

Lessons in Multifaith Chaplaincy and Feminist Thought: Making Room for Multiple Religious Belonging in Interfaith Praxis¹

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In the context of interfaith engagement, multifaith chaplaincies in college and university settings have a significant impact in determining ways of relating to perceived similarities and differences between diverse religious and philosophical traditions. This reflection first focuses on how feminist theologies and methodologies, along with insights from womanist theo-ethics, can elucidate key conceptual markers of student interfaith programs that seek to be holistic and welcoming, and then moves to identify ways in which these programs can unintentionally reproduce privileges, assumptions, and oppressive perceptions from our social and institutional settings. Finally, we ask whether these observations present a positive critical edge for university chaplaincies and scholarship in the field of interreligious studies, specifically related to the lived experiences of students who identify as LGBTQ and/or as belonging to more than one tradition.

A few years ago, I was sitting in my office when a student knocked on the door and asked if I had time to talk. I offered them² a chair as they began to explain that their friend, a peer who was active in local Pagan communities, had referred them to me since I was known to work with students from all traditions as part of my role with the chaplaincy and spiritual life on campus. Though I am not a Pagan, they thought I might be able to help. We chatted briefly and through the course of the conversation I learned that this student, who faithfully attended Pagan programs on campus, had some lingering questions about which spiritual path they wanted to follow. They had grown up in a Roman Catholic tradition but had left because of disagreements related to sexuality, race, and cultural heritage. The student missed participating in the Roman Catholic tradition, however, and expressed a desire to find a place—literal and figurative—in which they would not have to ignore important parts of their identity in order to participate in or belong to a community. Their questions to me were whether they could rejoin a tradition that they experienced as not wholly welcoming of their sexuality, how to integrate their Roman Catholic and Pagan spiritual experiences and practices, and ultimately if they could truly belong to more than one tradition.

It is from conversations and experiences like these in the context of university chaplaincy that my own questions about identities, interfaith relations, privilege, and power have emerged.³ As

¹ This reflection is based on my presentation for the “Religious Pluralism and Feminist/Womanist/Mujerista Theologies” panel of the Interreligious and Interfaith Studies program section at the 2016 American Academy of Religion conference in Atlanta, Georgia. I am grateful to the students and faculty of the “Alternative Epistemologies” workshop (University of Chicago Divinity School, coordinated by Elena Lloyd-Sidle and R.L. Watson), which invited me to present “Is Interfaith Inherently Patriarchal?” in May 2015 and, through that process, helped me clarify and refine my questions on patriarchal permutations in the interfaith movement. The Multifaith Working Group at the University of Chicago Divinity School (Spring 2016–present) has also provided a space to think creatively together about hybridity and multiple belonging in interfaith and multifaith contexts.

² I choose to use plural pronouns in reference to an individual student for the purpose of gender inclusivity.

³ Recent conversations about using the terms chaplain and/or chaplaincy to describe this work have occurred at the annual conferences of both the National Association of College and University Chaplains (NACUC) and the Association

students from different religious, spiritual, and philosophical traditions and journeys seek spaces to encounter one another and themselves, queries about intersectionalities and difference are ever-present and continually unfolding. Like the student above, sometimes the journey is about self-discovery or finding a kind of spiritual enlightenment (within or apart from a community), while in other moments and for other students, the journey sparks movement toward increasing their own religious literacy by learning about “the other” or “others.”⁴ And I have learned from these students that the move toward self and the move toward others are not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually enhancing.⁵

The chaplaincy role is centered, in part, on providing open and welcoming spaces for encounter to occur without being tied to any particular outcome, beyond that of supporting a student’s wholeness and well-being. Being open to multiple outcomes does not necessarily imply, however, that the spaces of welcome are created without a sense of intentionality or boundaries. In order for spaces to be welcoming and open, a kind of mutual trust must be established, and it is precisely this intention of creating trust that beckons us to think more deeply about what exactly is happening—particularly on the level of representation and power dynamics—when those from many traditions and none come together for dialogue, rituals, spiritual practices, service projects, social activism, or academic conversations.

