AN INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE ABOUT SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION:
SAC STATE GRADUATE STUDENTS SAY, “YES WE CAN!”

A Project

Presented to the faculty of the Division of Social Work
California State University, Sacramento

Submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

by

Barbara Diane Rodriguez

SPRING
2014
AN INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE ABOUT SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION:

SAC STATE GRADUATE STUDENTS SAY, “YES WE CAN!”

A Project

by

Barbara Diane Rodriguez

Approved by:

__________________________________, Committee Chair

Dale Russell, Ed.D., LCSW

____________________________

Date

iii
Student: Barbara Diane Rodriguez

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this project is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the project.

_________________________________, Division Chair
Robin Kennedy, Ph.D

Division of Social Work
Abstract

of

AN INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE ABOUT SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION:

SAC STATE GRADUATE STUDENTS SAY, “YES WE CAN!”

by

Barbara Diane Rodriguez

There is an insufficient amount of empirical evidence relating to social work students’
countertransference and topics of religion and spirituality while dialoguing with service
users or colleagues. It is unclear whether familial upbringing, personal characteristics, and
classroom content relating to religion and spirituality increase or diminish
countertransference when dealing with these topics with classmates or within professional
settings. Sixty four graduate students in their final year of a graduate program at California
State University, Sacramento were surveyed to explore their perceptions relating to
religion, spirituality and social work; and to determine whether these topics were present
within social work classes. It was determined that course content is present within the
social work program, and that some personal characteristics are associated with attitudes
relating to inclusion of religion and spirituality into practice.

_________________________, Committee Chair
Dale Russell, Ed.D., LCSW

_________________________
Date
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project to a few of the strong women whose paths have fortunately crossed my own throughout my life’s journey:

My mother, Lynne Graeber was definitely a social worker in her own right. She modeled for me what advocacy and having a strong will can achieve. She dedicated much of her life working to overcome obstacles for disabled persons working in California. Through development of a state run program L.E.A.P., as a founding member of Disabled in State Service, and as a Legislative Liaison she did not remain silent about the needs and the rights of the disabled. She carried herself throughout life with characteristics of strong values based in her foundational exposure to Christian Science. She was LOVE with a capital ‘L’! I love you!

My grandmother Barbara Recagno, who is my namesake, lived her life with passion and vigor. When she loved you, you knew she deeply loved; and when she didn’t...well you knew that too. She was a self taught, self motivated woman. She had a love for cooking and was a talented seamstress. Some of my favorite memories are lying out in the warm sun with my grandmother, ‘Ya-Ya.’ I will always have the sun. I love you!

I am blessed for the opportunity to have met my husband’s great-grandmother, Maria Paula Carrillo Rangel. She lived a century of a life, raising her children after being widowed at age twenty-five. She had a love of animals and surrounded herself with family.

I am also grateful to have been able to take a diversity class from Professor Wandarah Anderson, whose commitment to setting high expectations was appreciated.
First I would like to thank my husband, Alfredo Rodriguez, who has worked hard to ensure that I have been able to complete my educational goals. He is a strong man who does not expect a lot from others. Now it is time for you to continue to pursue your dream of completing your MFA and becoming a professor. Go out there and shine. I love you!

I thank Professor Dale Russell for his commitment to advocating on behalf of his students. He was instrumental in my continuing with my education after a leave of absence and I thank you for that. I wish you a joyous experience in your new role as Division Chair.

I owe so much appreciation to the *Spirituality in Social Work* class of the Fall of 2013. You were my light when I could not see. Your truths and experiences shared within our class community have helped me to push on with this project. Thank you Professor Bein (Andy), for allowing me to participate in your class and for your kind, encouraging words throughout this process.

I thank all of the social work students who have previously taken on the feat of researching religion and spirituality for their thesis topic. Your words and work have laid the path for me to follow. For that I am grateful!

I thank my family: Jim and Linda Bulla; Jennifer, Brett, Madison, & Kate Chaffins; Micki and Robert Graeber; Elida and Jorge Hernandez; Bertha and Juan Rodriguez; and Charlotte Walters for their unconditional, unwavering, non-judgmental support! I love you!
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication ................................................................. vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements ...................................................... vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables ............................................................. xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM ........................................ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Problem ............................................ 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Research Problem ................................. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study ..................................................... 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework .................................................. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Key Terms ................................................ 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions ................................................................. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification ................................................................. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations ................................................................. 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................. 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Background .................................................. 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational Beginnings of Contemporary Social Work .......... 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validating the Profession: Moving Away From Religion and Spirituality ......... 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmodern Era: Renewed Emphasis on Religious and Spiritual Contexts ........ 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptualizations of Spirituality and Religion ................... 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work Curriculum/Education .................................. 23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

viii
Implications for Social Work ................................................................. 61
Limitations .......................................................................................... 63
Recommendations ............................................................................... 65
Concluding Thoughts ......................................................................... 67
Appendix A. Informed Consent Letter ............................................. 68
Appendix B. Survey Questionnaire .................................................. 69
References .......................................................................................... 75
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tables</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Table 1: Ethnic/Racial Heritage</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Table 2: Religious/Spiritual Affiliation</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Table 3: Class Content on Religion and Spirituality</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Table 4: Religious/Spiritual Affiliation and Ethnic/Racial Heritage</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Table 5: Chi-square test of Affiliation and Heritage</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Table 6: Personal Spirituality/Importance of Bringing up With Service Users</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Table 7: Personal Spirituality/Comfort Discussing Religion with Service Users</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Table 8: Personal Spirituality/Comfort Discussing Spirituality with Service Users</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It has extensively been recommended that underpinnings of any present or future success between social workers and service users begin with rapport that has been developed within the therapeutic relationship. A quote by Theodore Roosevelt, “Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care” reverberates the importance of building a connection through caring interpersonal interactions.

The dynamics that individual human beings bring into these life experiences are comprised of each others’ biological, psychological, social, and spiritual compositions. The inclusion of the final element mentioned, spiritual, has historically been debated as being essential, irrelevant, harmful, and at the least uncertain regarding its place within the therapeutic relationship, and within social work education. It is this uncertainty that needs to be clarified.

There has been an increase of new criteria relating to religion and spirituality presented to social workers, and social work programs across the country by the Council on Social Work Education as part of its accreditation process and by the National Association of Social Workers as contained in its Code of Ethics and Standards for Cultural Competence in describing ethical and culturally competent practice. With these new expectations relating to inclusion of spirituality and religion it is ever more important to determine the best practices for integration of these elements into the educational and therapeutic environments that support the profession of social work.
Prior to beginning this project the researcher had the opportunity of living within a community composed of families of quite diverse religious backgrounds. The researcher has a foundational belief system based on Christian values. The neighbors across the street were Muslims from Jordan. Two houses down was a husband and wife who were Jewish. Two houses from that couple was a husband born in Jordan who was Muslim, and a wife born in Vietnam, who was a practicing Christian. Across the street from them was a family from The Republic of Belarus who were part of an Eastern Orthodox congregation. Aside from the researcher and the Jewish couple, the three other households consisted of parents that were first generation and children that were born in this country. The neighborhood came together with the common goal of supporting and nurturing the children.

While living within this community there were many opportunities to learn about similarities and differences between the various beliefs and to share celebrated holidays. The researcher was able to fast with and participate in Ramadan with the Muslim family across the street and to hear the mother of the family from Belarus sing at her church. This community will long be remembered as a wonderful example of living together while revering the strong values held by individual community members.

What was missing from this experience was an opportunity to have discussions with community members who may not orient themselves towards religion or spirituality. It was within the class taught by Professor Bein, *Social Work and Spirituality*, during the final year of the graduate program at California State University, Sacramento (CSUS); that the researcher experienced a safe forum that allowed for discourse among individuals that held
diverse religious and spiritual beliefs and those who did not feel that either religion or spirituality had a place in their lives. It was within this community that the researcher realized that up until now conversations relating to religion or spirituality predominantly related to the inclusion of it in peoples’ lives, with individuals who saw themselves as being religious and/or spiritual; and not the exclusion of it, with people who may see themselves as being atheist, or secular humanitarian for example.

More opportunities are needed for social work students and professionals to be able to have these conversations and to learn about others’ beliefs, not just from a text book, but from other people in order to better appreciate and begin to understand how service users’ beliefs may or may not play an important role in their lives. Even within the same religion there are many complexities relating to individual world view formations. The researcher learned this in the second year of the MSW program as Proposition 8 was being voted on to establish marriage between a man and a woman. Through personal views that were reinforced by social work values being learned and integrated, the researcher saw the right for anyone to marry whom ever they choose to marry as a civil rights issue, a social justice issue. There were many painful and difficult communications with close friends that were also Christians. This process resulted in the researcher reexamining and making some changes to beliefs and unfortunately to some close relationships.

The inability at the time to have conversations relating to differences in beliefs and to come out the other side with relationships still intact echoes the need to have more opportunities to learn form one another about different perspectives. This research project
strives to begin to explore some of the complexities that graduate students at CSUS may be dealing with relating to religion and spirituality, and how those variables may or may not be related to their comfort level in discussing these topics with service users.

**Background of the Problem**

With new mandates from accreditation organizations, a plethora of diverse religious and spiritual beliefs and orientations within the United States, social worker’s various levels of exposure and training relating to service users diverse beliefs and values there is a necessity to have dialogues relating to religion and spirituality within the social work educational and professional settings. The question is how best to do this, and what barriers and experiences of social workers make this implementation process smoother and/or more challenging. What responsibility does the social work profession have to society to uphold the ethical standard that would ensure that social workers acquire cultural competency about the ‘nature of social diversity and oppression’ as it relates to religion (NASW, 2008)?

As president Obama stated in his inaugural address in 2009, “We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus - and non-believers...our common humanity shall reveal itself...America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.” It is this sentiment of inclusivity that social work has been driven to uphold through its values since its founding that was based on Christian and Judaic morals (Holden, 2012). Currently 69% of US adults are very or moderately religious as compared to virtually all survey respondents in the US during the 1950’s and 1960’s (Gallup 2012). This may translate to
define that seven out of ten service users that meet with social workers would consider themselves to be religious.

What these statistics do not take into account is how many of the service users may ascribe to be spiritual and not necessarily religious. This distinction may implicitly be considered within a subset of what Gallup researchers refers to as the religious “nones.” Gallup surveys includes a question asking participants to choose their religious preference. In 2012, 17.8% responded to this question with the choice ‘no religion’ out of seven options, which is almost a 22% increase to this response since 2008. Currently, this increase is one of the most relevant patterns in religious measurement in the US (Gallup, 2013). In translation, the number of service users over the past six years increasingly may consider themselves not to be religious.

