The Impact of Professional Development on Public School Teachers' Understanding of Religious Diversity:

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THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON PUBLIC SCHOOL
TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

Dissertation

by

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THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

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Chair: Dr. Dennis Shirley

Schools and classrooms in the United States are increasingly religiously diverse, and religion remains a deeply influential social force, locally, nationally, and globally. However, decades of misunderstanding about the constitutionally appropriate relationship between religion and public education have created a cycle of silence about religion in K-12 schools and in teacher education. As a result, public school educators are not prepared to teach about religion in the curriculum. Nor do they have the skills to respond to common challenges that arise in religiously diverse school communities. This dissertation examines four professional development courses about religious diversity to understand the motivations and experiences of the educators who participated and to explore the impacts these courses had on the educators' teaching practices.

The 145 participants in the professional development courses learned about several religious traditions through a combination of visits to religious communities, guest speakers, and classroom discussion. The mixed methods study surveyed the participants three times, once before the courses, and twice afterwards. Follow-up interviews with 13 educators were conducted approximately one year after they completed the courses.

The findings reveal that educators working at all grade levels and in all content areas found valuable benefits from increasing their understanding of religion, including a greater appreciation for the religious identities of their students and increased comfort

with religion when it appeared in a range of school settings. Based on my analysis, I propose a framework of Pedagogical Content Knowledge about Religion to describe five domains of knowledge and skills that are necessary for educators to be able to competently respond to religion in public schools. This framework and the findings of this study have valuable implications for the development of future professional development courses and in charting a trajectory for further research on religion in U.S. public schools.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

For the past several decades, educators and scholars have been concerned about how little Americans know about religion. Although this concern came into sharp focus following September 11, 2001, religion has been a contentious, yet marginalized, subject long before tragedy and global conflict highlighted how little we as a country knew about religion and its influence in the contemporary world (Fraser, 2016; Nord, 2010; Waggoner, 2003). Given the substantial impact of religion on the modern world and everyday life, failing to educate students about religion limits their capacity to understand and respond to religious diversity. Public debates on issues ranging from health care and zoning to environmental and foreign policy are influenced by religious values, communities, and conflicts.

Religious identity is central for many individuals and communities, guiding their values and choices and grounding local and global decisions and interactions. Unfortunately, the media coverage of religion trends towards sensationalist and alarmist, and, for many people, this is the only form of education about religion. To remedy these issues, many have looked towards the public schools, but the complex context of U.S. public education, long histories of Christian privilege and xenophobia, and a uniquely American blend of church-state issues have complicated efforts to improve the treatment of religion in U.S. public schools (Waggoner, 2003).

How We Got Here

There is a longstanding relationship between religion and education in the United States. The earliest education laws viewed literacy, and therefore the ability to read the Bible, as a critical bulwark against the influences of "that old deluder Satan" and the

"saint-seeming deceivers" (i.e., Catholics), and the school books of the later 18th and early 19th century were infused with a Protestant theology and morality (Fraser, 2016). Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, schools were sites for negotiating how to form an American citizenry out of a rapidly growing and changing population as immigration, westward expansion, and industrialization pushed back against the white Protestant visions of schooling and civic life (Justice & Macleod, 2016; Macedo, 2000).

The modern iterations of this relationship arose in the early 1960s in the wake of two landmark Supreme Court cases: *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) and *Abington School District v. Schempp* (1963). Before these cases, the de facto Protestant establishment supported school-sponsored Christian religious practices, with little recognition of the presence of other religious and non-religious identities among students or in the curriculum (DelFattore, 2004; Fraser, 2016). The rulings in the *Engel* and *Schempp* cases declared that school-sponsored prayers and devotional Bible reading were unconstitutional. Since the 19th century, evangelical Christians had viewed public schools as "an institutional embodiment of their influence in American society" (Laats, 2012, p. 332), and therefore, in their eyes, these decisions not only "kick[ed] God out of public schools, but [they] kicked evangelical belief itself out of public life" (p. 323).

The removal of prayer and Bible reading from public school classroom became just one of many culture war battlegrounds over the next several decades. Conservative Christians have repeatedly attempted to amend the Constitution in favor of prayer in public schools and continue to advocate for the promotion and endorsement of Judeo-Christian values in schools and American society more broadly (Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, 2017; Gaustad & Schmidt, 2002; Prothero, 2016). Haynes and

Thomas (2011) describe this vision of education as the "sacred public school" model. For some people, this model represents a desire to return to "the good old days" when Christianity had a prominent place in the schools, happy to ignore the fact that religion has always been a source of conflict, sometimes to the point of violence, in public education (Haynes, 2014).

Evangelicals were not the only ones to interpret the 1960's Supreme Court decisions to mean that religion must be completely excluded from public schools. Other groups celebrated, rather than mourned, the removal of devotional religious practices. However, these proponents of the "naked public schools" (Haynes & Thomas, 2011) also went further, declaring that religion belongs solely in the private sphere. From this perspective, the separation of church and state requires that the public sphere, and by extension the public school, is utterly devoid of any religious practices, references, or reasoning (Grelle, 2014; Haynes, 2014). Ultimately, both of these models, the sacred public school and the naked public school, have spread inaccurate understandings about the application of the First Amendment in public schools. This has had detrimental effects on the treatment of religion in the curriculum, the recognition of religious diversity in school communities, and educators' comfort with religion in the school context. Several decades of conflicts between these approaches to religion in schools have resulted in a very limited and often distorted public understanding of religion (Haynes & Thomas, 2011; Marty & Moore, 2000).

There have been efforts to find a middle ground where schools can attend to religion in ways that neither endorse nor banish religion while also preparing students to be responsible citizens in a religiously diverse society. Recognizing the critical need to

find a way to help schools address deep differences around religion and values without forcing students or teachers to pick a side, Haynes and Thomas (2011) led the creation of a set of principles to articulate a third model, the "civic public school," that takes religion and religious freedom seriously. Endorsed by 24 major education and religious organizations, the document, "Religious Liberty, Public Education, and the Future of American Democracy: A Statement of Principles," sets out a "civic framework within which we are able to debate our differences, to understand one another, and to forge public policies that serve the common good in public education" (Haynes & Thomas, 2011, p. 11). Within this framework,

> Public schools may not inculcate nor inhibit religion. They must be places where religion and religious conviction are treated with fairness and respect. Public schools uphold the First Amendment when they protect the religious liberty rights of students of all faiths or none. Schools demonstrate fairness when they ensure that the curriculum includes study *about* religion, where appropriate, as an important part of a complete education. (Haynes & Thomas, 2011, p. 11)

This new model did not resolve the culture wars or transform all schools into civic public schools. Moreover, it is not universally accepted—many people still hold firmly to their visions of sacred or naked public schools. However, this civic framework has allowed the discourse about religion and public schools to move from conversations about *if* it is constitutional to teach about religion to conversations about *why* and *how* we teach and talk about religion in schools (Haynes, 2014).

Locating Religion in Public Schools

To simply say "religion in public schools" is incredibly vague. Religion comes into play in many different aspects of schooling. These can be examined at three levels: in relation to the broader culture, in the school community, and in the curriculum. The previous section described how cultural and political events and forces have informed perspectives on the role of religion in education. The socio-religious climate in the country also impacts schools more directly. The rhetoric about religious minorities, and particularly Muslims, used by the Trump campaign and administration has infiltrated classrooms such that religious minority students have reported increased discomfort, anxiety, and even bullying (Rogers et al., 2017).

Echoes of a Christan heritage can be seen in the structure of the academic year and in the ways in which teaching is commonly framed as a "calling" or vocation rather than a profession; teachers are expected to take on the roles of martyr, sacrificing of themselves for the sake of their students, and savior, "able, through forms of devotion, personal sacrifice, and 'heroism,' to 'fix' children and save them from their lot" (Burke & Segall, 2015, p. 17). American culture and politics are inextricably twined with religion, and, therefore, the public schools are also subject to that religious heritage and its ongoing influences.

At a more local level, changing religious demographics are reshaping the religious landscapes in communities across the United States (Eck, 2001; Pew Research Center, 2015). The religious diversity found in the communities in which schools are situated is also reflected in the classroom. Although some school districts have revised calendars to reflect better the religious holidays celebrated by their students (e.g., Truong, 2017) or

found other ways to create environments that welcome religious pluralism, other schools have been slower to respond to changing religious diversity. The sacred public school model can lead to environments that are unwelcoming to religious minorities or students who do not claim a religious identity, while the naked public school model teaches students of all religious backgrounds that they are not permitted to bring that part of their identity with them to school (Webb, 2000; Wertheimer, 2015).

The curriculum is the most frequently discussed site of religion in public schools. While there are obvious connections to religion in the history, social studies, and literature curricula, there are also connections to religion in health education, the arts, and the sciences. The consensus among religion and education scholars, however, is that religion is almost always treated poorly or neglected across the curriculum (Douglass, 2000; Haynes & Nord, 1998; Moore, 2007; Prothero, 2007). Of these three sites for locating religion in school—culture, community, and curriculum—the curriculum has perhaps been the most investigated. The curriculum is also the element over which educators and scholars have the most control and potential to change. The following sections discuss several arguments for why religion should be addressed in the curriculum and some of the remedies proposed by different scholars to address the current deficiencies in the curriculum.

Arguments for Teaching about Religion in Public Schools

There are many arguments for why schools should teach about religion. The most basic and direct argument is that "studying religion helps achieve the goal of public schooling: students will learn a more accurate picture of the world around them" (Marty & Moore, 2000, p. 64). However, there is rarely full agreement about what that picture of

the world should include, and, therefore, the conversation about reasons for teaching about religion requires a broader set of arguments. Feinberg (2014) identified five main arguments: (1) the patriotic argument, (2) the moral argument, (3) the constitutional argument, (4) the religious literacy argument, and (5) the academic argument. Although not the only possible categorization of these arguments, these divisions serve as a helpful starting point for an overview of these arguments. As described by Feinberg, the patriotic argument is rooted in a version of history that sees the United States as a Christian nation and in a desire to "maintain this identity across generations" (Feinberg, 2014, p. 396). At its best, the moral argument recognizes that schools have a role in the moral development of citizens and that the study of religion and religious diversity can play a part in that development (Moore, 2007; Noddings, 2013). However, this argument, especially when linked to courses about the Bible, is often used to endorse or advance moral values tied to particular traditions (Haynes & Nord, 1998). These two arguments do have some merits—religion *has* been highly influential in the history of the United States, and schools *do* play a role in shaping the moral character of students—but the implementation of these arguments frequently involves an unconstitutional emphasis on Christianity and the promotion of Christian values. The constitutional argument claims that "constitutional neutrality doesn't just allow schools and universities to take religion seriously, it requires it" (Nord, 2010, p. 165). From this perspective, the current absence of religion in the curriculum actually has the effect of promoting non-religious or secular worldviews, which violates the First Amendment just as the promotion of religious worldviews would. In this view, a truly neutral approach would take religion seriously as one of many ways of knowing and include the academic study of religion on equal ground with other

subjects. The religious literacy argument and the academic argument are closely linked. In Feinberg's overview, the religious literacy argument promotes knowledge of religion facts for the sake of knowing those facts, while the academic argument takes a more instrumental approach to those facts, which are necessary to able to interpret other content such as Shakespeare. In other accounts, these two arguments are often combined in a broader discussion about religious literacy (Moore, 2007; Nord, 2010; Prothero, 2007).

Following his critique of these five arguments, Feinberg (2014) introduces a liberal argument for teaching religion:

> Public schools have a responsibility to provide their students with the skills, outlook, and perspective required to choose and revise their own conception of the good, both as an individual and as a part of the larger collective. (p. 400)

This argument emphasizes the importance of religion in shaping conceptions of the good, the need to be able to understand and discuss differences, and the influences of religions, historically and in the contemporary world. Nord (2010) offers a similar argument:

> Religious perspectives must be allowed to contend with other perspectives in the critical conversation that a liberal education should nurture; religion can't be compartmentalized, rendered irrelevant to the rest of education, if education is to serve the purposes of critical thinking. (p. 113)

The liberal or civic argument for the inclusion of religion in the curriculum goes beyond the academic curriculum and takes into account a larger goal of education—to form engaged, informed citizens for participation in a pluralistic democratic society. Although the inclusion of religion in the curriculum is important, it is not the only site where

religion appears in schools. A more compelling civic argument takes a broader perspective toward the need for authentic recognition of how religion influences, and is influenced by, all aspects of schooling—the culture, community, and curriculum.

The endurance of religious freedom that is held so dearly by communities across the political and religious spectrum demands meaningful attention to religion in public schools. Religious freedom in the United States has been constructed as a *positive* freedom, giving citizens the right to choose their religion, rather than a *negative* freedom that gives citizens the right to choose not to follow a state religion or be subjected to the religious practices of another faith (Habermas, 2006). The perpetuation and success of this positive freedom requires, at least, tolerance and recognition of the other, so that "believers of one faith, of a different faith and non-believers must mutually concede to one another the right to those convictions, practices and ways of living that they themselves reject" (Habermas, 2008, p. 23). Ideally, we may strive to go beyond tolerance and seek pluralism through "engagement with, not abdication of, differences and pluralities" (Eck, 2001, p. 71). However, in many instances, the starting point must be the recognition of the religious other, that is, the "awareness of the fact that the other is a member of an inclusive community of citizens with equal rights, in which each individual is accountable to the others for his political contributions" (Habermas, 2008, p. 23). Although schools have improved their recognition of the "other" in terms of identity markers such as race and gender, the naked public school model effectively has created schools where religion cannot be acknowledged or recognized.

The naked public school model is closely aligned with the secularization thesis, the idea that the progression of modernity will eventually replace all of the functions that

religious communities and traditions have served, and religion will become a relic of the past (P. L. Berger, 1967). However, the secular age, or even post-secular age, in which we now find ourselves is far from devoid of religion. Rather than religion fading out of relevancy, there has been "a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged…to one in which it is understood to be one option among others" (Taylor, 2007, p. 3). Modernity has not simplified the relationship between the religious and secular. The complexity of life in a world in which both reason and religion remain vital forces and must find ways to "live together in a self-reflective manner" (Habermas, 2008, p. 29) has revealed the dangers of continuing to restrict religion to the private sphere in an attempt to maintain a "neutral" public square (Lewin, 2017). Schools must engage with religion in the culture, community, and curriculum if students are to be prepared for participation in this evolving religious and civic landscape.

This argument for the inclusion of religion has ambitious goals: to increase the academic study and understanding of religion, to cultivate respect for the mutual responsibilities of religious liberty, to encourage a pluralistic outlook that employs "the engagement of our differences in the creation of a common society" (Eck & Randall, 2018, p. 49), and to foster the formation of students equipped for the responsibilities of citizenship in a religiously diverse, deliberative democracy. The curriculum and the academic study of religion are the most concrete of these goals, and therefore, have received the greatest amount of attention. As is demonstrated in the next section, the other goals are often integrated into the reasoning behind various efforts to improve the treatment of religion in schools. However, it can be easy to get caught up in the focus on

the curriculum. Hickey and Suárez (2018) write in the context of the undergraduate classroom, but their message is applicable at all levels of education:

> Because the majority of our students do not go on to become religious studies majors, however, we want even more for them to become better citizens: to question religious rhetoric, to challenge toxic theologies, to forge meaningful connections across lines of difference, to stand in solidarity with minorities when they are targeted, to interrupt hate speech and violence. (p. 121)

Just as there are many arguments for attention to religion in public schools, there have been many associated efforts to improve this attention. The following section focuses primarily on those efforts that stem from the academic or religious literacy arguments as well as elements of the civic argument.

Existing Approaches to the Problem

Although there have been several strong accounts of the history of the relationship between religion and public education and the contemporary issues and challenges (e.g., DelFattore, 2004; Fraser, 2016; Justice & Macleod, 2016; Macedo, 2000; Nord, 1995), there are far fewer concrete suggestions of how to address those issues. The remedies that have been proposed generally fall into three categories: course proposals, curriculum standards and frameworks, and pedagogical approaches. This section does not provide a comprehensive overview of every proposal or effort to improve the treatment of religion in schools. Rather, it highlights significant examples in each of the categories.

Course Proposals

We live in a world and a country in which religion matters, and, therefore, Prothero (2007) argues, religious literacy also matters. Prothero, a scholar of America

religion, became interested in religious literacy as he observed that his undergraduate students did not know basic facts about religion, and the paradox that "Americans are both deeply religious and profoundly ignorant about religion" (p. 1). Viewing this ignorance as a civic problem, he advocates for increased education about religion, which should prepare students who are able "to participate meaningfully—on both the left and the right—in religiously inflected public debates" (Prothero, 2007, p. 22). To this end, he proposes the addition of two required courses to the high school curriculum. The first would be a mandatory course on the Bible that would include the study of the historical development and influence of the Bible, including the different translations, as well as central stories and characters. However, because the U.S. is also home to many other religious traditions, he also recommends a required course on world religions. Specifically, this course would cover Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as traditions of particular local relevance, such as Santeria in Miami or Native American traditions local to different regions (Prothero, 2007). The world religions course would examine both the historical and contemporary manifestations of these traditions as well as their scriptures. However, in the end, Prothero is a religious studies scholar, not an education scholar, and does not offer concrete suggestions for how these courses could fit into the existing curriculum.

Nord (Haynes & Nord, 1998; Nord, 2010) argues for taking religion seriously across the curriculum, including in subjects such as science and economics. Demonstrating a more realistic outlook on the present curriculum, he considers Prothero's (2007) proposal of two required courses to be too ambitious, "simply because the idea of one required religion course will be sufficiently outrageous for most

educators" (Nord, 2010, p. 236). Instead, he proposes a single, year-long course incorporating the study of the Bible and world religions, which would spend one semester on the study of the Bible, Judaism, and Christianity and one semester on the study of Islam and eastern religions. Nord thoughtfully takes into consideration both the issues of time and teacher preparation, suggesting that schools drop one year of required math and replace it with the religious studies course, a proposal that some might consider even more outrageous than Prothero's. Nord also provides a clear outline for what teachers would need to study and recognizes the importance of both content knowledge and pedagogy. However, there is an important caveat to this proposal: the addition of a required religious studies course "doesn't mean that religion can be ignored in all other courses, however; far from it. There must be courses in religion and there must be religion in (other) courses" (Nord, 2010, p. 195). For Nord, religion must be taken seriously across the curriculum because the critical thinking central to a liberal education requires an understanding of religions and religious ways of thinking.

Other curricular recommendations have focused on specific topics within the study of religion. Lester (2011) similarly proposes a required, semester-long world religions courses and also suggests that schools offer an elective on Judaism, Christianity and the Bible and an elective on intelligent design theory and critiques. The First Amendment Center published *Living with Our Deepest Differences: Religious Liberty in a Pluralistic Society* (McFall & Haynes, 2009), a ten-lesson unit examining the development and role of religious liberty in American society. Although not a full course, resources such as this are much more easily implemented than broad proposals for the addition of required world religions or Biblical history courses. These proposals have not

gained meaningful traction in the past several decades, expect in a handful of schools across the country. The most notable is the Modesto, California school district, which is the only district in the U.S. to require a world religions course for high school graduation (Lester & Roberts, 2006). This example is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

There are also perennial efforts to implement courses about the Bible. These courses are offered in many schools, often in the form of "Bible as Literature" or Bible history courses, although the academic quality and constitutionality of such courses can vary widely (M. Chancey, 2005; Feinberg, 2006). There have been numerous attempts to introduce legislation to promote elective courses about the Bible, some of which are connected to constitutionally sound curricula and others which are barely disguised as attempts to promote Christian values (M. Chancey, 2007; M. A. Chancey, 2014; Moss & Baden, 2017). These efforts have enjoyed renewed attention in the past few years from the religious and political right as part of wider efforts to reassert a version of religious freedom that bolsters a vision of Christian nationalism (Clarkson, 2018; Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, 2017). The 2016 Republican Platform stated: "A good understanding of the Bible being indispensable for the development of an educated citizenry, we encourage states to offer the Bible in a literature curriculum as an elective in America's high schools" (Republican National Committee, 2016, p. 33). Several states have proposed or passed legislation regarding Bible electives in the past few years. Although some of this legislation has led to the development academically rigorous and constitutionally sound curriculum standards (e.g. Kentucky Department of Education, 2018), there are also many instances of these courses beings used to promote particular interpretations of the Bible (Iasevoli, 2018).

Curricular Standards and Frameworks

Another response to the need for improved treatment of religion turns to curriculum frameworks and standards. Reviews of religion in social studies curriculum standards and textbooks over the past few decades have generally found that where religion is included, the treatment is minimal, superficial, or distorted (Boyer, 1996; Douglass, 2000; Sewall, 2008). As states have revised their social studies standards, some have taken steps to improve the treatment of religion. These steps have included new recognition of minority traditions such as Sikhism (Dale, 2018; Meyer, 2017) or rejecting the adoption of textbooks that present a biased treatment of Hinduism (Harrington, 2017; Yap, 2017). In some states, such as Texas, social studies curriculum standards have been, and to continue to be, used to advance a "fusion of religious and national identity" (M. A. Chancey, 2014, p. 329). Although the 2018 revision of the Texas standards reduced some of the pro-Christian biases, such as previous standards that emphasized Christianity as the only uniting force in medieval Europe but did not acknowledge the divisive influences of Christianity, other pro-Christian concepts were retained (Brockman, 2018). Most notably, the board voted to continue to teach that Moses was a key influence on the founding fathers and the development of the U.S. Constitution (Stone, 2018).

Regardless of improvements to state social studies standards, those documents still focus almost entirely on content knowledge about religion and do not address the application of that knowledge or the disciplinary tools and skills necessary to engage fully with the study of religion. There has been a turn in the past few years to standards and frameworks that focus on the skills for studying religion instead of identifying specific content that should be studied. The recent "Religious Studies Supplement" to the

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (2017) is the foremost example of this skills-focused approach. Joining the four core social studies disciplines—civics, history, economics, and geography—and appendices for psychology, anthropology, and sociology, this framework reaffirms the NCSS stance that the study of religion is an important part of a complete social studies education (National Council for the Social Studies, 2014). The 14 learning indicators provide guidance about conceptual understandings and analytic skills that students should be able to apply to the study of religion by the end of high school. It begins with the foundational assertion of the difference between the academic and devotional study of religion and the premises of religious studies described above. The second part of the framework addresses the understanding and analysis of religious identities through recognition of "the beliefs people hold, the behaviors they exhibit, and their membership within multiple intersecting communities" (National Council for the Social Studies, 2017, p. 94) and the social contexts and forces that shape those identities. The final part of the framework deals with the representation of religious communities and individuals in different types of sources and analysis of the implication of those representations.

This skills-based approach side-steps the conflicts that frequently arise when specific content about religion is included, or excluded, from curriculum standards. Instead, it seeks to provide a set of tools to assist teachers in approaching the study of religion in a constitutionally sound manner that encourages critical thinking and an understanding of many ways in which religions influence and are influenced by the cultures in which they are embedded, historically and in the contemporary world.

Pedagogical Approaches

The widespread implementation of religious studies courses based on academically rigorous and constitutionally sound standards would be ideal. In reality, the study of religion is most frequently integrated into existing courses, generally in the context of history and literature. Regardless of the course structure, the pedagogies used to teach about religion also matter. The third strand of proposed remedies works within the existing treatment of religion in the curriculum and seeks to improve the pedagogical treatment of religion. The American Academy of Religion (AAR) guidelines for K-12 public school educators on how to teach about religion describe common pedagogical approaches to teaching about religion: the historical approach, the literary approach, the tradition sbased approach, and the cultural studies approach (Moore, 2010). The first three are most common and are often found in courses where religion is integrated into other subjects. Although each of these has several weaknesses, they can all be strengthened through the integration of strategies and guidelines provided in the AAR document. In particular, it outlines three foundational premises of religious studies: that religions (a) are internally diverse, (b) are dynamic and changing, and (c) are embedded in cultures (Moore, 2010).

These premises challenge common portrayals of religions in textbooks and curricula, in which religions are distilled into lists of uniform beliefs, practices, symbols, and major holidays or are presented as isolated in particular time periods or regions. Helping teachers to understand these premises can improve the existing, if infrequent, treatment of religion in the curriculum. They encourage an approach to the study of religion that takes into account the complexity of religions in their many different expressions and avoids

reductionist descriptions. These premises can be applied in any context, improving the study of religion without the need to upend the curriculum completely.

Moore (2007) advocates for the adoption of a cultural studies approach, claiming that this approach overcomes many of the weaknesses of the other approaches. This is an interdisciplinary approach that uses multiple lenses to understand religion as a part of the human experience and emphasizes that all knowledge is situated in particular contexts and thus any source can only offer partial perspectives. The approach explicitly addresses social contexts and perspectives and the role of power and powerlessness; "the key to a cultural studies approach is the employment of multiple lenses to understand the subject at hand, including an awareness of the lenses of the interpreters (authors, writers, artists who are being studied), inquirers (students) and teachers who set the larger context for the inquiry itself" (Moore, 2007, p. 82). At its core, the cultural studies approach is a method of inquiry that can be employed to teach about religion in a range of contexts, whether in a US History class or in an independent religion course. The cultural studies method has probably received the most attention among possible pedagogical approaches. Moore's 2007 book, *Overcoming Religious Literacy: A Cultural Studies Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education,* details her rationale for the approach and provides an in-depth case study of cultural studies in action. This book is one of the few extended descriptions of a pedagogical approach for the study of religion. Although the cultural studies approach is the only one of the four approaches described in the AAR guidelines, for which Moore chaired the writing committee, it is the only one which is not critiqued.

The cultural studies method has many strengths, but this attention should not imply that is it the only pedagogical approach that is constitutionally appropriate and academically rigorous. For example, Goldschmidt (2013) advances a pedagogy based on the lived religion approach to the study of religion. In this model,

> Students do still need to learn about the central doctrines of major religious traditions, but much more than that, they need to learn about the religious lives of their diverse neighbors. They need a rigorous, academically grounded, engagement with the social realities of contemporary religious communities. (Goldschmidt, 2013, p. 193)

The lived religion approach focuses on "how religion and spirituality are practiced, experienced and expressed by ordinary people (rather than official spokespersons) in the context of their everyday lives" (McGuire, 2008, p. 12). Rather than starting from the institutional expressions of religious traditions, a lived religions approach breaks down the artificial barriers between the sacred and mundane, and emphasizes the intersubjective nature of religious identities and the relational elements of religious experiences (Orsi, 2003, 2007).

Kunzman (2006) offers a more normative approach, which he calls ethical education, that teaches about and engages with religious and ethical ideas to give students opportunities to explore questions about human flourishing, moral obligation, and the nature of "the good life." Kunzman advocates for not shying away from difficult ethical questions, even when they include religious dimensions—he gives an example about human cloning—because the ability to respectfully and thoughtfully engage with deeply held, but often competing and contradictory, beliefs and convictions is a critical

requirement for informed citizenship. Although these approaches emphasize different types of inquiry and knowledge, they each aim to improve education about religion and deepen students' understanding of religious influences and manifestations so that they can become better citizens in a religiously diverse, liberal democratic society.

Shortcomings in the Existing Approaches to Religion in Schools

In contrast to the curriculum, there has been much less attention to how to improve the understanding and treatment of religiously diverse students. The United States is becoming more religiously diverse, and schools cannot avoid addressing this growing diversity. Religious diversity varies substantially by age group; the youngest age cohort has the most religious diversity, and non-Christian groups have a much lower average age (Jones & Cox, 2017). As the religious composition of classrooms becomes more diverse, teachers will need the skills and knowledge to create classrooms that are responsive to and respectful of this diversity. Multicultural education and culturally responsive education seem like they would be well equipped to help teachers and schools address this growing religious diversity, but the field has been mostly silent on topics of religion (Aronson, Amatullah, & Laughter, 2016; Soules, In preparation). In 2000, the U.S. Department of Education distributed consensus guidelines on religious liberty to every public school in the country and has since provided further guidelines on student religious expression and prayer in public schools (Haynes & Thomas, 2011). Although these guidelines provide schools with a starting point for protecting the religious liberty rights for students of all religious identities, these legal frameworks are only one aspect of recognizing religious diversity in public schools.

Most of the efforts to address religion in public schools that have been described in this section have gotten some degree of traction, whether in individual classrooms and schools or at the level of revisions to state standards. However, there has not been widespread adoption of any of these efforts, and, in many cases, additional factors present roadblocks for further progress. Not the least of these is the persistent misunderstanding about the constitutionality of religion in schools. Another significant roadblock is a lack of teacher preparation and knowledge about religion.

Teacher Education: An Unexplored Remedy

The successful implementation of any of the proposals described above requires teachers who are knowledgeable about religion, understand the constitutional guidelines, and are competent in at least one pedagogical approach. There is some discussion of the role of teacher education for the success of some of the proposals (Moore, 2010; Nord, 2010), but there has not been a significant focus on teacher education as a primary site to remedy this problem. Even the best curriculum is ineffective in the hands of a teacher who is uncomfortable and unfamiliar with the subject matter. Guidelines and curriculum frameworks can only be implemented if teachers are aware of their existence and confident in the content. The missing piece is teacher education about religion.

Concern for teacher education about religion pre-dates the Supreme Court rulings of 1962 and 1963 and the ensuing conflicts over the relationship of religion and education. A 1947 report of the Committee on Religion and Education, a committee of the American Council on Education, described the concern about religion and education of the day: that the growing secularization of modern life and education had resulted in "an educational policy that has tended to isolate religion from other phases of community

life" (p. vi). The authors promoted an approach to education about religion that focused on "knowledge of the role of religion in our history, its relation to other phrases of the culture, and the ways in which the religious life of the American community is expressed" (Committee on Religion and Education, 1947, pp. 49–50). The report stressed the critical role of teacher education in this task and identified two dangers in the process. First, many teachers lack preparation regarding teaching about religion and are also not necessarily interested in the study of religion, and, second, that some teachers with strong religious convictions will tend towards a devotional or sectarian approach. However, the authors were also confident that these challenges could be overcome by teacher education, that "the dangers are not insurmountable" (Committee on Religion and Education, 1947, p. 36). These two dangers persist to today, but there has also not been any real progress on the teacher education front.

Two things exacerbate the current situation: teacher education programs rarely spend any meaningful amount of time on topics related to religion, and schools do not adequately teach about religion. As a result, teachers have not learned about religion themselves, and they are unable to teach about religion to their own students. The primary issue is that they lack the necessary content and pedagogical knowledge. However, they also lack models or exemplars of religion being taught and taken seriously in the public school classroom. Even though the effect of the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) can perpetuate stagnant teaching practices and make it challenging to implement meaningful changes in education, it does give teachers a mental image of what can and cannot happen in a classroom. If teachers have never seen religion addressed in the classroom, they are unlikely to realize that it is a subject that is missing.

In short, they do not know what they do not know. This has resulted in a cycle in which students do not learn about religion, and those students grow up to become teachers who still do not know about religion and in turn do not teach their own students about religion (Figure 1.1). This cycle needs to be interrupted, and this interruption needs to happen in teacher education, both at the pre-service and in-service level.
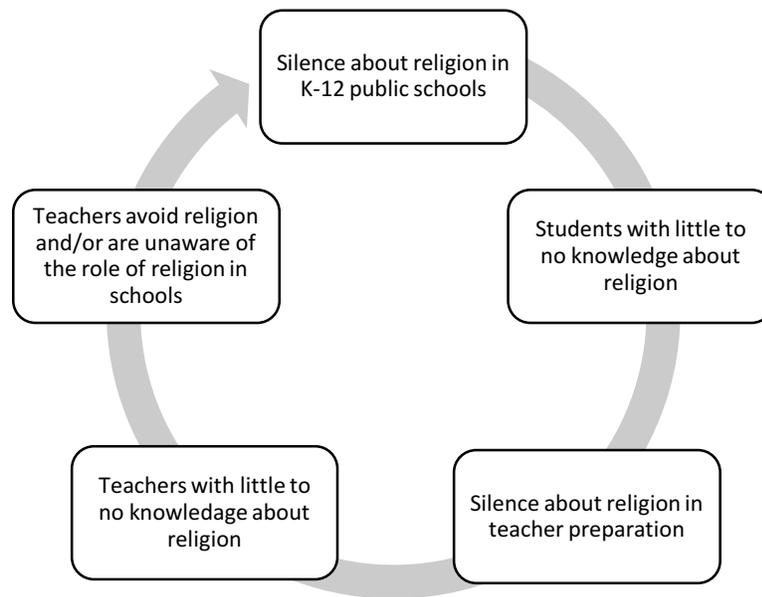
Figure 1.1: Cycle perpetuating silence about religion in K-12 public schools

There was no golden age that we could look back to as an example of when public school teachers had a rigorous preparation to teach about religion. Even in 1947, the number of teachers thought to be sufficiently prepared to teach about religion was "tragically limited" (Committee on Religion and Education, 1947, p. 36). Unfortunately, there has been very little research on teacher preparation about religion over the last 70 years. There has been some research on teachers' religious beliefs and the impact of those beliefs on their practice (e.g., Hartwick, 2015; White, 2009, 2010). Two similar studies (Anderson, Mathys, & Cook, 2015; M. J. Marks, Binkley, & Daly, 2014) surveyed pre-

service teachers' knowledge about religion and found that pre-service teachers were no more "religiously literate" than the general public, which is to say not very. Although there has been significantly more research on teacher education and professional development about religion in Europe (e.g., Baumfield, 2007, 2016; Everington, 2007; Stolberg, 2008), it is of limited application in the U.S. context. Because many European school systems include religion as a compulsory subject, those teachers are prepared in dedicated university programs for religion teachers.

Given this context, I argue that teacher education about religion is critical to the project of improving the relationship between education and religion in the United States. Beyond the importance of teacher preparation to the success of proposed religious studies courses or the implementation of curriculum standards and framework, public schools are increasingly religiously diverse. *All* teachers, not just those in specific content areas, will encounter students from diverse religious backgrounds. Teachers need opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge to respond to religiously diverse students, just as they are expected to develop the skills and knowledge to respond to culturally and linguistically diverse students (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). The cycle described above (Figure 1.1) not only produces teachers who are not prepared to teach about religion and respond to religiously diverse students, it also produces citizens who are not equipped to engage with religious diversity in a pluralistic society.

Religion is not going to disappear from the public sphere or the public schools, but the lack of research on teacher education about religion currently limits the ability of public schools to become communities that are welcoming to students of all religions or none and shape well-informed citizens. In this study, I investigate the experiences of in-

service teachers participating in four voluntary professional development programs about religious diversity and teaching religion. Each of the four courses examined in this study sought to increase participants' knowledge about several different religious traditions and introduced educators to frameworks for understanding and responding to religion in the public school context. The research questions that guided this study were:

I.   What motivates educators to participate in professional development on teaching about religious diversity?

    a.   Who are the educators who choose to participate?

    b.   Why do they seek out this type of professional development?

II.   Which aspects of the courses are most impactful for participants?

III.   What is the impact of these experiences on the educators who participate?

    a.   In what ways do these programs impact educators' confidence regarding religion in the classroom?

    b.   In what ways do educators change their professional practice following the programs?

Contributions to the Field

Although progress in the study of religion in American public school has been slow, the scholarship on religion in public schools has grown and matured in recent decades. Scholars have reached a general consensus on the civic public school model for a working relationship between religion and education (Haynes & Thomas, 2011; Nord, 2010), have put forth different arguments as to why it is important to pay attention to religion in schools, and have detailed the historical and constitutional developments that have brought us to today (e.g., DelFattore, 2004; Fraser, 2016; Greenawalt, 2005; Justice

& Macleod, 2016; Nord, 1995). Although there has been some empirical research on religion in the classroom and teachers' knowledge and learning about religion (e.g., Anderson et al., 2015; Aown, 2011; Evans, 2007; Feinberg & Layton, 2014; Hartwick, 2015; M. J. Marks et al., 2014; White, 2009), a cohesive research agenda or trajectory has not emerged in either of the fields of religious studies or education research. Despite this slow but positive growth, religion remains sidelined and understudied in U.S. public schools. Many building blocks have been put into place over the years, but they have not yet coalesced into a well-defined field that is able to exert the necessary influence to enact much-needed change in the treatment of religion in the schools.

Through this study, I hope to contribute original empirical research on teachers' motivations and learning in professional development about religious diversity and teaching religion. I propose a framework of pedagogical content knowledge for teaching about religion that describes the domains of knowledge that are required for teachers to competently respond to religious diversity in the classroom and the curriculum. The framework brings together several of the strands of research that have previously been explored and hopes to facilitate conversations across the field in order to increases the influence of all aspects of this field.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

In this study, I investigated the motivations and experiences of K-12 educators in professional development courses about religious literacy and teaching about religion. This chapter addresses the unique context of U.S. schools for teaching about religion and discusses the literature relevant to that investigation. The first part of the chapter contextualizes this study in the broader field of education about religion, locating U.S. schools in relation to other approaches to religion in K-12 education around the world. I then discuss different approaches to the concept of religious literacy and consider the implications of these approaches for teacher education. In the second part of the chapter, I focus on two conceptual frameworks that will inform this study. The first begins with the theory of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) and expands it to address the particularities of religion in public schools. The final section discusses a model of teacher learning based on the work of Opfer and Pedder (2011). The chapter concludes by making a case for the need for complex models of teacher learning and knowledge in order to address the current shortcomings in the treatment of religion in public schools.

Contextualizing Religion and Education

The previous chapter briefly described some of the historical developments that have shaped the current relationship between religion and public education in the United States. It also located religion in relation to the culture, community, and curriculum of public schools. Misunderstanding and confusion about these relationships continue to limit the effectiveness of efforts to improve the treatment of religion in schools. This section takes a closer look at some of the sources of that confusion, particularly regarding language and terminology. It then provides some international context for the unique U.S.

situation and describes the current status of religion in U.S. schools. I conclude this section with a discussion of the consequences and implications of this often tense and ill-defined relationship.

Clarifying Terminology

One of the challenges of talking about and studying religion in public schools is the imprecise language that gets used around the topic, particularly the term "religious education." This term is used to describe both education *for* or *into* religion and education *about* religion. It is crucial to be clear about the differences between the two and which type is being referred to in any discussion in order to reduce misunderstandings about the goals of any education about religion.

Education *for* or *into* religion is often referred to as confessional or devotional religious education. The primary purpose of this approach is to teach students how to live "in accord with specific religious tenets, beliefs, and practices" (Berglund, Shanneik, & Bocking, 2016a, p. 2), and promote adherence to a particular theological worldview and set of values. In the U.S., this model is typically found within religious communities and private religious schools. However, in the public school classroom, this approach violates the Establishment clause of the First Amendment.

In contrast education *about* religion, is the academic study of religion. The goal of this approach is to "introduce students to the vast array of faith-based expressions that exist within and between traditions with the aim of deepening understanding about religious diversity and the roles that religion plays in political, economic, and cultural life across time" (Moore, 2010, p. 4). This approach is constitutionally appropriate and the

basis for the various proposals for improving education about religion discussed in Chapter One.

Of course, these two approaches do not always remain distinct, and elements of one can often be found in the other, whether intentionally or not. Many people use the term "religious education" interchangeably regardless of approach. In the U.S., however, "religious education" most often implies a confessional approach or the type of instruction found in a Sunday school or other religious community. To add to the confusion, in Europe and many other countries, Religious Education (RE) is a compulsory school subject for primary and secondary students and can refer to both confessional and academic approaches, and blends of the two (Pepin, 2009).

The use of the adjective "religious" is a central source of misunderstanding and confusion. There is a presumption that the word "religious" refers to a characteristic of the people engaging in study, rather than to the object of study. Religious studies and theology are distinct, and admittedly related, academic fields, but religious studies students and scholars regularly face assumptions that they are training to become clergy, represent a particular religious community, or are religiously devout themselves (Grelle, 2005). As a comparison, just as one does not need to be German to pursue German Studies and one does not need to be African to pursue African Studies, one does not need to be religious in order to pursue the academic study of religion. Within higher education, it is widely understood that religious studies is a secular field with "epistemological and methodological commitments…rooted in the social sciences and humanities" (Nord, 2010, p. 209). However, this terminology has not been commonly adopted in discussions

of primary and secondary education, resulting in the ongoing struggle with the term religious education.

A proliferation of variations on this terminology has not helped. Jackson (2016) wrestles with the ambiguity of language in an effort to discuss and advocate for the increasing collaboration across Europe of research and debate on "various aspects of religion in education" (p. 11). He identifies "religious understanding," "religious instruction," and "religious nurture" as common descriptors for confessional approaches. Descriptors of the academic, non-confessional approach include "inclusive religious education," "integrative religious education," "religion education," and "understanding religion." He concludes that these terminology debates have mostly served to obscure research on how the two approaches can complement each other. Unfortunately, Jackson himself does not settle on any clarifying terminology. Phrases such as "teaching religion" or "religion class" can also introduce confusion as to what is happening in the classroom. In this study, unless otherwise indicated, I am discussing the academic study of religion or education *about* religion.

