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The Construction of Religion in Social Work Education

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2017

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The Construction of Religion in Social
Work Education

ABSTRACT

This social work master's thesis used a qualitative study design involving non-random sampling of syllabi at accredited master's level social work programs around the United States in order to address the question, "How is religion constructed in social work education?" Materials addressing religion were extracted from syllabi used in first year required practice classes at 15 schools in five different geographic regions around the country. The texts were then analyzed using the techniques of discourse analysis (Carbó, Ahumada, Caballero, & Argüelles, 2016), an approach that considers the active function of language, tending to structure our thinking about abstract concepts and facilitate the normative reproduction of those concepts. In this thesis document I identify and propose three modes of presentation of religion in social work literature: (1) as a resource, (2) as an aspect of culture, and (3) as an assessment factor. Implications for these modes of presentation are discussed and avenues for further research are recommended.

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Kendall's love, Andy's generosity, and Ron's guidance got me here.

I was able to stay because Mom agreed to watch the dog and Stephen is watering the garden.

Thanks to all five of you.

And also to the dog, Doc Holliday, who agreed to stay with mom.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

This social work master's thesis asked the question, how is religion constructed in social work education? In order to address that question, I used a qualitative study design involving non-random sampling of syllabi at accredited master's level social work programs around the United States in order to obtain a representative sample of social work educational materials that are used to teach about religion. I then conducted a discourse analysis (Carbó, Ahumada, Caballero, & Argüelles, 2016) of the sampled materials.

This project began from the post-structuralist precept that language use has an "active function" (Carbó, et al., 2016 p. 376), tending to structure our thoughts and ideas about a given topic. This potentiality is especially powerful in academic curricula, which are used to teach students about the cherished values and core competencies of the fields they prepare to enter. We train students to think about religion in ways that are sanctioned by the field, through the curricular materials we choose to teach.

The way we teach about religion in social work speaks volumes about the way social workers think about and respond to religion in the field. It may also predict, in part, how future social workers will continue to think and respond to religion in the field. My analysis of the literature I surveyed suggests that we tend to construct religion within the discourse of social work education in three distinct ways: (1) as a resource, (2) as an aspect of culture, or (3) as an assessment factor. In the following chapters, I offer examples and explanations of all three of these categories and two tables showing their prevalence within the literature analyzed.

As I believe I have shown in the following literature review, religion has recently made a kind of resurgence into the consciousness of social workers and social work academics. It is an

expanding area of study within our field and, as such, there is a need for a diverse and interdisciplinary conversation about the role of religion and spirituality in the work that we do.

Religion can be a tricky concept to discuss, and even harder to teach about. There are many problems we might encounter when we characterize a client's needs or experiences as religiously or spiritually informed. To begin with, what do we include and what do we exclude in those designations? How do we apply those two terms - religion and spirituality - differentially and what is at stake when we do? My hope is that by attending to the hidden assumptions and unstated implications of the language we use to teach and think about religion in social work, I will be able to offer a small contribution to this emerging conversation by refining our awareness of what we are saying and what we are teaching new social workers.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This literature review begins with an introduction to discourse analysis and its relevance to the field of social work. The introduction to my chosen method of analysis is followed by a brief summary of prevailing themes in the treatment of the concept of religion within social work literature. I focus especially on differences in treatment of the concepts "religion" and "spirituality," and the implications of this divide, which I will problematize. Finally, the review concludes with a consideration of the role of religion in social work education.

Discourse Analysis and Post-Structuralism

Discourse analysis is a form of content analysis grounded in the poststructuralist school of thought, which holds that discourse “refers both to the way language systematically organizes concepts, knowledge, and experience and to the ways in which it excludes alternative forms of organization. Thus, the boundaries between language, social action, knowledge and power are blurred” (Finlayson, 1999, p. 62). From this perspective, as Park and Bhuyan (2012) have written, "no usage of language can ever be considered neutral, impartial, or apolitical" (p. 21). Discourse analysis differs from content analysis in its capacity to consider language in "an active way" (Carbó, et al., 2016, p. 376); it assumes that the way we talk about concepts places restrictions on the ways we are able to think about them, or act on them. As a methodology, discourse analysis helps to show how discourses are imbued with reiterative templates of understanding, ideas that are packaged, consumed, and reproduced according to the implicit rules conveyed in the ways they are discussed. One way to get a closer look at this process is by examining the teaching of abstract but powerful concepts like "race," "patriotism," or "religion."

It is a fundamental premise of this thesis that the concept of religion is implicitly constructed for social work students in their education through the use of curricula, which function as authoritative texts defining the field that students prepare to enter. In other words, the way social work students are taught about religion, often through the course materials used in their education, has the effect of creating particular understandings of religion for those students, especially as it relates to the field of social work. In this way even if religion were absent from social work curricula it would delimit the field, effectively suggesting that religion is not within the purview of social work. We may consider, in this vein, Hardy's (2013) observation, i.e., "that which is *available* in social work journals can have the unintended consequence of establishing for their readers that which is *valuable*" (p. 380). I propose we extend that logic to our thinking about social work curricula. That which is *taught* in social work curricula has the consequence (intended or unintended) of establishing, for students, that which is *valuable*. Since different schools use different sets of curricula, multiple constructions of religion are possible according to the materials used. By examining curricula representative of social work education within the United States, this master's thesis project identifies a typology of constructs of religion, highlighting emerging themes and considering implications of different formulations.

Within the field of social work discourse analysis has been productively used to interrogate the emergence and implications of concepts such as "culture" (Park, 2005) and "mindfulness" (Barker, 2014). Using this methodology can help to illuminate biases and unseen power structures affecting the field. Education is an especially important area in which to apply this mode of analysis because it is the arena in which biases and power structures are often perpetuated through their reproduction within the academy. We train students to think and work within the boundaries of the curricula that we use to teach them.

To my knowledge, a discourse analysis of the construction of religion in social work education has not yet been performed. Such analysis will benefit the field by providing a better understanding of the ways new social workers consume the concept for their own use and inevitable reproduction.

Religion in the Field of Social Work

In America, the field of social work is commonly seen to have developed from a religious context. Forerunners of modern social work, the "Charity Organization Societies," settlement houses, and other early charitable or philanthropic institutions of the late 19th century, were directly linked to the Catholic Church. Hodge (2016) describes this as the first of three phases in the development of the relationship between religion and social work. The second phase, as Hodge (2016) writes, is characterized by a rapid secularization process driven by enlightenment conceptions of modernity and a desire to "professionalize" the field. The aversion to writing about religion in the first half of the twentieth century was so extreme that during the entire decade of the 1950s social work scholars produced only 13 articles addressing religion and spirituality published in the peer reviewed journals in "Social Services Abstracts" (Hodge, 2016, p. 6), a prominent academic resource for social work scholarship.

