

Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality in Secular Schools:
A qualitative study of Albertan Schooling

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Abstract

Over most of the 20th Century, many educational systems around the world became increasingly secular, notably with lessening involvement of religious institutions. However, what it means to offer secular education to an increasingly diverse student population is emerging as a contemporary international educational issue. The face of immigration, the rights of Aboriginals, and increasingly diverse and individual forms of religiosity and spirituality have implications for secular education today. This qualitative study of Alberta schooling provides an example of a setting that underwent a high degree of secularization in the 1960's-1980's. A litigious but interpretive boundary exists for the extent educationists were to engage students in thinking about religion and spirituality. Yet, teachers operated with a high degree of autonomy. With these contextual factors as a backdrop, this study explored how a hierarchical sample of Alberta policy-makers, administrators, and teachers conceptualized religion and spirituality for secular secondary schools. Results show that Alberta Education conceptualized space for the conservative religious and Aboriginal communities, but not mainstream students. The students operated in a 'leave your faith at the door' secular model, curriculum was rationalized, and the function of schooling was perceived as preparing students for work. Findings show that principals and teachers challenged the lack of space for mainstream students to engage in the concepts of religion and spirituality. They argued the secular model disadvantaged mainstream students in exercising their right to religious freedom and developing religious literacy and sensitivity skills and it also prevented non-religious students from gaining access to religious/spiritual concepts and tools to facilitate wellbeing and resiliency.

PROLOGUE:

Personal Orientation

In the interests of reflexivity and transparency, I would like to set out my personal reasons for devoting so much time to this issue. I do not define myself as religious but I have a fascination for how different people and different cultures believe in a transcendent reality and interpret what it means to be human and integrate these beliefs into their everyday lives.

To begin, I am of Scottish heritage. My ancestors were a part of the early 19th century wave of the highland clearances. They immigrated to Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia. Whilst I am not an expert in Scottish history, I have helped to construct a family history, dating back to 1723. I am familiar with the legal restrictions imposed on the Scottish during the clearances, particularly in terms of language, culture, and spiritual beliefs. Part of my personal development involves researching the history of spiritual belief in my cultural history.

As a child I grew up in the French and Catholic province of Quebec. I attended Sunday School in the Anglican tradition for a short while. My parents quit the Church when I was very young. On a national poll I would not affiliate with being an

Anglican or being Christian. My starting point therefore is not of an organized religious perspective, but instead it is one of an interest and curiosity about the nature of 'transcendent experience' because it was fairly common amongst my family members to have interactions with a supernatural reality. However, there was little in my own culture, outside of my family culture, for understanding and developing my experiences.

In Canada, I am politically categorized as 'Dominant Culture'. The other two categories are Aboriginal and Immigrant. I am categorized as 'Dominant Culture' because I am white, English speaking (the other is French speaking), and supposedly Christian heritage. I am a product of a colonial model of education, where children in the province of Quebec were divided along religious lines, with two school systems in operation, Protestant and Catholic. My educational experience, however, occurred during a particularly volatile period of Canadian history. As a religious and linguistic minority in Quebec, I was regularly targeted and beaten to the ground on my way to elementary school as the animosity between the French and English, Catholics and Protestants, had reached new heights. In October 1970 a terrorist group known as the FLQ (Front de la Liberation de Quebec) kidnapped two dignitaries and set bombs off around the city. Our Protestant school was under military supervision and armed guards were posted at the perimeter. Since my father was the Chairman of the Protestant School Board, I had a nuanced appreciation for the political and educational backdrop for the seriousness of being a religious and linguistic minority because regular conversations about schooling issues were a part of my growing up.

The negative experiences of being a religious minority did not dampen my interest in the ways people believe. Indeed, when I was a youngster my grandfather told me never to go inside a Catholic church or something bad would happen to me. By the time I was about nine years old, I tested his warning and slipped into the Catholic Church that was attached to the French schools. I remember pulling out the bench, being mesmerized by the beauty of the Church, and praying very hard that nothing bad would happen. A priest approached and asked if I needed any help. Fearful, I told him that I just wanted to see inside his Church to which he replied that I was welcome any time. It was in my nature to test what I was being told. Ever since I have been comfortable engaging in different religious/spiritual cultures. It is not surprising that I would choose to examine Canada's education system in terms of how religion and belief in a supernatural reality are treated. I was young when I began to think about how the government colonized our identity, divided students along religious lines, and set us up for bullying. The emerging body of de-colonist literature rarely depicts the impact of colonization on the 'Dominant Society'.

My family left Quebec City in the early 1970's and moved to the capital city of Ottawa in the province of Ontario. My parents wanted to remove their children from the environment of racism and the limitations that put on us for our future academic and professional careers. In Ottawa, schools were secular. There were no 'Protestant schools'. An incident in my grade eleven English literature class became the catalyst for this doctoral study. My teacher introduced a historical fiction novel, explaining that in the time period the book was written people were uneducated and so they were superstitious, believing in God, ghosts, and afterlife. I put up my hand, which was rare for me, and asked her what she meant that because they were uneducated

they believed in a supernatural dimension. She did not have a reply. She did not have the power to lead me away from what I believed, but her matter of fact rationalist assumptions became the catalyst for me to prove that highly intelligent people can believe in and experience a supernatural reality. There was little in my Dominant Society culture, other than Church, that would help me in understanding the nature of a supernatural reality.

I decided to become a secondary school English teacher because it seemed to be the most in alignment with my interests in the supernatural dimension, philosophical questions of life, and understanding of the variety of ways people understand what it means to be human. Enduring literature explores the nature of the human experience and causes one to think about the deeper questions about life and death. Literature such as Hamlet and MacBeth bring forth the way Shakespeare conceptualized a transcendent reality and provides a catalyst for readers to think about their own beliefs and experiences.

Since there was little in my own culture, I began to look to Buddhist and Aboriginal communities to find out how they believed and what they have learned about a transcendent reality. In the 1980's I lived the life of a pilgrim in Tibet for three months and traveled from temple to temple with Tibetan pilgrims. I taught for a year in China and learned how the Cultural Revolution impacted the lives of everyday people in China. I spent six weeks in the primitive hill tribes in Thailand and Burma learning through a translator how the tribes conceptualized a transcendent reality of spirits, mental telepathy, intuition, out of body travel, and the afterlife. In the 1990's and into the 2000's I spent most weekends and summers on Alberta

Aboriginal reservations, participating in everyday life and also in sweatlodge, Sundance, and vision quest ceremonies. I was struck by how open belief in a transcendent reality was in these cultures and how absent it was in my Canadian culture. I began to use the word spirituality to describe my interest in the nature of transcendent experience to distinguish from the concept of religion.

My experience as a high school English teacher showed me that whilst I considered belief in a transcendent reality to be normal, I found out that students wondered if they were allowed to wonder about a supernatural reality in school. At the start of a new term, I asked my English literature students (ages 15-18) to construct a list of their personal seven wonders. They had previously read Lewis' (2002) essay where he had drafted his list of wonders, which mainly had to do with insects and bacteria. I planned to use their wonders as a way to approach the teaching of literature. Several students addressed me privately and quietly to ask if they were allowed to wonder about a wide horizon of dimensions potentially related to the umbrella terms religion and spirituality. They wondered if they were allowed to wonder about God, fate, ghosts, what happens after they die, soul mates, meaning, and purpose. It seemed they had detected a boundary for which wonders were acceptable and which were unacceptable in an Alberta secular school. Their use of the word allowed was concerning to me personally and professionally. How had students learned that they might not be allowed to wonder about some of the most provocative questions about the human condition?

