The perspectives of Germans and Czechs regarding the term Christian

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by

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The Europeans’ perspectives on the term Christian and Christians’ influence in European society are topics that have not been critically researched. Past studies have analyzed the religious atmosphere in general, but have not focused explicitly on the Christian aspect, especially on how Europeans view Christians.

This study attempts to shed light on the topic of Christianity in Europe through a series of face-to-face interviews with Germans and Czechs. Two hypotheses are tested, the first stating that more Germans than Czechs will have an accurate conception of the term Christian, based on the definition given in the study. Despite the percentages in the analysis, this hypothesis cannot be confirmed due to the small and uneven sample size of the Czechs compared to the Germans. The second hypothesis states that a greater percentage of Germans will consider themselves to be Christians than Czechs. The results confirm the second hypothesis; however, generalizations should not be made to the German and Czech populations until larger scale studies are conducted.

The significance of the study is in the comments made by the participants and how their perspectives correlate to the historical, social and political backgrounds of their respective countries. Christian educators and missionaries can also gain understanding about the outlooks and beliefs of Germans and Czechs in order to more effectively communicate with Europeans about Christianity.
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Chapter I:
Introduction

The term Christian is used in a variety of contexts in present-day society. When it comes to defining the word, a multitude of descriptions prevails, which may differ depending on where it is used geographically. A definition for this term is essential for understanding how citizens of Germany and the Czech Republic view those who call themselves Christians. The people of these countries differ in their historical and social experiences with Christianity, which inevitably influence their present-day approach to the religion and their views of its followers. The purpose of this study is to record and analyze the ways Czechs and Germans define the term Christian and feel towards Christians. The hope is that it can serve as a stepping stone for future research that would seek to expand on these perspectives. While this is the primary purpose, the results would also be of interest to missionaries in these countries who wish to better understand how to reach out to the Germans and Czechs around them.

In the Western Hemisphere—including primarily America and Western and Central Europe—Christian values long ago laid the foundations of modern morals and ethics (Dawson, 1998). In a European society where people are turning away from their religious heritage, it is important to look at how the actions of Christians, especially in this century, have influenced and continue to influence the way people currently view the members of this major religion.
Definition of Terms

Before going further, a denotative definition of Christian must be established. Based on recurring themes from different sources (American Heritage Dictionary; Encyclopædia Britannica; Nardo, 1999; The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary; World Christian Encyclopedia), a definition that is inclusive of Protestant, Anglican and Roman Catholic denominations is “followers who profess belief in Jesus as Christ or [one who] follows the religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus” (Encyclopædia Britannica). In addition, the Apostles’ Creed provides “a summary of what the early church believed about Christ amid all the variety of its expression and formulation” (Encyclopædia Britannica). The creed is now a primary source for citing the most fundamental beliefs of a Christian, and so its tenets are included in the definition. In it, Jesus is proclaimed as “[God’s] only Son, our Lord,” who died and rose again for the “forgiveness of sins and…the life everlasting.” One scholar pointed out that “the vast majority of Christians focus their faith in Jesus Christ as someone who is also a present reality” (Nardo, 1999), meaning that he not only existed in history but since rising from the dead, is alive today, “and sitteth on the right hand of God Almighty” (Apostles’ Creed). In summary and for the purpose of this research study, the term Christian refers to someone who is a follower of Christ. This means that one believes he is the Son of God; thus, what he spoke was the truth from God and is applicable to our lives as humans.

It seems no recent literature on the condition of Europe is without some comment about the changing ideologies of its citizens. The term that continually appears in reference to these morphing ideologies is secularization. The definitions for this term, as
well as its relevancy to the condition of Europe, vary from scholar to scholar. In an essay from the 1930s, Catholic historian Christopher Dawson touched on the concept of secularization in Europe. He noted the disappearance of Christianity in the 20th century, referring to modern conceptions of Christianity as “a thing of the past,” because “modern life...deals with facts, while Christianity deals with unproved and incomprehensible dogmas” (p. 119). However, these dogmas are what lie at the foundations of Western European values, morals and social ideals (p. 118). The term secular, as defined by the Random House Webster’s Dictionary 3rd Edition, means, “(1) Of worldly or nonreligious things or subjects; temporal. (2) Not relating to or concerned with religion” (1998). The process of secularization is defined as “(1) To make secular. (2) To transfer from ecclesiastical to civil possession or use.” By definition, then, secularization attempts to overturn all of the basic principles under which Western Europe has been governed and controlled, or at least to modify them to a nonreligious and more self-focused ideology. It is a decisive process of turning away from religion; hence, a “reason for religious disintegration” (Davie, 2000). In its place emerges a greater focus on using the knowledge and understanding of oneself to find answers, rather than relying on the wisdom of an all-knowing God. This reflects the concept of individualism, which states that “the interests of the individual are or ought to be ethically paramount” and “the conception that all values, rights, and duties originate in individuals” (Merriam-Webster, 2004).

While one may argue that Christianity is inherently self-focused, in that it focuses on the eternal salvation of the individual at the expense of other human relationships, this
argument fails to grasp the real meaning of Christianity. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ and the author of Philippians, declared, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (2:3-5). This centers the individual’s purpose in life on following Jesus Christ’s teachings. By doing so, one focuses on the needs of others rather than choosing to live by one’s own philosophies and desires.