The diversity of world views in this country presents an opportunity for the prepared social worker to explore with service users their understanding of how religion and spirituality create or do not add to defining meaning and purpose within their lives. The cost of not addressing this within social work practice should it be relevant to service users would be a possible alienation of service users and a breakdown in the therapeutic relationship. The cost of a professional addressing religion or spirituality insensitively, and without proper training could be harmful for service users and may lead to legal ramifications (Hall, Livingston, Brown, & Mohabir, 2011). Both the incorporating of and not including religion and spiritual components within the therapeutic relationship may lead to unethical social work practice (Holden, 2012).
Sheridan (2009) reviewed literature that explored the presence of spiritually based interventions within practice settings, and studies that explored students’ perceptions of religion and spirituality in their personal lives, within classroom curriculum, and attitudes relating to its use among professional settings. In her research, she found that most decisions made by social workers to integrate religion and spirituality within practice were made without a consistent use of an ethical framework, and with limited education and training in this subject matter within their educational programs (Sheridan, 2009).

This limited education and exposure may present limitations to the professional social worker when working with specific populations that may find a source of strength from their religion and/or spirituality. This limitation may also fail to acknowledge and shed a light on the intersectionality of oppression based on race, gender, and/or sexual orientation that certain individuals are already facing within religious communities and society at large.

An article published last month describes a Baptist pastor in South Los Angeles who is facing a tribunal stemming from criticisms after marrying a lesbian couple in 2013 (Hutchinson, 2014). Barnes & Myer (2012) share from a New York study of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexuals (LGBs) that when compared to white LGBs, black and Latino individuals are more likely to “attend religious services, engage in prayer, and to self-identify with a religious affiliation.” Hall, et al (2011) urges social workers to be aware of the current immigration patterns and spiritual needs and practices when working with Asia Pacific Muslims. Many followers of the Islamic faith have been seeking mental health support
since the onslaught of prejudice and racism present in mainstream media since September 11, 2001 (Hall, et al, 2011).

Through spiritually sensitive social work practice and adherence to the NASW code of ethics, social work professionals continue in their quest to follow ethical principles such as ‘respecting the inherent dignity and worth of the person’ (Canda & Furman, 2010; NASW 2008). Many of the current graduate students’ professors and colleagues in field practice who completed their social work degree programs at a time when religion and spirituality was not mandated to be included within the curriculum have a renewed opportunity and challenge to participate in discourse surrounding this area of growing interest within the field (Crisp, 2009; CSWE, 2008).

**Statement of the Research Problem**

This project aims to look at successes and challenges graduate students have had in participating in dialogue relating to spirituality and religion within their social work classes and in incorporating it within their field placements. This body of research hopes to shed some light on some of the underlying reasons that are related to graduate students’ decision making processes relating to bringing religion and spirituality into the therapeutic relationship. The researcher has not seen a study that specifically incorporates the idea of how countertransference may affect social work students’ decisions relating to utilizing elements of spirituality and/or religion within the practice setting.

The limited resources of time and personnel available to students in their field placements may limit opportunities for supervision and feedback to allow for critical self-
reflection and awareness of possible areas of countertransference. This makes it even more necessary for a habit of self-reflection to begin to form within the social work programs.

**Purpose of the study.** The primary purpose of this research project is to explore elements that contribute to social work students’ decisions relating to incorporating or not incorporating spirituality and/or religion into their professional encounters with service users. The elements relating to religion and/or spirituality pertaining to graduate students that will be examined will be family upbringing, current religious and/or spiritual orientation and practices, class content, and attitudes relating to integrating topics of religion and/or spirituality during relationship with service users.

The secondary purpose of this study is to take a cross-sectional look at how graduate students in their final year of study perceive that religion and/or spirituality have been interwoven into course content within the social work department at CSUS. This information may give the department an opportunity to examine how they are doing in reference to the accreditation mandates from CSWE to incorporate religion into course curriculum.

**Theoretical framework.** Three perspectives will be used to examine the researched issue. Two postmodern perspectives, constructivism and narrative therapy will explore how individuals participate to create their perception of reality and how they define their personal stories. Ecological perspective, which embraces the person-in-environment, will be explained to show how it is connected to social work values while incorporating an assortment of practice theories.
Underpinnings of the ecological perspective can be found in an array of theoretical orientations (Greene, 1991). This perspective can be used to understand the reciprocal relationship between a person and their environmental forces. Religious and spiritual contexts can be explored to determine potential resources that may be seen as strengths in the lives of service users. Social workers have opportunities to more fully understand how service users’ lives have been shaped by their religions and spiritual beliefs and interactions and how some of their life choices have been determined based on some of these beliefs and values. In the same manner social workers can uphold the social work value of self determination in listening to and not judging some of the choices service users have made based on a worldview formed through external influences and internal incites.

Within postmodern perspectives knowledge is developed through lived experience. Constructivism is a conceptual theoretical framework that focuses on the nature of reality and the manner which knowledge is gathered (Lesser & Pope, 2007). Through this perspective constructivism contains the philosophy that nothing is universally true due to the belief that there is constantly differing perspectives of any given phenomena. Shared life experiences are based on an agreement of language, thought, and experience. Individuals’ religion can be seen through this lens as a lived experience shared among a group of people, and as one perspective among many.

One of the principles of constructivism, structural determinism, as described as an “inside-in process” supports one of the assumptions of this study that spirituality can be seen as a broader internal process and the external expression of this may or may not be
found within a specific religious group. It is the individual’s internal dynamics or spirituality that decides which external circumstances such as a religious organization can bring about life transformations (Lesser & Pope, 2007).

Narrative therapy assists the social worker to guide the service user in understanding the stories of his life, how the dominant culture has contributed to the formation of them, and then to confront and expand these stories (Kelly, 2002, as cited in Hull & Mather, 2006). Narrative therapy as seen through a constructivist lens is interactive. It involves the therapist learning what is important to the service user. Narrative therapy allows the social worker to be respectful while seeing the service user as the expert of his life (Morgan, 2000).

This respect and curiosity on the part of the social worker can first be practiced within a safe environment of a graduate level class. Students are given the opportunity to explore and make meaning of their stories and how religion and spirituality have brought about strengths and/or challenges in their lives. This study gives students the opportunity to remember and examine how their decisions relating to personal spirituality and/or religion may have been shaped by their upbringing, graduate class content and peer influence and how they have created their current belief system by moving away from and/or embracing some of these influences. The study participants also may view how some of these choices may affect their personal and professional lives.

**Definition of key terms.** The key words to be defined that are found throughout this project are religion, spirituality, faith, countertransference, and transference. The majority
of the research reviewed pointed towards definitions of religion and spirituality set forth by Canda and Furman (2010).

Religion - “Patterns of spiritual beliefs and practices formed in social institutions and traditions that are maintained by a community over time” (Canda & Furman, 2010, p. 66).

Spirituality - “The gestalt of the total process of human life and development, encompassing biological, mental, social, and spiritual aspects. The wholeness of what it is to be human. The spiritual component of an individual or group’s experience. The person’s search for a sense of meaning, and fulfilling relationships,” that are both intrapersonal and interpersonal (Canda & Furman, 2010, p. 66).

Countertransference - “The therapist’s unrealistic and inappropriate reactions to the client as a result of his or her own unconscious conflicts or developmental arrests” (Lesser & Pope, 2007, p. 50).

Spiritually Sensitive Practice - “Spiritually sensitive practice is attuned to the highest goals, deepest meanings, and most practical requirements of clients. It seeks to nurture persons’ full potentials through relationships based on respectful, empathic, knowledgeable, and skillful regard for their spiritual perspectives, whether religious or non-religious. It promotes peace and justice for all people and all beings (Canda, 2008, pp. x-xi)
**Assumptions.** Although there are various opinions throughout literature, for the purpose of this study, spirituality and religion are seen to be overlapping conceptualizations with spirituality being the broader concept. One may perceive themselves to be spiritual, while not relating to a particular religion. It is also assumed that practicing social workers would agree that it is important to use holistic practice methods, taking into account the whole being of the service users when making therapeutic decisions.

The final assumption the researcher is presenting is that religion does not begin war or commit acts of terrorism. It is not the sacred words of the Talmud, I Ching, Bhagavad Gita, Torah, Koran, or Bible that moves people to be violent and aggressive, but most likely the misinterpretation and manipulation of these sacred texts for personal gain that incites these atrocities.

**Justification.** Just taking a look at one area of social work that graduate students may find themselves a part of in the future or in their field placement, medical social work, there is evidence that discussing religion and spirituality helps to promote well-being and positive health outcomes. It is predicted that Americans will recognize more and more that religion may play an active role in positive outcomes relating to wellbeing, physical health, and emotional health (Gallup, 2012).

There are healthcare mandates to explore a service users spirituality within the assessment process by the leading organization, The Joint Commission (TJC), which approves accreditation and certification of health care organizations in the United States (Koenig, 2007, as cited in Hodge, & Horvath, 2011). It would behoove social work
programs to prepare students that may be dealing with populations within healthcare organizations to expose students to this content. This would have a positive reflection on the competence of the students and on the quality of the programs from which they graduate.

Accredited social work programs are also required by CSWE to include content on religion and spirituality (CSWE, 2008). It is expected that the social work classes within accredited programs include topics relating to religion and spirituality. The social work professors have a renewed opportunity to sharpen their facilitator skills in the way that they provide safe environments for students of various religious and non-religious backgrounds to learn to move beyond tolerance towards honoring, respecting, and promoting self determination with colleagues as we are encouraged to do with service users.

This project strives to assist the professors within the social work program at CSUS regarding students’ comfort levels in discussing spirituality and religion within the classroom. There is a hope that the research will shed some light on how these mandated topics are surfacing within the program curriculum and what students are finding helpful and challenging within these conversations.

Limitations. The focus of this study was related to perceptions and attitudes of second year graduate level social work students. This study did not explore attitudes of bachelor level students, entering graduate students, academia, or service users directly. Indirectly the survey participants may refer to others’ attitudes relating to the inclusion of spirituality and/or religion within the field or social work.
Through the review of literature the researcher has been made aware of intersections of religion, spirituality, and social work within the areas of discrimination based on sexual orientation, varying global contexts such as eco spirituality and practice perspectives in other counties, and recommended interventions to use with specific cultural populations. This project may briefly touch on these issues, but will not go into explicit detail. The larger focus of this project will be that within the complex diversities that exist among individuals relating to the overlapping of religion, spirituality, and social work, how do social work students make sense of this in their personal lives, with their colleagues, and when working to best meet the needs of the service users.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the literature will address the historical background and how religion and spirituality have explicitly and implicitly had a role within the formation of the social work profession. Definitions and conceptualizations of the relationship between religion and spirituality will be presented. A large section is devoted to exploring how curriculum is chosen and some of the experiences of instructors of courses that include content of religion and spirituality within their courses. The final section will focus on topics of religion and spirituality are interwoven into diverse areas of social work practice.