A second incident occurred when I handed out traditional red pockets to celebrate the Chinese/Vietnamese New Year. The lesson that day used the Chinese zodiac as a

language building exercise, where students made a word bowl from the character descriptors of the various astrological signs (eg. Year of the Monkey, Rat, Horse). This was followed up by a written response where they were to evaluate whether or not the descriptors for the year they were born into matched their genuine identity. Having taught at a university in Beijing and having taught English as a Second Language to immigrant students, it had not occurred to me that using the Chinese zodiac, especially during the Chinese New Year, would be perceived as problematic. A parent reported to my school principal that I had engaged the students in witchcraft and I had to be supervised for two class periods to ensure that I was not. Again, the issue of boundaries emerged. From a research perspective I found it fascinating that I had unknowingly transgressed a boundary and I would have liked to learn more from this parent about how and why he believed as he did. But, the parent was kept anonymous.

The third incident happened whilst I was teaching Canadian history to year ten students. Finding the one paragraph account of Aboriginal history at the front of the text inadequate, especially since the rest of the text promoted the French and English presences in Canada, I arranged for an Elder friend of mine from a nearby reservation to teach about Aboriginal worldviews and ways of life, where a belief in a transcendent dimension is entwined in all dimensions of life. Having spent long stretches on reservations in Alberta, learning first hand about Aboriginal ways of life and engaging in ceremony, it had not occurred to me that inviting an Elder from a reservation to address what I considered to be an inaccurate account of Canadian history in the mandated textbook was problematic. An angry parent telephoned me to say that I should not waste class time on integrating an understanding of an

Aboriginal perspective, which necessarily requires the integration of their understanding of spirituality, since in her view they had nothing to do with Canadian history. At the school that I taught at the year before there was a significant Aboriginal population. I integrated Aboriginal literature and philosophies alongside English literature and philosophies. There was a high degree of interest in Aboriginal culture amongst students so in response I organized a fieldtrip to learn about sacred ceremony. Students went through a sweatlodge and face-painting ceremony. I also organized and facilitated an Aboriginal culture programme where once a week after school Elders gave lessons about Aboriginal stories, spirituality, significance of names, drumming, healing methods, songs, and beading. In different schools there seemed to be different boundaries.

As a practitioner, I was uncertain about the extent I was allowed to respond to student wonders, integrate multiple spiritual perspectives in lessons, and include the marginalized Aboriginal perspective on spirituality in lessons on Canadian history. At the time that I was conceptualizing how I was going to construct an inquiry for locating the boundary, the province of Alberta Ministry of Education introduced a controversial Bill 44, which elevated the boundary issue beyond my practice to teachers in all of Alberta. The Alberta government legislated in the Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2009, Section 11(3)) that teachers must inform parents in advance if they include themes related to religion, sexuality, or sexual orientation. The problem was that the Act did not define what a 'religious theme' was or explicitly demarcate the boundary for educators, leaving the negotiation of this boundary open to interpretation. Should a teacher go 'too far', in the perception of the student/parent,

the parent had the right to submit a petition to the courts and the teacher might have to sit before a human rights tribunal to defend his/her decision to address a religious/spiritual theme. The trouble was that there was no directive about what is considered 'too far'.

I became intrigued about how Canadian secular education dealt with student wonders, beliefs, and experiences. I was curious about what teachers were allowed to include in their lessons and what they were expected to exclude. I became interested in how my colleagues perceived the notions of religion and spirituality and how relevant these concepts were to them personally and professionally. The larger issue for me was the Canadian secularization story. I started offering professional development sessions in my school jurisdiction, where my session on 'spirituality and education' was one of several options. The result was that my sessions were so popular that organizers started capping the number of participants in order to be fair to other presenters. I knew I had a topic that resonated with Alberta teachers.

I decided to move beyond personal and professional anecdotal accounts for the topic of 'spirituality and education' and study it systematically in a doctoral programme. I took a leave of absence from my school jurisdiction and enrolled in a doctoral programme in England where 'spiritual development' was a part of national policy. Since 'spiritual development' had a designated space in English education, I found there to be a wealth of literature, conferences, special interest groups, and scholars. But, as a researcher from a post-colonial country with British roots, I wondered why Canada/Alberta had secularized to the degree that it had. The goal was to see Canadian/Albertan education in a fresh way by immersing myself in

England's education culture. I remained conscious that I operated from three lenses: personal, professional, and academic researcher.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study explored how educationists from the province of Alberta in Canada conceptualized religion and spirituality in secular public education. This is an underdeveloped field in Canada. Canadian debates are most often limited to the role of religion and the impact of secularization on the public school system during the 1960's and 1980's and do not include the concept of spirituality. It is argued that 'religion' in public schools is an awkward and controversial subject and many policy-makers and educationists would rather avoid the topic and treat it as an insignificant educational concern (Sweet, 1997; Brown, 2000; Seljak, 2009a,b). Indeed, in many Canadian schools religions courses were eliminated, the religious backdrop of curriculum was removed, and academic and policy-making conversations about the space and role of religion in public education ended after the secularization era (Blair, 1986; Sweet, 1997; Khan, 1997, 1998; Brown, 2000; Benson, 2000; Fenwick & English, 2004; Hiemstra & Brink, 2006; McDonough & Boyd, 2009; Wane, 2011; Abdi, 2011). This inquiry is ground breaking for the Canadian context because it starts up conversations about what secular education

means amongst Alberta educationists after what Canadian scholars describe as decades of silence.

This study broadened the conversation, however, beyond religion and included the concept of spirituality. Studies on conceptualizations of religion and spirituality in secular education in Canada are rare. In this regard, this is a pioneering study. It brings the concepts of religion and spirituality from the margins of educational debates. The result was that the interviews provided an opportunity for contemporary Alberta educationists to speak of some knots that have formed over time as a result of how the secularization process occurred in Alberta, the lack of consensus for what 'secular education' means, and how educationists are to address the concepts of religion and spirituality in this post-secularization era.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

The three operational research terms were 'religion', 'spirituality', and 'secular'. The concepts of religion and spirituality are particularly difficult to define. In liberal democratic countries, individuals are free to conceptualize these terms in anyway they choose and therefore there is no consensus for definitions today (Taylor, 2007). It is impossible to pin down conceptualizations because the words mean different things to different people (Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Roof, 1999a,b; Tacey, 2004; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Taylor, 2007; Bibby, 2011). It is argued that there is currently no robust theoretical framework for how individuals

conceptualize the word spirituality in particular (see Taylor, 2007; Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003; Benson & Roehlkepartain, 2008; Luckmann, 1978, 1990, 1999, 2003; Luhmann, 1977, 1997, 2013; Brown, 2009; Bibby, 2011). Indeed, it is becoming common for social scientists to take a 'theory free' approach to the study of the concept of spirituality (Luhmann, 2013, p. 202). This posed a problem for situating this study within a theoretical framework. It also posed literature review and methodological challenges, as we shall see.

The third operational research term was 'secular'. There is a body of literature for meanings of 'secular' and 'secularization'. However, the literature is problematic, mainly because scholars use the words 'secular' and 'secularization' in such various ways that it is difficult to pin down the nature of the arguments (Dobbelaere, 1981; Chaves, 1994; Taylor, 2007; Luhmann, 2013). As a starting point, this study characterizes secularization theory in two ways. First, secularization theory refers to a belief that as societies progress, especially through modernization and rationalization, religious authority will diminish in significance at the state, institutional, and individual level and eventually the concept of religion will become insignificant in the social world. Second, secularization theory explains how the process of secularization occurred. Chapter Two develops the backdrop to these two definitions. In brief, the first definition is now considered an 'old' interpretation of the social change that occurred, mainly after World War Two when there was an obvious decline in church attendance. It is evident today that religious belief did not disappear altogether and indeed there has been a proliferation of new religions, immigrant communities are becoming more assertive in bringing their religious beliefs to the

public sphere, and there is an increased interest in individual non-religious quests for personal spirituality. The second definition is often presented as an 'endpoint', as though once the secularization process occurred, separating religious authority out of national, institutional, and individual day-to-day governance, that was the end of the story (Taylor, 2007; Casanova, 2009). The notion of what 'secular' means is often understood as though there were a generalizable definition (ibid). There are numerous forms of 'secular education' today (Dobbelaere, 1981; Chaves, 1994; Taylor, 2009; Casanova, 2009). This study takes up this issue of what 'secular' means, especially when applied to an Alberta public school system.

