and conflict impacts everything from national policy on refugee resettlement to the management of religious diversity in the workplace.

In this paper, I briefly discuss a campus-climate research project that I directed at Utah State University (USU) during 2014 and 2015. This project employed two undergraduate researchers to assist with all aspects of ethnographic data collection and analysis to learn about how students, faculty, administrators, and staff with religious/spiritual commitments (or lack thereof) felt in a climate where the majority of students belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS Church). In addition to facilitating four roundtable discussions with approximately 65 faculty-members, students, university administrators, and faith-leaders from the surrounding community, the student researchers assisted with the follow-up design, delivery, and analysis of ethnographic surveys that they administered to an opportunity sample of 48 students from seven different colleges on the Utah State University campus. Through this research experience, undergraduates learned valuable tools for designing and conducting participatory and applied research in anthropology. They gained new appreciation for the way that applied anthropology can help advance the causes of social justice and interfaith cooperation in whatever their chosen profession may be. But beyond becoming skilled researchers, both the student researchers and many of the interviewees who were involved in this project have helped create the very spaces for positive interaction among people who orient around religion differently on our campus that emerged as a common theme and felt-need among research participants during the initial project. These students have become stakeholders, change agents, and leaders in a campus-wide movement of interfaith cooperation that is having broad positive impact at Utah State University.

Thus, as I will discuss below, participation in this research has transformed these students, just as it has transformed our campus, in significant ways. As a direct result of this research, for instance, both of the research assistants and three of the students interviewed became founding members of the Utah State University Interfaith Student Association. This student organization is doing much to open spaces for dialogue, to encourage religious literacy, and to bridge “faith-divides” at Utah State University. More than 30 students with ties to this organization, for example, participated as “Parliament Fellows” at the Parliament of the World’s Religions in October 2015. More than 200 students on campus have had the opportunity to engage in conversations about religious/spiritual identities that this student

organization has hosted, and the officers of this student association have been able to share their mission of building a more inclusive community at our university with more than 2,000 students at various events since their initial organization in 2014.

Background

One of our biggest challenges as educators is to prepare students to live productively in a world where religious diversity and religious conflict are ever more visible. As Diana Eck has asserted, the United States is now one of the most religiously diverse landscapes on earth (Eck 2002). Yet, religious literacy is very low (Prothero 2008). This matters because, at least since 9/11, stereotyping, scapegoating, and “Othering” of faith-traditions that are not our own is on the rise. Almost daily, whether in the political sphere of barely-civil discourse, or in the public square, increasing religious diversity—and the fear that permeates discourse about what this diversity means—leads to increased conflict in our streets, in our nation, and around the world. To be able to navigate effectively in the 21st century requires that we provide students with the tools for living in this religiously diverse and complex world. Furthermore, our schools and universities need to become training grounds for providing students with these tools. As Bishop and Nash have asserted,

talking about religion [in public schools] has moved from taboo to necessity during the past few years . . . Religious literacy . . . is crucial because of the conflict that exists both within our country and outside it. Although it is tempting to think about religious persecution and violence as historic . . . even today differences in religious beliefs can erupt into bloodshed when they are combined with nationalistic, racial, ethnic, and political interests (2007).

Public and private universities all over the United States are addressing how best to build capacity in our students for meeting this challenge (American Association of Colleges and Universities 2008; Jacobsen and Jacobsen 2012). Interfaith Youth Core, which was founded by Eboo Patel, an American Muslim and Oxford trained sociologist in 2002, provides resources for universities, especially, to learn the art and science of interfaith cooperation and to change the public discourse about religion from one of seemingly inevitable conflict to cooperation.

They do this by partnering with American college campuses to train students as interfaith leaders and to build successful models of cooperation that can be carried by college students into their post-college years. By building capacity among students for interfaith leadership, and by encouraging campuses to institutionalize programs in support of this challenge, their work, all around the United States is helping to change the landscape of American education (cf. Interfaith Youth Core 2010, 2016).