Teaching Religion Outside of the United States

Regardless of terminology, two key features differentiate the approaches to religion in state-funded primary and secondary schools: (1) the content and goals of religion courses (confessional or non-confessional) and (2) the status of those courses within the curriculum (compulsory, voluntary, incidental, or forbidden) (Berglund et al., 2016a). I specify state-funded schools, because schools funded by the government are typically subject to greater oversight and control of the content of their curriculum than those schools that are privately funded. Funding structures of education vary significantly

around the world, and, in some countries, government funding is available to religiously affiliated schools, with different degrees of curriculum oversight. In countries such as Ireland and the Netherlands, government funded, religiously affiliated schools dominate the educational landscape. In others, such as Canada and Germany, government funding for religious schools varies by state or province (Pepin, 2009). All of these variants further complicate classifications and discussions of approaches to teaching about religion.

Many countries disallow or forbid confessional religious instruction in government-funded schools. In some cases, this prohibition is a reflection of the constitutional separation of church and state, such as in the U.S. but also in Japan and South Korea. In others, such as China, it is the result of political and ideological hostility toward religion or a history of anti-clerical movements, as in many Latin American countries, including Mexico and Uruguay (Durham Jr, 2013). In contrast, other countries include varying degrees of compulsory confessional religious education in their national curriculum frameworks. For example, in Spain schools are required to offer religious education courses, but they are voluntary for students to attend (Pepin, 2009). Although some countries only provide confessional religious education in the dominant or state religion, a more common model is "separate religious instruction for students of different religious affiliation" (Knauth & Körs, 2011, p. 218). That is, Lutheran students would attend a Lutheran religious education class, Catholic students would attend a Catholic religious education class, and so on. Traditionally, the available courses reflect the major religious traditions represented in the school or region, generally various Christian denominations, although Islamic religious education has begun to be offered in several

regions and countries in response to changing demographics (Berglund, 2015; Durham

Jr, 2013). In this model, students may learn about other religions, but generally through

the lens of the particular religious orientation of the class.

Non-confessional education about religion, that is, the academic study of religion,

also takes many forms. Some countries, such as Belgium or Slovakia, mandate

confessional religious education but also allow students to opt-out in favor of a non-

confessional moral education or ethics class (Pepin, 2009). Many school systems include

a range of voluntary confessional and non-confessional courses. In Finland, religious

education classes are non-confessional, but they are still divided by students' religious

affiliation, which represents the gradual shift from a confessional to non-confessional

approach (Berglund, 2015; Pepin, 2009).

The national curriculum in both England and Sweden includes compulsory, non-

confessional education about religion. These curricula represent a trend towards the

evolution from a confessional curriculum to an academic curriculum, albeit gradually as

this occurred in England in the 1970s and in Sweden in the early 2000s (Friedner, 2013;

Newcombe, 2013). The Swedish curriculum requires the coverage of Christianity, Islam,

Hinduism, and Buddhism and includes an emphasis on the internal diversity of different

religions as well as narrative, key ideas, and rituals (Berglund, 2015). In contrast, the

content of the Religious Education curriculum in English schools is determined by Local

Education Agencies and the appointed representatives of Standing Advisory Councils on

Religious Education These representatives are then tasked with shaping a syllabus that is

intended to be responsive to the religious composition of the region, although a non-

statutory national framework also provides some guidance regarding learning outcomes at different levels (Newcombe, 2013; Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004).

These models, and the others described above, are not without challenges, and as the religious demographics change in Europe and around the world, there are new debates about the purposes of education about religion and its relevance in the modern world (Berglund, Shanneik, & Bocking, 2016b; OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2007; Weisse, 2010). However, these models benefit from the existence of teacher training programs, data on students and teachers, a body of conceptual and empirical research, and public recognition of religion as a school subject. From 2006 to 2009, the European Commission funded a research project, Religion in Education: A Contribution to Dialogue or Factor of Conflict in Transforming Societies of European Countries (REDCo), which studied the experiences of students between the ages of 14 and 16 in religious education and diversity and intercultural education courses in eight countries (Weisse, 2010). Research from the REDCo project and other initiatives has some value for the discussion of these issues in the U.S. context, but two factors limit the utility: (1) the lack of a formal curriculum or system regarding education about religion in the U.S. and (2) the lack of data available about what is happening regarding religion in the public schools.

Current Status of Religion in U.S. Schools

A 2010 study found that while nearly 90 percent of Americans knew that teachers could not lead prayer in public schools, only 36 percent knew that schools could legally offer academic courses on religion (Pew Research Center, 2010). This limited awareness of the possibility of the academic study of religion is partially due to the pervasive

misunderstanding of First Amendment applications in public schools. It is also likely due to the fact that religion has never been a widely recognized subject in U.S. schools. As a result, the academic study of religion has not been considered a part of the canon of subjects included in the formal curriculum. In the 19th century common schools, precursors to the modern public school system, the popular and widely used *McGuffey Readers* were deeply infused with Protestant theology and values (Fraser, 2016). The earlier editions of these readers were characterized by a "dominant concern for the character and nature of God and his relationship with persons and the world" (Westerhoff, 1982, p. 75). Despite the explicitly Protestant theology in these texts, they may be the closest that U.S. schools have come to a formal religion curriculum of any sort.

In comparison to the centralized control of education found in many other countries, the hyper-local nature of the U.S. school system and an aversion to any form of national curriculum standards has further hindered the wide-spread development and adoption of religion curricula. In recent decades, emphasis on high-stakes testing and accountability has turned the curriculum into a zero-sum game in which tested subjects are allotted the most time and all other subjects must compete for time and attention or get edged out (Au, 2011). Without a formal curriculum or widely available, high-quality curricular materials, and with too few voices advocating for it, there is little leverage to add religion to the program of study in middle or high schools.

There are few examples of formal, non-confessional religion curricula in U.S. public schools. The Modesto City School District in California is the only known district in the country to require a world religions course for high school graduation (Lester &

Roberts, 2006). In Massachusetts, Wellesley Middle School includes a semester-long study of world religions in the 6th grade. An unknown number of high schools offer elective courses about religion, but like many issues related to religion in schools, these courses typically only receive attention when there is a problem or controversy, as was the case with the Wellesley Middle School curriculum (Wertheimer, 2015). It is interesting to note that the Modesto and Wellesley curricula both began in 2000 (A. Blummer, personal communication, April 24, 2018; Lester & Roberts, 2006), before 9/11 and the brief surge of interest in teaching about religion that followed. The International Baccalaureate (IB) program includes a World Religions course which provides guidelines for the content and approaches to the study of religion. However, this, too, is limited—the course was only first offered in 2011. As of 2018, of the almost 5000 schools worldwide that offer an IB program, only 80 offer the world religions course (A. Engel, personal communication, August 13, 2018). In 2015, the Religious Literacy Project at Harvard University began the "Religious Studies in Public Schools Mapping Project," which sought to explore the inclusion of religion in the curriculum in secondary schools, but that data is not yet available (Religious Literacy Project, n.d.). There have also been some efforts to promote the study of the Bible as Literature. A few textbooks and curricula have been produced, though some of these have been found to be unconstitutionally biased in both approach and content (M. Chancey, 2005). There has been some research on the implementation of these courses (e.g., Feinberg & Layton, 2013, 2014), but, similar to world religions courses, it is unknown how many schools offer a Bible as Literature or similar course.

This lack of data about religion in the curriculum in U.S. public schools is a challenge for researchers, in terms of both content and pedagogy. Beyond the content of the curriculum, there is also almost no data on teachers' attitudes toward teaching about religion, their comfort with religion in the classroom, or their preparation to teach about religion. Even less is known about students, what they know or what they would want to learn about religion. With so few formal curricula and little data regarding how religion is already addressed in schools, teachers and schools do not have robust models to turn to if they wanted to introduce the study of religion.

Religion and the Implicit and Null Curricula

The ultimate result of this complicated relationship between religion and public education, the lack of formal religion curricula, and general confusion and conflict over the appropriate role of religion in the schools has been that religion has been relegated to the "null curriculum" (Eisner, 1994). Eisner (1994) defined the null curriculum as those things that schools do not teach. Of course, the null curriculum is a challenging construct, because, as a construct of absence, it can only be defined in relation to the presence of something else (Flinders, Noddings, & Thornton, 1986). The identification of what is missing depends on what is included and not every topic that is missing from the curriculum is significant. In a typical high school education, many topics are excluded—surgical techniques, translating ancient hieroglyphics, the details of U.S. tax code—and yet there are very few people who would argue that this is a disservice to students. However, other absences have a more substantial impact. Eisner argues that what is not taught may be as significant as what is taught:

"Because ignorance is not simply a neutral void; it has important effects on the kind of options one is able to consider, the alternatives that one can examine, and the perspectives from which one can view a situation or problems…A parochial perspective or simplistic analysis is the inevitable progeny of ignorance. (Eisner, 1994, p. 97)

Although both have a significant impact on our lives, the absence of the study of religion from the curriculum has an arguably greater impact than the absence of an in-depth study of the tax code. Eisner identified two main domains of the null curriculum: intellectual processes and content areas. Not studying religion limits the ability of students to understand and analyze religious perspectives, of individuals or of whole societies. Eisner writes, "what students cannot consider, what they don't know, processes they are unable to use, have consequences for the kinds of lives they lead" (p. 103). And these consequences can have a global reach. Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright gives a striking example of the impact of this absence:

I found it incredible, as the twenty-first century approached, that Catholics and Protestants were still quarreling in Northern Ireland and that Hindus and Muslims were still squaring off against each other in South Asia; surely, I thought, these rivalries were the echoes of earlier, less enlightened times, not a sign of battles of still to come. (Albright & Woodward, 2006, p. 9)

She expressed regret that she, and those she worked with, did not take seriously the role of religion in global affairs and posits that this ignorance towards religion resulted in "enemies that we did not intend to make" (Albright & Woodward, 2006, p. 43). Although most of our students will not become secretaries of state, understanding the significance

of religious worldviews is important for all citizens in a diverse democracy. The REDCo project found that students in the eight European countries studies all believed that religion was an important part of the curriculum (Knauth & Körs, 2011; Miller & McKenna, 2011) and "showed themselves to be strongly aware of the increased importance of religion to their life and society" (Knauth & Körs, 2011, p. 221). At present, most U.S. students are not even afforded a foundational knowledge about religion, reducing or even removing the opportunities for reflection on the "increased importance of religion to their life and society" (Knauth & Körs, 2011, p. 221).

Every subject and course can argue that important content has been left out. No teacher can include all possible content knowledge on a subject in the curriculum and therefore must prioritize some topics over others. The problem when it come to religion is that nearly all of the content has been left out. Religion does make the occasional appearance in state social studies standards, but the overall effect of the null curriculum means that when religion does appear, it is often disconnected and distorted. For example, world history standards often include the ancient origins of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and other traditions. But these religions are typically constrained to their ancient origins and are presented as monolithic and unchanging. U.S. history courses and textbooks often have "more discussion of railroads than religion in the postbellum period" (Prothero, 2007, p. 56), which may further a narrative of Christian nationalism while also implying that religion no longer has any influence in American society. Although these infrequent appearances of religion could be used as a starting point for a stronger curriculum, when religion is given an isolated and partial treatment, it only serves to further devalue religion in the curriculum in comparison to other content that

receives thoughtful and extended attention (Marty & Moore, 2000). Brief references to religion do little to increase understanding of religion if when students have not developed an awareness of the significance of religion or of the skills and thought processes necessary to interpret that content knowledge in a meaningful way.

Not only are students missing out on meaningful learning about religion, but they are unaware that this is something that they are missing in the first place (Eisner, 1994). In turn, teachers are unaware of the absence of religion and unaware of what they are not teaching. This has broader consequences for teacher education as well. Despite the best efforts of teacher educators, the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) has a substantial impact on how educators learn to teach and their understanding of the curriculum. But because religion has been relegated to the null curriculum, current and future teachers are unlikely to have observed substantive inclusion of religion in the curriculum or academically rigorous and constitutionally sound teaching about religion in the classroom. This extends to teacher educators as well.

Flinders, Nodding, and Thornton (1986) argue that affect should be included as a third dimension of the null curriculum and that affect could be the primary reason for pushing some topics to the null curriculum: "We consign many topics to the null curriculum because of their potential affective impact. There are, it would seem, certain feelings and degrees of feeling that we do not want to induce in classrooms" (p. 36). This is certainly an accurate description when it comes to religion. Teachers are hesitant to bring such a subject into the classroom and potentially bring up questions that they cannot answer. The confusion and misunderstanding previously discussed are likely to play a role in this avoidance. Once religion has been avoided due to discomfort, it also

becomes forgotten, such that the avoidance is ultimately routine and engrained, rather than deliberate. When it is brought to the surface as a topic of study, the discomfort and potential affective impact also reemerge. However, this avoidance has an impact beyond the curriculum. When students receive the message that religion is not an appropriate topic for the classroom, they may also interpret that message as a censure on their religious identity. This can have a profound effect on students' academic and social experiences of school (Webb, 2000).

This section has described the landscape of religion and education in the United States and highlighted some of the unique features and challenges of this context. In particular, the confusion between the academic and devotional study of religion and the lack of a formal religion curricula require that discussions of religion in U.S. public schools use precise language in order to avoid misunderstanding. The result has been that religion been consigned to the null curriculum, and, therefore, students, teachers, and the public generally lack both the thought processes and content knowledge to talk about and understand the impacts of religion.

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Understanding Religious Literacy

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A common starting point in conversations on religion and public education is a call for increased religious literacy—of students, of teachers, and of the American public in general. Although religion scholars and educators have been concerned about the religious literacy of American students for several generations (Gallagher, 2018), the contemporary attention to religious literacy can be traced to Stephen Prothero's 2007 book, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—And Doesn't*. Prothero defines religious literacy as "the ability to understand and use the religious terms,

symbols, images, beliefs, practices, scriptures, heroes, themes, and stories that are employed in American public life" (Prothero, 2007, p. 17). Applying a metaphor of language to religious literacy (Marcus, 2018), this definition emphasizes the importance of knowing the *vocabulary* of religion in order to be able to engage in public discourse in a culture that is saturated with religion.

This conception of religious literacy gained public recognition following the release of Prothero's (2008) book and then when results of the subsequent *Pew Religious Knowledge Survey* (2010) found that participants were only able to answer 16 out of 32 questions about religion correctly. Although this study did not make claims to measure religious literacy and stressed that there is no comparison data to assess if this result has changed over time, these results captured the attention of the public, and, as a result, the idea of religious literacy is frequently associated with being able to recall facts about religion. Although there is some value in being able to identify holidays and holy texts of major religions and recognize religious figures and ideas commonly found in American media and culture, this study only measured discrete knowledge, which is different than the ability to apply and understand that knowledge. Despite the limitations of the Pew survey, including a bias towards Western religions and towards knowledge of texts and doctrine, the concrete nature of the survey instrument can make it an appealing approach to studying religious literacy, and it has been used in some small scale studies of pre-service teachers' religious knowledge (e.g., Anderson et al., 2015; M. J. Marks et al., 2014).

This vocabulary or content-focused approach to religious literacy is often associated with arguments that focus on the importance of knowledge about religion in

order to understand references in art and literature and to understand historical events. Nord (2010) critiques this approach to religious literacy as merely instrumental: "religion isn't important in and of itself, only for understanding something else" (p. 107). In the context of the curriculum, Feinberg (2014) dismisses this argument as "an inefficient way of teaching" (p. 399) about religion. Approaching religious literacy as a body of knowledge about religion that must be acquired can be overwhelming.

There is simply more content knowledge about religion than one could ever possibly know. Prothero (2008) responds to the impossibility of comprehensive content knowledge with the suggestion of contextualized religious *literacies,* specific sets of vocabulary applicable to different contexts, which might be tradition-focused, such as Jewish literacy or Protestant literacy, or as specific as Methodist literacy, or might be based on functional capacities, such as ritual literacy, narrative literacy, or even interreligious literacy. Although there are several limitations to a content knowledge approach to religious literacy, this type of knowledge is not important solely for the sake of knowing. Factual knowledge about different religious traditions enables individuals to recognize religion in everyday life. For example, a basic knowledge of Jewish and Christian practices and holidays helps school administrators avoid scheduling the spring class trip during Passover or Holy Week.

However, vocabulary is not enough to develop fluency in any language. Moore (2007) and Marcus (2018) offer frameworks to build a more comprehensive definition of religious literacy. Moore's definition is widely cited and forms of the basis of the AAR *Guidelines for Teaching about Religion in K-12 Public Schools in the United States* (2010) and the cultural studies approach that was introduced in Chapter One:

Religious literacy entails the ability to discern and analyze the fundamental

intersections of religion and social/political/cultural life through multiple lenses.

Specifically, a religiously literate person will possess 1) a basic understanding of

the history, central texts, beliefs, practices, and contemporary manifestations of

several of the world's religious traditions as they arose out of and continue to be

shaped by particular social, historical and cultural contexts; and 2) the ability to

discern and explore the religious dimensions of political social and cultural

expressions across time and place. (Moore, 2007, pp. 56–57)

Moore stresses the cultural embeddedness of religion, critiquing phenomenological

approaches to the study of religion that portray religions as discrete categories isolated

from all social contexts, which is a potential danger of the content knowledge approach to

religious literacy. In this view, a religiously literate person is able to more effectively

engage in public discourse about religion and does so with a set of critical lens and with

particular attention to how religion intersects with other aspects of life. This approach to

religious literacy prioritizes understanding of how to interpret and analyze expressions of

religion, particularly through the application of three key premises about religion: (1)

"Religions are internally diverse, not homogeneous;" (2) "Religions are dynamic and

change, not statistic and fixed;" and (3) "Religions are embedded in cultures, not isolated

from them. Religions influence and are influenced by culture" (Moore, 2010, pp. 12–15).

Although content knowledge is necessary to study religion in this way, Moore prioritizes

teaching a set of skills and conceptual frameworks for deep critical inquiry over the

development of a broad vocabulary.

Marcus (2018) adds another layer, articulating a "linguistic mode of inquiry…that focuses on the complex processes of religious identity formation" (p. 63). Marcus explains that attention to religious identity is a crucial part of religious literacy:

> Too often Americans assume that they understand a religion when they learn about belief via doctrines and scriptural narratives. Defining religious identity solely according to belief would render unintelligible the experience of countless religious individuals and communities for whom behavior and belonging drive religious identity…A religious linguist needs a firm grasp of the construction of religious identity through belief, behavior, and belonging in order to understand…the complexity of lived religious experience. (Marcus, 2018, p. 65)

Including the construction of religious identities through the interactions of beliefs, behaviors, and communities of belonging—the 3Bs framework—as a part of a conception of religious literacy helps to account for the messiness of religious experiences in real life. This framework requires an expanded conception of what "counts" as religion, beyond that which is defined by religious organizations and official doctrines. In this way, religion can be understood at a more human level, which is important because

> at the level of the individual, religion is not fixed, unitary, or even coherent. Rather, each person's religious practices and the stories they use to make sense of their lives are continually adapting, expanding or receding, and ever changing. (McGuire, 2008, p. 210).

The 3Bs framework provides a way to understand the often abstract content knowledge and conceptual frameworks of religion in terms of how individuals interpret these

through varied concrete expressions of beliefs and behaviors and in communities of belonging.

Developing competency in each of these aspects of religious literacy—content knowledge or vocabulary, the premises of religion, and the construction of religious identities—enable individuals to engage in "meaningful conversations about religion and its role in private and public life without relying on an essentialist understanding religion that perpetuates stereotypes" (Marcus, 2018, p. 68). Initial impressions of religious literacy can make it appear to be a relatively straightforward body of knowledge that must be developed in the same vein as E.D. Hirsch's "cultural literacy" (Hirsch, 1987), but, in reality, the concept requires analytic skills and understanding several conceptual frameworks, as well as the considerable content knowledge. The development of religious literacy is an ongoing task, which must be responsive to contexts and current events.

Religious Literacy for Teachers

The idea of religious literacy is often called upon in conversations about improving the relationship between religion and education; Moore (2007) even titled her book *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy*. This section turns to an examination of the application of religious literacy specifically for teachers in public schools. Marcus (2018) provides a definition that accounts for the multiple components while also addressing the application of religious literacy:

> Religious literacy requires both a familiarity with the vocabulary of multiple
> religious languages and a deep linguistic understanding of the varieties of
> religious languages' grammar—the many ways individuals and communities

construct their religious identities through belief, behavior, and the experiences of belonging to a community. Effectively communicating with the religious other depends on utilizing a similar grammar—referencing shared aspects of religious identity—as much if not more so than using the same vocabulary. (p. 57)

Although this definition, along with those offered by Prothero (2007) and Moore (2007), provides an important starting point, the knowledge and skills described by these definitions are not fully sufficient to equip educators to competently respond to the many ways in which religion appears in the public schools. Several scholars have begun to describe what teachers need to know in order to teach about religion, and identify specific categories of knowledge (e.g. Moore, 2007, 2010; Nord, 2010; OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2007). Suggested categories include content knowledge, an understanding of the methods of religious studies, and various pedagogical approaches. However, these categories are primarily only relevant to those who teach courses about religion or incorporate the study of religion into subjects such as history or literature. As demonstrated above, the inclusion of religion in the curriculum represents only a portion of the overall landscape of religion in schools. For teachers to be religiously literate in the context of public education, they need the foundational components of religious literacy, but they must also understand religion in the wider culture, the school community, and the curriculum. The necessary knowledge and skills for educators go beyond the current definitions of religious literacy and the existing discussions of teacher knowledge about religion. In order for *all* teachers to be religiously competant, I propose a framework with five domains of knowledge and skills that will enable teachers to navigate the landscape of teaching about religion and religious

diversity in public schools in the United States today. This framework integrates current models of religious literacy (Marcus, 2018; Moore, 2007; Prothero, 2007) with the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) to account for the multiple contexts in which religion influences education and the knowledge and skills necessary to understand and respond religion in all of those contexts. The five domains of this framework of Pedagogical Content Knowledge about Religion (PCKR) are (1) Legal and Civic Literacy; (2) Religious Studies Knowledge; (3) Instructional Approaches; (4) Cultural Competency and Responsiveness; and (5) Self-Reflection (Figure 2.1).

Pedagogical Content Knowledge About Religion

Shulman (1987) proposed the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in the context of a broader exploration of the knowledge base for teaching and a call for education reforms to be more attentive to what teachers know and how they use that knowledge. More than just knowledge of teaching techniques and strategies, Shulman defined PCK as "the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). This powerful theory differentiates teachers' unique knowledge from that of content area experts, and it has been employed in countless articles in the decades since it was introduced. Although there has been substantial discourse about the nature and importance of PCK in relation to several content areas, especially math and science, there has not yet been any scholarship on the nature of PCK regarding teaching religion in U.S. schools. Pedagogical content knowledge may not ultimately be the best descriptor for this framework as a whole—a significant portion addresses elements beyond both content and

pedagogy—but for the time being it is a useful way to connect this particular framework to the broader concept and research. This section briefly highlights key characteristics of PCK and then describes each of the domains in my proposed framework.

The transformation of content knowledge into "forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive" (Shulman, 1987, p. 15) is at the heart of this concept. PCK is not necessarily a category of knowledge that can be identified and measured distinct from other forms of knowledge. Abell (2008) identified four important characteristics of PCK as described in research on PCK among science teachers:

> PCK includes discrete categories of knowledge that are applied synergistically to problems of practice; PCK is dynamic, not static; content (science subject matter) is central to PCK; and PCK involves the transformation of other types of knowledge. (p. 1407)

Of these four characteristics, three of them are explicitly active, and, although less obviously active, the content knowledge in any discipline is also always evolving and changing.

Various content areas have used PCK to explore teacher knowledge within particular disciplines (e.g., Hill, Ball, & Schilling, 2008; Howey & Grossman, 1989; Koehler, Mishra, & Cain, 2013; R. Marks, 1990; McNeill & Knight, 2013). These studies have examined the sources of teachers' knowledge, teachers' knowledge of students' understanding, potential misunderstandings, instructional strategies, and other ways in which teachers use and interpret content knowledge. The sources of this knowledge can vary widely, as can the application of the knowledge (Howey & Grossman, 1989). Specific definitions of PCK are challenging "because pedagogical content knowledge

derives from other types of knowledge, [therefore] determining where one ends and the other begins is difficult" (R. Marks, 1990, p. 8). Although differentiating between the types of knowledge that make up PCK within a content area is challenging, the boundaries between disciplines and the sources of knowledge and the processes of knowledge construction within disciplines are relatively clear (Powell, 2018).

However, this is not the case for all content areas; Powell (2018) argues that the social studies have not had the same benefits of research on PCK as other subjects because social studies suffers from "a missing paradigm problem" (p. 253). As a result, there is no consensus on the sources of knowledge or the organization of that knowledge, which is drawn from several disciplines including history, economics, sociology, and psychology. The problem is that

> to develop PCK, teachers need not only to 'know' a subject in a traditional sense
>
> (i.e. as a pile of information collected over time), but they also need to know how
>
> and why it has been organized by disciplinary scholars. (Powell, 2018, p. 255)

This is particularly hard to do when the subject is built from an amalgamation the content and methods of multiple disciplines. Even if we were only concerned with PCK for teaching about religion in the curriculum, this same problem would still apply as religious studies also draws on several humanities and social science disciplines. However, the knowledge that teachers need about religion in schools goes beyond the treatment of religion in curriculum. My proposed framework of Pedagogical Content Knowledge about Religion (PCKR) endeavors to consider not only the challenges of religion as a subject for academic study but also account for the other aspects of education where religion has a role in schools. Religion impacts multiple aspects of the experience of

schooling in ways that other content areas such as math or literature do not. Math

teachers do not need to be attentive to laws that govern how they talk about math in the

curriculum or their own feelings about math, and literature teachers rarely have to

respond to students being bullied because of their favorite genre of literature. Although

pedagogy and content are at the heart of this framework, three additional domains address

the need for broader knowledge about religion for all teachers, regardless of their content

area or grade level.
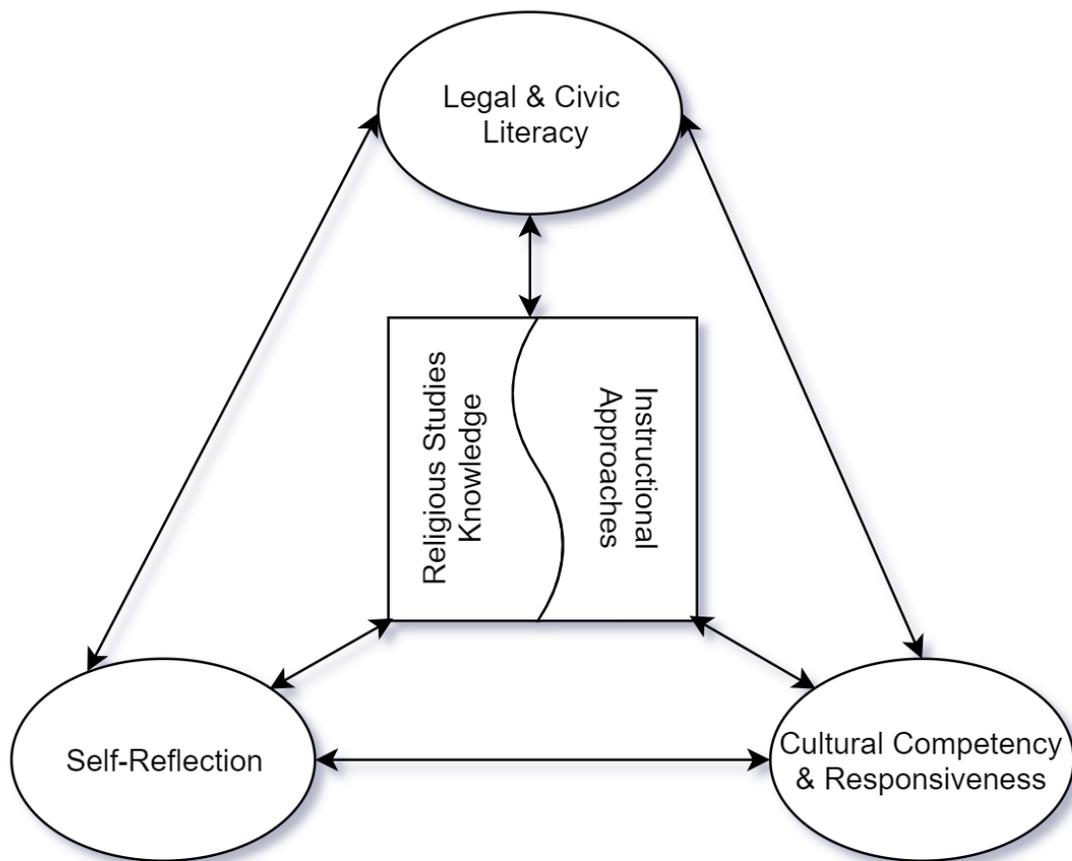
Figure 2.1. Model of Pedagogical Content Knowledge about Religion

The PCKR framework (Figure 2.1) is structured with two core domains, Religious

Studies Knowledge and Instructional Approaches, linked at the center, surrounded by

three supporting domains, Legal & Civic Literacy, Cultural Competency &

Responsiveness, and Self-Reflection, which shape the context of religion in public schools. The specific details of each domain are described following a discussion of the structure of the framework overall.

The two core domains—Religious Studies Knowledge and Instructional Approaches—mostly closely resemble a traditional model of PCK. Although one of the features of PCK is that content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are inextricably integrated, I have purposefully represented them as individual, but connected, domains. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, they reflect the different approaches to religious literacy; Prothero's (2007) approach prioritizes content knowledge, and Moore's (2007) approach prioritizes analytical skills and a particular pedagogical approach. The Religious Studies Knowledge domain leans towards the content knowledge side of PCK and more closely aligns with Prothero's approach. The Instructional Approaches domain leans towards the pedagogy side of PCK and more closely aligns with parts of Moore's approach, especially her cultural studies approach to the study of religion. However, just as neither the Prothero nor the Moore models of religious literacy can realistically be pursued in isolation, these two domains are deeply tied together and cannot truly be understood or enacted individually.

The second reason for representing these two domains individually connects to the application of the framework. The PCKR framework is intended to describe knowledge about religion for all teachers regardless of subject or grade, and, therefore, the specific content of each domain for any teacher would differ in reflection of that individual's context. Understanding the foundational premises of the study of religion and the components of religious identity formation are valuable for all teachers, but the

necessary additional content knowledge about specific religions will vary widely.

Similarly, understanding the difference between confessional and academic approaches to

teaching religion is important for all teachers, but the specific pedagogical or

instructional approaches that a teacher needs to be familiar with will vary based on many

factors. Because the framework has potential applications in developing teacher educator

courses or as an evaluation tool, maintaining a distinction between these two domains has

value. For example, two fifth grade teachers may have similar needs regarding

instructional approaches—religion comes up every once in a while but they do not

regularly teach directly about religion—but vastly different needs for religious studies

knowledge. One could work in a district with students representing a wide range of

religious traditions that co-exist relatively peacefully, while the other could work in a

majority Christian district where there is significant religious tension between liberal and

conservative Protestants. These different contexts could also have pedagogical

consequences, but an initial professional learning need would be for each teacher to

develop a greater understanding of the religious groups represented in their communities

and how they interact. Conversely, two teachers might both teach the same world history

curriculum with a religions unit and need similar religious studies knowledge based on

the curriculum, but need different instructional approaches based on their students, their

school culture, and the wider community. Maintaining a distinction between these two

domains recognizes that, although ultimately intertwined as PCK, the pedagogy and

content elements can also vary independently. The guiding questions in Figure 2.2 also

demonstrate how a distinction between the two helps to conceptualize the different

components of this knowledge. The PCKR framework covers a potentially overwhelming

range of knowledge and skills but can also be used to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in order to prioritize learning.

The arrangement of the three supporting domains is also important. The Legal & Civic Literacy domain is positioned at the top of the diagram in reference to the primacy of this knowledge. It is crucial for public school teachers to understand how the First Amendment governs the treatment of religion in public education. Overcoming the widespread and substantial misunderstandings about the legal status of religion in public schools is an important step in breaking the cycle of silence about religion in schools. The successful application of the other four domains requires knowledge of First Amendment guidelines and an awareness of the presence and influences of religion in the public square, which is where the civic literacy element comes in. The final two domains, Cultural Competency & Responsiveness and Self-Reflection form the base of the triangle. These two domains relate to the ways in which religion is treated in the school community broadly, beyond just the curriculum. The extent to which the school and teacher treat religion as a part of cultural diversity and are reflective about assumptions and biases related to religion shapes the climate in which the other three domains can operate. All five of the domains are interdependent and overlapping. It is impossible to be aware of the role of religion in the public square and the intersections of religious diversity with other forms of cultural diversity without at least some knowledge of religious studies premises and content. Instructional approaches to teaching about religion must be informed by an understanding of First Amendment guidelines. Taken together, these five domains describe the range of contexts in which religion can play a

role and the knowledge educator need in order to effectively address religion in these contexts.

Figure 2.2 provides an alternative representation of the framework. This model does not as fully represent the relationships between the domains, but it allows for the inclusion of guiding questions that provide further clarity about each domain. In this model, the domains are ordered from those with the broadest scope to the narrowest scope. The Legal & Civic Literacy domain addresses religion at the macro level, including widely applicable legal principles and attention to the presence and influence of religion in the public square. The subsequent domains get progressively more specific, from broad understandings of religious studies and approaches to teaching about religion and then responding to the particular religious landscapes of schools and classrooms. The final domain, Self-Reflection, addresses the smallest unit of analysis, the individual.

Finally, the naming of the framework is significant. Although discussions of PCK in other content areas can be referred to as "mathematical pedagogical content knowledge" or "technological pedagogical content knowledge," the use of the adjective "religious" to describe this form of PCK has the potential to misrepresent or distort the goals of this framework. As discussed earlier in this chapter, when the adjective "religious" is applied in connection to education in the United States, it is commonly understood to refer to devotional approaches rather than secular, academic approaches. Although there is a place for *religious* PCK in devotional settings, this framework of Pedagogical Content Knowledge *about* Religion (PCKR) is intended to be applicable to public school settings and, therefore, this name attempts reduces the possible connotations of confessional or other unconstitutional approaches to religion in schools.

Legal & Civic Literacy	• How does the First Amendment apply in public schools? How does religion impact public life?
Religious Studies Knowledge	• What do I need to know about religion in my context? What are the theories and methods of religious studies? How is religion related to my curriculum?
Instructional Approaches	• How do I teach about religion in ways that are academically rigorous, counstitutionally sound, and developmentally appropriate? How do I approach religion when it is relevant in my classroom?
Cultural Competancy & Responsiveness	• How do I create classroom and school environments that are welcoming for students of all religious identities? How is religious diversity recognized in relation to other forms of diversity?
Self-Reflection	• How does my own religious identity and background shape my perspective and positionality? What biases do I have?

Figure 2.2. Guiding questions for Pedagogical Content Knowledge about Religion domains

In a 2007 interview, Shulman described the origins of PCK: "My intention was to call attention to a gap in the field, to a missing place, and to orient people to start to look for what was missing and try to fill it in" (Berry, Loughran, & Driel, 2008, p. 1273). This description makes the use of PCK in relation to teacher knowledge about religion even more fitting. The goal of my framework is to fill a gap in the understanding of teacher knowledge about religion and call attention to the complexity of these forms of knowledge. This creates a framework for thinking about both the creation of teacher education about religion and helps to identify the gaps in the research, providing a starting point for future research. The following descriptions of each domain are framed broadly and contain illustrative, not exhaustive, examples of the content of each; the specific content of each would vary for every individual dependent on a number of

contextual factors, including subjects taught, geographic location, local religious demographics, and grade level.

Legal and Civic Literacy

For public school teachers in the United States, it is critical to understand the basic principles of religious liberty and how the First Amendment applies in public schools. This includes knowing about and being able to protect the Free Exercise rights of students and teachers and understanding the purpose of the Establishment clause in the school context and how to maintain neutrality towards religion (Haynes & Thomas, 2011). Guidelines originally published by the Public Education Religion Studies Center at Wright State University, and distributed to by the Department of Education to every public school in 2000, clearly and succinctly summarize the distinctions between teaching about religion and promoting religion:

- "The school's approach to religion is *academic*, not *devotional*;

- the school strives for student *awareness* of religions, but does not press for student *acceptance* of any religion;

- the school sponsors *study* about religion, not the *practice* of religion;

- the school may *expose* students to a diversity of religious views, but may not *impose* any particular view;

- the school *educates* about all religions; it does not *promote or denigrate* any religion;

- the school *informs* the students about religious beliefs, it does not seek to *conform* students to any particular belief." (Haynes & Thomas, 2011, p. 98)

Confusion about these distinctions can quickly cause problems when a parent misinterprets an academic lesson for a devotional one or if a teacher mistakenly tells students that their religious expression is forbidden in schools. Teachers who are not confident in their understanding of religious liberty in the schools are likely to avoid teaching religion altogether (Nord, 2010).

Legal and civic literacy also includes an awareness of the religious landscape, locally and nationally. Just as teachers would seek to learn more about the ethnic groups found in the community and be familiar with local civic organizations, they should also be familiar with the religious communities local to the school. Religious organizations and communities can play a significant role in shaping the civic landscape of an area. Civic literacy involves recognizing that religions cannot be excluded from the public sphere, and that pretending that there is such thing as a fully neutral public square ultimately only hinders productive dialogue about difference and pluralism.

Religious Studies Knowledge

The multiple dimensions of religious literacy discussed earlier in this chapter inform the Religious Studies Knowledge domain. Shulman (1987) identifies "scholarship in the content disciplines" as the first source of the knowledge base of teaching, and this knowledge is extended to the methods of the disciplines:

> A teacher is a member of a scholarly community. He or she must understand the structures of subject matter, the principles of conceptual organization, and the principles of inquiry that help answer two kinds of questions in each field: What are the important ideas and skills in this domain? and How are new ideas added and deficient ones dropped by those who produce knowledge in this area? (p. 9)

A strong understanding of the content of religious studies and its underlying structures is essential to be able to transform that knowledge for students. This may be one of the more daunting domains because there is so much that could possibly be included. However, a thorough understanding of the premises of religious studies (Moore, 2010) and the 3Bs framework of the construction of religious identities (Marcus, 2018) enables educators to approach this task with a better understanding of how knowledge about religion is connected to other understandings about the social world.

The specific religious literacies needed by educators will depend on school contexts and roles, the makeup of local religious communities, and the degree to which religion appears in the curriculum of a particular subject. For example, an early elementary school teacher in a predominantly Catholic and Jewish neighborhood would probably want to develop knowledge about the relevant religious holidays and the ways different communities celebrate those holidays. At the elementary level, the curriculum rarely delves into the theological significance or historical origins of religious holidays, but holidays are easily understood by students at that age and can be used to discuss the internal diversity of religions and the significance of holidays for different communities. A high school world history teacher would need much more extensive religious studies knowledge, with a substantial focus on both content and methods. Shulman remarks,

> One of the consequences of weak subject matter preparation and a sense that one is weak in it, is that it leads to rigid pedagogy … Pedagogy that is highly didactic that leaves students very little opportunity to break out of the path because you're afraid that … if you leave the well-trodden path … you'll get eaten by a bear."
> (Berry et al., 2008, p. 1276)

This sentiment is particularly salient when it comes to teaching about religion, where straying off the path can result in violations of the First Amendment. A strong understanding of the frameworks for studying religion can help educators better navigate the complexity of content knowledge about religion and avoid a simplistic or rigid approach to religion in the curriculum.

Instructional Approaches

Knowledge of instructional approaches to teaching about religion must begin with an understanding of the difference between the devotional and academic study of religion. Beyond this critical understanding, this domain may be the most variable and context-dependent. A middle school history teacher is much more likely to include lessons directly about religion in their curriculum than a second-grade teacher or a geometry teacher. For those who do explicitly address religion, teachers should be aware of the different pedagogical approaches, such as the historical approach, the literary approach, and the cultural studies approach, and the strengths and weaknesses of each (Moore, 2010).

Understanding of appropriate (legally, academically, and developmentally) instructional approaches to teaching about religion is crucial, because, although teaching about religion can be highly engaging and creative, it is easy to cross the line into potentially controversial, if not entirely unconstitutional, territory. For example, bringing in religious objects or garments can provide students with the opportunity for authentic engagement with a concrete element of a religious tradition. However, having students use the objects or try on clothing can be interpreted in many ways, including compelling students to perform religious rituals or even accusations of indoctrination (Wertheimer,

2015). Conversely, teachers with limited understanding of appropriate instructional approaches run the risk of reinforcing limited and rigid conceptions of religion by adhering strictly to textbook accounts out of fear of stepping past legal boundaries or inciting controversy.