To explain the impact of secularization on religion, Steve Bruce argues that “individualism threatened the communal basis of religious belief and behavior, while rationality removed many of the purposes of religion and rendered many of its beliefs implausible” (as cited in Davie, p. 24). Yet this still does not completely explain the idea of secularization. Lucian Hölscher offers a historical perspective on it:

Starting from the positive origins of the concept, a small group of liberal Protestants used the term for the idea of bringing together the opposing concepts of God and world, of church and society, of the holy and the mundane...Protestant theologians saw the vision of a religiously-inspired secular society—not based on church as an institutional framework but on the religious conscience of the Christians themselves. (2003, p. 185)

Callum Brown gives a personified interpretation of the word, contending that “secularization fillets the religious spine out of the body of human culture” (as cited in McLeod & Ustorf, 2003). In consideration of this multitude of definitions and for the benefit of the study, the researcher presumes that the process of secularization is occurring, at least in Western and Central Europe. A composite definition interprets secularization as a turn from religious institutions and doctrines for answers toward
nonreligious sources, which may include searching within oneself for these answers. The problem with turning away from religious institutions and the process of secularization is that nothing exists to take the place of a spiritual community, offered by the church. Thus, the youth of this generation who have turned away end up feeling alone and searching for unknown meaning in life. According to Smith, one Czech student, who like many, was highly influenced by the atheistic climate of the country, commented on religion: “With all of its connections to world view and meaning of life, [it] seems to be so important and fruitful, that I wonder how I could have neglected it so far” (2001).

This word atheism was referred to frequently by Czech participants in the study. Peter Sugar defined it as simply the “denial of existence of God” (1999) whereas Hölscher contended, “Today the meaning of [atheism] is ambiguous: on the one hand it is used to denote those who do not believe in God, but on the other it is used for a certain form of positive creed or philosophical attitude” (p. 194). Random House agrees with Sugar’s definition, but wherever the connotative meaning lies, this concept was highly encouraged by the Communist government in both the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany) and the Czech Republic.

Intent of Study

Now that the key terms in the study are defined, the research question is this:

*RQ: What are some of the current perspectives of Germans and Czechs with regard to the term Christian?*

In order to answer this question, the researcher conducted interviews in Germany, the Czech Republic and the United States, relying on contacts in each country to help acquire research participants, and asked participants about their understanding of the term
Christian as well as whether or not they would identify themselves as one. Participants were also asked about the influence of Christians in a social setting, resulting in a variety of responses. (See Appendices A and B)

The histories of Germany and the Czech Republic are very different, as well as their experiences with Christianity. Prior research shows that Germans have a history more involved and attached to Christianity than do Czechs (Greeley, 2000), dating back to the influences of Martin Luther and John Calvin during the Reformation. Although the Czechs faced Catholic domination during their unity with Slovakia (Olson, 1996), in this century they have been much more influenced by the doctrines of communism. Based on the events of recent history, the following hypothesis is offered:

\[ H1: \text{More Germans will have an accurate conception of the term Christian, as defined in this study, than will Czechs.} \]

The second hypothesis also relates to the social and religious history of the two countries. Since the fall of communism in the Czech Republic in 1989, the country’s government has become a republic and no longer demands that its citizens follow one ideology. When Germany split after World War II, western Germany did not go through the same type of drastic cultural changes that its neighboring eastern half endured. This study does not distinguish between citizens living in western or eastern Germany. Even if it had, many of the participants interviewed in the former GDR were in their twenties and not old enough to have grown up understanding the Communist doctrines that existed in the Soviet Union. Also, considering the fact that most German participants were from western Germany, the second hypothesis argues that:
**H2**: A greater percentage of Germans will consider themselves to be Christians, as defined in this study, than will Czechs.

This study will proceed to describe the research method, discuss the data collection instruments, and then go on to provide the data collected as well as an analysis of the results. It will end with a discussion of the implication of the data and focus on the future research to be done.
Chapter II:
Literature Review

This chapter describes and outlines the literature and previous studies that are relevant to the research question and testing the hypotheses. It is organized into four sections: (1) the role of secularization in describing the religious trends of Europe, (2) the factors leading to Germany’s generally indifferent attitude towards religious values, (3) the influence of communism on the Czech citizens’ view of religion, and (4) the differences between the present approach to the research and previous studies.

The Role of Secularization

The exact beginning of the process of secularization is much debated. Some, including Hölscher, say religion has been declining for over a century, while others cite the 1960s as the distinct period when value changes caused a shift in Europeans away from institutional support and towards personal and societal development (Gabriel, 1995; Brown, 2003). From 1968-1973, the number of people who attended worship regularly in Germany decreased by one-third and the number of people leaving the church increased severalfold (Gabriel, 1995). Based on this decrease in church attendance, the responses from survey participants after this decade should be different from respondents of any other previously-gathered statistics. Harding, et. al. maintained this in his analysis of the European Values Study (EVS) of 1981, in which he reported that “markedly lower
church attendance, institutional attachment, and adherence to traditional beliefs is found in younger compared with older respondents” (as cited in Davie, 1994). Gabriel also noted from the same study that the most prevalent changes in values were in post-war generations (1995).

However, sociologist Andrew Greeley understood the role of secularization differently when he presented results from the EVS of 1981 and 1990, and the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), conducted in 1991 and 1998. Before examining Greeley’s comments one should understand the intentions of these studies. The EVS observed the current trend in European human values in a variety of contexts and asked to what degree these values are changing (Davie, p. 54). The ISSP was a much more extensive study—each involved country committed to obtaining at least 1,000 participants—but limited by the 15-minute module through which it was distributed (Greeley, xiii). Both studies reveal advantages and limitations to survey methodology, one downfall being that collection of the data was derived from a quantitative approach. Brown believes this is problematic because statistics on religion measure formal actions of people (p. 41) and whether these fit into a religious or non-religious domain of behavior. Even the measurements of beliefs rather than formal procedures or rituals (such as baptism or going to church) require a binary structure of inquiry (p. 42) in order to be tallied in a reasonable amount of time. These factors make analyzing the results of studies such as the EVS and ISSP more contradictory and complex (Davie, p. 55) than clear-cut for easy examination.
Therefore, Greeley was not wrong, per se, when he observed the trend in secularization from a different viewpoint (here, he discusses the Czech Republic and Slovakia in particular):

Did socialism lead to secularization in either country? One suspects only marginally. Those who were Catholic in [the Czech Republic and Slovakia] remained Catholic. Those who were atheists or agnostics...remained atheists. (2003)

Davie also scrutinized the EVS and came to a somewhat different conclusion; that some indicators of religiosity on the survey showed an “undeniable degree of secularization throughout Western Europe” while others pointed to the continuance of certain religious beliefs (1994).