Secularization theory is a contested and messy theory, mainly because its theoretical assumptions are critiqued. However, with a careful analysis and deconstruction of different theoretical accounts of how the secularization process occurred (Chapter Two), this study developed a template of constructs that proved fruitful in understanding why Alberta education removed religious authority from schools and why 'religion' is a controversial subject in most public schools across Canada (see Template in Appendix). In the context of growing significance of religion and spirituality in the public sphere, this study opened discussions about the existing 'post-secularization model', why religion was considered a controversial subject, and how educationists thought post-secularization institutions should deal with religion and the contemporary notion of a non-religious form of spirituality.

1.2 Statement and Background of the Issue

This pioneering study re-starts the conversation about conceptualizations of religion and spirituality in Alberta's post-secularization era. In order to enter the field of Alberta schooling a historical backdrop was constructed for the Canadian 'secularization story', using the secularization theory template of constructs. Chapter Three presents the Canadian secularization story, beginning with its pre-secularization colonial model for a dual (Protestant and Catholic, but not Aboriginal) public education system (1500's-1960's), the secularization era and the de-Christianization of the Protestant sector but not the Catholic sector (1960's-1980's), and the post-secularization story where the dual model was 'secular' public education and Catholic separate education (late 1980's to the present). Over time, the concept of religion in secularized schools became controversial and a litigious but interpretive boundary existed for teachers/schools in terms of how far they may integrate religious themes into their lessons (Blair, 1986; Sweet, 1997; Brown, 2000; Benson, 2000; Fenwick & English, 2004; Seljak, 2006a,b; 2009; Wane, 2011). Little is known about how educationists think a 'religion free' post-secularization education model addresses the contemporary notion of a personal, non-religious, form of spirituality.

Taylor (2009), however, argues that notions of what 'secular' means have evolved over time and that it is important for secular institutions to re-evaluate policy and practice to ensure that it is appropriate for the contemporary generation of people the institution is meant to serve. Canadian sociologists (see Chapter Three: Seljak, 2009; Kunz, 2009; Gaye & Kunz, 2009; Fadden & Townsend,

2009; Thomas, 2009), however, argue that this re-evaluation is not occurring in Canada and there is a general lack of debate about the significance of religion and spirituality amongst Canadian policy-makers and administrators and this is preventing institutional leaders from adapting to the current circumstances where religion and spirituality are becoming increasingly significant at the institutional and personal levels.

This study set out to make sense of a complicated field of inquiry that was underdeveloped in Canada. With few resources to draw upon due to the gap in Canadian literature, and the lack of consensus for the concepts of ‘religion’, ‘spirituality’, and ‘secular education’, this study provides a starting point for the Alberta education context.

1.3 Research Questions

The formulation of the research questions will be discussed in full in the methodology (Chapter Four), however, in brief, the overarching research question was:

How do teachers, administrators, and policy-makers conceptualize religion and spirituality in secular public education?

This question was divided into three operational research questions as outlined below.

Research Question One was established as a baseline question. Since there is a lack of consensus for meanings of religion and spirituality, this question was intended to open discussions on conceptualizations of religion and spirituality:

How do teachers, administrators, and policy-makers conceptualize spirituality and religion?

Research Question Two opened up a horizon of concepts that the umbrella terms religion and spirituality include:

Which conceptualizations of religion and spirituality do teachers, administrators, and policy-makers think should be included or excluded from educational mandates or teacher lesson objectives and activities and why?

This question was intended to gain clarity about the litigious boundary issues of secular education mentioned earlier. The intention was also to delve into the ‘whys’ of decision-making and thus make a contribution to secularization theory as it relates to a post-colonial setting such as Alberta.

Research Question Three addressed the complicated and conflicted issue of policy-making and curriculum development for religion and spirituality:

How do teachers, administrators, and policy-makers think policy and practice should address religion and spirituality within secular schools?

The intention of this question was to engage educationists in a critical examination of its post-secularization model and to think about the function of post-secularization education for a contemporary generation of educationists, parents, and students.

1.4 Purpose and Significance of the Study

This study's primary purpose was to start conversations amongst Alberta educationists about religion and spirituality for post-secularization education and to continue Alberta's secularization story. In the process, it unpacked how different educationists used the words religion and spirituality and perceived the concept of 'secular education'. It also located assumptions, biases, unresolved knots at the administrative level and the principal and teacher levels, as well as proposed solutions from the bottom up. This fills a gap in Canadian literature by providing a fresh account of post-secularization education in the province of Alberta.

Abdi (2011) argues that the gap in Canadian literature is so significant now that few Canadian scholars will take the risk to construct a study because there is not a foundation of literature and methodological models to build upon. Data driven research informed studies on conceptualizations of religion and spirituality in everyday post-secularization schools in Canada are rare (Bohac Clarke, 2001; English, 2001; Abdi, 2011; Wane & Ritskes, 2011; Cole, 2011; Hart, 2011). Most existent studies are limited to literature reviews and position pieces that offer prescriptive accounts of what should happen in Canadian schools (Fenwick, 2003). In this regard, this study is ground breaking for Alberta. It cannot be compared to studies from other international contexts where scholarly attention has been directed at conceptualizing religion and spirituality for schools and where there is a substantial foundation of literature, policy statutes, curriculum documents, and conferences. This study needs to be put in the context of a limited foundation.

This is the first Canadian study, as far as I know, that constructed the historical, cultural, and policy backdrop using secularization theory as the lens. It is the first study, that I am aware of, that explored conceptualizations of religion and spirituality in policy and practice for Alberta educationists in the context of Canada's secularization story. Sweet (1997) conducted a Canadian wide study that investigated the role of religion in public schools after the secularization of the Protestant sector of education, but her sample consisted mainly of religious families and her findings mainly pertained to the effects of secularization on religious families. She did not explore how the concept of spirituality was conceptualized for schools. Recently, a small group of Canadian scholars are beginning to use the word 'spirituality' as their operative research term (see Abdi, 2011; Wane, 2011; Ritskes, 2011; Motha, 2011; Cole, 2011; Bibby, 2011). In this regard, the concept of spirituality is beginning to surface, albeit conceptualized in different ways, and scholars are attempting to lay down a foundation for how to create a scholarly study on this complex and difficult field of inquiry.

1.5 Research Design

Chapter Four presents a detailed account of the methodology for this qualitative interview study. The absence of consensus for the operative research terms, the problematic issues of 'secularization theory', the absence of a substantial body of Canadian literature, and the limited number of methodological frameworks that were appropriate for the Canadian education context posed significant challenges.

This study, therefore, took a qualitative exploratory approach with the goal to

make sense of a complicated subject matter. Data were gathered from a priori research of policy documents and one-to-one face-to-face one to two hour semi-structured interviews. This study limited the scope to one Alberta secular public school jurisdiction (of 42 in Alberta). This jurisdiction had a multicultural and religiously/spiritually diverse and complex population and was the one where I taught for eighteen years, where students wondered if they were *allowed* to wonder about ultimate concerns and where I was uncertain about the boundary for practice. Canadian education policy is a provincial responsibility not a national one. Therefore, each province's post-secularization model will be somewhat different. Therefore, studies emerging from one province cannot be generalized to another province.

