

Teaching Christianly

Andrew Herrity

California Baptist University

Abstract

What does it mean to teach Christianly, teaching in such a way that faith informs pedagogy and not simply course content or the spirit in which it is taught (Smith, 2018, p. viii)? Then, if teaching in such a way, what are the consequences? This article addresses those two questions by examining them theoretically and empirically.

The theoretical examination begins with a faith-integrated review of literature from multiple disciplines. It draws upon Chartrand and van Baaren's (2009) finding that people tend to mimic the behaviors of caring authority figures. It further draws upon Smith's (2018) qualitative finding that narrative is an element of teaching Christianly, and Hunter's (2000) observation that narrative is at the heart of character formation. The review then combines this literature with findings in personality psychology about the role of narrative in personality development to develop a theory of student formation as a consequence of teaching Christianly.

The empirical examination consists of a qualitative study about implementing this theory in an undergraduate business course assignment. In the assignment, students reason autobiographically (McLean et al., 2020) about their formation by telling personal stories. First, though, the instructor serves as a role model by telling his own story. The article reports on observations of over two hundred student stories during a four-year period. Results indicate that a caring faculty member teaching Christianly plays an important role in the formation of student character.

If, indeed, there is a hope or an imaginable prospect for human flourishing in the contemporary world, it begins when....the love of Christ becomes flesh in us, in our relations with others, within the tasks we are given, and within our sphere of influence. (Hunter, 2010, p. 252)

Christian faculty members create this sphere of influence mainly through their academic classroom role with students. What can students learn from faculty members, though, that results in flourishing? Scholars, both ancient (Aristotle, ca. 350 B.C./2011) and contemporary (Park & Peterson, 2009), agree that it is character. Yet, scholars lack a theoretical framework as to how character forms. This is because character formation is not generally an aim in the broader higher education community due to what Hunter calls *The death of character* (2000). While the field of positive psychology includes a focus on character, the so-called strengths of character in that field are more like personality traits than virtuous qualities like courage. In addition, positive psychology scholars "do not know the

process by which strengths of character develop" (Park & Peterson, 2009, p. 6).

To address the limited knowledge about character development, this article offers a faith-integrated review of behavioral science literature to propose a theory that student character forms when a faculty member teaches Christianly. *Teaching Christianly* is defined as instructing in such a way that "faith informs pedagogy and not simply course content or the spirit in which it is taught" (Smith, 2018, p. viii).

The article then reports on an examination of the theory in a four-year qualitative study of 225 students. The study shows that teaching Christianly does indeed result in student character formation. Two questions inform both the theory and study. First, what does it mean to teach Christianly? Then, upon instructing with a so-informed pedagogy, what are its consequences?

The idea of pedagogy as Christian may be novel to many. Pedagogy is ranked as relatively unimportant by faculty in Christian higher education (Alleman, Glanzer, & Guthrie,

2016). This is likely because pedagogy is seen as secondary to the defining characteristic of the academic profession: the development and dissemination of objective knowledge (American Association of University Professors, 2019).

Also, student character formation as part of the professor's role may be an uncomfortable idea. Faculty members likely lack skill in student character formation; such formation tends to be a focus for student life professionals. Unfortunately, character formed in the student life arena does not translate well into academic or professional disciplines (Appiah, 2008).

Fortunately, though, Christian faculty members are known for a desire to prepare students with the character to make ethical workplace decisions by being courageous in the face of opposition and to be good neighbors at work, for example. This article therefore offers faculty members a way to consider a pedagogy of teaching Christianly and its effects on student character. First, to situate the article in the broader faith integration scholarship, the following literature review begins with a very brief survey of the different approaches to faith integration.

Literature Review

Faith Integration

A full review of the faith integration literature is beyond the scope of this article because there are dozens of types of faith integration, and the scholarship is vast. The author thus refers the reader to Moroney (2014) for a comprehensive orientation to faith integration as it has developed during the twenty-first century. The relatively concise literature review that follows is consistent with Moroney's clustering of integration types into three broad approaches.

