Can Darwin and God Get Along?
Christian Leaders’ Perceptions of the Theory of Evolution

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

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Abstract

Darwin’s theory of evolution has been a point of debate within the church since its publication in 1858. Many Christians believe that evolution contradicts the story of creation in Genesis, and instead support theories such as Intelligent Design (ID). The issue has even arisen in school corporations across the country, with some insisting that evolution be emphasized as a theory only and ID be taught as well. In this thesis I present how Christian leaders in my hometown of Valparaiso, Indiana perceive Darwin’s theory of evolution via natural selection and what effect, if any, it has on their teaching. I hope to clarify different churches’ stances on the topic so citizens in similar communities can understand how the two interact and find the balance between science and faith.
Introduction

Ever since its publication in 1858, Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution via natural selection as presented in his book *On the Origin of Species* has been a point of controversy within religious institutions. For years many people believed that the theory clashed directly with the story of creation presented in the first book of the Old Testament. The argument even spilled over into the school systems in 1928 when John Scopes, a high school teacher, was arrested for teaching evolution in his classroom. Today the debate rages on, this time with other theories such as Intelligent Design (ID) entering the mix.

Many people have opinions on the subjects of evolution and religion, but the ones most heard in the media are those of people who demand the most attention. There are many articles and papers written by outspoken Christian authors who appear deeply mistrustful of Darwinists. In a 2005 article, “Verdict that Demands Evidence” published in *Christianity Today*, Charles Colson and Anne Morse said that evolution “has been primarily an attack on religion by atheist militants who wrap themselves in the mantle of science in an effort to refute all religious claims concerning a creator” (112). Indeed, there are many scientists who clearly believe that the idea of a divine creator is wrong, such as Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*. Just last semester I had a professor who offered extra credit to students who wrote a paragraph pointing out the faults in a certain book on creationism. If one looks only at the extremes, the two sides seem irreconcilable.

Through this project I want to reveal what the everyday Christian leaders from a small community—the ones who quietly guide their congregations, not the ones who shout in articles—understand and believe about evolution, how it affects Christian lives, and whether it should be taught in schools. I believe that being aware of how religion and science interact will help to dispel
misunderstandings and myths associated with both sides. This information could be important to people like myself who consider themselves both scientists and Christians, but have trouble understanding how the two interact. I grew up in an evangelical free church, and always assumed that evolution was wrong, because that was the impression I got from those around me. When I entered college and learned about the theory in more depth, it made perfect sense to me and I did not understand why some people in my church believed otherwise. When I began this project, I hoped to encounter more viewpoints like my own that accept evolution as a plausible mechanism of divine creation, or at least find some common ground on which to begin an understanding.

I carried out this study in my hometown of Valparaiso, Indiana. I chose this location not only because of the personal connection, but also because of its location—Northwest Indiana, just above the Bible belt. As with any aspect of culture, religious views and interpretations may also vary regionally. Many of the articles and studies already conducted were done in the southern part of the United States, leaving the northern regions generally untouched.

Valparaiso is the second largest city in Porter County, with a population of almost 30,000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau). It is the home of not only two public school systems, but also a prominent Lutheran university, Valparaiso University, and several smaller colleges, including a Purdue campus. Most importantly, a wide variety of Christian denominations can be found in Valparaiso.

Methods

To determine local Christian views of evolution, I interviewed leaders of various Christian churches in Valparaiso. Before arranging the interviews, this study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ball State University. In order to obtain approval I worked through the
National Institutes of Health tutorials on ethical research concerning human subjects and obtained a certificate of completion. I also submitted a Human Subjects Application stating my responsibility to act ethically while conducting my study, a narrative outlining the purpose of this study and the procedures to be used, a letter of informed consent to be signed by everyone interviewed, a copy of the letter of introduction sent to those I interviewed, and a copy of the interview questions themselves. A copy of all these documents may be found in the appendix.

Since there is no one church whose doctrine can speak for all of Christianity, multiple denominations were used in this study to illustrate the spectrum of opinions on evolution. The denominations I chose for my thesis were those that had the greatest number of adherents in the United States, according to the website Adherents.com. I contacted leaders from Trinity Lutheran, First United Methodist, St. Andrew’s Episcopalian, Good Shepherd Presbyterian, St. Iakovo’s Greek Orthodox, First Baptist, St. Paul’s Catholic, and Faith Evangelical Bible churches, and interviews with all but the latter two were arranged. During the interviews which lasted about forty minutes each, the leaders were asked thirty questions about their denomination’s stance on evolution, their personal beliefs pertaining to Darwin’s theory, their educational background, and their opinions regarding evolution in the school system. Prior to each interview everyone reviewed and signed a letter of informed consent which briefly described the study, and they all agreed to allow their name and the name of their church to be used in this thesis. To make the leaders more comfortable, they were allowed to choose the location of the interviews. All took place within their respective churches, except for Reverend David Byrum of First United Methodist, who chose to meet at the Valparaiso University library.
Evolution and Education

Schools across the country are locked in debate over Darwin’s theory of natural selection. School boards in Kansas, Pennsylvania, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and other states have attempted to pass legislation concerning how scientific theories are taught in the classroom, some as recently as this year. In January of 2009 the Texas Board of Education eliminated a mandate that required teachers to explore the “strengths and weaknesses” of theories such as evolution. While some viewed this as a small victory in the name of science, not all critics were satisfied. They argued that some amendments to the curriculum were made that would “open the door to teaching objections to evolution and might encourage students to reject it” (McKinley).