An important reason for focusing on secularization is the frequent appearance of the term in literature written about the modernization of society, especially that of Europe. Understanding the importance and meaning of this concept leads to future studies on the religious attitudes and perspectives in Europe and America with regard to secularization.

*Germany’s indifferent attitude towards religion*

Having discussed the enduring secularized society in Europe, Germany is a perfect example of one country whose population seems to adhere to the idea. The concept of a Christian society in Germany is not altogether inaccurate; just dependent upon how one looks at the numbers. According to Gabriel, 51 out of 61 million citizens living in the area formally constituting the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany) are members of the Protestant or Roman Catholic Church. However, he went on to say that among the generations emerging after World War II (those born after
“there has come to be...a new relationship to established religion...markedly different from the relationship the older generations had” (p. 115). After the great decline in church membership in the late 1960s in Germany, one reason for the persistence of these large numbers still claiming ties to the church might be due to formality. Greeley expressed this notion as follows:

In some countries—Germany for example—religious affiliation is a formality that seems to many to be required for participation in civic life. You pay your church tax so that when you marry, when you have children, and when you die, the rituals will be performed without undue difficulty. (p. 55)

In this context, religion or religious affiliation is not an integral part of one’s everyday thinking but rather another demographic that describes a person. It is not personal—only official.

Even with the large percentage of western Germans claiming affiliation, the numbers are still dropping. The reasons for this could be many; for example, one might be the strong affiliation of the Church with the political system. Freedom of religion is technically granted in Article 4 of the Basic Law, Germany’s Constitution, established in the Federal Republic in 1949; however, “the churches enjoy a special legal status as corporate bodies” (Country Studies US), giving them precedence over the law. In 1948, when post-war Germany was struggling to regain governmental stability, the Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union were formed on the basis of an inclination towards “Christian socialism” (Turner, 1992). Today the CDU/CSU, as it is referred to, is still one of the primary political parties in Germany, showing the unmistakable relationship of the Church to the political system. Although an association in itself is not
necessarily negative, many Germans recall the allegiance of the Roman Catholic Church to the Nazi regime beginning in 1933. Through this Concordat, the Vatican pledged that its Roman Catholic clergy would refrain from political activity and the Nazis would control church-state relations. Unfortunately the consequences of the Concordat were underestimated by the Catholic church, resulting in the strengthening of the Nazi regime through the aid of the Church. Nevertheless, after the war ended, the Church in the Federal Republic enjoyed a position of prominence and prestige (Gabriel, p. 114) in the 1950s and early 1960s:

Church taxes were collected by the state, large segments of the state school system were denominational in character, church-controlled religious education was a compulsory subject in every school, and the social work carried out by the churches received financial support from the state. (p. 114)

So in theory, constitutional separation of church and state exists in Germany, but church financing complicates and virtually negates this separation (Country Studies US). This church tax is worthy to be mentioned as a reason for present-day disaffiliation from Protestant and Catholic churches. Established by Hitler through the Concordat in order to silence the Roman Catholic Church on the issue of the Jews, it required all members of Protestant or Catholic churches to pay a yearly tax. Although the Nazi regime has disappeared, the church tax has not, requiring all Protestant Catholic Church members to pay an eight to nine percent surcharge of their income tax paid (Country Studies US). Thus, it serves as a barrier that dissuades many German citizens from wishing to become a part of a church community. Dawson recognized the ploy of the Nazis “to borrow Christianity’s salvific message and transform it into a stage along the road to Aryan
domination” (p. x), to which he had to say, “Nothing could be more fatal to the spirit of Christianity than a return to Christianity for political reasons” (p. 131). Perhaps this is why younger generations show more detachment to religion in studies than their older counterparts. In a 1992 poll, approximately 42 percent of those queried stated that the church tax was “much too high”; 64 percent favored abolishing the tax and giving of their own accord (Country Studies US).

According to Köcher, 52% of the younger generation (ages 18-29) in the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany) in 1989 described their attitude towards faith with statements such as, “Faith does not mean anything to me. I have no need for religion” (Gabriel, p. 124). In the 1990s, Country Studies US reported about Christianity in reunited Germany:

Attitudinal differences separate many younger Germans with humanistic values (concern for the environment, the rights of women and minorities, and peace and disarmament issues) from an older generation who hold traditional religious values. Many others of the postwar generations have accepted the values of popular culture and consumerism and have left the churches because they no longer seem significant. Millions of Germans of all ages, however, continue to profess a religion for a variety of reasons, among them strong religious beliefs, social pressure to conform, preservation of educational and employment opportunities, support for essential church social-welfare activities, and (in the western Länder) the enduring appeal of Christian rituals surrounding baptism, marriage, and burial.

This is not to say that Christians or people with religious values cannot also value humanistic concerns. However, the emphasis of the report is that the younger generation is focusing more exclusively on humanistic concerns without regard for religious values. If they are maintaining these values, it seems that many reasons come from ulterior
motives. From this reasoning, it is not surprising to learn that from 1981 to 1998, belief in God in the FRG decreased from 80% to 62% (Greeley, 2003, p. 8).

In view of the decline and disinterest in religion and specifically Christianity in Germany over the past twenty years, the statistics would seem disheartening to strong Christians in the country who would wish to reach out to their fellow Germans, or foreign Christian missionaries who wish to do likewise. However, Greeley offered some hope on the situation when he said there is “a need…for religion, relating especially to a yearning for meaning and belonging” (p. xiv). Altes also hopes for the younger generations because “people are losing faith in the illusions of consumerism” (1999) and thus will begin looking elsewhere for change and satisfaction. The need to understand what direction these youth are turning ideologically in order to share the Gospel effectively is another reason for identifying their perspectives on Christians. The same is true for the Czechs; their perspective—tainted by communism—needs to be identified if Christians or other religious groups wish to effectively minister to them.