The most well-established approach is often called the integration of faith and learning. The genesis of this approach is commonly traced to Hasker's (1992) definition of faith integration:

Integration is concerned with integral relationships between faith and knowledge, the relationships which inherently exist between the content of the faith and the subject matter of this or that discipline. (p. 234)

The approach is an effort to re-integrate biblical truth with secular knowledge in the scholar's discipline. Re-integration is needed because biblical truth is disconnected from scholarship in academic circles beyond Christian higher education. Finding alignments between scriptures and disciplinary content is often a rational exercise that does not require personal faith, and it is a

suitable exercise for non-Christian and Christian students in the academic classroom. The rational focus provides the faith and learning approach with legitimacy as an academic exercise in the context of higher education more broadly.

For similar reasons of academic legitimacy, the second-most well-established approach to faith integration - Christian worldview - usually adopts a cognitive focus on "the intellectual framework that Christianity provides for its adherents" (Moroney, 2014, p. 146). Scholars following this approach tend to conceive of worldview as operating in a person's deliberate thinking processes. This cognitive concept of the way a worldview operates has come under significant critique in recent years, however, because such a view adopts a "stunted, rationalist picture of the human person" (Smith, 2009, p. 32). Although a worldview can be described as a deliberately held mental belief, it actually operates as a "fundamental orientation of the heart" (Sire, 2004, p.17) residing below the level of conscious awareness as a "set of narratives or stories that establish a particular perspective on life" (Naugle, 2002, p. 297).

A third approach to faith integration - practice and formation - addresses many of the limitations of the deliberately cognitive approach to worldview summarized above. This approach focuses on how faith intersects concretely with teaching and learning in the classroom rather than on how faith intersects with disciplinary scholarship (Moroney, 2014, p. 150). It is relatively new on a widespread basis in Christian higher education. However, the practice and formation approach is increasingly being embraced because it focuses on the distinctiveness of a Christian institution. Within this approach to faith integration, a rapidly emerging scholarly literature demonstrates the importance of pedagogy for faith integration (e.g., Johnson, Van Dyke, & Yoo, 2021), albeit in disciplinary focused publications. The qualitative study included in the paper at hand falls into this practice and formation approach to faith integration.

Role Model

To help transform the lives of students, Toledo (2022) proposes that faculty members will need to "reimagine their role as a teacher....from being content-centric to student-centric" (p. 4), in which educators serve as "models for students" (p. 5.). In an educational context, role modeling is normally understood to be a form of instruction in which the teacher demonstrates a target competency so that a learner can comprehend the entire process of adopting a particular behavior in a specific type of context (Grossman, Salas, Pavlas, & Rosen, 2013, p. 231). Faculty members are generally familiar with this type of demonstration in which

they might show how to do anything from calculating an arithmetic mean to playing a musical instrument, for example. A general assumption is that these processes of demonstrating and learning are deliberate.

In recent decades, however, researchers have discovered that through a process of nonconscious “automatic mimicry,” young adults adopt verbal, facial, and other behavioral patterns of instructors, provided students perceive teachers as caring (Chartrand & van Baaren, 2009, p. 221). Mimicry occurs more broadly than in formal educational settings because it enables humans to learn without having to deliberately and rationally think through how to learn. It is especially pervasive in the higher education classroom due to the teacher’s institutionally granted power: individuals with more power are mimicked more (Chartrand & van Baaren, 2009, p. 251). This all means that learning from a role model occurs even when the process is not deliberate: students can potentially mimic all classroom behaviors of the caring faculty member.

These behavioral science findings align well with the New Testament. For example, from the moment Jesus says to his first disciples “come follow” in Matthew Chapter four (also John chapter one), his teaching method includes role modeling. Similarly, the Apostle Paul refers to his personal actions as showing how to live out the new thinking in his letters.

Pedagogy

The term pedagogy here refers to the practices of higher education faculty members in guiding others to learn. However, pedagogy is more than a set of techniques, especially in Christian higher education. David I Smith – the author from whom this article derives its “Teaching Christianly” title – proposes that Christian pedagogy is a form of hospitality. Smith elaborates using the metaphor of pedagogy as a home:

When we teach, when we design learning, we offer a temporary home in which students will live for a while.....Like any home, it involves resources for and patterns of interaction, both intended and unintended, that shape how those within it grow and imagine the world. (2018, p. 12)

Smith notes that narrative is an element of teaching Christianly. Through narrative, students encounter “people as made in God’s image” to enable “serious reflection about their own lives and identities” (pp. 56, 57).