A similar situation arose in Louisiana in with a different outcome. In 2008 the Science Education Act was passed, which essentially allows teachers to introduce non-scientific alternatives to evolution in the classroom. The act lists evolution with scientifically controversial topics such as human cloning and global warming. Human cloning poses an ethical issue concerning whether or not scientists should be allowed to create life in such a manner, and global warming is a relatively new issue that is still being debated in the scientific world. Those against the Science Education Act say it is misleading, since evolution is a broadly accepted theory in the scientific community and presents no such ethical issues. The reasoning behind passing the law seems innocent enough. “We believe that to teach young people critical thinking skills you have to give them both sides of an issue,” said Gene Mills, executive director of the Louisiana Family Forum, which was a major group lobbying for the act (Geftner). Critical thinking is a fundamental tool for any aspect of education, especially science, so of course it should be emphasized in schools. However, allowing theories such as Intelligent Design and creation “science” to be taught alongside a sound, testable theory like natural selection is seen by many to be a clear violation
of the separation of church and state, and undermines the methodology used in true science.

Furthermore, opponents of the act now fear that the school will introduce entire textbooks devoted to refuting evolution, such as *Explore Evolution: The arguments for and against Neo-Darwinism*, which was written by Intelligent Design supporters (Geftner). Although Louisiana passed the Science Education Act, it should be noted that five other states failed to pass similar legislation (Geftner).

Although these issues were settled in a courtroom, church groups played a significant role. The controversies were promoted by the Discovery Institute, a research organization that has been widely criticized for promoting religion under the guise of science. Also, the school board meeting where the arguments originally cropped up were attended largely by parents, teachers, students—and community church leaders (Geftner).

As leaders of their own communities, it was important to determine how the pastors I interviewed felt about evolution in the classroom. When asked whether or not evolution should be taught in public schools, all of the church leaders said yes, but to varying degrees. Some stated that it should be taught because it is an important concept fundamental to science itself. Reverend Byrum of First United Methodist said, “Not including [evolution] would be like not teaching Bohr’s Law¹; it’s a basic principle of biology...I think we would be doing kids a disservice by not teaching it.”

Others said that evolution belonged in the classroom, but implied that it is important more on a social scale and not necessarily fundamental to science. Pastor Greene of Good Shepherd Presbyterian insisted that schools need to teach what the recent scientific thinking is, because “if you’re going to function in society you have to know what the current science is.” To some this may suggest that evolution should be taught not because it is a sound theory, but because “everyone is doing it.”

¹ Bohr’s Law (or the Bohr Model) describes the basic structural components of an atom. It is generally taught in introductory courses as a fundamental idea behind chemistry and physics.
Still others said yes to evolution in the classroom, but stressed that it should emphasized as a theory only. Pastor Ayres of First Baptist thought that evolution and creationism should be taught side by side as equals, perhaps in a philosophy class instead of a science class. According to him, “evolution as a theory is a religion, as much as Christianity is. Science is observable facts. You can’t ‘observable fact’ anything in evolution.”

Most of the other pastors had no problem with teaching alternative theories to evolution in the classroom either. They felt that it is a good thing to hear a variety of perspectives concerning these arguments. Debating such topics makes students intellectually stronger and more aware of ongoing discussions in science. However, Father Santoro of Trinity Lutheran felt it was inappropriate to teach theories such as Intelligent Design in the classroom. He said, “Intelligent Design is a code word for creationism, which is a code word for literal interpretation of Genesis. We should just name it as it is—a literal understanding of the first two chapters of Genesis. I think they’re written as faith statements and reflect primitive science of that time, and should not be treated as a scientific theory on the same level as evolutionary theory.” He went on to state that creationist theories such as ID should be dealt with in the church, not at school.

If evolution ever became an issue in the Valparaiso school systems, it does not seem that church leaders would be supportive of removing it from the curriculum. One or two might be in favor of placing disclaimer stickers in textbooks to ensure that students understand that evolution is only a theory, as schools in Alabama have, and most may stand up for teaching other theories of origin as well. Overall, Darwin’s theory appears to be safe in the public school system, at least in Northwest Indiana, even if it may eventually have to share the spotlight with ID.
Education about evolution is important for understanding a large portion of science in general, but it is also key to accepting the theory as a plausible method of human origins. A 2009 Gallup poll done in honor of Darwin’s 200th birthday revealed a relationship between acceptance of evolution, religion, and education in the United States. Out of the 1,018 Americans that were interviewed, only 39 percent believed in evolution. Of those who had a postgraduate degree, 74 percent believed in evolution, while only 21 percent of those with a high school education or less felt the same. The poll also asked people to match Darwin with his theory, and only 55 percent of those interviewed could do so correctly. Of those who gave a wrong answer, 30 percent said they thought evolution was wrong. Of those who were unsure of the answer, 17 percent did not believe in evolution. People who attended church regularly were also less likely to believe in evolution (only 24 percent) (Newport).