Historical Background

Within the literature there are three overlapping phases of the progression of inclusion and exclusion of religion and spirituality within social work. The first phase focuses on the values and beliefs that assisted with the initial formations of what is today considered social work. The second phase deals with the development of the profession of social work and the ideologies associated with distancing religion and spirituality from social work education and practice. The third phase that today’s generations are part of involves a growing integration of religion and spirituality within the field of social work, and an effort to examine how this inclusion should best be realized. Many debates and mixed views on this topic continue in contemporary literature.
Foundational Beginnings of Contemporary Social Work

Although values of serving those in need stem from all major religions, throughout literature social work is attributed to have its underpinnings and value formation interrelated with Judeo-Christian traditions and philanthropy (Gray & Coats, 2013; Neagoe, 2013; Whiting, 2013; Wagenfeld-Heintz, 2009; Lee & Barrett, 2007). Similar to Australia, the US has been considered to be a predominantly Christian society due to the influx of immigrants ascribing to Catholic and Protestant worldviews in the countries’ earlier history (Holden, 2012).

Two women, who have had a religious and spiritual presence in their upbringing and have been influential in the development of social work within the United States, are Jane Addams and Mary Richmonds (Steyaert, 2010b, 2010c). Jane Addams had influences from Quaker beliefs by her father’s association with the quaker community. Mary Richmonds was raised by a grandmother who was a spiritualist and radical. Later Mary Richmonds was part of the Unitarian Church and Jane Addams did not associate herself with an organized religion. In 1888 each of these women made life choices that would have an impact on the field of social work (Steyaert, 2010b, 2010c).

In 1888 as a medical student, Jane Addams went to East London to visit Toynbee Hall, which modeled students living within impoverished neighborhoods, being members of the communities they were trying to help, as a way of practical application of what they were learning in the classroom (Steyaert, 2010a). This idea of voluntary work within poverty stricken neighborhoods was given the name Practical Socialism by Anglican Priest,
Samuel Barnett (Barnett, 1913, as cited in Steyaert, 2010). Jane Addams brought the example of Toynbee Hall back with her to Chicago and began a settlement house, with Ellen Starr, near the West side of Chicago. This was during a transitional period, when settlement house workers focused less on religious associations (Tangenberg, 2005). It was also 1888 when Mary Richmonds first applied to be treasurer of Charity Organization Society in Baltimore. Almost thirty years later (1917) Mary Richmonds went on to write the book *Social Diagnosis*, spreading the idea that scientific methods would assist in alleviating social challenges (Tangenberg, 2005).

**Validating the Profession: Moving Away from Religion and Spirituality**

In 1915 Abraham Fletcher spoke at the National Conference on Social Welfare making a claim that social work was not a valid profession because there was no written body of knowledge or educational methodologies (Barker, 1995). Social work professionals used Richmonds’ book as an initial text on social work and as a response to Fletcher’s previous accusation.

Much of the literature addresses the inadequate recognition of the contribution of religion and spirituality in service users lives as social work progressed to be recognized as a profession with underpinnings of scientific methodologies (Crisp, 2009; Wagenfeld-Heintz, 2009; Tangenberg, 2005). Earlier in the profession most social workers had previously been trained as nurses and the first job with the title of social worker was at a hospital in Boston in 1905 (Gehlert, 2006). About 25 years later there were courses in medical social work while the fields of psychiatry and psychology worked to align
themselves as knowledge bases to accompany medicine in hospitals. This moved social work to focus more with psychoanalytic theoretical perspectives than with a ‘charity organization model of moralistic counseling’ while working to establish itself within higher education and amongst other respected professions (Gehlert, 2006; Holden, 2012; Moss, 2011; Lee & Barrett, 2007).

Due to Freudian and Marxist ideologies anything that had to do with religion and spirituality was seen to be outside of the professional realm, and even counter to social works’ dedication towards anti-discriminatory practice (Moss, 2011; Wagenfeld-Heintz, 2009). It was predicted by Freud, Marx, and Durkheim, the ‘masters of suspicion’, that religious beliefs by the general public would have a drastic decline, if not total extinction, by the latter part of the 1900’s (Hunt, 2005, as cited in Neagoe, 2013). During this era of secularization seen in social services, some realms of spiritual strength that seemed unfamiliar, such as “speaking in tongues’ may have been labeled as psychotic and individuals with such behaviors may have been prescribed medication (Hall, Livingston, Brown & Mohabir, 2011).

**Postmodern Era: Renewed Emphasis on Religious and Spiritual Contexts**

The third and current phase addressed in literature is one that incorporates moving away from a positivistic, universal, objective way of knowing; towards a postmodern, more subjective concept of knowledge acquisition and expression (Gray & Coats, 2013; Barker & Floersch, 2010). This, less narrow perspective, gives professionals opportunities to
include interventions with service users that honor, respect and acknowledge diverse cultural and spiritual beliefs (Bhagwan, 2012).

In a 2009 article, Crisp pointed out the increase of attention that was now being given to the area of spirituality as it relates to service users and professional social workers. She went on to explain that in order to be successful the spiritual dimension needs to be considered. Groen (2008) echoes this, and points out that the evolution of the renewed acceptance of spirituality within the field of social work in North America relates to religious and non-religious beliefs. Gray and Coates (2013) expand this in their reference to the ecospiritual perspective. They make reference to Besthorn’s (2002, as cited in Gray & Coates, 2013) critique of common social work theory that focuses on the individual and fails to acknowledge the environmental realm in the way that Indigenous academia and tradition view this planet and all of its beings as sacred.

Graham, Bradshaw, & Trew (2009) discuss a multicultural movement within social work called localization, using distinct information and methodologies with diverse cultural groups. The authors discuss and give an example of localization in Canada by interviewing 52 social workers who are currently practicing with Muslim service users or who personally follow the Islamic faith. Although there has been evidence of a growth in research, courses offered in Universities, and presence at professional conferences relating to spirituality and social work; Graham, et al. (2009) challenge future research ventures to continue to explore how the practice of localization can be fulfilled with populations that ascribe to differing belief systems (Hodge, 2011; Hodge & Boddie, 2007). An article on
ethical standards relating to addressing religion in practice reinforces the importance of
exploring diverse values and needs as societies’ interest in religion and immigration
patterns of cultures that ascribe to Islam, and Hinduism among others increase over time
(Gallup & Lindsay, 1999, as cited in Hodge, 2005).

Returning to social work’s roots in the medical field, there is an increase through
research in the acknowledgement that spirituality has a place in improved health and
wellness efforts (Hodge, 2013). Spiritual assessments are now required when working with
specific populations in health care organizations (Koenig, 2007, as cited in Hodge &
Horvath, 2011). In an international study conducted in 150 countries, Rath and Harter
(2010) explored individuals’ perceptions of wellbeing in five areas of their lives: Career,
Social, Financial, Physical, and Community. ‘For many people, spirituality drives them in
all these areas. Their faith is the most important facet of their lives, and it is the foundation
of their daily efforts’ (Rath & Harter, 2010, p. 7).

Conceptualizations of Spirituality and Religion

Defining Religion

Religion has been defined as associating with a particular set of beliefs and sharing
these beliefs through participation within a community (Heyman, Buchanan, Marlowe, &
Sealy, 2006).

Defining Spirituality

There is no universal definition of spirituality within the field of social work (Moss,
2011; Barker & Floersch, 2010; Crisp, 2009). A majority of the social work literature looks
to Canda for a definition of spirituality (Canda, 1988, as cited in Barker & Floersch, 2010). Canda’s definition refers to a range of relationships with self, others, and some power beyond ourselves while in the process of searching for meaning. Others have included the idea of the sacredness of something as the reason behind looking for meaning (Bullis, 1996, as cited in Barker & Floersch, 2010).

Some see spirituality as more of an internal sense of strength (Heyman et al., 2006).

Staude offers a definition of spirituality within a non-religious context:

Spirituality is a transformational process through which the different aspects of life are integrated (physical, emotional, occupational, intellectual and rational). It involves a connectedness to oneself, others, nature, and to a larger meaning of Presence. It is strongly associated with creativity, play, love, forgiveness, compassion, trust, reverence, wisdom, faith and sense of oneness. (Staude, 2005, p. 256, as cited in Crisp, 2009)

In an article about Islam within Asian Pacific Muslims, Hall et al. (2011) touch on spirituality as including ideas of searching for harmony, aspects of creativity, drives behind life purposes, altruism, and seeing life as holy while acknowledging that there is are tragedies within this holy life. Moss’s (2011) research process also included the idea of a ‘dark side’ in the way that the participants came together to come up with a framework for the conceptualization of spirituality. In their co-creative approach it was largely determined that spirituality was a broader term of which religion may or may not be a part of. In a study by Lee and Barrett (2007) interconnectedness was a major theme as part of how social workers define spirituality.
Searching for Conceptualizations of Spirituality

Throughout literature both religion and spirituality have been defined and associated in a myriad of ways (Hodge, 2005). Crisp (2009) explains that spirituality is seen in various ways as being part of a religion or not and of having a relationship with God or not. Hodge was unique in the way that he conceptualized religion as a “visible, measurable manifestation of an inward spiritual reality,” and based on this considered religion to be the more general term that spirituality falls within (Hodge, 2005, p. 279). Two years later he went on to do a study with Boddie (2007) to determine if social workers’ personal qualities determine their ideas of spirituality and religion. The study involved telephone surveys with 303 graduate students. The findings showed that among the diverse faith affiliations of the participants that some association between religion and spirituality was present (Hodge & Boddie, 2007). Holden (2012) echoed this feeling that spirituality, as associated with a search for meaning, may include religious experiences.

Searching for a conceptualization for spirituality is a process that is occurring in many professional spheres today (Barker & Floersch, 2010). Most of literature associates spirituality as being a broader concept that religion is a part of. Barker and Floersch (2010) developed a conceptual framework for spirituality as formed through interviews with twenty social workers. It was summarized that spirituality is: “difficult to define...and individually defined...not a religion...characteristically and behaviorally describable...(and) multidimensional” (p. 365). They explained in their article that participants had an easier
time coming up with ideas of spirituality when asked to describe someone they thought was spiritual (Barker & Floersch, 2010).

Groen (2008) describes her process of moving from an idea of spirituality only being associated within a religious framework to a wider perspective of it serving the purpose of some of her meaning seeking during the middle season of her life. She describes two elements contained within spirituality: going into and connecting within oneself and expanding out and connecting to the world (Groen, 2008).

**Social Work Curriculum/Education**

Many factors are considered relating to the inclusion of curriculum within social work programs. Regulations, theoretical frameworks, faculty perceptions and student feedback, along with ethical considerations are some of the factors that will be discussed in this section.