So how, and to what end, are students brought together to create trust and connection between, across, and among the similarities and differences of their religious and philosophical traditions? Because chaplains and scholars do not come from or operate in a vacuum, this question must be answered with self-awareness and careful attention to social location. My own context as a white, middle-class, American, cisgender⁶ woman who identifies as queer and feminist certainly influences my approach to interfaith programs with students. Moreover, my connection to Christian traditions—although I am neither ordained nor do I hold any formal ecclesial authority—can and should produce questions related to privilege and power when I facilitate programs, lead discussions, or provide spiritual care and presence.

In my approach to working with students, I begin with attention to social location because *who we are* is integral to what we think and how we interact and connect with others, be they deemed similar or different in relation to ourselves. My particular work has included advising an interfaith leadership development program for undergraduates and graduate students; co-facilitating a working group of Master of Divinity (M.Div.) students of various traditions, the focus of which is imagining curricular changes in multifaith academic settings; coordinating a weekly gathering that

for College and University Religious Affairs (ACURA). In short, the term has been tied to the Christian tradition (historically, etymologically, and otherwise) to describe the work of Christian ministers primarily in military, hospital, prison, and university contexts. I acknowledge this debate and history while still choosing this term because I believe it is the best way, for the time being, to delineate as clearly as possible the qualitative differences of the role in comparison to, for example, the roles of those trained in student affairs. For a description of the university chaplaincy role, consult NACUC’s standards and guidelines (<http://www.nacuc.net/standards>) and ACURA’s principles (<http://acura-online.org/principles>).

⁴ I owe the use of “others” in contrast to using “the other” to Emilie M. Townes, who emphasized this terminology as a respondent for the session “Questioning the Capitalist Moment: Ethical Approaches to Economic Justice” at the 2013 American Academy of Religion conference in Baltimore, Maryland.

⁵ For an example of one theologian who engages in this conversation, consult Paul F. Knitter, *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2009).

⁶ Cisgender is a term indicating that one’s gender identity and biological sex (assigned at birth) match.

is intentionally open to those of many traditions and none;⁷ and more generally, being present and available for conversations with students who want to talk about meaning and purpose. In all of these settings, certain concepts from my background in feminist thought and theology,⁸ from vision to program implementation, have influenced and complemented everything from the setting of the physical space and the language used to acknowledge or welcome participants, to the structure of the gathering and critiques of the various visions and permutations of multifaith and interfaith engagement.

In the hope of highlighting some of the ways in which theory can inform practices in university chaplaincy settings and beyond, I will draw out a few concepts from feminist methodologies and theologies that have grounded my interfaith work with university students. These methodologies foster a greater awareness of how we relate to one another amidst the confluence of our own many-faceted identities and make explicit the theories, theologies, and practices that may be subtly (or overtly) influencing us when we participate in religiously plural settings. Practice, however, also influences our theoretical understanding and theological construction, so this brief essay will conclude with critical edges emerging in interfaith praxis related to LGBTQ identities and multiple religious belonging.

Crucial Concepts in Theory and Practice

Feminist theories and theologies identify the ways in which the institutional realities of patriarchy, androcentrism, and various kinds of misogyny, sexism, and heteronormativity comprise the whole of our lives. In the most basic sense, these forces work together to interpret reality in terms of competing dualisms (for example, light and dark, male and female), create binary oppositions from this dualistic vision, and ensure that maleness and masculinity, in contradistinction to femaleness and femininity, remain atop hierarchical social relations in regard to power and privilege in social, cultural, and institutional contexts—in short, everyday life. And finally, we attribute power, privilege, or goodness based on these perceived differences; patriarchal power relies, in the end, on domination through perceived ontological difference rather than a decentered, egalitarian form of relating.⁹