Darwin’s theory of evolution via natural selection states that species change over time by passing on heritable traits that improve their chances of survival and reproduction. It is a process that takes millions of years. Darwin also proposed that all organisms may have come from a few common ancestors. Evolution is often falsely interpreted as suggesting that all species evolved from currently existing ones. The most famous misunderstanding is that man came directly from apes. This idea implies that one day chimpanzees will turn into humans and is incorrect. Darwin instead thought that humans and other primates are more like cousins, sharing an ancestor.

Every church leader I interviewed had at least a bachelor’s degree from an accredited university. Most of them also had a correct, if vague, understanding of Darwin’s theory, which supports the findings of the Gallup poll. Father Richard Wineland of St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church had one of the most accurate explanations, stating, “Darwin argued that organisms adapt to their surroundings and change over time, and that organisms that are the best adapting survive.” Father Greanias of St.
lakovo’s Greek Orthodox Church seemed to have less understanding of both the mechanisms of evolution and the time required for the process. “Somehow we evolved from some molecular structure through water... and basically went from a tadpole to an ape to human.” He later added, “If there is evolution, why has it stopped now? Why is man not evolving to something higher? It doesn’t make sense to me.” Out of the six church leaders interviewed, Father Greanias was one of only two who opposed evolution.

Evolution and Doctrine

The two representatives who opposed Darwinism were also the only ones who were confident of their denomination’s official stance on the theory. Pastor Ayres of First Baptist Church stated that his denomination believed that God created the world by speaking it into existence and finished in six literal days. He created man and the entire animal kingdom for man’s enjoyment. Pastor Ayres wholeheartedly agreed with this viewpoint, and when asked his personal opinion of Darwin’s theory, stated that it was “destructive, demoralizing...behind Hitler’s movement. If you say that we evolved from animals and...there is no moral code then man does what’s right in his own eyes and thus there is no God. We’re basically denying Him and denying the existence of any type of creator.” He went on to say that if evolution was proved true, it would be the end of religion.

There would be no God. Religion would be destroyed...Every spiritual aspect of life would collapse, every one. Even Hinduism, Buddhism would be destroyed, because there is no spiritual realm or god or creator, we simply are an accident, a cosmic accident. There is no afterlife, it’s just life here and the grave, which, by the way, is what we’re teaching our children--we’re putting it in schools. And
we wonder why people shoot people...and the dominant specie eradicates the weaker specie, thus we have a better form of evolution. Darwin’s theory.

Father Greanias of St. Iakovo’s Greek Orthodox Church explained that although his church was more concerned with honoring and knowing God than understanding how He does something, it denies evolution as the mechanism of creation. He agreed with this view, but unlike Pastor Ayres, he did not think religion would be much affected if evolution were proved true. As mentioned before, Father Greanias did not have a strong understanding of evolution and admitted that as an outsider to the field of science, much of it did not make sense to him. He was therefore wary of Darwinism and did not support it. However, when asked about the implications for religion if evolution was proved, he said, “I don’t think the two necessarily have to be contradictory, if it’s proven true.”

None of the remaining four leaders I interviewed were certain of their denomination’s official views of evolution, or did not think there was one at all. More than once St. Augustine was quoted: “In the essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” To them, accepting and loving God and Jesus Christ as the Savior were more important than understanding how the world was created. None of them felt there would be any negative consequences for Christianity if evolution were ever proved to be true, either. Father Santoro of Trinity Lutheran believes that much of evolution has already been proven true, and Pastor Green of Good Shepherd Presbyterian merely shrugged and said, “It doesn’t threaten Jesus as my Savior.”

As leaders of a congregation, it is important for those I interviewed to have an understanding of their denomination’s official views and their own personal opinions of such topics as evolution in case someone came to them with questions regarding our origins. Apparently some leaders had more experience with these questions than others. Several said that the issue of evolution versus creationism had never come up in any way other than a few passing comments. These same leaders believed that
most people in their congregation understood Darwin’s theory, citing Valparaiso University as the explanation. Many members of their congregations consisted of either faculty or students of the university who had more than likely discussed evolution in the classroom at one time or another.

Others did not believe most adults in their church correctly understood evolution via natural selection, and acknowledged that many Christians avoid the topic. Without a background in biology, evolution can be a difficult theory to grasp, and it is hard to make a decision or even defend faith without fully understanding the opposing argument. Pastor Ayres of First Baptist admitted, “It’s easier to kind of ignore it and not deal with it.” There are other reasons to avoid evolution as well. Even in the church there are people on both sides of the argument, and debates can be divisive. Furthermore, many people do not see it as an important issue. “They don’t have time to search out every deep question,” said Reverend Byrum of United Methodist. It is more important to many congregations to form a relationship with God than to worry about how he created the world.