The challenges of building this capacity for appreciative knowledge and relationship-building are probably different in urban settings of high religious diversity than in the Intermountain West. In urban settings like New York, Chicago, San Jose, and Miami, frequent interactions with members of a faith different than one's own, are common.¹ There, unknown religious "Others" can be viewed with hostility, but there is also the possibility for friendships to develop when Muslims and Christians, Jews and Hindus come together to solve common problems and to serve the common good. Familiarity can breed contempt, but it can also enrich interactions—depending on how these are structured. On demographically diverse college campuses, when adherents of multiple faith traditions come together in the classroom, in residence halls, in clubs, and on athletic fields, there is at least an opportunity to structure activities and relationships that allow these religiously diverse students to find common ground.

In our area of the Western United States, religious diversity is extremely low and most incoming students have had little sustained interaction with those of other faith commitments before arriving on campus as college freshmen.² In this situation, it might be less likely that students will build positive relationships with those of other faiths simply because they are less likely than their urban counterparts to have had sustained interaction with members of other religious traditions. But it is also possible that stereotypes and assumptions might not be as entrenched as in settings where religious diversity is high.

Does the difference-in-diversity between urban and rural settings create different obstacles and opportunities for engendering appreciative interaction across religious differences? What might these be? And, how can being aware of these differences help guide capacity building in ways that make sense in our particular situation? These questions were foundational to the initial research project, entitled "Promoting Religious Literacy at Public/Single-

Faith Universities: Adapting Models for Interfaith Dialogue While Expanding Research Paradigms." Our first task was to determine the need, interest, capacity, and best practices for engaging in this very important work on our campus.³

At our university, which is located in what is arguably the least religiously diverse state in the nation⁴ more than 68 percent of our almost 18 thousand on-campus students are originally from Utah.⁵ Furthermore, only about 30 percent of recently surveyed incoming freshmen have *ever* spent more than 12 months living in a region where they considered themselves to be a religious minority.⁶ Although a public university campus, about 70 percent of our incoming students self-identify as members of the LDS Church, which makes them a distinct "faith-majority" on our campus (IDEALS 2015). While many older students serve missions for their church in more than 189 countries around the world,⁷ their exposure to other languages and other cultures is necessarily filtered through a missionary's-eye-view of the world. Thus, a majority of our students have probably not had the same kinds of exposure to those of other faiths as young people do who live in more religiously diverse areas of the country. Meanwhile, religion is very visible on our public university campus.

To understand why this is so, it is important to understand something about the educational system in our state. Although Utah is not the only place in the United States where a particular faith-tradition predominates, our state is somewhat unique in the way that opportunities for religious education parallel publically supported education for students of all ages. In Utah—with approval from the State Legislature—the LDS Church provides free religious education (for members and nonmembers alike) at LDS Seminaries and LDS Institutes that stand adjacent to public schools from the ninth grade through the university years. High school students are given release time to attend LDS Seminaries, which border high school campuses (Ashcroft 2011).⁸ On college campuses, LDS Institutes that stand adjacent to university property provide the same opportunity for members and nonmembers to participate in religious-education classes until the age of 30.⁹

At USU, the LDS Institute (which is located just across the street from the USU student center) is the largest in the state, enrolling between 6,800 and 7,500 students in at least one class each term.¹⁰ This accounts for between 42 and 47 percent

of the approximately 16 thousand undergraduate students who make up the USU on-campus student population.¹¹ Although technically separate from the university, the LDS Institute curriculum looks similar in significant ways. Courses are taught by regularly appointed faculty and students register for courses that are part of an institutionally approved curriculum. They receive course grades, have transcripts, and are eligible for a diploma upon completion of the Institute's religious education curriculum.

Extracurricular opportunities are also highlighted as part of "Institute life." Events (from dances to public lectures) are frequently organized by the LDS Institute or by the LDS Student Association (LDSSA) that is affiliated with this organization. At LDSSA events, it is not atypical for 1,500–2,000 students to attend.¹² Fireside chats, weekly lectures about "religion in public life," relationship-enhancing activities for both single and married students all create a strong sense of community among Institute enrollees. While not USU campus events, per se, the LDS Institute presence (and influence) on our campus is both ubiquitous and often taken for granted.