**Regulations**

Regulations come in the form of international agreements, federal laws, accreditation commissions, and professional associations. In an article promoting tolerance and human rights, a reference is made to the United Nation’s *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)* and how countries around the world are categorized by their ranking of freedom (Hodge & Wolfer, 2008). Article 9 of the *European Convention on Human Rights* echoes article 18 from the *UDHR* that individuals have the freedom to have their own beliefs and to share their faith with other individuals (Neagoe, 2013). Crisp (2010) mentions these rights as relating to children from *United Nations Convention on the*
Rights of the Child (UNCRC). She makes note of spiritual freedoms mentioned in Articles: 27 (1), 32 (1), and 17 of the UNCRC. These articles suggest that children have rights to: a standard of living adequate for spiritual development, be protected from economic exploitation that is harmful to a child’s spiritual development, service providers working with them who know that every child has a right to have access to information aimed towards spiritual well-being (Crisp, 2010).

More specifically related to the profession of social work, in 2004 a joint conference was held in Australia between the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Federation for Schools of Social Work (IASSW) (Crisp, 2009; Moss, 2011). It was at this conference that global standards for current and future social work professionals were outlined to include spiritual elements as a category of knowledge that competent social workers would need in understanding human development and behavior. IFSW carried this vision on, revising it’s Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles to validate that social workers should uphold every individual’s spiritual integrity and well-being (IFSW, 2004, as cited in Moss, 2011), and in its creation of a webpage that lists the code of ethics in each included countries’ national language (IFSW, 2014).

At a national level, England’s National Health Service (NHS) requires some content on spirituality as part of their training of nurses (Crisp, 2009). The United State’s Joint Commission, the country’s primary accreditation establishment for health care organizations, has included spiritual assessments as part of its standards of accreditation
The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the only agency to grant accreditation for social work education in the US, has gone through several changes relating to the inclusion of religion and spirituality since its inception in 1952 (Russel, 1998).

**CSWE.** After dialogue in 1952 that communicated concern that the component of spirituality was not included as an aspect of human life, CSWE’s first curriculum policy statement in 1953 included the value that ‘physical, mental, and emotional growth should be considered with regard for...spiritual influences upon development of the individual’ (Council on Social Work Education, 1953, Section 3543, as cited in Russel, 1998). This was expanded in the 1962 policy statement to include the need to study spirituality influences.

Currently there are three educational policies included in the *Education Policy and Accreditation Standards* (CSWE, 2008) that include content related to religion and/or spirituality:

Policy 2.1.4. Engage diversity and differences in practice:

“...dimensions of diversity are ...the intersectionality of multiple factors including ...religion” (p. 4).

Policy 2.1.7. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment:

“Social workers apply theories...to understand...spiritual development” (p. 6).

Policy 3.1. Diversity:

“Program’s commitment to diversity - including...religion” (p.10).
Although there were years where the component of religion and/or spirituality were missing entirely from the policy statements, there is currently a trend of stronger focus in this area. This is demonstrated by: the reintroduction of spirituality and religion into CSWE’s guidelines in 1995 (Russel, 1998), the requirement from the 2008 Educational Policy & Accreditation Standards that accredited social work programs include content on religion and spirituality (Seyfried, 2007; Northcut, 2005; Canda, Nakashima, & Furman, 2004), and the CSWE Religion and Spirituality Work Group that was organized in 2011 (CSWE, 2014). This work group was implemented to provide resources for social workers who have an expectation placed upon them to consider religion and spirituality within the lives of service users and their communities. The work group’s mission is echoed in NASW’s Code of Ethics and Standards for Cultural Competence (NASW, 2008; 2001).

NASW. NASW’s Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work (2001) directs social workers to consider religious cultures in their work with service users. The Code of Ethics, which was first ratified in 1960, lists six standards mentioning religion explicitly or implicitly, as a basis for numerous cultural groups (Barker & Floersch, 2010; Hodge, 2005a). In part D of the Australian Association of Social Work’s Code of Ethics it mentions that ‘social workers will recognize, acknowledge and remain sensitive to and respectful of the religions and spiritual world views of (people) ...and the operations and missions of faith and spiritually based organizations’ (AASW, 2010, as cited in Holden, 2012). This is different than the NASW (2008) code of ethics followed in the United States in the way that NASW’s code only uses the word religion.
In a research study of 2,069 NASW members it was concluded that the participants appeared to be motivated to follow the principles and values listed in the code of ethics when working with service users concerns relating to religion and spirituality (Canda et al., 2004). Respondents commented on the significance of increasing skills to work in areas of spiritual and religious competencies, and knowledge of religion and spirituality relating to human developments as foundational components for spiritually sensitive practice (Canda et al., 2004). Participants in the study shared that it was relevant for social workers to continue in their referencing and following of the ethical principles outlined in the code such as client self-determination.

Hodge (2005) completed a study assessing whether graduate student members of NASW believed that the profession was in compliance with these same ethical standards addressing religion. According to the study which included 303 telephone surveys, participants’ views were that there were high levels of compliance within the profession (Hodge, 2005a).

**Faculty Perceptions**

Although questions about inclusion of spirituality and religious content still stir up conflict amongst state universities, it is widely viewed by instructors, social workers, and students that spirituality is a necessary element of social work curriculum (Barker & Floersch, 2010; Stoesz, 2008, as cited in Moss, 2011). Even faculty that oriented themselves as atheist believe that social work education should allow for space within the curriculum for students to question these topics within their own lives and the lives of their
service users (Moss, 2011). Seyfried (2007) shared that teaching the elective graduate course, *Spirituality in Social Work Practice* was personally one of her most enriching instructional experiences. Northcut (2005) stated that every semester she conducted the course, *The Role of Religion and Spirituality in Clinical Social Work*, that it dynamically mirrored the thoughts, experiences, and needs of the current of students.

**Challenges.** There still remains a historical concern amongst academias of possible harm that these topics may bring to the surface (Moss, 2011). The majority of social work instructors in countries such as Australia, Canada, England, and the United States most likely attended their educational programs at a time when they were instructed to separate professional practice from their spiritual lives (Crisp, 2009). Groen (2008) found the faculties’ lack of exposure to the content of her class, *Spirituality in the Workplace*, a hurdle to overcome when working within the department of Education.

Northcut (2005) found it challenging to arrange and decide which to include of the many unique frameworks, and to juggle the balance of providing sufficient structure for learning and development while being cognizant of students’ need for space to explore and process their new conceptualizations. This has been a challenge not only for social work educators, but for academia whose expertise primarily lies in the area of spirituality (Crisp, 2009). Groen (2008) contemplated if a tight community would be formed within the context on an on-line learning community. Lecturing a couple of times within a class of health and welfare students, Crisp (2009) found it challenging to define an understanding of
spirituality that would not isolate students who have a deep religious identity, a non-theistic religious orientation, or who do not associate themselves with religion.

Once the class community was established (Tacey, 2003, as cited in Crisp, 2009) Tacey, an instructor of a class focusing on spirituality, found it difficult at times to facilitate a discussion amongst students that believed spirituality necessitated relationship with a Christian God and those who did not concur. Some instructors may share their spiritual or religious orientation and some may choose to keep that information to themselves (Crisp, 2009).

**Opportunities.** Professors have the potential to connect their personal spirituality to their vocational choice of being an instructor (Crisp, 2009; Groen, 2008). When teaching, Tacey shared that ‘secular students are happy for me to be religious and spiritual at the same time, so long as I do not seek to impose my views on them’ (Tacey, 2003, p. 100-101, as cited in Crisp, 2009). This element within the curriculum gives students and educators alike opportunities to bridge the educational environment with significant life questions (Groen, 2008). Although some authors such as Groen (2008) share that spiritual transformation of students, as mentioned in the work of Mezirow on transformational learning, cannot be one of the desired course outcomes; she did agree that the course laid the underpinnings of transformative learning for students as well as for professors (Mezirow, 2000, as cited in Groen, 2008). This demonstrates how courses can be designed to allow for the possibility of spiritual transformation of graduate level students.
While making decisions of course design and content, professors have the opportunity to explore their own worldview and beliefs as related to the class (Groen, 2008). Groen (2008) sees this foundational understanding of self as critical to being able to facilitate and support the learning community along the journey throughout the semester. This self exploration while planning the course is one example of self care that educators take on. One of the students in Groan’s (2008) class reflected: “We must take the time to care for ourselves before we can take care of those who seek and expect our guidance and best-efforts” (p. 202).

**Other disciplines focus on religion and spirituality.** As was demonstrated by the joint commission's requirement to conduct spiritual assessments within the medical field, other professions and academic faculties have followed this pattern of finding importance of including recognition of spirituality and religion. Historically topics of instruction relating to spirituality were solely within the theology and religious studies departments (Groen, 2009). Currently its exposure can be found increasingly in a diverse array of areas of study such as: anthropology, business, education, literary studies, history, sociology, psychology, health sciences, nursing, professional health and welfare, and social work among others (Perrin, 2007, as cited in Crisp, 2009; Groen, 2008). There still remains a lack of resources such as the CSWE’s Religion and Spirituality Clearinghouse, mentioned above as the workgroup, that are helpful to professors teaching in a predominantly secular environment of graduate level courses (Crisp, 2009). This exposure within academic settings is critical in beginning to engage in discourse about the potential that spirituality
has to cultivate students’ growth as they move into and begin to have these conversations with colleagues about how to incorporate this within social work practice (Crisp, 2009).

**Class Typologies**

As the requirements for accreditation relating to inclusion of religious content are laid out, it is not explained how this should be implemented (Crisp, 2009). In Sheridan’s (2009) meta-analysis of studies relating to religion and spirituality in social work; 7 out of 18 studies offer recommendations of how to include content into the curriculum. The ways mentioned are: to offer a required course that all MSW students must take, offer an elective course as one of the choices for students, and/or insert content into already required courses (Sheridan, 2009). Crisp’s (2009) article describes brief lectures that were presented to classes within the core curriculum. Even this brief overview of the topic of religion and spirituality demonstrates the legitimacy of its use within the profession (Crisp, 2009). This need within the profession is reverberated by studies examined by Sheridan (2009) where 38-59% of participants in 5 studies stated that additional training about incorporating spirituality and religion into practice was sought after completion of their graduate programs.

One way to include spirituality into the curriculum may be to invite a guest speaker such as a chaplain. Although this presence may assist in questioning stereotypes, Crisp (2009) points out that a chaplain may hold values contrary to that of tolerance and acceptance of diversity; and that the preference would be to have someone within the field of social work, already familiar with the profession’s values, address the class.
Learning processes/frameworks. The less answered question regarding spirituality within social work education has not been, is it necessary, but how to incorporate it (Barker & Floersch, 2010; Crisp, 2009). In this postmodern age of academia there are various pedagogical styles of incorporating discourse about religion and spirituality that are explored within the departments of social work globally and across the United States. The postmodern pedagogic pathway may be most helpful in the instruction of spirituality and religion (Hodge & Derezotes, 2008, as cited in Moss, 2011). It is within these educational environments where the bridges between theory and practice are pondered by educators and students alike (Crisp, 2009).