Teaching for Character Formation

Narrative, in turn, is at the heart of character formation (Hunter, 2000). Hunter elaborates:

Implicit in the word “character” is a story. It is about living for a purpose that is greater than the self. Though this purpose resides deeply within, its origins are outside the self and so it beckons one forward, channeling one’s passions to mostly quiet acts of devotion, heroism, sacrifice, and achievement. (p. 226)

While narrative is not a focus for Toledo (2022), he does propose character formation as the reason for the practice and formation approach to faith integration. Yet many students in our classrooms are not Christians, so teaching Christianly needs to provide room for unbelievers without losing the ability to be distinctively Christian.

To begin bridging differences between believers’ and unbelievers’ views, this review next draws briefly upon Aristotle. For Aristotle, character is acquired by practice and is recognizable in a person when they habitually practice a virtue such as courage (Hartman, 2013, p. 72). At the same time, for Aristotle, the individual keeps the free will to choose – or not choose – courageous acts. This free agency enables the individual to reason about his or her habitual practices and adjust, if necessary, their habitual pattern of thought. The individual is prompted to do this when experiencing a contradiction between habitual practice and what might have been a better course of action. For Aristotle, the contradiction prompts rational reflection and character forms when one makes an inner choice to restrain one’s behavior. The importance of rational reflection will appear later in this literature review but first, this research survey turns to contemporary findings on character.

Character strengths are studied systematically in the field of positive psychology. Research in that field indicates that character strengths are associated with a flourishing life. Character strengths refer to aspects of personality that contribute to human flourishing, so people place a moral value on them for that reason (Park & Peterson, 2009). Yet the field of positive psychology offers limited guidance as to how character strengths form. Therefore, because character strengths are viewed in positive psychology as aspects of personality that are valued, this review looks to personality psychology for guidance on formation.

Research in the field of personality psychology demonstrates that, between the ages of 18 and 22, people tend to increase in openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness (Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2006). These personality traits correspond

respectively but approximately to the character strengths of wisdom, courage, and humanity, with this last one corresponding particularly to love and valuing relations with others.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that character and personality are not the same. Hunter (2010) explains:

Character is *not*, as the psychologist would have it....merely a set of traits within a....personality. (p. 15, emphasis in original)

The story implicit within the word "character" is one that is shared, it is never just for the isolated individual. The narrative integrates the self within communal purposes, binding dissimilar others to common ends. Character outside of a lived community, the entanglements of complex social relationships, and their shared story, is impossible. (p. 227).

Personal Narrative

Personality, to the extent that it is explained by experience, is driven by a personal narrative (McAdams, 2015). A personal narrative is an internalized story - mostly held unconsciously - guiding behavior (McAdams & Guo, 2014). This personal narrative is constantly at work, below the level of deliberate consciousness. Because it mostly works unconsciously, students need help consciously recognizing their authentic personal narrative for their transition from college to the next stage of life. Research findings over the past two decades in personality psychology (e.g., Bauer, McAdams, & Sakaeda, 2005), developmental psychology (e.g., McLean & Pratt, 2006), and narrative psychology (e.g., McLean et al., 2020) consistently indicate that this internalized story integrating a person's past, present, and imagined future, has a significant and often unconscious effect on behavior. Most importantly for this article, life story narratives develop significantly in the late teens and early twenties (McAdams & Guo, 2014). The aim for people working in this area is to help individuals develop by engaging in autobiographical reasoning to re-evaluate assumptions and interpretations biased by long-ago pain from events in the past and make connections in one's memory that those life episodes had previously unrecognized redemptive outcomes.

Autobiographical Reasoning

The college years are the ideal time to examine these behavior-driving patterns (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2017).

As a student meets new situations, he or she experiences contradictions between expectations in their unconscious personal narrative and events unfolding in their lives. The contradiction prompts the emotion system to trigger cognitive meaning-making, but the young adult requires help to make sense of the new contradiction over their personal narrative. This process of sense-making is called autobiographical reasoning (McLean et al., 2020) and is not unlike the rational reflection proposed by Aristotle (ca.350 B.C./2011; Hartman, 2013) as central to character formation.