In the campus residence halls, a religious presence is also strongly felt. Although LDS returned missionaries, priesthood holders, and adult lay leaders (bishops) are technically restricted from evangelizing among residents, the dorms are divided into "wards" that are overseen by LDS bishops. This organizational structure is shared with any student who asks (student RA's are given information to share with their residents about where and when weekly LDS worship services are offered as part of their RA-orientation meetings). LDS missionaries (all of whom must complete regular service hours as part of their mission experience) make themselves available to students moving into and vacating the residence halls. As one residence life employee recently told me, "on those days I make sure I'm present to 'ride-herd' on the Missionaries so they limit their involvement with the residents to the service of helping them to move rather than using this as an opportunity to evangelize."¹³ But, as illustrated below, LDS missionaries do evangelize around the edges, both in and out of the residence halls. Utah State University students who are LDS—or who might be interested in becoming LDS—thus have plenty of opportunity to engage in discussion about their religious lives during the course of each school day.

Students who are not (or who are no-longer) LDS have no such parallel religious support net-

work. Although there are other religiously oriented (and secular humanist or atheist) student clubs, none has the reach of the LDSSA when it comes to organizing social events or recruiting members. Although the local Catholic Church has a Newman Center near campus and other churches can also be found within a mile or two of the university, the options for pastoral care or religious education are both substantially less visible and less available than these are for members of the LDS faith. In an era where research increasingly points to student desire for opportunities to explore their religious (or non-religious) identities as a vital part of their university experience, we were concerned that this lop-sided support structure might have consequences on our campus that contribute to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and reticence for exploring any interests they might have about the role of spirituality/religion in their lives. We were also curious about whether students (particularly those who are not or who do not wish to become LDS) felt able to engage in the kinds of inquiry that is increasingly recognized as important to social and emotional development on the university campus (cf. Astin et al. 2010 ; Parks 2011; Small 2015).

The research project

This was the context in which our campus-climate research unfolded. The research questions we asked, motivated by the realities of our particular campus culture were these: Do members of our campus community, including students, faculty, administrators, and staff members want to be able to express their religious (or nonreligious) identities on campus? If so, is there adequate support for doing so? If there is interest in having these conversations in an environment that is not conducive to this interest, what already existing campus assets might we capitalize upon to create spaces where these conversations can happen? And, how will having these conversations help us to share more authentically, to engage with those of other worldviews more appreciatively, and to bridge an apparent "faith-divide" on our campus in order to build a stronger sense of community among all who identify as Utah State University "Aggies?"

During the course of our discussions, we found that having the opportunity to discuss personally held religious (and nonreligious) worldviews was, indeed, important to participants. Participants

expressed the desire to foster a climate where being an educated person is not viewed in isolation from having a particular faith commitment (including a commitment to no religion at all). They expressed the desire to create ways and spaces for all members of our campus community to feel comfortable sharing their beliefs and associated values. They expressed hope that discussions of how their faith traditions relate to broader domains of knowledge, relationship, and action would be embraced on our public university campus. Our roundtable participants also expressed a desire for more opportunities to engage in productive dialogue across faith divides. But, during our roundtable discussions, we also found that almost all of our participants did not yet feel safe having these discussions on campus. Instead, we found that our campus climate was one where almost no one felt comfortable talking about religion.

Significantly, our roundtable discussions revealed that almost everyone we talked with—whether practicing LDS, former LDS, members of a minority religion or avowedly not religious—felt obliged to leave their religious identities (or lack thereof) at the door when interacting with others. Religion was described as the “elephant in the room” because it was important to so many—but it was a taboo topic for discussion. As one participant summarized it, “I think people really, really want to talk about these things and share. Pretending that we don’t have religions is kind of a pain actually and I don’t think that anyone wants that. I think [hiding] can increase feelings of loneliness.”