Some of the more disputed instructional practices include field trips and guest speakers, and teachers should be aware of the arguments both for and against before planning for a field trip or speaker. Some scholars are adamantly opposed to going on field trips to religious sites or inviting guest speakers from a religious community (de Saeger, 2013; Moore, 2007). Some of the concerns include the possibility of students equating the experience of a single site or speaker with the views or practices of an entire religion, a loss of control over the content being presented, and the risk of students engaging in religious practices during field trips. These concerns are valid and should be carefully considered (Wertheimer, 2015), but there are also many benefits of visiting religious sites or hearing directly from a member of a religious community that cannot be replicated by any classroom activity (Goldschmidt, 2013).

Cultural Competency and Responsiveness

Religious identities are not left behind when students enter the classroom. The neglect of those identities has not always received as much attention as the neglect of religion in the curriculum. To ensure that those identities are given appropriate attention, this domain involves cultural competency toward religious diversity. Ladson-Billings (2014) identifies cultural competency as one of the core domains of culturally relevant pedagogy—"the ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in at least one other culture" (p. 75). When it

comes to religious identities, cultural competency includes recognizing and supporting the expression of those identities in the school setting within the appropriate First Amendment guidelines. The Free Exercise clause allows students a great deal of latitude in their religious expression. That expression can be inappropriately limited or disallowed when educators are unfamiliar with students' rights to religious expression and the religious identities behind those expressions. When religion is treated as a taboo topic or teachers demonstrate substantial bias against or ignorance towards religion, religious students may be put in a position that does not allow them to fully and authentically express their religious identity. Students may see multicultural curricula actively integrating diverse racial and ethnic perspectives and celebrating the many different funds of knowledge students bring to school, but find that a central facet of their identity is ignored, or even discouraged. This "nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (Taylor, 1994, p. 25).

Multicultural education has made great strides in providing recognition to students who have long been marginalized, creating spaces to bring their identities and perspectives into the classroom instead of acting as if racial or ethnic identities do not impact experiences of schooling. However, it has largely avoided addressing the ways in which religious identities also influence experiences of schooling. Cultural competency and responsiveness to religious diversity is crucial because,

> If people of faith are to learn how to participate in public education with their
> most cherished values intact, then they must be encouraged throughout the

educational process to bring their faith to the table rather than learning to act as if

it does not matter. (Webb, 2000, p. 16)

 As classrooms become even more religiously diverse, it will become increasingly important for teachers to recognize this diversity and develop the skills necessary to create classrooms where students can engage across deep religious differences and where students of all religious identities or none feel respected.

Self-Reflection

Finally, teachers must be cognizant of their own religious backgrounds and identities and how those identities may impact their teaching. Pre-service teachers are continually asked to reflect on the many components of their identities, such as race, gender, and socio-economic status, and how those identities and the intersections of those identities influence their perspectives on their role as teachers, their relationships with their students and colleagues, and even their relationships to the subject matter (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Howard, 2003). However, religion is frequently left out of these conversations, despite the fact that for many people religion is the foundation of their personal system of values and their outlook on the world. There has been some research on how teachers' religious identities influence other aspects of their practice (e.g., Cutri, 2009; Hartwick, 2015; White, 2010), but this is a largely unexplored area, and the implications of these influences are presently unclear. Religious identities and biases have the potential to impact teachers' relationship with students and with the content of their curriculum. Just as teachers should develop cultural competence regarding religious diversity in much the same way they consider cultural and linguistic diversity, teachers

should also consider how their own religious identities and backgrounds shape their thinking and actions.

Each of these domains could independently constitute an entire research agenda and multiple teacher education programs. Some have been the focus of more theory and research than others. However, by putting them together into a single framework, I hope to offer a way to map the landscape of religion and education in a way that will be valuable for both researchers and teacher educators, while also providing a tool for educators to reflect on their preparation to respond to religion in the classroom.

Professional Development

The final part of this chapter turns to professional development. Although improving attention to religion in pre-service preparation would have the most significant and long-term impact on disrupting the cycle of silence about religion in education, traditional pre-service teacher education programs are already overburdened with requirements and are slow to change. At present, professional development for in-service teachers appears as the most viable avenue for teacher education about religion. Regardless of the mode of delivery, and perhaps more significant than time and resources, any proposed teacher education program about religion must overcome the lack of awareness about religion and its role in public schools. The location of religion in the null curriculum is not just an issue for students, but also for teachers and administrators who are not only blind to what they do not know about religion, but also to the fact that religion is missing and is something they need to know something about (Eisner, 1994). Once the necessity of understanding religion is made clear, additional barriers to teacher learning about religion must be overcome, including the widespread

misunderstandings about the constitutionally appropriate role of religion in public schools and general discomfort with religion as a topic of conversation. The four professional development programs being investigated in this study have been able to overcome these barriers and have been fully enrolled each time they have been offered. However, the ways in which the development of these programs have navigated these substantial roadblocks will have to be left to a project independent of the other research questions in this study. The inquiry into professional development in this study focuses on the participants and their motivations for seeking out and participating in these programs and then how their experiences and learning impacted their teaching.

There has been extensive research on professional development over the past several decades, and one of the central questions in this research concerns what makes for effective professional development (Borko, 2004; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Guskey, 2003; Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005; Kennedy, 2016). Desimone (2009) argues that the multitude of studies, ranging from case studies to experimental designs, has generally resulted in a consensus on the key features that have a role in determining the effectiveness of professional development and, therefore, should be included in impact studies. These five features are: (1) content focus, (2) active learning, (3) coherence, (4) duration, and (5) collective participation, which Desimone proposes should be at the core of a framework for research on professional development. Although this study is not concerned with effectiveness as it is frequently explored in the professional development research, the expression of these five features in these programs may help ultimately to contextualize these programs within the broader landscape of professional development.

The change or improvement of student outcomes is frequently an important measure of the effectiveness or impact of professional development (Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 1986; Kyriakides, Creemers, & Antoniou, 2009). Understanding the improvement of student outcomes is a very important aspect of professional development. However, there has been very little measurement of student outcomes regarding religion or any substantive theorizing about what outcomes could or should be measured. A study of the required world religions course in Modesto, California found a positive impact on students respect for religious liberty and an increase in content knowledge, but these are only two possible outcomes (Lester & Roberts, 2006). For example, a researcher is currently exploring the relationship between the Modesto course and its impact on religious bullying (A. Chan, personal communication).

Other research has indicated that courses on the Bible or world religions can support the development of analytic and critical thinking skills and may encourage civic engagement (Feinberg & Layton, 2014). Scholarship on religion and academic achievement has mostly focused on correlations between membership in religious communities and academic achievement or the academic outcomes of students in private religious schools (e.g., Butler-Barnes, Williams, & Chavous, 2012; Fuller & Johnson, 2014; Sikkink, 2009). The potential impacts of increased teacher knowledge about religion on students could be investigated in connection to academic achievement, student engagement, school climate, or many other aspects of students' experiences. This is to say, models of the impact of professional development that rely on student outcomes as a central measure will not be particularly valuable in the context of this study as we currently lack the necessary constructs to conceptualize and measure those outcomes.

Another approach to studying professional development is to understand the process of teachers' professional learning with a focus on the outcomes for the teachers as evidence of the impact of professional development, rather than student achievement. Guskey (1986) identifies these outcomes as changes in teachers' practice and change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes. A traditional model of teacher learning, or staff development in the language of Guskey's particular discussion, holds that learning activities impact and change teachers' beliefs and attitudes about content or pedagogy and then the changed beliefs and attitudes result in changes in practice. This model is not dissimilar to a traditional conception of religious identity which prioritizes religious beliefs and then implies that religious practices and behaviors are the enactments of those beliefs (Marcus, 2018). However, in both contexts, the relationship between belief and practice is much more complex.

In Guskey's (1986) model, teachers first implement new practices in the classroom, but "significant change in the beliefs and attitudes of teachers is contingent on their gaining evidence of the change in the learning outcomes of their students" (p. 7). Kennedy (2016) also argues that changes in teachers' ideas about teaching are the result of a negotiation between old and new knowledge; the enactment of new ideas often requires abandoning old ideas that have previously been adequate or engrained in habit. Professional development programs use different strategies to introduce and promote the adoption of new ideas and practices, which may address different problems of practice to varying degrees of effectiveness. Both of these models of teacher learning focus on the conditions in the classroom and professional development programs that can help to explain how teachers process the new learning and how that knowledge then gets

transformed and enacted in the classroom. When it comes to learning about religion, however, there are additional factors that may impact teachers' learning.

Models of teacher learning about religion should take into account teachers' religious backgrounds and identities, experiences with religion, and existing knowledge and assumptions about religion, as well as the socio-cultural climate and attitudes towards religion in which the teacher is situated. Opfer and Pedder (2011) propose a model, based in complexity theory, which posits that teacher learning is impacted by three "interdependent and reciprocally influential" (p. 379) systems and subsystems: (1) the individual teacher, (2) the school system, and (3) the actual learning activity. In this model, teacher learning is not conceptualized as a linear, additive process, but as a complex system in which various dynamics interact and combine to produce many possible outcomes. They critique the extensive research on the characteristics of effective professional development because it can imply that finding the right combination of content, time, and activities will create a recipe for consistently effective professional development. In practice, "the same causes that may produce teacher learning and change may also lead to intellectual stagnation and inertia" (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 831); each of the systems— the learning activities, the school contexts, and the individual teacher— combine and interact in unique ways for every individual, and in order to understand teacher learning, all must be taken into account.

Of these three systems, the learning activity is the element that can most be controlled. This model does not completely dismiss the research on characteristics of effective professional development (Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Guskey, 2003); these characteristics are valuable, and the design of the learning experiences is an

important factor, but focus on the design is not sufficient to fully account for teacher learning, and variations within and among teacher learning experiences. The school-level system can contain multiple, nested systems, including the norms, practices, cultures, and structures of the school as an organization. Systems and individuals within schools influence and are influenced by "collective beliefs and practices about teaching and learning…collective pedagogical norms and practices…[and] collective awareness of their capacity for learning and growth" (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 392).

This overall orientation to learning at the school level can influence an individual's decision to participate in professional learning as well as how that learning is interpreted and implemented in practice. When considering professional development about religion, school-level orientations towards religious diversity and toward teaching about religion will be important to consider regarding both teachers' motivations for participation and their ability to apply their learning afterward. Three of the four programs in the study are based in particular school districts. The participants in each of those programs share at least some school-level elements, and it would be reasonable to assume that there might be some similarities in terms of motivation or application. Other systems will also influence each individual's learning experiences.

The last aspect of this model is the individual teacher, who can also be understood as a system which "encompasses their prior experiences, their orientations to, and beliefs about, learning, prior knowledge, and how these are enacted in their classroom practices" (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 384). Again, all of these elements interact with and influence, and are influenced by, all of the elements of the learning activity and the school-level systems. Although the model is focused on individuals' orientations to and beliefs about

learning, I argue that individuals' orientations to and beliefs about religion, both personally and conceptually, also play a significant role in this system. As discussed above, teachers are usually very familiar with reflecting on the ways different aspects of their identity, such as race, gender, or socio-economic status, inform their teaching practice and relationships with students, but this type of reflection rarely includes religious identity. However, awareness of one's orientation toward religion likely has a significant effect on both motivations for learning about religion and the interpretation and application of that learning.

Opfer and Pedder (2011) recognize that this model, with its multiple interacting systems, presents challenges for designing causal research about teachers' professional learning. However, the strength of this model for investigating professional development about religion is that "although complex, [this model] better illustrates the multicausal and multidimensional nature of teacher learning" (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 394) and highlights the multiple elements, and their interactions, necessary for teacher learning. The use of a complex model like this one is fitting for the study of religion because it better aligns with the complex frameworks for understanding religions and religious identity. Marcus's (2018) 3Bs explicitly challenges a model of religious identity that, very similar to the process-product model in education, posits that theological and doctrinal beliefs precede and then directly inform or result in religious behaviors and practices. Because neither religion nor the processes of teacher learning are that simple, this model provides a framework to investigate the complex problem of teacher learning about the complex topic of religion.

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with an overview of the landscape of religion and education, globally and in the United States. It then examined the place of religion in the null curriculum of U.S. public schools, which has multiple implications for students' capacities to navigate a religiously pluralistic society. It turned to the concept of religious literacy and the approaches taken by different scholars to defining this concept. The multiple elements of religious literacy, however, remain insufficient to describe the knowledge and skills needed by teachers to competently respond to religion in the classroom. This led to the discussion of pedagogical content knowledge and a proposal for a framework for pedagogical content knowledge about religion. The chapter concluded with a discussion of frameworks for understanding professional development and teacher learning.

CHAPTER 3: Methods

This study explores the experiences of educators participating in professional development courses about religious literacy. I conducted a mixed-methods, collective case study of the participants in four professional development programs that took place in the summer of 2017. The following questions guided this study:

I. What motivates educators to participate in professional development about religious diversity?

    a. Who are the educators who choose to participate?

    b. Why do they seek out this type of professional development?

II. Which aspects of the courses are most impactful for participants?

III. What is the impact of these experiences on the educators who participate?

    a. In what ways do these programs impact educators' confidence regarding religion in the classroom?

    b. In what ways do educators change their professional practice following the programs?

As very little is known about professional development opportunities about religious diversity or how to teach about religion, a mixed-methods design allowed me to develop both a broad picture of the characteristics of the participants and their experiences in the programs and the particularities of individual interpretations and applications of the content. This chapter describes the study design, the research settings, participants, the data sources, and analytic process.

Research Design

This study employs an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2014). In an explanatory sequential mixed methods design **"**the researcher first conducts quantitative research, analyzes the results and then builds on the results to explain them in more detail with qualitative research. It is considered explanatory because the initial quantitative results are explained or further probed in this design" (Creswell, 2014, p. 15). The quantitative data provides a broad understanding of the research questions, which is then elaborated on and explored in-depth through the qualitative data (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006).

The first stage of this research was the administration of three surveys at time points before and after the programs. All of the surveys included quantitative and qualitative questions. The first two surveys informed the development of the third survey, and preliminary analysis of the quantitative survey data informed the design of the interview protocol for the second stage of the research. Figure 3.1 displays a visual model of this process. Although qualitative data were collected during the first stage of the research, initial analysis between stages focused on the quantitative data and only included a preliminary review of qualitative responses. Subsequent analysis explored both sets of data, surveys, and interviews, concurrently. In the explanatory sequential design, the quantitative data from the three surveys established a general understanding of the participants and their experiences, as well as longitudinal changes in attitudes and perspectives on religion in the school context. The qualitative data, from both the surveys and interviews, elaborated on the quantitative results and provide more in-depth and detailed responses to the research questions.

Phase	Procedure	Product
Survey 1	• Web-based survey (n=122) • June/July 2017	• Numerical data • Text data
Survey 2	• Web-based survey (n=86) • July/August 2017	• Numerical data • Text data
Preliminary Analysis	• Frequencies • Review of qualitative responses	• Descriptive Statistics • Revised Survey 3
Survey 3	• Web-based survey (n=34) • November 2017	• Numerical data • Text data
Preliminary Analysis	• Frequencies • Review of qualitative responses	• Descriptive Statistics • Revised Interview Protocol
Interviews	• In-Depth Individual Phone Interviews (n=13) • May-July 2018	• Text data (interview transcripts)
Quantitative Analysis	• Frequencies • Correlations • Factor Analysis	• Descriptive Statistics • Correlations
Qualitative Analysis	• Coding & Thematic Analysis • Within & Cross-Case Analysis	• Code and themes • Categories
Integration of Qualitative & Quantitative Analysis	• Interpretation & integration of results	• Discussion • Implications • Future Research

Figure 3.1 - Visual Model of Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Design

These questions were explored using a collective case study approach (Stake, 1995). The programs and the participating educators serve as individual cases to inform the collective case study of multi-day professional development courses about religious diversity and teaching about religion.

The collective case study design fits this particular research as the four programs are "sufficiently similar" (Compton-Lilly, 2013, p. 56) to be informative about teachers' experiences of professional development on teaching about religion. The unique features of each contribute to a broader understanding of this approach to professional development. Although case study research may be critiqued for its inability to reliably generalize from a small number of cases, Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that formal generalization is an overrated approach to generating knowledge and testing theories, "whereas 'the force of example' is underestimated" (228). At present, there are few opportunities for professional development about religion for K-12 educators beyond the courses included in this study. Therefore, the purpose is to use the example of these four courses to develop a better understanding of teacher knowledge and learning about religion and to encourage the creation of other learning opportunities. Due to the highly contextual nature of teaching about religion, the interviews provide more in-depth perspectives directly from individual participants about how they interpreted and applied the content and pedagogies they learned about during the workshops.

The use of both surveys and interviews allowed for the triangulation of the findings (Stake, 1995). In a field with very little empirical research, this study provides detailed examples of one approach to professional development. Although these findings cannot be generalized to all forms of professional development about religion, this study

is able to provide a general perspective on teachers who choose to participate in this type of professional development and to point to possible impacts on the classroom.

Researcher Positionality

I initiated and currently organize a community of educators, researchers, and scholars whose work focuses on religion and education, The Religion and Education Collaborative. This group meets regularly via videoconference to share work in progress, receive feedback on programs and research, and report back about different activities undertaken by members. My access to the research sites in this study came about through my connections with this network. Shortly after initial conversations with the director of Program 1 about the possibility of researching the course, I became connected with the director of Program 2, who suggested I might also include that course in my research. These two programs became the sites of the pilot study that I conducted in 2016-2017. The addition of Programs 3 and 4 was the result of other connections and relationships within this network. I am in regular conversation with members of this community, including directors of the programs I am studying, on questions of practice, professional learning, and research. This community has been a valuable resource through the progression of this study as different individuals have provided feedback on research instruments, theoretical frameworks, and analysis. Because of these connections, I was able to attend two days of Program 2, and I met some participants at that time. I have also worked with a few of the participants through other professional learning opportunities. Although my ongoing involvement in this community and these connections have the potential to introduce bias into this research, these connections have also enabled this

work to happen and will facilitate the dissemination of the results back to those who can most benefit from it.

I also approach this work from an interdisciplinary perspective, positioned between the fields of religious studies and education. I believe that the success of any work intended to increase understanding of religion in schools requires the contributions of both of these fields, which are often very disconnected from one another. This study is primarily conducted from an education research standpoint, but I also hope that it can be valuable from a religious studies perspective.

Research Setting

This research was conducted with participants of four professional development courses that took place in the summer of 2017. All four courses focused on developing religious literacy for K-12 teachers. Although these courses varied in duration, location, and participants, the content and pedagogical approaches were fairly similar across all four programs. They all employed a lived religions approach to the study of religion and emphasized a First Amendment framework for approaching religion in schools. All of the programs brought in guest speakers that included scholars of religion, religious practitioners and leaders, and other individuals working in settings with a religious mission or focus. Participants in all four programs visited several different religious communities, where they had opportunities to speak with members and leaders of those communities and, in some cases, observe or participate in religious services or rituals. This experiential component enhanced the lived religions approach employed by all of the courses. By enabling the participants to "encounter and engage religious practice and imagination with the circumstances of other people's lives and within the contexts of

[their] own" (Orsi, 2003, p. 174). Dewey (1938) believed that experience was essential to learning because experiences allow learners to continually construct meaning within contexts, rather than passively receiving static knowledge. The inclusion of experiential learning in courses about religion, whether conceptualized as Kolb's (1984) cycle of doing, reflecting, judging, learning and acting or in respect to mind-body relations and embodied pedagogies (Estey, 2014; Long, 2018), reflects the multiple modes through which knowledge about religion is constructed, by religious practitioners and religious scholars.

Table 3.1

Characteristics of programs included in the study

	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4
Geographic Location	Northeast	Mid-Atlantic	Midwest	Midwest
Sessions prior to 2017	3	1	0	0
Sponsoring organization	Non-profit	Public school district	Public school district	Public school district
Admission Process	Application essay	Open registration through the district	Open registration through the district	Open registration through the district
Duration	3 weeks	1 week	1 week	1 week
Participants	Public & private school teachers, K-12	Public school & private school teachers, PreK-12	Public School Teachers, 9-12	Public school teachers, PreK-12
2017 participants	25	40	42	33

At the time of the study, these were the only programs of this nature available to K-12 educators. The pilot study conducted in the fall of 2016 and spring of 2017 included

Programs 1 and 2. During the preparation to distribute the first survey in this study, the

opportunity arose to include Programs 3 and 4, which were first offered in summer 2017.

Table 3.1 summarizes the programs, and the following section describes the specific

contexts and features of each program.

Program 1

Program 1 was the most established of all of the programs; the 2017 session of

Program 1 was the fourth time the course was offered. Participants in prior sessions

(2012, 2014, and 2016) were included in the pilot study. The participants were selected

from a nationwide applicant pool. The application process was open to public and private

school teachers, who submitted a short essay about their interest and the relevance of the

course to their work. Twenty-five teachers were selected to attend the three-week course

in 2017. This admissions process means that the participants in this program were

specifically seeking out this type of professional development and were committed to

spending three weeks away from home in order to participate. The grant funding for the

program helped provide a stipend for participants to help cover the cost of travel and

lodging for the duration.

The program took place on a university campus in a large, northeastern city and at

religious sites throughout the city. Participants were provided with a comprehensive

syllabus ahead of the program, which includes a substantial amount of reading. Days

were typically split between classroom time, with guest lectures and discussion, and site

visits to a wide range of religious communities. The participants also collaborated on

curriculum development projects throughout the course. The three-week duration allowed

the curriculum to include discussion of religious studies theory, pedagogy, and American religious history in more depth than was possible in the shorter programs.

Programs 2, 3, and 4

These three programs were very similar in structure, participants, and context. The directors of these programs, all high school social studies and history teachers, worked together to develop the programs and regularly collaborate on other projects related to teaching about religion. Each program was offered through the professional development systems of the public school districts in which these teachers worked, which enabled participants to automatically receive approved professional development credit hours as required by their districts. Any teacher or staff member could register for and participate in the programs.

Program 2 took place in a very large school district (over 150,000 students) in a diverse county near a major metropolitan area in the mid-Atlantic region. The course was first offered in the summer of 2016, and a variation was offered in the evening during the 2016-2017 academic school year. Because the course had been offered twice before the summer of 2017, the participants may have known something about the course before deciding to attend. About 13% of the participants came from neighboring school districts or private schools.

The five-day course moved between different locations each day. These locations included the houses of worship of several different religious communities, non-profit organizations, and other community spaces. Each day typically included visits to at least two different sites, where participants heard from religious leaders and practitioners, academics, and other people who worked in fields related to religion. Because the

program moved between the different sites, there was no classroom-based instruction. Participants were not required to complete any readings ahead of the program.

Programs 3 and 4 were partially run conjointly, which allowed them to share some resources such as guest speakers, who either came from out of town or spoke to the groups via videoconference. Program 3 took place in a suburban school district in the Midwest, near a major metropolitan area. This large district (over 10,000 students) is a high-school-only district, and therefore the participants in this program were all high school teachers or in non-teaching roles, such as school social workers. Program 4 was based in a large suburban school district (over 10,000 students) in the Midwest, within 50 miles of the Program 3 district. The participants in this program included teachers from early childhood through high school and also included school staff in non-teaching roles. Both of these programs were able to use schools in the districts for classroom space on some of the days and at various sites on other days. Program 3 was four and a half days long, and Program 4 was five days long with an optional sixth day. These programs both provided participants with some readings ahead of time. Both programs were in their inaugural year at the time of this study.

Participants

A total of 145 educators participated in these programs, and 122 consented to participate in the first survey, 84.1% of the total participants. This section discusses the characteristics of the overall sample, although the data are also broken down by program in some tables. This data comes from Survey 1, which had the highest response rate and, therefore, is most descriptive of the sample. This section describes three areas of the participants' characteristics: (1) demographics, (2) subjects and grades taught, and (3)

religious identity. A table of individual survey respondent characteristics can be found in Appendix A.

Although the participants in this study are not a statistically representative sample of U.S. teachers overall, they do align with the several key characteristics of the national teaching force. Nationally, 76.6% of teachers are female and 23.4% are male (Taie & Goldring, 2017); this sample was 77% female and 22% male (Table 3.2). Nationally, the average number of years at one's current school is 8.2 and the average total number of years teaching is 13.7 (Taie & Goldring, 2017); in this sample, the average number of years at one's current school was 9.4 and the average total number of years teaching was 13.6 (Table 3.3). This study did not ask participants to provide their racial or ethnic identity.

Table 3.2

Gender Identity (Survey 1, N=122)

	Program 1		Program 2		Program 3		Program 4		All Participants	
Gender	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	5	31%	5	16%	14	34%	3	9%	27	22%
Female	10	63%	27	84%	27	66%	29	91%	93	77%
Other	1	6%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%
Total	16	100%	32	100%	41	100%	33	100%	121	100%

Table 3.3

Years Teaching (Survey 1)

	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4	All Participants
Mean Years at Current School	7.7	6.5	12.0	10.1	9.4
Mean Total Years Teaching	10.9	10.94	15.40	15.7	13.6

The participants in this study had a higher than average level of education, with 89% of participants holding a master's degree (Table 3.4), compared to 47.3% nationally (Taie & Goldring, 2017). The survey also asked about sources of prior education about religion. Almost half of the participants, 48.4%, said that they had taken a religion course during their undergraduate education, and 15.6% said that they had taken graduate level religion courses. Although many religiously affiliated colleges and universities require students to take religion or theology courses, the limited research on pre-service teachers' religious literacy found that students at religiously affiliated colleges and universities did not score any better than peers at a secular university on a test of religious knowledge (M. J. Marks et al., 2014).

Table 3.4

Level of Education (Survey 1, N=122)

Level of Education	Program 1		Program 2		Program 3		Program 4		All Participants	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Bachelor's degree	2	13%	3	9%	0	0%	0	0%	5	4%
Master's degree in progress	0	0%	4	13%	1	2%	0	0%	5	4%
Master's degree	13	81%	25	76%	40	95%	32	100%	110	90%
Doctorate or Professional Degree in progress	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%	1	1%
Doctorate or Professional Degree	1	6%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%
	16	100%	32	100%	42	100%	32	100%	122	100%

With the exception of Program 1, the majority of the participants worked in public schools. Half of the Program 1 participants taught at private schools, both secular and religious, and the other half taught at public schools. Program 2 included one respondent who taught at an Episcopal school. The remaining participants in Program 2 and all of the participants in Programs 3 and 4 worked at public schools. Overall, 93% of the participants worked at public schools, and 7% worked at private schools.[1] The average size of these schools was 1,487 students, with a range of 100 to 4,500 (Figure 3.2). Most participants described their schools as suburban (86.3%), but 11.1% described their school as urban, and 2.6% described their school as rural. Almost half of participants (47.0%) said that their school received Title I funds, while 33.3% said their school did not receive Title I funds, and 19.7% said they did not know if their school received funds.
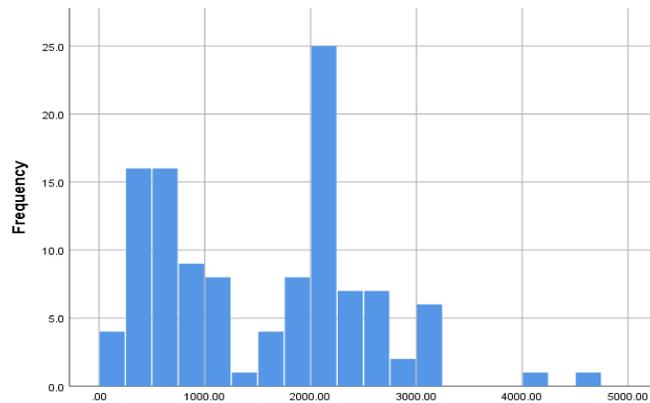
Figure 3.2. Approximate number of students in participants' schools

The participants as a group taught at all grade levels. Just under two-thirds of the participants taught at the high school level (Figure 3.3), and the remaining third taught younger grades or worked across multiple grade levels in other roles (Table 3.5). The percentage of high school teachers is skewed in part because all 42 of the teachers in Program 3 worked in high school due to the composition of the district. The number of early childhood and kindergarten teachers

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[1] The analysis and discussion of the findings, however, will focus on the implications for teacher in public schools.

was unexpected. The survey question on which participants selected the grades that they taught did not include an option for early childhood, but those teachers wrote it in the "other" category. These
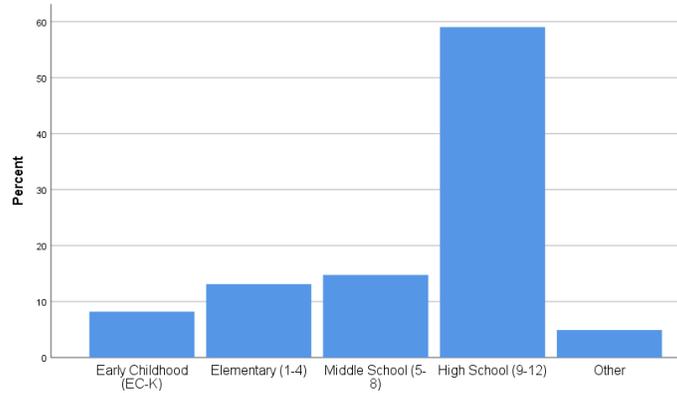
Figure 3.3. Distribution of grade levels taught by participants

individuals were reclassified from "other" to Early Childhood in the process of consolidating responses for individual grades to the groups to grade levels shown in Table 5. The remaining six individuals (4.9%) worked in roles that crossed grade levels or did not indicate a grade level when identifying their position. Surprisingly, the early childhood and elementary teachers in Program 4 outnumbered the middle and high school teachers. Program 2 had a much higher percentage of middle school teachers than the other programs.

Table 3.5

Grade Levels Taught

	Program 1		Program 2		Program 3		Program 4		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Early Childhood	0	0%	2	6.3%	0	0%	8	25.0%	10	8.2%
Elementary (1-4)	1	6.3%	4	12.5%	0	0%	11	34.4%	16	13.1%
Middle School (5-8)	3	18.8%	13	40.6%	0	0%	2	6.3%	18	14.0%
High School (9-12)	12	75.0%	11	34.4%	42	100%	7	21.9%	72	59.0%
Other	0	0%	2[a]	6.3%	0	0%	4[b]	12.5%	6	4.9%
Total	16	100%	32	100%	42	100%	32	100%	122	100%

[a] Special education specialists
[b] Speech-language pathologist, support staff, counselor, adaptive technology specialist

The participants in this study included teachers and educators in all subject areas (Table 3.6). One third (33%) of the participants taught history or social studies, and just under one third (31%) taught literature and English language arts. Given that religion is most frequently found in the curriculum in History, Social Studies, and English classes, it is not surprising that these subjects would be highly represented among the participants in this professional development. The extent of the representation of such a wide range of other subjects, however, was less expected. Although math teachers are perhaps the least likely to encounter religion in their curriculum, 20% of the participants indicated that they taught math. The participants in the two core content areas, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and the humanities, were aggregated. Table 3.7 shows the percentage of participants in each program and overall who taught a subject in either of these categories. Humanities teachers (anyone who selected at least one of the following subjects: Literature & English Language Arts, History & Social Studies, or Religion & Ethics) make up 55.7% of the participants. STEM teachers (includes anyone who selected at least one of math, science, or technology) represent 28.7% of the participants.

Although the substantial representation of non-humanities teachers can be partially attributed to the inclusion of early-childhood and elementary teachers, who are often generalists and teach both STEM and humanities, when these teachers are removed from the analysis there is still a meaningful representation of these subjects. Ten percent of the middle and high school teachers indicated that they taught science, and 14.4% indicated that they taught math.

Table 3.6

Subjects Taught

Subjects Taught	Program 1		Program 2		Program 3		Program 4		All Participants	
	N	% of Cases	N	% of cases	N	% of cases	N	% of cases	N	% of cases
Literature & English Language Arts	6	38%	8	25%	12	29%	12	37.5 %	38	31%
ESL	2	13%	3	9%	4	10%	7	22%	16	13%
Mathematics	2	13%	6	19%	7	17%	10	32%	25	20%
Science	0	0%	6	19%	3	7%	10	32%	19	16%
Social Studies & History	10	63%	9	28%	11	26%	10	32%	40	33%
Religion and/or Ethics	5	31%	1	3%	2	5%	0	0%	8	7%
Foreign Languages	1	6%	8	25%	3	7%	0	0%	12	10%
Technology	0	0%	1	3%	1	2%	2	6%	4	3%
Arts	1	6%	4	13%	0	0%	2	6%	7	6%
Special Education	1	6%	4	13%	4	10%	4	13%	13	11%
Physical & Health Education	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	1	1%
Other[a]	3	19%	1	3%	7	17%	4	12%	15	12%
I am not in a teaching role at my school[b]	0	0%	3	9%	2	5%	6	18%	11[c]	9%
Total	16		32		42		32		122	

[a] Responses include: Assistive Technology Specialist, Support/Office Staff (2), Counselor (4), Therapist (2), and Speech Language Pathologist

[b] Responses include: Business, AVID, Ethnic Studies, International Baccalaureate, Journalism, Law, Sociology, Psychology, Speech-Language Pathology (3), and Social Work (2)

[c] This number does not match the number of participants identified in Table 5 in the "Other" category for grade levels because some of the individuals in non-teaching roles indicated that they worked with students in a specific grade range.

Table 3.7

Humanities and STEM teachers

Subjects Taught	Program 1		Program 2		Program 3		Program 4		All Participants	
	N	% of Cases	N	% of cases	N	% of cases	N	% of cases	N	% of cases
Humanities	16	100%	15	46.9%	22	52.4%	15	46.9%	68	55.7%
STEM	2	12.5%	10	31.%	11	26.2%	12	37.5%	35	28.7%
Total	16		32		42		32		122	

A very small portion (7%) of the respondents indicated that they taught religion or ethics. However, just over half of these respondents were in Program 1, which included religiously affiliated private schools. However, 40% of the participants said that they had taught at least one lesson that was directly about religion during the previous school year, and 48.7% said that they had incorporated discussion of religion into lessons that were not directly about religion. The majority of the respondents who said that they had directly or indirectly talked about religion in their classes in the past year taught humanities subjects, but a small portion of the STEM teachers had also included religion in their lessons (10% directly and 15% indirectly).

The final participant characteristic is religious identity. Survey 1 asked about religious affiliation, frequency of religious attendance, and importance of religion in participants' lives. The religious affiliation question was open-ended: "Please briefly describe your current religious identity, if any" (Survey 1, question 8; see Appendix A). This question was asked as an open-ended question due to the complexity of religious identity and the challenges of achieving reliable survey data around religious identity and practice (Brenner, 2014). It is important to note that a multiple-choice list of religious

affiliations does not necessarily capture the nuances of religious identity. The open-ended nature of this question resulted in participants providing additional information about their religious heritage as well as their present religious identity.

Table 3.8

Participant Religious Identity

	N	%
None	7	5.5
Atheist	5	3.9
Agnostic	8	6.3
Spiritual	4	3.1
Muslim	1	.8
Jewish	6	4.7
Christian (Not Specified)	18	14.1
Christian Background - Not Practicing	6	4.7
Catholic	34	26.6
Catholic Background - Not Practicing	7	5.5
Protestant - Mainline	8	6.3
Protestant - Evangelical	19	14.8
Other Christian[a]	3	2.3
Missing	2	1.6
Total	128	100.0

[a] Includes Greek Orthodox and Mormon

The open-ended responses were initially coded into 22 categories, maintaining distinctions of specific Protestant denominations. These categories were ultimately simplified into 13 categories (Table 3.8), only separating Protestant respondents into Mainline and Evangelical categories, using the denominational classifications from the Pew American Religious Landscape study (Pew Research Center, 2015). The total number of responses is greater than the number of survey respondents (122) because a small number of people indicated multiple religious identities,

such as a participant who described their religious identity as "Agnostic Quaker Unitarian (culturally Jewish)." This level of coding still included separate categories for individuals who indicated that they had been raised in a particular Christian tradition but were not currently practicing, which were about 10 percent of the responses. Because an individual's religious background may play a role in their experience of learning about

religion, it is interesting to note the number of participants who chose to identify in this way. The question asked about "*current* religious identity, if any," but 10% of the respondents provided responses that referred to past religious identities or affiliations, which suggests that these identities were still significant to participants in some way.

Table 3.9

Participant's Religious Identities Compared to U.S. Population

	Study Participants		Religious Landscape Study (Pew Research Center, 2015)	
	N	%	General Population[a]	Post-Graduate Education[a]
Unaffiliated (Religious "nones")	37	28.9	22.9	24
Christian - Catholic	34	26.6	20.8	20
Christian - Protestant	27	35.2	46.6[b]	39[b]
Christian - Other	3	2.3	2.1[c]	3[c]
Jewish	7	4.7	2.0	5
Muslim	1	0.8	0.9	1
Missing/Refuses	2	1.6	0.4	0.4
Total	128	100.0	100	100

[a] Does not add to 100 because some religious groups are not included, N = 35,0721
[b] Includes: Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Historically Black Protestant
[c] Includes: Mormon and Orthodox Christian

In order to compare this sample with the general U.S. population, the categories were collapsed further to match the top level categories from the Pew Religious Landscape survey (2015). For this comparison, the categories of None, Atheist, Agnostic, Spiritual, and Not Practicing were all classified as "Unaffiliated," a complex category often referred to as the "religious nones." The Mainline, Evangelical, and Christian-Not Specified groups were classified as Christian – Protestant. When comparing the participants in this study to the national sample from the Pew Religious Landscape study, the general distribution is relatively similar (Table 3.9). Because over 90% of the participants in this study held a post-graduate degree, this group can also be compared to the subset of the national sample with a post-graduate degree (approximately 17% of the

sample). The distribution of religious affiliation among the study participants is even closer when closer when compared to the national sample of people with a post-graduate degree.

Religious affiliation is only one measure of religious identity, and, as the number of Americans who claim no religious affiliation increases, it is important to also consider measures of other aspects of religious identity, such as behaviors. Table 3.10 shows the responses to the question "Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?" in comparison to the responses on the national survey. The participants in this study appear to attend religious services slightly less frequently than the national sample, even when compared to those with a post-graduate degree. Forty-five percent of the participants in this study attend religious services at least once or twice a month, compared to 51% of the national sample. The small sample size in this study and factors such as geographic location, age, and gender could also contribute to the variations from the national sample.

Table 3.10

Frequency of Attendance at Religious Services

| | Study Participants | | Religious Landscape Study (Pew Research Center, 2015) | |
	N	%	General Population[a] %	Post-Graduate Education[b] %
More than once a week	7	5.7	14.3	12.9
Once a week	27	22.1	23.2	24.5
Once or twice a month	21	17.2	13.6	13.9
A few times a year	27	22.1	18.3	18.1
Seldom	27	22.1	17.1	16.9
Never	13	10.7	12.8	13.3
Missing/Refused	0	0	0.6	0.5
Total	122	100	100	100

[a] N=35,071
[b] N=5,897

Participants were also asked how important religion was in their lives (Table 3.11). Similar to the previous item, the participants in this study rated religion slightly less important in their lives than the national sample. The responses on both items were more concentrated in the middle of the scale. In this study, 47.5% of respondents said that religion was either "somewhat important" or "not too important," while on 34.5% of the national sample selected these responses. However, fewer respondents said that religion was "not at all important," particularly compared to the subset of national respondents with a post-graduate degree.

Table 3.11

Importance of Religion

| | Study Participants | | Religious Landscape Study (Pew Research Center, 2015) | |
	N	%	General Population[a] %	Post-Graduate Education[b] %
Very Important	52	42.6	53.4	46.7
Somewhat important	31	25.4	23.7	23.2
Not too important	27	22.1	10.8	13.8
Not at all important	12	9.8	11.3	15.8
Missing/Refused	0	0	0.8	0.8
Total	122	100	100	100

[a] N=35,071
[b] N=5,897

These two items are only two of many possible ways of measuring religious identity or religiosity, notoriously challenging constructs in survey research (Brenner, 2014, 2017; Jong, Zahl, & Sharp, 2017; Putnam & Campbell, 2010). Putnam and Campbell (2010) used six items, including both these, to construct a "religiosity index" in the analysis of their Faith Matters survey, but they also acknowledge that this measurement is "inevitably fraught with ambiguity and controversy" (p. 19). Nevertheless, these items provide some insight into the religious affiliations and identities

of the participants in this study and demonstrate that they do not vary substantially from the general population of the United States.

Like most education research, the participants in this study are not a statistically representative sample of U.S. teachers. However, on some fundamental measures of religious identity and teaching experience, they align well with data from large-scale national studies (Pew Research Center, 2015; Taie & Goldring, 2017).

Data Sources and Collection

The data for this study came from two sources: surveys and interviews. This section describes the development of the survey instruments and interview protocol and the process of data collection.

Surveys

The primary data source for this study was a series of three surveys administered before and after the professional development courses. Participants received surveys at three time-points—before the program (June 2017), shortly after completing the program (July & August 2017), and after the start of the academic year (November 2017). Survey 1 asked about participants' interest in and expectations from the program, their prior learning about religion, and established baseline responses on items about their comfort with religion in schools and their conceptualization of religion. Survey 2, immediately following the programs, measured changes in comfort with religion in schools and conceptualizations of religion and also captured information about the immediate reactions to experiences in the program. Survey 3 was administered in November 2017, after participants had returned to their classrooms and had time to apply their learning to their teaching practice and curriculum. This survey again asked about comfort and

conceptualization of religion as well as changes to teaching practices and curricula. Table 3.12 compares the sections present in each of the surveys.