The Working Theory

Taken together, this literature on personal narrative and autobiographical reasoning suggests a working theory about teaching Christianly: that a faculty member telling of the development of his or her own openness, perseverance, and agreeableness during the college years would help students with the formation of these respective character qualities. This review frames these qualities in the language of personality psychology because the research on the narrative formation of the drivers of behavior is situated in that field. At the same time, although a personal narrative underpins both personality and character, it does not mean they are the same thing.

Openness

Having an open personality is roughly like having an open-mindedness, which is part of the character quality of wisdom. For Christians, the scriptures are replete with instruction to be open to change. Psalm 139:23-24 (ESV) gives one example:

Search me, O God, and know my heart....

See if there is any offensive way in me....

This is also illustrated in the New Testament book of Acts, chapter 11, where Peter reminds his hearers in verses 16-18 of his own story about hearing the voice of God. Peter's story is of being terrified at Jesus' transfiguration - as told in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9 - but now we read the words of a confident man, seeing in retrospect how that time of inner turmoil was so important. Peter has grown. He has a much more open mind as to how the Kingdom of God works. The proposition here is not that we aspire to be a psalmist or Peter, but that the scripture offers an example of how the remembered experience generates the inner energy driving a person's character. All this suggests the following proposition:

P1: An instructor serving as a role model telling his or her own Christian faith story of growing in openness will be effective at helping students reason autobiographically about their own openness.

Perseverance

Perseverance is part of the personality trait of conscientiousness and character strength of courage. To elaborate on the meaning of perseverance, Patterson, Goens, and Reed (2009) note that people:

...demonstrate perseverance in the face of adversity when they voluntarily and relentlessly pursue a course of action, consistent with their core values about what matters most, and without regard for discouragement, barriers, or previous failure – unless it is absolutely clear all realistic strategies have been exhausted.
(p. 8)

The Christian reader will note that there is nothing new about the contemporary behavioral science finding of perseverance as essential for healthy human development. The virtue of perseverance features prominently in the Bible in passages such as James 1: 2-4 (NIV):

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds. Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Importantly, this passage conveys the idea that the actual action of perseverance itself through trials serves to develop more perseverance as well as mature a person. This is exactly the finding in contemporary behavioral science research. For example, Yeager and Dwek (2012) report that perseverance develops in adolescents and young adults from enduring effortful challenges and learning from occasional failure. This all suggests the following proposition:

P2: An instructor serving as a role model telling his or her own Christian faith story of perseverance during the college years will be effective at helping students reason autobiographically about their own perseverance.

Agreeableness

Valuing relations with others is part of the character strength of humanity, the personality trait of agreeableness,

and is at the heart of the Great Commandment to love others, as explained by Jesus in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. This all suggests the following proposition:

P3: An instructor serving as a role model telling his or her own Christian faith story of valuing relations with others will be effective at helping students reason autobiographically about their own valuing of relations with others.

Role Model for Non-Christians

A high proportion of students in Christian higher education are not Christians. Therefore, any testing of propositions developed above would require a faculty member to be a role model in telling their story in two ways: one to include the role of God and the other not. The propositions stand either way because the literature review developed the theory underpinning them using Christian and behavioral science perspectives.

Assessment of Learning

To assess learning of the process of autobiographical reasoning, students would need to tell their own stories. Such stories can include difficult life episodes. Therefore, students need to perceive the classroom as psychologically safe to be willing to tell their stories.

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is the perception by a learner that a learning environment is relatively non-threatening. It facilitates people's willingness to speak up in a group setting. The concept was developed in the field of organizational psychology and describes a learner's "perceptions of the consequences of taking interpersonal risks in a particular context (Edmondson & Lei, 2014, p. 24). Psychological safety is a useful concept here because it focuses on the learner's feeling. This is especially important for Generation Z students who live with social-media-generated anxiety over potentially feeling shame due to perceived failures (Twenge, 2017).

Framing

Framing refers to human bias, causing people to react differently depending on how something is presented. Framing enables students to transfer something learned in one context and apply it to another (Engle, Nguyen, & Mendelson, 2010). Teaching Christianly in the ways suggested in the article at hand requires framing to help students understand how this pedagogy belongs in an academic course. Framing allows students to see how personal characteristics recognized through

autobiographical reasoning will be applicable in their future workplaces. This can be done by framing the qualities of openness, perseverance, and agreeableness as consistent with Maree's (2017) finding that these are qualities employers seek in college graduates.