Because of this, we developed a set of questions and conducted one-on-one ethnographic interviews with students to gain further insight into the perceived barriers constraining these kinds of conversations. Over the next several months, we interviewed 48 students to understand their perspectives about our particular institutional challenges for this important aspect of their identities.

In talking with our respondents, we found that study participants felt uncomfortable sharing their faith-commitments with others for reasons that varied according to their worldview. But for LDS and non-LDS participants alike, the adaptive strategy was similar. While they chose to stay “in the religious closet” for multiple reasons, “don’t ask, don’t tell” (as one interviewee put it) was the common response for all (Hawvermale and George 2015).

Some LDS participants preferred not to talk about their faith commitments because they felt

afraid that they would be mocked if they did. During our roundtable discussions and follow-up interviews, they expressed concern about something called “Mormon-bashing”—both in and out of the classroom. Because this is a public university campus, our student respondents told us they were reticent to share religious commitments because of faculty disregard for their religious perspectives—especially in science courses. As one student noted, “There seems to be a negative stereotype . . . about Latter-day Saints. People assume either that I’m going to be judgmental or closed minded or I don’t think for myself.” And another LDS student noted, “I think because [the LDS faith] is a majority, it feels like it is okay to make fun of it, and it’s okay to make fun of the members and the traditions.”

Interestingly, this concern had also been expressed by LDS faculty and LDS campus administrators during our roundtable discussions. One program director on the student-services side of our campus shared a personal example of how his right to religious liberty is oppressed on campus because of the common perception that dialogue about religion is not appropriate at a public university. As he shared,

I’m LDS and I had a parent and a student come in that were both wearing CTR rings. I knew they were probably LDS because of their rings, and the mom was totally out of control and was yelling and screaming. So, I said [to her], there’s a scripture that says “the soft answer turneth away wrath.” It was perfect for the situation. The mom regrouped, quieted down, and we had a civil discussion after that. But because I said the word scripture, I was turned into affirmative action, and reprimanded here at Utah State because I said the word scripture. If I had said that the quote was from *Playboy* or the *National Enquirer* it would have been fine, but because I said the word ‘scripture’ I was . . . reprimanded. And I think that’s appalling in a country where we believe in freedom of speech.

Other practicing LDS students—especially those who have come to USU from out-of-state or those who report more “lax” approaches to their faith than some of their peers—felt it was better to stay closeted in order to avoid feeling pressure from peers or family to conform to LDS ideas of what they called “good and moral behavior.” As one

former LDS student put it, “After I stopped going to church, my roommates who were all LDS started to really look down on me . . . All of a sudden I’m seen as this bad influence.” Another student told us, “I feel like there is . . . a social standing that comes from being LDS, where if you are LDS and they know it, then they expect you to conform to their standards, and if you do, then you’re one of them. If you don’t then you meet their disapproval.”

Students who had never been LDS church members also shared their preference for invisibility. In addition to being shunned for what they termed “bad behavior,” they felt members of the LDS church had a conversion agenda when interacting with nonmembers. As one student put it, “If you’re not LDS, [the LDS students] don’t necessarily care to associate with you . . . They don’t necessarily invite you to hang out with them on a social basis, and when they do invite you to things it tends to be more of a concerted attempt to bring you to the Truth as they see it.” But, what non-LDS students viewed as “friendshipping” (befriending someone simply for the purposes of converting them), LDS students viewed differently. As one student noted, “inviting someone to church, inviting somebody to read the book of Mormon is really just an act of faith and love.” These miscommunications about what friendship means also contribute to the tentativeness students feel about sharing their religious identities with one another.

On our campus, we found that low levels of religious literacy, lack of interest for learning about other religious traditions, and even nonacceptance of others’ religious identities can present additional obstacles for interacting across faith lines. The following experience, told us by a student RA, illustrates this point,

I was down with a couple other RAs in the hallway . . . and these [LDS] missionaries came in. [As] they walked by . . . they kind of interrupted us, and they said, “Do you want to talk about religion” and we were like, “no, not really,” but fair enough [because] you know, we’re here for students, we’re here to engage in conversations, so [we agreed]. And one of them said, “Do you mind if I ask what religion you are?” And I said, “You know, I’m a Taoist.” and he immediately said, “Come on man, you’re kidding.” And he started laughing, which automatically made me want to close [the] dialogue . . . He honestly had no idea [Taoism] was even a real thing.