As theologians and scholars in recent decades have contended, this legacy of *patriarchal relations* also affects the ways in which our religious traditions are embodied, from who holds ecclesiastical authority to the ways in which sacred texts may have been (and continue to be) interpreted to privilege male norms and male voices.¹⁰ Awareness of these concerns—and specifically identifying the ways in which patriarchy influences our religious traditions—is crucial to creating *egalitarian*

⁷ As coordinator of the weekly program (called “Open Space”), I introduced the gathering each week as being more apophatic with regard to communal religious identity and creed, yet cataphatic in relation to highlighting and connecting to the stories that emerge in the space—be they explicitly religious or not. I developed this language from several conversations with students and administrators related to vision and purpose for Open Space.

⁸ Though my influences in feminist theology primarily come from Christian traditions, there is a rich history in feminist thought from other traditions as well. I have been influenced by the works of Letty Russell, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Serene Jones, Kwok Pui-Lan, and Marcella Althaus-Reid.

⁹ Patriarchy as a term has had various interpretations in Christian feminist thought and theologies. For a classic example, consult Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward A Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973). For a more recent interpretation and critique of the term patriarchy, see Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

¹⁰ For a resource containing many perspectives on women in interfaith contexts, consult Catherine Cornille and Jillian Maxey, eds., *Women and Interreligious Dialogue* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2013).

relations in a religiously plural setting, such as an interfaith dialogue program for students. If as a chaplain or scholar I remain unaware of the daily realities of sexism, for instance, how can I ensure that students’ voices are welcomed in an interfaith program, with specific attention to gender identity? And perhaps just as crucial in pluralistic settings, how can I ensure that the differences in students’ religious identities are not defined against each other in a way that gives priority to some traditions over others?

In the practice of interfaith engagement, the answers to these questions are manifold and require constant attention to very specific aspects of putting together a program or space, including but not limited to, the language used by facilitators and participants (i.e., not exclusively using the term “religion” to describe one’s practice, identity, or group); the variety of food that is provided for all to eat, as well as the assumptions about what kinds of food and drink can be at the same table (and even handled) by all; the manner in which spaces are set to accommodate diverse practices, abilities, and customs; and even the hour or day of the week in which a program is held. Feminist methodologies of *inclusivity* emphasize this depth of intentionality *so that voices, perspectives, and traditions that have historically been excluded or marginalized are made welcome*, so to speak. Though including those that have been excluded is a worthy endeavor, to simply include others *into an established way of relating* that does not take into account the real differences that emerge in our religious or spiritual identities (both communal and individual) would be an unfortunate mistake. This is all too common in interfaith programs that assume language, concepts, and customs from Abrahamic traditions while ignoring, or otherwise failing to demonstrate adequate literacy in, the language, customs, and concepts from Dharmic traditions, for example.¹¹ Taking cues from the emphasis on inclusion in feminist methodologies, it is my sense that what interfaith contexts increasingly require is a *decentered inclusivity*, which proceeds from an awareness of power and privilege in the move to include marginalized or minority voices or those on the periphery. Thus, decentered inclusivity is not simply inviting excluded voices into a conversation or program in which the terms and language and physical space (and ritual format and style, if applicable) have already been decided—often by those from Christian and other Abrahamic traditions, at least in the context of the United States.¹² Rather, a praxis of decentered inclusivity takes seriously the perceived centeredness of religious traditions and identities while attempting not to privilege one to the exclusion of others.