Still, some people do go to their church leaders with questions. A few of the leaders I interviewed said that evolution came up every now and then when they went over Genesis in their sermons. Younger people especially seem to have a lot of questions. When asked how they would respond if someone came to them asking about evolution in relation to the creation story in Genesis, the answers were varied. Reverend Byrum of First United Methodist was straightforward in his reply. “The most important thing to remember is, ‘In the beginning, God created.’ The rest of the story is someone asking the tribal leader with the story stick.” Father Wineland of St. Andrew’s Episcopal elaborated a bit more on this view, saying, “Genesis is a story that makes sense to the people it was written for. It is not science.” The leaders with this view also agreed that the biggest problem with such issues is people going to the Bible with questions it was not meant to answer. Pastor Greene of Good
Shepherd Presbyterian said, "[Genesis] makes affirmations about who we are. It doesn't address the specifics of how." Reverend Byrum had a similar opinion, saying, "If you were going to figure out how to install a new sink in the bath, would you look in the Bible? The Bible is intended to be about faith and relationship questions and some of the ultimate questions of human life, who we are, whose we are, why we are. I think that trying to answer all the questions using the scriptures is abusing it."

Pastor Ayres of First Baptist had a different answer for anyone with questions regarding Genesis and Darwin's theory. "They absolutely cannot mix. If you cast a shadow on the very first words...you basically destroy the foundation of scripture and then it's free to interpret any way you want to interpret it, and it becomes just another work of fiction." He repeatedly mentioned 2 Timothy 3:16, which says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness," and after all, Genesis is a part of Scripture. His response was firm, but when people do come to him with questions, Pastor Ayres makes a point of not bashing evolution. "I receive their questions with sincere love and try to present science in light of what science is," he said. "Science is not our enemy, science is a great ally, but I try to present the fact that [evolution is] not science, it's a theory. A destructive theory. I can say that in all my years of dealing with this, I have never sat down and presented evidence and had somebody say 'No, it's evolution.' Usually they're like, 'you know what, you're right.'"

Discussion

The Christian church as a whole is united on major doctrinal issues, such as accepting Jesus Christ as the Savior, but when it comes to lesser topics that are not fundamental to Christianity, there is room for variation. As far as evolution is concerned, opinions seem to vary denomination to denomination, and even person to person.
The results of the Gallup poll on Darwin’s 200th birthday clearly indicate the importance of education about evolution. It is one thing to understand Darwin’s theory of natural selection and refute it based on opposing evidence. It is another thing entirely to be unable to match one of the most important scientific theories with one of the most famous biologists of all time, suggesting a lack of experience with the topic, and then say said theory is wrong. This poll also demonstrated the influence that the church may have, since so few churchgoers believed Darwin was right.

Different denominations seem to be in agreement about evolution in the classroom—it has a place there. Schools should teach Darwin’s theory to help students understand the fundamental concepts on which much of biology is built. However, most church leaders also thought that alternate theories of origin such as Intelligent Design should be taught alongside evolution to expose students to both sides of the debate.

The division in opinion appears when discussing personal and denominational beliefs. I was personally relieved to learn that not all Christians refuted evolution, as those in my church growing up had. In this study, the representatives from the Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopalian, and Presbyterian churches did not feel that evolution and Christianity were in conflict with one another. Reverend David Byrum of First United Methodist said, “God’s greatest gift is freedom. Darwin called it natural selection.”

I was unable to arrange an interview with a pastor from the same denomination as my former church, so whether or not my church was a special case within the evangelical faith has yet to be resolved. I believe that disdain for evolution in my church, at least among the congregation, may have been due to a misunderstanding of the theory. I recall many of the most firm advocates for creationism were not highly educated, while quite a few of those that were did not stay with the church for long.
With this in mind, I found it surprising that Pastor Ayres from First Baptist church did believe that evolution directly contradicted the story of creation presented in the Bible. Out of everyone I interviewed, he was by far the most informed on Darwin’s theory, having read not only *On the Origin of Species* but also many other books and articles on the subject. Despite his education, or perhaps because of it, Pastor Ayres stood firmly rooted in the Scripture. Father Greanias of St. Iakovo’s Greek Orthodox Church agreed with him, saying, “We believe God created the world. Until proven, evolution is not a theory we adhere to.”

The debate is unlikely to ever be resolved. There will always be people arguing against evolution in the media and elsewhere. Father Jim Santoro of Trinity Lutheran said, “People have an emotional response and think they need to protect God, but God doesn’t need to be protected.” Similarly, there will always be people defending Darwin. This holds true in Valparaiso, with some church leaders on both sides. It does not seem to be a matter of utmost importance, however, and is not a major conflict as it may be in other areas of the United States. In Valparaiso, as Reverend Byrum said, “It’s okay to be a Christian and believe in evolution.”
Works Cited


Appendix
Narrative

SECTION 1 – TITLE, PURPOSE OF THE STUDY, AND RATIONALE

1.1 Title
Christian Leaders’ Perceptions of Evolution

1.2 Purpose of the Study
The objective of this study is to determine how Christian leaders in the Valparaiso, Indiana, area perceive Darwin’s theory of natural selection and what effect, if any, it has on their teachings. Through this study I hope to clarify different churches’ stances on the topic so communities can understand how the two interact and find the balance between science and faith.