One reason for this kind of response may have to do with the insularity of the LDS Church as well as with the ubiquity of the LDS presence on our campus. As one former member put it, “Inside the Mormon church [is] the mindset we have the Truth . . . [and since] we already have it . . . we don’t really need to reach outside to look for it. So I think there is a lack of literacy because maybe some people don’t value other cultures and other religions.”

Yet, insularity does not mean that there is no interest in these topics. We suspect, in fact, that it is precisely *because* religious commitments seem to be such an important part of many students’ lives that there is a desire to know more. In fact, in a follow-up survey to our research that was conducted the following year among USU incoming freshmen, 89 percent of respondents asserted that being able to “express my religious identity outside the classroom” was either “somewhat, quite, or extremely” important (IDEALS 2015).¹⁴ As one of our interviewees commented, “I truly, truly believe that people’s religion is such a core of their culture [and] is such a core of who they are . . . if we could all just understand that . . . part I think that everyone would be just a little bit better; people would be a little bit kinder and a little bit friendlier.”

Empowering our students as interfaith leaders

While our research was progressing, we began taking steps to implement some of the desires that had been identified during our original roundable discussions. These would require big and small changes on our campus—some of which were within the scope of our respective roles and others of which would require substantive buy-in from high-ranking university officials as well as changes to university-defined priorities. Small changes included creating opportunities for students to come together to share with one another as well as inviting speakers from various faith traditions to come and speak on our campus. I also designed a stand-alone training that would build capacity for interfaith dialogue and appreciative interaction with those of other worldviews as well as creating and maintaining a directory of like-minded community organizations to facilitate communication. An “asset-mapping” exercise led us eventually to create a two-tiered organizational structure. Students organized an Interfaith Student Association (under the student-services umbrella of the Center

for Access and Diversity). According to the Interfaith Student Association website, they work to provide other USU students “the opportunity to voice, engage, and act with people who orient around religion differently for the betterment of the community.” Faculty, staff, and administrators came together as the “USU Interfaith Initiative” (under the umbrella of the Religious Studies and the Anthropology Programs) to coordinate between offices and units, to raise money and visibility, and to lobby for institutional change.

The two students who participated in the initial research project continued analyzing data and began preparing summaries of the research for presentations at university-wide student showcases, at regional events (like the annual “Posters on the Hill” day held annually in the halls of our state legislature), and at national meetings (including the Society for Applied Anthropology and the American Anthropological Association).

But, in addition to these expected research outputs, these two student researchers also cofounded and became officers in the Interfaith Student Association mentioned above. In this capacity, they assumed primary roles in the design and delivery of programming to make conversations about religious (or nonreligious) identity easier for everyone. As emerging student interfaith leaders, they began organizing activities to provide safe spaces for USU students to explore, validate, talk about, and celebrate their faith commitments (Hawvermale 2015a).

In the two years since we began to organize, we have begun to see positive change on our campus. First of all, people seem less reticent to talk about religion than they did before we began our research. As evidenced by the more than 170 students, staff, faculty, and administrators who have participated in a stand-alone, three-hour “Better Together Interfaith Ally Training Program,” which I developed to provide some basic training for all who are committed to bridging religious differences on our campus, interest in learning how to become Interfaith Allies is high. Student-organized events and other activities are well attended.