Emphasizing a decentered inclusivity in interfaith engagement directly connects to the need for a greater *consciousness of the privilege(s)* that characterize our identities. For students in interfaith and multifaith programs, meditating on male privilege and white privilege, for instance, may bring to light questions related to comparable privileges that exist for those from certain religious traditions,

¹¹ The use of the term “Dharmic” has gained some traction in chaplaincy and religious life contexts to acknowledge Jain, Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh traditions, in contradistinction to Abrahamic traditions (Christian, Jewish, and Muslim). Though in my opinion “Dharmic” is limited as a modifier in much the same way that “Abrahamic” is limited, I have also experienced its use as being beneficial in allowing for chaplains and students to be intentionally more explicit about the diversities that can and should comprise interfaith programs. I also want to further clarify that my context, with regard to interfaith programming and activism, is centered in the United States. Thus, it is a consistent reality that participants and organizers often subscribe to Western paradigms and categories, broadly speaking.

¹² For an in-depth look at America’s increasing religious diversity over recent decades, consult Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper, 2001). A key argument is that the Immigration Act of 1965 essentially brought to the U.S. large numbers of adherents to religious traditions that were relatively new to the American context (i.e., traditions other than Christianity and Judaism). Further insight and research on this topic may be accessed through the Pluralism Project at Harvard University (<http://pluralism.org>), of which Diana L. Eck is the founder and director.

namely, Christianity. Though we are witnessing a statistical decline in the number of people who identify as Christian in the United States, in the present moment Christianity continues to be prevalent and has significant cultural import.¹³ This reality affects everything from the holidays observed and/or acknowledged (e.g., Christmas, Good Friday), to the traditions present in college interfaith groups, to how many active university chaplains (expected to serve multiple traditions) are ordained Christian ministers and priests.

Though it can be helpful to refer to a tradition, such as Christianity, as a uniform whole when pinpointing the cultural and social privileges that such an identity affords, the idea of a monolithic tradition can be confining when we think of the diverse ways that people embody their spiritual or philosophical identities, as well as the many other identity intersections that may be present. In order to do interfaith work well, we must be sensitive to the reality that traditions are internally diverse and intersections of identities are significant: for instance, an LGBTQ Christian will not necessarily have access to the same social privileges (within Christian communities and in other communities) as heterosexual or cisgender Christian students, a transgender Muslim student might have to decide on which section of the musallah they will pray, and a Zen Buddhist student might encounter the assumption that they are vegetarian and use meditation beads in their practice. *Self-naming*, then, is key to creating egalitarian relations that acknowledge privileges and historical power imbalances while also allowing for individuated experiences of those polyvalent realities. Constructions of identity as multiple and hybrid within a tradition open this possibility for an individual and remind us, on a communal level, that being particular about each facet of our identities is critical to a holistic ethic of engagement with those who are different from ourselves.¹⁴

Most students who participate in interfaith contexts are presumably present in order to learn about others and experience dialogue as a means of increasing religious literacy. Some interfaith councils may even engage in their activities as a means of creative peacemaking, especially if religious identities and practices are seen as a divisive force on campus or in political spheres. I have found that these self-selecting students welcome critical thinking about their traditions, especially if it facilitates more grounded, sensitive, and ethical ways of relating to similarity and to difference. These are excellent intentions. I believe these intentions must be accompanied, however, by a holistic sense of the historical milieu in which interfaith programs are taking place and what certain differences may “mean” in specific cultural, geographical, or institutional settings. As Jeannine Hill Fletcher has recently articulated, in increasingly globalized, connected contexts, we must continue to ask how gender as well as other intersectionalities (e.g., race, sexuality, ability) inform our relationships to one another and frame our categories for identity, difference, and resulting power differentials and marginalizations.¹⁵ Yet how do we recognize the differentials that may be already in place? How do we name the inequities and decenter the assumptions and categories that may be assumed by students who identify with “majority” traditions in a given context?

¹³ See Pew Research Center, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” May 12, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>.

¹⁴ Constructions of identity as multiple and hybrid are found in many fields. I am particularly influenced on this point by postcolonial scholars such as Homi Bhabha, R. S. Sugirtharajah, and Kwok Pui-Lan. An additional resource on this question is from Christian theologian Jeannine Hill Fletcher, who focuses on feminist thought and religious hybridity in “Shifting Identity: The Contribution of Feminist Thought to Theologies of Religious Pluralism,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 19:2 (Fall 2003): 5-24.