This study constructed a hierarchical sample of Alberta's Minister of Education, two provincial curriculum specialists, school jurisdiction policy-makers, senior administrators, school principals, and teachers from a variety of curriculum disciplines in order to understand this complicated field of inquiry from multiple perspectives.

1.6 Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope

Canadian literature suggests that few conversations occur about conceptualizing religion and spirituality for post-secularization education. My professional experience indicated that students had questions related to religion/spirituality but they wondered if they were allowed to ask them in an Alberta public education setting. Therefore, the starting point assumption was that

a conversation needed to be started about what post-secularization education meant. The conversation needed to establish some baseline for how religion and spirituality were conceptualized for post-secularization education and it needed to enter into new territory of critically examining the post-secularization model through the lens of secularization theory. It did not position conceptualizations of religion and spirituality in terms of 'best practice' or 'learning theory'. It focused primarily on establishing a foundation for conceptualizations of religion and spirituality in the context of an interpretive yet litigious post-secularization model. As a foundational work, this study is a living document. It marks a beginning point to build upon.

1.7 Outline for the Thesis

1.7.1 Chapter Two: Review of Secularization Theory

This chapter provides an account of secularization theory by presenting the evolution of meanings of the terms secular, secularization, and secularism. It focuses on multiple interpretations of secularization theory and justifies the one put forward in this study and the template that was constructed.

1.7.2 Chapter Three: Canadian/Albertan Context

Chapter Three builds the historical, political, cultural, and religious backdrop for policy and practice related to religion/spirituality for the Canadian/Albertan

education context. It divides the backdrop into three distinct eras: 1) the pre-secularization colonial era (1500's-1960), 2) the secularization era (1960-1980), and 3) the post-secularization era. Each of these eras is examined through the lens of secularization theory, which was developed in Chapter Two.

1.7.3 Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter sets out the steps that were taken to create, conduct, and evaluate this qualitative study. It addresses the appropriateness of qualitative methodology, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, choice of research setting and access, ethics procedures, analysis techniques, and steps taken to address validity.

1.7.4 Chapter Five: Conceptualizations of Religion/Spirituality

This chapter presents findings for Research Question One, the baseline conceptualizations of religion and spirituality. The sample for each finding chapter (Five-Eight) was divided into two groups, policy-makers and senior administrators and principals and teachers in order to highlight the complexity of issues related to institutional management and day-to-day classroom experience. Findings demonstrate the diversity of conceptualizations, the extent to which the historical, political, cultural, and educational backdrop influenced perceptions, the relevancy of religion and spirituality personally and professionally, and current perspectives on the role of post-secularization education in the province of Alberta.

1.7.5 Chapter Six: Traditional and Contemporary Conceptualizations

This chapter presents the findings for Research Question Two. It portrays the negotiation process of respondents as they made decisions about which conceptualizations of religion and spirituality should be included or excluded from the provincial model and from the school jurisdiction. The negotiation process revealed a lack of consensus amongst top-down administrators and bottom-up practitioners. It revealed the conceptualizations that were permitted and the conceptualizations that were tiptoed around and considered controversial for a post-secularization Alberta public school system.

1.7.6 Chapter Seven: Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality in Practice

This chapter presents how principals, but mainly teachers, resolved some of the issues that materialized because of the high degree of secularization. Despite the lack of policy and curriculum directives, teachers and principals changed the post-secularization model from the bottom up. The sample is divided into curriculum disciplines.

1.7.7 Chapter Eight: Future Direction

This chapter presents findings for Research Question Three. It presents the lack of consensus with regard to the direction Alberta education should take with regard to policy discourse, methods to address diversity, formal and informal approaches, and suggestions for the future of post-secularization education.

1.7.8 Chapter Nine: Discussion

This chapter sets out the original contribution to knowledge and a summary of the findings for each research question. It brings forward three key findings for discussion: the presence of space for religion and spirituality for conservative and Aboriginal communities but not the mainstream community apart from traditional religions courses, the disadvantages of post-secularization education in fostering religious literacy and sensitivity and the lack of resources for non-religious students to gain access to religious/spiritual tools to facilitate wellness and resiliency.

1.7.8 Chapter Ten: Conclusion

This chapter shows the wider implications of this study by drawing on post-secularization models in Australia and New Zealand. Since these three countries share a British colonial and indigenous heritage, and went down the pathway of secularization, they offer a fresh voice with how to unpick some of the knots that developed over time. It also includes suggestions for further research.

1.7.9 Epilogue

The epilogue will continue from the prologue and present a transparent view into how my views were supported or challenged and where I plan to extend my own research.

2.0 CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF SECULARIZATION THEORY

This chapter develops the theoretical debates about how secular schools deal with the concepts of religion and spirituality. It begins by presenting the literature review strategy. It then outlines the evolution of meanings for what the word secular means in relation to the concepts of religion and spirituality. It then presents the evolution of meanings and contested debates for the meaning of the word secularization, and how secularization theory has been used in the past to describe the changes in society in regard to religion, spirituality, and what it means to live in a secular society. This chapter reflects on Giroux's (2003) statement, "Times change ... Changing historical conditions posit new problems, define different projects, and often demand fresh discourses" (p. 5). It introduces new theoretical considerations about what secularization means, the problems inherent in conceptualizing the boundary for what secular education means, and issues related to whether or not a model of secular education adequately functions to serve a contemporary generation of young people. To close the chapter, the theoretical arguments will be synthesized into a series of constructs. These

constructs will be used in the investigation of Alberta's colonial, secularization, and post-secularization eras.

2.1 Literature Review Strategy

The most influential text in the early stages of the literature search was Canadian Charles Taylor's (2007) *A Secular Age*. Taylor's conceptualization of the differences between the 'sacred' and the 'secular' became the framework to look at how other scholars conceptualized these concepts. The search terms were: 'secular', 'secularization', 'secularism', and 'secularization theory'. It searched out scholars who gave accounts of the decades of the 1960's to 1980's when secularization seemed to be a significant social issue and where a difference in conceptualizations between religion and spirituality became apparent.

The search terms shifted to 'religion' and 'spirituality'. The literature broadened the time period to include literature from the early 1900's to the present. It is impossible to exhaust the literature on the meanings of religion and spirituality, especially spirituality, due to a lack of consensus. In this regard, the literature located the scholars that recurred in literature reviews as to the seminal scholars in conceptualizing religion and spirituality: James (1902), Durkheim (1915), Otto (1923, 1958), Maslow (1968), Hardy (1979), Smart (1989), and Luhmann (2013). It located the well-cited scholars who developed the concept of spirituality as a contemporary phenomenon (Roof, 1999a,b; Heelas, 1993, 1996; Tacey, 2004; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Taylor, 2007; Bibby, 2011). In the end, it follows Taylor's (2007, 2009) argument that the variations in conceptualizations of 'the

secular', 'religion', and 'spirituality' are so great and so context bound that it is impossible to resolve definitional issues.

2.2 Meanings of 'The Secular'

Taylor (2007, 2009) argues that the task of understanding what a secular institution is today is a difficult and convoluted one because the concept of the secular means different things within different societies, within different institutions, and between different individuals. The polysemy of the word makes cross-cultural dialogue difficult, he argues. To clear up the different meanings, he (2007) traces the evolution of the meaning of secular in *A Secular Age* and concludes that contemporary institutions should re-examine their understandings and find out if existent secular education models are appropriate for the current generation of people who operate in the institution. The review of the literature is not an exhaustive search on the meaning of secular since the meanings and uses of the word vary considerably. The goal is to use Taylor's historical account, along with other interpretations, to open up the multidimensionality of the word secular and to demonstrate the importance of finding out how particular nations, institutions, and individuals interpret the word for use in institutional policy and practice and everyday life rather than operate from an assumed meaning of the word secular as though there is a shared understanding.