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, social work scholars have taken a renewed interest in the role of religion and spirituality in social work, initiating the third and most recent phase, which Hodge calls the "reemergence" of religion in social work. Recent publication rates of articles addressing religion and spirituality in the field have grown exponentially. The database, *Social Work Abstracts*, shows that 337 of these articles were published in the 1980's, 992 in the 1990's, and an astonishing 2,937 in the early part of this century (Hodge 2016).

In 2004, a new journal, the *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work*, published its inaugural issue (*Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*).

Although, the impact of this publication on the field of social work is debatable, one measure comes from the *Scimago Journal & Country Rank*, which places it consistently in the third or fourth quartile among other social work journals (*Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work*), suggesting a relatively low readership and impact on the field. Despite the fact that research on religion and spirituality in social work is growing relative to its past, engagement with the topic may still be restricted to a small cluster of interested scholars.

In 2013, Kimberly Hardy performed a content analysis of the treatment of "The Black Church" in six mainstream social work journals. To begin this project, she analyzed all 2,522 articles appearing in those six journals within a ten-year period, between 2000 and 2010, coding them for religion, spirituality, or both as the main topic of each paper. She found a total number of 86 articles (3.4%) that fit the criteria for inclusion in her sample (Hardy, 2013). Although Hardy found only a small number of articles addressing her intended topic, she incidentally discovered that 27 of those 86 articles (31%) were written by the same two authors: David Hodge and Edward Canda. The writings of these two scholars clearly dominate the discourse (Hardy, 2013). Though their contribution is undoubtedly valuable, there is a need in the field for more diverse perspectives on this issue.

New authors are gradually entering the conversation. Some have focused their efforts on an attempt to pinpoint the precise meaning and application of the terms "religion" and "spirituality" (Hill et al., 2000; Hodge, 2015; Starnino, 2016; Wong & Vinsky, 2009). Others have focused on the integration of these concepts into practice contexts (Gilligan & Furness, 2005; Oxhandler & Pargament, 2014; Oxhandler, Parish, Torres, & Achenbaum, 2015). The field

of social work is reconfiguring its relationship to religion and spirituality, repairing a century-old rupture prompted by the recognition of a problematically enmeshed relationship between social work and religious -- especially Christian -- values and traditions. During its inception, social work was too close to its western religious origins to support competent work with clients from different backgrounds. As social workers became aware of this problem, the field made a drastic move to secularize. Currently, religion is being reintroduced as an object of interest for social workers, along with the relatively new and parallel concept of "spirituality." As this process continues, it is important that the field engage with diverse perspectives on religion and spirituality. Too much uniformity in scholarship or domination of the field by a handful of scholars becomes a discursive problem because it fails to represent the diversity of traditions of knowledge and belief that are integral to our lives and the lives of our clients. In the next section, I will clarify this problem of uniformity in definition by examining the ostensible divide between religion and spirituality.

Religion and Spirituality

Although there is ongoing conversation in the field, Canda's 2010 definitions of religion and spirituality are widely cited and serve to epitomize the most commonly encountered formulation within social work literature. In Canda's words, "spirituality refers to a universal quality of human beings and their cultures related to the quest for meaning, purpose, morality, transcendence, well-being, and profound relationships with ourselves, others, and ultimate reality" (p. 59). Religion, on the other hand, "is an institutionalized (i.e., systematic) pattern of values, beliefs, symbols, behaviors, and experiences that are oriented toward spiritual concerns, shared by a community, and transmitted over time in traditions" (p. 59). In this formulation, religion presumes spirituality, but spirituality does not presume religion. Because the two

concepts are so often connected, and so frequently defined in opposition, a consideration of one necessitates a consideration of the other.

A more comprehensive differentiation of the concepts of religion and spirituality for our purposes has been conducted in the adjacent field of psychology, where Hill and colleagues (2000) have organized a synthesis and overview of the two concepts operating in mental health at large. They consider spirituality in the context of secular modernity and suggest that, for many, spirituality has acquired a positive valence in its capacity to refer to direct, personal experiences, unmediated by the confines of institutionalized traditions. In turn, established traditions, especially around institutions like churches, are thought to be characteristic aspects of religion, which tends to be more negatively perceived. Hill and colleagues propose that this polarization along independent-institutional and good-bad axes oversimplifies the relationship between the two concepts, confounds study, and ignores the reality that these two phenomena are "inherently intertwined" (p. 72). Elsewhere, Pargament (1999) supports this point, reminding us that virtually all religions are interested in spiritual matters and that religious and spiritual expression always occurs in some social context.

Addressing this distinction, Wong and Vinsky (2009) have advocated for a need to historicize and contextualize religion and spirituality. They take issue with the tendency to separate the two in academic writing, arguing that doing so normalizes Euro-Christian ideas about the divide between spiritual experience and religious tradition. They write that "the assumption of spirituality as neutral and non-sectarian—one that transcends history, culture and ideological interpretation, and is elevated as 'pure' and 'good' and free from baggage—is less detectable and thus more persuasive in leading us to impose and reproduce status quo exclusions. Such a claim sets up the hierarchy of spirituality and religion, and a colonial othering of

racialized ethnic groups who are often represented as 'more religious than spiritual'" (p. 1355). One problem with the concept of spirituality is that, because the term tends to obscure its own historically contingent development, it also hides inherent power dynamics. The religious is discursively diminished in opposition to the spiritual.

The anthropologist, Talal Asad, has famously argued that academics have an obligation to a deep contextualization of phenomena that we identify as religious. He contends that a "universalist definition of religion" will always be inadequate, "...not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes" (p. 29). Asad traces the origins of the modern, concept of religion as universal through the European reformation and holds that the concept as we know it now has a "specific Christian history" (p. 42). He writes, "From being a concrete set of practical rules attached to specific processes of power and knowledge, religion has come to be abstracted and universalized" (p. 42). It is this abstraction that allows us to speak of religion across different traditions in order to compare, say, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Christianity and to consider them all variously religions. However, this abstraction also obscures the disciplinary effect of the practical rules attached to specific religious rituals, which imbue their subjects with certain kinds of power and knowledge. By ascribing religious activity to the various expressions of a universal human need (Canda, 2013), we fail to see the ways in which different religious traditions, and, importantly, even the ostensibly neutral and non-sectarian tradition of spirituality form and are perpetuated by particular historically situated human subjects.

Cultural Competence and Religious Competence

Among social workers and social work scholars, there is a tendency to associate religion with the discussion of cultural competence. For example, Oxhandler and Pargament (2014) locate religion "under the umbrella of diversity topics requiring cultural competence" in the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) *Code of Ethics* (2008), and highlight a parallel between the treatment of religion and the treatment of culture in social work. Starnino (2016) makes the same association, noting that "scholars emphasize the need for providers to address spirituality in a manner that is consistent with professional ethical principles. Two applicable principles often mentioned in social work include self-determination and cultural competency, meaning that practitioners are expected to work according to the client's spiritual and cultural framework as opposed to imposing their own worldviews" (p. 296). While the admonition to work carefully, taking into account the distinct traditions and values of our clients is important, Park (2005) warns us about the ways in which the concept of "culture" can function as a placeholder, symbolizing racialized "othering" practices that are ostensibly sanitized from social work discourse. We might then ask, is religion also a marker for difference in social work discourse? If so, what are we demarcating when we label something "spiritual" instead of "religious?"