¹⁵ Jeannine Hill Fletcher, “Constructing Religious Identity in a Cosmopolitan World: The Theo-Politics of Interfaith Work,” *The Journal of Interreligious Studies* 15 (Fall 2014): 47-54.

A conceptual reminder that has proven helpful in my work with students is gleaned from the work of womanist ethicist Emilie Townes, who writes of a fantastic hegemonic imagination that “helps to hold systematic, structural evil in place,” impacting and reifying our everyday social and political structures.¹⁶ The histories and memories of our societies (or religious traditions, one might argue) impact the hegemonies that are constructed and to which we assent, collectively and individually. These hegemonies—or dominating, pervasive ideas—guide our perceptions of others and can create caricatures and stereotypes of those who are marginalized by the hegemonic system at play. The stereotypes call for an identity performance that is socially acceptable and ultimately affect the way we relate to, dominate, or subjugate both others and ourselves, with the hegemonic construction as the standard. Townes writes:

The fantastic hegemonic imagination is deep within us and none of us can escape its influence by simply wishing to do so or thinking that our ontological perch exempts us from its spuming oppressive hierarchies. These hierarchies of age, class, gender, sexual orientation, race, and on and on are held in place by violence, fear, ignorance, acquiescence. The endgame is to win and win it all—status, influence, place, creation.¹⁷

The fantastic hegemonic imagination is deeply critical and offers us—chaplains, students, scholars—a clear reminder of what is considered intelligible in settings that operate according to representation. This occurs, for instance, when religious traditions with more representation (as well as socio-historical dominance, acceptability, desirability, or currency) have the power to construct or demand how those from “other” or “minority” traditions must perform and represent both themselves and their traditions. This happens most often, in my experience, when a student, chaplain, or other participant must perform a *perceived identity of their tradition* in order to be seen as legitimately representing it by those who stand outside. Wholeness and multiplicity are essentially impossible with the fantastic hegemonic imagination at work: Christian students must hold beliefs that fit orthodox doctrines about the person of Jesus Christ, Muslim students must pray five times a day and wear garments appropriate to their gender performance, and all students must belong to *one* tradition since the particular beliefs of many traditions are assumed to be, ultimately, antithetical to one another.

Further Observations

Feminist and womanist methodological and theological lineages, then, have increased my awareness of what is literally happening when we come together across and between our traditions. The concepts above—awareness of patriarchy, egalitarian relations, decentered inclusivity, consciousness of privilege, self-naming, and the possibility of hegemony in performances of religious identity—describe realities of which, in my experience, we must be aware when engaging in multifaith chaplaincy work if we are to tend to the subtleties of student wholeness and well-being. The observations below, though by no means comprehensive, illuminate what I see as the current critical edges of multifaith chaplaincy work and interfaith praxis, though I believe they could also apply in settings beyond colleges and universities.

First, by and large *Abrahamic traditions are far more represented* than other traditions, at least in

¹⁶ Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

interfaith contexts in the United States, and this can often lead to greater emphasis on—and privileging of—language, concepts, and assumptions from these traditions.¹⁸ This privilege, in my experience, offers more immediate access to students whose traditions hold a high view of sacred text(s) and the declaration of a singular deity (or a deity at all, for that matter). This is not to say that only Christian, Muslim, or Jewish students are active in campus interfaith programs, but that there are fewer students from so-called “minority” traditions who participate. The reasons for this could be multiple, with the simplest explanation being the much smaller numbers of students from, for example, Pagan traditions than those from more culturally prevalent traditions like Christianity.¹⁹ Yet even if we can say that the root of this unbalanced representation is purely numbers (i.e., that in North American contexts there are just more Christians, Jews, and Muslims who participate in these settings), what is engendered with this reality? What is the logical end for interfaith dialogue and other kinds of programming? This brings us back to the need for a decentered inclusivity and the necessary project of creating welcoming spaces that are attentive to the variety of preferences concerning the language, physical layout, and communal food choices of interfaith programs—and even the times at which they meet—with the hope that the presence of more voices is a good thing for all.