Survey Instrument Development

The survey instruments were developed over the course of two pilot studies. Cognitive interviewing (Brenner, 2015) was employed to test and develop some of the survey items. The first pilot was conducted in Fall 2016 with participants from past cohorts of Programs 1 and 2, and the survey asked about experiences and attitudes both before and after completing the program (n=21). This version had many limitations, the most significant being the potential for bias or misreporting of events or attitudes that had occurred up to four years before to the administration of this survey (Schwarz & Oyserman, 2001). The survey was revised for a second pilot as a pre-program survey and was administered before the Spring 2017 semester session of Program 2 (n=15). The two pilot versions of the survey were used to revise Survey 1 and Survey 2 ahead of the summer 2017 courses. Conversations with other researchers familiar with the courses also provided valuable feedback. The post-program surveys (Surveys 2 and 3) were also revised following the initial pilot survey and in response to the data gathered from Survey 1. A substantial number of questions from the pre-survey were repeated in the post-surveys to assess changes in attitude and behaviors in response to the workshops (Bohner & Dickel, 2011). The final versions of the surveys are found in Appendix B.

Table 3.12

Comparison of Item Categories Across Survey Waves

Survey Section	Survey 1 June 2017	Survey 2 August 2017	Survey 3 November 2017
Individual Teacher Background	X	Select items	Select items
School Context Information	X	Select items	Select items
Interest in Program & Content	X	Select items	
Prior Education about Religion & Teaching about Religion	X		
Teaching about religion in the most recent school year	X		X
Confidence in Dealing with Religion in School	X	X	X
Conceptualization of Religion	X	X	X
Responses to Specific Scenarios	X		Select items
Key Learning and Importance of Areas of Content		X	Select items
Program Evaluation Questions		X	
Changes to Teaching & Practice			X

Participants in Programs 1, 2, and 4 received email invitations to participate in the study from the program directors one to two weeks ahead of the programs and then received email reminders a few days before they began the courses. The online surveys closed on the first day of each program. The director of Program 3 gave participants time on the first and last days of the course to complete the first two surveys, which accounts for the very high response rate for this program. All other participants received invitations for the second survey in the weeks immediately following the completion of the program. The second survey remained active until late August 2017. Invitations for Survey 3 were sent in late October, and the survey remained active until mid-December 2017. The third survey also included an option to volunteer to participate in interviews.

The responses rates on the surveys decreased with each administration (Table 3.13). A total of 145 educators participated in the courses. Survey 1 had the highest response rate (84.1%), with 122 responses. Survey 2 had 86 responses, a response rate of 59.3%. Survey 3 was sent several months after the courses and received 36 responses, a rate of 28.0%.

Table 3.13

Survey Response Rates

Survey Wave	Program 1 Attendees = 25		Program 2 Attendees = 40		Program 3 Attendees = 42		Program 4 Attendees = 33		Total Attendees = 145	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Survey 1	16	64.0	32	80.0	42	100.0	32	97.0	122	84.1
Survey 2	5	20.0	15	37.5	41	97.6	25	76.0	86	59.3
Survey 3	1	4.0	9	22.5	13	31.0	11	33.3	34	28.0

In order to facilitate matching cases across surveys, participants created a unique identifier based on their birth month and the final four digits of their phone number and provided this number on each of the surveys that they responded to. Using these identification numbers, and confirming by comparing other provided demographic information, 70 respondents were identified to have responded to Survey 1 and Survey 2, and, of those, 24 responded to all three surveys. These matched pairs were used in some of the quantitative analysis to compare responses between Survey 1 and Survey 2. Because the response rate for Survey 3 was so much lower than the other two surveys, that quantitative data was not included in the analysis as the diminished number of matched pairs limited the validity of any statistical analysis. However, the qualitative responses from Survey 3 were included in the analysis.

Table 3.14

Data Collection Timeline

Study Phase	Programs included	Survey 1 (pre-survey)	Survey 2 and 3 (Post-Surveys)	Interviews
Pilot 1	Program 1 Program 2	n/a	November 2016	February 2017
Pilot 2	Program 2	February 2017	June 2017	n/a
Main Data Collection	Program 1 Program 2 Program 3 Program 4	June 2017	Survey 2: August 2017 Survey 3: November 2017	Summer 2018

Interviews

Pilot interviews with participants from Program 1 and Program 2 were conducted in January and February of 2017. Although some interview questions were refined slightly over the course of the pilot interviews, the overall structure of the interview protocol was not altered. The interviews addressed the participants' individual teaching contexts, their experiences in the program they attended, and how they changed, or intend to change, elements of their teaching in response to what they learned during the courses. Interviews with participants from the summer 2017 professional development courses were conducted in May, June, and July 2018.

Seven interviews were conducted in June and July 2018. Individuals who provided contact information following Survey 3 were sent an invitation to participants, and an additional invitation was sent by the program directors. Interviews were conducted via phone, videoconference, and in person. Table 3.14 details the data collection timeline. The six interviews conducted during the pilot study were also

included in the analysis for this study. The inclusion of these interviews increased the overall total and provided multiple perspectives for Program 1 and Program 2. All of the interviews took place between six months and four years after the participants took the courses. The 2018 interviews took place approximately one year after the courses. Although the extended time between the courses and the interviews introduced some bias into the participants' responses, this extended time enabled interviewees to reflect on the application of their learning in their professional settings. Following the summer courses, the participants returned to their schools and had the chance to integrate their new knowledge and understanding of religious diversity into their work. Interviews immediately following the courses may have gleaned a more detailed account of the content learned, but these interviews were able to better capture the enduring understandings that participants took back to their schools. Table 3.15 shows the characteristics of the interview participants.

Interview Protocol

The protocol for the semi-structured interviews was also tested during the initial pilot. Six interviews were conducted with participants from Programs 1 and 2 in February 2017. The protocol was slightly revised following the pilot interviews. The structure of the protocol (see Appendix C) mirrors the structure of the three surveys; the first part asks about motivations for attending and prior learning experiences about religion, the second about experiences during the program, and the third about the impact of the program on their professional practice over the past year. The goal of the interviews was to create a more detailed picture of the experiences and understand more about individual contexts. Based on the model of teacher learning discussed in Chapter Two (Opfer &

Pedder, 2011), the protocol included questions on the learning activities, the school context, and the individual teacher. The protocol provided a guide and basic structure for the interviews but did not constrain the conversations. In the pilot interviews, topics naturally came up without prompting and in an order different from the protocol.

Table 3.15

Interview Participant Characteristics

Name	Program	School Type	Content Area and Role	Grades	Additional Information
Alex	2**	Public	Social Studies Teacher	Middle School	
Bethany	3	Public	School Counselor	High School	
Daniel	1**	Public	History Teacher	High School	
Fiona	1*	Public	School Counselor	Elementary	Previously taught high school history
Grace	4	Public	Teacher	3rd Grade	
Katherine	1*	Public	Humanities Teacher	High School	
Louis	1*	Public	History Teacher	High School	
Mary	3	Public	ESL & Personal Finance Teacher	High School	
Olivia	1	Public	History	Middle School	
Paula	1*	Public	Language Arts Teacher	Grades 3-5	
Sarah	2	Public	English Teacher	High School	
Timothy	2	Public	School Counselor	High School	Previously taught middle school social studies
Vera	4	Public	Certified School Nurse	All grades	

*pilot study, 2012 cohort
**pilot study, 2016 cohort

<center>**Analysis**</center>

The mixed methods design of this study enabled the different data sources to offset the strengths and weaknesses of each (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). The quantitative survey data provided a broad profile of the participants and was able to capture a range of motivations and experiences. The qualitative data from both the surveys and the interviews provided insight into individual experiences and nuances of particular contexts and situations. In a field that presently suffers from a lack of empirical data, this study offers important new insights about professional development about religion and teachers' understandings of religion in the schools.

Quantitative Analysis

The surveys include both closed- and open-ended questions and, therefore, required both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative survey data were analyzed with descriptive statistics. The goals of this analysis were to establish an overview of the participants' characteristics, identify common motivations, perspectives, and attitudes among participants, and compare responses from Survey 1 and Survey 2 to identify possible impacts of the courses.

The participants' characteristics, discussed earlier in this chapter, were primarily from Survey 1, which had the most demographic questions and the highest response rate. These characteristics were compared with Survey 2 to check for reliability within the data and to confirm the matched pairs identified using the ID numbers created by the participants. Some data were compared to national studies (Pew Research Center, 2015; Taie & Goldring, 2017) with comparable or identical questions in order ascertain the degree to which the participants in this study were similar to the general population. The

participants in this study were not a statistically representative sample, but these comparisons showed many similarities to the general population.

The second goal was to identify common motivations, perspectives, and attitudes among the participants. Multiple choice, multiple response, and Likert-type questions addressed each of the research questions. The frequencies and means of these items were analyzed. These questions were primarily analyzed at the level of the whole sample.

The questions that were repeated on Survey 1 and Survey 2 were analyzed to look for either continuity or change. Some of these questions were included to assess reliability across the three survey administrations, such as questions about subjects and grades taught. Other questions were designed to measure changes in attitudes or perspectives following participation in the programs. Of particular interest were two items designed to address participants' degree of confidence regarding particular situations related to religion in the schools and to measure participants' conceptualization of religion. These analyses were conducted using matched-pairs t-tests with the data from Surveys 1 and 2. Seventy participants completed both surveys, and, therefore, it was possible to compare their responses using descriptive statistics and t-tests to compare means on certain items.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data were approached using the "flexible coding" strategy described by Deterding and Waters (2018). This strategy draws on the tradition of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) while acknowledging the realities of qualitative research that more often lead to *abductive* reasoning (Timmermans & Tavory,

2012) rather than the pure *inductive* reasoning advocated by grounded theory. Timmermans and Tavory (2012) describe abductive reasoning as

> The form of reasoning through which we perceive the phenomenon as related to other observations either in the sense that there is a cause and effect hidden from view, in the sense that the phenomenon is seen as similar to other phenomena already experienced and explained in other situations, or in the sense of creating new general descriptions. (p. 171)

In other words, this approach recognizes that researchers bring prior literature, theories, and hypotheses to the process of qualitative analysis, and data are examined through those lenses, but novel or surprising data lead to the development of new theories or concepts. Deterding and Waters (2018) combine this pragmatic approach to qualitative analysis with the functionality of qualitative data analysis (QDA) software to recommend a three-stage process for analyzing semi-structured interviews, which they have titled "flexible coding." Although the method was described and recommended in the context of a relatively large set of interviews (N>30) and this study only analyzes 13 interviews, it was found to be a logical way to approach the analysis process and incorporate the qualitative responses from the three surveys alongside the interview transcripts. After the interviews were transcribed, the transcripts were imported into NVivo for analysis. Qualitative responses from the surveys were also imported, along with associated demographic data.

The first stage of the flexible coding method (Deterding & Waters, 2018) draws on the power of QDA software. Rather than beginning with line-by-line coding as is typical with grounded theory research, *index codes* were applied to large chunks of texts,

representing that broad topics of interest within the research. These codes were developed from the research questions as well as the structures of the interviews and surveys. The matrix coding query feature of Nvivo was used to assess the coverage of the index coding. The application of the index coded allowed for analysis of only the relevant material for a particular question in the next stages of analysis.

The second stage of the flexible coding process involved applying analytic codes (Deterding & Waters, 2018). The first research question addressed teachers' motivations for participating. Analytic codes were generated through the reading of the material related to motivation, as identified from the index codes. This question was the most discrete of the three main questions. The other research questions, about the experiences during the courses and the impacts of the courses did not break down as neatly. There was considerable overlap between the material relevant to each of these questions, and a broader set of analytic codes emerged applying to both research questions. These codes were refined through several iterations of coding. For example, "confidence" and "comfort" were coded separately, but there were some overlaps in the content and contexts in which these two ideas were mentioned. All of the material coded at either "confidence" or "comfort" was then re-coded to identify contexts and the direction of changes in either of these characteristics.

Following the generation and application of analytic codes, the final stage in flexible coding examines "how deeply the story is grounded in the entire body of text" (Deterding & Waters, 2018, p. 24). Further analysis and queries of the data ultimately resulted in the four main themes discussed in the next chapter: motivations, experiences, conceptions of religion, and impacts. Although it was initially challenging to apply codes

based directly on the research questions, the process of flexible coding ended up resulting in themes that closely align with the original research questions.

Validity Considerations

In qualitative research, checks for validity seek to determine the degree to which the study "accurately reflect[s] the phenomenon studied" (Richards & Morse, 2002, p. 168). In this study, several checks for validity were considered throughout. First, the mixed methods research design and the choice of data sources allowed for triangulation of the findings. The quantitative survey questions were supplemented by opportunities for participants to provide detailed about their responses through qualitative responses, and the interviews also covered the same topics addressed across the three surveys. Multiple reviews of interview transcripts and qualitative survey responses, along with analytic memos throughout the data collection, transcription, and analysis, allowed me to ensure descriptive validity.

Issues regarding the reliability and validity of measures regarding religious identity have already been discussed above. In short, although questions related to religious identity often ask about behaviors as a proxy for understanding identity, "respondents may not be telling us about their actual behaviors with veracity and validity, but they are telling us about how they see themselves" (Brenner, 2017, p. 43). The limitations of measuring religious identity and issues of social desirability bias in questions about perceptions of other religious groups, self-reported behaviors, and any other potentially sensitive topics cannot be entirely eliminated in research in this field. Rather, they must be taken into account in the analysis and discussion of items related to any of these topics.

Finally, the goal of this study was not to be able to generalize to all professional development about religious diversity or all teachers' experiences of learning about religion. The programs included in this study were the only ones of this kind at the time of the study, and there are currently few formal avenues for teachers to learning about religion. The findings of the case studies presented through this research, however, may be "cautiously generalizable to local populations or communities that share similar situations, challenges, and resources" (Compton-Lilly, 2013, p. 61), providing that the particularities of each context are taken into account. By focusing the analysis on the participants as a whole group, rather than looking at the differences between the courses, the findings and discussion are able to focus on broad themes regarding professional development about religion. Analysis at the level of each course would lead to comparisons between the courses, which are not as valuable at this stage of research in the field. Given the limited number of professional development opportunities of this type, and the small community of educators and researcher in this field, it is likely that programs developed in the future will draw on the successes and weaknesses of the programs in this study, and these findings may be a valuable part of those considerations. Further, although the findings in this study do not constitute formal generalizations, the fact "that knowledge cannot be formally generalized does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 227). This study makes a meaningful contribution to the limited body of empirical research on teacher learning about religion.

Limitations

Although this study points to valuable insights regarding educators' participation in professional development courses about religious diversity, some limitations should also be noted. First, this study was conducted with participants who voluntarily chose to partake in professional development courses about religious diversity and, therefore, had some degree of preexisting interest or other motivation for participating. Participation in each stage of this research was also voluntary. This voluntary nature of participation, in both the courses and in the research, presents a related set of limitations. Regarding the participation in the courses, the educators in this study were likely pre-disposed to be open to learning about religion and visiting different religious sites. Although the findings discussed in the next chapter reveal some examples of participants' discomfort with these experiences, the majority of the participants expressed a positive outlook on the learning experiences. Participants' existing interest in learning about religion makes it harder to consider how individuals who have less interest in religion would react to the experiences. If districts or organizations seek to expand the opportunities for professional learning about religious diversity, they will need to take into account how to attract educators without a preexisting interest or even those who have an aversion to learning about religion. The findings in this study on participants' motivations do not speak to those populations.

The voluntary participation in the surveys and interviews may have resulted in respondents who had a more positive experience self-selecting to participate and those with less positive, or even negative, experiences declining to participate. Although some attrition is expected on longitudinal surveys, there is no way to determine how much of

the attrition in this study can be attributed to participants with negative experiences opting out of the later surveys. This limitation is even more visible in the interviews. The interviewees in this study all expressed very positive views on the courses. Without developing a stronger relationship with participants during the courses, it would be challenging to get participants with negative experiences to volunteer to participate in interviews. These limitations self-selection may be reduced as this type of professional development expands, and there is a simply a larger population of potential participants.

A second limitation is the restricted geographic location of the majority of the participants. Although Program 1 drew participants from across the country, the other three programs were limited to fairly large, suburban school districts in the mid-Atlantic and Midwest. As a result, over 85% of the participants were from areas that are relatively politically liberal, religiously diverse, and near major metropolitan areas. Although 68% of the participants reported the religion was either somewhat or very important in their lives, this and other measures relating to individuals' perspectives about religion vary by region as well as other demographic characteristics (Pew Research Center, 2015). The participants in this study reflect several demographic characteristics of U.S. teachers overall as well as religious affiliation demographics, but their geographic settings separate them from the general population of educators. This study did not attempt to generate a representative sample, but it would be helpful to be able to compare the experiences of educators in other geographic settings. The specific context of these participants likely has a substantial impact on their perspectives and experiences. Again, as this type of professional development is expanded, further research will be able to include participants from a wider range of contexts.

A third limitation concerns the ability to analyze the impact of this professional development. Many models describing how professional development results in changes in teachers' practice include student outcomes as at least one of the measures of impact (Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 1986; Kennedy, 2016). The participants in this study include educators in all content areas and grade levels, as well as individuals working outside of the classroom. Given this diverse sample of educators, there are not specific constructs of student outcomes that could be measured and compared across the participants. In order to assess student outcomes, the sample of educators, and therefore the corresponding students, would need to be more uniform. This is not to say that the impacts of professional development can only be analyzed in relation to student achievement. The conceptual framework described by Opfer and Pedder (2011) and employed in this study approaches professional development from the perspective of the processes affecting teachers' learning and does not seek to identify causal links to student outcomes. This limitation is important to note, however, because the question of the impact on student outcomes is not unimportant. Although impacts on teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and confidence towards religion are valuable for themselves, these changes are ultimately important in regards to how they affect teachers' abilities to work with religiously diverse students and teach about religion. The design of this study does not enable the analysis of the impact on students, and the sensitive nature of religion can make research with students more challenging. Understanding teachers' experiences and learning is an important step in understanding the impacts of professional development on this topic and will inform the design of future research exploring the impacts for students.

Despite the limitation of this study, the findings presented here represent a substantial step forward in understanding educators' experiences of professional development about religious diversity. I hope that it will prove useful for those who advocate for and create professional learning in this area and demonstrate the value of improving teachers' understanding of religious diversity in public schools.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has described the mixed methods research design of this study and the rationale for this design. I then described the four professional development courses that were the sites for the research and the demographic characteristics of the participants in the study. The data sources included a series of three surveys and a set of semi-structured interviews, which were conducted approximately one year following the course. The final part of the chapter described the process of quantitative and qualitative data analysis and the limitations of this study.

CHAPTER 4: Findings

The key findings of this study are divided into four themes:

1. Personal and Professional Motivations

2. The Importance of Experiential Learning

3. Advanced Conceptions of Religion

4. Applications of Learning

The first section discusses the participants' motivations for attending the courses. This illuminates the expectations and assumptions they had before taking the courses. The second section describes participants' experiences during the courses and, in particular, the experiences of visiting different houses of worship as a part of a professional development course. The third section discusses the impact of the courses on participants' conceptions of religion. Finally, the fourth section discusses the impacts of the courses on participants' professional practice in a broad range of contexts.

Theme 1: Personal and Professional Motivations

The first research question in this study was: *What motivates teachers to participate in professional development religious diversity?* There were two sub-questions: *Who are the teachers who choose to participate?* and *Why do they seek out this type of professional development?*

The first sub-question was answered in the description of the study participants found in Chapter Three. To summarize, the participants taught at all grade levels, but the majority, 59%, taught at the high school levels. All content areas were also represented. Just over half (55.7%) taught a humanities subject, and 28.7% taught a STEM subject.

Nine percent of the participants were in a non-teaching role, including counselors, support and office staff, and therapists. In terms of the number of years teaching and gender, the participants in this study closed aligned with the national statistics. Similarly, the participants' religious identities closely reflected the distribution of religious traditions in the U.S. populations.

Questions about motivations for attending appeared on both Survey 1 and Survey 2. This section first discusses the participants' stated motivations before taking the courses and then discusses changes in participants' stated motivations after attending the courses.

Table 4.1

Reason for Attending the Course (Survey 1, N=121)

	N	% of cases
I have a personal interest in religion	78	64.5%
I believe religion is an important topic for students to learn about	66	54.5%
My school is very religiously diverse	54	44.6%
My classes cover topics that have connections to religion	44	36.4%
I've encountered controversies related to religion in my school	32	26.4%
I've encountered religion in my classes and have not known how to respond	29	24.0%
I've encountered religion in my school (outside of classes) and have not known how to respond	28	23.1%
My classes directly address religion	24	19.8%
Other	23	19.0%

Participants selected their reasons for attending from a list of eight options and were able to elaborate in an open response question. The closed-ended question allowed participants to select as many of the choices as they wished. The most commonly selected reason, chosen by 64.5% of all respondents, was "I have a personal interest in religion" (Table 4.1). The next two most commonly selected reasons were "I believe religion is an

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important topic for students to learn about" (54%) and "My school is very religiously diverse" (44.6%).

Because all of the courses were voluntary and required a significant time commitment during the summer, an interest in the topic would have to play some role in participants' reasons for attending. The qualitative data also emphasized the participants' personal interest. One survey respondent wrote,

> I enjoy learning about religion. I also teach yoga, and I read a lot of texts from a variety of masters of yoga, meditation, and religion to educate myself. I also have several friends who practice religions different from my own, and I'm fascinated when invited to share in celebrations with them. [34][2]

A more concise description of one respondent's motivation was simply: "general life interest and curiosity" [10]. For Vera, the course was an opportunity to continue her interest in learning about different cultures:

> I find other cultures fascinating, whether they're macro-cultures or micro-cultures. And I'm someone that's traveled internationally, and by that, I mean things like I've gone to the Amazon jungle, and I've gone to Kenya, and I've worked in an orphanage…I want to know the culture, not just see the sights of the place. Same thing in, even in the US, there's many micro-cultures in our wide nation. And so I find culture very fascinating, and, of course, spirituality is a really basic and

---

[2] Numbers in brackets following quotations correspond to the ID numbers in the Survey Respondent table in Appendix A.

foundational part of cultures. So I thought it would be a really fascinating way to

spend the summer.

Vera was one of several interview participants who spoke of being "life-long learners."

Bethany chose to pursue her interest in learning about religion, despite not needing any

more credits: "I have a master's plus two additional 30-hour master's degrees. I'm tapped

out. I don't need more classes. I took this class simply because I wanted to."

It appears that for many people, initial interest in the course was sparked by an

opportunity to learn more about a topic they already found interesting. For Daniel, this

initial interest was coupled with a desire to improve his teaching. Daniel expressed a deep

interest in religion—he had previously earned a graduate degree in theology—but he also

recognized that this interest could be a detriment to his teaching:

> "I wanted to go because it--- It was honestly, in theological terms, it was the
>
> answer to my prayer. I love teaching about religion. I love reading about religion,
>
> I'm totally fascinated by religion and yet I always found that the way--- So
>
> sometimes the worst subject to teach is the one that you love the most because
>
> you are so involved by just talking about it that that's all you want to do."

This is an important insight. Even if someone has a personal interest or an extensive

background in a subject, they are not necessarily equipped to teach about that subject.

This is an key factor in the development of the concept of pedagogical content knowledge

(Shulman, 1987), which differentiates between the knowledge of subject area experts and

the knowledge of teachers. The pedagogical content knowledge about religion framework

(PCKR) is vital for the same reason. Although Daniel was reflective about the limitations

of his personal knowledge about religion to be impactful in the classroom, it is not uncommon for teachers to be assigned to teach a religion course simply because they are religious themselves, or perhaps studied religion or theology in an undergraduate degree. Participants' interest in religion and their prior experiences learning about religion—whether from friends, travel, or graduate study—provided motivations for attending and impacted how they experienced the courses themselves, but this type of personal interest and knowledge alone is not sufficient to competently respond to religious diversity in the public school context.

The next two most frequent responses were "I believe religion is an important topic for students to learn about," 54.5% of respondents, and "My school is very religiously diverse," 44.6% of respondents. The necessity of understanding religion in relation to current socio-political climate or global conflicts related to religion was rarely directly mentioned in the survey responses and interviews. They were, however, alluded to in some of the qualitative responses:

> "I want new approaches to help my students see the relevance of religion in our contemporary world" [99].

> "Personally, I feel that it is important for students to be exposed to other religious groups in order to better understand their ideas, beliefs, motivations, etc. so that they can better comprehend their geographic, political, social, technological, intellectual, and economic motivations" [139].

These two respondents appear to be attentive to the role of religion in the world and want to ensure that their students are equipped to understand it. Other respondents were in the

process of recognizing changing religious diversity closer to home and wanted to be better equipped themselves:

"I want to be prepared as our school becomes more diverse" [134].

"I have also noticed that there is more religious diversity in my school and would like to better understand the beliefs/backgrounds of my students" [26].

"I want to learn more about other religions so that I can be better informed and understand how to engage appropriately and respectfully to students and adults of other religious backgrounds" [2].

As previously discussed, the religious demographics of the U.S. have changed dramatically in the past few decades. It is not apparent from the data what precipitated these respondents' recognition of the changing religious diversity in their schools or a desire to be better equipped to engage with it. However, this item was selected by almost half of the participants, pointing to some degree of attention to religious diversity in the school setting.

Examining a cross-tabulation of the motivation questions with the self-reported perceptions of the religious diversity of schools adds some further insight to these responses (Table 4.2). This is also a helpful check of validity. There is a clear correlation between the perceived religious diversity of the school and those who indicated that their school's religious diversity was a reason for attending. Participants who said there was little to no religious diversity did not indicate that religious diversity was a reason for attending the courses. As the degree of perceived religious diversity increased, so did the portion of participants indicating that this was a reason for attending.

Table 4.2

Cross Tabulation: Reasons for Attending & School Religious Diversity

Why did you choose to attend?	*How would you characterize the religious diversity of your school?*					
	No religious diversity or cannot determine	Little religious diversity	Some religious diversity	Fairly religiously diverse	A great deal of religious diversity	Total
I have a personal interest in religion	3	11	35	15	9	73
	60.0%	73.3%	68.6%	60.0%	52.9%	64.6
I believe religion is an important topic for students to learn about	3	10	34	10	6	63
	60.0%	66.7%	66.7%	40.0%	35.3%	55.7
My school is very religiously diverse	0	0	15	18	16	49
	0.0%	0.0%	29.4%	72.0%	94.1%	43.4
My classes cover topics that have connections to religion	2	7	21	6	4	40
	40.0%	46.7%	41.2%	24.0%	23.5%	35.4
I've encountered controversies related to religion in my school	1	4	12	7	6	30
	20.0%	26.7%	23.5%	28.0%	35.3%	26.5
I've encountered religion in classes and not known how to respond	1	1	17	4	3	26
	20.0%	6.7%	33.3%	16.0%	17.6%	23.0
I've encountered religion outside of classes and have not known how to respond	0	4	12	5	3	24
	0.0%	26.7%	23.5%	20.0%	17.6%	21.2
My classes directly address religion	1	4	11	4	3	23
	20.0%	26.7%	21.6%	16.0%	17.6%	20.3
Other	1	3	5	9	2	20
	20.0%	20.0%	9.8%	36.0%	11.8%	17.7
Total	5	15	51	25	17	113

Of the 17 participants who responded that there was "A great deal of religious diversity" at their school, all but one also said that the religious diversity of their school was one of their reasons for attending.

Conversely, participants who responded that there was less religious diversity at their school also responded more frequently that they attended because they believed religion is an important topic for students to learn about. Two-thirds of the participants who responded that there was little or some religious diversity also said they attended the course because they believed religion is an important topic compared to 40% or less of the participants from less religiously diverse schools. Similarly, approximately 40% of respondents who identified some, little, or no religious diversity indicated that their classes had connections to religion, while only about 24% of the respondents who selected fairly or very religiously diverse said this was a reason.

One possible reason for this may be that educators at schools with noticeable religious diversity assume that students learn something about religion directly from their environments and social settings. Those educators who teach at schools with less religious diversity may be inclined to think that there needs to be more deliberate education about religion because students do not otherwise learn about it as part of their everyday life and exposure to other religions.

Two reasons for attending that were not included in the multiple choice question emerged in the qualitative responses. Although these reasons were only expressed by a minority of participants, they merit mention because of their contrast to the reasons provided in the multiple choice question and their potential implications for the design of future courses.

Although personal interest was a common motivator, a much more practical

reason also served to motivate some participants. Alex was very open about this aspect of

his reasoning for taking the course:

> "[The class] looked really cool. It was going to be during one week's time…[and]
> you can actually earn graduate credits, which you know, I'm not going to lie, a lot
> of people are motivated to do things like that because of that, because those
> contribute to salary advancement and you know, that was part of the motivation.
> But also it just looked intriguing, and I saw that there were a bunch of site
> visits…and I said, what the heck, so I went for it."

Seven respondents wrote in some variation of professional learning credits in the "Other"

option on the multiple choice questions. This may be a small percentage of the entire

group, but it is worth noting because participants who were primarily motivated by

earning credits, rather than an interest in the topic, were likely to approach the learning

experiences differently. However, as Alex indicated, this motivating factor did not

preclude an interest in the topic as well.

Another unexpected reason for attending had to do with the experience and

charisma of the individuals leading the courses. For each of the courses, at least one

participant explicitly noted that knowing the person leading the course, either personally

or by reputation, was one of the reasons that they chose to attend. In Program 3, for

example, several people wrote about the positive reputation of the high school world

religion course taught by the program director and seeing the professional development

course as an opportunity to take a version of that class.

Changes in reported motivations after taking the course

Participants were also asked about their motivations for attending after they completed the course. The shifts in what people said were their reasons for attending before and after the courses reveal changes in how the participants thought about religion (Table 4.3). Some of the items with fairly objectives responses, such as "My classes directly address religion" or "I've encountered controversies related to religion in my school" did not show a great deal of change. There were slight increases (less than five percentage points) from Survey 1 to Survey 2. It makes sense that these responses did substantially not change; participants had still taught the same courses or encountered the same controversies when they took Survey 2.

However, there were noticeable changes on other items. Participants expressed more personal interest in religion on Survey 2, with 80% of respondents giving that as a reason for attending. The percentage of participants saying that they attended because they had encountered religion in school—in and outside of class—and had not known how to respond increased on both items by at least ten percentage points. Although the participants were unlikely to have had new encounters with religion in school since the completion of the courses, they may have become more aware of the complexity of religion in school and recognized ways in which they had not been prepared to respond. Changes in participants' confidence in their abilities to respond to religion are discussed later in this chapter, but when reflecting on motivations for attending, people may have reevaluated their perceived confidence prior to the courses in comparison with their new knowledge and skills.

Table 4.3

Changes in Reported Reasons for Attending (Survey 1 and 2; N=70)

	Survey 1		Survey 2	
	N	Percent of cases	N	Percent of Cases
I have a personal interest in religion	48	68.6%	56	80.0%
I believe religion is an important topic for students to learn about	38	54.3%	41	58.6%
My school is very religiously diverse	37	52.9%	21	30.0%
My classes cover topics that have connections to religion	23	32.9%	26	37.1%
I've encountered controversies related to religion in my school	20	28.6%	23	32.9%
I've encountered religion in my classes and have not known how to respond	17	24.3%	22	38.6%
I've encountered religion in my school (outside of classes) and have not known how to respond	17	24.3%	25	35.7%
My classes directly address religion	11	15.7%	13	18.6%
Other	10	14.3%	9	12.9%

One item that might be expected to *increase*, "My school is very religiously diverse," actually had a substantial *decrease* in the number of participants saying this was why they attended. On Survey 1, 52.9% of respondents indicated they attended the course because their schools were religiously diverse. But on Survey 2, only 30% said this was a reason. The religious diversity of the participants' schools did not decrease during the courses, but after the courses participants selected this as motivating factor less frequently. I would have expected that this item would show an *increase* as participants became more aware of religion, and particularly less visible religions, and recognized more religious diversity in their schools.

The changes in participants' reported motivations after taking the course do not reveal actual changes in the reasons why they chose to attend as much as they point to changes in perceptions about which elements of the course were important to them and awareness of the presence of religion in the school context. On Survey 1, a small

percentage said that they chose to attend because they were unsure of how to respond to religion in and out of the classroom and a relatively high percentage expressed a personal interest in religion. This seems to indicate that initially educators were choosing this professional development to increase their general knowledge of the topic, rather than to learn how to address a problem or weakness in their practice. However, the increases in the percentage of respondents saying that uncertainty about responding to religion was a motivating factor for attendance on Survey 2 suggest that participants did not have a full awareness of their weaknesses regarding religion. As purely voluntary summer professional development courses, it is logical that educators might choose a topic that they found interesting over one that they were uncomfortable with. These factors may be important to consider in the future regarding how to frame and promote professional development on this topic to other educators and administrators.

Theme 2: The Importance of Experiential Learning

The second research question in this study asked *"Which aspect of the courses were most impactful for participants?"* On Survey 2, administered in the weeks immediately following participation in the courses, participants were asked, "What were the most valuable elements of the program?" and were permitted to select up to three choices (Table 4.4). The most frequently selected item by far was the site visits, chosen by 95.3% of the respondents. The next two most commonly selected items were Guest Speakers-Representatives of Religious Communities (87.3%) and Guest Speakers-Academic (55.8%). These elements were the primary activities in all of the courses, and, therefore, it makes sense that they were identified most frequently.

This section describes participants' experiences during the courses. Two salient aspects of these experience emerged from the data: (1) that these were new or novel experiences for the majority of the participants, and (2) the significance of the personal interactions with guest speakers and direct experiences of the site visits, especially in contrast to other methods of learning about religion.

Table 4.4

Most Valuable Elements of the Course (Survey 2, N=86)

	N	% of Cases
Site visits	82	95.3%
Guest Speakers-Representations of Religious Communities	72	83.7%
Guest Speakers-Academic	48	55.8%
Group Discussions	21	24.4%
Informal Conversations during breaks or after hours	16	18.6%
Getting to know other educators interested in teaching about religion	7	8.1%
Readings and Written Resources	6	7.0%
Other	2	2.3%

New and Novel Experiences

The elements identified as most valuable—site visits and guest speakers—were activities and experiences that participants would be less likely to have access to independent of a structured course or program. The site visits, in particular, were also a new experience for the majority of the participants (Figure 4.1); over 80% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Visiting houses of worship of different religious traditions was a new experience for me."

Participants recognized that outside of the courses they might not otherwise have had opportunities to visit religious sites or learn directly from scholars of religion. To
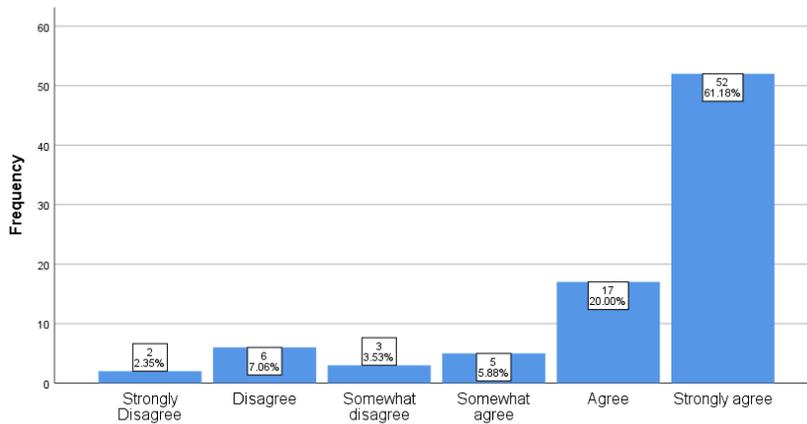
Figure 4.1. Visiting different houses of worship of different religious traditions was a new experience for me.

some extent this was because of practical considerations: "I can read a book on my own, but to arrange a site visit or listen to a guest speaker is much harder [50]."

Although many of the guest speakers would probably be happy to speak with an educator who wanted to learn more about religion, teachers or administrators may not know whom to reach out to in order to have those conversations or what to ask about. The same is true for visiting houses of worship. The courses provided a curated set of speakers and site visits. This helped participants feel confident that these were "reliable sources and locations" [40]. Although logistical concerns might be one deterrent to seeking out these experiences independently, the courses also enabled participants to overcome more challenging barriers such as fear and social norms. Participating in the site visits through a professional development course provided a safe and comfortable entry into an otherwise unfamiliar place. Perceived social norms created barriers to such visits as potential learning experiences, as Vera explained:

> You don't just drive into a temple and stop in for a visit; you don't even know if that's allowed, you know. You're going to walk in, this white face, and they're like, why are you here? You know. So I mean, I don't feel, I don't feel that's allowed, and I don't see people of other cultures stopping into my church either on

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Sundays, right? So, I think that [the opportunity to go on site visits] was really good because I don't know how else anybody would do it. It would never occur to me to go visit a Hindu temple or that I would be welcomed to do that. I would have predicted that I would, you know, people would meet you at the gate and say like, why are you here? Can I see your ID? Because clearly I'm an outsider if I were to go and do that.

For Vera, visiting a Hindu temple or other religious community was not something that she would have even considered as a feasible approach to learning about another religion. She imagined what might happen if someone visited her own house of worship or how others might react if someone who was perceived to be an outsider showed up. She could not conceive of this being a particularly welcoming experience for the visitors or that it would have real educational value for the hosts or visitors.

Sarah expressed a similar idea of social norms around visiting other religious communities:

I don't think I'd ever go up to the door of, you know, a gurdwara and, you know, knock, knock, knock, can I see what's inside? I don't think that's, that's not really how our society is really set up. However welcoming each of those communities are, it's just not in people's comfort levels to just kind of invite themselves to a place that they're unfamiliar with. So I think from that standpoint, just the unique opportunity to visit a mosque or a temple or gurdwara is really, really unique in itself.

Even though Sarah imagined the other community as more welcoming than Vera did, she

still thought of this type of visit as off-limits due to her discomfort with the unfamiliar setting and the potential awkwardness entailed in arranging such a visit as a private individual. Experiencing the site visits as part of a group, and with a clear objective, allowed the participants to get past logistical, social, and psychological barriers that might otherwise have prevented them from these experiences.

Despite the apprehension expressed by some participants, a theme of hospitality appeared throughout descriptions of the site visits. When asked on Survey 2 "What specific conversations or experiences have stuck with you since the workshop?" one of the most common topics in the responses was the experience of hospitality and welcome that participants felt during the site visits. Comments included; "What sticks with me is the experiences of how welcoming each of the religious centers were that we visited" [127] and "Everyone was so welcoming and generous" [142] and "The warmth and friendliness of all the people we met" [67].

Although the vast majority of the comments about the site visits were positive, there was an unspoken current of surprise running throughout the descriptions of hospitality. That so many people said that they were surprised by the hospitality points to an anxiety that they would not feel welcomed. Although Vera and Sarah described expectations that they would not be welcomed as a barrier to visiting religious sites on their own, these expectations appear to have been prevalent among the participants even once the opportunities to visit had been arranged.

One respondent explicitly stated that they were struck by the hospitality because they "thought it would be more formal and distant" [130]. Although this is the only direct mention of this expectation, this comment captures the unstated sentiment in many of the

other comments made by participants. One person responded that they found it interesting that "all the site visit participants were eager to show us that they were not violent or terrorists, but peace-loving and seeking to live holy and good lives" [66]. Such assumptions reveal that both participants and their hosts brought considerable concerning regarding the perspectives and perhaps stereotypes of the participants who were involved in the site visits. Hosts recognized that these visits might be their only opportunity to shape or alter the perceptions that visitors had of their communities.

Concerns about intolerance of other religions or even attempts to convert those from other religions were much less common, but they were still present. These concerns might be more prevalent among another population of participants who had not had as much exposure to religious diversity in their communities. Two participants noted "the welcoming and accepting nature of the other religions and sites we visited" [61] and that the experience was "very genuine" [47]. Another specifically commented "All of the religions were NOT trying to convert anyone" [28, emphasis in original].

Although these comments do not directly express fears that the visits would include attempts to convert the visitors or intolerance of visitors' beliefs, they indicate that some participants were aware of this possibility and recognized when those fears were not realized. For some, this came with the recognition that people in all religions want to be understood and feel welcomed and that sharing about one's religion can be a part of that without any ulterior motive. One participant wrote that one of the best things from the course was:

Feeling that I can visit these sites or ask to enter other temples of worship and that I will be welcome and well received. People want to tell their story and to share

their history and culture with everyone else. No conversion required. [140]

This individual expressed a key desired outcome: to be open to learning more and knowing how to learn more about religion.