2.2.1 The Secular and the Sacred

Taylor begins his account with a Latin Christendom distinction between a higher or sacred time and a profane or lower, ordinary, and everyday time. Durkheim (1915) is often cited in the literature for his understanding that the human experience can be divided into two realms: a sacred, transcendent reality that has to do with the “world of the mysterious, of the unknowable, of the un-understandable” (p. 24) and a profane reality that has to do with everyday experience. Luckmann (1990) builds on Durkheim’s thesis by describing the boundaries of human experience, with some experiences being of the everyday ordinary and some being of the mysterious, such as dreams, moments of enlightenment, and meditations. Berger (1966, 1967, 1999, 2001, 2007) likewise describes the higher or sacred dimension of experience as “sticking out” from everyday life (1967: 26) in the sense that it has “a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him” (p. 26).

In this regard, the secular dimension of life has to do with the everyday ordinary parts of life and the sacred has to do with the mysterious, intangible parts of life. However, today the idea that the sacred and secular dimensions of life are segmented from each other is challenged (Roof, 1999; Smith, 2001; Wane, 2011). The first analytical construct for the secularization template becomes ‘How the sacred is conceptualized in an educational setting’. ‘Is there a distinction between the sacred and the profane/secular?’ ‘Is the sacred dimension included or excluded in the school system?’ The issue for educationists is to decide how to deal with the sacred and the secular.

2.2.2 Secular and Transcendent Reality

By the 17th century, Taylor (2007) argues, the secular (profane or ordinary) was contrasted with the notion of a transcendent reality. World order was divided into two realms, the immanent and the transcendent. He argues that it is important to recognize that whilst the concept of a transcendent reality is common to most societies, the way a transcendent reality is conceptualized in different cultures and societies are various. Traditionally, organized religion provided an explanation for the transcendent dimension and how it functioned in everyday life (Berger, 1967, 1999; Luckmann, 1990, 2003; Luhmann, 1977, 1997, 2013) (to be discussed further). James (1902), Otto (1923, 1958), Maslow (1968), and Hardy (1979), however, argue that conceptualizations of a transcendent reality are individual and based on personal experience and are not necessarily connected to ‘a religion’.

In Western literature reviews William James (1902), Rudolph Otto (1923, 1958), Abraham Maslow (1968), and Alistair Hardy (1979) are well cited for their theories that everyday people have a type of consciousness that enables them to perceive what they conceptualize as a transcendent dimension. James’ theory is that human consciousness has the capacity to merge with a:

reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call ‘something there,’ more deep and more general than any of the special and particular ‘senses’ by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed (p. 58).

Describing this merging as a ‘religious experience’, he argued that the capacity for human beings to have a religious experience is a “primordial” thing (p. 30). James

argued that individuals construct a 'personal religion' from their personal interpretation of a transcendent reality and a sense of the divine based on:

The feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine (p. 31).

In this regard, understandings of 'the divine' are individual and there will be a variety of conceptualizations of the divine. He argues that a personal transcendent experience should not be confused with "dogmatic theology" (p. 448).

Otto (1923, 1958), similar to James, described a transcendent experience as an 'X' experience. He coined the term the 'numinous' to describe an indefinable holy or sacred experience, an 'X' experience as he put it. An 'X' experience is difficult to put into words. He argued that it is a non-rational feeling of:

the 'uncanny', the thrill of awe or reverence, the sense of dependence, of impotence, or of nothingness, or again, the feelings of religious rapture and exaltation (p. 10).

An 'X' experience is marked, he argued, by a shift in what he described as a felt sense. It is a feeling of awe and wonder that there is something larger going on than the ordinary everyday experience.

Maslow's (1968) studies led him to coin the term 'peak-experience' to describe "the mystical, the illumination, the great awakening" (viii). It is a state of elevated consciousness of a mysterious realm of life from which individuals experience an epiphany, a great 'big idea', and/or sudden realization. His studies show that most everyday people have the capacity for elevated consciousness, which is often described as a 'knowing' that "one is a part of the larger universe and that each one of us has a place in it" (p. 59).

Hardy's (1979) qualitative studies collected 1000's of retrospective accounts from everyday people and found that it was fairly common for individuals to have some form of transcendent experience such as having had a conversation with a deceased relative, been in the presence of a divine force, a vision of the future or a dream that came true, or a sense of complete oneness with space and time. Some experiences led to instant illumination (peak-experience) and shift in awareness (eg., discovery of life purpose, insight into meaning of an event, sense of absolute unconditional love and joy, feeling at one with nature/global consciousness). He posed the theory that the ability to have transcendent experience and the insights gained through the experience have long lasting protective value and may lead to increased longevity. In this regard, transcendent experience serves a significant function in a person's life.

Taylor points out that the boundary for conceptualizations of the immanent and the transcendent is different in different countries/cultures and different people will have different experiences. He argues that it is important to step back from a culture under investigation and find out how a particular society and individuals within the society conceptualize the boundary of experience of both the secular (ordinary or everyday) and the transcendent rather than assume there is some sort of generalized or shared understanding. From a research point of view the issue is to find out 'how decision-makers in an institutional setting interpret and bound the notion of a transcendent reality (e.g., the divine, spirits, afterlife, heaven/hell)'. 'How is transcendent experience conceptualized (e.g., intuition, vision, awe and wonder, insight, peak-experience)? 'Do curriculum and school practices include/exclude a belief in and experience of a transcendent reality?'

2.2.3 Secular and Rational

The Enlightenment Era shifted the notion of secular further by making a distinction between a scientific rational paradigm of knowledge and knowledge gained from transcendent experience. Rationalists, argued Taylor, conceptualized the lower, material realm as ‘real’ and the higher transcendent realm as a human invention (or not ‘real’). As an Enlightenment rationalized orientation to life and scientific methodology became more predominant, it was assumed that as societies modernized, industrialized, and urbanized, people would evolve into rational thinking beings and grow out of the ‘ignorant’ belief in superstition institutionalized in religious practice (Chadwick, 1975). This theoretical assumption was the early stage of secularization theory. Casanova (2007, 2009) references his early work to explain that he used to argue that the modernization and rationalization argument could be applied universally but now (2009) argues that it applies more to the European context not other international contexts and certainly not for the American context where there is a high level of belief in God. Other scholars such as Green (1996), Berger (1999, 2001), Luckmann (2003), Taylor (2007), and Bibby (2011) argue that the rationalization argument in secularization theory for the most part has been put to rest for the fact that it is part of the human condition to wonder about forces larger than oneself, death, afterlife, and meaning and purpose.

A growing body of literature suggests that people are ‘hard-wired’ for thought and experience about a transcendent reality. Persinger, Saroka, Koren, and St. Pierre (2010), for example, mapped the brain by directing electromagnetic rays to different parts of the brain to find out which parts functioned for different purposes

(eg., math parts and art sensibility parts). They discovered that the right temporal lobe, when triggered, elicited a transcendent experience (eg., a conversation with a deceased relative or God, an out of body experience, a vision). From Persinger's ongoing studies, the right temporal lobe was nicknamed 'the God spot'. He does not concern himself with whether or not a transcendent reality is real or not. Individual experience is real and has long lasting significance to people who have them. Newberg and D'Aquili (2001) extended Persinger's theory of a 'God spot' by using EEG machines to study the brain activity of Buddhist meditators. They find that meditators activate the brain areas necessary for concentration whilst they shut down the posterior superior parietal lobe, a centre responsible for consciousness of the boundary of the body. This suggests that the human brain can be trained to engage in religious/spiritual thought. Hamer (2004), a Harvard geneticist, presents the theory that a proportion of the population has a variation of the VMAT2 gene, which determines the extent to which it is interested in spiritual matters. He argues that individuals with VMAT2 with CC attachments are compelled to explore spiritual experience, whilst CA attachments have moderate interest, and AA have no interest. He nicknamed the VMAT2 gene the 'God gene'.