Communism’s effect on how Czechs view religion

A much longer telescope is required to see how history has so greatly impacted the outlook of Czechs on religion. Results from the ISSP study in 1998 indicated that only in the Czech Republic and former GDR was there a less than majority belief in God (46% in the C.R.; 25% in the GDR). Atheism stood at 20% in the Czech Republic at this time. According to Greeley, the reason for this significant difference in beliefs (compared to all of the rest of Central and Western Europe, including the FRG, that recorded a 65% belief in God and 11% Atheist response [p. 2]) comes from “a long
tradition of anti-religious sentiment, represented by the ‘Free Thinkers’” rather than the use of socialist pressure (p. 4). Even before the half-century-long era of Communist rule in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the country as a whole has notoriously mistrusted the institution of the Church—particularly the Roman Catholic Church—and chose the route of atheism.

One reason for the Czech citizens’ disinclination towards Christianity relates to their long-past but not-forgotten history in the 15th century. Olson described the history’s influence by saying, “As a man’s personal past shapes his present character and identity, so the history of the Czech peoples has left its indelible imprint on the modern Czech.” When the glory days of the social revolution under the Hussite King George of Podébrady ended in defeat in the 15th century, the Counter Reformation turned Czech lands into Roman Catholic domains (Sugar, p. 54). Thus, the success of the Catholic Church rested on the demise of the Czech people’s era of greatest triumph and personal comfort. It is understandable, then, why these proud people would not welcome Catholicism into their culture, even centuries later. Greeley added that the Catholic Hapsburg Monarchy, which extended into the 19th century, might have played a negative role in the decision of Czechs and Slovaks to choose non-belief over Protestantism and Catholicism (p. 131). These factors confirm that “disaffiliation from the church in the Czech Republic is...a historic phenomenon and not a recent one” (p. 57).

The entry of the Communist party into the Czech lands did nothing to help the religious situation in the country; as history had shown, it made it much worse. Communism refused to integrate religion ideologically into its system of government—
“it was the only aspect of society in this position” (Michel, 1994)—because “religion demands complete acceptance of an absolute ‘truth’” (Sugar, p. 44). Since Communism claimed to have the absolute “truth,” religious institutions were the first and most necessary establishments in society to go. Sugar emphasizes that Communist regimes were not anti-religion but rather anti-church, due to the threat the churches represented. However, if the Czech people viewed the Church as simply another institution that threatened to oppress them, even after the Communist era ended, then their alternative to turning to the Church for answers, support and stability was to turn to themselves or elsewhere. “In short,” said professor Richard Smith, “the Czech Republic is a nation in search of its soul” (2001).

Since it was the older generations who most deeply felt the spurn of Communism, then it could be their passing of the torch of atheism, so to speak, that has kept the ideology prominent today. The increasing response of “no religious affiliation” by Czechs (and to a lesser degree, Slovaks) in the ISSP 1998 study cannot be benchmarked by the 1991 study because they were not included (Greeley, p. 130). Greeley asks, “To what extent are these phenomena the result of the decline of Socialism and to what extent do they represent continuity with the past?” to which the answer remains ambiguous.

Not all of the research and personal insights support the conclusions of Greeley, Michel and others. Some report a revival in the search for faith in the form of religion. Although Czechs’ past experiences with religion have been scarring, Smith concluded this from his interactions with university students that, “despite the rampant mistrust and skepticism that threatens to corrode Czech society...there remains a guarded openness to
religious ethics, spirituality, and to their indigenous religious heritage” (p. 36).

According to Smith’s article, many students have recently questioned the ability of atheism’s propositions, or their new-found freedom from communism, to answer their questions about life and meaning. One student stated, “I am not sure whether this absolute freedom is not just a sad call for help...We are fumbling in a darkness...even though we have the freedom to discover whatever we want to. Is there something to live for?”

When communism was eradicated in the early 1990s, a wave of missionaries entered the country to attempt to convert Czechs to Christianity, passing out tracts and spreading the Gospel door-to-door. Gary Rickard, a Christian missionary in the Czech Republic, attested that these actions have added to the negative connotation of the word Christian for most people, or allowed for neutrality at best (2003). However, as Smith heard in his conversations with students, some expressed the outlook that “Christianity should definitely play a role in the Czech Republic...in education and also in politics” (p. 35).

By glancing at the past events of the Czech Republic, one observes a history of foreign absolutism under Roman Catholic, Nazi and Communist control (Smith, p. 35), which has closed off most citizens to the influence of what they view as another institution: religion. However, as evidenced by the reports of Christian missionaries in the Czech Republic, a new openness to religious thinking has developed since the end of the Communist era. This observation of Smith has not been scrutinized by current research, which affords room for expansive research on the idea. The goal of the Czech
portion of this study is to attain some understanding of what Czechs know and think about Christians, and how they view themselves in light of a religious affiliation.

Differences of this study

While these two studies have enormous sample sizes and are expansive in both breadth and depth of questioning, neither matches exactly the focus of this study. There are three major differences in the format and content of this study as compared with previous research conducted on European religious values and perspectives.

Difference 1: The Christian perspective. The first difference results from some puzzlement about the EVS and ISSP projects. These surveys asked questions about the respondent’s belief in almost every aspect of the Christian faith—a God, a soul, sin, life after death, heaven, the devil, hell, and a personal God. Only two items out of a list of ten could not be considered directly Biblical: these are the belief in re-incarnation and the belief in a spirit or life force (Davie, 1994). Yet even in the Christian faith there exists a Holy Spirit as part of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) (Matthew 28:19), so this item could be considered as one related to Christian doctrines. However, the survey had only one mention of the word Christ, wherein the ISSP question asked if the respondent had ever had been “born again” or had a “born again” experience in which, at a turning point, they committed their life to Christ.

If these surveys barely mention the person of Jesus Christ, who is the basis for the Christian faith (Altes, 1999), then they are not Christian at all but rather an overview of all religious tenets in Europe. This is, in fact, what the EVS was. The inclusion of so many Christian principles in the content of the survey would suggest that the survey asks
about religion from a Christian perspective; however this is merely a subjective viewpoint. Since the focus of this study is explicitly Christian, it was pertinent for the researcher to include a question about the participants’ view on the person of Jesus Christ.