1.3 Rationale
Despite national denominational stances on issues such as evolution, there can be regional and local interpretations. Presently, most information available about views of evolution in the United States refers to the South. For example, some school boards have tried repeatedly to either introduce Intelligent Design into the curriculum or place disclaimers about evolution inside science textbooks. However, the target area of my study, just north of the Bible belt, has not received attention in this topic.

Many people have opinions on the subjects of evolution and religion, but the ones most heard in the media are those of people who demand the most attention. There are many articles and papers written by outspoken Christian authors who appear deeply mistrustful of Darwinists. In a 2005 article, “Verdict that Demands Evidence” published in Christianity Today, Charles Colson said that evolution “has been primarily an attack on religion by atheist militants who wrap themselves in the mantle of science in an effort to refute all religious claims concerning a creator.”

This controversy exists not only in individual opinions, but also in the educational system. In 1928 John Scopes, a high school teacher, was arrested for violating the Butler Act, which prohibited the teaching of evolution in school. Years later, the debate over Darwin’s theory in the school system continues in a slightly different form—keep evolution, get rid of religion. School boards in Alabama, Georgia, Kansas, and most recently, Texas have been under fire for attempting to downplay natural selection and introduce alternate theories such as Intelligent Design. As recently as January 2009 the Texas school board voted on how evolution should be taught in the classroom. An article in the New York Times, “Split Outcome in Texas Battle on Teaching of Evolution,” by James McKinley, Jr. covered the debate and noted that although the board voted to stop promoting the “weaknesses” of evolution, the chairman passed several amendments to the curriculum that “would open the door to teaching objections to evolution and might encourage students to reject it.”

Education may have another role in the discussion on the origin of species. According to a Gallup poll taken on February 6-7, 2009, only 39% of adults believe in evolution. Furthermore, education seemed to be a factor in both understanding and believing Darwin’s theory. The same poll revealed that only 21% of people with a high school education or less believed in evolution, compared to 74% of
people with a postgraduate degree. Only 31% of people with a high school education could even correctly identify Darwin with his theory of natural selection, versus 86% those with postgraduate degrees.

Additionally, much of the literature available deals only with Catholicism and its views of evolution; very little is mentioned about other denominations. For example, the article “Darwin’s Divisions” by Martin Hilbert, published in Touchstone magazine, discusses Catholicism and its role in the debate about evolution, and “The Vatican’s Position Evolves” from Science mentions the extra attention Catholics get concerning the same subject because of Pope John Paul II “backing the theory of evolution.” The current Pope’s stance on Darwin’s theory appears less firm, and has created ambiguity about the Vatican’s official view of evolution. “Benedict’s Evolving Thought on Evolution,” written by John Allen, Jr. and published by National Catholic Reporter in 2006 states that Pope Benedict XVI is neither a creationist nor an advocate of Intelligent Design, suggesting that he accepts evolution as his predecessor did. However, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, who once studied under Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), wrote an article for the New York Times, “Finding Design in Nature,” in which he stated, “neo-Darwinists recently have sought to portray our new pope, Benedict XVI, as a satisfied evolutionist,” when in fact he is not. These conflicting statements may put Catholics in a difficult position when addressing evolution, which is why one of the objectives of this study is to clarify official church stances.

The region and people I wish to discuss in my thesis have not been studied. I want to reveal what the everyday Christian leaders from a local community—the ones that quietly guide their congregations, not the ones that shout in articles—understand and believe about evolution, how it affects Christian lives, and whether it should be taught in schools. I believe that being aware of how religion and science interact will help to dispel misunderstandings and myths associated with both sides. This information could be important to people like myself who consider themselves both scientists and Christians, but have trouble understanding how the two interact.

**SECTION 2 – DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECT POPULATION**

**2.1 Number of Subjects**

I plan to interview eight subjects for this study; one from each of the following denominations: Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Baptist, Anglican, and Methodist.

**2.2 Describe the Subject Population**

Because the objective of this study is how Christian leaders’ views of evolution affect their community, each subject in this study must be an ordained leader of his or her respective church in the Valparaiso area. In order for a leader’s opinions to have an effect on the congregation’s beliefs, he or she must have an integral role in the congregation’s education within the religious community. Therefore the subject must also be involved with the congregation as a teacher of some form. This may include sermonizing, leading study groups within the church, missionary work, or youth ministries.
2.3 Describe and inclusion/exclusion criteria

Each subject must be an ordained leader of his or her respective church in the Valparaiso area. The subject must also be involved with the congregation as a teacher of some form. This may include sermonizing, leading study groups within the church, missionary work, or youth ministries.