The boundary between an Enlightenment rational and scientific approach to reality and a transcendent reality is being challenged today and it is evident that a growing number of educated people, as we shall see, blend a conceptualization of a transcendent reality with a conceptualization of empirical science (Roof, 1999 a,b; Heelas, 1993, 1996; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Tacey, 2004; Bibby, 2011). However, not everyone claims to have the capacity for transcendent experience. Indeed, Maslow's (1968) study shows that people in senior management of large

institutions and conservatively religious individuals are the least likely to report having had a transcendent experience and believe that transcendent experience is a 'real' concept. He finds that this creates friction in organizations when senior managers marginalize the knowledge gained through transcendent experience, intuition, and vision. In this regard, Maslow (1968), Hardy (1979) and his successor Hay (2006), Berger (1999), and Taylor (2007) argue that in building a theoretical template, scholars should find out the extent a secular institution frames knowledge in an Enlightenment rational paradigm and the extent it is open to the possibilities of a transcendent reality and knowledge gained from individual transcendent experience. The task is to search out whether or not the organization values transcendent experience as a way of knowing.

2.2.4 Secular and Religion

As the concept of 'the secular' evolved Taylor argues that it became commonplace to consider the adjective secular in contrast to the concept of organized religion, more specifically a contrast to Christianity and Church. Durkheim's (1915) functional definition for religion is often used to open the debates about the function of religion and the church and the function of the secular. He defines religion as:

a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (p. 47).

He argued that organized religion functioned as a mechanism to understand how everyday people were to comport themselves in relation to sacred objects, spaces,

activities, and turning points in life. Similarly, Berger (1967) argued that organized religion is a 'sacred canopy'. It functions as a unifying tool in a community to help members face the eventual human experience, death.

Luhmann (2013) argues that 'a religion' is the systematization of a version of a transcendent reality. Theologians and other decision-makers engage in a boundary setting process to interpret the meaning of a 'great transcendent experience' and then negotiate which beliefs about the experience will be included (canonized) or excluded, the hierarchy of people to be included or excluded, and the function and identity of the religion (e.g., salvation). In this regard, Luckmann (1990) characterizes religion as a quasi-objective reality.

In Smart's (1989) comprehensive analysis of multiple religions, he portrayed the horizon of conceptualizations for 'religion':

- 1) *The Practical and Ritual Dimension*: This includes regular worship, preaching, and prayers (p. 12).
- 2) *The Experiential and Emotional Dimension*: This relates to the religious/spiritual experience, such as 'great transcendent experience' of Prophet Muhammad, St. Paul, and Buddha. It also includes 'everyday transcendent experience' of awe, wonder, compassion, sacred, peace, calm, inner dynamism, brilliant emptiness within, outpouring of love, sensations of hope, and gratitude for favors (p. 13).
- 3) *The Narrative or Mythic Dimension*: The story side of religion, for example the story of the life of Jesus, the tales of heroes and saints, parables, and the adventures of gods (p. 15).
- 4) *The Doctrinal and Philosophical Dimension*: This relates to an analysis of and explanation for the nature of a Divine Being, gods, or spirits. It explains the ritual of communion, the doctrine of Trinity, Buddha's vision of self-transcendence, and scriptures (p. 16).
- 5) *Ethical and Legal Dimension*: This provides the laws or morals that are shared amongst a community of believers. Examples are the precepts or virtues of

Buddhism, Sharia Law, the Ten Commandments, and the 600 rules of the Torah (p. 17).

6) *Social and Institutional Dimension*: Since an organized religion is established for a group of people in a community, this dimension provides a framework for the meeting of the community. For example, the notion of Church or Sangha, and also the people who are included in the community such as priests, nuns, monks, mystics, prophets as well as the parishioners (p. 18-19).

7) *Material Dimension*: This dimension makes tangible and visible the beliefs of a community in the form of buildings, works of art, symbols, and sacred spaces such as the River Ganges, the Jordan, Eyre's Rock, Mount Fuji, and Mount Sinai (p. 20).

In the evolution of meanings of a secular reality, according to Taylor, the secular stands in contrast to an organized religions 'reality'.

However, the theory that organized religions have a monopoly over explanations for the sacred/transcendent/mysterious dimension of life began to break down and this posed problems for organized religion and for nation states and institutions that were constructed from an organized religion point of view, as we shall see in the section on the secularization process (Berger, 1967, 1999; Luckmann, 2003; Bruce, 2002; Casanova, 2009; Taylor, 2007; Luhmann, 2013). Taylor (2007) dates the distinction of the religious and the secular further back in history to the Protestant Reformation when the sacred (mystery, miracles, and the like) became a diminished part of the Protestant paradigm of faith and individual conscience and a personal connection to the divine was promoted. He describes the Reformation as a process of disenchantment.

In the template, of importance is whether or not a concept of a sacred transcendent dimension of life is situated under 'the umbrella of institutionalized religion'. In other words, does the educational institution treat institutionalized religion(s) as an authority on understanding the nature of the sacred. If

institutionalized religion is considered an authority and/or significant, 'to what extent does the education system include Smart's constructs listed above: practical and ritual dimension, experiential and emotional, narrative and mythic, doctrinal or philosophical, ethical and legal, social, and material'.

2.2.5 Implications for Secular Education

The polysemy of the word secular means that a secular education model in one context will likely not be exactly the same in another. There is a range of ways a secular school could be configured. This section of the literature review shows that there are contested boundary issues for conceptualizations of the secular and the sacred/transcendent dimension of life. A model may include or exclude to varying degrees a space in education that deals with a sacred dimension of life, a belief in a transcendent reality, the varieties of transcendent experience and insights, a rational Enlightenment approach to knowledge, a Protestant approach, and/or religious knowledge. In this regard, it is necessary to find out how decision-makers within secular organizations conceptualize the notion of the boundaries for the sacred and the secular (see template in Appendix).

2.2.6 Conceptualization of Secularism

Secularism refers to an ideology. In the sphere of government, it refers to how a government defines the concept of religion/spirituality, what its attitude is toward the concepts of religion/spirituality, and what role religion/spirituality should

have in the public sphere (Casanova, 2007). This ideology shapes what decision-makers think of the function of secular education and the role religion and spirituality should have in schools. Barnett (2008) outlines various forms of secularism in different countries. Three examples of forms of secularism that can act as heuristics for the Canadian form are: the United States, England, and France. In the United States the Bill of Rights makes a clear separation of church and state whilst protecting the right to religious freedom. England still retains a church and state relationship but accommodates religious freedom. France has a more rigidly defined form of secularism. Policies enforce allegiance to the state and French culture first and religious institutions second. The ban on headscarves in the public sphere has gained international attention. Canada's form of secularism is rather vague, with no clear distinction between state and religious institutions, as we shall see in Chapter Three.

Ritskes (2011) argues that a study of religion/spirituality must be approached as a historical project in order to understand the political and cultural forces that shape an institution's treatment of the concepts of religion and spirituality. In this regard, it is necessary to study the secularization of schools and locate the attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions that underpin the secular model (Marshall, 1994 a, b).