Method

The author developed the pedagogy studied here, referring to himself as the instructor when describing its implementation in the classroom. He observed the effects of his pedagogy using a qualitative case-study theory-building method (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2013) and, for clarity, refers to himself as the researcher when describing his recording and analysis of the instructor's activities. The researcher received approval from his university institutional review board to publish his findings, provided individual student identities remain confidential.

Framing

When initially implementing the pedagogy, the instructor created a learning frame (Engle et al., 2010) using the concept of organizational capability, a critical idea in the field of strategic management (Pisano, 2019) and central to the content when the instructor teaches this course. He showed students how to do this by drawing an analogy to the development of personal capability as central to forming a strategy for life (Drucker, 2005).

Initial Implementation of the Pedagogy

The instructor began to develop the pedagogy in 2017 in response to observed gaps in his students' open-mindedness, perseverance, and valuing relations with others. Based on a literature search and conversations with approximately two hundred current and former students, he crafted an assignment in an undergraduate strategic management course in a school of business at a Christian university. He implemented it in the classroom in the fall of 2018 and revised it substantially in the spring of 2019, based on his observations as a researcher.

Qualitative Case Study Methodology

The researcher made observations using a qualitative case-study theory-building method. This method should not be confused with the case study teaching method, in which a case consists of a single company's operations over time. A case study methodology is appropriate when there is little empirical evidence to address the research questions and an explanation is needed (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2013). The qualitative nature of the method involves observing the phenomenon under study in its real-life context and building theoretical arguments to explain those observations. The method is well suited to this article's aims

of addressing open-ended questions for which there is limited empirical evidence and explaining how character forms in college-aged students.

Psychological Safety

To respect the anxiety of undergraduates that has been heightened by social media, as discussed in the literature review (Twenge, 2017), the instructor took great care to foster psychological safety (Edmondson & Lei, 2014) for his students. He told his own stories first, describing his personal failures and the life purpose he ultimately identified in those episodes. To reduce the likelihood that students would try to perform with excellent stories, he repeatedly stressed that his story was not any better or worse than anyone else's; it was simply his story. He waited six weeks before any students were scheduled to tell their stories; he learned this from making the mistake one semester earlier of scheduling the assignment too early in the term. The instructor repeatedly announced in class that if any student sensed the assignment would be distressing for them, then he or she should plan on less disclosure or change to a different true story. The instructor required that any remarks following a story had to be positive and affirming; there was to be no critique.

The 2018 and 2019 Pedagogy

The type of stories in the assignment changed over the semesters as the instructor learned how students told their stories and how to tell his own stories in ways that would be more instructive for students. For the ineffective start in the fall of 2018 and the effective semester in the spring of 2019, these were the true stories:

General Life Lesson

The instructor's story was, as a new Christian, how he learned to practice the presence of Jesus while at a blue-collar summer job in a manufacturing company.

Talents

This instructor's story was set when he was in his early forties in a successful business career and realized he had the talent to be a college professor.

Resilience

This story was set during the instructor's sophomore year in college when an injury ended his athletic career but ultimately led to his relationship with Jesus Christ.

Openness

This story was set when the instructor was in his mid-sixties and traveled to Russia to teach a master's degree course.

For the first and third stories, he gave credit to Jesus Christ for getting through the situation. For the second and fourth, he made no reference to the role of God to help maintain psychological safety for students who might be unprepared to talk about faith in front of others. The instructor emphasized in every story that he had difficulty at the time of the episode in identifying the purpose and meaning of the experience. Only later, through autobiographical reasoning, did he recognize the purpose and fully incorporate it into his story.

The 2020 Revised Pedagogy

This paper follows the usual convention of reporting results after methods, but early results informed a method change for later semesters. Based on the results in spring 2019, the instructor changed the four story types in fall 2020 to:

Why Did You Choose Your Major?

Several students in 2019 told stories about struggles to choose a major and how they learned openness to new people and ideas in the process. This finding informed a new theme in 2020 focusing on the choice of major.

Life Lesson About the Importance of Community?