Fears about pressure on one's personal beliefs and the sense of comfort created by the context of the course come across very clearly in an anecdote from Timothy. A high school counselor and former history teacher, Timothy had a Muslim brother-in-law and thus could have had the opportunity to easily overcome some of the social barriers that other participants described. But he had never felt comfortable asking to visit, fearing that someone might try to convert him or that they might question his faith:

> What's interesting, I have a brother-in-law that I'm close, through marriage, who is Muslim and I've never gone with them to go inside of a mosque, but I've known him for the past 15 years, and I never had that level of comfort to even ask to go in. [I thought] maybe I [would] be under the influences of being converted or people asking me or questioning me if I believed and I wasn't really up to that. But going into it as a learning experience through a course gave--- I felt a little bit more comfortable about it, you know. It made it more--- There was an objective to meet. Everybody pretty much had the same common understanding that we're here to learn, not under pressure to be converted or something.

Although Timothy's anecdote expresses this concern most directly, other participants also indicated that the course created a more comfortable way to visit houses of worship and experience cultures and religions that were completely unfamiliar. One participant wrote that they had wanted to attend the course because "I had no other acceptable way or method to enter into temples, synagogues, etc. This was preplanned, and other people

made arrangements for me. I was traveling with a group so I felt more confident asking questions [66]." A sense of safety in numbers allowed people to enter into spaces that they perceived as otherwise inaccessible, and the established educational purpose of the visit "provided an easy entry point to conversations that would otherwise be considered too personal [100]." Although it is unlikely that participants had never met or worked with someone from another religious background, asking questions about religion is often seen as socially taboo, or at least uncomfortable. Many people are hesitant to ask an acquaintance to tell them more about an unfamiliar religion, let alone ask to visit a place of worship. In the context of the courses, social barriers to asking such questions were lowered, and people had an easier entry into these conversations.

The benefits of this type of setting did not entirely remove elements of discomfort. For many participants, pushing the boundaries of their comfort zone was an essential part of the experience. Mary went into the course knowing that she would be pushed out of her comfort zone, but that did not necessarily hinder her learning:

> I felt completely supported, but I also felt uncomfortable. Like I knew I didn't have to approach [the altar in the Hindu temple] … And so, it was uncomfortable, but it was so interesting… It was just, wow. It was so different. It was so different. But good. I mean, I am so glad I had the experience.

She later went on to say, "although I felt a little bit uncomfortable, it wasn't going to hold me back." Acknowledging the potential for discomfort and being aware when she was uncomfortable allowed Mary to use those feelings to inform her learning experience. A few participants also commented on being able to share these experiences of discomfort with their students when they returned to school, "some of the site visits really pushed my

boundaries, and I love being able to share that with my students" [39]. Being open about their own experiences learning about religion and being willing to admit that they had more to learn about religion enhanced their relationships with students.

Most participants who commented on experiences of discomfort also mentioned the ultimate benefits of expanding their comfort zones. However, for a few, visiting other religious communities pushed their boundaries too far: "The worship of idols at the Hindu Temple was very provocative. As a Bible-believing Christian, it was difficult to be around it. The worship of gods or idols is sinful in Christianity. It is an offense to the God I love" [62]. This participant's own religious beliefs made it challenging for them to even witness the rituals of another religion. Both Mary and this participant expressed feel uncomfortable in a Hindu temple, but they had very different learning experiences because those experiences were mediated by "the interaction and intersection of knowledge, beliefs, practices, and experiences that constitute a teacher's individual orientation to learning system" (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 388).

In her interview, Bethany talked about being surprised that some people were so uncomfortable with the religious sites, especially since they knew that site visits were going to be a substantial component of the course. The data on these individuals who had a hard time reconciling visiting other religious sites with their own beliefs is limited. Therefore, it is not possible to determine what impact these experiences had on those participants' overall learning. However, this is an important factor to consider with future professional development and research. For individuals with strongly held beliefs within certain traditions, encountering other religions can be a challenge. This is an issue with interfaith work, professional development, and other experiences of learning about

religion that could be important not only for teachers to consider, but also for their students to engage with. The self-reflection domain of the PCKR framework encourages educators to consider these aspects of their personal beliefs and prior experiences that may impact their teaching and their relationships with students and colleagues from other religious traditions.

"Learning by Doing"

Beyond the novel experiences of the site visits, the opportunity to personally visit different religious sites, observe religious services, and talk with members of religious communities was a crucial component of the learning during this professional development. A number of people commented that they did not think they would have been able to develop as complete an understanding of the different religious traditions from just reading a text or hearing a lecture. Participants emphasized the contrast between learning about religion solely in a classroom through texts and images and a more experiential approach to learning about religion through site visits and guest speakers. Participants also expressed a sense that the site visits provided a degree of authenticity or authority to the content that they may not have felt in a more traditional classroom experience.

One common theme in the responses about why particular elements of the program were valuable compared learning about religion from lectures and readings with the opportunity to go on site visits and hear from representatives of religious communities. A few people spoke about their personal learning styles, "I liked having experiences to learn because I remember better than by reading or listening" [60]. There were several comments about "learning by doing" being superior to classroom learning.

One participant wrote that the site visits were important because "they allowed for a more hands-on learning approach rather than just reading articles and listening to constant lectures" [17]. The "hands on" nature of the site visits, opportunities to engage with speakers, and discussion among the participants created a learning environment that was well suited to kinesthetic and auditory learners: "I feel like the site visits truly helped me to have hands on learning. All of the speakers were very helpful and the conversations that colleagues and I had further enhanced our knowledge" [91].

A number of responses highlighted the fact that there are aspects of religion that simply cannot be learned in a classroom context. The lived religion approach emphasizes many of these aspects, such as the ways in which religion shapes individuals' daily lives or how religious communities reflect the cultures in which they are situated (Orsi, 2002). One participant summarized this aspect of the site visits to this end very well: "[The site visits] were more than lectures on the specifics of the religion - they were insights into how people of that faith went through their daily lives." [18] Another wrote, "It opened up some aspects of these religions that I would not have learned about through a textbook alone" [62]. These realizations are an important part of the Religious Studies Knowledge domain of PCKR. Knowledge about religion cannot be restricted only to texts and the intellectual domain. "'Religion' is not a natural category" (J. Z. Smith, 2004, p. 179), but rather is continually constructed and reconstituted in the experiences and religious expressions of individuals and communities. Part of the challenge of PCKR that it requires recognizing that knowledge about religion is far from objective and then also understanding how to teach about religion in ways that can authentically include this complexity while also providing enough concrete knowledge for students to hold on to.

There were some participants who pointed to parts of the experience of the site visits that were less about an understanding of the lived religious experience and were closer to a transcendent understanding of religion. One respondent valued the academic foundation from the classroom but also saw that learning as a prelude to something less tangible:

> We needed the academic information as background building. However, the representatives from religious communities and the site visits themselves fleshed out the academics. Being face to face, experiencing the beauty and peace at many sites - that can't be taught. You have to soak in it. [103]

Although this is a valid way of approaching and understanding religion, it does raise some questions about the objectives of the visits and the purpose of learning about religion, particularly for public school teachers. This is another instance when individual orientations to religion impacted on how participants experienced site visits, how they processed those experiences, and how the visits informed their understanding of individual religious traditions and religion in general.

A number of people spoke to the personal and emotional impact of the site visits and the professional development overall. Many of the guest speakers at different sites shared stories of their own experiences, often of discrimination or bullying. One participant was moved by "the idea that students did not feel safe and secure and/or embarrassed in our school environment because of their religious identity" [83]. This point was underscored for another participant by the account of "a former student who tried to hide her religious affiliation from the class because of fear of being not normal" [13]. These stories provided a compelling insight into the lived experiences of many

different religious communities, particularly when the stories came from current or former students.

These courses were not just about increasing factual knowledge about several religions; they also impacted the participants' attitudes and approaches towards religious diversity. Although the academic study of religion, especially in K-12 public schools, typically steers away from normative claims and affective approaches to understanding, there is some value in these approaches in the context of professional development. Two statements capture this very well:

> "Being able to be on site and speak with representatives of a religious community helped grow not only my religious literacy but my overall compassion, sensitivity, and interests in multiple communities that I knew very little about prior to this class." [84]

> "The personal stories that the representatives from the community made what we were learning more real. Hearing the stories and experiences and seeing the places of worship had a greater impact on me emotionally than just reading about the topics. I think if we are working to create tolerance and empathy this is essential." [26]

Both of these teachers drew a direct connection between their experiences during the site visits and impacts on their feelings of compassion and empathy. Direct encounters with people from other religious communities spurred a change in thinking and attitude that they associated explicitly with the site visits.

Another participant wrote, "Every site visit we made was interesting and gave me a totally different perspective into a life and culture I have never known. I am forever

changed by this experience" [44]. Alex spoke about how being welcomed into different

religious communities and engaging with people in these communities highlighted for

him that even in his fairly diverse and progressive community, he had the privilege of a

very different experience from some of his students:

> Being a middle-aged white man, even though I'm Catholic, I'm pretty
>
> accepted…as opposed to these [Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh] kids and their families,
>
> even if they don't face a lot of intolerance or resistance, they still feel it, they still
>
> see it. So that's really informed a lot of the relationships I have with my kids.

Not only did Alex gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by his students, he

also became more aware of his own positionality and the impact of that positionality on

his relationships with students. The experiences of visiting religious sites and meeting

members of those communities and hearing their stories enabled participants to engage

with aspects of religion that they would not have had access to in a traditional classroom

context.

As a result of having the direct experiences during the site visits and opportunities

to hear from guest speakers, many participants spoke or wrote about how they came to

recognize the people from other religious communities as "real people." They cited an

appreciation for the specific experiences of individuals in religious communities, from

understanding what community life involved to recognizing the experiences of bias and

discrimination faced by many religious minorities. In the three district-based programs,

some participants had the opportunity to hear directly from their own students, either on

panels in the classroom or as representatives of the community during a site visit. For

many, this was a very powerful experience—they were able to see students as individuals

with lives beyond the classroom and learn about the communities that these students were a part of. Attention to student voices and experiences has the potential impact of "altering dominant power imbalances between adults and young people" (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 8) and position students as active citizens in the school community. These effects, especially when the students are from minority religions and the adults are from dominant religions, are crucial in the formation of school communities that are welcoming to religious diversity.

Participants drew a contrast between the type of information they were able to gain from readings and the "real" people they were able to meet. Some people did not appear to view members of other religious traditions as fully human until they actually had the opportunity to meet those people: "So we weren't just looking at pictures and turning pages of a book, but we were actually going into that space itself and talking to people who are actual practitioners of those belief systems" (Vera). Another person spoke of "REAL practice and real spaces of worship" [32, emphasis in original] and "meeting real people on their turf" [32].

This need for direct experiences to make people of other religions real also extended to dispelling feelings of fear: "In the readings, there was information that was distilled down to very basic understandings. The site visits allowed us to meet 'real people' of other faiths and find out there is nothing to fear" [66]. This comment is particularly striking; it implies that prior to the site visits and meeting "real people" that this person felt threatened in some way by people from other faiths and that reading about those religions wasn't sufficient information to quell those fears.

Before the site visits, some participants appear to have seen the religious other as depersonalized and abstract. However, the site visits actually humanized the other so that they "could see the religion through the eyes of a real person with feelings" [55]. Again, this emphasis on "real" people raises questions about how these educators previously thought about people from other religious traditions and, in particular, their own students with different religious identities. It appears before these experiences many educators did not fully acknowledge students' religious identities, did not recognize those identities, or simply did not understand the impact of those identities on students' lives. Mary was able to make connections between what she was learning in the course and what she knew about her former students:

> And then I found myself putting together like the names of some of my former students and thinking about like, oh, you know, this is what their families may have been raised doing or continue to do here in the United States. So that part was interesting.

Because many of the religious traditions encountered during the courses were new to the participants, it is understandable that they might not have made connections with the lived experiences of their students prior to the course. It is one thing to be able to identify individual students as Hindu or Jewish or Sikh, but the site visits enabled educators to go one step beyond labels and develop some context around those labels. The emphasis on the site visits being critical in making the religious other "real," however, still raises questions about the role of the site visits and the possibility of achieving similar impacts in a professional development course that do not include site visits.

Similar to the sense that only first-hand experiences could make the religious other fully real, a couple of participants also expressed a view that site visits and conversations with members of those religious communities constituted the most authentic expression of that religion, or at least a more authentic source of information than a text or a scholar of religion. For example, one person wrote that the site visits and speakers were the most valuable parts of the course, because "they were experiential and from reliable sources. I felt I was receiving the best and most accurate knowledge available to me" [40]. Another person similarity commented that the site visits and speakers "allowed me to get direct information from reliable sources and locations" [44].

This attitude was not pervasive in the responses, but it is not an uncommon view about sources of information about religion. Some people consider religious leaders and members of religious communities to be the best source of information about the religions that they represent and discount the knowledge and skills of religious studies scholars (Moore, 2007; Personal communication – Georgia 3Rs project, July 2017). Representatives of religious communities are authoritative about their own experiences within that religious tradition, but they are rarely trained in the academic study of religion and are not able to provide a higher-level picture of a tradition, its internal diversity, and its expressions in different contexts.

This is part of the concern about using site visits to teach about religion. Given the learning objectives of these particular courses, the site visits were important for developing the sense of lived religion and "realness" discussed above. These types of experiences are crucial in creating a deeper and more complex understanding of the religions being studied, but they should not be seen as the sole source of authentic

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knowledge (M. S. Berger, 2004). Site visits need to be balanced with other sources of information. Participants should be introduced to frameworks for thinking about religion and how to study religion ahead of the visits so that they can contextualize the information they receive during a visit or from a guest speaker within a broader understanding of the religion.

Theme 3: Advanced Conceptions of Religion

The third research question was "*What is the impact of these experiences on the educators who participate?*" While this question was initially imagined to examine the impact on educators' practice in the classroom, another area of impact emerged during the data analysis. This section examines how participants' conceptions of religion changed following the courses.

Religion is a notoriously challenging concept to define, and how people think about this concept has been profoundly influenced by a long history of the construction of religion in early modern political and social discourse (Masuzawa, 2005; Stoddard & Martin, 2017). Contemporary sensationalized media portrayals of religion have also cemented stereotypical portraits of religious traditions in popular culture and the public imagination. The ways in which religion is discussed in the media and is frequently presented in the classroom endow an

> immediate facticity to [religion] through sheer repetition and proliferation, and thus implicitly endorses as empirical and true what is, in reality, a particular way of conceptualizing the world, or, one might say, an idiosyncratic system of demarcating certain supposed contents of the world. (Masuzawa, 2005, p. 6)

The lived religions approach taken in these courses attempted to dismantle some of the stereotypes that often hinder deeper engagement with religious diversity by highlighting the complexities of the religions that were encountered.

Each survey included a series of questions from the U.S. Religious Landscape Study (Pew Research Center, 2015) related to perceptions of religion. On one item, participants were asked to rate their feelings towards a list of religious groups using a "feelings thermometer," on which 0 was the "coldest" and most negative and 100 was the "warmest" and most positive (Pew Research Center, 2017). This type of question is particularly susceptible to social desirability bias and can only measure explicit attitudes towards religious groups and not the implicit attitudes that respondents are unaware of (Jong et al., 2017). However, despite these limitations, this measure does provide some insight into the views of the participants of this study and enables comparison with a national sample.
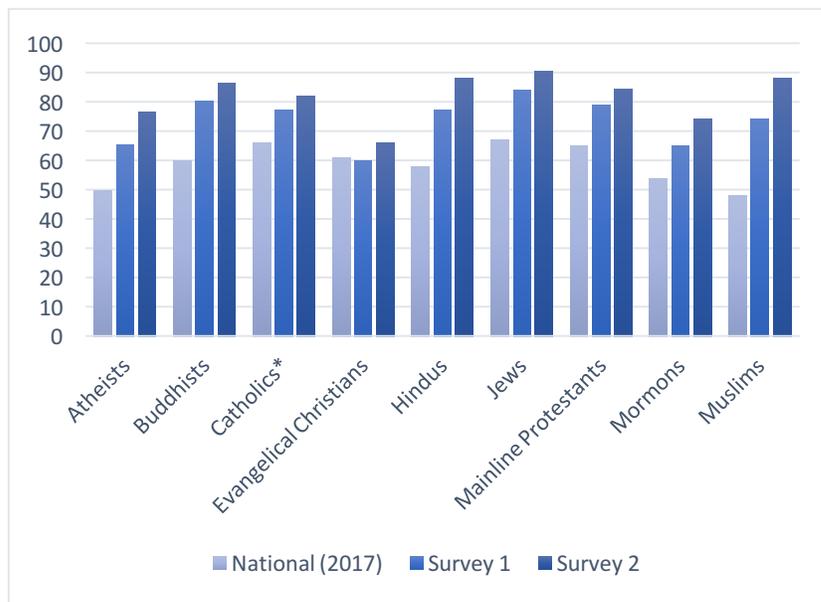
Figure 4.2 Mean Feelings Thermometer Ratings

The participants in this study rated all of the religious groups, with the exception of Evangelical Christians, considerably more favorably than the national sample on both Survey 1 and

Survey 2 (Figure 4.2). The mean change in ratings between surveys was found to be

statistically significant for all of the religious groups except for Catholics (Table 4.5).

The most substantia; change in the ratings was an increase of 14.0 points for Muslims.

Atheists were also rated considerably more positively, an increase of 11.0 points. The

potential for social desirability bias may have been increased in this context, because the

surveys were distributed by the program directors, even thought it was made clear that

the program directors would not have access to the individual survey responses.

Table 4.5

Mean Feelings Thermometer Ratings

| | National (2017)[a] | This Study | | | | |
		Survey 1	Survey 2	Mean Change	t	df
Atheists	50	65.7	76.7	11.0	-3.095**	28
Buddhists	60	80.2	86.6	6.4	-2.845**	32
Catholics	66	77.1	82.0	4.9	-1.748	44
Evangelical Christians	61	59.9	66.0	6.1	-2.161*	42
Hindus	58	77.4	88.0	10.6	-3.913**	29
Jews	67	84.1	90.3	6.2	-3.447**	41
Mainline Protestants	65	79.1	84.45	5.3	-2.583*	30
Mormons	54	65.3	74.0	8.7	-2.971**	30
Muslims	48	74.1	88.1	14.0	-4.658***	36

[a] N = 3,939
*significant p<0.05
**significant p<0.01
***significant p<0.001

Although there are many factors influencing attitudes towards other religions in

complex and sometimes counterintuitive ways (B. G. Smith, 2007), multiple uses of this

measure have demonstrated that simply knowing someone from a particular religious

group was associated with a more positive rating of that religious group (Pew Research

Center, 2017; Putnam & Campbell, 2010). The longevity of the relationship with

someone from a particular religious group is not a factor; in fact, even learning about the previously unknown religious identity of a long-time friend or acquaintance produces this effect (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). The majority of the participants in this study lived in fairly diverse communities near major metropolitan centers, so it is possible that they were more likely to know members of religions other than their own than the general U.S. population, which could account for the higher mean rating than the national sample.

Although the participants had only short interactions with members of different religious communities, these interactions provided a human face to an otherwise abstract religious tradition. In some cases, participants learned of the religious identities of their own students or had those religious identities made more salient. All of these experiences contributed to the even more positive ratings on Survey 2.

Additionally, Putnam and Campbell (2010) have found some evidence that there is a spill-over effect to knowing someone of a different religion such that one comes to view other religious groups more positively as well. This effect was suggested by one survey respondent, "I am much more open to discussing religion and less likely to stereotype some groups that I have found oppressive in the past" [89]. The effects of increased warmth towards religious groups and the increased awareness of religious identities appear to have had a positive impact on participants' relationships with students and attitudes toward religion in schools.

Beyond more positive attitudes towards different religious groups, participants also developed a more complex conception of religion overall. The courses introduced participants to the foundational premises of religious studies—that religions are internally

diverse, dynamic and changing, and embedded in cultures (Moore, 2010) and the 3Bs framework for the construction of religious identities (Marcus, 2018). Participants were asked to respond to a series of statements designed to assess their conceptions of religion through several characteristics of religion.

Participants responded to each of the statements in Table 4.6 on a 6-point scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The table also shows the associated constructs contributing to a conception of religion. The statements were displayed in a random order for each respondent.

Table 4.6

Conceptions of Religion Constructs

Statement	Construct
When trying to understand religious violence today, it is most important to look at the historical conflicts between the two groups.	Change over time; Embeddedness in Culture
Religious literacy means knowing the founder, sacred text, place of worship, and major doctrines of major religious traditions.	Definition of religious literacy
There are fundamental truths that all members of a religious tradition should agree on.	Internal diversity
People with different interpretations of a religious doctrine will always be in conflict with each other.	Internal diversity
The way members of a religious tradition celebrate a holiday will look the same in different countries.	Internal diversity; Embeddedness in culture
Religious literacy is primarily important so that students will understand art and literature.	Definition of religious literacy
Members of the same religion can disagree on the major beliefs of the religion but still participate in the same rituals.	Internal diversity
All religions are different paths up the same mountain.	Orientation toward pluralism
All religions can be distilled into a version of the Golden Rule—"Treat others as you would want to be treated."	Orientation toward pluralism
Progressive Christians and conservative Christians have more in common with each other than progressive Christians and progressive Jews have in common.	Embeddedness in culture; Internal diversity

The concept of the internal diversity of religions resonated with many of the participants. The traditional world religions paradigm that most people are familiar with presents religions as discrete units with particular defining elements, such as texts, a founder, major holidays, and beliefs about what happens after death (Cotter & Robertson, 2016). In reality, religions are much messier, and, as one participant put it, there are "differences that exist even within the same religions" [3]. This was a new approach for thinking about religions for many of the participants.

The site visits and conversations with religious leaders helped to crystallize this concept for participants:

"Every religious representative said, 'others will disagree with my view of our religion. There is no singular way to practice this religion.'" [49]

"Hearing from diverse leaders helped me to understand and appreciate intra-religious diversity in new and valuable ways." [108]

One of the arguments against incorporating site visits and guest speakers into the academic study of religion is that participants will associate an entire religious tradition with that single visit, and their understandings of that religion will only be filtered through that one visit or one representative of that tradition. However, when possible, the courses included more than one site or representative for the religions studied in order to counter this possibility.

For Bethany, visiting two different Hindu temples enforced the idea of the diversity of religions:

Being Jewish, I understand that there's different levels of Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and stuff, and I understand it very much within my own religion. But when a student would say to me, 'I'm Hindu, and I'm going to my temple on Sunday, and this is what do,' if I only had one experience in a Hindu temple, I would have only had that image in my head of what the student might be experiencing. But because [the course] took us to two different Hindu temples, it kind of stopped and reminded me to still need to ask that student what their experiences are like because if someone said, I went to a Jewish service but they went to a very traditional conservative services, that's not my world at all.

This comment captures both the everyday impact of recognizing the internal diversity within religions and the challenges of recognizing the internal diversity of unfamiliar religions. Although Bethany knew that there were variations in practice among different branches of Judaism, she did not transfer that idea of internal diversity to her conception of another religious tradition until she had the opportunity to see first-hand the variations between two different Hindu communities.

Survey 1   Survey 2
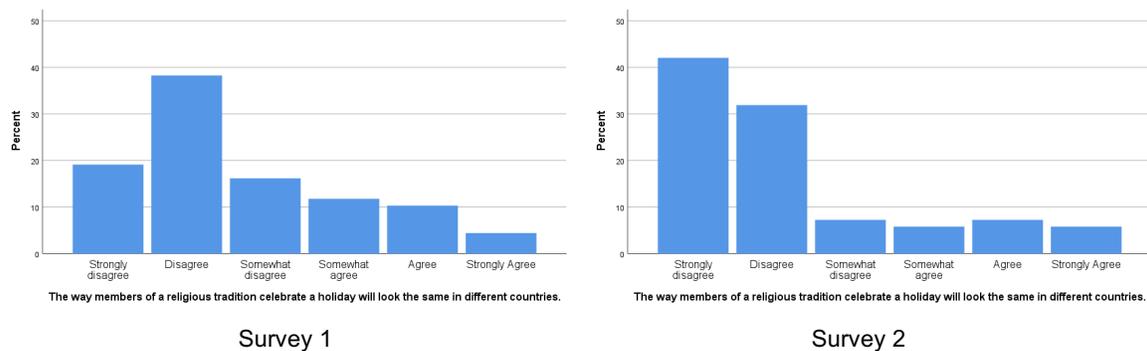
Figure 4.3: Responses to the statement "The way members of a religious tradition celebrate a holiday will look the same in different countries" for surveys 1 and 2. (N=70)

A greater recognition of internal diversity was also demonstrated in the responses to some of the statements about religion. Figure 4.3 shows the responses to the statement
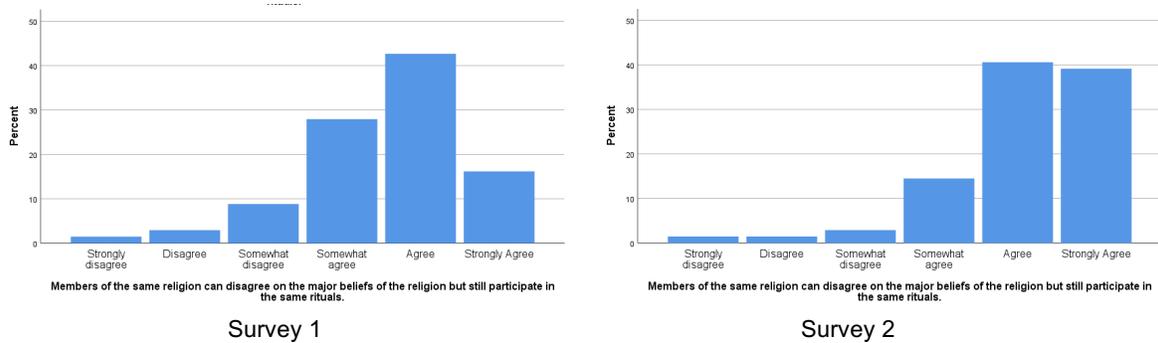
Figure 4.4. Responses to the statement "Members of the same religion can disagree on the major beliefs of the religion but still participant in the same rituals" for surveys 1 and 2. (N=70)

"The way members of a religious tradition celebrate a holiday will look the same in different countries." On Survey 1, the responses skew towards "disagree"; 73.5% of respondents choose one of the disagree options, and 57.4% said "disagree" or "strongly disagree." It is logical to infer that people in different countries would celebrate holidays in different ways. However, after the course, these responses shifted even more dramatically towards the disagree side. On Survey 2, 73.9% of respondents chose "disagree" or "strongly disagree," suggesting a greater recognition of the internal diversity of religions. The mean response on Survey 1 was 2.69, which decreased on Survey 2 to 2.22, a change on 0.47 points or about half of a rank on the 6-point scale. This shift may also be connected to an increased awareness of the ways in which religions are embedded in cultures and that the celebrations of religious holidays are also influenced by cultural practices.

Although variations in religious practice in different contexts can easily be recognized relation to other cultural practices, variations of beliefs within religions are often less apparent. Figure 4.4 shows the responses to the statement "Members of the same religion can disagree on the major beliefs of the religion but still participate in the same rituals." In this case, the Survey 1 responses skew toward "agree;" 85.7% of

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respondents selected either "somewhat agree," "agree," or "strongly agree," and 16.2% selected "strongly agree." The mean response was 4.56, about halfway between "somewhat agree" and "agree." After the courses, on Survey 2, the responses were even more heavily skewed towards the "agree" side of the scale, and the mean rating increased to 5.09. The number of people selecting "strongly agree" more than doubled to represent 39.1% of respondents. This stronger agreement with the statement points to an increased recognition of this idea after completing the courses. One participant described coming to this understanding: "Many religions have sets of beliefs, but they are not that rigid. [Meeting] practicing people allowed me to see what it's actually like" [104]. Having a strong understanding of internal diversity impacted some participants' comfort with religion:

> "I think I will embrace internal diversity much more - really present religious ideas as one explanation in a sea of explanations." [80]

> "I feel more comfortable knowing that religions are very different within the group." [21]

> "I loved learning how religion isn't something that you can necessarily define as an absolute with rules and regulations. How people choose to practice their religion varies greatly and is completely individual. [122]

Although the idea that religions are internally diverse is not hard to demonstrate, recognizing this foundational premise of the study of religion is crucial for understanding the lived experiences of individuals and communities and conceptualizing the other two premises, that religions are dynamic and changing and are embedded in cultures.

However, these are premises of the academic discipline of religious studies rather than inherent characteristics of religions. Some religious worldviews reject the idea that their religion has changed over time or that other interpretations of sacred texts, doctrine, or ritual practiced by others sects or denominations are valid expressions of that religion. Some religious worldviews present more or less totalizing understandings of their relationship with other variations within that tradition and with other religions. There are different models for understanding and reconciling the existence of the plurality of religions, both from a civic stance and a theological stance. From a civic perspective, the fact of religious diversity can be approached from the perspective of exclusivism, assimilation, or pluralism (Eck, 2001). Exclusion and assimilation have been the primary approaches throughout U.S. history, most recently evident in the treatment of Muslim immigrants. Pluralism, in contrast, seeks "the engagement of our differences in the creation of a common society" (Eck & Randall, 2018, p. 49). Eck and Randall (2018) argue that within a civically pluralistic position, one's theological position is "essentially irrelevant. Here, we engage our differences around the common covenants of citizenship, the ideas and ideals of American constitutional democracy" (p. 51). While this may ideally be true, it is also necessary to consider theological orientations towards the fact of religious diversity.

From a theological perspective, the general spectrum of stances is very similar—exclusivism, inclusivism, or pluralism. An exclusivist view holds that one religion is superior to all others and all other religions are false (B. G. Smith, 2007; H. Smith, 2010); "truth is singular in this perspective and the possession of Truth is limited"(Kaplan, 2002, p. 30). And inclusive stance "extends the possibility of salvation to those outside of the

fold" (Kaplan, 2002, p. 1), but still maintains a hierarchy of truths. The pluralism position is a complex one, but one common metaphor for this position imagines different religions as different paths up the same mountain (H. Smith, 2010). Another variation distills the teachings of all religions to a version of the "Golden Rule" (Prothero, 2010). Scholars of religion and theology disagree on the conceptions of a pluralistic account of religious diversity and the ways that they shape discourse about religions (Kaplan, 2002; Prothero, 2010; H. Smith, 2010; J. Z. Smith, 2004). Moreover, there are different implications depending on how the models are applied—to the academic investigation of religious pluralism or to how one relates to individuals and communities with conflicting theological worldviews. Nonetheless, the many paths up the same mountain, pluralistic model is a common way of approaching the diversity of religions in the world within popular discourse (H. Smith, 2010). It is valued because it promotes a vision of unity in a world that is more frequently torn apart by religious differences than brought together over shared values (Prothero, 2010).

There was broad agreement with idea that "All religions are different paths up the same mountain" before and after the courses (Figure 4.5). The mean response on Survey 1 was 3.54, which increased slightly to 3.81 on Survey 2. This common approach to
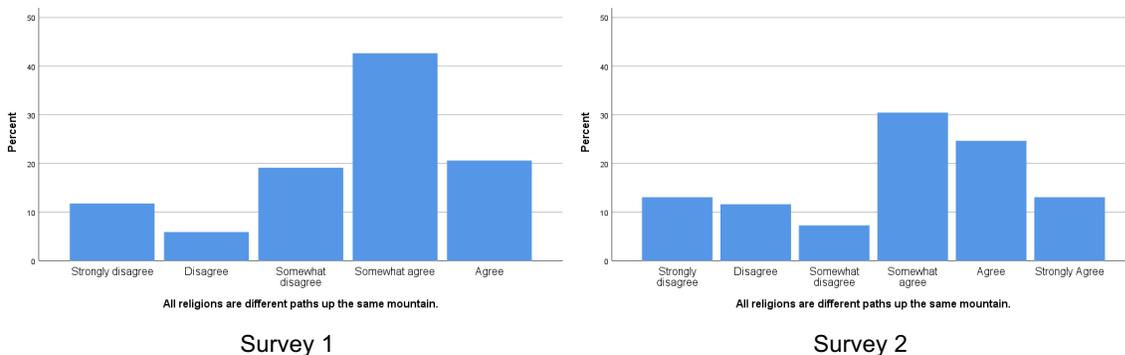
Figure 4.5: Responses to the statement "All religions are different paths up the same mountain" for surveys 1 and 2. (N=70)

religious diversity may have been reinforced as participants learned about the specific beliefs of different religions and made comparisons. After the course, fewer responses were clustered around the "somewhat disagree" and "somewhat agree" responses and were overall spread more evenly across the spectrum. While there were no "strongly agree" responses on Survey 1, 13% of respondents selected this option on Survey 2. Individuals' prior conceptions about the similarities or differences between religions may account for shifts towards both ends of the response spectrum on Survey 2

On Survey 1, the majority of respondents leaned toward "agree" in response to the statement "All religions can be distilled into a version of the Golden Rule – Treat others as you would want to be treated," (Figure 4.6). The mean ranking before the course was 3.63, with 38.2% choosing "somewhat agree." Following the course, the mean response increased to 4.04, although again the responses were more evenly distributed across the scale. The proportion of respondents on the "agree" and "disagree" sides of the scale changed by only 0.5%, but the percentage of respondents choosing "strongly agree" more than doubled, from 7.4% on Survey 1 to 18.8% on Survey 2. This could be due to the participants' increased knowledge of the key beliefs and practices of several religions that had previously been unfamiliar, allowing them to make comparisons between religions more confidently. Similar to the previous item, these responses could show participants' pre-existing ideas about religious diversity being confirmed as they learned more about religions. One participant wrote that what stuck with her since the course was the idea that "No matter what you call your God -- love, kindness and compassion is the glue that bind us together" [140]. Grace explicitly brought this idea into her classroom: "I myself feel that all religions have the weaving thread of treat others the way you want to be

treated. I think the golden rule can be found in any religion. And that's what I promoted my classroom."

Although the overall trend on both of these items was for participants to more strongly agree with conceptions of religion that emphasized the similarities between religions, participants also recognized the tensions between finding similarities and differences among religious traditions. For some, this understanding was included in their statements about what aspects of the course would be most useful in their work:

"The knowledge of each religion and what makes those religions similar and different to others" [41]

"Understanding the diversity within each community, that religion can't be viewed on a shelf" [95]

"I understood how much similar and different at the same time are each religious groups." [109]

Survey 1   Survey 2
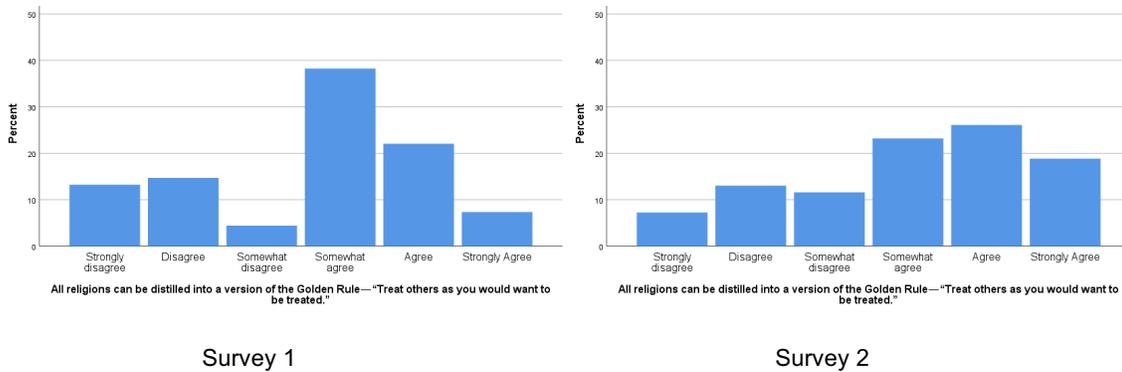
Figure 4.6. Responses to the statement "All religions can be distilled into a version of the Golden Rule – 'Treat others as you would want to be treated'" for surveys 1 and 2. (N=46)

One of Prothero's (2010) critiques of the "same mountain" perspective is that it can tend to overemphasize the positive aspects of religions and downplay the conflicts that come out of the differences. He argues that

> we pretend these differences are trivial because it makes us feel safer or more moral. But pretending that the world's religions are the same does not make our world safer. Like all forms of ignorance, it makes our world more dangerous. (Prothero, 2010, p. 4)

Relatedly, Kaplan (2002) points out the "the one summit tends to look like only one of the religious traditions; and thus, we are again faced with the notion that the rest are wrong" (p. ix).

These are valid concerns. It is challenging to find the appropriate balance between making the strange familiar and erasing the differences and tensions between religions as a part of this effort. Professional development courses such as these may be critiqued for their attempts to make religious other feel more familiar and more real and to shed a positive light on the unfamiliar. There were participants who said that the site visits were an opportunity to "find out there is nothing to fear" [66]. This is important at an individual and local level; it fosters relationships and builds community between different groups. However, this does not mean there is nothing to fear about religion or groups that claim to be motivated by religion, such as the Islamic State. In his argument for focusing on the differences between religions, Prothero (2010) states, "We need to understand religious people as they are—not just at their best but also their worst" (p. 7). Understanding the more negative and harmful aspects of religions is also critical for living in a religiously diverse society. While it would be counter-productive for a

professional development course to purposefully emphasize only the worst elements of different religious groups, discussing only the positive also creates a false narrative that does not allow educators to develop a complete understanding of how religions influence society.

For some participants, gaining a deeper understanding of religions, especially religions that they may have previously viewed more negatively, enabled them to turn a critical eye to more familiar traditions such as Christianity. There are harmful and hateful groups within all religions, but as one participant noted, the same standards are not applied to all traditions when associating those factions with the tradition as a whole: "We don't think about [the] Ku Klux Klan as being Christian, but they light a cross. Doesn't match how closely we connect Muslims to terror." [28] The premises of religious studies provide a framework for putting all aspects of religion into perspective and developing more complex understandings that are not based on singular understandings or stereotypes.

Theme 4: Applications of Learning

Because the participants worked in so many different contexts and roles, it is hard to draw direct connections between these professional development courses and changes in practice. Each of the courses had a different mix of teachers and slightly different objectives. Program 1 had the most focus on pedagogy and was three times as long as the others, allow it to cover more content knowledge in more depth. Programs 2 and 4 both included educators from early childhood through high school as well as support staff, while Program 3 only included high school teachers. This diversity among the participants makes it challenging to identify specific impacts on teaching in terms of

pedagogy, curriculum, or student outcomes. Although there are some examples of impacts on classroom practices or pedagogies, the majority of participants discussed the ways in which these courses impacted their professional practice, attitudes, and dispositions beyond the curriculum. A key theme that was found throughout participants' comments on the impacts of the courses was an increase in confidence regarding religion in school, whether in the curriculum, talking with individual students, or explaining the importance of learning about religion to colleagues and community members. This section examines the impact of the courses in four areas of the participants' professional practice: (1) curriculum and pedagogy, (2) the impact for educators who do not teach about religion, (3) relationships with students, and (4) comfort and confidence with religion in the school context.

Curriculum and Pedagogy

Of all the educators who participated in these courses, secondary history and social studies teachers were most likely to teach directly about religion in their classrooms. Secondary English and literature teachers also regularly encounter religion or references to religion in their curriculum. Overall, 25.9% of the participants taught secondary history. Just over half (53.1%) of the participants taught at least one humanities subject (history, social studies, English, literature, writing, religion, and/or ethics) at any grade and 43.0% of the participants taught a humanities subject at the secondary level (middle or high school).

There was limited discussion about religion in the curriculum or pedagogical approaches for teaching religion in the survey and interview data. Some participants mentioned that having more knowledge about religion helped them to enhance existing

curricula, such as units in a Human Geography course or in the study of literature (e.g., *The Kite Runner*). The participants in Program 1 talked about the impact of the course on their teaching more frequently than those in other programs. Louis and Katherine both implemented versions of a lived religions projects that they did as part of that course. Focused on the question "what does lived religion look like in this particular part of my community?" (Loius), participants explored an assigned area of the city and then identified the "locations where we had found evidence of lived religion and, and then we analyzed what we saw" (Katherine). Louis reported:

> The kids especially enjoyed the lived religion project, you know, because I had them walking around their neighborhood or their community and ask[ing] different sorts of questions and sort of look[ing] through a different lens than they're used to looking through… especially those students who do have a specific connection to a certain religious tradition or community around here, [it] lets them kind of get out and get their feet wet and a little bit of field work.

This project allowed Katherine and Louis to engage students in an authentic exploration of religion in their communities. Katherine noted how her students reacted to studying religion: "every time I get done with a class of students, it seems like they are more interested, connected and eager to learn about their own faith or their own cultural traditions that are related to faith."