“Speed-faithing” events are just one example of the kinds of activities that are making a difference on our campus. Students learned how to conduct speed-faithing activities while attending an Interfaith Leadership Institute that was hosted by Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago during the summer of 2014 and have modified it slightly to fit the needs of our campus. This activity provides a struc-

tured opportunity for dialogue with multiple conversation partners where participants are encouraged to respond to question prompts like “Did you grow up with a particular faith tradition? What was it?” “Do you practice that (or another) faith tradition now?” “What is one of your faith tradition’s core values?” “What is a stereotype about your faith tradition that you would like to dispel?” After an opportunity to share and respond to a single question prompt for approximately three minutes, participants shift positions to talk with a new conversation partner. The atmosphere is friendly, energy is high, and by the last conversation prompt, it is always difficult to get people to stop talking. At these speed-faithing events there are ground rules for discussion that build capacity for responsible sharing as well as appreciative listening. These include requirements that every participant speak from their own experience, rather than as religious experts, that they not interrupt or challenge their conversation partners’ perceptions and views, that they agree to disagree and give their conversation partners the benefit of the doubt when strong emotions surface, and that they practice confidentiality with what is shared.

When asked about these events, which have occurred more than a dozen times on campus since we began our campus-climate research, participants have commented that these activities do much to break the ice and build community. As one speed-faithing participant noted, “. . . at the beginning we were just . . . people who only vaguely knew each other. But afterwards, there was definitely a different connection between us.” And as another student commented,

Everyone wants to share what they believe, but it’s scary. You don’t want to offend anyone or misrepresent your religion, or have others make fun of your beliefs. [But] at the activity, there were no problems, and some of the people I talked with had never talked about their religion with others. I learned a lot and found the whole experience very uplifting.

When discussing their experiences, participants have also commented that it is surprisingly easy to share, that they have felt heard and appreciated and comfortable talking about religion in ways that they hadn’t anticipated, that they have discovered shared values even when truth claims differ, and that they are eager to follow-up with new-found friends that

have been part of these experiences (Glass-Coffin, Hawvermale, and George 2015).

In addition to the speed-faithing events that student leaders have coordinated, the Interfaith Student Association (made-up primarily of anthropology students who participated in our campus-climate research and their close associates) has built capacity for our students to talk about their faith commitments and worldviews in multiple settings, both on and off campus. They have participated in interfaith worship services, they have chaired roundtable discussions for those interested in learning how religious/non-religious identities inform their lives as students, they have participated as panelists—briefly presenting their worldviews and then fielding questions from large audiences. They participated as student fellows at the Parliament of the World's Religions that was held in Salt Lake City in October 2015. Additionally, they have fielded questions about what interfaith cooperation means at student fairs and majors fairs on campus, they have facilitated site visits to churches, synagogues, and mosques. As the student leadership team representing the Interfaith Student Association, these students are frequently asked to articulate their mission and vision statement at organized and informal events both on and off campus (Hawvermale and Tauber 2016).

Expanding the research on campus

Not long after the founding of the Interfaith Student Association, four of the anthropology students who had been involved in the original project (one as a student researcher, two as friends of the student researcher, and the fourth as an interviewee) joined the Collaborative Anthropology Research Lab (CARL) that is discussed elsewhere in this volume (see Dengah et al. 2016). Working independently and in teams these students chose to focus their research on such topics as “religious identity and dating practices/mate-selection,” “religious identity and gender-role expectation,” “religious identity and mental health,” and “halfie-Mormon anthropology.” This last, highly self-reflective topic, asked the researchers themselves to consider how being Mormon (or non-Mormon) impacted their relationships and their discussions of data that were emerging from their CARL research—data that showed that religious identity accounted for significant differences in USU student attitudes about potentially volatile topics like feminism, marriage

equality/traditional marriage, and gender-role expectations (Cf. Hawvermale et al. 2016; Hawvermale, 2015b; Temple et al. 2015; Dengah et al. 2015; Temple and Dengah 2016; and Temple 2015).

For at least some of these CARL students, being part of a project that exposed religion as a taboo topic on campus and challenged assumption further awakened their commitment to applied anthropology as a tool for effecting positive social change. As one CARL member told me, “Being able to say I changed our campus for the better while I was still a freshman? Well, that’s addicting!” Indeed, this particular student noted that “starting [with the campus-climate research] . . . I became interested in other research that would make a positive difference on campus . . . These interests came from an awareness of how important it is for our students to have meaningful interactions [about religion] with their peers.”