Most students in 2019 told stories about the value of community in getting through a struggle and developing personal resilience. This finding informed a new theme in 2020: what is a life lesson you have learned about the importance of community?

How Has a Personal Trial Developed Your Perseverance?

In 2019 all students who talked about resilience included a narrative about coming through a personal trial and becoming more persevering. This finding informed a refined theme about personal trials.

What Did You Learn from Becoming Better Acquainted with Someone Unlike You?

In the 2019 stories about openness to new experiences with others, students reported increased openness but also increased love of neighbor and perseverance. Therefore, this theme was re-phrased, allowing students to choose their own story outcome.

Results

As noted above in the literature review, character strengths formation is still an emerging area of knowledge, so the instructor developed the student assignment using the best available from literature in several related fields. To learn

from the students, the researcher selected the qualitative case study approach (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2013) in which each story told by a student constituted a case.

The researcher did not try any objective measure of changes in openness, perseverance, or agreeableness because observation effects would call into question the validity of any results. Interestingly, without being asked to do so, the students consistently reported on changes in their perseverance.

Data Collection

The data are observations of students' presentations of their personal stories, each lasting about five minutes. The researcher constructed a coding sheet for making consistent observations and sat at the rear of the room to make field notes during the presentations. Observations made in the spring of 2019 clustered into three story elements: difficult episodes, reflection about the episode, and new understanding now as to the outcome, meaning, and purpose of the experience.

One student story is provided here as an illustration. This is an abridged version of her exact words because a full transcript is beyond the space limitations of this article. Other student stories are not provided because the instructor told students their stories would remain confidential to maintain psychological safety. This student gave explicit permission for her story to be published:

I'm giving my story a title: "going into the unknown." It's about becoming more persevering because of the most difficult experience of my life. I decided to do a study abroad semester in Ireland during my sophomore year. I'd done nothing like this before. At that point, I had never been more than two hundred miles from home. My parents both emigrated from Mexico and we speak Spanish at home.

At the University of Limerick, I lived in student housing and was surprised when all students went home every weekend. I was so lonely I called my parents to discuss dropping out. They were okay with me coming home but I decided to stick it out. Being lonely for three months was the hardest thing I have ever experienced. Looking back, though, I went into the unknown and that challenge built my character. That's my story.

The story is noteworthy for two reasons. First, the instructor knew the student was a Christian, yet she did not mention faith in the story. Second, the student did not have a

supportive surrounding community at the time of the episode. The importance of these elements will be discussed later in the results section.

The instructor continued the assignment in the fall of 2020 when his university transitioned to synchronous real-time instruction using WebEx. As noted in the methods section, the instructor revised the story themes in the fall of 2020 and thereafter. The results are summarized in Table 1 below. The observations from all four semesters are combined into one table because the data are very consistent over time. As suggested by the literature review, observations are coded using language from personality psychology because the research on retrospective meaning-making is situated in that field.

Table 1
225 Observations of Student Stories Over Four Semesters,
Fall 2020 Through Spring 2022

Proposition	Retrospective meaning supporting proposition
1: Openness	92 learned to be more open (41% of total observations) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 reporting openness associated recognition of that characteristic in themselves with a faith experience. (7% of those reporting openness)
2: Perseverance	112 learned to be more persevering (50% of total observations) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 49 reporting perseverance associated recognition of that characteristic in themselves with a faith experience. (44% of those reporting perseverance)
3: Agreeableness	14 learned to be more agreeable (6% of total observations) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 reporting agreeableness associated recognition of that characteristic in themselves with a faith experience
	7 various other meanings not clearly associated with a proposition

Faith

A striking new thing happened in the fall 2020 stories: about a quarter of the students talked about their faith. This did not happen in the spring of 2019, so the instructor considered the possibility that the online environment somehow made the students feel even more psychologically safe. The faith stories continued in the spring of 2021 online environment at the same rate as in the fall of 2020. Then, the faith stories continued in the face-to-face-on-campus environment in the fall of 2021, at about the same rate as in the fall of 2020. This suggested that online was intrinsically no more psychologically safe than face-to-face and not the factor prompting faith stories.