Religion in Social work Education

Scholars have remarked on social workers' apparent lack of preparation to address issues of religion and spirituality (Canda & Furman, 2010; Gilligan & Furness, 2005). A late 20th century study by Sheridan and Hemert (1999), for example, which surveyed 205 MSW students at two graduate schools, offered results that seem to agree with this appraisal, suggesting a need for greater focus on religion and spirituality in social work education. Some writers have even

recommended integrating courses specifically designed to teach religion and spirituality in social work practice (Canda & Furman, 2010; Cnaan, Boddie, & Danzig, 2005; Hodge & Derezotes, 2008). In fact, a significant majority (83%) of the student respondents in the 1999 Sheridan and Hemert survey stated that they would enroll in such a course if it were offered.

How might social work educators best engage with religion and spirituality? A review of the literature indicates that several scholars have proposed methodological approaches or curricula for training around religion and spirituality (Canda, 1989; Hodge & Derezotes, 2008; Ng & Kvan, 1998). In one relatively early example of a proposed curriculum, Canda (1989) suggests a "comparative approach," encouraging students and social workers to both "come to terms with religious and spiritual issues" (p. 43) and to develop fluency in a range of religious traditions. Here, Canda again invokes the discourse of cultural competency, suggesting that ostensibly impartial professionals can achieve practical mastery of the traditions and knowledge sets relevant to working with clients who, in this formulation, seem more historically and contextually bound by their traditions.

In contrast, Ng and Kvan (1998) refute Canda's 1989 suggestion, claiming that it is unreasonable and problematic to expect that social workers could achieve competency in all of the religious traditions they might encounter in the lives of their clients, especially if they are also expected to "come to terms" with their own beliefs (which would suggest fixed value systems). Instead, Ng and Kvan propose that social work education around religion and spirituality should start from an understanding that students must "suspend their belief in the absolute truthfulness of their own *formulations* of both religious and 'scientific' beliefs and to admit to a degree of tentativeness in such formulations" (p. 43). This is in line with the suggestion by Hodge and Derezotes (2008) that a postmodern perspective may help to develop

pedagogy that addresses questions of certainty and "ultimate truth" often inherent in the study of religion and spirituality.

Having completed their education, licensed clinical social workers appear to be positively disposed toward integrating clients' religious and spiritual needs into their practice (Oxhandler et al., 2015); and yet, "self reported behaviors indicate fewer are engaging in behaviors related to integrating clients' [religion and spirituality] into treatment" (p. 231). This could be seen as an indication that social workers, who are otherwise positively inclined to incorporate religion and spirituality into their practice, may not have received adequate training to do so, suggesting a need to enhance these elements of training programs. Indeed, Oxhandler and colleagues (2015) have shown that there is a "positive relationship between prior training and improved orientation toward [religion and spirituality] in practice" (p. 232). Thus, if students were asked during their education to engage more with religion and spirituality as concepts that may be important in the lives of their clients, they might be more prepared to encounter and interact with these concepts in the field.

Looking Ahead

The history of religion in social work is fraught. Initially emerging in direct interaction with religious institutions, the field spent many years disavowing its origins and has only recently developed a renewed interest in studying and teaching about religion and spirituality in the lives of clients and clinicians. The body of scholarship on this topic is rapidly expanding, but it has been disproportionately dominated by a handful of scholars who often put forward a standardized and universalist definition of "religion," juxtaposed against "spirituality," a relatively new analytical category that purports to be free of the baggage adhering to institutional

religion. What kind of person is religious? Who is spiritual? How do we reproduce normative understandings of these concepts in social work graduate education?

A 1999 survey of academic departments at "top ranked" social work programs found that 75% of respondents reported offering "a course in which spirituality or religion was addressed in the curriculum. Of these courses, 74% were required social work courses" (Kilpatrick & Puchalski, 1999). Thus, it seems that social work education does teach about religion, but what is being taught? In the next chapter, I will introduce the methodology and study design that I applied in order to answer that question.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This study used qualitative research methods to address the question, how is religion constructed in social work education? In order to answer that question, I sampled syllabi from required introductory level practice courses at 15 schools from a sample frame of 246 Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited master's in social work programs throughout the United States. I then performed a discourse analysis (as described in the literature review) on the texts addressing religion that appear in those syllabi. By doing this, I illuminate the process by which religion is constructed as a concept to be applied and perpetuated within social work education. This chapter describes my methodology for conducting this study.

Study Design and Sampling

This exploratory/descriptive study design used non-random quota sampling of CSWE accredited master's level social work programs (CSWE, 2016) organized by geographic region. This was done in order to adequately represent diversity of perspectives in social work pedagogy across the United States. I chose to organize programs by geographic region as opposed to some other factor (i.e., cost of admission, state or private school, urban or rural) as a way of ascertaining a random arrangement of socioeconomic conditions, political differences, and other broad social factors without artificially constraining those variables. It thus allowed me to remove my own bias as the researcher in constructing categories for differentiation.

Accredited programs identified as meeting criteria for this study were arranged in clusters according to five geographic regions: Pacific (WA, OR, CA, NV, AK, HI & AZ), Frontier (ID, MT, WY, UT, CO, NM, OK, TX, & KS), Midwest (ND, SD, NE, MN, IA, MO, WI, IL, IN, MI, & OH), Northeast (ME, NH, VT, MA, NY, RI, CT, NJ, DC, PA, MD, & DE), and Southeast

(WV, VA, KY, TN, NC, SC, AR, LA, MS, AL, GA, & FL). This formulation is based on a schema proposed by geographer Alexandr Trubetskoy (Trubetskoy, 2014). I have added AK and HI to the Pacific region and DC to the Northeast region, though these were not included in Trubetskoy's original schema. The four CSWE accredited schools in The United States unincorporated territory of Puerto Rico were not included in this study in order to control for any differences in the educational practices between nations and to constrain the sample to syllabi and curricula written and delivered in the English language.

Data Collection Methods

In order to obtain a syllabus from first year required practice courses I contacted department heads, registrars, and professors at each school appearing in my sample. I requested that they email me a syllabus from the appropriate course. The criteria for inclusion of a syllabus were that it must be from either semester of a first year introductory practice class taught in an accredited master's level social work program within the last three years.