But even beyond this, for at least this CARL member, participation in these applied research projects has changed the course of her life. As she told me, “I didn’t grow up Mormon and [living in Utah] religious tolerance was something that I had struggled with in my own life . . . By getting involved in this research about our campus culture and climate as it relates to religious tolerance, I realized what was important to me. I also realized my life’s path.”

Thus, it was because of our initial campus-climate research, which helped begin to liberate discussions about religion from the “cone of silence” that permeates our campus culture that at least some of the CARL members chose to inquire more deeply into questions of how religious and other areas of student identity intersect. As another CARL member told me, “I had just left the Mormon church when I was interviewed for the campus-climate project. That made me realize that I was interested in learning more about the relationship between gender roles and Mormon identity . . .”

For these students, participating in applied research about how religious identities on campus intersect with aspects of student development has stimulated further interest in (and capacity for) doing applied research to effect positive change in our campus community. Learning that students *want* to be able to talk about the role of religion in their lives (and learning how to facilitate this dialogue) has empowered them as researchers, as student leaders, and as future citizens. In doing the campus-climate research as well as the subsequent CARL research, and

through creating programs that respond to student desires to share authentically, to listen deeply, and to come together across faith divides, these student researchers are better prepared to be able to navigate the religiously complex world that they will step into as they graduate and move into the next phase of their lives.

Career prospects for anthropology graduates with capacity for interfaith leadership

A brief look at how interfaith leadership translates into careers as well as capacity reveals that students trained in anthropology and interfaith cooperation are finding jobs in the political arena, in development, in nonprofit and for-profit sectors, and in faith-based organizations both domestically and internationally. According to the Pew Research Center, 84 percent of the world's population¹⁵ identifies strongly with a particular religion and 75 percent live in areas where religious freedoms are severely restricted.¹⁶ Because of this, Congress is on the verge of passing a bill that will appoint a permanent "Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom" (as well as mandating 20 new staff positions as part of the Department of State). This bill, if passed into law, will also mandate religious freedom and religious engagement training for all Foreign Service officers.¹⁷

In international development, organizations like World Faiths Development Dialogue (Georgetown University) and others that ask how religion fits into development and tracks "activities of people of faith across the globe and across religious traditions," are expanding the range of international development positions for students with this kind of expertise.¹⁸ Nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations like the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy use "faith-based diplomacy" as a mechanism for resolving domestic and global conflict and terror in some of the world's most violent hot spots.¹⁹

Domestically, the President's Interfaith Community and Campus Challenge brings together people of differing religious backgrounds to collaborate on projects that serve the common good—tackling everything from social service delivery and social justice to immigration, homelessness, environmental degradation, poverty and unemployment, and violence in U.S. cities. This year, more than 250 college campuses are participating in this initiative.²⁰

As more and more campuses embrace the art and science of interfaith cooperation, the national conversation about religion is changing and the positive impact of developing religious literacy and interfaith leadership is also expanding. Philanthropic organizations like Arthur Vining Davis are changing their funding priorities and thus acknowledging the importance for building this kind of capacity on our campuses.²¹ As more and more organizations recognize the value of interfaith cooperation as a knowledge base and a skill set,²² new opportunities for postgraduate employment and continued training will only continue to expand. Our students are well positioned to take advantage of these new opportunities, trained as they are in the methods of participatory and engaged research as well as in the skills that will help make "interfaith cooperation a social norm within a generation."²³

Conclusion

As many of the other contributions to this volume attest, undergraduate students in anthropology who are carefully mentored, thoughtfully taught, and thoroughly trained have much to offer this very troubled world. Whether through generally promoting global understanding (Brooks 2016), engaging with communities to promote volunteerism and service (Copeland et al. 2016), improving elementary school education (Funkhouser et al. 2016; Brondo et al. 2016), or helping us better understand HIV/AIDS (Copeland 2016), our undergraduate students are learning valuable skills and knowledge that will lead to productive careers—and invitations to top graduate schools—because they are doing applied research on topics of vital importance in a 21st-century world.