A second observation is that *it is rare for certain intersectional issues and identities to openly surface in interfaith encounters*, at least when we speak of forms of interfaith dialogue and activism that focus on bringing together *leaders* from various traditions. My experience has primarily centered on LGBTQ issues and identities in interfaith contexts; therefore, this is the intersectional locus that informs my observation. Inattention to, or exclusion of, LGBTQ concerns can be attributed to both the perception and the reality that religious traditions have different stances on LGBTQ issues. Essentially, these topics are deemed too “indecent”²⁰ for groups that are trying to come together despite perceived deep differences that could cause conflicts and disagreements, and ultimately failure of the program.²¹ For, if dialogue is focused on what we have in common through and amidst our differences (which many interfaith organizations explicitly state in their missions/purposes), then it logically follows that many controversial topics are best avoided in order to bring everyone to the table. However, when intersections of identity are precluded from being present in an interfaith encounter, then we must ask ourselves: to what end is a dialogue or program intended? Are we

¹⁸ Recent findings from the Interfaith Diversity Experiences & Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS), a project of Interfaith Youth Core and researchers from North Carolina State University and the Ohio State University, suggest that there is a distinction among students’ appreciative attitudes toward particular traditions. “Emerging Interfaith Trends,” <https://www.ifyc.org/resources/emerging-interfaith-trends-report>. With these findings in mind, and in regard to Abrahamic traditions, it must be articulated that Christian and Jewish identities may have a higher appreciation than Muslim identities, which would further distinguish how certain aspects of Abrahamic privilege affect participants differently based on tradition/affiliation.

¹⁹ Though numbers will vary from institution to institution, it is helpful to refer again to research from the Pew Research Center. See “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” May 12, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape>.

²⁰ See Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

²¹ Several years ago, as I was gathering information about citywide resources for my students, I contacted a facilitator for a certain interfaith group to ask some questions about the format of their meetings before recommending their programs to anyone. Because I was working with students who identified as queer or gender-nonconforming, I asked explicitly how the group dealt with these concerns and issues in their dialogues. The facilitator’s response was that those issues are peripheral to the group’s mission of bringing together people from Abrahamic traditions; and, even more than peripheral, these particular issues could inject conflict and disagreement into the budding relationships among the participants. I was told that students were welcome to attend but not to focus on their intersectionalities (pertaining to gender and sexuality) in the group’s dialogues and other programs.

hoping for a simplistic unity that brings representatives of different traditions together, or for a deeper solidarity that holds the disagreements, tensions, and pluralities of identities and traditions without requiring that they be reconciled?

A third observation is context-specific, related to a particular interfaith leadership development program that I advised in which fifteen to twenty graduate and undergraduate students participated. Over the course of time, I noticed that there were a number of students who identified as LGBTQ or as religious hybrids (and at least one participant who identified as both queer and religiously hybrid). Over time and as individuals in the group became more open in dialogues, I noticed that *the LGBTQ students were positively defining their sexual/gender identities as fluid rather than stable, while the religious hybrids were negatively defining their religious identities as fluid rather than stable*. That is, fluidity around sexuality and gender identity was being expressed positively, while with regard to religious identity, fluidity was initially expressed as a negative quality. This phenomenon presented itself with students who identified themselves multiply across traditional bounds and/or outside Abrahamic traditions (for instance, Hindu-Buddhist or Jain-Hindu).