Once I had obtained 15 syllabi (three from each of the five chosen geographic regions) I used library services available through Smith College and New York University in order to obtain at least one textbook used in each program. Although the syllabi sometimes cite other works that may be used to teach about religion and spirituality, it was not within the scope of this project to analyze all of the materials on all 15 syllabi. Therefore, I chose to focus my analysis on textbooks, because textbooks are authoritative texts that are common to all of the syllabi I obtained. While some courses do not offer secondary articles, all of them require a textbook, and sometimes only a textbook, often requiring the reading of it cover to cover over the course of the class.

Having obtained 14 textbooks and one book-length case study used in the class taught at a single school from the southeast cluster, I used indexing or digital search tools to find references to religion and spirituality within the texts. I then excerpted those relevant portions of the texts. This collection -- the compilation of all references to religion and spirituality within these 15 texts -- forms the final sample used for my review and analysis of the literature.

Data Analysis

I analyzed data obtained in this study according to the methods of discourse analysis (Carbó, et al., 2016). In order to conduct this discourse analysis, I excerpted fragments of a text from a specific context: social work educational curricula. This context constitutes the discourse. The fragments of text became data for analysis that were taken to be representative of that discourse. By examining both the context of the production of these texts and the fragments themselves, I came to understand the way in which the concept of religion is constructed and reconstructed in the discourse.

Carbó and colleagues (2016) describe the beginning steps of critical discourse analysis (CDA): "(a) Look for patterns in the data; (i) look for variability in the data; differences in the content or form of the narratives; and (ii) look for consistency: identify of [sic] similar patterns in the different narratives... (b) locate the pattern and its function" (p.369). In this manner, throughout my discussion section, I pose fragments of text alongside and against one another in order to illuminate the state of the discourse, highlighting the variety of constructions of religion.

The final step in this analysis was to consider and discuss the ways that these constructions might function to predispose social work graduate students to apply in their work normative understandings of religion and spirituality. As mentioned in the preceding literature review, CDA differs from content analysis in its capacity to consider language in "an active way"

(Carbó et al., 2016, p. 376) – that is, not only structured by the context in which it is produced but also continuing to structure and reproduce specific power dynamics according to the rules of the discourse. In my discussion, I described potential consequences of the constructions of religion that have been identified in this study.

In the following chapter I will detail the findings of this study.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

I have organized the major findings of this study into a typology categorizing the ways in which religion is constructed in the social work educational materials collected. In this chapter, I will present my typology, including an assessment of regional differences and related findings, followed by a discussion of the study's limitations and the potential for generalizability of these findings.

Modes of Presentation

The typology I have constructed in order to organize my findings identifies three prominent ways of thinking about religion in the field of social work: (1) as a resource, (2) an aspect of culture, and (3) as an assessment factor. I will refer to these ways of thinking about religion as *modes of presentation*, in order to emphasize the way that curricula function to present concepts to students so that they may internalize and, in their own work, deploy, and reproduce the concept in the same manner. Each mode of presentation represents a different way of constructing religion as an object of social work practice for students.

The categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, a text might primarily present religion as an aspect of culture but also recommend that social workers assess the role it plays as a cultural factor in a client's life. When I propose that a text primarily constructs religion as an aspect of culture, for example, I mean to say that according to my reading this is the quality of religion that the authors of the text appear to think is the most critical for a student to consider.

One text, Shulman (2016), actively resists a primary mode of presentation by citing multiple sources that sometimes contradict or critique one another. In the case of the Shulman text, I did not identify a primary mode of presentation.

Another text, Fadiman (1998), is a book-length case study titled *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. It is a well-known work of journalistic anthropology that tells the story of a Hmong refugee child who is diagnosed with epilepsy by her American doctors, but considered spiritually gifted by her Hmong parents. The syllabus from which I drew this text uses the Fadiman text in teaching about what the syllabus calls "culturally relevant practice with diverse populations." Based on that designation and the content of the book I have placed this text in the "aspect of culture" category. The use of this long case study to teach about culture and religion is unique amongst the syllabi I analyzed. All other courses analyzed primarily use textbooks or, sometimes, articles, which were not surveyed in this project.

The following table, Table 1, shows the modes of presentation of religion across the various texts analyzed. I have indicated primary modes of presentation with three X's and secondary modes with a single X.

Table 1

Modes of Presentation of Religion in Social Work Education

Text	Resource	Aspect of Culture	Assessment Factor
Birkenmaier, Ber-Weger & Dewees (2011)	X	XXX	
Saleebey (2012)	XXX		X
Sue (2006)	X	XXX	
Coady & Lehman (2008)	XXX	X	
Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried, & Larsen (2013)	XXX		X
Shulman (2016)	X	X	
Miley (2017)	X	XXX	X
Boyle, Hull, Mather, Smith & Farley (2006)	X	XXX	
Cummins, Sevel, & Pedrick (2012)	X	XXX	X
Murphy & Dillon (2011)	X	X	XXX
Kirst-Ashman & Hull (2015)	XXX	X	X
Ragg (2011)	X	XXX	X
Turner (2011)			XXX
Walsh (2013)	X		XXX
Fadiman (1998)		XXX	

Resource. As the table above shows, four out of 15 texts primarily present religion and spirituality as a resource. The language used in these texts involves phrases such as, "resilience" (Saleebey, 2013, p. 81), "support" (Congress, 2008, p. 140) or source of "strength" (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012, p. 447). For the purposes of this project I am including them all under the heading of "resource" because they all invoke a discourse that describes religion as a resource to be relied upon in the lives of clients or clinicians. Often, the implication is that it is the clinician's task to somehow activate or draw upon this resource in the life of the client.

The Kirst-Ashman and Hull text is one example of this mode of presentation. As the authors write, "Some clients maintain strong values, which sustain them during difficult times or

motivate them to make changes. For instance, an extremely religious client may rely on her beliefs, minister, and fellow parishioners to help her cope with the death of her father." (2012, p. 172) Later, the authors explain that because spirituality functions as a resource, it should be assessed according to this function. "Effective assessment requires recognizing client system strengths.... Consider such areas as spirituality, mutual support, respect for elders, and a willingness to share with others as strengths upon which to build" (2012, p. 447). Here, religion becomes an assessment factor through its value as a resource, and social workers are encouraged to operationalize that resource. It is primarily a resource and secondarily an assessment factor.

Similarly, Rothery (Coady & Lehman, 2008) presents the case study of a client, who, "...if she were asked what keeps her going in very difficult times... would invariably give her church and faith a full measure of credit. Her religion comprises a very powerful set of sustaining beliefs," (p. 101). Later, in another chapter in the same text, Congress writes, "contact with cultural and religious institutions often provides support to an immigrant family" (Coady & Lehman, 2008, p. 140). In this case, religion is connected to culture through its crucial function as a resource. It is primarily a resource and secondarily an aspect of culture.