The classroom is a place for social workers to begin to see modeled and to learn about the application of values such as self-determination. Theoretical frameworks have been developed to guide learning processes and environments for potentially controversial topics such as religion and spirituality. The literature lists various presentations of how the learning of spirituality and religion alongside social work have been attempted while placing value on the subjective nature of this topic (Barker & Floersch, 2010). It is within these frameworks chosen by instructors as they design their classes, within these structures, that students are free to dialogue and explore (Groen, 2008).

Groen (2008) refers to six paradoxical tensions developed by Parker Palmer that she utilized in developing and implementing her course, *Spirituality in the Workplace*. The six paradoxes include developing and supporting: a structure which is contained and flexible; an environment which is comforting while encouraging participants to question each others
perceptions; discourse and storytelling about society at large, within the class community and individually; the integrity of internal reflection and processing alongside accountability of the community towards each other’s expanded learning; and a learning forum that allows for talking and voicelessness (Palmer, 1998, as cited in Groen, 2008).

The realization, that the diverse spiritual and religious perspectives of each community member is only a piece of the community perspective, echoes what was mentioned earlier of Canda’s (2010) metaphor of the entirety of the bright sun and the individual colors that make up the color of its light. As some of the community members may not consider themselves to be religious or spiritually oriented, it has been suggested that it is critical to have a framework that is inclusive and applicable within a secular context (Moss, 2011). Moss (2011) described in his study how a theoretical framework was developed using a co-creative approach by students, educators, social workers, service users, and caregivers to explore the concept of spirituality.

The literature touches on considering other ways of knowing that may not be linear (Seyfried, 2007; Northcut, 2005). Northcut (2005) suggests moving away from linear ways of comprehending spirituality, and heading towards more inclusive, postmodern approaches. In Graham’s (2008) article on spiritual growth through community, he differentiates two Greek terms for knowing: chronos and kairos. As compared to chronos, or chronological time, kairos is described as fulfilled time, the correct time, time that something happens. The author tells of an Anglican priest that calls this ‘God
time’ (Graham, 2008). Seyfried (2007) shares that this, other way of knowing, can lead to transformational holistic learning.

Groen (2008) describes how theorists have used Mezirow’s ideas about transformational learning, that focus on the development of meaning at a cognitive level, as a starting point to explore connections between spirituality, soul, and transformative engagement leading to more intense learning experiences. These learning opportunities derive from educators focusing, not as much on what is being taught, but on how teaching is occurring in the classroom (Barker & Floersch, 2010). Within this environment the participants may develop an evolution in their way of seeing things as their previous knowledge is built upon and expanded (Groen, 2008).

Barker and Floersch (2010) introduce a tool, self-assessment template (SAT) that is used to support students’ necessary self-reflections within the classroom. This tool evolved from a qualitative study about how professional social worker’s conceptualize spirituality within their lives. The authors encourage educators to give feedback to students’ reflections as a way of supporting students’ critical thinking processes (Barker & Floersch, 2010). Within these processes of reflection and feedback, there may be more possibilities for spiritual growth.

Several authors refer to a framework of spirituality as a lived experience (Crisp, 2009; Groen, 2008). Crisp (2009) suggests that this could include topics such as life rituals and routines, creative pathways, sense of place and location, and social action without the use of explicit religious language. As relationships are built over time, this manner of
approaching these themes of discussion may allow for further elaboration and deeper discussion of how spirituality is connected to daily living. Crisp’s (2010) book, *Spirituality and Social Work*, elaborates on the ideas expressed in her article; stating that using a framework of lived experience would be useful in facilitating communication between individuals that vary on their worldview, people that are not comfortable discussing topics of religion and spirituality, and when particular religious/spiritual language are not familiar. In this way social workers and service users or classmates that have no religious or spiritual background may feel included and not alienated during conversations (Moss, 2011; Crisp, 2009).

**Spiritually Sensitive Social Work Practice**

**Frameworks**

In a study by Canda et al. (2004) it was determined that when making decisions about the use of religion and spirituality with clients social workers were not looking to the guidance of a structured framework nor were they utilizing strategies learned during their coursework on this topic. This was considered to be a limitation within the field (Canda et al., 2004). Spirituality looked at through a liberation theological lens calls people to action as motivated from the compassion of God to help those in need (Lee & Barrett, 2007). Johnstone et al. (2012) explain that most of the studies focusing on spirituality and religion have involved a Christian perspective. Some of the literature focus on particular aspects of spirituality, such as social justice issues and/or considerations of spirituality while working within specific populations of service users.
Gray and Coates (2013) advocate for including environmental issues into the discourse on spirituality within social work. Bacchus touches on racism in her article on Professional Black women and how they deal with stress in the workplace. The findings of Bacchus’s study, including research from 203 professional black women, determined that there was an association between an individuals’ spirituality and the way they coped with stress in their lives (Bacchus, 2008).

Graham et al. (2010, 2009), and Hall et al (2011) both did studies pertaining to the faith of Islam and social work practice with Muslims. Islam has been determined to be one of the global religions that is growing rapidly (Hall et al., 2011). Issues of racism and isolation in this country have faced Muslims more extensively since the plane crashes in New York and Washington D.C. in September of the year 2001. The authors point out that it is critical to incorporate religion and spirituality when working with Muslims and encourage referrals, when needed, to be directed towards communities that social workers have already established trusting relationships with (Hall et al., 2011; Graham, Bradshaw, & Trew, 2010).

Bhagwan (2012) and Whiting (2013) discuss social work with underpinnings from Indian culture in their articles on Gandhian social work and ancient hindu and spirituality. Whiting explores Gandhi’s influence on social work in England using the biographical examples of two women who associated with Gandhi during his time there: Muriel and Doris Lester. He uses terms such as Swadesh to explain the simple way of living, Bramacharya to show the restraint they exampled, and Satyagraha which is often
described as ‘soul-force.’ Whiting shares that the modern day social worker practicing gandhian social work would choose which issues they will advocate for and will have an awareness that the advocacy in itself will be an expression of spirituality (Whiting, 2013).

Bhagwan (2012) explains how there is not much literature on Hindu spirituality within social work. The author explains that Hinduism recognizes that people are diverse and may have diverse journeys to reach God (Sharma, 2000, p. 246, as cited in Bhagwan, 2012).

Mountain (2005); and Cadell, Kennedy, and Hemsworth (2011) discuss social work relating to spirituality with work with children and their families. Mountain did a study with 60 primary school children in Australia exploring the meaning and purpose of prayer for children. The participants included children from spiritual, religious and non-religious familial belief backgrounds. Through the interview process it was determined that 100% of the children reported using prayer and spoke positively about it (Mountain, 2005).

Cadell et al. (2011) completed a study which explored how parents of children with life limiting illnesses cope with their stress and PTSD. It was determined that spirituality was a resource and that there were positive factors, such as growth and resilience associated with the PTSD involved with navigating healthcare issues while advocating for their children.

**Summary**

This section has shed some light on decisions that have been made over the years that affect social work programs, instructors, students, and service users. It has
demonstrated why there is a need of inclusion of the topics of spirituality and religion within social work settings.

Sacramento has been considered the most ‘integrated city’ in the nation by Time magazine, and because many of the graduates from CSUS go on to work within Sacramento and its outlying areas it is ever more important for students within the Social Work program at CSUS to be cognizant of the diversities arising around the topics of religion and spirituality (Stodghill & Bower, 2002). Stodghill and Bower (2002) go on to discuss ‘The most segregated hour’ from their article Welcome to America’s Most Diverse City:

“More than 30 years ago, Martin Luther King Jr. famously said that "the 11 o'clock hour on Sunday is the most segregated hour in American life." It's an indictment that still carries weight today, as an estimated 90% of Americans worship primarily with members of their race or ethnicity. Yet Sacramento's complex social tapestry challenges conventional notions that racial segregation in worship is a failure of America's national ideal of equality. Sometimes segregation is driven not by bigotry but by language barriers and cultural heritage” (p.3).

These language and cultural barriers are extenuated in a diverse city such as Sacramento. Sacramento City Unified School District is home to a range of students speaking over 40 different languages, coming from households that may represent up to 70 languages (SCUSD, 2014; Stodghill & Bower, 2002). Every month Sacramento hosts naturalization ceremonies that may range from 800-1000 participants representing 80 counties of origin. Pew Research company (2013) has shown that immigrants are more religious than the general population. Unauthorized immigrants who are primarily of Latin
American and Caribbean origin are 83% Christian, which is more representative than the 80% of the general US population who affiliate with being Christian (Pew Research, 2013).
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 discusses the research process. It begins with introducing the study objective and main research question. Next the study design and sampling procedures are discussed. Data collection, instrumentation used and data analysis are then summarized. This chapter ends with a brief discussion of the measures taken for the protection of human subjects.

Study Objective

The purpose of this study was to collect information from social work students about their levels of spirituality and religion, exposure to classroom content and discussions relating to spirituality and religion, and to potential instances of countertransference during classroom discussions and when working with service users. This study may have benefited participants in the way that their participation in answering the questions may lead to considering their personal views and beliefs about spirituality and how those beliefs may affect their interaction with classmates during classroom discussions and with service users. The Sacramento State University Department of Social Work may benefit from this study by evaluating how their progress of including topics of a religious and/or spiritual nature into curriculum has potentially increased from past years.

Past thesis studies of Sac State students have demonstrated a desire to see an inclusion of content on religion and spirituality in social work at the Bachelor’s level and at the graduate level, have determined that integrating these topics into curriculum is a critical
piece of cultural competency, and confer that use of religion and spirituality with service users is important (Britto, 1998; Porter, 2002; Samas & Virnig, 2000). Nyquist (1994), a CSUS student, shared from her findings that consisted of interviews with social work educators: “If religion and spirituality are incorporated into the social work curriculum in the right way and/or in the right setting, an important human resource can be tapped respectfully and without violating social work values” (p. iv).

**Main Research Question**

How have Sac State students made sense of spirituality and religion in their lives and what have their experiences been regarding religion and spirituality in classroom discussions and when relating to service users?