2.3 Process of Secularization

There is consensus in the literature that the word secularization refers to a process of change with regard to the relevancy, significance, and influence of

religion at the state, institution, and personal level (Chadwick, 1975; Berger, 1967, 1999, 2001; Wilson, 1985; Dobbelaere, 1981; Chaves, 1994; Luckmann, 2003; Bruce, 2002; Casanova, 2009). The change that is the basis of secularization theory, however, is difficult to measure and evaluate. From an international cross-cultural perspective, Casanova (2007, 2009) argues that it is important to distinguish between a secular school in a country that underwent a secularization process and a secular school in for example Turkey or in Buddhist countries that did not undergo a secularization process. This creates a new layering of interpretation for international perspectives. Since Canadian schools underwent a secularization process, the following section will frame the secular debates according to Casanova's three categories of the process of secularization: the process of privatization, the process of differentiation, and the process of individual secularization of conscience.

2.3.1 Privatization of Religion

The privatization of religion in countries with a Christian heritage generally refers to the process of separation of state and church (Casanova, 2009). In Taylor's terms, developed above, secular is a contrast to religion, more particularly a contrast to church. Casanova argues that privatization is most relevant to European countries that had a state church and/or national religion that influenced state decision-making. Canada does not have a state church/religion, but the colonization process involved a Christianization of Canada (see Chapter Three).

Casanova explains that as countries became more complex and religiously/spiritually diverse, liberal, and democratic it was no longer considered justifiable to permit the beliefs and moral codes of a state church to influence or have authority in governance structures. He argues that the goal of the process of privatization was to create the conditions for the freedom of religion and conscience in alignment with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). In this sense privatization involves the de-politicization of religious identity (Taylor, 2007).

Luhmann (1977, 1997, 2013) would argue it is necessary to find out how and why a particular religion was connected with state politics in the first place. From there the task is to trace the process of privatization and the extent the church lost its influential position in society. The task is to understand the new functional logic of the state and the church. The privatization of the church usually meant that its functional logic is to provide care for the religious/spiritual needs of a population. In Canada, where there is no established church/religion, Marshall (1994 a,b) adds that religious institutions in the process of privatization in Canada lost their special status in society and were forced to rely on funding from congregations rather than the government which ultimately made them have to compete with other spiritual care providers to retain or increase their congregations. Chaves (1994) proposes that privatization weakened the monopoly religious institutions had over conceptualizations of a transcendent reality, which led to a decline in their capacity to influence the social sphere. The argument in terms of secularization theory is that as religious institutions lost their authority in society they would lose their significance. In time, secularization

theory proposed that religious institutions (and the way they systematized the sacred dimension of life) would eventually become akin to a historical relic, like artifacts in a museum, than an authority on the sacred (Berger, 1967; Weber, 2002, 1964).

Seljak (2009a) argues that Canadian policy-makers and institutional decision-makers use the privatization argument as an excuse for marginalizing religion as a policy-making issue. Similarly, Fadden (former Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada) and Townsend (Executive Head of Policy Research Institute) (2009) find the marginalization of religion as a Canadian policy-making concern is leading to a gap in Canadian literature. In this way, policy-makers, they argue, make secularization theory a reality. They argue that the problem with this approach is that the government does not collect sufficient data on the relevancy of religion to people in their lives. This, they say, is preventing institutions from diagnosing problems in organizations and responding effectively. In this regard, they argue that more Canadian studies are needed that inquire into what institutional decision-makers think privatization means, how decision-makers think they are to treat the concept of religion in institutions, and what sorts of knots are surfacing within a secular model of education.

2.3.2 Institutional Secularization

As nations secularized, privatizing religion and de-politicizing religious identity, public institutions also underwent a secularization process to varying degrees. Several scholars studied the way secularization occurred and developed

theoretical tools for understanding the process of institutional secularization. However, the literature is problematic, with too many assumptions inherent in analysis. This is not, therefore, an exhaustive search of the literature. It relies on scholars who put forward that they made an earnest attempt at clearing up some of the problems in the literature.

This section begins the account of institutional secularization theory with Luhmann (1977, 1997, 2013) who argues that it is necessary to begin an examination of institutional secularization by understanding the concept of differentiation. In a differentiated society, argues Luhmann, where different institutions (e.g., politics, medical, educational, legal, religious) serve different functions in society, the pre-secularization story can be constructed following his systems theory principles. In his theory, a differentiated system is constructed to solve a particular problem. In this educational study, it will focus on the construction of an education system. According to Luhmann, an education system is constructed to solve the problems of how to educate students in a particular environment. In his model, constructing a system is a boundary-setting exercise. He argues that decision-makers will assess the environment, identify the problems, sort out what 'education' means, decide which people will be included or excluded from the system, how education will be delivered, define the function of the education system as distinct from other institutional systems, and define a functional identity for the system. Luhmann's theory is criticized for being overly focused on the system as though it were not organic, changeable, and responsive (Dobbelaere, 1981). He also focuses heavily on the power of decision-makers as though they are the only boundary-setters. Taylor (2007) argues, however, that it

is important to recognize that many decision-makers (e.g., policy-makers and senior administrators) construct a system, and the policy and practice for the system, out of their social imaginary. A social imaginary tends to be an image of what is familiar to the decision-maker and usually resides in the unconscious. The process of differentiation is often one of replicating the familiar of the decision-makers. Therefore, it is necessary to locate how decision-makers defined religion and their attitude toward religion.

Another significant part of the pre-secularization story is to find out how religion was conceptualized in the school system. There will be a range of pre-secularization configurations for how religion was conceptualized (Dobbelaere, 1981; Chaves, 1994; Casanova, 2009). In this regard, it is necessary to locate the baseline for secularization (Dobbelaere, 1981). There is a body of literature, for example, that traces the secularization process of the English education system, beginning at 1870 when the English government introduced a state school structure to operate in parallel with Church schools. In this regard, several English scholars traced the complicated and conflicted debates of differentiating the functional mandates and identities of the state school in contrast to the Church school (e.g., Copley, 2000; 2005; Gates, 2007; Chadwick, 1997; Cox, 1983; Barber, 1994; Jackson & O'Grady, 2007). Institutional secularization is often described in the literature as a differentiation process. However, Canada's pre-secularization story and differentiation process is a complicated one and not well-researched, as we shall see in Chapter Three.

Several scholars provide theory on how the differentiation process occurs.

Dobbelaere (1981) defines differentiation as:

a process of growing independence of institutional spheres (such as politics, education, economy, and science), each developing its own rationale, which implies the rejection of the overarching claim of religion (p. 14).

He argues that a historical baseline needs to be established. As institutions became autonomous from the influence of a religious institution, decision-makers negotiated a new functional logic and identity, usually a functional logic that had to do with a rationalized approach to education rather than a faith-based approach. He argues that the differentiation process occurred differently in different international contexts because of the different voices/perspectives that had the power to influence decision-makers. In this regard, the trajectory of differentiation will lead to different secular models in different countries.

Wilson (1985) stresses in his definition that the differentiation process transfers out the manifest and latent functions of religion from a state school:

a process of transfer of property, power, activities, and both manifest and latent functions, from institutions with a supernaturalist frame of reference to (often new) institutions operating according to empirical, rational, pragmatic criteria (p. 11-12).

Thierren (2009) focuses on understanding how the state perceives the intention of the differentiation process. In this regard, privatization and differentiation are related processes. She defines differentiation as a political process and refers to:

the deliberate steps taken by the State to maintain *neutral* relations with religions and to prevent any direct interventions by religions in the management of the state. . . by means of constitutional provisions, by judicial decisions, or through common law (p. 67, my italics).