Aspect of Culture. Texts that primarily present religion as an aspect of culture often use the language of "diversity" (Miley, O'Melia, & Dubois, 2017, p. 228) or "cultural competency" (Birkenmaier, Berg-Weger, & Dewees, 2011, p. 5) to describe the ways in which religion and spirituality function. Seven of the 15 texts analyzed use this mode of presentation, making it the most common mode appearing in my survey. This is likely because it is the mode of presentation apparently espoused by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (NASW, 2017), which admonishes in its code of ethics under the heading "cultural competence and social diversity" the following:

(c) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical disability. (2017).

Considering the prominent role of the NASW in setting norms for professional social workers, it seems fair to conclude that several texts rely on this guideline in their construction of religion as an aspect of culture.

Birkenmaier and colleagues (2011) make the connection to the NASW standards explicit. Citing the indicators for the achievement of the NASW standards for cultural competence in social work practice (NASW, 2015), the authors note that, "Spirituality is integrally connected with culture and therefore gives practitioners access to knowledge about important dimensions of their clients." (p. 5). The implication of this rhetoric is that social workers should come to better understand their clients' cultures in order to achieve "cultural competency," at least in part through an understanding of their religion and spirituality.

Miley et al. (2017) offers an extreme example of this mode of presentation, locating ethnic and minority groups under separate subheadings in the chapter and individually describing the typical role of religion for each group (p. 218-228). The text features subheadings for African-Americans, Native Americans, Arab Americans, and others, including brief descriptions of the religious tendencies observed within each group. Miley et al. recommends, "Social workers need to expand their base of knowledge about cultures to become familiar with the diverse religious and spiritual traditions of those with whom they work" (2017, p. 229). Again, this is reminiscent of the language in the NASW cultural competency mandate, urging social

workers to "obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity," (NASW, 2017).

The Cummins, Sevel, and Pedrick (2012) text shows how religion can be constructed primarily as an aspect of culture, and secondarily presented as an assessment factor. "Within the social work literature, spirituality is often incorporated into practice by way of assessment because of the linkage between the client's cultural worldview and spirituality." (p. 194) Here we can see how Cummins et al. (2012) present spirituality as an important assessment factor not due to the independent value of spirituality or its capacity to function as a resource, but because of its connection to the client's culture.

Assessment factor. Of the 15 texts analyzed only three present religion and spirituality primarily as assessment factors without first overtly designating them as resources or aspects of culture. It is easiest to see this construction in Walsh's work (2006), which is organized into chapters focusing on different theory bases for social work practice (e.g. "Ego Psychology," "Family Emotional Systems Theory," "Cognitive Theory," etc.). Each chapter includes subheadings for different features of the theory ("major concepts," "assessment and intervention," "case illustrations," etc.) and a subheading for the role of spirituality in that particular theory. When spirituality is considered in this way, it obtains its own independent value; that is, religion or spirituality become stand-alone concepts with independent essential meaning, which can then be considered differently in different theory traditions. The object of observation is not an aspect of culture or a kind of resource; it is simply religion or spirituality *sui generis*.

Regional Differences

Below, Table 2 shows differences in modes of presentation according to region. Where schools do not require the portion of the text addressing religion, I have omitted that text from the table. For example, according to the syllabus obtained for the school labeled "Frontier 2," students are not required to read the portion of the assigned text that addresses religion.

Similarly, the syllabus obtained for the school labeled "Frontier 1" did not assign specific reading, making it impossible to identify whether or not students do or do not actually read the portion of the text addressing religion.

Table 2

Regional Differences in Modes of Presentation of Religion in Social Work Education

School	Primary mode(s) of presentation	Text(s)
Midwest 1	Aspect of Culture	Birkenmaier, Ber-Weger & Dewees (2011)
Midwest 2	Aspect of Culture & Resource	Sue (2006); Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried, & Larsen (2013)
Midwest 3	Resource	Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried, & Larsen (2013)
Frontier 1	Unknown	Kirst-Ashman & Hull (2015); Shulman (2016)
Frontier 2	Unknown	
Frontier 3	Assessment	Walsh (2013)
Pacific 1	Aspect of Culture	Boyle, Hull, Mather, Smith & Farley (2006)
Pacific 2	Aspect of Culture	Miley (2017)
Pacific 3	Aspect of Culture	Cummins, Sevel, & Pedrick (2012)
Northeast 1	Resource	Coady & Lehman (2008)
Northeast 2	Resource	Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried, & Larsen (2013)
Northeast 3	Aspect of Culture	Miley (2017)
Southeast 1	Aspect of Culture	Fadiman (1998)
Southeast 2	Assessment Factor	Murphy & Dillon (2011)
Southeast 3	Aspect of Culture & Resource	Ragg (2011); Kirst-Ashman & Hull (2015)

Regional findings were not significant for any mode of presentation or preference for a particular text. It may be noteworthy that the Pacific region schools all tend to construct religion as an aspect of culture, but the small sample size and the variation in results within and across all four other regional categories makes it hard to meaningfully extrapolate.

Related Findings

In the course of organizing my typology, I observed a number of secondary findings. Though incidental to my research, they may prove pertinent to future inquiries regarding religion and spirituality in social work. I will present these related findings here and in the discussion section propose some ways that future study might expand on them.

The authors of the 15 texts I analyzed tend to privilege the ostensibly "spiritual" over the "religious," while seven of the 15 do not explicitly differentiate between the terms religious and spiritual, often using them interchangeably. The texts that do explicitly differentiate between religious and spiritual offer spirituality as a more open-ended, all-encompassing term. In particular, Canda's chapter in Saleebey (2013) refers again and again to his "spiritual path" (p. 86) and "spiritual practices" (p. 87), which are derived from religious contexts but remain optional for Canda's eclectic practice and can operate independently of their former context. As Canda writes, "Over the course of many years, certain practices and religious or philosophical involvements wax and wane; I continuously explore new healing activities and try them out for periods. If they work well for me, I continue. If not, I drop them" (p. 86). For Canda, expression of spiritual meaning through religious ritual is always optional and individually determined. He writes, "Authentic faith grows by continuous weaving together of insights from many kinds of information and from direct experiential exploration of one's own consciousness and the vastness of the universe in so far as humanly accessible" (p. 83). Canda envisions spiritual liberation as an "intrinsic aspect of all human beings" (p. 83). In the following discussion section, I will return to the usefulness and potential pitfalls of constructing spirituality in this manner.

A final observation is that 10 of the 15 texts analyzed cite Hodge or Canda. Three of those 10 texts cite both authors. This would seem to confirm and expand upon Hardy's (2013) remark concerning the predominance of these two scholars (p. 384). Canda's contribution is particularly notable in the texts I analyzed. He has written one of the chapters on religion in its entirety (2012) and provides an inlay for the Boyle (2006) text, sharing his definitions of religion and spirituality.

Summary of Findings

Three different modes of presentation of religion were identified in the social work materials analyzed. Authors tended to present religion as either a resource, an aspect of culture, or an assessment factor. Aspect of culture was the most common primary mode of presentation, with seven of the 15 texts analyzed favoring this mode of presentation. Although my survey was organized by region, regional differences were not significant. In the following section, I will discuss the limitations of my survey.