Difference 2: Focus on others, not self. The second difference from past studies is the focus of the questions being asked by the researcher. Whereas the EVS and ISSP projects focused on the respondents’ intrapersonal, or self-inherent, beliefs on religion and its principles, this study focuses on the interpersonal perspectives of two diverse groups of Europeans, namely Germans and Czechs. It attempts to unveil how these two nationalities view Christians, while focusing less on the religious beliefs of the participants themselves.

Difference 3: Collection format. The third difference is in the method of data collection. No other study uncovered by the researcher used the format of interviews with open-ended questions for obtaining responses from participants, perhaps due to the extended amount of time and analysis that each set of data requires. The intent of this method is to allow for in-depth and wide-ranging answers in response to relatively wide-open questions, such as, “How would you define a Christian?” (See Appendix A) Keeping these differences in mind, this study marks the entry way for further investigation by providing some responses about Christianity from a handful of Czechs and Germans.

Summary
The German portion of the study offers the same questions to participants but, as the hypotheses indicate, expects at least somewhat different responses. In this literature review, the relevant history leading up to the present-day religious situations in the Czech Republic and Germany has been revealed. How these historical and social factors play into the current perspectives of Czechs and Germans will be scrutinized in this study through interviews with a small sample size of citizens. Their responses will lay the groundwork for future studies to continue to understand the place of religion, particularly Christianity, in the Czech Republic and Germany today.
Chapter III:

Methods

Sample

The sample for the study consisted of fourteen citizens of Germany, eleven citizens of the Czech Republic and five German citizens or former citizens presently living in the United States. The age range of most Czech participants (N = 11; n = 5 women; n = 6 men) was between 18-30, with one male who was 40. The age range was estimated, because during the Czech portion of the interviewing process, the researcher did not ask all participants for their age. In Table 1 this estimation is indicated with a double asterisk (**). The age range for the German participants (N = 17; n = 8 women; n = 9 men) was 21-60, with most in their twenties.

Procedure

In order to locate Czech participants with whom to conduct interviews, the researcher went to a heavily-trafficked public square in central Prague and approached young people to ask for an interview for a university project that she was conducting in the United States. If they wished, the participants were given a typed document that explained the validity and purpose of the project and directed their questions to a phone number in the
### TABLE 3.1: German Participants Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Language of Interview</th>
<th>Location of Interview</th>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>English</td>
<td>Prague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Ilmenau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Ilmenau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Ilmenau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Ilmenau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Ilmenau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Ilmenau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G9</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Frankfurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Cologne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>German/English</td>
<td>Cologne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>German/English</td>
<td>Cologne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Frankfurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G14</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Oxford, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G15</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Oxford, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Oxford, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G17</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Oxford, OH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 3.2: Czech Participants Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Number*</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Language of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>18-19**</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25-30**</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21-24**</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*C1 dropped out of the study.

**The researcher did not inquire the ages of these participants; thus, a rough estimate was determined.
U.S. (See Appendix C) The researcher recorded by hand the participants’ responses in a notebook, numbering each participant in order of when they were interviewed (C1, C2, etc.). This was also done to ensure confidentiality for the participants. Only one participant (C1), approached in a restaurant, dropped out of the interview after she learned that the topic was about Christians, contending that, “I am not the right person to ask because I don’t believe in God.” Nine interviews were conducted in the English language and one in German. At the time that these Czech interviews were carried out, the researcher had not formally transcribed the interview questions into German. Therefore, the data from this Czech participant interviewed in German (C5) does not exactly match the interview question format of the other nine.

The interviews with the German participants were conducted in semi-secluded locations such as cafeterias, living rooms or empty classrooms in cities all over western and eastern Germany. The brother of the researcher helped to identify students at the Technische Universität Ilmenau (Technical University of Ilmenau) who were willing to participate in the study. Other participants were friends or acquaintances of the researcher, and 2 were interviewed in Prague at the same location as the Czech participants. All German interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder, with the researcher first requesting and recording verbal permission to use any or all parts of the participant’s interview in the analysis and results of the study. The researcher also took notes by hand during the interviews and numbered participants in the same format as the Czechs (G1, G2, etc.), ensuring confidentiality. No German participants declined to take part in the study, nor did any refuse to be voice-recorded. Thirteen of these interviews
were conducted in the English language and 4 were conducted in German, with a
formally-transcribed version of the interview questions.

Data Collection Instrument

As stated, the data collection instrument was a list of open- and closed-ended
questions about Christians, posed in face-to-face interview format. (See Appendices A
and B) The interview questions were determined based on the researcher’s interest in
identifying the current perspectives of Czechs and Germans with regard to Christians and
what influenced them to come to these understandings. Due to the open-ended format of
some questions, the researcher elaborated on some questions or asked additional ones not
in the set, if the participants’ responses suggested, in the researcher’s opinion, further
questioning. During the course of the Czech interviews, the researcher decided to include
the participant’s age as one of the first questions asked, which she continued to do for all
of the German interviews. This addition was based on results from surveys conducted by
the Allensbach Institute for Public Opinion Research (as cited in Gabriel, 1995), which
showed that major differences exist in religious beliefs, practices and affiliations in
Germany between these age groups: 16-29, 30-44, 45-59, and 60 or older.

The interview questions asked what the participants’ understanding of the term
Christian was, in order to determine what they believed it meant to be a Christian. Based
on the definition they gave, the researcher asked if they considered themselves a
Christian. The researcher desired this information to determine what characteristics and
beliefs the participant used to define a Christian. The other questions inquired if and how
Christians differ from people of other religions and what their influence is on the people
around them. This information was helpful in obtaining current perspectives on the perceived role or roles of Christians in society.

Qualifications of the applied method

Two major constraints on the study were time and the acquisition of participants. Because the researcher was only able to contact Germans over a ten-day period in the country and Czechs over a two-day period, not enough time was available for a pilot study. Thus, the data collection instrument was not tested in a pre-test for validity and reliability measures.

During the process of interviewing, the interview questions were edited in order to attain more useful and beneficial answers from the participants. The question, “What were your interactions with [a Christian(s)] like?” was deleted and the question, “Must a Christian also believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?” was added as the third question.