**Study Design**

This is an exploratory study that used a mixed method research approach. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected using a survey questionnaire completed by Sac State students taking classes within the department of social work. The survey contains demographic questions; Likert scale closed-ended questions to assess levels of spirituality, class content, use of spirituality when interacting with service users; and open-ended questions to share more specific details of religious and/or spiritual upbringing, and classroom and internship experiences where the topic of spirituality and religion may have surfaced.
Sampling Procedures

The inclusion criterion limited participation to Sac State students taking social work classes. It was the researcher's goal to recruit 40-50 participants to complete surveys. Sixty-four surveys were completed in total. The researcher engaged the participants by approaching them in one of their social work classes taken at California State University, Sacramento. No inducements were offered. The researcher anticipated a potential conflict of interest with participants of Spirituality in Social Work class as the researcher was also a participant in that class. The researcher avoided the potential conflict by informing participants that their participation was voluntary, that they could have chosen to not answer any of the questions, and that they could have decided to opt out of the study at any point while completing the survey.

The researcher requested permission from the social work professors to present the research project to their class for the purpose of recruiting participants. The presentations took place following approval of research from the division of Social Work Research Review Committee. Every volunteer that agreed to participate signed a consent form. Forms were made available for students to read while the researcher presented the project topic to each class. The consent form that each participant signed included the concept of confidentiality in the manner that the research data would be handled, the project’s purpose, contact information should questions arise, and on-campus counseling services should support be needed. Appendix A includes a copy of the consent form.
Data Collection Procedures

The data was collected using a convenient sampling process by the researcher from surveys completed by Sac State students taking social work classes. All surveys were completed during one of the student’s social work classes.

Instrumentation

The research was captured using a survey questionnaire to measure participants’ perceptions of their behavior relating to religious and/or spiritual practices, attitudes pertaining to religious and spiritual content with service users, characteristics such as age and ethnicity, self-classification of being religious and spiritual, and knowledge developed through work experience and classroom content that may lessen chances of discomfort when discussing religion and/or spirituality with clients (Kreuger, & Neuman, 2006). Appendix B includes a copy of the questionnaire. The survey was chosen as the best use for the discussion of religion and spirituality as this may be quite a personal topic to discuss, and respondents may be more at ease answering in a survey format. It is suggested that respondents may be more honest in answering questions on self-administered questionnaires than from face-to-face interviews (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006). The researcher made every effort to design the survey questions to be inclusive regardless of respondents spiritual and/or religious orientation.

The survey questionnaire was compiled of 28 questions. Approximately half of the questions were open-ended questions and the rest were closed-ended questions. It was important to the researcher to give respondents opportunities to answer questions relating to
beliefs and feelings using open-ended questions as opposed to being guided into limited fixed responses (Kreuger, & Neuman, 2006). The design of the questionnaire using open and closed-ended questions mixed throughout the survey may have helped the respondent engage more with the process before answering the last few potentially threatening questions about their upbringing relating to religion and spirituality. As it is recommended to not end a survey with a threatening question, the final question asked about students’ reasons for taking a *Spirituality in Social Work* course (Kreuger, & Neuman, 2006).

**Data Analysis**

The completed surveys were analyzed in two ways. The open-ended questions were organized to look for recurring themes, coded accordingly and then analyzed discussing patterns, similarities, and differences. The demographic information, measure of spirituality, and measure of religiosity using Likert scale questions were analyzed and compared using SPSS.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

Before initializing the data collection procedure the researcher submitted an application to California State University of Sacramento’s Division of Social Work Research Review Committee. The purpose of the application was to seek approval of the researcher’s proposed study. The application was initially reviewed on November 25, 2013, and was returned to the researcher requesting minor modifications prior to approval. Modifications were submitted and a secondary decision was made on December 5, 2013, that the proposed study was approved as Exempt (Approval # 13-14-049). The research
conducted in this study was categorized exempt by the researcher based on the perception that the students taking social work classes are familiar with the research process and undergo work in their social work classes relating to self-awareness.

Data was collected and handled in an anonymous fashion. The participant names were only on the consent forms which were stored separately from the completed surveys. No student names were on the completed surveys. Data was only handled by the researcher and was made accessible to the researcher’s advisor. The research material was stored in a locked briefcase in the researcher’s home until it was destroyed upon completion of the research project.
STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This body of research is derived from survey questionnaires completed by graduate students in their final year of their programs at CSUS. Information pertaining to religion and spirituality was gathered relating to students’ familial upbringing, personal affiliations and practices, classroom content, and attitudes relating to inclusion or exclusion while working with service users in a professional setting. Sixty-four students completed surveys that contained open and close-ended questions addressing these topics of inquiry.

The potential for countertransference with colleagues and with service users while discussing spirituality and religion was considered the dependent variables of this study. Countertransference was measured by asking respondents about: 1) their comfort discussing class content of religion and spirituality different than their own, 2) ability to not judge classmates with differing beliefs, 3) whether it was important to bring up religion/spirituality with service users, 4) appropriateness of bringing up religion/spirituality before service user brings it up, and 5) comfort level when discussing religion and/or 6) spirituality with service users.

The independent variables: familial upbringing, personal religiosity/spirituality, and perceptions of class content on religion/spirituality were each compared to the six dependent variables making up the measurement of countertransference.
Overall Findings

Demographics

One respondent declined to answer all of the demographic questions except for education. One hundred percent of the respondents were in their final year of a graduate program. Only one respondent was not in the MSW program, but was studying to become an MFT. The participants ranged in age from 23 to 49, with a mean age of 31 years old. Of the sixty-three respondents who answered the question regarding gender, 81% were female and 19% were male. Just over 70% of the respondents reported not having children. Around 10% each had 1 or 2 children and just over 6% total had 3, 4, or 5 children.

Table 1. Ethnic/Racial Heritage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic/Racial Heritage</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Latino</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Heritage</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican American/Chicano</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>98.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>declined</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the respondents (46.8%) identified as being white/caucasian. The next largest ethnic groups identified as Mexican American/Chicano (16.1%), and Asian/Asian American (12.9%). Six respondents identified as Mixed Heritage, four each identified as African American/Black and Other Latino, and one identified as other without
specifying an ethnic/racial background (see Table 1). No students identified themselves as American Indian/Alaskan, Filipino, or Pacific Islander.

**Table 2: Religious/Spiritual Affiliation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Catholic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Religion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Religious</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>98.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing Declined</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the sixty-two respondents that identified a religious/spiritual affiliation, the majority, 23.7% identified themselves as Protestant or a denomination of Protestantism such as: Baptist, Evangelical, Methodist, and Pentecostal. Other Christian (12.7%) affiliations, including some non-trinitarian affiliations were: non-denominational Christian, Unity Church, Church of Christ, Mormon, Seventh Day Adventist, and the one Jewish participant was placed into this category. Catholics (19%) identified themselves as being Catholic, Irish Catholic, and Roman Catholic. The two eastern religious traditions accounted for were Taoist, and Buddhist.

The respondents that were considered in the spiritual (12.7%) category included: spiritual, yoga, and a course in miracles. The non-religious (14.3%) category included: agnostic, atheist, and secular humanitarian (see Table 2).
Specific Findings

Personal Religious and Spiritual Characteristics

Significantly more respondents considered themselves to be more of a spiritual person than a religious person. When asked to respond to the statement I am a very religious person 58% stated that they somewhat or strongly disagreed, and 28% strongly or somewhat agreed, with the remaining 14% choosing neutral/no opinion. When responding to the sentence I am a very spiritual person, just over 70% strongly or somewhat agreed, 19% somewhat or strongly disagreed and 11% answered neutral/no opinion.

When asked how respondents practiced their religion, just under 52% declined to respond. Respondents were given the choices of attending service, reading sacred text, praying, or engaging in specific rituals. They were asked to mark all that applied. Out of 31 respondents to this question, 27 (87%) checked that they practiced their religion by praying. A lower number responded that they attend service (65%) and an even lower number stated that they practiced by reading sacred text (42%). The ritual most specified was meditation as listed by three respondents. Four respondents answered none or don’t practice religion.

When asked to describe how respondents practiced their spirituality, meditation (18) received the greatest response. Thirteen respondents listed praying. Mindfulness (9), the way I live life and treat others (6), and living a life of service (4), each received more than three responses.
When asked the consistency that respondents connect with a religious community, out of 59 respondents, 39% stated never, and just over 27% reported connecting less than once a month. Twenty-two percent stated they connect once a week or more. Twenty-seven of the respondents described their religious community in the form of service/mass or church. Five respondents described it as family and friends and three described it as community meetings.

When asked the consistency that respondents connected with a spiritual community, out of 59 respondents, 39% stated never, but only 10% reported connecting less than once a month. Thirty-four percent stated they connected once a week or more, and 17% connect monthly. The spiritual communities within which respondents described connecting were in the forms of mostly family and friends (11). Eight respondents described their spiritual community as church, and four described it as groups. Other types of spiritual communities listed by more than one respondent were: nature, peers, yoga community, meditation, and personal/not in a community.

In an effort to include respondents that did not orient themselves as religious or spiritual, an open-ended question was asked to inquire about coping strategies. The two most significant coping strategies were spending time or talking to friends and family (30), and prayer (21). Exercise (13), meditation (8), being mindful (6), and journaling/reflecting (6) were each listed by more than five respondents. Other coping responses listed by more than two respondents were: music, therapy, boyfriend/spouse/partner, focusing on solutions rather than problems, affirmation/self-talk, and food/cooking.
Perceptions of Classroom Content Relating to Religion and Spirituality

The majority of students agreed to have had content in social work classes relating to spirituality. The ratio of students that strongly or somewhat agree to having content as compared to students that somewhat or strongly disagreed was 2 to 1. Eight percent of the 63 students who responded to be neutral/no opinion.

Approximately 42% of the respondents had taken the social work and spirituality class that was offered within the social work department. Twenty-six of the students took this class during their graduate level coursework and one student took it as a undergraduate. Thirty-seven students reported not taking SWK 232 as an elective.

Students were given a list of classes from the MSW program and asked whether the class included content on religion/spirituality or whether it did not:

Table 3: Class Content on Religion and Spirituality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Yes Frequency</th>
<th>Yes Percent</th>
<th>No Frequency</th>
<th>No Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>202 Diversity</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204A Practice I</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204B Practice II</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210 Research</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>235A Theory</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>235B Theory</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250 Policy</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204C Practice</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 Culminating Experience</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501 Advanced Research</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Yes Frequency</td>
<td>Yes Percent</td>
<td>No Frequency</td>
<td>No Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>218 Chemical Dependence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>219 Practice in Health Care Settings</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>221 Community Organizing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>223 DSM</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>224 Advanced Mental Health</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>228 Clinical Intervention in Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>232 Social Work and Spirituality</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>238A Issues and Practice in Schools</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>238B Issues and Practice in Schools</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>245 Death, Grief and Growth</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>259 International Social Work</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>261 Grant Writing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>262 Practice in Rehabilitation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the core classes Diversity was the one class that a clear majority (86.4%) stated that content on spirituality and religion was included. The responses for Practice during the first year and theory were fairly divided. Ninety-two percent of respondents felt that research class did not include content in these subject matters. Most of the respondents that reported taking a Culminating experience (88.5%) or Capstone class (100%) reported there not being content within their classes.