Limitations

Sample size is a major limitation on this project. In order to provide a statistically significant representation of the way religion is constructed and presented differently by social work programs in different regions across the United States, a larger sample size would be necessary.

It may also be important to analyze all of the texts on each syllabus that address religion and spirituality in order to obtain a fuller picture of the materials presenting the concepts. Some schools assign articles or textbooks in addition to the ones analyzed here. Thus, the analysis I present is not a complete analysis of the syllabi for classes appearing in my sample. However, I chose to focus my analysis on textbooks, because they are authoritative texts common to all of the syllabi obtained. Further, while some courses do not offer secondary articles, all of them require a textbook and sometimes only a textbook, often requiring students to read them in their entirety over the course of the class.

Although the modes of presentation I identify in this survey are not generalizable by region, they are undoubtedly repeated in other social work literature. This project is best seen as an exploratory study offering a preliminary categorization of constructions of religion and

spirituality in social work literature, all of which could be refined or expanded with a larger sample size.

In the next and final chapter of this thesis, I will discuss the implications of my findings.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The three modes of presenting religion identified in this study are common in social work literature and relevant to social work practice. Social workers seek to "enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (National Association of Social Workers, 2017). Assessing clients, taking into consideration available resources, and working in a culturally sensitive manner are integral to our work. Still, when we do so, we might ask, what are the unexamined consequences of these constructions of religion and spirituality? What happens when religion is identified as a resource, an aspect of culture, or an assessment factor? In this section I will offer a discussion of my findings and recommendations for future research in this area.

"Spiritual but Not Religious"

One consequence of identifying religion as an aspect of culture is that religion and spirituality then have the potential to be used as markers for difference, posed against an unstated normative subject. In a discourse analysis of the use of the term "culture" in social work literature, Park (2005) proposes that culture has "largely replaced the categories of race and ethnicity as the preferred trope of difference" (p. 29). This has occurred without substantial change to the conversation about difference at large, allowing old templates for race and class hierarchy to continue in more discreet forms. In cases where religion is defined as an aspect of culture, we need to ask what about this form of religion is "cultural?" What is outside this form of culture?

In asking these questions, we may find that certain kinds of people are more likely to be attributed characteristic religious patterns than others. For instance, Miley et al., (2017), which individually addresses the religious tendencies of different groups under separate subheadings, does contain a subheading for "Non-Hispanic White Americans," but within that subheading there is no discussion of the religious habits of these Non-Hispanic White Americans despite the fact that there is such a discussion for all of the other groups.

The kind of difference relevant here is not only racial difference (although that is one important dimension); it is also a difference derived from the extent to which we see a group of people imbedded in a particular context. The anthropologist, Arjun Appadurai, has written about the ways in which anthropologists confine people to places by designating them as "natives" of those places: "natives are not only persons who are from certain places, and belong to those places, but they are also those who are somehow *incarcerated*, or confined, in those places" (1988, p. 37). In a similar sense, social workers may be ascribing cultural and religious traditions only to people who we imagine are confined to the contexts of those traditions. By designating certain groups as bearers of culture or religion we necessarily construct an opposing category.

This phenomenon is especially visible in the construction of what Wong and Vinsky call the "'spiritual' Western 'self'" (p.1353). As Wong and Vinsky (2009) observe, when we split the term "spiritual" from the "religious," we tend to create a kind of hierarchy of forms of belief in which "religion" assumes a position that is lower, older, pre-modern, and sometimes racialized. This is posed against spirituality -- the elevated, enlightened, and modern expression of "an intrinsic aspect of all human beings" (Canda, 2012, p. 83), unconstrained by history or tradition. As Wong and Vinsky (2009) put it, "If the racialized ethnic 'other' is religiously and culturally bound by traditions and doctrines, the western 'self' is spiritual, free, and independent in their

personal quest of the Ultimate. The ordering of social relations between the 'spiritual' Western 'self' and the religious ethnic 'other' is produced" (p. 1353). I propose that we may be reproducing and maintaining this hierarchy through teaching, unselfconsciously, about religion as an aspect of culture.

Social work is in a precarious position. We need to operationalize ambiguous concepts like religion and spirituality, but we also need to be cautious about the consequences of the ways in which we apply those concepts. As a profession characterized by its application, we do not have the luxury of being a more academic and less engaged field. We have to teach about religion and spirituality so that we can engage with them in our work.

Increasing numbers of people identify as "spiritual but not religious" (Masci & Lipka, 2016), and there are obvious patterns of religious affiliation within given ethnic groups or given regions. Speaking about these phenomena in themselves is not inherently problematic, it is, in fact, very necessary. However, as we find ways of addressing these phenomena in our research and our clinical practice, we should also work to recognize the changes in power structures and social relationships that may occur as a result of the language we use and the ways that we teach.

Writing about the emergence of the concept of religion during the European reformation, Talal Asad (1993) advises:

In this movement we have not merely an increase in religious toleration, certainly not merely a new scientific discovery, but the mutation of a concept and a range of social practices which is itself part of a wider change in the modern landscape of power and knowledge. That change included a new kind of state, a new kind of science, a new kind of legal and moral subject. To understand this mutation it is essential to keep clearly distinct that which theology tends to obscure: the occurrence of events (utterances,

practices, dispositions) and the authorizing processes that give those events meaning and embody that meaning in concrete institutions. (p. 43)

Similarly, if we find that the relatively new term "spiritual" has unique applications to certain kinds of subjects and that the recognition of culturally linked religiosity in other subjects has the capacity to illuminate something, we might also ask, what is it obscuring?

New Directions

Further research in this area may benefit by narrowing the focus on particular religious groups, especially as a means of better understanding the treatment of particular religious or spiritual subjects. By analyzing social work literature that specifically addresses Islam, for example, we might find that Islam, because of its current position as a prominent religious "other," is frequently presented as an aspect of culture while Buddhism -- perhaps because of its connection to popular mindfulness practices -- is always presented using the language of the resource.

It may also be useful to design a study that examines social work master's programs explicitly affiliated with a religious tradition. Not all social work programs have lost touch with their historical roots in religious organizations, and there are many programs connected to faith-based groups. Because of their religious orientation, such programs may teach students in ways that differ from their secular counterparts.

Most importantly, future work on this topic would be improved by the inclusion of a larger and more diverse range of publications. Social work textbooks are by their very nature meant to be general introductions to the field at large. As such, they can sometimes fail to take strong positions on topics, tending instead toward brief overviews of large and complex concepts. Future research endeavoring to analyze the construction of religion in social work

education or especially in social work more broadly would do well to include in its sample base journal articles and other publications as well as textbooks. One way to address a study to this material might be to sample social work courses that have a more central focus on teaching about religion and spirituality.