Daniel and Olivia both came to the courses with an existing interest in teaching about religion. They both already had advanced degrees in theology and religious studies, respectively, and were looking for ways to improve their current teaching about religion. Daniel admitted that at times his love of studying religion made it hard for him to teach in

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a way that would be engaging for 9th grade students and that he felt that he "didn't teach it with any life or very little nuance, [it] just didn't feel like it [religion] was a real thing." Through the course and the site visits, he came to understand the lived religions approach better and recognize how studying religion in that manner helped religion become more relevant for students. Although he was not able to replicate the site visits with his own students, he was able to share those experiences with the students:

> Just having those, those personal anecdotes [about the different site visits], I think adds, adds so much more to the educational experience, even though it's not diversifying the mode of instruction, because it's still me talking to them. It adds variety to, just like the, the kind of information, it adds texture. It adds humanity. Where I can talk about, talk about these people that I met, these things that I did with them and you know, I can paint a vivid enough picture so that they get a pretty good idea and it just, it gives them a more alive conception of what these belief systems are, how they act in the world.

For Daniel, one of the most important things that he learned was that "teaching lived religion doesn't require a huge shakeup in your curriculum." Olivia echoed this idea:

> So the eye-opener for me going into it—I was teaching eighth grade at the time, so I was like, I'm not sure how this is going to fit in here— and I learned while I was there [at the course], religion is basically everywhere, and there's room for it everywhere.

As a part of the course, she developed a unit about religious identity in Colonial America and has been able to integrate the study of religion into other aspects of her teaching, particularly drawing on the 3Bs framework.

Although there are a few vivid examples of the impact the courses had on the curriculum and pedagogy of individual teachers, these tended to be highly specific to individual situations and were often carried out by teachers with an existing strong background and interest in teaching religion. Participation in the courses enabled them to strengthen their practice and draw on a community of scholars and resources that they might not otherwise have had access to. For the majority of the participants, however, the impacts of the courses were more generally connected to increased knowledge and understanding about religion, particularly as it related to their students.

"I don't teach religion but…"

A common refrain in the survey responses was "I don't teach religion, but…", typically followed with a description of the benefits of the courses for the individual's work. Forty percent of the respondents said that they had taught lessons directly about religion in the school year prior to the courses, and 48.7% said that they had incorporated the discussion of religion into lessons that were not directly about religion. This does not mean, however, that all of these teachers saw religion as a regular part of their curriculum. Additionally, 37.7% of the participants said that they had not taught about religion, directly or indirectly, in the prior school year. The most common reason this group gave for not teaching about religion was that religion was not applicable in their subject or content area. Despite the substantial number of participants who did not

regularly teach about religion, there were many responses about the benefits of the courses for educators who do not teach about religion.

Some of these benefits were practical, such as being more aware of religious holidays or being able to give explanations about religions to students and colleagues:

"One of my students was discussing the Jewish holidays and didn't understand why the football game had been moved, so I was able to talk about it and felt comfortable addressing this" [134].

"I better understood my Jewish and Muslim students' religious obligations during holidays and in regards to their general practices" [133].

"I have also been able to teach other staff members about some cultural and religious facts about the makeup of religions and cultural backgrounds of our students" [35].

Other people pointed to situations that were specific to their particular role in the school:

"As a special education teacher, different religions' views on disability are of particular interest to me. This course made me more sensitive to situations where a person might practice a particular religion without embracing everything about that religion (e.g., viewing people with disabilities as 'cursed')." [102]

"Understanding health/diet and lifestyle practices of different religions [are valuable], because I work as a school nurse" [66]

Just having more information about several religions enabled educators to be more aware of the presence of religion around them. Although not directly connected to their

curriculum, participants' were able to find valuable applications of the Religious Studies Knowledge domain of the PCKR framework.

Grace felt that she had already been attuned to the religious diversity in her classroom, but, after the course, she was more aware of how other people talked about religion in the school:

> So what I do notice more, and then I'm not sure what to do about it, is my colleagues not being as knowledgeable or open about different religions…[for] example, during Ramadan, my teammate was talking about all the Indian kids celebrating Ramadan and not eating, and I'm like, well, first of all, India is a huge country, and they have like a bazillion [*sic*] different religions there, and you know. It's like I wanted to correct her, but I don't want to seem like a know-it-all…I wish everyone else had the experience and knowledge that I've gained.

This type of increased awareness is a vital step in creating school environments that are welcoming for students from all religious backgrounds, as well as students who do not identify with any specific religious tradition. Grace's example points to a common conflation of national identity and religious identity, which could alienate students from either group, while also perpetuating stereotypes and misunderstandings. She also highlights the challenge of correcting colleagues, particularly on a sensitive topic such as religion.

Other teachers mentioned being more aware of activities that they did with students and how those activities might be received by students from varied religious backgrounds:

Because I am a speech/language pathologist in an Early Childhood program, I do

not necessarily teach religious topics. HOWEVER, I can reflect on my previous

practices and make a change with regard to the activities I do with my students.

For instance, I will no longer have kids color trees and stockings in December.

When students bring up Christmas, with other students who are not Christians, I

can describe how children may not celebrate Christmas, but they celebrate other

holidays. I can talk (at a very basic level) about how we are all different, and

that's what makes us so special. [9, emphasis in original]

Regardless of whether any of the educators in these examples ever directly or indirectly

encounter in their curriculum, they demonstrate the practical, everyday benefits of a

better understanding of students' religious identities, experiences of religion in school,

and the complexity of religious diversity in the school context. In this vein, developing

content knowledge is an important component of becoming more culturally responsive.

Relationships with and Advocacy for Students

Having a deep understanding of students backgrounds and identities is essential

for teachers to develop strong relationships with their students. However, as previously

discussed, the discussion or acknowledgment of religious identity is largely avoided in

teacher education programs, in professional development offerings, and in the classroom.

Passively ignoring, or actively avoiding, students' religious identities can have harmful

effects on students' experiences in school and hinder the development of positive

relationships with teachers and staff. A common theme in both the interviews and survey

responses was that increased knowledge about religions helped participants to understand

their students more and improved their relationships with students.

As discussed above, the site visits helped participants to form a fuller picture of their students' lives beyond the classroom. More than one participant wrote that they did not feel that they had been insensitive toward religion before the professional development, but now they were much more comfortable acknowledging students' religious lives and more sensitive to how students bring those lives with them to school: "I wasn't intolerant before, but I now have a deeper sense of empathy and understanding of certain religions and how students who practice those religions want to be treated at school" [102]. Having seen and interacted with some of the religious communities that their students were a part of, teachers had a reference point to help them understand those specific communities, as well as religious communities in general.

One survey respondent wrote, "Just knowing commitments of my students and expectations at home has helped me be more sensitive in my classroom" [114]. Just as many teachers want to be aware of students' participation in athletics or other extracurricular activities to be respectful of those commitments, teachers should also be aware of students' commitments to their religious communities.

The increased knowledge about religion enabled participants to recognize religious identities and understand how students might want, or not want, those identities to be acknowledged in the classroom. Many participants commented that they were now more comfortable talking to students about religion and asking students questions about their religions. One participant recognized that her fear and hesitancy to talk about religion had held her back from being able to engage fully with a former student:

When we were at the Sikh Gurdwara one of my former students was there singing. I wished so badly that I had taken this course before I had her in class. I

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always felt so ignorant and uneducated about the Sikh religion and did not want to offend her, so I never asked all of the questions I wanted to about her religion when she was in my class. It would have been such a great way for my entire class to learn about Sikhism. [76]

This teacher had clearly recognized that she had a Sikh student, but was unsure of how to engage with that part of the student's identity. Therefore, this teacher, and likely the other students, remained ignorant about Sikhism. The student did not have an opportunity to share that part of her identity with others and was not able to see that the teacher recognized and valued that identity.

In contrast, another teacher had been completely unaware that one of her students was Sikh: "Last year I had a student with the last name Kaur. Her father wore a turban. Because of my ignorance, I had no idea that related to the Sikh religion. I didn't observe any problems as a result of her religion, but this may be helpful in the future" [131]. Although the teacher was not aware of any issues related to this student's religious identity, the student could have faced challenges that the teacher was also unable to recognize because she did not have the requisite religious literacy.

While increased knowledge about religion enabled participants to recognize religious identities and be more willing to engage with students' religious identities, this knowledge also came with a recognition of the struggles of religious minority students that teachers may not have been aware of before. A high proportion of religious minority students experience bullying, discrimination, and misunderstanding in schools (Balaji, Khanna, Dinakar, Voruganti, & Pallod, 2016), but these experiences may not be apparent to educators who also do not recognize those students as members of those religious

traditions. Guest speakers, including students and parents, brought these experiences to light and helped participants to reflect on the experiences of religious minority students:

> It was particularly helpful learning from faith representatives what information they wished educators would know about their faith practices and beliefs. Although the answers will be very diverse for each individual, it was helpful to get a better understanding of how certain well-intentioned behaviors by educators could make students of various faiths uncomfortable. [84]

As a school counselor, this participant is likely to have direct conversations with students about religious identity in the future and may be able to better advocate for students with other educators in the building. Knowing about the concerns of students and how they want adults in the school to acknowledge their religious identities can help educators better respond to those students and provide suitable supports and resources. Hearing directly from students about religion put students and teachers on more equal ground. Students felt that their teachers were willing and interested in learning more about their identities, and teachers no longer felt that religion was a taboo topic. This enabled teachers to view students as "knowers and actors" in the expression of their religious identities rather than as the "recipients or victim of teachers' (or administrators') decision-making processes" (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 9).

Although acknowledgment of religious identities can build stronger student-teacher relationships, there are appropriate ways of approaching these conversations and asking students to share about their religions. Participants learned about the importance of giving the student the power to share as much or as little as they wish about their religion. Students should not be asked to speak authoritatively about an entire religious

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tradition or feel that they have the responsibility to educate their peers and teachers about their religion.

Some students do not want to share their religious identity in the classroom. One of the guest speakers for Program 3 was a graduate of a high school in that district, and she spoke about hiding her Muslim identity from her classmates and teachers throughout high school. One participants summarized: "she and her sister both have asked their mother not to come to school functions because they are embarrassed or just afraid how students would respond if they realized she is Muslim -- and this is at a fairly liberal, accepting community" [25]. This story deeply resonated with participants, and several of the Program 3 teachers commented on it. Hearing from students and other guest speakers gave participants insight into how religious identities impact students' and families experiences of school.

Some participants responded to recognizing these student experiences by becoming more active advocates for their students. In particular, a couple of participants stated that they would be able to better respond to incidents of bullying:

"I sometimes overhear students making fun of a religion, so I believe that I will be able to more actively fight against that by raising awareness to students that act that way." [12]

"Listening to how students face issues of bullying or misunderstanding at school, both from their peers and their teachers, stuck with me since the conclusion of the course. Becoming an ally and an advocate at my school for these students is

something I can directly control and change as a product of my learning through

this course." [51]

Some religious minority students may not want to stand up for themselves because they

do not want to draw attention to their religious identities. And some face additional

barriers. One person explained: "I work with students with significant disabilities who

cannot always advocate for themselves. I wanted to take this class to be more culturally

responsive to different religions and practices" [44]. Olivia described another vulnerable

population:

> Unfortunately, most of our students who are religious minorities are also EL
>
> students. So their parents don't know how to advocate for their kids. They
>
> probably don't even know that they are entitled to a space to pray or, certain
>
> dietary preferences.

 She supported the Muslim students in her school during Ramadan by creating space in

the library for them to spend their lunch period rather than be in the cafeteria. Feeling

better equipped to recognize insensitivity towards religion, to advocate for religious

students, and simply engage in conversations with students about religion bolstered the

confidence of the participants, regardless of how frequently they encountered religion in

their classrooms or other roles.

Confidence, Language, and Vocabulary

Participants were asked about confidence in both closed and open-ended

questions. On Surveys 1 and 2, they responded to a series of eight situations involving

religion in schools with their degree of confidence on a scale of one to five (1=Really Not

Confident, 2=Not Confident, 3=Not Sure, 4=Confident, 5=Very confident). Table 4.7 displays the mean responses for all items on both surveys. On Survey 1, the overall mean confidence score was 3.17, which corresponds with the "Not Sure" response.

Before the courses, of all of the situations, participants were most confident responding to incidents of religiously motivated bullying (3.50) and least confident talking about reasons for teaching about religion with parents (2.96). Given the recent attention to bullying in schools, it is possible that some educators had prior training about responding to bullying of all kinds. In contrast, very few teachers have ever received any instruction about how to teach about religion or how to explain the reasons for teaching about religion. For this reason, it is logical that teachers might be less confident talking about religion with parents. Other items that were ranked with fairly low confidence included the three items about talking with students about religion outside of a lesson, such as answering questions about religion in the context of current events or responding to a dispute or disagreement about religion between students.

On Survey 2, the overall mean confidence rating was 4.0, which corresponds the "Confident" response. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the overall mean confidence ratings on Surveys 1 and 2. There was a statistically significant difference in the mean confidence ratings from Survey 1 (M=3.17, SD=0.762) to Survey 2 (M=4.00, SD=0.463); $t(66) = -9.814$, $p < 0.001$. This suggests that the courses had a meaningful impact on participants' confidence regarding religion in school, with an average increase in confidence by 0.83 points, almost a full level on the scale.

Table 4.7

Mean Confidence Ratings (Matched pairs, Surveys 1 and 2; N=68)

	Survey 1			Survey 2			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean change
Responding to an incident of religiously motivated bullying	68	3.50	0.922	69	4.31	0.580	0.810
Responding to a student comment or question that perpetuates a stereotype about a religious group	68	3.46	0.88	69	4.35	0.512	0.890
Discussing reasons for teaching about religion with teachers, staff, or administrators	68	3.24	1.053	69	4.31	0.652	1.070
Answering a student question about religion in the context of a lesson	68	3.18	0.945	69	3.93	0.649	0.750
Answering a student question about religion in the context current events	68	3.07	0.919	69	3.71	0.793	0.640
Responding effectively to a dispute or disagreement about religion between students in class	68	3.01	1.029	69	3.88	0.744	0.870
Responding to student questions in the context of students' personal faith or spiritually	67	3.01	0.826	68	3.42	0.801	0.410
Discussing reasons for teaching about religion with parents	67	2.96	1.134	69	4.13	0.736	1.170
Mean Confidence	67	3.17	0.762	67	4.00	0.463	0.830

The participants indicated that they were more confident on all of the items after completing the courses. The two items with the greatest increase were about discussing reasons for teaching about religion with parents and with teachers, staff, or

administrators. On average, participants increased their rating of these two items by a full level. In the qualitative responses, participants stated that they felt that they had acquired the vocabulary or language be able to talk about religion, which may account for the demonstrable increase in confidence on these two items.

The item about responding to student questions in the contexts of students' personal faith or spirituality showed the least increase. On Survey 1, the mean rating was 3.01, and there was 0.4 increase to a rating of 3.42 on Survey 2. Responding to these types of questions can be a particularly challenging situation. Survey 2 was administered immediately after the programs, prior to teachers returning to their classrooms, and, therefore, participants were unlikely to have actually encountered any of these scenarios since the courses and, therefore, have any practice responding.

Participants also demonstrated increased confidence and comfort with religion in school in the qualitative responses. Many responses referred to feeling of overall increased confidence. One person quantified their increased confidence as such: "On a scale from 0-5 zero being lowest confidence level...I am a 4. I was a 2.5 before" [140]. Other participants qualified their responses in terms of what they had learned and what they still needed to learn. For some, the course gave them a great deal of confidence: "It's given me 100% more confidence than what I had upon entering the class. I still feel like I have a lot to learn, but walked away with a much better sense of religions I wasn't aware of" [41]. Even though these short courses could not provide a comprehensive and in-depth treatment of all of the religious traditions, they provided participants with frameworks for approaching the study of religion and a wide range of resources to access as they continue their learning. Some people need to have a greater depth of content

knowledge before they feel comfortable teaching a subject, and these courses did not necessarily provide that depth of knowledge. One participant commented, "I feel that this class has answered a lot of questions but also raised many more. At this point, I will be very uncomfortable teaching about religion. That being said, I now know the resources that I can use to learn more" [104]. For another participant, the course actually helped them to feel more secure about the limits of their knowledge by providing a framework for thinking about religion: "My confidence has increased because of this class. I better understand that I don't have to know all nuances of religions but rather how to focus on respect of differences. The 3B model was also a concrete way for me to analyze religions" [116]. In this way, participants were able to improve their perceived self-efficacy around learning and teaching about religion.

Another theme in the comments about increased comfort and confidence was related to participants' fear and discomfort with religion prior to the courses. Of the participants who did not teach about religion, directly or indirectly, in the previous school year, about 20% said that they had not taught about religion because they did not feel prepared or were uncertain about the legal aspects. For some teachers, this resulted in avoidance or even fear of religion in the classroom.

These fears were lessened, but not necessarily entirely quelled by participants' experiences with these professional development programs. One respondent stated, "I am certainly less scared to have the discussion now. I've been terrified in the past" [44]. Although "less scared" is an improvement over "terrified," it still reflects a degree of perceived risk. Another participant learned for the first time that they were even allowed to teach about religion:

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"I really did not know we could teach about religion in the public school. I knew of the First Amendment...but I thought we could not discuss religion. Now, I know we can, and I have this class and resources to support me. I think I would seek out support from my administrator, but feel there is a support system in place, now." [67]

Other participants made larger shifts in their approach to religion in the classroom:

"This course had a major impact. In the past, I have COMPLETELY steered clear of any discussions related to religion. However, I feel I now have enough knowledge to teach about religion without concern that it will sounds like I am preaching about religion. I also think I am better suited to recognize when someone is being religiously insensitive and improve the situation." [40, emphasis in original]

Regardless of whether someone became much more comfortable confronting religious insensitivity or simply became "less scared" to discuss religion, these increases in confidence allow religion to be a more openly discussed topic and less taboo. One of the barriers to improving understanding of religion in schools is the persistent silence and avoidance of the topic. Mary nicely summarized the reasons for these silences, "Before? I think I just felt so ignorant, you know? And so I think we kind of as teachers stay away from things that we don't feel like we're very well versed in." Because teachers are authority figures and sources of knowledge, it can be hard to admit that they do not know something and will move to avoid it.

Some participants were not necessarily uncomfortable with religion prior to the courses, but their increased knowledge about religion made them more open to

encouraging those conversations. As a counselor, Bethany described herself as "pretty blunt and pretty straightforward" and was not afraid to talk about religion. However, she commented,

> I feel like from that class I was given permission or language to have conversations with kids… it almost reminded me it's okay to ask the student to teach me and to educate me and to let me into their world. And from that class, I remember feeling like I got a little bit of the language to do that.

Grace had not been uncomfortable talking with her third graders, but following the course, she was more open when kids shared about religion-related events or experiences. She described this change,

> I had more of a connection now because now that I've seen where they go [to houses of worship], I was like, oh yeah, I've been there, or yeah, I've been to a Diwali party, and I guess just having that connection with kids, feeling a little bit more connected with them.

Bethany and Grace did not actively avoid discussions of religion like some of the participants discussed above, but being more knowledgeable enabled them to encourage to embrace those conversations when they came up and develop stronger connections with their students. Bethany felt that students responded positively to just knowing that she had taken the course and had an interest in learning more about religion. She felt more confident having conversations about religion with the students, but the students also felt more comfortable because they knew that she had already taken steps to learn more about religion prior to that interaction.

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Comfort with talking about religion in general was another theme in the responses. Bethany and Grace's responses demonstrate comfort with responding to conversations when students bring up religion. However, one significant development was that some participants also became more comfortable *initiating* conversations about religion. Having more knowledge about religion and understanding of religious diversity in school and comfort with talking about religion went hand-in-hand for some respondents:

> "I think I am more aware of how religious identity may impact families and students within the school environment. I am also more confident about how to open the conversation about religious identity in a culturally sensitive manner." [83]

> "It has made me way more comfortable having an intelligent conversation and has made me further appreciate student diversity." [104]

Because of the aforementioned silence about religion, many teachers may not have ever observed appropriate conversations about religion in the classroom. Having models to follow and a clear understanding of reasons for teaching about religion and approaches to teaching about religion enabled some participants to be more comfortable:

> "I have also seen modeled how to talk about religion in the classroom." [133]

> "[The course] made me more confident and comfortable and gave me more language to explain what I am doing to others who have lots of questions about it." [89]

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"This course made me more confident by provided information about dialoguing. This course also stressed how to discuss religion in a school-appropriate manner." [51]

Learning the appropriate language to use when talking about religion came up in a few responses. Bethany's comments above refer to language; at another point in the interview, she said that the course "give me enough language and enough experience to ask educated questions." Some of this language came from the frameworks related to the premises of religious studies and the construction of religious identities through belief, behavior, and belonging. Additionally, the phrasing that differentiates between teaching religion and teaching *about* religion provided clarity about the appropriate relationship between religion and public schools. Fiona repeatedly stressed that the course gave her the language to explain reasons and approaches for teaching about religion: "I really fine-tuned the language and learned new ways of presenting it."

This language was not just valuable for talking to administrators or colleagues. Fiona also saw her understanding and knowledge about religion as another way to connect with students: "we have another vehicle to open and access to teach children, if we have this understanding [about religion] …it's another language to be able to talk to children with." Mary also discussed how her knowledge about religion provided greater access to language, although in a more literal manner, for her English language learner students:

I would never discourage by any means a student bringing up religion if they wanted to talk about it, but [now] when the kids are speaking [about religion] and others aren't understanding them just because they don't have enough English yet,

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I feel a lot more comfortable when I can jump in and say I think this is what he or she is trying to say. And before this course, I didn't have that much, as much of a comfort level.

Being familiar with the language to talk about religion is an important step in becoming more comfortable talking about and teaching about religion. Recent research has found that the use of language about religion and spirituality has declined in everyday conversation and in written works (Barna Group, 2018; Kesebir & Kesebir, 2012; Merritt, 2018b). Merritt (2018a) claims that one of the reasons for this decline is fear, because "sacred rhetoric feels socially risky, [it is] no wonder some people are afraid to do it at all" (p. 28). Although the research conducted by the Barna Group (2018) focused primarily on the language about personal religious and spiritual identities, the findings have broader implications for the comfort and everyday use of language about religion. Without some knowledge about religion and comfort with the language and vocabulary, the building blocks of literacy, it will be challenging to increase understanding about religious diversity. Many of the participants in this study have begun to develop that language and confidence and bring those conversations into their schools and classrooms.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed four themes: personal and professional motivations for attending the courses, the importance of experiential learning during the courses, the impact of the courses on participants' conceptions of religion, wide range of applications for participants' learning across multiple contexts. The diverse participants in this study came to the professional development courses for varied reasons but overall found the experiences to be positive and to produce positive impacts in their work and teaching.

The site visits and guest speakers had a particular impact by providing experiences that humanized the religious other and helping participants to increase their understanding of religion in ways that could not be completely replicated in a classroom setting. These experiences and the other learning during the courses also had the effect of complicating participants' conceptualization of religion. Finally, educators working in all subjects and at all grades experienced meaningful impacts on their teaching, from enhanced pedagogical strategies to increased comfort and confidence responding to religion in a range of school contexts.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss the findings. I connect the findings to the framework of Pedagogical Content Knowledge about Religion (PCKR) described in Chapter 2. This framework is based in two assertions, that teacher education about religion is valuable for *all* educators, and that there are multiple dimensions to what teachers need to know about religion. These assertions are reflected in each of the four themes presented in the previous chapter. This chapter first discusses the expression of the five domains of PCKR in the context of these themes and then concludes with a re-examination of the PCKR framework in light of the findings of this study.

Educators' Motivations

The first research question examined the participants' motivations for attending the courses and who the educators were who chose to attend these courses. In some ways, the findings here fit my expectations about what types of teachers might attend this professional development, and, in other ways, they were surprising. It was unsurprising that the majority of the participants were middle and high school teachers, and of those, the majority taught a humanities subject. However, it was surprising that 20% of the participants worked in early childhood and elementary education. It was also surprising that almost 30% taught a STEM subject. These teachers only occasionally encounter religion in their curriculum, and they are often not included in discussions about improving the understanding of religion. However, that these educators chose to participate in these courses highlights the fact that this professional development is relevant to all educators. While most elementary teachers or high school STEM teachers may not regularly think about religion in relation to their work, there were clearly some

who were aware of the importance of religion in their specific contexts. It may be more challenging to promote professional development about religion to these teachers, but there are connections to be made nonetheless.

The three primary reasons that participants gave as their motivations for attending the courses were: (1) personal interest in religion; (2) a conviction that religion is an important topic for students to know about; and (3) the presence of religious diversity in their school. The first two reasons approach religion from a positive stance, seeking to learn more about religion to benefit one's self and/or one's students. The third may be the result of more mixed feelings about religion. While some educators embrace religious and cultural diversity in their schools and seek to directly engage students with topics related to diversity, others struggle to find the appropriate response (Taggar, 2006). Regardless of an individual's views on the religious diversity in their school, the fact that they choose to learn more about religion through a professional development course, rather than ignore its presence, is a positive step.

Given that most teachers are unprepared to address religion in schools, I expected that more participants would have sought out this professional development because they had encountered religion in the school and not known how to respond. The courses would, in this case, be an opportunity to fill gaps in their knowledge. I also expected that controversies related to religion would be a more common motivator, but they ended up being selected by less than one third of the participants. It is encouraging that negative experiences were not a dominant motivator, although this may be interpreted in two ways. It may suggest that the majority of the participants in this study had not had notably negative encounters with religion in the school context, and, therefore, choose to

attend these courses. Alternately, or concurrently, it may also suggest that educators who have had negative experiences with religion in school, or even outside of the school context, are less inclined to voluntarily attend a course about religious diversity. A broader survey of educators in a district that offered one of these courses would be necessary in order to better understand the possible connections between past negative experiences with religion and interest in and experiences during professional development about religion.

After the courses, a greater percentage of participants said that they chose to attend the course because they had encountered religion, in and outside of classes, and had not known how to respond. Although these reasons were still only selected by less than 40% of the participants on Survey 2, there was an increase of more than 10 percentage points for on each of the items. As noted in the previous chapter, this increase may be due to participants recognizing more connections to religions and realizing that they were not as equipped to respond as they had thought they were. When considering how to appeal to other educators for future offerings of these types of courses, attention to this delayed recognition of areas of weakness may be important. If educators are unaware of what they do not know or where their weakness are, they are unlikely to take the initiative to seek out professional development in those areas.

Up to this point, the majority of the work done to provide training and professional development about religion for public schools has been in response to a problem or controversy, such as a guest speaker who decides to proselytize, a lesson that steps over the Establishment Clause line, or a violation of students' religious liberty rights (e.g. Balingit, 2017; Balingit & Brown, 2015; Wertheimer, 2015). This remedial

work is important and will continue to be necessary. Each incident or controversy, although disruptive to individual schools and communities, provides valuable insights into what types of misunderstanding need to be addressed and how religion is currently being treated in schools. However, working only in a reactive manner to fix weaknesses or problems as they arise does not solve the larger problem of the cycle of silence about religion in education. This current tactic also offers limited opportunities to develop innovative approaches to teacher education about religion. These findings point to the possible efficacy of a more *proactive* approach. It is clear that some teachers already recognize that their schools are religiously diverse and that religion is an important topic for students to learn about, but the current lack of professional development opportunities poses a barrier for them to increase their understanding of religion. Other educators may need to be convinced of the importance of learning about religion, but the multiple motivators among the participants in this study point to a range of ways to appeal to educators about the value of professional development on this topic.

The Value of Site Visits and Experiential Learning

The second research question sought to determine which aspects of the professional development courses had the most substantial impacts. The site visits and guest speakers clearly emerged as the most meaningful elements of the courses. However, whether it is appropriate to incorporate guest speakers and site visits in the academic study of religion is debated among educators and scholars of teaching about religion (Brady, Marcus, & Camardella, 2018; Graziano, Grelle, Marcus, Robinson, & Moore, 2018; Moore, 2007; Wertheimer, 2015). A few scholars argue that guest speakers and site visits should *never* be used as part of the academic study of religion. Diane

Moore (2007) argues that "it is never appropriate for a religious practitioner to be put in a situation where s/he is expected or allowed to represent the tradition simply by virtue of being a practitioner" (p. 202). The majority of educators and scholars, however, recognize that speakers and site visits carry risks, but they also acknowledge that these experiences provide insights into religions that cannot be replicated in the classroom (M. S. Berger, 2004; Flueckiger, 2004; Long, 2018). Some of the concerns include crossing First Amendment lines, participants generalizing about entire religious traditions based on an individual visit or speaker, and the affective dimensions of experiential learning.

The legal risks of site visits and guest speakers are somewhat decreased when the participants are adults who elected to take a professional development course about religion, rather than minors who are compelled to attend school. Adults can better understand the ramifications of maintaining appropriate boundaries between the observation and practice of religious rituals and then make choices about how much or how little they would like to participate in any aspect of a site visit. However, the legal and civic aspects should still be taken into account. Although participants did not explicitly discuss the First Amendment in relation to the sites visits or guest speakers in the survey responses or interviews, these experiences still increased civic literacy. By visiting religious communities near or within their communities, the participants gained a deeper understanding of the roles these communities play in civic life and a better sense of the religious landscape in which they are situated.

The tension between teaching complexity and generalization is found across pedagogies of religious studies, particularly in introductory courses and intensive immersion experiences such as the courses in this study. The role of site visits in

mitigating this tension is disputed. From one perspective, there is concern that participants in the visit will extrapolate the experience of a site visit into generalizations about an entire religious tradition (Moore, 2010). From another perspective, site visits are a chance to combat generalizations by giving the participants the opportunity to encounter the particularities of one example of that tradition (M. S. Berger, 2004; Estey, 2014). The concerns about generalizations, either that participants will generalize or that the experiences will reinforce existing assumptions or stereotypes, are valid and deserves appropriate attention before and after the experiences. This position does not discount the pedagogical power of site visits, but recognizes the potential for that powerful experience to distort understandings, such that "the power of the experience is such that it can become mistakenly enshrined in the student's mind as outweighing other sources of knowledge" (Long, 2018, p. 83).

The experience of directly witnessing and interacting with a religious community cannot be fully replicated in a classroom setting. The participants in this study emphasized the positive impact of the site visits and guest speakers and explicitly contrasted those experiences with learning about the same content from just texts or lectures. The experiential learning context can move participants from an intellectual understanding of a religious practice or tenant to a fuller, embodied understanding. For example:

One can read about the Ummah (community of Muslims), but when one sees people standing shoulder to shoulder in a mosque, with no distinctions on the basis of race or socioeconomic status, praying with their entire bodies, one gains a

more visceral understanding of what the Ummah means to Muslims. (Hickey &

Suárez, 2018, p. 119)

When considering the Religious Studies Knowledge domain, it is important to address the intellectual content and theoretical foundations of the discipline, *and* the embodied ways in which different communities interpret different elements of religious traditions. Site visits are an opportunity to develop an understanding of diverse ways in which religion are expressed in the real world, which also emphasizing many different forms of knowledge about religion. Site visits or field trips should not be the primary mode of introducing content knowledge about a religion, but they can enhance and supplement that knowledge.

Researchers in Germany examined the experiences of third grade students participating in field trips to churches as part of their religious education curriculum, looking for impacts on students' abilities to interpret religious symbols and stories and to participate in religious discourse (Riegel & Kindermann, 2016). They found that while there was some impact on students' competencies in those two areas, "the additional value of field trips rather lies in the impressions beyond pure information attained by the students, like the experience of atmosphere and space" (Riegel & Kindermann, 2016, p. 112). It is valuable for educators to recognize the complexities of knowledge about religion and reflect on how that complexity impacts that pedagogies used to address that content in the classroom and through site visits.

This is not to say, however, that it is impossible for students or educators to develop a complex understanding of religion without the experience of visiting religious sites. The use of a board range of sources, including first person narratives, film, and

other media, can inform a rigorous curriculum that enables students to develop strong analytical skills and robust understanding of the many ways in which religions are expressed in the world. Both the cultural studies approach (Moore, 2007) and a lived religions approach (Goldschmidt, 2013) offer pedagogical strategies for engaging students in authentic inquiry and dialogue about religious diversity.

As a sort of middle ground, a few educators have begun experimenting with the use of virtual reality and 360-degree video to replicate some of the elements of visits to religious sites (Johnson, 2018). Advances in technology and the recent availability of relatively low-cost 360-degree cameras and virtual reality headsets can enable students

> to become virtually immersed in religious experiences anywhere in the world at very little cost. One no longer needs to travel abroad to get a taste of what it is like at the Kumbh Mela or to chant with Tibetan monks in the Himalaya. (Johnson, 2018, p. 229)

Virtual reality site visits have the potential to overcome typical barriers to field trip, such as time, distance, cost, as well as other restrictions such as the perseveration of historical or ecologically-fragile sites or sites that do not allow outsiders to visit (George, 2018; Schott & Marshall, 2018). Although a virtual visit to a religious site could never entirely replace real-world experiences, some of the early research on the use of these experiences appears to indicate that virtual experiences can have an impact on users' feelings of empathy while also providing a sense of a being at a safe distance (Johnson, 2018; Korbey, 2017). This may be an interesting option to explore in future research on professional development about religion.

The site visits had the effect of enhancing participants' content knowledge about the different religious traditions, but this was not the only goal of the courses. The development of cultural responsiveness was also an important outcome of the experiences of the site visits and guest speakers. For the majority of the participants, this professional development course was their first time visiting houses of worship other than their own. While they were likely to have previously interacted with people from other religious traditions, it is less likely that they would have had conversations explicitly about religious identities and experiences. Cultural competency requires the ability to have conversations about differences and be comfortable with interactions with people from different religious and cultural backgrounds. By leaving the classroom setting, the courses gave participants opportunities to practice these skills and apply their increased content knowledge in real-world settings.

Another possible concern about site visits is the potential for the educational experience to go beyond just learning *about* a religious tradition to learning *from* a religious tradition. The affective elements of experiential learning, including developing empathetic understandings of different religious traditions, can begin to move away from an attempt at an objective, analytical approach to the study of religion. In some contexts, particularly in Europe, learning *from* the religious traditions being studied is actually a part of the pedagogical aims (Everington, 2007; Jackson, 2004; Teece, 2010). In this approach, students "are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs, values, and decisions" (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2007, p. 45), and the learning

is potentially transformative of students' own religious self-understanding… [and the] engagement in 'conversations' about different worldviews and ways of life sometimes lead students to reassess their own worldviews and ways of life. (Grelle, 2005, p. 30)

In light of the First Amendment, U.S. public schools cannot seek to influence students' self-understanding of their religious identity or alter their ways of life through the study of religion, as that would constitute the promotion of religion. The personal and subjective nature of site visits creates possibilities for learning and interpretation which are more open-ended. This can mean giving up some control of the learning outcomes for participants, which can be risky. In the context of these professional development courses, the personal and subjective nature of the site visits resulted in learning outcomes which were ultimately highly valuable for the participants.

One particularly meaningful outcome of site visits and other interactions with members of a religious community appears to be that the participants developed a greater sense of empathy toward that community. As experiential learning activities, these are not purely intellectual exercises; there is an embodied and affective element to this type of learning (Estey, 2014; Long, 2018). Ashcraft (2015) takes his college students on field trips to new religions (e.g. Scientology, Soka Gakkai, the Unification Church), "hop[ing] the field trip will rattle my students' cages" (p. 38). These field trips require that students confront questions about what qualifies as a religion, and Ashcraft expects that the experiences may be unsettling. He goes on to say, "I believe that discomfort can be a useful emotion for learning. I don't want my students to feel pain, but I do want them to feel the ground shifting under their feet" (p. 38). These feelings are likely heightened by

the additional factor of studying new religions, which are even more unfamiliar and subject to negative stereotypes than the "traditional" world religions, but the importance of the emotional impact is similar. Some participants expressed feelings of discomfort, but were also able to use that discomfort as a learning experiences. Through interactions with members of different religious communities, participants not only had the chance to "find out there is nothing to fear" [66], but also "see religion through the eyes of a real person with feelings" [55].

The site visits provided participants with the opportunity to confront their assumptions about unfamiliar religious communities. There were both voiced and unvoiced concerns about the experiences, including anxieties about how they would be received by the host communities. However, most participants were surprised at the level of hospitality that they experienced at each site. Although most participants in this study did not explicitly articulate a recognition of the dissonance between their expectations and their actual experience, this experience is not isolated to this specific group of participants. In Long's (2018) reflections on taking college students to visit a Hindu temple, he describes a student who "who felt reservations about being in the worship space of another tradition and then felt ashamed of those reservations upon seeing the warm welcome that she and her fellow students received from the Hindu community" (p. 91). This student's reflections on this experience led her to realize that "this expectation was a function of her worldview. In her words, this expectation was a 'need.' She had needed the other to be scary and intimidating" (Long, 2018, p. 91), but the site visit gave her an opportunity to revise her assumptions about the religious other. Timothy described the impact of visiting a mosque for the first time during the course, despite the

opportunity to go with a Muslim family member, and recognizing that his concerns were unfounded. It appears that he also "needed" his fears and assumptions about what the experiences would be like, perhaps in order to help justify his reasons for not having visited before. Although these types of personal revelations may not be explicit goals of the courses, they can be powerful experiences.

Learning about religious traditions in a classroom setting can have the effect of dispelling stereotypes and assumptions, but directly confronting the religious other and seeing them as a fellow human being requires a greater degree of self-reflection about those assumptions and their implications. Orsi (2003) describes the effects of a lived religion approach to the study of religion:

> This way of approaching religious worlds eliminates the comfort of academic distance and undermines confidence and authority of claims of 'we are not them' and 'they are not us.' We may not condone or celebrate the religious practices of others, but we cannot dismiss them as inhuman, so alien from us that they cannot be understood or approached. (p. 174)

Participants were not expected to agree with everything that they saw or heard during the courses. But these were opportunities to close some of the distance between themselves and unfamiliar religious communities. For many participants, this involved facing their assumptions about the religious other and reflecting on how they had previously responded to religious diversity in the school context.

The weight of the value placed on the site visits and guest speakers by the participants raises questions about the possible detriments of emphasizing these experiences possibly at the expense of other modes of learning. In the description of his

theory of experience and learning, Dewey (1938) was careful to caution that learning

through experiences is not inherently beneficial, that the nature and quality of the

experiences matter:

> Some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the
>
> effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. Any experience
>
> may be such as to engender callousness; it may produce lack of sensitivity and of
>
> responsiveness…Any experience may be immediately enjoyable and yet promote
>
> the formation of a slack or careless attitude. (p. 25-26)

Although the data indicate that these particular experiences produced *increased*

sensitivity and responsiveness, one of the limitations of the study is the likelihood that

those educators with negative experiences of the site visits or courses did not choose to

complete the surveys or participate in interviews. The potential negative outcomes that

Dewey warns against can easily be imagined in response to visits to religious sites,

especially depending on individuals' pre-existing assumptions and attitudes towards other

religions. The enjoyable, engaging, and group aspects of the experiences may also have

an effect on how educative a visit can be. There are different perspectives about how to

structure site visits for the best educational experiences, as guided visits in a group or as

individual visits to a regularly scheduled service (Flueckiger, 2004; Long, 2018).

Although group visits can help participants get past social barriers and feel more

comfortable going into an unfamiliar setting, as several educators in this study

commented on, individual visits have the potential to allow for more authentic

interactions with members of community when an instructor or other outside authority is

not present to mediate the experience (Flueckiger, 2004). Experiencing site visits as a

part of a group may also produce social pressures to mask discomforts and limit self-reflection about challenges to one's assumptions or stereotypes. However, theorists of experiential education do not suggest that experiences should be left to stand on their own (Dewey, 1922; Kolb, 1984; Moon, 2004). Reflection and synthesis of the knowledge generated from experiences are a critical to the cognitive processes "whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38).

Beyond concerns of experiential learning doing more harm than good, there are also critiques of the primacy that is often given to first-hand experiences as the most reliable and vivid sources of knowledge (Buchmann & Schwille, 1983). Although firsthand experiences are powerful learning tools, they are also by nature finite and easily biased by "inferences that are readily made but unwarranted…[and by] the personal and affective qualities of firsthand experience" (Buchmann & Schwille, 1983, p. 43). An uncritical acceptance of knowledge gained through direct experience can result in a partial understanding of the world and does not necessarily encourage the consideration of a wider range of possibilities or alternative explanations. This is one of the concerns of those who fear that learning about religion from site visits will results in inaccurate or biased generalizations based on a single experience. What possibilities for understanding are created when religions are approached in terms of teachings and doctrines that are not available when the focus is on experience? How much weight should be given to experiential learning when it comes to the study of religion?

The limitations and risks of site visits and guest speakers should not be minimized or ignored. However, the findings in this study strongly indicate that these experiences played a vital role in educators' learning about religious diversity. This is evident from

the participants' statements about the importance of the site visits and guest speakers and in the ways they described the impacts on their teaching. The connections between the method of learning and the subject matter at hand are an important consideration (Dewey, 1922). Because religion cannot be confined to the intellectual realm, but is also a part of "the world of things and persons" (Dewey, 1922, p. 193), it follows that the methods for learning about religion should take into account the nature of the subject matter. The lived religion approach to learning about religions allows participants to encounter the messiness of religion, but not preclude attention to more theoretical matters. This is important for educators who are faced with responding to the full range of students' experiences and identities and tasked with making sense of the relationship between religion and public life. Although different scholars have developed varying recommendations of the knowledge required for culturally responsive teachers, there is generally consensus that teachers need knowledge about cultural diversity that "goes beyond mere awareness of, respect for, and general recognition of the fact that ethnic groups have different values or express similar values in different ways" (Brown, 2007, p. 59). One way for educators to develop this type of knowledge about religious identities is to engage directly with religious communities to develop a greater understanding of the lived realities of the religious experiences of their students.