The needs being met in these other research areas are urgent. Yet, in a 21st Century world where ignorance and fear of the "Other" propels ever more frequently to religious violence and intolerance, so too is the need to demystify religious difference and build community across faith divides. Now more than ever before, in a world rife with religious conflict, ignorance, and fear of the "Other," the prophetic words of anthropologists Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead ring true. As Benedict asserted almost a century ago, anthropology—and applied anthropology in particular—is sorely needed "to make the world safe for human differences." Through their research and discovery, and through taking this knowledge to the next level in

order to create positive interaction among those who orient around religion differently, these students are obtaining vital skill sets and ensuring their future employability. But even more than this, the skills and knowledge that they are gaining on our campus are preparing them to be “thoughtful citizens” whose life-work may be, as Margaret Mead once said, only as important as saving the whole world.

Notes

1. cf. <http://www.citylab.com/politics/2012/12/americas-most-religiously-diverse-cities/4227/>.

2. cf. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/govbeat/wp/2013/12/12/religion-in-americas-states-and-counties-in-6-maps/>.

3. The research in question was generously funded through a Research Catalyst Grant from USU’s Office of the Vice President for Research and was approved by USU’s Institutional Research Board (USU IRB Protocol #5402).

4. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/govbeat/wp/2013/12/12/religion-in-americas-states-and-counties-in-6-maps/>

5. http://www.usu.edu/aaa/pdf/enroll_sum/Fall2015Summary.pdf.

6. These data were collected as part of the IDEALS Time I survey but they were not included in the report (IDEALS, 2015) because they were “extra survey questions” that were not part of the overall dataset. The question that was asked of respondents was, “When have you lived for 12 consecutive months or more in a region of the United States or the world where the predominant religion of the region was different than your own?” Response choices included, “never,” “when I was 0-8,” “when I was 9-17,” “when I was 18-26.” The average affirmative response rate for those aged 0-26 was 31.4 percent. The raw data are available for review and are on file with the author.

7. <https://theboard.byu.edu/questions/72034/>

8. For two very different opinions on the way that Utah interprets the relevant laws see <http://www.acluutah.org/resources/item/593-lds-seminary-in-public-schools> and http://news.hjnews.com/opinion/guest-column-church-schools-thankfully-leaving-seminary-issue-be/article_2da61136-d3a6-11e1-b711-001a4bcf887a.html

9. Personal communication, LDS Institute staff on April 26, 2016.

10. Personal communication, LDS Institute staff on April 14, 2016.

11. http://www.usu.edu/aaa/pdf/enroll_sum/Fall2015Summary.pdf.

12. Personal communication, LDS Institute staff on April 26, 2016.

13. Personal communication, USU Housing and Residence Life staff on April 26, 2016.

14. The question, “How important is it to be able to express your religious/spiritual identity at USU outside of class?” was another of the additional questions we added to the nation-wide IDEALS survey that our freshmen students participated in during the fall of 2015. Of the 272 respondents (representing about 17% of our freshman class), 89% responded that expressing these identities were somewhat, quite, or extremely important. As with the other questions we added to the survey protocol, these responses were not analyzed or included in the final report (IDEALS 2015) but the raw data were tallied by the author and the dataset, which is on file with the author.

15. <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>.

16. <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/08/09/rising-restrictions-on-religion2/> and <http://www.themitchellfirm.com/international-religious-committee/>.

17. <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/bill/hr-1150-frank-r-wolf-international-religious-freedom-act-2015>

18. <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/wfdd>.

19. <http://icrd.org>.

20. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ofbnp/interfaithservice>.

21. www.avdf.org/AboutUs/ShapingourFuture.aspx.

22. <https://www.ifyc.org/sites/default/files/audit/FY14%20IFYC%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

23. <https://www.ifyc.org/content/about-network>.

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