SECTION 3 – SUBJECT RECRUITMENT

3.1 Describe the Method of Subject Recruitment

In the Valparaiso, Indiana, area, one church from each of the following denominations will be chosen: Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Baptist, Anglican, and Methodist. These denominations were chosen based on their large number of adherents in the U.S. A letter will be sent to the head of each church informing them of the study and its purposes, and afterwards the principal investigator of the study will contact them via phone and set up a date and time for the interview. If a church declines the interview, another church of the same denomination will be contacted as a backup.

SECTION 4 – METHODS AND PROCEDURES

4.1 Describe the methods and procedures to be used

Each interview will take place at the subject’s church, unless the subject prefers otherwise, in which case a neutral location will be chosen. The interview process will be completed in one visit. After reviewing and signing a letter of consent, each subject will be asked a series of interview questions regarding their knowledge and opinions of the theory of evolution, if and in what context the topic comes up in their teachings, and how the subject’s beliefs on the topic may influence the congregation. Questions will also address the subject’s respective denomination’s official views on evolution and how, if at all, the subject’s personal views differ.

SECTION 5 – ANONYMITY/CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

5.1 Describe how data will be collected and stored.

Each interview session will be recorded on audio cassette. If the subject prefers not to be named in this study, the tape and any notes made will be labeled only by denomination. The tapes and notes will remain in the possession of the principle investigator, and only the investigator and faculty advisor will review them. When the project is completed, the tapes will be erased.
SECTION 6 – POTENTIAL RISKS AND BENEFITS

6.1 Describe the potential risks and discomforts
Subjects may find the interview questions to be personal or controversial, and may become uncomfortable.

6.2 Describe how the risks will be minimized.
Before the interview begins the subject will be asked to read and sign a letter of informed consent to ensure that he or she is aware of the nature and objectives of the study. If the subject so chooses, his or her name, the name of the church, and the denomination will not appear in the final product of the study. They will instead be referred to only as Protestant or non-Protestant. If at any time during the interview process the subject becomes uncomfortable, he or she may choose to end the session or pass on certain questions with no consequence. Suggestions for counseling centers will be listed in the letter of informed consent for the subject to contact, should uncomfortable feelings persist after the interview.

6.3 Describe the potential benefits.
By participating in this study the subject will have the opportunity to clarify his or her denomination’s opinions on a controversial theory and dispel any myths or misunderstandings associated with them. Religion and science both play an important role in many people’s lives, and being aware of how the two interact will give religious leaders and communities a better understanding of the balance between the secular and religious aspects of their life.

SECTION 7 – SUBJECT INCENTIVES/INDUCEMENTS TO PARTICIPATE

7.1 Describe any inducements/incentives to participate that will be offered to the subject.
Not applicable

SECTION 8 – OTHER FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Describe any financial expense to the subject.
Not applicable

8.2 Describe any provisions for compensation for research-related injury.
Not applicable

SECTION 9 – INFORMED CONSENT

9.1 Describe the process of obtaining the informed consent of the subject.
Each subject will be mailed a letter describing the study and its objectives. Shortly after, the principal investigator will contact each subject via phone and discuss whether or not the subject would
like to participate in the study. If the subject agrees, a date and time will be set for the interview. Before the interview the subject will be asked to read and sign a letter of consent to inform him or her of the nature and objectives of the interview and study.
Letter of Introduction

Dear [insert name],

I am a student at Ball State University and am working on an Honors College thesis project about how Christian leaders perceive Darwin’s theory of evolution. As both a Christian and an aspiring scientist, I am interested in how these two fundamental areas in my life interact. I would like to conduct a thirty minute interview with you in the near future. Your participation in this study can benefit your community by providing understanding of how science and religion—two important components of everyone’s lives—work together in today’s world.

I feel that talking with you about your denomination’s views of evolution and how you address the issue in your own teachings will give personal insight into the relationship between the church and Darwinism. I will be contacting you via phone in the next few days to set up an interview date at your facility if you are willing. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Shannon Evers
snevers@bsu.edu
(219)309-7078

Thesis advisor:
Ms. Beth Dalton
edalton@bsu.edu
Interview Questions

- Did you go to a public or private high school?
- Do you think attending a (public or private) school made a difference in the way science, evolution especially, was taught? If so, how so?
- Was evolution taught in your school growing up?
- Did you attend college?
- If so, was it public or private, and what degree did you receive?
- How did evolution come up in your higher education?
- How was the theory of evolution taught in your school (high school or college)? As fact, as an idea, or something in between?
- If it wasn’t taught, how did you learn about it?
- Did you learn other theories of origin as well? If so, which ones?
- Should the theory of evolution be taught in schools? Why/Why not?
- Should alternate theories of origin be taught, such as Intelligent Design, even though there is less supporting evidence? Why/Why not?
- Would these topics be better suited for a philosophy class? Why/Why not?
- What do you understand the term ‘theory’ to mean, as it pertains to scientific study?
- What do you think is the relationship between humans and other primates?
- Can you tell me what you know about Darwin’s theory of evolution via natural selection?
- What is your denomination’s official stance on evolution?
- Do you agree?
- What is your personal opinion of Darwin’s theory?
- In what instances has the topic of evolution come up in your church?
- How did the congregation respond?
• If it hasn’t, can you foresee this as an issue? Why or why not?