The electives that 100% of the respondents perceived to contain content on religion/spirituality were Death, Grief, and Growth; and Social Work and Spirituality. Over 70% of students who reported taking Advanced Mental Health (90%), Social Work Practice in Health Care Settings (77.8%), Community Organizing Practice (71.4%), and International
Social Work (75%) stated that there was content on religion and spirituality. There were mixed responses for DSM with most (68.4%) reporting that it did not have content. Half of respondents who reported taking Clinical Intervention in Sexual Abuse reported there being content. All of the respondents who took grant writing reported that there was not content on religion and spirituality (see Table 3).

The majority (73.8%) of 61 respondents, when asked if they were comfortable discussing spiritual/religious content that was different than their beliefs/values strongly or somewhat agreed as compared to 13% who somewhat or strongly disagreed.

An equal number of respondents (14) described feelings borough up during classroom discussions as being positive or negative. Eleven respondents described feelings as being neutral and six had mixed feelings that were both positive and negative.

When asked if respondent was able to not judge classmates that had beliefs that were different than their personal beliefs/values, just under 81% strongly or somewhat agreed that they would not judge classmates based on their beliefs. Eleven percent remained neutral, and 8% somewhat or strongly disagreed that they would be able to not judge their classmates.

**Attitudes Relating to Religion/Spirituality Within Professional Settings**

This section was composed of four Likert scale questions asking about perceptions relating to addressing religion and spirituality with service users. An open ended question about specific tools used to lessen the social workers level of discomfort when addressing these topics in the professional setting is also asked.
Just under 90% of respondents strongly or somewhat agree being comfortable discussing spirituality with service users. Just under 80% strongly or somewhat agree to being comfortable discussing religion during interactions with service users. Sixty-five percent strongly or somewhat agree to feeling that it is important to bring up religion and spirituality when working with service users while 55% strongly or somewhat agree it is appropriate to ask about a service user’s religion/spirituality if the service user has not previously brought it up.

**Familial Upbringing and Current Familial Beliefs/Values**

The final section contained three open ended questions discussing respondents’ upbringing relating to religion and spirituality.

When asked in what ways respondents upbringing relating to religion and spirituality were positive and/or negative, of the 56 responses, just over 32% stated it was positive. Just under 27% recalled it being negative, 16% were neutral and 25% had mixed feelings that were both positive and negative.

**Interpretation of the Findings**

Cross-tabulations and chi-square tests were conducted using SPSS to identify relationships and the strength of relationships between various variables. For all of the chi-square tests a .05 level of probability was used as a “cutoff” for statistical significance (Fox, 1998). Fox explains that if the probability of an observed association between two variables is less than .05 then it should be within reason to confirm that there is indeed a relationship.
Table 4: Religious/Spiritual Affiliation and Ethnic/Racial Heritage

Cross Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic/Racial Heritage</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Latino</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican American/Chicano</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Religion</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Religious</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents Ethnic/Racial Heritage and Religious/Spiritual Affiliation were compared using cross tabulation. Only Mixed Heritage and White/Caucasian associated with having an affiliation of being spiritual. This is different than the Likert scale question asking how spiritual of a person respondents considered themselves to be. One hundred percent of Latinos affiliated with a Christian based religion of Catholicism, Protestantism, or Other Christian denomination (see Table 4).
Table 5: Chi-Square test of Affiliation and Heritage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>70.181*</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>66.016</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Assoc.</td>
<td>.207</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 47 cells (95.9%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symmetric Measures</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Approx. Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominal by Nominal Phi</td>
<td>1.073</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramer's V</td>
<td>.438</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| N of Valid Cases        | 61    |              |

A chi-square computation was completed. Looking at the Cramer’s V value of .438 after determining the level of probability to be .001, it was determined that there was a moderate positive association between the two variables (see Table 5).

Out of 36 chi-square computations that were completed to compare independent and dependent variables, three showed a statistical significance in their relationship. All three of these involved respondents perception of how spiritual they were as compared to attitudes relating to topics of religion and spirituality as related to working with service users (see Tables 6, 7, and 8).
Table 6: Personal Spirituality/Importance of Bringing up with Service Users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>27.039*</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>25.189</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>10.957</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 21 cells (84.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .32.

Table 7: Personal Spirituality/Comfort Discussing Religion with Service Users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>31.341*</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>23.104</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>8.490</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 21 cells (84.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08.

The likert scale question asking whether the respondent felt they were a spiritual person was compared to how strongly a respondent felt that it was to bring up religion and spirituality when working with service users. There was a moderate positive association between these two variables due to gamma being .435 (see Table 6).
The likert scale question asking whether the respondent felt they were a spiritual person was compared to how comfortable respondents were discussing religion when interacting with service users. There was a moderate positive association between these two variables due to gamma being .443 (see Table 7).

Table 8: Personal Spirituality/Comfort Discussing Spirituality with Service Users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symmetric Measures</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Asymp. Std. Error</th>
<th>Approx. T</th>
<th>Approx. Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordinal by Ordinal</td>
<td>.443</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>3.047</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N of Valid Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>31.490&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>22.711</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>13.186</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N of Valid Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gamma</td>
<td>.509</td>
<td>.137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N of Valid Cases

The minimum expected count is .08.

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
The likert scale question asking whether the respondent felt they were a spiritual person was compared to how comfortable respondents were discussing spirituality when interacting with service users. There was a moderate positive association between these two variables due to gamma being .509 (see Table 8).

**Summary**

It was determined that as a person perceived themselves to be more spiritual they would also directly perceive: 1) it to be more important to bring up religion/spirituality when working with service users, 2) themselves to be more comfortable discussing religion and spirituality with service users.

All of the respondents who identified as Mexican American/Chicano or Other Latino also affiliated themselves with either Protestantism, Catholicism, or Other Christian. This can be a critical characteristic trait to remember when working with service users in California. According to the Governor’s Budget summary presented in January of this year, 2014 is the first year that Latinos are expected to ‘surpass whites as the largest (recorded) racial/ethnic group in California’ (Lopez, 2014).
Chapter 5

CONCLUSION, SUMMARY, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the final section of this project will be qualitative nuances not previously mentioned in the research analysis. A brief summary of general findings will be presented. Implications for social work practice at different levels will be discussed. Some of the limitations of exploring subjective topics within research, and dynamics that occur when sensitive topics are discussed will be presented. A system of CARE as a plan of action to continue with the integration of spiritually sensitive practice, and as a model in contrast to social injustices will be suggested and outlined.

Summary of Study

This research project begins to describe some of the many intricacies of the diverse spiritual, religious, and non-religious perspectives that graduate level students have formed over their lifetimes. Exploring brief, open-ended questions about familial upbringing has demonstrated that many of these worldviews have dynamically taken different forms throughout the course of participants’ lives. Some of this diversity has been described within the data presentations and analysis of Chapter 4. The respondents' spiritual orientations were quite diverse. Participants described their upbringing as: being raised in a home of a Methodist minister, following an 'obscure Eastern religion’, raised Reform Judaism, more spiritual incorporating Buddhism, and following Sikh beliefs among many others.
Many of the respondents have made choices to diverge from the traditional belief systems of their youth. Some of these processes were explored within the students’ elective course focusing on spirituality. As a participant in social work 232, *Social Work and Spirituality*, the researcher had the opportunity to be part of a community that openly discussed religion and spirituality in a respectful, honoring manner. When asked why survey participants in the current study chose to take SWK 232, the class experiences were described as:

“I took it by chance but it was the best chance I was ever given. Changed my life.”

“New experience unlike any other class.”

“I have always wanted the opportunity to engage in honest round table discussion about sensitive issues within a safe, structured and non judgmental space.”

“So glad I took this course. Learned new concepts that fleshed out my intuitive knowledge about forgiveness, radical acceptance, mindfulness and beliefs about other ways of looking at the world.”

“I never thought about how important it is to practice spirituality w/ MINDFULNESS. Mindfulness really inspires me to look at things from different angles and I now appreciate what I possess. (Health, loved ones, education, water, etc.)”

**Implications for Social Work**

The literature review in Chapter 2 demonstrated that some of the mentioned major contributors to the literature in the field of social work and spirituality/religion, such as Canda, Hodge, Sherr, and Sheridan (some of the members of CSWE’s Religion and Spirituality Workgroup) have worked hard and dedicated much of their livelihood to advocate for religion and spiritualities’ place within the field of social work. The research
project demonstrated a desire amongst many participants to respect one another including each others’ differing religions and beliefs. There appears to still be work to be done to provide forums to begin to explore and talk about some of these differences, and ways to affirm and truly honor and respect each others’ differences.

It has been demonstrated by this study that CSUS has upheld its integrity of accreditation expectations by including these themes within courses such as the Social Work and Spirituality elective that is currently taught by Professor Bein, and by the incorporation of content into core classes such as Diversity. Many students communicated learning things that have filled in some gaps for them:

“The death and dying class was wonderful real life connection to ritual and belief.”

“I was under-educated about how some cultures distrust medical professions.”

“I feel more compelled to bring up discussion of religion and spirituality with clients after taking SWK 232”

“Religion/Spirituality is an important resource for clients- exploring ideas related to this topic can enhance my ability to engage, assess & connect with clients.”

“It is an important part of many peoples lives and should be honored in SW practice. Should be considered when working w/a client on a treatment plan in a clinical setting.”

Although some content has been provided, it has been communicated by some of the participants that they did not get sufficient exposure to these topics within the program:

“I wish I had the opportunity to take the spirituality class. I don’t feel like I have a wealth of knowledge in this area.”

“Content has been limited.”
“It has not a lot of discussion”

This perception of deficit, gives MSW graduates the opportunity to explore how they will continue to discuss and explore how spiritually sensitive social work presents itself within practice settings of forensics and corrections, schools, healthcare organizations, social service agencies, and politics and community organizing among many other areas of specialization.

**Limitations**

One of the greatest limitations faced as researcher on this project was attempting to give form, shape, and texture to the subjective, personal nature of spirituality and religion while feeling like being in a box of rules about deadlines, scientific hypothesizing, formatting, accepted research etiquette, and required project elements. It has been challenging to feel the love throughout this methodical process. Near the end of the project a realization surfaced... an exploration about perceptions relating to religion and spirituality has been attempted without bringing up the work love once. Love was definitely present within the research:

I practice my religion (and spirituality) by...“Engaging with and connecting to the infinite love of the universe.”

Made changes from familial upbringing...“I don’t practice Judaism. I practice kriya yoga. It is not a religion. I feel real spiritual connection to god like I am evolving spiritually. It has made me happy & gives me a sense of infinite love & faith knowing I’m in good hands w/god the guru. It’s changed everything about how I experience life.”