Interviewing the Czechs posed another unforeseen problem. One of the researcher’s friends in Prague warned that Czechs lead very private lives and are generally not open to talking about religion. Therefore, if the researcher were to ask to record the interview, some people may decide not to participate. Due to the concern of losing too many potential participants in the short amount of time allotted for interviewing, the researcher did not record or request to record any Czech interviews.

Other missing data in the Czech results are due to language barriers. Although all of the participants spoke English to an extent, some were far more fluent than others. Without an interpreter, the researcher could not restate the research questions in Czech.
This problem was not so determinative in Germany, given that the researcher’s ability to speak German made up for her participants’ lack of English comprehension.

Once the data was collected, the researcher tabulated the close-ended questions into percentages. (See Tables 4.1 and 4.2) In order to tabulate the responses to open-ended questions, the researcher categorized similar responses into groups. If the researcher perceived that a participant had the same intent in a response as another, their answers were combined. This method resulted in differing categories between the Czechs and Germans to the same questions. (See Charts 4.1 and 4.2)

Summary

By using face-to-face interviews as the data collection instrument, the researcher utilized a previously un-tested set of open- and close-ended questions that all related to Christians. The aim was to obtain current statistics on those who claim to know what a Christian is and if they view themselves as one. The open-ended questions allowed the researcher to probe for subjective definitions of a Christian and their influence on those they interact with. Although obtaining participants was not easy, the researcher was aided by a family member and friends throughout Germany and friends in Prague, Czech Republic. This convenience sample consisted primarily of adults in their twenties (mean age in Germany = 25.5, mean age in Czech Republic = 26.2) with an almost even number of males and females.

The next section scrutinizes the results of tabulation and presents some relevant comments that participants gave in response to open-ended questions. It also considers the research question and hypotheses in light of the collected data.
Chapter IV:

Analysis

The purpose of the study is to identify the current perspectives of Germans and Czechs with regard to the concept Christian. The results show that Germans and Czechs have different understandings of what it means to be a Christian as well as Christians’ influences on the German and Czech cultures. Both sets of informants identified some of the same primary tenets of Christianity, as defined by this study, but the less central concepts were different in each country. The unequal sample sizes in Germany and the Czech Republic, however, could have played a role in the expance and number of definitive tenets that participants gave.

The definitions that the Germans and Czechs gave, as well as where they placed themselves religiously, also agreed with the hypotheses. Both were supported in the results of the research: More Germans have an accurate (according to the definition in the Introduction) conception of the meaning of the term than do Czechs, and more Germans consider themselves to be Christians than Czechs. The statistics and categorical responses of participants demonstrate this in the following analysis.

German Responses

The number of participants who said they knew what a Christian is in the closed questions is much higher among Germans. Fourteen of 17 participants said “yes” to this question in Germany. In providing a definition for the term Christian in the open-ended
question, 64.71% of Germans said that believing that “Jesus Christ is the Son of God” was an important or definitive part of being a Christian. Fewer Germans (52.94%) mentioned “belief in God” as part of the definition of Christian. Believing in eternal life was the third most given answer in defining a Christian (41.48%). The other statements given by Germans were categorized into five aspects: Live like Bible instructs; Can live like Bible instructs if you want, but don't have to; Pray; Jesus Christ existed as a man, and Belong to a Christian community.

**TABLE 4.1: German responses to closed questions by number of participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Do you know what a Christian is?</th>
<th>Must a Christian also believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?</th>
<th>Would you call yourself a Christian?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When comparing Christians to people of other religions, 4 of 17 (23.53%) Germans said there was “no difference” between the two groups. Germans did see many differences, however; the most common being that Christians rely on a (single) God for guidance and strength (23.53% or 3 participants). Interestingly, 17.65% (2 participants) also stated that Christians differ because they don’t take their beliefs seriously in comparison to people of other religions. This response also appears in the answer to another question. 33.33% report that Christians not practicing their beliefs results in a negative influence on those with whom they interact.
That leads to the next question about the influence of Christians on those with whom they interact. Nine Germans (52.94%) said they have a positive influence while 6 (29.41%) said both (positive and negative). The problem with the “both” response was that 4 out of 9 Germans who answered “positive” gave conflicting answers by adding on a negative aspect. The most common was, “They have a positive influence today but not in the past” (33.33%).

Czech results in comparison
The responses from Czechs with regard to the concept of Christian varied in some ways from the Germans. As Hypothesis 1 predicts, Germans have a more accurate conception of the term Christian than Czechs. 77.78% of Czechs, or 7 out of 9, said they knew what a Christian is. However, in their explanation of the term, they emphasized more the “belief in God” aspect (66.67% or 6 out of 9) than the Germans (52.94% or 9 out of 17). 50% said that “Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” but some did not state that as part of their definition until after the question about Jesus Christ was posed. Thus, although percentage-wise more Czechs included Jesus Christ as part of their definition, in reality that is only 5 Czechs. Of the remaining 5, 4 were not asked (thus “not applicable”) and 1 said “no” to the question. Three of 10 Czechs included having eternal life in defining a Christian. Other inclusions in the definition, which differ from the Germans’ responses, are as follows: Have peace/inner happiness; have salvation through faith, and do good things.

Based on the small number of Czech participants responding to the question about Jesus Christ as the Son of God, Hypothesis 1 cannot be confirmed. Although the percentages (5 of 6 Czechs or 83.33% said “yes” whereas 13 of 17 Germans or 76.47% said “yes”) suggest that Hypothesis 1 is not confirmed, the actual number of participants in the Czech study is too small and uneven, compared to the German number, for an accurate confirmation of the hypothesis.

In answering the other open-ended questions, 3 out of 10 Czechs responded that Christians are no different than people of other religions. The highest response in the Czech Republic concerning the influence of Christians was both (negative and positive)
The biggest negative influencer was that Christians could be close-minded or disapproving (3 out of 4 of any “negative” responses). One person also added that “forcing people to convert” was negative, as was the involvement of politics in the (Catholic) Church.