The work of Catherine Cornille has been useful in delineating how and why religious hybridity and multiple religious belonging can be troubling in interfaith contexts, and she has written about whether it is theoretically possible and coherent for an individual to belong to more than one tradition.²² Multiple religious belonging, more than any other phenomenological reality in interfaith contexts, questions the problem of representation by revealing that identities do not have strict, neat bounds. And, more controversially, perhaps traditions themselves are more porous than an interfaith banner with one symbol for each tradition might imply or suggest. Is it the fantastic hegemonic imagination of interfaith engagement in recent decades in Western contexts that assumes or requires its participants to identify with one tradition in order to be deemed internally coherent as individuals and in relation to monolithic interpretations of religious traditions and communities?

Because of my experiences as a queer person, chaplain, and feminist, then, these observations have helped me begin to ask whether there could be any integral connections between frameworks for negotiating fluid identities (such as what emerges in queer theory and lived experiences) that would empower religious hybrids to positively negotiate their identities in an interfaith context. Moreover, in regard to the practices of interfaith engagement, my questions center on whether such a model or framework could provide a necessary critique of, and remedy for, issues related to representation, privilege, and power, and could catalyze our imagining of more holistic ways of being present and open to the multiplicity and internal plurality of ourselves and others.

Critical Edge? Queer Identities and Multiple Religious Belonging

Intersectionality and the possibilities of new frameworks for self and for community do and could have a far-reaching effect on many facets of our identities, namely, race, ethnicity, ability, age, socio-economic location, immigration status, and on and on. I focus here on a critical edge of queer

²² Catherine Cornille, “Introduction: The Dynamics of Multiple Belonging,” in Catherine Cornille, ed., *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2002): 1-6. For a student perspective on this phenomenon, see Jem Jebbia, “Coming Together 6: Finding Common Ground Amidst Diverse Religious and Spiritual Traditions,” *Huffington Post*, updated May 3, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jem-jebbia/coming-together-6-finding_b_2803497.html. Jebbia’s blog post is a reflection on the sixth Coming Together conference (tri-annual gatherings hosted by ACURA institutions) held February 14–17, 2013 at the University of Chicago.

frameworks for identity and multiple religious belonging/religious hybridity because, in my experience, these were the primary issues that continued to surface in the last few years with the individuals and groups of students that I advised.²³ The lived experiences of LGBTQ students for negotiating identities—identities that are increasingly considered fluid and potentially multiple rather than singular and stable—could provide a model for positively articulating internal plurality when it comes to religious hybridity and multiple religious belonging in interfaith contexts.²⁴

Following this line of thought may be one promising pathway for continuing to establish and imagine ethical methods and practices in multifaith engagement, which include the following:

1. A *decentered inclusivity* that is not entirely dependent upon the politics of representation and performances of normative religious identity to produce successful interfaith engagement and programs
2. A *remedy for Abrahamic privilege*, which sometimes manifests as a desire for the concept of oneness (perhaps unity) to emerge in practice, representation, and performances of religious identity
3. A rendering of *theoretical and philosophical coherence* to religious hybridity/multiple religious belonging, such that chaplaincy programs and scholarly work as a whole accept the reality, validity, and sustainability of these identities²⁵

These critical edges and lines of thought are named with the hope that theology and theory can inform our interfaith praxis, and that the praxis itself—multifaith and interfaith experiences and encounters—can also inform our theories of wholeness and well-being.

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²³ Jeannine Hill Fletcher astutely points out that, though her focus is naming and deconstructing white supremacy in interfaith contexts, there are multiple intersectionalities that call for our attention. "Constructing Religious Identity," 52.

²⁴ I will explore the conversation between queer theoretical frameworks for identity and multiple religious belonging/religious hybridity in a forthcoming presentation for the Interreligious and Interfaith Studies program unit at the 2016 AAR annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas. This article will be published sometime after the meeting.

²⁵ For a discussion of the perceived problems related to philosophical, theoretical, and/or theological coherence and multiple religious belonging, see Catherine Cornille, "Multiple Religious Belonging," in David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt, and David Thomas, eds., *Understanding Interreligious Relations* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013): 324-340.