Conclusion

By conducting a discourse analysis (Carbó, et al., 2016) of educational materials used in accredited master's level social work programs throughout the United States, this master's thesis has proposed three common modes of presentation of religion in social work education: (1) as a resource, (2) as an aspect of culture, and (3) as an assessment factor. I have discussed the implications of these concepts, focusing especially on the predominance of the aspect of culture mode, which may encourage new social workers to conduct assessments of religion primarily in the lives of the racial or ethnic “other” and to diminish its role in the lives of clients perceived as more “normative” subjects, often white and modern-seeming.

This work has been carried out in the context of a professional field that is rapidly expanding its engagement with religion and spirituality. My hope is that the typology I offer here will help to clarify the unstated implications of our existing discourse on the concepts of religion and spirituality, and serve as an entry point into further studies focused on applying, refining, or expanding this typology.

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Appendix:
HSR Application
2016-2017

Smith College School for Social Work
 Human Subjects Review Application

Project title: **The Construction of Religion in Social Work Education**

Is this a joint project (more than one researcher working on this study)? No ___ Yes

Name of researcher(s): **Michael Waldon**

Check one: MSW ___ PhD

Phone (include contact researcher for joint projects): **(707) 489 - 8814**

Email (include email for contact researcher for joint projects): **Waldon.mw@gmail.com**

Research advisor: **Dominique Moyse-Steinberg**

The signature below testifies that I, as the researcher, pledge to conform to the following: As one engaged in research utilizing human subjects, I acknowledge the rights and welfare of the participants involved. I acknowledge my responsibility as a researcher to secure the informed consent of the participants by explaining the procedures and by describing the risks and benefits of the study. I assure the Committee that all procedures performed under the study will be conducted in accordance with those federal regulations and Smith School for Social Work policies that govern research involving human subjects.

Any deviation from the study (e.g.: change in researcher, research methodology, participant recruitment procedures, data collection procedures, etc.) will be submitted to the Committee by submitting a Protocol Change Form for which you MUST receive approval *prior* to implementation. I agree to report all deviations to the study protocol or adverse events IMMEDIATELY to the Committee.

Researcher:

Michael Waldon
 Name(s)

November 20, 2016
 (Date)

Research Advisor/Committee Chair:

Dominique Moyse Steinberg
 Name(s)

November 20, 2016
 (Date)

IN THE SECTIONS BELOW WHERE DESCRIPTIONS ARE REQUESTED, BE SURE TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT DETAIL TO ENABLE THE COMMITTEE TO EVALUATE YOUR PROCEDURES AND RESPONSES.

1. DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH PROJECT INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Briefly summarize the purpose of the study, the over-arching research question, the specific research design you will use and why you have chosen it for this study, and the planned use of human participants, and a brief synopsis of relevant literature that points to need for further study (NO MORE THAN A HANDFUL OF ARTICLES) ***with sufficient detail and in clear, concise language*** (space will expand in all sections as you enter your information):

This study asks the question, how is religion constructed in social work education? In order to answer this question, I will obtain a sample of 25 syllabi from master's level social work practice sequences throughout the United States, and perform a discourse analysis (Finlayson, 1999) of all portions of the texts on those syllabi that address religion. By doing this, I hope to clarify the ways the concept is defined and constructed within the discourse of social work education and will then discuss the implications for practice and training.

Discourse analysis is a form of content analysis that arises from the poststructuralist school of thought, which proposes that discourse "refers both to the way language systematically organizes concepts, knowledge, and experience and to the ways in which it excludes alternative forms of organization. Thus, the boundaries between language, social action, knowledge and power are blurred" (Finlayson, 1999). From this perspective, as Park and Bhuyan have written, "no usage of language can ever be considered neutral, impartial, or apolitical" (p. 21). Thus, a fundamental premise of this project is that the concept of religion is implicitly constructed for social work students in their education through the use of course materials, which function as authoritative texts that define the concept as it relates to the field the students are preparing to enter. A poststructuralist perspective holds that these authoritative definitions, which are not always directly stated but can be inferred from the way that concepts are discussed, have the effect of constructing the concept for students to consume and apply. From this perspective, even the absence of religion (or any other concept)

from social work curricula serves to delimit the field, effectively suggesting it is not within the purview of social work.

Although the field of social work originally developed in the context of religious movements, it was rapidly secularized and, as an academic discipline, has been mostly separated from its religious origins (Hodge, 2013). The emergence of the concept of "religion" in the academic field of social work has been widely addressed by a number of authors, often in contrast to the term "spirituality" (Hill et al., 2000; Wong & Vinsky, 2009), as has its integration into practice (Oxhandler & Pargament, 2014; Oxhandler et al. 2015), but religion in social work education has been less frequently addressed (Canda, 1989, Sheridan & Hemert, 1999). A discourse analysis of the use of religion in social work education has not yet been performed, and would benefit the field by providing an on-the-ground representation of the ways new social workers encounter the concept. Other authors have productively applied discourse analysis to understand the emergence of such concepts as "culture" (Park, 2005) and "mindfulness" (Barker, 2014) and their usage in the field of social work

2. PARTICIPANTS: if you are only observing public behavior, skip to question d in this section.

a). How many participants will be involved in the study?

I am expecting to obtain a sample of 25 syllabi from masters in social work programs throughout the united states.

b). List specific eligibility requirements for participants (or describe screening procedures), including exclusionary and inclusionary criteria. For example, if including only male participants, say so, and *explain why*. If using data from a secondary de-identified source, skip to question e in this section.

My sample will be drawn from curricula used at master's level education in social work programs across the United States. In order to identify these programs in a manner that adequately represents the diversity of perspectives within the country, I will use cluster sampling to split the country into five different regions and then randomly choose five schools from within each of those regions. The regions will be Pacific (WA, OR, CA, NV, & AZ), Frontier (ID, MT, WY, UT, CO, NM, OK, TX, & KS), Midwest (ND, SD, NE, MN, IA, MO, WI, IL, IN, MI IN, & OH), Northeast (ME, NH, VT, MA, NY, RI, CT, NJ, PA, MD, & DE) and Southeast (WV, VA, KY, TN, NC, SC, AR, LA, MS, AL, GA, & FL). This formulation is based on an organization proposed by geographer Alexandr Trubetskoy (Trubetskoy, 2014). The schools included in my sample frame will be all of the 266 CSWE accredited master's level programs in the US (CSWE, 2016). The schools will be organized by region into five clusters, and five schools will be chosen randomly from each cluster. I will then obtain a course syllabus from the required first year practice sequence at each school and conduct a content analysis of the syllabi for any portions of the included texts that address religion. I will then excerpt those portions of the text and analyze them using the tools of discourse analysis. Since a full survey of all the ways in which religion is addressed in social work education is not within the scope of this project, I have chosen to focus my analysis on the first year practice sequence because it is the course in

which students learn practice skills and areas of interest deemed essential for their first year field internships.