Developing More Advanced Conceptions of Religion

The Religious Studies Knowledge domain of PCKR is challenging because there are so many possible variations on what educators need to know based on different contexts and factors. Secondary history teachers need broader content knowledge about religion than early childhood teachers; teachers in a rural, primarily Catholic, New

England school district need different content knowledge than teachers in a suburban, Midwestern district with a large recent immigrant community. However, following from Shulman (1987), the Religious Studies Knowledge domain not only includes factual knowledge about religion, but also an understanding of the disciplinary structures of religious studies. Teachers should be able to consider the questions: "What are the important ideas and skills in this domain? and How are new ideas added and deficient ones dropped by those who produce knowledge in this area? That is, what are the rules and procedures of good scholarship or inquiry?" (Shulman, 1987, p. 9). In religious studies, this includes an understanding of the three premises of the nature of religion (Moore, 2010), frameworks for constructing religious identity, (Marcus, 2018), and complexity of the expression of religious identities within the lived experiences of individuals and communities (McGuire, 2008).

These understandings are important because they influence how teachers think about religion in their contexts. When educators have a more complex conception of religion, they can play a role in dismantling stereotypes about religion that are frequently advanced in public discourse and prevent those stereotypes from being replicated in their students. These participants came to recognize "that religion can't be viewed on a shelf" [95]. This has implications for how educators understand religion as playing an active role in the construction of students' identities and in the school community. This dynamic view of religion is necessary to be able to consider the intersections of religion with other identities, including race and gender. As political and ideological lines increasingly fall along both racial and religious lines (Jones, 2016), the ability to recognize the influences

of religion and apply a critical lens to the role of religion is a vital skill, for both teachers and students.

For those educators who do teach directly about religion, having a more complex understanding of religion enables them to critique, rather than reinforce, artificial structures and assumptions about religion that are promoted in the world religion paradigm (Ramsey, 2016). When teachers are not provided with appropriate education about religion, they are likely to fall back on the stereotypes and impressions that they have picked up from popular media, their family and cultural backgrounds, or even lessons from childhood religious education, such as Sunday school. However, not only were those lessons taught from a confessional lens, "such learning, dispensed originally to infant, young child, or preadolescent, will seem simplistic when set alongside subjects studied in college" (Marty & Moore, 2000, p. 48).

We expect that the treatment of chemistry and history will be more sophisticated than what teachers learned from the childhood chemistry sets and *American Girl* dolls. Shouldn't we also have higher expectations for the treatment of religion in the curriculum? When religion is given a second-class treatment in the classroom, students learn that is it not as significant as other social forces or identities. When educators develop a more sophisticated understanding of religion, they can give it ensure that is it taken seriously across the curriculum and in the broader school community.

Impacts on Practice

The wide range of impacts on the participants' professional practice demonstrate the multiple domains of PCKR and the application of the framework to educators at all levels and content areas. While legal and civic literacy was not emphasized in the data, a

few people commented that they had not known that they could legally teach about religion or did not fully grasp some of the implications of the First Amendment in public schools. A minority of the participants regularly had the occasion to teach directly about religion, but several of these teachers found valuable pedagogical strategies from the courses that they were able to implement in their classrooms.

For the majority of the participants, the most significant impacts were in the Cultural Competency and Responsiveness domain. They reported that increased knowledge about religions, including the lived experiences of several different traditions, enabled them to engage with religiously diversity students in new ways.

One of the key findings in this study was that participants were more aware of students' religious identities and more willing to engage in conversations about religion when students brought up the topic. This openness to religion in the everyday discourse of the school is crucial. In the beginning of his book, *Taking Religion to School: Christian Theology and Secular Education,* Webb (2000) describes his experience in seventh grade when a teacher reprimanded him and his friends for a lunchtime conversation about religion, telling them that they should not be talking about religion at school. This humiliating incident and the ongoing suggestions throughout middle and high school that religion was not welcome in school had a profound effect: "Consequently, I carried my faith as a burden that was too heavy to take to school. It was easier to leave it at home, so I began developing two lives with little connection between them" (Webb, 2000, p. 28). During a crucial period of identity development, the rejection of conversations about religion, let alone religious identities, resulted in the bifurcation of Webb's identity into an intellectual self that could be expressed and nurtured at school

and a religious self, connected to emotional development and expression, that was limited to particular spaces. Webb (2000) describes the impact of this situation:

> Only unhealthy consequences can flow when religion is reduced to one aspect of personal development. I wavered between an emotionalism that sent me off in extreme directions and often ended in depression and self-hate and an intellectualism that alienated me from my family and classmates. (p. 29)

Although Webb's subsequent pedagogical recommendations to prevent this experience for other religious students veer too far towards a confessional approach, he paints a very vivid picture of the consequences when teachers outright reject religion from the school and do not allow students to bring their whole selves into the classroom. Identities cannot be developed in isolation, excluded from important sites of growth and development such as the school. Ongoing dialogue and negotiation, "partially overt, partially internal," (Taylor, 1994, p. 34) are crucial for the discovery and nurturing of identity. In recounting some of the ways he did manage to express his religious identity during high school, Webb (2000) writes, "looking back at these experiences, I am struck by how important it was for me to talk to people about religion" (p. 33).

Participants also reported becoming more comfortable talking about religion. It is hard to be responsive to all aspects of culture and identity when educators are not even comfortable speaking about some of those aspects. These courses gave participants a starting point for conversations with students and a set of tools for continuing their learning. They previously may not have been aware that they should pay attention to religion, and it is hard to admit that you do not know something when you do not even see that thing as a part of the landscape. As a part of this experience, participants

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developed what Eboo Patel (2016) describes as "a radar screen for religious diversity" (p. 135). Comparing religious diversity to other types of diversity, Patel points out that

> There is a general awareness and an emerging language for race, gender, and sexuality issues in our culture. We pay attention to these parts of identity; they register when we see them. In other words, we have a radar screen for these dimensions of diversity. (Patel, 2016, pp. 135–136)

The consequences of not having a radar screen for religious diversity can range from being inconsiderate of Muslim students' experiences of a fieldtrip to an amusement park with a heavy emphasis on food during Ramadan (a story recounted by Olivia) to foreign policy failures with global ramifications (Albright & Woodward, 2006). Developing this radar screen for religious diversity takes time and is an ongoing process. Patel advises, "If you were an airplane, you would simply install the necessary upgrades to your radar system. But since you are a person, you have to view the development of a radar screen for religious diversity as a skill" (p. 137). Patel works in the context of interfaith leadership and describes different areas to which the radar screen should be tuned, and the same is true for educators. Each of the domains in the PCKR framework constitute elements of this radar screen. The participants in this study have begun developing this important skill. They reported being more comfortable asking questions about religion and providing openings for students to share about religious identities. Although pedagogical strategies and enhanced lessons about religion are important, helping educators become more cognizant of religious diversity in their school contexts and more understanding of the role of religion in students' lives may be one of the most valuable outcome of these courses.

Advancing a Theory of Pedagogical Content Knowledge for Religion

Just as it is impossible to define religion in a universally applicable manner, it is impossible to define exactly what *all* educators need to know about religion. J.Z. Smith (2004) recounted a story of students who would cite a certain list of over 50 definitions of religion in order to claim that it is impossible to define religion. The reality, however, "is not that religion cannot be defined, but that it can be defined, with greater or lesser success, more than fifty ways" (J. Z. Smith, 2004, p. 193). It is not that we cannot definitively say what educators should know about religion, but that there are many different configurations of this knowledge. This framework is adaptable for educators working in different contexts. This section briefly revisits each of the five domains in light of the findings.

Legal & Civic Literacy

The Legal and Civic Literacy domain came up the least frequently in the survey and interview responses. A few participants noted that the courses were the first time that they learned about the application of the First Amendment. Additionally, the site visits provided an opportunity for participants to increase their civic understanding of the role of religious communities. It is unclear from the data what participants' prior knowledge of the First Amendment was, but this is a domain that all educators can benefit from increased understanding.

The limited number of comments about the legal and civic dimension could either indicate that the courses did not spend a substantial amount of time on these topics or that participants already had some familiarity with them and therefore what was discussed was a review. I suspect that the reality was some combination of the two. Regardless of

participants' prior knowledge, it is always valuable to revisit the First Amendment guidelines. These principles undergird the civic approach to religion in public schools and, therefore, reemphasizing and recommitting to the mutual responsibility of citizens to uphold the principles of religious freedom is an ongoing task.

Religious Studies Knowledge

The goal of these courses was not to create content area experts. A focus on understanding the premises of religious studies and frameworks for studying religion established a foundation of knowledge and skills on which participants could build during and after the courses. In the process of developing a more advanced conceptualization of religion, existing and new content knowledge was made more meaningful as it was understood in context.

The specific knowledge about religion needed by any given educator will vary substantially. For educators such as Daniel and Olivia, both conceptual understanding and specific content knowledge were helpful when they returned to their classrooms and taught directly about religion. Other educators applied their increased content knowledge to make connections between experiences that their students talked about and the religious traditions that informed those experiences. Recognizing the premises that religions are internally diverse and embedded in cultures challenged existing stereotypes about religion, but also provided a framework for reconciling new information with previous assumptions (Ramsey, 2016).

Prothero (2008) suggests that religious literacy might be better imagined as multiple religious *literacies,* tailored to different contexts and needs. This domain can also be imagined in terms of multiple forms of knowledge—knowledge connected to

religion in the curriculum, knowledge of the religious traditions represented in the school community, and knowledge of the premises and foundations of religious studies—with differing degrees of priority for each for different individuals. The last form, knowledge about the discipline of religious studies, is a crucial prerequisite for advancing public discourse about religion and enabling educators to put the other two elements of content knowledge into context in a meaningful manner. Although the purpose of this framework is to overcome the anxiety that can result from simply advocating that teachers become more religiously literate, the Religious Studies Knowledge domain remains the broadest of the five domains. One strategy for making this domain more approachable is to start with the principles of religious studies and then build content knowledge for different purposes on those principles.

Instructional Approaches

The majority of the participants did not teach about religion, directly or indirectly, on a regular basis. Understanding the difference between confessional and non-confessional approaches to teaching about religion and understanding the premises of religious studies gives educators who do not regularly address religion the foundation and tools to appropriately respond when religion does come up. This does not mean, however, that the instruction domain is otherwise irrelevant. By developing a "radar screen for religious diversity" (Patel, 2016), all teachers become more aware of connection to religion in the classroom. This awareness includes recognizing implicit stereotypes or biases in classroom activities or resources, such as worksheets with imagery from religious holidays, or discovering connections to religion in otherwise familiar curricular materials, such as religious symbolism in a novel or film.

For educators who do teach about religion, the courses introduced valuable resources, including a network of other teachers, to bring back to their classroom. The courses also modeled an approach to learning about religion that may have been different from any previous experiences learning about religion. Although these teachers are unlikely to be able to directly translate the experiential learning elements of these professional development courses into their middle or high school classroom, they may be able to draw on certain elements to include a lived religions approach in their curriculum. Having experienced site visits and guest speakers, they can better assess if those experiences would be feasible and appropriate for their own students.

Cultural Competency and Responsiveness

The Cultural Competency and Responsiveness domain was the area of the most significant learning in these courses. Through the site visits and guest speakers, the participants not only learned about several different religious traditions, they came to recognize the members of these communities as "real people with feelings" [55]. This recognition encouraged participants to develop a great sense of empathy and foster more open relationships with their students. In these ways, they were able to demonstrate to their students that their religious identities were welcomed and recognized in the classroom.

Paris (2012) offers the idea of *culturally sustaining pedagogy* to go another step beyond culturally responsive pedagogies, which he critiques as not going far enough to support and sustain multiculturalism and pluralism. A culturally sustaining approach "seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). Although not explicitly

named, the recognition of religious identity is an important part of this democratic project. Collet (2018) argues that religion is an important part of the experience of integration for migrant students and that "reasonable and informed recognition and accommodation" of religion in schools (p. 9) can help facilitate that process. By including the adjective "informed," Collet stresses that educators need more than just knowledge of the policies for accommodations and of the religious practices that necessitate accommodation; they should understand *why* those religious practices are meaningful and how they contribute to students' sense of identity and belonging in the community. The development of this domain by the participants in this study moved them forward in the ongoing work of creating culturally sustaining pedagogics and informed recognition for students from all religious backgrounds.

Self-Reflection

The Self-Reflection domain requires that educators consider their biases and assumptions towards religion, as a concept, as well as toward specific religions, and reflect on how their own religious or non-religious identities influence their frame of reference and teaching practices. Through the courses, participants encountered opportunities to reflect on all of these. Notably, many participants confronted their assumptions about unfamiliar religious communities when they were welcomed with openness and hospitality. In the classroom context, some participants noted that they did not think that they had been intolerant or fearful of religion before the courses, but after the course they realized that they could be more open and explicitly welcoming of religion.

Gay and Kirkland (2003) argue that self-reflection is crucial for educators to develop a cultural critical consciousness as culturally responsive educators, but they also note that many pre-service teachers struggle with reflection. Describing the multiple barriers to meaningful reflection and critical consciousness, they write, "in addition to simply not engaging with race, racism, ethnicity, and cultural diversity in education some preservice teachers try to silence the significance of these issues" (Gay & Kirkland, 2003, p. 183). These challenges can be extended to teachers' reflection on and consciousness of religious identities, particularly if they have not yet recognized the significance of the presence of religious diversity in the school. Social taboos on talking about religion in public, a lack of models for reflecting on the impact of one's religious identity, and structural biases in the school context can also present barriers to the development of this domain. Although there may initially be resistance from teachers or administrators to learning about religion, as educators increase their understanding of religion and recognize the degree to which it is embedded in culture, this learning can "serve as a catalyst to seek new learning and change" (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 389). These courses provided opportunity for educators to begin the important process of self-reflection, which, like all of the domains, requires ongoing learning and growth.

Next Steps

This PCKR framework is a work in progress. There are likely elements of teacher knowledge about religion that I have left out and elements of the existing domains that have not been discussed. However, it attempts to bring together previously disparate discussions and inquiry into teacher knowledge about religion into a framework that is approachable for both researchers and teachers. Further examination of each of the

domains may form the basis for professional development courses as well as tools for self-evaluation of individual and school-level strengths and weakness in different domains. The framework also has the potential to help guide future research agendas, starting with an analysis of the gaps in current research within each domain.

Any articulation of strategies for improving the relationship between religion and public education raises questions about how to bring religion into regular conversation with other identities and social forces while also maintaining the status of religion as special or different from other parts of life. It is contradictory to demand that religion is treated in the same ways as race or gender, as one of many identity markers, and, at the same time, assert that there is something different about religion that should receive special consideration. There is a challenging line to be found between "taking religion seriously" by opening up spaces to acknowledge differences and deeply held commitments and avoiding conflict by putting aside the possibility of irreconcilable differences between truth claims of different religions (Pritchard, 2010). Orsi (2007) claims that "religious studies in not a moralizing discipline; it exists in the suspension of the ethical, and it steadfastly refuses to either deny or redeem the other" (p. 202-203). This may be possible in some academic contexts, but the approaches of religious studies have their limits in public education.

Attention to religion in the public school classroom requires an analytical understanding of how religions shape human experiences, but it also requires learning to actually live and work day-to-day with people who may hold radically different conceptions of the world. And this work must take place with young people who are still in the process of exploring and forming their identities and their conceptions of the good.

Education is never neutral; it cannot simply suspend ethical questions in order to create spaces for religion to be recognized alongside other identities and social forces. Behind each of the many arguments for teaching about religion discussed in Chapter One is an idea about what students should know in order to shape and move society toward different conceptions of the good. The choices that educators make regarding the treatment of religion in the school community and curriculum have significant consequences. As much as we might want to say that we will completely suspend ethical judgements toward competing truth claims, the reality is that some religious truth claims are ultimately harmful to the goals of civic life, and there are lines to be drawn and choices to be made (Macedo, 2000). Educators have a responsibility to help students navigate these complexities in such a way that they learn to make independent choices which also ultimately serve the civic good.

Because education about religion comes with these responsibilities, the knowledge and skills that teachers need to be able to approach religion are much different from the pedagogical content knowledge required for subjects such as math or literature. Pedagogical Content Knowledge about Religion requires an acceptance of some degree of uncertainty and many open questions. This means recognizing that the boundaries between public and private life are far more permeable than they have been drawn in the past. It can be tempting to focus on the similarities between religions and the ways in which religions can bring people together through variations on the many paths, one mountain and Golden Rule approaches to religious diversity. But that would be dishonest and would not prepare students to truly understand the realities of how religions interact, in productive and destructive ways, in the world. Pedagogical Content Knowledge about

Religion not only requires understanding these tensions and being able to help students understand these tensions; it also requires finding ways to live with the ways these tensions appear through the identities and experiences of each member of the school community. This framework does not resolve these tensions or claim that there is an answer to these questions. It does, however, hope to create a structure for ongoing dialogue about these questions by highlighting the complex and multifaceted nature of religion in education and the processes of learning about religion.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed each of the four themes identified in the findings in connection to the PCKR framework. Particular attention was given to the benefits and potential drawbacks of experiential learning in the form of site visits to religious communities. Additionally, the discussion of the impacts on practice emphasized the importance of the recognition of religious identities and the development of a "radar screen for religious diversity" (Patel, 2016). The chapter concluded by revisiting each domain of PCKR framework and reflecting on the possibilities for further research based in this framework.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

This study set out to examine four professional development courses about religious diversity and the experiences of the educators participating in those courses. Chapter One described the current challenges regarding religion in U.S. public education. By examining a range of arguments for including religion in education and several approaches to remedying the present challenges, I identified teacher education about religion as the missing component necessary to break the cycle of silence about religion in public education. Chapter Two began by clarifying the terminology and language about religion and education. It also provided further context for this study within the landscape of education about religion, globally and within the United States, including different conceptions of religious literacy. After analyzing the implications of the relegation of religion to the null curriculum (Eisner, 1994), I drew on Shulman's (1987) theory of pedagogical content knowledge to introduce a framework of Pedagogical Content Knowledge about Religion (PCKR). Based on the premises the all educators need to know about religion and that the required knowledge is multi-faceted, the five domains of this framework are (1) Legal and Civic Literacy, (2) Religious Studies Knowledge, (3) Instructional Approaches, (4) Cultural Competence and Responsiveness, and (5) Self-Reflection. Chapter Two concluded by describing a framework for analyzing the processes of teacher learning through professional development (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). In Chapter Three, I described the mixed methods approach to the study and the process of data collection. This chapter also included a description of the four courses included in the study and of the participant demographics. Chapter Four presented the findings, which were categorized into four themes: motivations, experiences, conceptions

of religion, and impacts on practice. In Chapter Five, I discussed and analyzed these findings in light of the PCKR framework and in connection to the relevant literature. In this final chapter, I discuss the implications of this research for future professional development courses about religious diversity and make recommendations for such course. I also present several questions and topics for future research on religion and education more broadly.

Implications

There are few opportunities for teachers to learn about religion, and there has been very limited research on teacher education about religion in the United States. The research that does exist has primarily been in the form of small-scale, qualitative case studies (e.g., Anderson et al., 2015; Aown, 2011; Evans, 2007). This study represents a significant contribution to the research on teacher education about religion, providing quantitative and qualitative data on the motivations, experiences, and learning of over 100 educators, across four professional development courses. The sample size alone demonstrates that there is interest among educators in learning about religion. The overall findings provide strong evidence that professional development courses about religious diversity can have a valuable impact on educators across all grade levels and content areas. Therefore, discussions of future teacher education opportunities should not be limited to secondary humanities teachers. The five domains of the PCKR framework provide a description of the multiple forms of knowledge in a structure that is adaptable for teachers in different contexts.

One challenge now is for teachers in younger grades and STEM subjects to recognize the important of knowledge about religion in their contexts. The findings

indicate that, before the courses, the teachers in this study were not fully aware of the limitations of their knowledge about religion, or the implications of the limits. Finding ways to demonstrate to teachers in all content areas the need for understanding religion will be important for creating buy-in and support for future professional development courses.

The overwhelmingly positive responses to the site visits points to the need for more conversation about the appropriate use of site visits and fieldtrips, for both adults and secondary students. Although the concerns expressed by some scholars about effects of site visits should be taken seriously, there are clearly also many benefits. The positive impacts on learning outcomes are important, but there may also be additional benefits, such as attracting students or teachers who might not otherwise consider a course about religion, the development of a strong learning community among the participants during travel to and from sites and through group reflections, and the establishment of relationships between the school and local religious communities which may otherwise feel marginalized in the school community. Further conversations and research about site visits and experiential learning about religion are necessary to fully understand the implications of these activities as part of teacher education, as well as for K-12 students.

The finding that the site visits and guest speakers had the effect of humanizing the religious other raises questions about educators' attitudes towards religious minority students. This is another area where there has been limited small scale research (e.g., Ezzani & Brooks, 2015; Taggar, 2006), but the growing religious diversity of public schools calls for a better understanding of this issue. It is unclear if courses without similar experiential elements would have had the same effect on participants' attitudes

towards the religious other. Further, although much of the attention on religion in schools has focused on minority religions, it is also important to consider how students from majority religions perceive and experience the treatment of religion in the school environment. The naked public school model (Haynes & Thomas, 2011) seeks to banish discussion and recognition of *all* religions, including majority religions. A study drawing on data from the 1996 Religious Identity and Influence Survey found that high percentages of conservative Protestants felt that the public schools were hostile to their moral and spiritual values (Sikkink, 1999). More recent data shows that while Americans feel more positively towards most religious groups, including Muslims and atheists, than they did even a few years ago, there has been no corresponding increase in positive feelings for Evangelical Christians (Pew Research Center, 2017). As religious and racial demographics continue to shift, White Evangelical students will find themselves in the minority much more frequently than they have in the past (Jones, 2016), and educators should be careful to consider *all* religious identities, not just those of minority traditions.

Taken together, the findings of this study make a strong argument for the importance and value of teacher education about religious diversity. Although schools and districts have limited resources to devote to professional development, the courses examined here appear to have a wide range of benefits for educators at all levels. Given the ever increasing religious diversity in U.S. public schools, districts might want to consider the benefits of a proactive approach to professional development about religious diversity. Waiting until a problem arises has the potential to erode the trust of local religious communities and foster learning environments that are hostile to religious diversity, intentionally or unintentionally.

Recommendations

The purpose of this study was not to evaluate the four professional courses. However, it is my hope that these courses, as well as other courses that have or will be developed, will be able to draw on the findings of this study to strength their curricula. Based on the findings of this study and the related literature, I offer the following recommendation for future professional development courses about religious diversity:

- Present the frameworks for studying religion from the beginning of the course and reiterate them throughout.

- Be explicit about First Amendment guidelines and discuss the implications of those guidelines in the professional development context and in the K-12 classroom context.

- Include a mix of classroom time and experiential learning.

- Discuss the goals of learning from site visits and guest speakers, including both the benefits and limitations of these experiences.

- Be clear about expectations for site visits, including the degree of participation that is expected or permitted for visits.

- Ensure there is time following all site visits or guest speakers for participants to debrief with the course leader and as a group.

- Whenever possible, include multiple representations of each religious tradition. This may include visiting multiple houses of worship, a panel of religious leaders or community members with a range of perspectives, and/or media sources to supplement experiential learning.

- Include educators from different content areas and grade levels, but consider including breakout sessions to allow smaller groups to reflect on the application of the content for their specific contexts.

- Consider including student panels or other opportunities for educators to hear from students (or recent alumni) about their experiences of religion in the school.

At present, these recommendations are for courses that are voluntary for the participants. Additional considerations might be necessary if the courses were required for educators in a school or district. These could include providing more opt-out provisions for site visits and incorporating even more attention to skills of civil dialogue and how to bracket one's own religious convictions for the purpose of the academic study of religion. As more courses of this type are created, these recommendations may be refined or amended.

Future Research

The future directions for research in this field are numerous. The work of mapping existing scholarship and the individuals and organizations engaged in the field is in its early stages, and this is an important step towards advancing a clear research agenda. At the macro level, more research about what is happening nationally would be an invaluable resource. The Religious Literacy Project at the Harvard Divinity School has completed a study of the inclusion of religion in the course offerings of public secondary schools and should be releasing the analysis soon (Religious Literacy Project, n.d.). In addition to this data, there is need for nation-wide insight into how religion is addressed in teacher preparation programs and state and district-level policies about religious freedom in public schools. A large-scale survey of educators' knowledge about religion

and attitudes about religious diversity schools would establish a critical foundation on which to build future opportunities for teacher education about religion. Zam and Stone (2006) and Hartwick, Hawkins, and Schroeder (2016) have conducted some survey analysis of social studies teachers' and teacher educators' attitudes towards religion in the curriculum, but both of these studies were limited to the social studies and the treatment of religion in the explicit curriculum.

Turning specifically to professional development, this study raises many questions for further investigation. The four courses examined in this study were, as far as I can tell, the only courses of this type at the time of the study. However, new professional development opportunities have been created and implemented in the intervening time, and there are other approaches to professional development about religion. I propose that the current professional development opportunities about religion can be classified into three types. First, there are courses, such as the ones in this study that have a broad focus on religious diversity and are intended for educators at all levels and content areas. The second type focus on a specific religious tradition or family of religious traditions, and may be designed for a broad set of educators or primarily for humanities teachers. A third group have a much narrower focus on pedagogies for teaching about religion for humanities teachers. Within these types, there are also different configurations, ranging from one day workshops to multi-week courses and online platforms. A survey of the landscape of these different professional development opportunities would be very valuable and lay the groundwork for an expansion of this research examining motivations, experiences, and impacts for educators engaging in different types of learning about religion.

As previously discussed, this study was limited in its ability to examine certain impacts due to the diversity of the participants and their contexts. However, future research should more closely examine the impacts of this type of professional development on several areas. First, there are still many questions about how participants' religious identities and backgrounds influence their reception of professional development about religion, as well as how school and community demographics and openness to religious diversity play a role in shaping participants' orientation to this type of learning (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Additionally, how do individuals' content areas and other school roles influence how they approach these experiences? There are also questions about how these factors also influence the participants' actual learning experiences and shape how they bring their new knowledge back to the classroom.

There is also the question of impacts for students. Much of the professional development research looks to identify how teacher learning impacts students (e.g., Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 1986). There are many open questions regarding how teacher learning about religion impacts students, some of which are also connected to simply developing a better understanding of students' current experiences related to religion in school, in the curriculum or in the community. What are students' current perceptions of the school climate towards religious diversity, and how do those perceptions change when educators take part in professional development about religion? When teachers increase or improve the incorporation of religion into the curriculum, what are the impacts on students' achievement or engagement?

There are many possible avenues for future research regarding religion in public schools. The PCKR framework may provide a valuable starting point for categorizing the

existing research, identifying gaps in that work, and developing questions to guide future studies. This study has demonstrated that religion is connected to education in many different ways, and that creating clarity about the interactions of different aspects of religion and education is critical if the goal is to alleviate the many misunderstandings about religion in public schools.

Conclusion

Religion is complicated and has been the sources of disagreement and conflict for millennia. A common response in the modern world, particularly in Western liberal democracies, has been to avoid religion and ignore its influences in an attempt to avoid trouble (Albright & Woodward, 2006; Lewin, 2017; Noddings, 2013). But there are few problems in this world which are resolved by pretending that they do not exist. It is critical that educators acknowledge the realities and power of religion in the world so that they can help to form students as citizens who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to engage with religious pluralisms in their communities and around the world. What will it take for educators to see religion not as "a foreign invader, a problem to be solved, or as a mechanism by which to reinforce particular religious, cultural or national identities" (Lewin, 2017, p. 10), but rather as an inextricable part of the lives of their students, colleagues, and the American social landscape? Interrupting the cycle of silence about religion in public schools and public life is vital for preparing students for life in a pluralistic, and yet deeply divided, democratic society.

Kymlicka (2015) argues that the third stage of multiculturalism policy in Canada will require taking account of religious diversity, alongside ethnicity and race. This approach would allow individuals to participate in public life as members of religious

communities, as well as members of racial and ethnic communities. For example, "many Somalis also want to participate in Canadian life as *Muslims*, alongside other Canadian Muslims from different ethnic and racial backgrounds" (Kymlicka, 2015, p. 26). Although what may work in Canadian federal multiculturalism policy cannot be directly transferred to public schools in the United States, Kymlicka's proposal highlights the limitations of current approaches to multiculturalism and diversity in education. The exclusion of religion from the curriculum and from conversations about what it means for students to be well-rounded and prepared for college, career, and civic life perpetuates an incomplete narrative about the world. Ladson-Billings (2014) critiques educators who claim to employ culturally relevant pedagogies by developing knowledge about different cultures and having good intentions for their culturally diverse students, but who have failed to "take up the sociopolitical dimensions of the work, instead dulling its critical edge or omitting it altogether" (p. 77). A similar critique could be levied towards educators who claim to want to improve the treatment of religion in public schools but focus only on the contents of the textbooks or the recognition of holidays on the school calendar. All five of the PCKR domains are necessary to create schools that recognize religious diversity and prepare students as citizens in a pluralistic society.

This is not, unfortunately, just a task of adding religion to the constellations of identities to be recognized in the classroom. Although multicultural education grew out of the civil rights movement and the recognition of the ways in which schools and curriculum created barriers to the equal treatment and success of African American students, the field has expanded over time to also account for socioeconomic status, gender, language, and, more recently, sexuality (Gollnick, 1995). Adding religion to this

mix, however, poses additional challenges. One concern is that the inclusion of religion will "violate the liberal ethos of multiculturalism" (Kymlicka, 2015, p. 28) when religious groups make truth-claims about race, gender, or sexuality that deny the full participation of individuals or groups, claims that run counter to the goals of full recognition and respect for all people. This is a very real concern and one that many religious communities are currently wrestling with within their own organizations. This is not to say, however, that there are not also religious communities that seek to affirm and welcome all people. The challenge lies in the ongoing negotiations between competing claims for civil rights and in finding ways to live with our deepest differences.

The inclusion of religion in our accounts of multicultural education adds a layer of complication that does not have easy solutions. However, continuing to avoid these complications does a disserve to students and to the wider community. Collet and Bang (2018) argue that "the ways in which schools in liberal democratic states treat their religious minority students may be one of the most significant barometers for measuring states' commitment to multiculturalism" (p. 351). There is still a great deal of work to be done regarding the treatment of racial, ethnic, linguistic, and gender diversity, work that may never be fully complete, but it is also necessary to include religious diversity if we want to have a truly honest understanding of what it means to live in a diverse society.

Disrupting the cycle of silence about religion in schools through teacher education is a crucial step in moving these conversations forward. This study demonstrates that a proactive approach to this problem, through professional development courses about religious diversity, can have meaningful impacts for teachers across a wide range of contexts. The task of improving teacher education about religion requires taking up the

messiness of religious pluralism and all of the questions that come along with it.

However, helping students to understand and navigate the complex social world is one of

the most important responsibilities of educators. Just as "religion is always religion-in-

action, religion-in-relationships between people, between the way the world is and the

way people imagine or want it to be" (Orsi, 2003, p. 172), the task of education is always

to understand the world as it is while continually moving towards what we imagine it that

it *could* be.

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APPENDIX A: Survey Respondents

Table A.1

Characteristics of Survey Respondents

ID	Course	Grades Taught	School Type	Gender	Humanities Teacher	STEM Teacher	Non-Teaching Role	Responded to Surveys 1 and 2	Responded to all 3 surveys
1	2	Elementary (1-4)	Public	Female					x
2	2	Middle School (4-8)	Public	Female	x	x		x	
3	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x			x	
4	1	High School (9-12)	Public-Charter	Male	x				
5	1	Middle School (4-8)	Other	Female	x				
6	4	Early Childhood (EC-K)	Public	Female	x	x			
7	1	High School (9-12)	Private - Other religious affiliation	Male	x				
8	2	Middle School (4-8)	Public	Female	x	x			
9	4	Early Childhood (EC-K)	Public	Female				x	
10	4	Elementary (1-4)	Public	Female					
11	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x			x	
12	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male		x		x	
13	3	High School (9-12)	Public		x				
14	2	High School (9-12)	Public	Male		x			
15	1	High School (9-12)	Public	Female		x			

ID	Course	Grades Taught	School Type	Gender	Humanities Teacher	STEM Teacher	Non-Teaching Role	Responded to Surveys 1 and 2	Responded to all 3 surveys
16	2	Elementary (1-4)	Public	Female	x	x			x
17	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x			x	
18	2	High School (9-12)	Public	Female		x			x
19	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x				
20	4	Early Childhood (EC-K)	Public	Female	x	x		x	
21	4	Early Childhood (EC-K)	Public	Female	x	x			
22	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x				
23	1	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x				
24	2	High School (9-12)	Public	Male		x			
25	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x			x	
26	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female				x	
27	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male		x			
28	3	High School (9-12)	Public			x			
29	2	Early Childhood (EC-K)	Public	Female					x
30	4	Early Childhood (EC-K)	Public	Female	x	x			
31	1	High School (9-12)		Male	x				
32	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x			x	
33	3	High School	Public	Female		x		x	

ID	Course	Grades Taught	School Type	Gender	Humanities Teacher	STEM Teacher	Non-Teaching Role	Responded to Surveys 1 and 2	Responded to all 3 surveys
		(9-12)							
34	4	Elementary (1-4)	Public	Female	x	x			x
35	4	Early Childhood (EC-K)	Public	Female					x
36	4	High School (9-12)	Public	Female					
37	2	Middle School (4-8)	Private-Other religious affiliation	Female	x				
38	2	Elementary (1-4)	Public	Female	x	x			
39	1	High School (9-12)	Public		x				
40	4	Elementary (1-4)	Public	Male	x	x		x	
41	3	High School (9-12)	Public		x				
42	2	High School (9-12)	Public	Male			x		x
43	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x				
44	4	High School (9-12)	Public	Female				x	
45	3	High School (9-12)	Public		x	x		x	
46	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female					x
47	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x				x
48	3	High School (9-12)	Public				x		
49	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x			x	
50	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female				x	
51	2	Middle School	Public	Female	x				x

ID	Course	Grades Taught	School Type	Gender	Humanities Teacher	STEM Teacher	Non-Teaching Role	Responded to Surveys 1 and 2	Responded to all 3 surveys
		(4-8)							
52	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female			x		
53	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male					
54	4	Middle School (4-8)	Public	Female	x	x		x	
55	4	Elementary (1-4)	Public	Female	x	x		x	
56	1	Elementary (1-4)	-99	Female	x	x			
57	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male		x		x	
58	1	High School (9-12)	Public-Charter	Other	x	x			
59	2	Middle School (4-8)	Public	Female	x	x			
60	4	High School (9-12)	Public	Female		x			x
61	4	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x			x	
62	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x			x	
63	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male					
64	1	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x				
65	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female		x			
66	4	Other	Public	Female			x		x
67	4	Elementary (1-4)	Public	Female	x	x		x	
68	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x				
69	2	Middle School (4-8)	Public	Female				x	

ID	Course	Grades Taught	School Type	Gender	Humanities Teacher	STEM Teacher	Non-Teaching Role	Responded to Surveys 1 and 2	Responded to all 3 surveys
70	2	Middle School (4-8)	Public	Female					
71	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male			x		
72	4	Elementary (1-4)	Public-Charter	Female					
73	4	Elementary (1-4)	Public	Female	x			x	
74	3	High School (9-12)	Public			x			
75	2	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x				x
76	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female		x		x	
77	4	Middle School (4-8)	Public	Female	x				
78	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x			x	
79	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x				x
80	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x			x	
81	2	Other	Public	Female			x		
82	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x			x	
83	4	Other	Public	Female			x	x	
84	4	Other	Public	Female			x	x	
85	1	High School (9-12)	Private-Secular		x				
86	2	High School (9-12)	Public	Female					
87	1	Middle School (4-8)	Private-Secular	Female	x				
88	1	High School (9-12)	Private-Secular	Female	x				

ID	Course	Grades Taught	School Type	Gender	Humanities Teacher	STEM Teacher	Non-Teaching Role	Responded to Surveys 1 and 2	Responded to all 3 surveys
89	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x				x
90	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female					
91	4	Early Childhood (EC-K)	Public	Female			x		x
92	4	Elementary (1-4)	Public	Female				x	
93	1	Middle School (4-8)	Public-Charter	Female	x				
94	2	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x				
95	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x			x	
96	2	High School (9-12)	Public	Female					
97	3	High School (9-12)	Public						
98	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female					
99	1	High School (9-12)	Private-Catholic	Female	x			x	
100	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x			x	
101	2	High School (9-12)	Public	Female					
102	2	Elementary (1-4)	Public	Female	x	x			x
103	2	Middle School (4-8)	Public	Female				x	
104	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female		x			x
105	1	High School (9-12)	Private-Secular	Female	x			x	
106	1	High School (9-12)	Private-Secular	Male	x				

ID	Course	Grades Taught	School Type	Gender	Humanities Teacher	STEM Teacher	Non-Teaching Role	Responded to Surveys 1 and 2	Responded to all 3 surveys
107	4	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x				
108	1	High School (9-12)	Private-Catholic	Female	x			x	
109	2	Middle School (4-8)	Public						
110	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female			x	x	
111	4	Elementary (1-4)	Public	Female					
112	4	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x			x	
113	2	Other	Public	Female			x		
114	4	High School (9-12)	Public	Female		x			x
115	2	Middle School (4-8)	Public	Female					
116	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female					x
117	4	Other	Public	Female			x		
118	4	Other	Public				x		
119	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female		x			x
120	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x			x	
121	2	Middle School (4-8)	Public	Female					
122	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female		x		x	
123	4	Early Childhood (EC-K)	Public	Female	x	x			x
124	2	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x				

ID	Course	Grades Taught	School Type	Gender	Humanities Teacher	STEM Teacher	Non-Teaching Role	Responded to Surveys 1 and 2	Responded to all 3 surveys
125	4	Early Childhood (EC-K)	Public	Female				x	
126	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x				
127	3	High School (9-12)	Public		x				
128	2	Middle School (4-8)	Public	Female	x		x		x
129	2	High School (9-12)	Public	Female					
130	4	Elementary (1-4)	Public	Female	x	x		x	
131	2	Early Childhood (EC-K)	Public	Female	x	x		x	
132	4	High School (9-12)	Public	Female			x	x	
133	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female	x				x
134	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Female		x			
135	3	High School (9-12)	Public			x			
136	1	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x				
137	4	Elementary (1-4)	Public	Female				x	
138	2	Middle School (4-8)	Public	Female	x				
139	2	Middle School (4-8)	Public	Male	x				
140	3	High School (9-12)	Public				x		
141	3	High School (9-12)	Public	Male	x		x		
142	3	High School (9-12)	Public				x		

ID	Course	Grades Taught	School Type	Gender	Humanities Teacher	STEM Teacher	Non-Teaching Role	Responded to Surveys 1 and 2	Responded to all 3 surveys
143	2	High School (9-12)	Public						

Survey 1

Study Overview/Introduction

Thank you for your participation in this study. The goal of this research is to better understand professional development about religious literacy in order to inform and improve existing programs. This research will help shape new programs and opportunities for teachers to learn about religious literacy and teaching about religion.

This study will occur in several stage and this survey is the first part. You may be invited to take part in future surveys and interviews after you have completed the program.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at kate.soules@bc.edu.

Thank you,
Kate Soules
Boston College

Create an ID:

Since this is the first survey you will take as part of this study, you will need to create an ID number. Your ID number will allow us to match your responses on **each survey** without needing your name or other identifiable information.

In the field below, please enter a 6-digit number using the following criteria:

- The 2-digit month of your birthday (e.g. May=05, November=11)
- Followed by, the last four digits of your phone number

For example, the ID number for Kate Soules would be 05-1416.