**TABLE 4.2: Czech responses to closed questions by number of participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Do you know what a Christian is?</th>
<th>Must a Christian also believe that J.C. is the Son of God?*</th>
<th>Would you call yourself a Christian?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Four participants are not applicable, because they were not posed the question.

Evidence for the second hypothesis is present when comparing the participants’ claim of whether they call themselves a Christian or not. In the Czech Republic, the
number of “yes” responses was far less than in Germany. Only 14.29%, or 2 participants, said they were Christians in the Czech Republic. In Germany, the same measure was 52.94%, or 9 of 17. However, as with Hypothesis 1, the small and uneven sample size of the Czech participants must be considered. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is verified but the conclusions that one draws from it should be not be generalized until another evaluation is conducted with a larger sample size.

Summary

The data collected for this study from interviews with Germans and Czechs reveals that the two countries have somewhat different perspectives on Christians and their influence and role in society. One interesting finding is that the number of Germans who referred to themselves as Christians is not as high as past studies would suggest. One German participant said that “ninety percent of Germany is for living as Christians” (G10), but his statement is not supported by the responses of the other participants, which total just 9 out of 17 who call themselves Christian. Hypothesis 1 cannot be confirmed due to the inaccurate percentages when comparing actual numbers of Czech versus German participants. Although Germans offered more definitive tenets than Czechs for the definition of the term Christian, this could also be influenced by the uneven sample sizes and thus does not permit a confirmation or disconfirmation of the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2 was confirmed with more supporting evidence, yet the same problem of a small sample size of Czech participants only permits the conclusions to apply within the confines of this study. The other limitations and strengths of the study, as well as suggestions for future research, will be presented in the following section.
Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this study is primarily to uncover the current perspectives of Czechs and Germans with regard to Christians. Examining these views involved face-to-face interviews with study participants, during which they answered open- and close-ended questions about Christians, adding their own comments as well.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis intends to test the claim that more Germans have an accurate conception of what a Christian is than Czechs, based on the definition of the term Christian as stated in the introduction. This first hypothesis cannot be confirmed or disconfirmed due to the misleading percentages, which suggest that more Czechs than Germans identify Jesus Christ as the Son of God as part of their definition of a Christian. However, when comparing actual numbers of Czech versus German participants, more Germans than Czechs (9 compared to 5) include Jesus Christ as part of their definition. In addition, some participants did not include Jesus Christ in their definition until after the question about him was asked. This threat to validity caused by the researcher is another obstruction that stands in the way of a confirmation or disconfirmation of Hypothesis 1.

As for understanding the other foundational tenets of the Christian faith outlined in the Apostles’ Creed, neither Germans nor Czechs fully grasped these. However, both
groups responded with having “eternal life” as part of the definition of a Christian, which is the concluding sentence in the Apostles’ Creed. From this, one can see that both groups have at least a partial understanding of what it means to be a Christian, but neither could define it in more than basic terms.

**Hypothesis 2**

The second hypothesis states that a higher percentage of Germans will consider themselves to be “Christians” than will Czechs. The statistics from the analysis show that this hypothesis is confirmed. However, as is the case with Hypothesis 1, the small and uneven sample size of the Czechs compared to the Germans limits the conclusions from this Hypothesis to the participants in this study and not Germans and/or Czechs as a population.

If one were to speculate, however, a reason for the difference between the groups could be that in the Czech Republic, people are slow to return to religion since the end of the Communist era. The ideas about religion that were instilled in their parents by Communist schools and government could have rubbed off on the post-Communist generation. Thus, even if a person knew how to define a Christian, the opportunity for them to become one or learn more about the Christian faith would be more difficult than in Germany. A lack of Christian resources (i.e. youth groups, Bible studies, or Christian events) as well as lack of peer support could suspend one’s interest in Christianity. The participants in the study, most of whom in their twenties, have seemingly turned away from Christianity and are looking inward to their own knowledge for finding answers about life.
As for the Germans, their decision is not as fundamental as whether or not to be a Christian, but whether or not to adhere solely to its doctrines without incorporating other non-Christian schools of thought. Participants who made statements such as, “the bottom line is believing in something” (G9) and “who says Christians are right? Other people’s beliefs are right too” (G4) show that they do not see Christian faith as demanding an exclusive commitment. They do not seem to be aware that in the book of John, Jesus Christ clearly states that “no one comes to the Father except through me” (14:6), thus declaring an absolute and exclusive way to achieve salvation. This post-modern approach to thinking by some Christians could provide an avenue for future research to learn how it plays into religious and, specifically, Christian attitudes.

Limitations

A major affecter of the study’s validity is the lack of a pilot test. Limited time and a narrow margin of available participants did not allow for a pilot test to be conducted. A pilot study would have allowed for revision of questions that are too broad and selecting ones that are more specific about the participants’ understanding of Christianity. Choosing a wider variety of ages to participate in the study would have increased the validity of responses that refer to “Germans” and “Czechs” as a population.

More demographics could have been included as well, which are something for future researchers to consider. By examining families’ religious backgrounds, the explanation for and source of participants’ own religious backgrounds would be clearer. For example, a future study could separate East and West Germans, since past studies
indicate very diverse religious attitudes (Gabriel, 1995; Greeley, 2003; Harding, 1986). Protestants and Catholics could also be distinguished for more precise understanding.

In assessing the interview questions, the researcher became aware that by including the question, “Must a Christian also believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?” she inserted a bias. This could have influenced the definitions of the term Christian as given by the participants, in that they could have been more apt to include Jesus Christ in their definition after the question about him was asked. This should be seen as an unintentional threat to validity due to the researcher’s introduction of a concept that she anticipated the participants would include in their definition of a Christian.

Another area of limitation is the language barrier in the Czech interviews. Although every interview poses a set of core questions, the participant could have interpreted them differently than the researcher intended. Since no previous data collection instrument was available to attest to the validity of the collection technique, the format and arrangement of the interview questions could be invalid. Another threat to the validity of the data is the Hawthorne effect. It states that participants interviewed simultaneously (which was sometimes the case) tend to give similar responses, thus not perhaps saying what they truly believe or wish to answer.