Trubetskoy, A. (2014). America in five regions. <http://ispol.com/sasha/five/>
 CSWE (2016). Directory of accredited programs. Retrieved from
<http://www.cswe.org/default.aspx?id=17491>.

c). Describe how participants will be recruited. ***Be specific: give step-by-step description of the entire recruitment process, including getting permission to post flyers or post messages on internet sites.*** Attach all flyers, letters, announcement, email messages etc. that will be used to recruit. ***Include the following statement on any/all recruitment materials/emails/internet postings, etc:*** This study protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC).

d). Is there any relationship between you as the researcher and the participants (e.g. teacher/student, superintendent/principal/teacher; supervisor/clinician; clinician/client, etc.) that might lead to the appearance of coercion? If so, what steps will you take to avoid this situation. For example: "I will not interview individuals who have been direct clients."

e). Are the study *target subjects* members of any of the following federally defined vulnerable populations? (ONLY check if the study focus area is SPECIFICALLY based on any of the listed groups. For instance, if your study is about how persons who are economically disadvantaged access services, you DO check 'Economically disadvantaged' category below. DO NOT CHECK IF SOME OF THESE FOLKS MAY BY CHANCE BE IN A MIXED SAMPLE – EXCEPT IF THERE ARE CHILDREN/UNDER 18 YEAR OLDS. Thus: if you are asking about how individuals who live in inner city locations get to services, you DO NOT check any of the categories below, because there is a range of types of people who live in these environments who may wish to participate, and you do not define the population as 'economically disadvantaged').

Be aware that checking 'yes' ***automatically requires the HSR Full Review.***

____ Yes **X** No

If 'Yes', check the group(s) all that apply in your study:

____ minors (under 18 years of age) Please indicate the approximate age range of minors to be involved. Participants under age 18 require participant assent AND written consent from the parent/legal guardian. Please use related forms.

____ prisoners

____ pregnant women

____ persons with physical disabilities

____ persons with diagnosed mental disabilities

economically disadvantaged

educationally disadvantaged

3. RESEARCH METHODS:

(Check which applies)

Interview, focus group, non-anonymous questionnaire

Anonymous questionnaire/survey

Observation of public behavior

X **Analysis of de-identified data collected elsewhere ('secondary' data analysis)**

() Where did these data come from originally?

Did this original research get IRB approval? **X** Yes No

(Skip to BENEFITS section)

Other (describe)

Describe the nature of the interaction between you and the participants. Additionally, if applicable, include a description of the ways in which different subjects or groups of participants will receive different treatment (e.g., control group vs comparison group, etc.).

a). Please describe, with sufficient detail, the procedure/plan/research methodology to be followed in your research (e.g. this is a quantitative, survey based study; tell us what participants will do; etc).

b). How many times will you meet/interact with participants? (***If you are only observing public behavior, SKIP to question d in this section.***)

c). How much total time will be required of each participant?

d). Where will the data collection occur (please provide sufficient detail)?

e). If you are conducting surveys, attach a copy of the survey instrument to this application. If you are conducting individual interviews or focus groups, including ethnographies or oral

histories, attach a list of the interview questions as an "Attachment". Label attachments alphabetically, with descriptive titles (e.g.: *Attachment A: Interview Questions*).

4. INFORMED CONSENT: (If you are only observing public behavior, SKIP to next section)

a). What categories of consent documentation will you be obtaining from your participants? (Check all that apply)

- written participant consent
- written parent/guardian consent
- Child assent 14-17
- Child assent, assent 6-13
- Adult with guardian consent

b). Attach original consent documents. *note: be advised that, electronic signatures and faxed, signed consents ARE allowed. Please describe how you will gain consent.

5. COLLECTION /RETENTION OF INFORMATION:

a). With sufficient detail, describe the method(s) of recording participant responses (e.g., audiotape, videotape, written notes, surveys, etc.)

b). Include the following statement to describe where and for how long will these materials will be stored and the precautions being taken to ensure the security and safety of the materials,

All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period.

c). Will the recordings of participant responses be coded for subsequent analysis? ***If you are only observing public behavior, SKIP to next section.***

Yes

No

6. CONFIDENTIALITY:

a). What assurances about maintaining privacy will be given to participants about the information collected?

X 1. Anonymity is assured (data cannot be linked to participant identities)

2. Confidentiality is assured (names and identifying information are protected, i.e., stored separately from data).

3. Neither anonymity nor confidentiality is assured

b). If you checked (2) above, describe methods to protect confidentiality with sufficient detail. Describe how you will maintain privacy of the participant as well as the data

c). If you checked (3) above, explain, with sufficient detail, why confidentiality is not assured.

d). If you checked (3) above, provide sufficient detail that describes measures you will take to assure participants understand how their information will be used. Describe and attach any permissions/releases that will be requested from participants.

7. RISKS:

a). Could participation in this study cause participants to feel uncomfortable or distressed?

Yes

No

If yes, provide a detailed description of *what steps* you will take to protect them.

b). Are there any other risks associated with participation (e.g. financial, social, legal, etc.)?

Yes

No

If yes, provide a detailed description of the measures you will take to mitigate these additional risks.

8. COMPENSATION: (If you are only observing public behavior, SKIP to the next section)

Describe any cash or 'gifts' (e.g.: coffee shop gift card) that participants will receive for participating in this research (see guidance about payment/gift compensation in the Smith School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Guideline, at the HSR site in the SSW website).

9. BENEFITS:

a). Describe the potential benefits for you, the researcher, in conducting this study.

This project will be in partial fulfillment of the requirements for my master's in social work degree from Smith College.

b). Describe the potential benefits for individuals who participate as subjects, EXCLUDING payment/gift compensations.

There will be no human subject participants in this project.

c). Describe the potential benefits to the field of clinical social work from this research?

This research will benefit the field of clinical social work by helping to further our understanding of the construction of religion as a concept within social work education. This is important to the continued improvement of the field and its training programs, particularly as they interface with complicated ideas that are difficult to define and are used in various ways across different contexts. By becoming more self-reflexively aware of the way social work education constructs ideas for students, we can identify implicit biases that new students may be acquiring through their training and work to respond appropriately with new research and pedagogy.

10. FINAL APPLICATION ELEMENTS:

a. Include the following statement to describe the intended uses of the data:

The data collected from this study will be used to complete [***include which is applicable: my Master's in Social Work (MSW) Thesis; my Doctoral degree***]. The results of the study may also be used in publications and presentations.

b. If there are Co- Researchers, cooperating departments, and/or cooperating institutions, follow the following instructions:

If you are working with/conducting your research with a researcher working at another institution or organization, include a letter of approval from that institution's IRB or agency administrator. If there are multiple researchers, indicate only one person on the Documentation of Review and Approval as the researcher; others should be designated as "Co-Researcher(s)" here.

c. TRAINING: Include the following statement to describe training:

I have completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) on line training course prior to HSR approval. The certificate of completion is on file at the SSW and was completed within the past four years.

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