Part 1: Introduction & Teacher Background

1. What grades do you teach? (select all that apply)
   a. Kindergarten
   b. 1st
   c. 2nd
   d. 3rd
   e. 4th
   f. 5th
   g. 6th
   h. 7th
   i. 8th
   j. 9th
   k. 10th
   l. 11th
   m. 12th
   n. Other

2. What subject areas do you teach? (select all that apply)
   a. Reading, Writing, Literature, English Language Arts
   b. English as a Second Language or English for Speakers of Other Languages
   c. Mathematics
   d. Science
   e. Social Studies, History
   f. Religion and/or Ethics
   g. Foreign Languages
   h. Technology
   i. Arts
   j. Special Education
   k. Physical & Health Education
   l. I am not in a teaching role at my school: _____
   m. Other _____

2. How many years have you been teaching <u>at your current school</u>?
   a. [drop down list of options] (less than 1 – 30+)

3. How many years have you been teaching <u>in total?</u>
   b. [drop down list of options] (less than 1 – 30+)

4. What is your highest degree?
   a. Bachelor's degree
   b. Master's degree in progress
   c. Master's degree
   d. Doctorate or Professional degree (e.g . JD, MD, etc) in progress
   e. Doctorate or Professional degree (e.g . JD, MD, etc)

5. What is your gender identity?
   f. Female
   g. Male
   h. Other_____

6. Please briefly describe your present religious identity or affiliation, if any:
   i. _____

7. Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?
   a. more than once a week
   b. once a week
   c. once or twice a month
   d. a few times a year
   e. seldom
   f. never

8. How important is religion in your life?
   a. very important
   b. somewhat important
   c. not too important
   d. not at all important

Part 2: Interest and Motivations

This set of questions ask specifically about your interest in this course and what you hope

to learn.

9. Why did you choose to attend this program? (check all that apply)
   a. I have a personal interest in religion
   b. My class(es) directly address religion
   c. My class(es) cover topics that have connection to religion

    d. I've encountered religion in my class(es) and not known how to respond

    e. I've encountered religion in my school (outside of classes) and not known how to respond

    f. I've encountered controversies related to religion in my school

    g. My school is very religiously diverse

    h. I believe religion is an important topic for students to learn about

    i. Other_____

10. You may use this space to provide additional details on why you wanted to attend:

    _____

    _____

Religious literacy for educators encompasses many different areas of knowledge. Some of these are listed below.

11. Please put these topics in order based on <u>your individual interest</u> in learning about them during this course. (1=most interested or highest priority to learn about)

    a. The First Amendment and religious liberty in the school context

    b. How to teach about contemporary religious topics

    c. How to teach about historical religious topics

    d. Information about specific religions

    e. How to respond to concerns from parents or community members

    f. How to respond to diverse student religious identities in the classroom

    g. Designing lesson or unit plans about religion or topics related to religion

    h. Understanding religious diversity in the school context

    i. Better understanding of the lived experiences of religious communities

12. You may use this space to provide additional information about what you hope to learn during this course:

    _____

    _____

13. Why do you feel it is important to you to learn more about religion and teaching about religion by participating in [Course Name]?

    _____

    _____

14. Please put these same topics in order based on how important you think they are <u>for teachers in general</u> to know about in order to be religiously literate. (1=most important topic for teachers to know about)
    a. The First Amendment and religious liberty in the school context
    b. How to teach about contemporary religious topics
    c. How to teach about historical religious topics
    d. Information about specific religions
    e. How to respond to concerns from parents or community members
    f. How to respond to diverse student religious identities in the classroom
    g. Designing lesson or unit plans about religion or topics related to religion
    h. Understanding religious diversity in the school context
    i. Better understanding of the lived experiences of religious communities

15. If there are other topics or areas of knowledge you think are essential for teachers to be religiously literate, please list them below:
    _____
    _____

Part 3: Previous Education about Religion

This set of questions asks about your previous experiences learning about religion.

16. From what sources have you had prior experience learning about religion (check all that apply):
    a. Religious education in a religious community (Sunday School, Hebrew School, Catechism Classes, etc.)
    b. Bible courses in a K-12 public school
    c. World Religion courses in a public K-12 school
    d. Religion courses in a secular, private K-12 school
    e. Religion courses in a religiously affiliated, private K-12 school
    f. Religion courses during undergraduate education
    g. Religion courses during graduate education
    h. Personal reading or research
    i. Family, friends, or colleagues
    j. Community and neighborhood
    k. Other_____
    l. None

17. Have you ever had any instruction or training on how to teach about religion academically in the K-12 classroom?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Can't remember

18. *If (a) Yes is selected in Q19:* What was the context of this learning?
    a. Undergraduate education course
    b. Graduate education course
    c. Professional development course
    d. Mentoring
    e. Other_____

19. *If (a) Yes is selected in Q19:* Please describe the context and content of the learning experience:

    _____

    _____

20. Have you ever discussed or learned about religious diversity or religious identity in a professional learning or development setting related to multiculturalism or diversity?
    j. Yes
    k. No

21. *If (a) Yes is selected in Q22:* Please describe the context and in what way religion was included in this professional learning or development:

    _____

    _____

Part 4: Teaching about Religion

The next set of questions asks about the most recent school year (2016-2017) and your experiences with teaching about religion.

22. Did you teach any lessons that were directly about religion?

    This could include lessons about the history of a religious tradition, an event directly related to or involving a religious tradition, or about the beliefs or practices of a religious group.

    a. Yes
    b. No

23. *If (a) yes is selected in Q24: Please briefly summarize the topics of lessons directly about religion that you taught this year:*

_____

_____

24. Did you incorporate any discussion of religion into any lessons that were not directly about religion?

This could include discussing religious themes in a piece of literature, religious influences or themes in visual or performing arts, or discussing religious perspectives on particular topics such as current events, bioethics, history, or politics.

    a. Yes
    b. No

25. *If (a) yes is selected in Q26: Please briefly list the topics of the lessons you taught that incorporated religion:*

_____

_____

_____

26. *If NO was selected in 24 and 26:* Why did you not teach about religion, either directly or indirectly? (select all that apply)
    a. Was not applicable to my subject/content area
    b. Was not appropriate for the age of my students
    c. Did not have enough time in the curriculum
    d. Was limited by testing requirements
    e. Was told not to by administrators
    f. Was told not to by other teachers
    g. Did not feel prepared to teach about religion
    h. Uncertain about the legal aspects of teaching about religion
    i. Concerned about responses from other teachers or staff
    j. Concerned about responses from administrators
    k. Concerned about responses from parents or families
    l. Concerned about responses from students
    m. Other_____

27. Did any of the following occur at your school during the most recent school year (2016-2017)? (select all that apply)
    a. Incident(s) of religiously-motivated bullying
    b. Guest speaker(s) from a religious community or organization

c. Days off in recognition of non-Christian religious holidays (e.g. Rosh Hashanah, Eid, Diwali)
d. Parent complaints about religion in the school
e. Student complaints about religion in the school
f. Teacher, staff complaints about religion in the school
g. Administrator complaints about religion in the school
h. School sponsored celebration of religious holidays
i. Presence of student religious organizations (e.g. Good News Club, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Secular Student Alliance, etc.)
j. Use of dedicated school spaces for religious practice (e.g. prayer) during school hours
k. Use of school building by religious organization(s) outside of school hours

28. How would you rate your confidence in your ability to respond to each of the following situations?
1- Really not confident
2- Not Confident
3- Not sure
4- Confident
5- Very Confident

Answering a student question about religion in the context of a lesson	1 2 3 4 5
Answering a student question about religion in the context of current events	1 2 3 4 5
Responding to an incident of religiously-motivated bullying	1 2 3 4 5
Responding to a student comment or question that perpetuates a stereotype about a religious group	1 2 3 4 5
Discussing reasons for teaching about religion with parents	1 2 3 4 5
Discussing reasons for teaching about religion with teachers, staff, or administrators	1 2 3 4 5
Responding to student questions in the context of the student's personal faith or spiritually	1 2 3 4 5
Responding effectively to a dispute or disagreement about religion between students in class	1 2 3 4 5

29. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about religion: [RANDOMIZE STATEMENTS]

1-Strongly disagree
2- Disagree
3- Somewhat disagree
4- Somewhat agree
5- Agree
6- Strongly Agree

When trying to understand religious violence today, it is most important to look at the historical conflicts between the two groups.	1 2 3 4 5 6
Religious literacy means knowing the founder, sacred text, place of worship, and major doctrines of major religious traditions.	1 2 3 4 5 6
There are fundamental truths that all members of a religious tradition should agree on.	1 2 3 4 5 6
People with different interpretations of a religious doctrine will always be in conflict with each other.	1 2 3 4 5 6
The way members of a religious tradition celebrates a holiday will look the same in different countries.	1 2 3 4 5 6
Religious literacy is primarily important so that students will understand art and literature.	1 2 3 4 5 6
Members of the same religion can disagree on the major beliefs of the religion but still participate in the same rituals.	1 2 3 4 5 6
All religions are different paths up the same mountain.	1 2 3 4 5 6
All religions can be distilled into a version of the Golden Rule—"Treat others as you would want to be treated"	1 2 3 4 5 6
Progressive **Christians** and conservative Christians have more in common with each other than progressive Christians and progressive Jews have in common.	1 2 3 4 5 6

The next group of questions asks you to think about two hypothetical situations that you might encounter related to religion and education. Please think about how you would respond to these scenarios if they were occurring in the context of your current school.

Situation 1: A new student has joined your class and you learn that this student is from a religious tradition that you are unfamiliar with. Because you do not know very much about this religion, you want to learn more about the student's religious tradition.

30. What sources would you use to seek out more information about this religious tradition? (select all that apply)
    a. General internet search
    b. Specific websites
    c. Books you own
    d. Books from the library or other source
    e. Colleagues
    f. Administrators
    g. Friends or family
    h. Religious leaders from that tradition
    i. Members of that religious tradition
    j. Members of other religious traditions
    k. Religion scholar (e.g. faculty at local university)
    l. The student(s) from that religious tradition
    m. Other _____

31. What questions would you ask about that religious tradition to help you know your student better?

    _____
    _____

32. How would you discern the quality of the information you gathered from different sources?

    _____
    _____

Situation 2: A student is giving a class presentation and includes several stereotypes, some of which are negative, and/or false information about a religious group.

33. How would you respond to this presentation?

    _____
    _____

34. What would you do to prevent this situation from occurring in the first place?

_____

_____

These questions ask about your views about specific religions and religion in general.

35. We'd like to get your feelings toward a number of groups on a "feeling thermometer." A rating of zero degrees means you feel as cold and negative as possible. A rating of 100 degrees means you feel as warm and positive as possible. You would rate the group at 50 degrees if you don't feel particularly positive or negative toward the group.

How do you feel toward [RANDOMIZE]? [sliders for each from 0-100]

    a. Evangelical Christians
    b. Catholics
    c. Mormons
    d. Jews
    e. Muslims
    f. Atheists
    g. Buddhists
    h. Hindus
    i. Mainline Protestants

36. At the present time, do you think religion as a whole is increasing its influence on American life or losing its influence?
    a. Increasing its influence
    b. Losing its influence

37. All in all, it this a good thing or a bad thing?
    a. Good Thing
    b. Bad Thing
    c. Other _____

Part 5: School Background Information

This last group of questions asks about your school context.

38. How would you characterize the religious diversity of your school?

    1--------------------2--------------------3----------------------4------------------------5

    1: No religious diversity or cannot determine

    3: Some religious diversity

    5: A great deal of religiously diversity

39. Please briefly describe the religious diversity of your school in terms of the religious traditions represented and the associated percentages of the student body.

    _____

    _____

    _____

40. Type of School:
    a. Public
    b. Public-Charter
    c. Private-Secular
    d. Private-Catholic
    e. Private-Other religious affiliation _____
    f. Other _____

41. Number of students in your school_____

42. What is the youngest grade that your school serves? _____

43. What is the oldest grade that your school serves?

44. Would you classify your school as urban, suburban, or rural?
    a. Urban
    b. Suburban
    c. Rural

45. In what state is your school located? [drop down list of states]

46. Does your school receive Title I funding?
    a. Yes
    b. No

c. I don't know

47. You may use this space to provide any additional information about your school context that you think may be helpful or relevant:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Study Overview/Introduction

Thank you for your ongoing participation in this study. The goal of this research is to better understand professional development about religious literacy in order to inform and improve existing programs. This research will help shape new programs and opportunities for teachers to learn about religious literacy and teaching about religion.

This is the second stage in this study. You were previously invited to take a survey before participating in a professional development course on religious literacy. This survey asks about your experiences in that course. You will also be invited to participate in a final survey and interview in October to reflect further on what you learned in the course and how you are applying that learning in your professional setting.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at kate.soules@bc.edu.

Thank you,

Kate Soules

Boston College

Enter Your ID:

When you took the first survey in this research project you created an ID number. Your ID number allows us to match your responses on each survey without needing your name or other identifiable information. Please enter the ID number you created for the first survey following the criteria below.

If you did not take the first survey, please use the criteria to create an ID number.

In the field below, please enter a 6-digit number using the following criteria:

- The 2-digit month of your birthday (e.g. May=05, November=11)
- Followed by, the last four digits of your phone number

For example, the ID number for Kate Soules would be 05-1416.

Part 1: Background Information

1. Which course did you attend?
    a. Religious Literacy for Educators – Illinois
    b. Religious Literacy for Educators –Maryland/DC
    c. Religious Worlds of New York

2. *[If a or b is selected in question 3:]* In what district do you teach?
    _____

3. What grades do you teach? (select all that apply)
    a. Kindergarten
    b. 1st
    c. 2nd
    d. 3rd
    e. 4th
    f. 5th
    g. 6th
    h. 7th
    i. 8th
    j. 9th
    k. 10th
    l. 11th
    m. 12th
    n. Other

4. What subject areas do you teach? (select all that apply)
    a. Reading, Writing, Literature, English Language Arts
    b. English as a Second Language or English for Speakers of Other Languages
    c. Mathematics
    d. Science
    e. Social Studies, History
    f. Religion and/or Ethics
    g. Foreign Languages
    h. Technology
    i. Arts
    j. Special Education
    k. Physical & Health Education
    l. I am not in a teaching role at my school: _____
    m. Other _____

5. How would you characterize the religious diversity of your school?

1--------------------2----------------------3--------------------------4----------------------5

      1: No religious diversity or cannot determine
      3: Some religious diversity
      5: A great deal of religiously diversity

6. Has your perception of the religious diversity of your school changed after completing this course? If yes, how so?

_____

Part 2: Experience and Learning

_____

This set of questions asks specifically about your expectations and experiences in the course.

7. Why did you choose to attend {this course – insert program name}? (check all that apply)
    l. I have a personal interest in religion
    m. My class(es) directly address religion
    n. My class(es) cover topics that have connection to religion
    o. I've encountered religion in my class(es) and not known how to respond
    p. I've encountered religion in my school (outside of classes) and not known how to respond
    q. I've encountered controversies related to religion in my school
    r. My school is very religiously diverse
    s. I believe religion is an important topic for students to learn about
    t. Other_____

8. You may use this space to provide additional details on why you wanted to attend:
    _____
    _____

9. What were the most valuable elements of {the program}? (Please select up to 3)
   a. Site visits
   b. Guest speakers--academic
   c. Guest speakers--representatives from religious communities
   d. Readings and written resources
   e. Group discussions
   f. Getting to know other educators interested in teaching about religion
   g. Informal conversations during breaks or after hours
   h. Other_____

10. Why were these elements valuable?

   _____
   _____

11. What specific conversations or experiences have stuck with you since the workshop?

   _____
   _____

12. What struck you as interesting, new, provocative, or meaningful during this workshop?

   _____
   _____
   _____

13. What aspects of the course do you think will be most useful to your work?

   _____
   _____

14. Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

    1- Strongly disagree
    2- Disagree
    3- Neither disagree nor agree
    4- Agree
    5- Strongly agree

The majority of the content about different religious traditions was new to me.	1 2 3 4 5
I got useful advice or feedback from other participants about the challenges of my own school context.	1 2 3 4 5
This workshop challenged stereotypes or misconceptions that I held before this experience.	1 2 3 4 5
The questions I had at the beginning of the workshop were answered by the end.	1 2 3 4 5
I came away with concrete ideas that I could put into place in my own classroom.	1 2 3 4 5
I already had a strong understanding of the relationship between religion, the First Amendment, and education before the workshop.	1 2 3 4 5
Visiting houses of worship of different religious traditions was a new experience for me.	1 2 3 4 5

15. Of the topics covered in the workshop, which would you have liked to have had more time to learn about and discuss? Select all that apply
    a. The First Amendment and religious liberty in the school context
    b. How to teach about contemporary religious topics
    c. How to teach about historical religious topics
    d. Information about specific religions
    e. How to respond to concerns from parents or community members
    f. How to respond to diverse student religious identities in the classroom
    g. Designing lesson or unit plans about religion or topics related to religion
    h. Understanding religious diversity in the school context
    i. Better understanding of the lived experiences of religious communities
    j. Other_____

16. How would you rate your confidence in your ability to respond to each of the following situations?
    1- Really not confident
    2- Not Confident
    3- Not sure
    4- Confident
    5- Very Confident

Answering a student question about religion in the context of a lesson	1 2 3 4 5
Answering a student question about religion in the context of current events	1 2 3 4 5
Responding to an incident of religiously-motivated bullying	1 2 3 4 5
Responding to a student comment or question that perpetuates a stereotype about a religious group	1 2 3 4 5
Discussing reasons for teaching about religion with parents	1 2 3 4 5
Discussing reasons for teaching about religion with teachers, staff, or administrators	1 2 3 4 5
Responding to student questions in the context of the student's personal faith or spiritually	1 2 3 4 5
Responding effectively to a dispute or disagreement about religion between students in class	1 2 3 4 5

17. How do you think that this course impacted your confidence regarding teaching about religion and religion in school?

    _____
    _____

18. Please put these same topics in order based on how important you think they are for teachers in general to know about in order to be religiously literate. (1=most important topic for teachers to know about)
    j. The First Amendment and religious liberty in the school context
    k. How to teach about contemporary religious topics
    l. How to teach about historical religious topics
    m. Information about specific religions
    n. How to respond to concerns from parents or community members

o. How to respond to diverse student religious identities in the classroom
p. Designing lesson or unit plans about religion or topics related to religion
q. Understanding religious diversity in the school context
r. Better understanding of the lived experiences of religious communities

19. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about religion: [RANDOMIZE STATEMENTS]

1-Strongly disagree
2- Disagree
3- Somewhat disagree
4- Somewhat agree
5- Agree
6- Strongly Agree

When trying to understand religious violence today, it is most important to look at the historical conflicts between the two groups.	1 2 3 4 5 6
Religious literacy means knowing the founder, sacred text, place of worship, and major doctrines of major religious traditions.	1 2 3 4 5 6
There are fundamental truths that all members of a religious tradition should agree on.	1 2 3 4 5 6
People with different interpretations of a religious doctrine will always be in conflict with each other.	1 2 3 4 5 6
The way members of a religious tradition celebrates a holiday will look the same in different countries.	1 2 3 4 5 6
Religious literacy is primarily important so that students will understand art and literature.	1 2 3 4 5 6
Members of the same religion can disagree on the major beliefs of the religion but still participate in the same rituals.	1 2 3 4 5 6
All religions are different paths up the same mountain.	1 2 3 4 5 6
All religions can be distilled into a version of the Golden Rule—"Treat others as you would want to be treated"	1 2 3 4 5 6
Progressive Christians and conservative Christians have more in common with each other than progressive Christians and progressive Jews have in common.	1 2 3 4 5 6

These questions ask about your views about specific religions and religion in general.

We'd like to get your feelings toward a number of groups on a "feeling thermometer." A rating of zero degrees means you feel as cold and negative as possible. A rating of 100 degrees means you feel as warm and positive as possible. You would rate the group at 50 degrees if you don't feel particularly positive or negative toward the group.

20. How do you feel toward [RANDOMIZE]? [sliders for each from 0-100]

       j. Evangelical Christians
       k. Catholics
       l. Mormons
       m. Jews
       n. Muslims
       o. Atheists
       p. Buddhists
       q. Hindus
       r. Mainline Protestants

21. At the present time, do you think religion as a whole is increasing its influence on American life or losing its influence?
       c. Increasing its influence
       d. Losing its influence

22. All in all, it this a good thing or a bad thing?
       d. Good Thing
       e. Bad Thing
       f. Other _____

Part 3: Program Evaluation

23. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements:

       1-Strongly disagree
       2- Disagree
       3- Somewhat disagree
       4- Somewhat agree
       5- Agree
       6- Strongly Agree

I would recommend this course to other educators like myself	1 2 3 4 5 6
This course met my expectations	1 2 3 4 5 6
This course was a valuable professional development experience	1 2 3 4 5 6
The speakers and presenters were knowledgeable about their topics	1 2 3 4 5 6
I will be able to apply what I learned in this course to my professional context	1 2 3 4 5 6
The course presented diverse views and perspectives on the topics covered	1 2 3 4 5 6

24. The length of the course was:
        a. Too short
        b. Just right
        c. Too long

25. Additional comments on the length of the course:

       _____
       _____
       _____

26. How much of the reading for the course did you complete?
        a. I read all of the assigned readings
        b. I read most of the assigned readings
        c. I read about half of the assigned readings
        d. I read less than half of the assigned readings
        e. I read none of the assigned readings
        f. Not Applicable: I was not assigned any readings

27. Additional comments on the reading assignments for this course:

_____
_____

28. *[do not display if F is selected in Question 27]* Please response to these statements about the reading material:

    1-Strongly disagree
    2- Disagree
    3- Somewhat disagree
    4- Somewhat agree
    5- Agree
    6- Strongly Agree

The readings were a valuable part of the course	1 2 3 4 5 6
There was too much reading	1 2 3 4 5 6
There was too little reading	1 2 3 4 5 6
I found the reading materials accessible and engaging	1 2 3 4 5 6
The readings presented a diverse range of experiences and perspectives	1 2 3 4 5 6
The readings complemented the other elements of the course	1 2 3 4 5 6

29. What recommendations would you have for future sessions of {this course}?

_____
_____

30. You may use this space for any additional comments about your experience of {this course}:

_____
_____

Introduction

Thank you for your ongoing participation in this study. The goal of this research is to better understand professional development about religious literacy in order to inform and improve existing programs. This research will help shape new programs and opportunities for teachers to learn about religious literacy and teaching about religion.

This is the third stage in this study. You have previously been invited to take two surveys about your participation in a professional development course on religious literacy. This survey asks about your experiences in that course and the impact on your teaching practice.

At the end of this survey, you will have the opportunity to volunteer to be interviewed about your experience in this professional development course.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at kate.soules@bc.edu.

Thank you,
Kate Soules
Boston College

Enter Your ID:

When you took the first survey in this research project you created an ID number. Your ID number allows us to match your responses on each survey without needing your name or other identifiable information. Please enter the ID number you created for the first and/or second survey following the criteria below.

If you did not take the first or second surveys, please use the criteria to create an ID number.

In the field below, please enter a 6-digit number using the following criteria:

- The 2-digit month of your birthday (e.g. May=05, November=11)
- Followed by, the last four digits of your phone number

For example, the ID number for Kate Soules would be 05-1416.

Part 1: Background Information

1. Which course did you attend?
   a. Religious Literacy for Educators – Illinois 203
   b. Religious Literacy for Educators—Illinois 214
   c. Religious Literacy for Educators –Maryland/DC
   d. Religious Worlds of New York

2. What grades do you teach? (select all that apply)

   a. Kindergarten
   b. 1st
   c. 2nd
   d. 3rd
   e. 4th
   f. 5th
   g. 6th
   h. 7th
   i. 8th
   j. 9th
   k. 10th
   l. 11th
   m. 12th
   n. Other

3. What subject areas do you teach? (select all that apply)
   n. Reading, Writing, Literature, English Language Arts
   o. English as a Second Language or English for Speakers of Other Languages
   p. Mathematics
   q. Science
   r. Social Studies, History
   s. Religion and/or Ethics
   t. Foreign Languages
   u. Technology
   v. Arts
   w. Special Education
   x. Physical & Health Education
   y. I am not in a teaching role at my school: _____
   z. Other _____

4. How many years have you been teaching <u>at your current school</u>?
    a. [drop down list of options] (less than 1 – 30+)

5. How many years have you been teaching <u>in total?</u>
    a. [drop down list of options] (less than 1 – 30+)

6. What is your gender identity?
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Other_____

7. Please briefly describe your present religious identity or affiliation, if any:
    a. _____

Part 2: Impact on Teaching

This set of questions asks you to reflect on any impacts this course has had on your work since the start of the 2017-2018 school year.

8. Of the topics covered in the workshop, which have you found most valuable since the start of the school year?
    a. The First Amendment and religious liberty in the school context
    b. Teaching about contemporary religious topics
    c. Teaching about historical religious topics
    d. Information about specific religions
    e. Responding to concerns from parents or community members
    f. Responding to diverse student religious identities in the classroom
    g. Designing lesson or unit plans about religion or topics related to religion
    h. Understanding religious diversity in the school context
    i. Better understanding of the lived experiences of religious communities
    j. Other_____

9. Please describe 2-3 things you learned about during the workshop that you have been able to apply in your school or classroom this year:

_____
_____

10. Are there things that you learned about in the workshop that you want to apply or utilize, but have not yet been able to? If so, what are they and why have you not be able to apply them yet?

_____

_____

11. Have you had conversation about religion with any of the following school community members that you might not have had prior to this course?
     a. Students
     b. Parents/Guardians
     c. Colleagues
     d. Administrator
     e. Other_____

12. Please describe the nature of one of these conversations.

_____

_____

13. How has this course changed your overall thinking about religion in the school context?

_____

_____

14. Do you teach any courses in which religion is a natural part of your curriculum?

For example, religion is commonly found or referenced in both literature and history. You may see the natural inclusion in other courses as well.

     a. Yes
     b. No

If YES to question 15:

The next set of questions asks your experiences with teaching about religion since the beginning of this school year:

15. Have you taught any lessons that were directly about religion?

    This could include lessons about the history of a religious tradition, an event directly related to or involving a religious tradition, or about the beliefs or practices of a religious group.

        c. Yes
        d. No

16. *If (a) yes is selected: Please briefly summarize the topics of lessons directly about religion that you have taught this year:*

    _____
    _____

17. Have you incorporated any discussion of religion into any lessons that were not directly about religion?

    This could include discussing religious themes in a piece of literature, religious influences or themes in visual or performing arts, or discussing religious perspectives on particular topics such as current events, bioethics, history, or politics.

        c. Yes
        d. No

18. *If (a) yes is selected: Please briefly list the topics of the lessons you taught that incorporated religion:*

    _____
    _____

19. Has your participation in this course changed how you think about including religion in your curriculum? If so, how?

    _____
    _____

20. You may use this space to provide any additional information about how your teaching or work has changed since completing the course:

_____
_____

If NO to question 15:

21. If religion is not directly related to your content area or grade level, how has this course changed your thinking about religion in the school context?

_____
_____

22. How has it changed your thinking about religion in relation to your particular area of work?

_____
_____

23. You may use this space to provide any additional information about how your teaching or work has changed since completing the course:

_____
_____
_____

Part 3: Confidence and Conceptions of Religion

24. How would you rate your confidence in your ability to respond to each of the following situations?
    6- Really not confident
    7- Not Confident
    8- Not sure
    9- Confident
    10- Very Confident

Answering a student question about religion in the context of a lesson	1 2 3 4 5
Answering a student question about religion in the context of current events	1 2 3 4 5
Responding to an incident of religiously-motivated bullying	1 2 3 4 5
Responding to a student comment or question that perpetuates a stereotype about a religious group	1 2 3 4 5
Discussing reasons for teaching about religion with parents	1 2 3 4 5
Discussing reasons for teaching about religion with teachers, staff, or administrators	1 2 3 4 5
Responding to student questions in the context of the student's personal faith or spiritually	1 2 3 4 5
Responding effectively to a dispute or disagreement about religion between students in class	1 2 3 4 5

25.   Have you encountered any of these situations since the start of the school year? If so, how do you feel this course equipped, or did not equip, you to respond?

_____

_____

26. How do you think that this course impacted your confidence regarding religion in school?

_____

_____

27. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following
    statements about religion: [RANDOMIZE STATEMENTS]

1-Strongly disagree
2- Disagree
3- Somewhat disagree
4- Somewhat agree
5- Agree
6- Strongly Agree

When trying to understand religious violence today, it is most important to look at the historical conflicts between the two groups.	1 2 3 4 5 6
Religious literacy means knowing the founder, sacred text, place of worship, and major doctrines of major religious traditions.	1 2 3 4 5 6
There are fundamental truths that all members of a religious tradition should agree on.	1 2 3 4 5 6
People with different interpretations of a religious doctrine will always be in conflict with each other.	1 2 3 4 5 6
The way members of a religious tradition celebrates a holiday will look the same in different countries.	1 2 3 4 5 6
Religious literacy is primarily important so that students will understand art and literature.	1 2 3 4 5 6
Members of the same religion can disagree on the major beliefs of the religion but still participate in the same rituals.	1 2 3 4 5 6
All religions are different paths up the same mountain.	1 2 3 4 5 6
All religions can be distilled into a version of the Golden Rule—"Treat others as you would want to be treated"	1 2 3 4 5 6
Progressive Christians and conservative Christians have more in common with each other than progressive Christians and progressive Jews have in common.	1 2 3 4 5 6

28.   In what ways has this course changed your thinking about religion in general?

_____

_____

These questions ask about your views about specific religions and religion in general.

29. We'd like to get your feelings toward a number of groups on a "feeling thermometer." A rating of zero degrees means you feel as cold and negative as possible. A rating of 100 degrees means you feel as warm and positive as possible. You would rate the group at 50 degrees if you don't feel particularly positive or negative toward the group.

How do you feel toward [RANDOMIZE]? [sliders for each from 0-100]

      a. Evangelical Christians
      b. Catholics
      c. Mormons
      d. Jews
      e. Muslims
      f. Atheists
      g. Buddhists
      h. Hindus
      i. Mainline Protestants

30. At the present time, do you think religion as a whole is increasing its influence on American life or losing its influence?
      a. Increasing its influence
      b. Losing its influence

31. All in all, it this a good thing or a bad thing?
      a. Good Thing
      b. Bad Thing
      c. Other _____

Part 4: Case Study Scenario

This set of questions ask you to think about a hypothetical situation that you might encounter related to religion and education. Please think about how you would respond to this scenario if it were occurring in the context of your current school.

A new student has joined your class and you learn that this student is from a religious tradition that you are unfamiliar with. Because you do not know very much about this religion, you want to learn more about the student's religious tradition.

32. What questions would you ask about that religious tradition so help you know your student better?

    _____

    _____

33. How has your participation in this course impacted how you would approach this situation?

_____

_____

Part 5: Recommendations for Part 2

34. Of the topics covered in the workshop, which would you have liked to have had more time to learn about and discuss? Select all that apply
    a. The First Amendment and religious liberty in the school context
    b. How to teach about contemporary religious topics
    c. How to teach about historical religious topics
    d. Information about specific religions
    e. How to respond to concerns from parents or community members
    f. How to respond to diverse student religious identities in the classroom
    g. Designing lesson or unit plans about religion or topics related to religion
    h. Understanding religious diversity in the school context
    i. Better understanding of the lived experiences of religious communities
    j. Other_____

35. What would you include in a Part 2 of this course?

_____

_____

Part 6: School Context

36. What was the first day of the 2017-2018 school year for your school? _____

37. Type of School:
    a. Public
    b. Public-Charter
    c. Private-Secular
    d. Private-Catholic
    e. Private-Other religious affiliation _____
    f. Other _____

38. Approximate Number of students in your school_____

39. What is the youngest grade that your school serves?

a. Pre-kindergarten
b. Kindergarten
c. 1st
d. 2nd
e. 3rd
f. 4th
g. 5th

h. 6th
i. 7th
j. 8th
k. 9th
l. 10th
m. 11th
n. 12th

40. What is the oldest grade that your school serves?

a. Pre-kindergarten
b. Kindergarten
c. 1st
d. 2nd
e. 3rd
f. 4th
g. 5th
h. 6th
i. 7th
j. 8th
k. 9th
l. 10th
m. 11th
n. 12th

41. In what state is your school located?
    [drop down list of states]

42. Would you classify your school as
    urban, suburban, or rural?
d. Urban
e. Suburban
f. Rural

Opt-In for Interviews (On end screen of the survey, after responses have been submitted)

The next stage of this research will include follow-up interviews with individuals who participated in these workshops. If you are willing to be contacted about a short (approx. 30 min) interview, please follow this link to provide your contact information. This information will not be connected to your survey responses in any way.

Interview Opt-In Survey

Thank you for being willing to be contacted for a short follow-up interview. Interviews will be conducted via phone or online video conferencing at a time convenient to you.

Please provide the following information. There will be some questions you have already answered in the survey. These questions will allow me to select interview participants from a diverse set of school contexts.

1. First Name: _____
2. Last Name: _____

3. I participated in:
   a. Religious Literacy for Educators – Illinois
      i. District: _____
   b. Religious Literacy for Educators –Maryland/DC
   c. Religious Worlds of New York

4. Email address: _____
5. Phone Number:_____
6. School Name: _____
7. School City and State: _____

8. Type of School:
   a. Public
   b. Public-Charter
   c. Private-Secular
   d. Private-Catholic
   e. Private-Other religious affiliation _____
   f. Other _____

9. What grades do you teach? (select all that apply)
    a. Kindergarten
    b. 1st
    c. 2nd
    d. 3rd
    e. 4th
    f. 5th
    g. 6th
    h. 7th
    i. 8th
    j. 9th
    k. 10th
    l. 11th
    m. 12th
    n. Other_____

10. What subject areas do you teach? (select all that apply)
    a. Reading, Writing, Literature, English Language Arts
    b. English as a Second Language or English for Speakers of Other Languages
    c. Mathematics
    d. Science
    e. Social Studies, History
    f. Religion and/or Ethics
    g. Foreign Languages
    h. Technology
    i. Arts
    j. Special Education
    k. Physical & Health Education
    l. I am not in a teaching role at my school: _____
    m. Other _____

Informed Content

Boston College Lynch School of Education
Informed Consent to be in study:
Professional Development for Teaching about Religion: Motivations, Learning, and
Impact for Teachers
Principle Investigator: Kate Soules

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you consent to participate in this
study. Please ask any questions necessary to understand what you are being asked to do.

Why have I been asked to take part in this study?
You are being asked to be in a research study about professional development on
religious literacy and teaching about religion.
You were selected to be in the study because you are participating in a professional
development on these topics.

What is this study about?
The purpose of this study is to better understand:
(a) why teachers choose to participate in professional development on teaching about
religion;
(b) what teachers learn during professional development on teaching about religion; and
(c) the impact this professional development has on teachers, their pedagogy, and their
curriculum.

Who will take part in this study?
The people in this study are teachers and other educators who are participating in
professional development programs on teaching about religion and religious literacy.

If I decide to participate, what will I be asked to do?
You will be asked to fill out a survey online through a survey website right now. The
survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.
You may be asked to complete additional surveys after completing the course.
You may also volunteer to be contacted about participating in an interview after
completing the course. The interviews will last about 30 minutes.

What are the risks to being in the study?
There are no expected risks. However, you may be asked questions about difficult or
sensitive topics. You may choose not to answer any questions about a topic that you are
uncomfortable discussing. There are no consequences if you choose not to answer certain
questions.

This study may include risks that are unknown at this time.

What are the benefits of being in the study?
There are no direct benefits to you for taking part in this study.
Answering questions about your experiences of professional development may help you reflect on your learning and experiences, which could be positive and beneficial to you as an educator.

What is the compensation for being in the study?
You will not receive any payments for participating in this study.

Is there a cost to be in the study?
There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

How will my answers be kept private?
The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we may publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you.
Research records will be kept in a locked file. All electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file.
Mainly just the principle investigator will have access to information; however, please note that a few other key people may also have access. These might include government agencies. Also, the Institutional Review Board at Boston College and internal Boston College auditors may review the research records.

What if I do not want to take part in the study or if I change my mind later?
Participating in this study is voluntary. You may choose to skip any questions that you do not want to answers. If you choose not to be in this study, it will not affect your current or future relations with Boston College or with the program in which you participated.
You are free to quit at any time, for whatever reason.
There is no penalty or loss of benefits for not taking part or for quitting.

Who can I contact if I have questions?
The principle investigator conducting this study is Kate Soules. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her at kate.soules@bc.edu or 802-595-1416.
The faculty advisor for this study is Dennis Shirley. For questions or more information, you may contact him at dennis.shirley@bc.edu or 617-552-1642.
If you have any questions about your rights as a person in this research study, you may contact: Director, Office for Research Protections, Boston College at (617) 552-4778, or irb@bc.edu.

Copy of Consent Form:
You are encouraged to save and print a copy of this form for your records. You may download a copy of this form here [link to pdf].

Consent to Participate
I have read the contents of this consent form. I have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my content to be in this study.

Consent:
Yes, I want to participate in this study
No, I do not want to participate in this study.

APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol

Introduction:

1. Can you give me a little bit of background about what you teach and the school where you teach?
   a. Grades and subject areas taught? Number of years teaching?
      i. OR: role in school if not a classroom teacher
   b. Size of school, location, type of school (public/private)
   c. Diversity of school
2. What about your own background with learning about religion?
   a. Have you previously studied religion?
      i. Academically?
      ii. In a devotional context?
   b. *Do not necessarily prompt, but ask follow-up questions if personal religious background or identity is discussed*

Part 1: Interest in Participating in this Course

3. What led up to your participation in this course?
   a. How did you find out about it?
   b. Were you looking for this type of professional learning and development?
      i. If so, why?
   c. Why did you decide to sign up?
      i. Were you encouraged to participate by colleagues or administrators?
      ii. Was your decision to participate supported by your colleagues or administrators?
   d. Why did you choose this course over other professional learning opportunities?

Part 2: Experiences in the Course

4. Can you tell me about your experiences in the course?
   a. What were your expectations going into the course?
   b. What was new or surprising to you?
   c. What stood out to you as important or meaningful?
   d. What about the experience of the site visits?
   e. (If relevant) Student panels?
   f. How were your views about religion and religious literacy challenged or changed during this course?
   g. What were you left still wanting to know at the end of the course?

Part 3: Impact on Practice

5. How has the experience of this course and what you learned during this course impacted your work in the classroom/school?
    a. Have you made any changes to your practice? If so, what are they?
    b. (if relevant) Have you made (or do you plan to make) any changes to your curriculum as a result of this course?
    c. Has your thinking about religion or diversity in your school changed? If so, in what ways?
    d. Have you had any opportunities to discuss your experiences or learning in this course with other people in your school (students, faculty, community members)?
        i.   What have been the nature of those conversations?

Addition questions if responses do not come up naturally:

6. Why do you think it is important for educators to be religiously literate?
7. How would you define religious literacy?
8. What would you want to include in a "Part 2" version of this course?

9. Is there anything that I didn't ask about that you think would be important or helpful me to know or consider in my research?

Informed Consent for Interviews

Boston College Lynch School of Education
Informed Consent to be in study:
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Impact for Teachers
Principle Investigator: Kate Soules

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you consent to participate in this
study. Please ask any questions necessary to understand what you are being asked to do.

Why have I been asked to take part in this study?
- You are being asked to be in a research study about professional development on teaching about religion and religious literacy for educators.
- You were selected to be in the study because you have participated in a professional development program on religious literacy and teaching about religion and you have previously completed a survey about this program.

What is this study about?
- The purpose of this study is to better understand:
    - (a) why teachers choose to participate in professional development on teaching about religion;
    - (b) what teachers learn during professional development on teaching about religion; and
    - (c) the impact this professional development has on teachers, their pedagogy, and their curriculum.

Who will take part in this study?
- The people in this study are teachers and other educators who have participated in professional development programs on teaching about religion and religious literacy.

If I decide to participate, what will I be asked to do?
- Complete an interview with the principle investigator about your experiences around religion and education. The interview will last about 30 minutes. The interview will be recorded using a digital recorder.

What are the risks to being in the study?
- There are no expected risks. However, you may be asked questions about difficult or sensitive topics. You may choose not to answer any questions about a topic that you are uncomfortable discussing. There are no consequences if you choose not to answer certain questions.
- This study may include risks that are unknown at this time.

What are the benefits of being in the study?
- There are no direct benefits to you for taking part in this study.

- Answering questions about your experiences of professional development may help you reflect on your learning and experiences, which could be positive and beneficial to you as an educator.

What is the compensation for being in the study?
- You will not receive any payments for participating in this study.

Is there a cost to be in the study?
- There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

How will my answers be kept private?
- The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we may publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you.
- Research records will be kept in a locked file. All electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file. Only the principle investigator will have access to any audio recordings of interviews.
- Mainly just the principle investigator will have access to information; however, please note that a few other key people may also have access. These might include government agencies. Also, the Institutional Review Board at Boston College and internal Boston College auditors may review the research records.

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- You are free to quit at any time, for whatever reason.
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Who can I contact if I have questions?
- The principle investigator conducting this study is Kate Soules. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her at kate.soules@bc.edu or 802-595-1416**.**
- The faculty advisor for this study is Dennis Shirley. For questions or more information, you may contact him at dennis.shirley@bc.edu or 617-552-1642.
- If you have any questions about your rights as a person in this research study, you may contact: Director, Office for Research Protections, Boston College at (617) 552-4778, or irb@bc.edu.

Copy of Consent Form:
- You are encouraged to save and print a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form. I have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to be in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

Signature/Date

Study Participant (Print Name):

Participant Signature: **Date**