How often and in what way do you connect to a spiritual community... “always...being present and embracing the infinite love around me.”
Discuss class experiences... “SWK 224 (Advanced Mental Health) - Discussion of DBT - connecting with ‘the big picture’ understanding & exploring ways we are loved, connecting to those around us.”

How were classmates beliefs unique... “My God is a god of love and my principles are to love everybody. I love any people.”

Another dynamic that may be seen as a limitation is the tension created when individuals come together to discuss subject matter that they are passionate about while having apparent differing viewpoints. Some participants addressed this tension with uncertainty:

“When spirituality is discussed in classroom setting I am offended because teacher often make it seem like being Christian is something negative.”

“It is difficult for me to accept that some people do not believe in God or reject his existence.”

“I remember talking about God and it gives me an uncomfortable feeling because of past experiences.”

“I was angry but I didn’t want to say anything because I didn’t think I could be polite.”

“I felt isolated and wanted to contribute but didn’t feel comfortable. A lot of discussions about Christianity/Catholicism made me feel isolated because my family is of Sikh faith.”

“Discussing conservative religious views & work with children makes me tense. Although I am “Christian”, forms of Christianity that attempt to convert children scares me.”

“I was not raised in a religion, so it felt very unfamiliar and foreign.”

“I had a very strong negative response during a classroom discussion where a quote was given about “God giving us worth.”
“(feelings were...) neutral/strange; made me question my beliefs.”
In class discussion... “Negative comments about Christianity” felt... “Negative for a (social work) program that is supposed to be unbiased.”

Other respondents embraced the opportunity to share differing perspectives:

“I was the only agnostic in my 202 (Diversity) class. I felt comfortable discussing my spirituality. No issues.”

“Discussed Spirituality in death and dying and it was nice to share about my culture. Most people are not aware of the intense labor and time invested in our spiritual healings so being able to share this knowledge was great.”

(felt positive during discussion...) “I feel very strongly that organized religion leaves room to discriminate, but I felt well received by my peers about this, most agreed.”

Feelings during class discussions... “very positive. love learning about various religions”

“Overall all positive feelings. The class discussions make me look @ my own past experiences w/organized religion.”

**Recommendations**

The way the researcher communicated feeling boxed in by expectations of this research project can be seen as a metaphor for the many complex systems that need to be navigated as social workers striving to provide the best services to those we work with.

The researcher recommends for continuing inclusive dialogues around the topics of religion and spirituality within a system of CARE.

When asked what tools survey participants utilized to minimize discomfort when discussing religion and spirituality with service users certain characteristics were described: open-mindedness, acceptance, awareness, non judgemental, radical acceptance, honesty,
respect, being in the moment, and ‘being comfortable with being uncomfortable.” Included with these qualities should be compassion, accountability, responsibility, and empathy.

**System of CARE**

Providing services within a system of CARE involves staff and service users at all levels agreeing to uphold characteristics of compassion, accountability, responsibility, and empathy. The literature touched on each of these characteristics. It was discussed to have compassion through creativity and advocacy for self, others and communities which individuals are part of. Accountability can be utilized to minimize the risk of abuse of power through completing accreditation requirements, making efforts to record and learn from critical self-reflection and supervision, and being mindful of boundaries and whether it is in the service users best interest to bring up certain topics within therapeutic relationships.

Responsibility lies within social work programs to provide safe learning environments to encourage the development of language and tools for social workers to use to navigate sensitive issues such as spirituality and religion. Social workers can then be ethically responsible to service users. Academia are encouraging the field of social work to take more responsibility for environmental issues with consideration of all beings. It is hoped that empathy would be achieved through initially beginning with compassion, being accountable to each other, taking responsibility for our actions in order to be able to be sufficiently present to attempt to see the world from another’s perspective.
The survey participants had views about when systems of CARE were not in place. When there is a lack of accountability leading to power misuse and a core social work value of social justice is compromised:

Feelings relating to class discussion... “Negative. Most religious system teach to love one another however those that use it in the form of control are not true living up to their religious system.”

Class discussion... “Religion was used as an example of social control without taking into account that those using it in a negative way were not following their own belief structure.”

“Many ascribe to organizational religion. I find this to be an oppressive & restrictive practice.”

Concluding Thoughts

Yesterday morning after meditating I recorded some of Oprah’s words of wisdom:

“What I know for sure is that...Each of us is responsible for the energy we bring to any moment. You add to the positive vibration of all that is, and that my friends is what changes the world, one person, one energetic vibration.”

It is asked by Professor Bein in the syllabus for SWK 232 for classmates to, “...attempt to open to the idea that love and striving for wholeness represents the foundation of each spiritual tradition.” This ‘striving for wholeness’, to me, represents a journey, a life-long process full of individual moments. It was once described to me by a friend that these life journeys can be represented by bridges leading to an island. I see the bridges as diverse religious beliefs, spiritual understandings, and/or life journeys that lead to the island representing our oneness. It was stated by one of the study participants:

“Essentially we all believe the same thing w/different manifestations.”
APPENDIX A

Consent Letter

Dear Sac State Student:

My name is Diane Rodriguez, a Sac State, MSW graduate student. My research project is on the topic of students’ experiences relating to spirituality and religion within the classroom and within internship experiences.

The purpose of this study is to gain knowledge about how the exposure to class and internship content surrounding religion and spirituality may affect students. This information will allow for the Social Work Department at Sac State to see how they are doing in this area as perceived by students. As a participant you may also benefit from some self-awareness relating to the research topic and your work with clients.

The manner in which I will collect this research will be through a survey which should take approximately 25 minutes of your time. The research process will be anonymous, in the way that I will not ask you to write your name on the survey. The completed surveys will be kept in a safe place with only myself and the faculty sponsor having access to them. All research material will be destroyed no later that August 31, 2014.

I do not foresee any risk or discomfort while completing the survey, however if at any point you are in need of support in the way of counseling services you may contact the on-campus Student Health and Counseling Services (SHCS) located at: the Well (916) 278-6461. SHCS hours of operation: M-Th 8:00-6:00, F 9:00-4:30.

As a volunteer in this research project you may choose to answer as many or as little questions as you choose, and you may withdraw your participation from this research project at any time. Your answers to the research questions and your personal perspectives are highly valued. There will be no compensation for your participation. By signing below you are indicating that you have read this letter of consent and you agree to participate in the research project. Your participation is appreciated.

___________________________________________                          ______________
Signature of participant             Date

If you have any questions relating to this study, please call, Diane Rodriguez at (XXX) XXX-XXXX, or e-mail at XXX_XXX_XXX@yahoo.com. You may also contact the faculty sponsor for this study, Dr. Dale Russell, at (916) 278-7170, or by e-mail at drussell@csus.edu.
APPENDIX B

Survey Questionnaire

Research Study: CSUS Students’ Perspectives on Religion & Spirituality

1. BSW  MSWI  MSWII  Other__________________
   (please circle one)

2. Age: ____________________

3. Gender: __________________

4. Ethnic/Racial Heritage:
   - American Indian/Alaskan _____  African American/Black _____
   - Asian/Asian American _____  Pacific Islander _____
   - Filipino _____  Mexican American/Chicano _____
   - Other Latino _____  White/Caucasian _____
   - Mixed Heritage _____
   - Other _____________________

5. Religious/Spiritual Affiliation:
   - Agnostic _____  Atheist _____
   - Buddhist _____  Catholic _____
   - Evangelical Christian _____  Hindu _____
   - Jehovah Witness _____  Jewish _____
   - Mormon _____  Muslim _____
   - None _____  Protestant _____
   - Secular Humanitarian _____  Seventh Day Adventist _____
   - Taoist _____  Wicca _____
   - Specific Denomination _________________________
   - Other _________________________________

6. Number of Children: _____

Some of the following questions use a scale. Please circle the best answer.

7. I am a very religious person.
   
   | Strongly | Somewhat | Neutral | Somewhat | Strongly |
   | Agree    | Agree    | No Opinion | Disagree | Disagree |
8. I am a very **spiritual** person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9. I practice my religion by (Please mark all that apply):
   - Attending Service
   - Reading Sacred Text
   - Praying
   - Engaging in specific rituals such as: ____________________________________
   - Other: ____________________________________________________________

10. I practice my **spirituality** by:

____________________________________________________________________

11a. The consistency that I connect with a **religious** community is:
   a) more than once a week
   b) once a week
   c) monthly
   d) less than once a month
   e) Never

11b. This **religious** community is in the form of: ______________________________

12a. The consistency that I connect with a **spiritual** community is:
   a) more than once a week
   b) once a week
   c) monthly
   d) less than once a month
   e) Never

12b. This **spiritual** community is in the form of: ______________________________

13. What are your coping strategies when dealing with challenging situations:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________
14. I have had content in my social work classes relating to spirituality:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral No Opinion</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. I have participated in a SWK 232: Social Work and Spirituality class.

Yes _____ No _____

16. The following SWK classes have included content on religion/spirituality:

(Please mark yes if classes contained content on religion/spirituality)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SWK Class</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Have you taken this class?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>202 Diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204A Practice I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204B Practice II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210 Research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>235A Theory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>235B Theory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250 Policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204C Practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 Culminating Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501 Graduate Capstone (Class)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective __________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective __________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective __________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17a. During class discussions I was comfortable discussing spiritual/religious content that was different than my beliefs/values:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral No Opinion</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
17b. Can you briefly describe a classroom discussion about religion and/or spirituality that brought up feelings for you?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

17c. Would you describe your feelings as positive, negative, or neutral? Please explain.
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

18a. I was able to not judge other classmates that had beliefs different than my beliefs/values:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

18b. What was unique about your classmates’ beliefs. How were they different than your own?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

19. How has content included in social work classes on religion/spirituality helped to fill in some gaps for you since taking your classes?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
20. I feel that it is important to bring up religion/spirituality when working with clients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral No Opinion</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

21. It is appropriate to ask about client’s religion/spirituality if the client has not brought up the topic first.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral No Opinion</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

22. When interacting with clients I am comfortable discussing religion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral No Opinion</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

23. When interacting with clients I am comfortable discussing spirituality:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral No Opinion</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

24. Some tools that I have learned/used while interacting with clients that have lessened my level of discomfort in discussing religious/spiritual topics have been:

(please indicate where these tools were learned)
25. Please describe how religion/spirituality played a part in your family growing up:
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

26. In what ways was your upbringing relating to religion and spirituality positive and/or negative for you?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

27. How have you made changes from your family of origin’s beliefs/values and the beliefs/values you incorporate into your life today?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

28. If you participated in a Spirituality in Social Work Class, what made you choose this class over other electives?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
REFERENCES


of Social Work in End-of-Life & Palliative Care, 8(4), 356-381.

doi: 10.1080/15524256.2012.732021


doi: 10.1606/1044-3894.256