Upon reflection, the instructor recognized that the likely explanation for new faith stories was his revised way of greeting students using Webex in the fall of 2020. When students' images and names appeared on the screen at the start of class, he greeted each one individually with "Good morning (first name)." This was simple to do on Webex, to set a welcoming tone during the season of stress brought on by the pandemic and the uncertainties of the live online classroom. His greeting set the tone for Smith's notion (2018) that hospitality characterizes Christian pedagogy, but Smith's work did not consciously inform the instructor's new way of greeting students. The instructor's motivation came from Jesus' commandment to "Love your neighbor as yourself," found in Matthew 22:39 and Mark 12:30 (NIV), consistent with Hunter (2000), as quoted at the outset of this article's introduction.

The instructor continued his new way of greeting students upon returning to the face-to-face-on-campus environment in the fall of 2021. Instead of simply taking attendance, he consistently arrived early to greet every student by name as they entered the room and found their seat. He adapted the greeting to each student, depending on his observation of their body language and whether they arrived with peers or alone. Students liked the greeting, and, in retrospect, it appears to have been a major factor contributing to students' willingness to talk about faith in class.

Perseverance

Students most often told stories of perseverance. In all four semesters, roughly half of students reported a growth in perseverance, with many linking their recognition of personal growth to the exercise under study in this article. This offers support for this study's second proposition that an instructor serving as a role model will be able to help students reason autobiographically about their perseverance. Faith played a prominent role in student stories of perseverance, with 44% attributing their growth in this area to a faith experience.

Openness

The next-largest growth area was in openness, with 41% overall reporting growth in this trait. Most often, their openness came out of a struggle to choose a major. These stories normally concluded with a statement to the effect that they felt more comfortable with risk because of coming through the struggle. This supports this study's first proposition that an instructor serving as a role model can help students reason autobiographically about their openness. Faith played a less prominent role in student stories of openness, with only six percent attributing their growth in this area to a faith experience.

Agreeableness

The fewest students told stories in this area and of those who did, faith did not play a role in any.

Importance of Recognizing Retrospectively the Value of Community

65% of the time, student stories included an account of being accepted by others at the time of the past life episode. This percentage is noteworthy because the instructor only mentioned the influence of others in two of his personal stories. Generally, students did not accept the importance of that episode or the people who surrounded them at the time of the difficult episode. During the assignment they could look back on these episodes as what McLean and Pratt (2006) call self-defined turning points, using autobiographical reasoning, although the instructor did not refer to the terms turning point or autobiographical reasoning during the course. In preparing and telling the story for this assignment, students accepted retrospectively the value of the difficult episode and of being accepted at the time.

Researcher Recognition of Character Formation

This community aspect of student stories noted above gradually led the author as a researcher to recognize that the qualities articulated by students were aspects of character. When the project began, as a researcher he listened to aspects of openness, perseverance, and other-centeredness as personality traits. Correspondingly, he coded each story according to the aspects of personality emphasized in that student's narrative. Only in 2019 did he begin to recognize that most students spoke about a supportive community at the time of their personal struggle. In addition, many students used the word character in describing what grew in them because of reasoning autobiographically. For these students, openness, perseverance, and other-centeredness were more than simply qualities employers seek in new graduates (Maree,

2017), making them more competitive in the workplace. These qualities were aspects of character. Thus, by the spring of 2020, the researcher recognized that his teaching Christianly by modeling his faith story as an instructor played a vital role in the formation of student character.

Conclusion

This article advances our understanding of what it can mean to teach Christianly and the consequences of teaching in such a way. The research reported here suggests that character forms in students as they reason autobiographically about the meaning and purpose of difficult personal life events in the past. If they had a supportive surrounding community during those past life events, formation in the present is more likely. Perseverance is the character quality most likely to form if students are Christians. Students can learn to reason autobiographically in this way from a caring faculty member who models the formation of their own character.

Limitations and Future Research

There may be limitations to the findings of this research, however, due to the period studied. Fall 2020 through spring 2022 was atypical due to COVID-19. Effects on student emotional states and teaching modality may have affected results in ways that may differ during a different time period. Yet the consistency of results over multiple semesters suggests validity and reliability to the findings. Nonetheless, due to possible time-period effects, the author invites future studies on teaching Christianly and its effects on student character formation.

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Author Information

Andrew Herrity
California Baptist University
aherrity@calbaptist.edu