Replication of this study might also be difficult for future researchers, due to the method of data collection. However, reformatting the study could allow for more research on the same topic. One of the first considerations is to increase the sample size, since this study’s small sample size makes generalizations to the German and Czech populations impractical. Another method to consider is translating the data collection
instrument into both languages prior to beginning the collection. Data could first be collected through a written survey or one posted on the internet. Then, for those people willing to do so, these surveys could be followed up with in-depth interviews either by phone or face-to-face if possible. Of course future research is not limited to Germany and the Czech Republic; it would also be worthwhile to include other European countries when gathering Christian perspectives.

**Strengths and recommendations for future research**

The value of this study is mostly for Christians. Christians who read this will see that both non-Christians and other Christians—perhaps those who are not practicing—are turned off to Christianity by those who claim to be of this faith but do not demonstrate the principles in their daily living. One German said that Christians have a negative influence when “they say they are Christians but don’t live like it” (G3), and another said that Christians should have openness to talk about their beliefs, “but there are always black sheep in the mass” (G6). These statements signify that people are negatively influenced by Christians when they do not live according to what they claim to value.

Based on this insight, brought to light by the comments of this study’s participants, Christians may reconsider how they reflect the principles of Christianity and the doctrines of the Bible in their daily lifestyle. Christians who read this and realize for the first time that they may be seen as close-minded, might at the next opportunity engage more open-mindedly in a conversation with a non-Christian.

Another strength of this study is that it shows the room for growth and education about Christianity in Germany and the Czech Republic. Since almost no participants
indicate a complete understanding of Christianity, Christian educators and missionaries have a prime opportunity in both countries. They can continue to challenge citizens—especially the youth—about their beliefs and encourage them to consider the precepts of Christianity as having the answers to questions about the meaning of life.

The international aspect of this study also has great worth to the researcher. In the process of interviewing these participants and from the standpoint of a Christian, she has learned that many Europeans have misconceptions about Christianity. The fact that the topic is viewed as “taboo” in Germany, as one German participant stated (G17), makes opening the gateway to conversation about Christianity very important. As demonstrated through the willingness of Germans and Czechs to participate in a study relating to Christianity (minus the first Czech subject), perhaps there is still the desire to know more about the subject. As Smith learned through talking to university students in the Czech Republic, “Despite the rampant mistrust and skepticism that threaten to corrode Czech society…there remains a guarded openness to religious ethics, spirituality, and to their indigenous religious heritage” (2001). One German responded during her interview that she “would like to become a Christian, but [she was] not sure how” (G11). A Czech participant gave a similar response (C8). Statements like these show that Europeans are open to talking about Christianity if persuaded and approached non-threateningly. Christian missionaries as well as researchers interested in the religious views of Europeans, specifically Germans and Czechs, should be encouraged by this information. Future studies branching from this topic must begin with non-threatening questions, such as ones that ask the participants to question their religious beliefs and their origins.
Conclusion

The limitations of this study relate to the initial organization of the data collection instrument and the questions that were chosen for the interviews. Since replication of the study is difficult, costly and time-consuming, one should view this study for the value of the participants’ responses and additional comments in the interviews and accept the merit therein. As revealed by the questions that arise from this study and its analysis, much remains to be learned and understood about the European perspectives on Christianity. Now that the historical and some social reasons Germans’ and Czechs’ perspectives have been established through the results of this study, new research can begin where this one left off. A good place to start would be to create questions that expand on the responses to these questions and to taper the demographics of the participants to a specific group, or else to enlarge them to include a wider range of informants.
References


Bibliography


Appendix A:  
Research Interview Questions (in English)

1. Do you know what a Christian is?  
2. How would you define a Christian? 
3. Must a Christian also believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? 
4. Would you call yourself a Christian? 
5. Have you ever known any Christians personally? 
6. How do Christians, if at all, differ from people of other religions? 
7. From what you know about Christians, would you say they have a positive or negative effect (or influence) on the people they interact with?
Appendix B:
Forschungsinterview Fragen (auf deutsch)
(Research Interview Questions, in German)

1. Wissen Sie, was ein Christ ist?
2. Was ist für Sie ein Christ?
3. Muss ein Christ auch glauben, dass Jesus Christus der Sohn Gottes ist?
4. Würden Sie sich als einen Christen bezeichnen?
5. Haben Sie je Christen persönlich gekonnt?
6. Wie weichen Christen ab, wenn Sie das denken, von Menschen von anderen Religionen?
7. Was Sie über Christen wissen, würden Sie sagen, dass sie einen positiven oder negativen Einfluss auf die Menschen haben, mit denen sie zusammenkommen?
Appendix C:
Letter of Explanation to Participants

Dear Study Participant:

My name is Alexandra Joachim and I am a student at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, United States of America. I am conducting interviews for a research project at Miami University. Thank you for volunteering to participate in this interview. This interview will be tape recorded with your permission.

During the interview, I will ask you a series of questions concerning your beliefs about Christians and Christian missionaries. This will be used in an academic study about the different perspectives of people in Germany and the Czech Republic about Christians. My goal is to discover if, and how, people's personal experiences have led them to have certain beliefs about Christians.

This interview will last approximately ten (10) minutes; however, if you do not wish to complete the interview or answer a particular question, you may decline or leave whenever you like. This interview is voluntary, and the results from it will be confidential. No subjects’ names will appear in any of the results.

If you have any questions about your rights as a Human Research Subject Participant, you can contact the Office for Research and Scholarship at Miami University by phone at: 513-529-3734 or email at: humansubjects@muohio.edu.

If you have further questions about the study, please contact Alexandra Joachim at (U.S. number): 330-629-2974 or email at: bucurie3@hotmail.com. My faculty advisor at Miami University is Dr. James Hanges. He can be reached at (U.S. number): 513-529-2029. If you would like to contact me by mail, my address is:

515 Gardenwood Drive
Boardman, OH 44512
USA

Thank you again for your participation!