• Has anyone from your congregation ever come to you with questions about theories of origin such as evolution? If so, how did you respond?

• What would you say if someone asked you about evolution in relation to the story of creation in Genesis?

• Do you think God created life and gave it the ability to evolve?

• If not, why not?

• If so, how much guidance does God give in evolution?

• Do you think Christians avoid the topic of evolution or ignore its implications for religion? If so, why?

• What are the implications for religion if evolution was proved?

• Do you think most adult Christians in your church understand Darwin’s theory?

• Are there any other comments you would like to add?
**Human Subjects Research Application**

**Protocol title:** Christian Leaders' Perceptions of Evolution

**Proposed project dates:** begin: October 1, 2008 end: May 1, 2009

**Principal Investigator:** Shannon Evers E-mail: snevers@bsu.edu

**Department:** Biology Department Telephone: (219) 309-7078

(check all that apply) ☐ Faculty/Staff ☐ Graduate student ☒ Undergraduate student ☐ Unaffiliated

(If the PI is a student researcher or not affiliated with Ball State University, a Faculty Sponsor must be listed below.)

**Faculty Sponsor:** Elizabeth Dalton E-mail: edalton@bsu.edu

**Department:** Department of English Telephone: (765) 285-8382

If this project is funded or if the investigator is seeking funding, list the agency(s) and/or sources.

(If the title of the grant application differs from the title of the IRB protocol, also specify the grant application title.)

To comply with the federally-mandated educational requirement, you (and all Key Personnel for this project – including the faculty advisor/sponsor) must have completed the online tutorial on the protection of human subjects. A copy of the computer-generated certificate indicating your successful completion of this tutorial must either be uploaded with this application or be on record in the Office of Academic Research and Sponsored Programs.

Have you and all Key Personnel completed this online tutorial? ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Principal Investigator Assurance Statement**

I have read and understand Ball State University's "Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research" as stated in the Faculty and Professional Personnel Handbook, and I agree:

a) to accept responsibility for the scientific and ethical conduct of this research study,
b) to obtain IRB approval prior to revising or altering the research protocol or the approved Informed Consent text, and
c) to report immediately to the IRB any serious adverse events and/or unanticipated problems which occur as a result of this study.

The Principal Investigator must electronically sign this study prior to submitting the protocol to the IRB for review. When you sign this study as the Principal Investigator, you are also agreeing to the terms in the Principal Investigator Assurance Statement above.

v. 5 10/26/2007
Faculty Sponsor Assurance Statement

As the Faculty Sponsor for this study, I certify that I have reviewed this protocol and affirm the merit of this research project and the competency of the investigator(s) to conduct the project. My involvement in this study is as follows (check one option):

- I will be involved in this project. My name is listed and my responsibilities (described in the Key Personnel section) include supervision and oversight of this project.

- I will be involved in this project. My name is listed and my responsibilities (described in the Key Personnel section) in this project are limited (e.g., data analysis only). I affirm that this investigator has the competency to conduct this research study without my supervision or that of any other faculty or staff member of Ball State University.

- I will not be involved in any aspect of this project (including data collection). However, I have reviewed this protocol and the investigator's research experience and expertise. I affirm that this investigator has the competency to conduct this research study without my supervision or that of any other faculty or staff member of Ball State University.

A Faculty Sponsor must electronically sign this study for all student research projects and for all persons not affiliated with Ball State University before the protocol is submitted to the IRB for review. When you sign this study as the Faculty Sponsor, you are also agreeing to the terms in the Faculty Sponsor Assurance Statement above and accepting responsibility for ensuring that the terms of the Principal Investigator Assurance Statement are met.

Key Personnel

List all persons, other than the PI, who will have a role in the research project (refer to an attachment if necessary):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Dalton</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Supervision, oversight, evaluation of final paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Department:</td>
<td>Responsibilities:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Page 2 of 3
Subject Population

Check all categories that apply to the subjects:

☐ Cognitively impaired
☐ Minors (individual under age 18 years)
☒ Normal healthy volunteers
☐ Patients/clients
☐ Other, explain: ___________________________

☐ Pregnant women
☐ Prisoners
☐ Students
☐ Student athletes

Will information pertaining to the research be withheld from subjects (incomplete disclosure/deception)? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, for what purpose? ____________________________________________

List the location(s) where the research will be conducted: One church from each of the following denominations in Valparaiso, Indiana: Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, Orthodox, Anglican, Pentecostal, and Presbyterian.

If advertisements will be used to recruit subjects, indicate the format(s) to be used:

☐ Flyer
☐ Newspaper
☐ Electronic media, describe: ____________________________
☐ Other, describe: ____________________________,

Collaborators and Permissions

If any part of the research is to be conducted at another institution with a collaborator, provide the following information for the research collaborator:

Name: ____________________________________________
Title: ____________________________________________
E-mail: ____________________________________________ Telephone: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________________________

If any part of the research is to be conducted at an institution, or in conjunction with another organization, other than Ball State University, provide the name and contact information for a person who is authorized to give permission to conduct the research. Generally, this will be the person who would write a letter of permission to conduct the research.

Name: ____________________________________________
Title: ____________________________________________
E-mail: ____________________________________________ Telephone: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________________________
Study Title  Christian Leader's Perceptions of Evolution

Study Purpose and Rationale
The objective of this study is to determine how Christian leaders in the Valparaiso, Indiana, area perceive Darwin’s theory of natural selection and what effect, if any, it has on their teachings. Through this study I hope to clarify different churches’ stances on the topic so communities can understand how the two interact and find the balance between science and faith.

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Audio or Video Tapes
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If you so choose, your name and the name of your church will not appear in the final product of the study and will be referred to only by denomination.

Storage of Data
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**Voluntary Participation**
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.

**IRB Contact Information**
For one's rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: Research Compliance, Office of Academic Research and Sponsored Programs, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu.

**Study Title**  Christian Leaders' Perceptions of Evolution

**Consent**
I, [Participant Name], agree to participate in this research project entitled, "Christian Leaders' Perceptions of Evolution." I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

Please check one of the following:

- [ ] Yes, my name, church name, and denomination may be used in the study
- [ ] Only my name and denomination may be used in the study
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- [ ] None of the above may be mentioned in the study

Signed: [Signature]
Date: [Date]

**Researcher Contact Information**

Principal Investigator:
Shannon N. Evers, Undergraduate Student
Biology Department
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
Telephone: (219) 309-7078
Email: snevers@bsu.edu

Faculty Supervisor:
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Department of English
Ball State University
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Participant's Signature: [Signature]  Date: 3/27/09

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Investigator:
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Biology Department
Ball State University
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Study Title Christian Leaders’ Perceptions of Evolution

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Participant’s Signature: ___________________________ Date: 3-28-09

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Investigator: Shannon N. Evers, Undergraduate Student
Biology Department
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
Telephone: (219) 309-7078
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Study Title  Christian Leaders' Perceptions of Evolution

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Participant's Signature  

Date

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Investigator:  
Shannon N. Evers, Undergraduate Student  
Biology Department  
Ball State University  
Muncie, IN 47306  
Telephone: (219) 309-7078  
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Faculty Supervisor:  
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Department of English  
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Participant's Signature: ____________________________  Date: 5-8-09

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Investigator: Shannon N. Evers, Undergraduate Student
Biology Department
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
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**Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**
To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be an ordained leader of your respective church and be involved with teachings within the church. This may include sermonizing, leading study groups within the church, missionary work, or youth ministries.

**Participation Procedures and Duration**
For this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview. The questions asked are meant to examine your knowledge and opinions of the theory of evolution, if and in what context the topic comes up in your teachings, and how your beliefs on the topic may influence your congregation. Questions will also address your denomination’s official views on evolution and how, if at all, your personal views differ. The interview should take no more than one hour.

**Audio or Video Tapes**
For purposes of accuracy, the interview will be recorded on audio cassette, with your permission. If you prefer not to be named in this study, the tape and any notes made will be labeled only by denomination. The tapes and notes will remain in the possession of the principle investigator, and only the investigator and faculty advisor will review them. When the project is completed, the tapes will be erased.

**Data Confidentiality or Anonymity**
If you so choose, your name and the name of your church will not appear in the final product of the study and will be referred to only by denomination.

**Storage of Data**
All data will remain in the possession of the researcher and deleted after the final product of this study is finished. Only the researcher and faculty advisor will have access to the data.

**Risks or Discomforts**
The only anticipated risk from participating in this study is that you may not feel comfortable answering some of the questions. You may choose not to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable and you may choose to end the interview at any time. If you should continue to feel uncomfortable after the interview, you may consider seeking counseling. Suggestions for counseling centers in the area are listed below. Neither the investigator nor Ball State University are financially responsible for counseling sought.

Center for Christian Counseling  
(219) 465-1991  
204 Lincolnway  
Valparaiso, IN 46383

Choices Counseling Services  
(219) 548-8727  
607 Lincolnway  
Valparaiso, IN 46383
Benefits
Through this study you will have the opportunity to clarify your church's stances on a controversial theory and dispel any myths or misunderstandings surrounding it. This will benefit the community by helping people find the balance between science and their faith.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.

IRB Contact Information
For one's rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: Research Compliance, Office of Academic Research and Sponsored Programs, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu.

Study Title  Christian Leaders' Perceptions of Evolution

Consent
I, ________________________, agree to participate in this research project entitled, "Christian Leaders' Perceptions of Evolution." I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

Please check one of the following:

☒ Yes, my name, church name, and denomination may be used in the study
☐ Only my name and denomination may be used in the study
☐ Only my name may be used in the study
☐ Only the name of my denomination may be used in the study
☐ None of the above may be mentioned in the study

Participant's Signature  Date

Researcher Contact Information

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