It is a political process to ensure the fundamental right of freedom of religion and conscience. In addition, no particular religious worldview will influence the policy and practice of schools. In analyzing the differentiation process of a school system it is necessary to locate the constitutional provisions, judicial decisions, and laws about how religion is to be treated.

Definitions for what is considered a 'neutral' state, however, are controversial (Beaman, 2003; Barnett, 2008; Jackson, 2007; Taylor, 2007). Barnett argues that countries that are experienced in policy-making for a diverse population, such as Canada, will tend to have a flexible concept of a neutral state with little government interference in how religious expression manifests and countries with less experience will tend to create more rigid policy structures that shape some version of neutrality, such as France. Thierren proposes that a neutral state is one that blocks religious institutions from influencing decision-making of institutions. However, Beaman (2003) and Taylor (2007) argue that institutional leaders tend to revert to their Christian understandings of what religion means and thus block 'other' religions from asserting their influence in institutions. In this regard, Dobbelaere (1981) argues that too little attention is offered to the analysis of which people/groups (voices) are the secularizers and which voices seek to assert their influence and retain the significance of religious belief in the public sphere (p. 61).

Similarly, Chaves (1994) argues that differentiation occurs, or not, "as the result of social and political conflicts between those social actors who would enhance or maintain religion's social significance and those who would reduce it" (p. 752).

Both Dobbelaere (1981) and Chaves (1994) find that it is becoming common, however, in the literature for scholars to avoid providing a definition for religion, treating it as though there is some sort of shared understanding of the word when in the context of contemporary pluralism the boundary for the notion of religion is vague. Chaves finds the lack of terminological transparency and consensus for the object of the differentiation process are creating an “analytical cul-de-sac” (p. 749). He and Taylor (2007) argue that the concept of differentiation is more applicable to countries where Christian beliefs and practices influenced institutional policy and practice. An examination of a particular institution’s differentiation process is about locating the “unsustainable and problematic” dimensions of Christian hegemony as they manifest within a particular institutional sphere where a pluralistic population operates (Chaves, 1994, p. 751). Freathy and Parker (2013) provide an example of how secularists and humanists in England, for example, challenged Religious Education classes there. The trajectory of the process and the extent Christian beliefs and practices are included or excluded in the new secular institution will depend on the heated debates of the social actors involved in the process.

Mayrl (2011), however, argues that the secularization of schools is far more complicated. In his study, he finds that the process was not entirely a deliberate political process, or in other words a top-down administrative process. He finds that administrators and teachers, who were the implementers of state legislation, became agents of the secularization process and influenced the trajectory in a bottom-up fashion. In an attempt to avoid controversy, increase time management, and resolve class management issues, teachers and administrators in

a rather haphazard way contributed to the secularization of schools. He makes the case that in countries where teachers and administrators have more autonomy over school decision-making they will likely have more influence over the secularization process than in countries that are more restrictive in terms of formal political mandates, inspection, and scrutiny.

Casanova (2009) notes that he used to make the mistake of assuming a European pattern of differentiation could be generalized to other global contexts. He argues that the contemporary issue is to learn more about the patterns of differentiation and the outcomes of the differentiation process from different international perspectives. He theorizes that the differentiation process will occur differently in countries with a state church/religion from those, like Canada, that do not.

It is currently argued that more case studies should address the historical, cultural, political, and religious backdrop for different social settings and provide nuanced accounts for meanings of secular, secularization, and secularism for contemporary society (Berger, 1999, 2001, 2007, Green, 2003; Ammerman, 2007; Taylor, 2007; Casanova, 2009). Casanova (2009) makes the arguable point that secularization did not occur in, for example, Buddhist countries where religious beliefs and practices are more individual-based and not ecclesiastical. Weber (2002, 1964) argues that education systems with a Protestant backdrop will likely follow a thorough rationalization route in the differentiation process and adopt a functional logic that the role of education is to train students in a Protestant work ethic in order to prepare students for employment. Berger (1999, 2001) argues

that the contemporary issue is to re-think the differentiation process and examine the result of the process and the impact the result has on the massive number of people within the institution who believe in various ways in a transcendent reality and/or are compelled to seek out explanations for the concept of 'God', spirits, afterlife, meaning and purpose in order to prepare for the eventuality of death. Likewise, Maslow's (1968) view was "an education which leaves untouched the entire region of transcendental thought is an education which has nothing important to say about the meaning of human life" (from Maslow: *Manas*, July 17, 1963, p. 58).

Berger (1999) proposes that secularization/differentiation is a self-limiting process. He argues that if a state education system removes all traces of the concept of religion, and goes so far as to remove all reference to a transcendent reality, whether this is in the form of an institutionalized set of beliefs or in the form of individual conceptualizations of the divine, afterlife, and meaning and purpose, then counter secularization forces will emerge to confront a rationalized orientation to curriculum. He proposes desecularization theory. He does not offer further theory into how the desecularization process occurs and his student Karpov (2010) argues that little attention has been offered to patterns of desecularization in different societal contexts. In this regard, the concept of desecularization opens the door to new theoretical beginnings.

2.3.3 Personal Secularization

A third way of thinking about secularization is in terms of the secularization of consciousness. This category of secularization theory tends to be more vague than

the other two categories and arouses the most debate about what secularization means. An 'old' interpretation of secularization theory is that quantitative surveys showed a linear decline in belief in God and church attendance most notable after World War Two (Chadwick, 1975; Berger, 1967; Luckmann, 1990, 1999, 2003; Luhmann, 1977, 1997, 2013; Green, 1996; Bibby, 1990, 2004, 2006; Bruce, 2002; Taylor, 2007; Luhmann, 2013). It was argued that modernization, rationalization, the Protestant Reformation, individualism, industrialization, capitalism, urbanization, immigration, plausibility, pluralism, fragmentation, privatization, and differentiation became social forces for the decline in belief in God and the relevancy and significance of organized religion in the social sphere and in the everyday lives of everyday people (ibid). The prediction was that the concept of religion would eventually die out in human consciousness. This theory proved not to fully materialize.

Contemporary scholars attempt to find explanations for the decline in church attendance. At the same time, new voices join the debates and propose that a growing number of people have secularized to different degrees from their religious heritage, not from the notion of a transcendent/sacred reality, and are shaping a personal spirituality, as we shall see.

2.3.4 Summary

This summary will pull the threads of secularization theory together. The overarching principle of secularization theory proposes that religious authority will

decline in significance and understandings of religion will fade out of human consciousness. Secularization theory proposes that modernization, rationalization, the Protestant Reformation, individualism, industrialization, capitalism, urbanization, immigration, plausibility, pluralism, fragmentation, privatization, and differentiation are forces that diminish the significance of religion in the social world. Secularization theory is also used to explain the process of secularization, the separating out of religious authority from state, institutional, and/or individual governance. In this regard, the state, institution, and individual become autonomous from the authority of institutionalized religion. However, scholars are currently re-thinking secularization theory. Instead of decline theory some scholars are exploring religious transformation. Instead of religious transformation, some scholars are exploring a spirituality revolution. The following section turns to an exploration of these two current theories that add to secularization theory.

2.4 Re-Thinking Secularization Theory

Taylor (2007) proposes that many scholars have a “flattened view” of the secularization of society and what it means to live in a secular society (p. 510). He argues that too much attention in the literature is offered to the concepts of privatization and differentiation, and proposes that scholars move on and examine the outcomes of differentiation and the ways people believe. He argues that new theoretical beginnings are emerging. This section is divided into three parts: the theory of religious transformation, the theory of a spirituality revolution, and the raucous debate between theoretical positions.

2.4.1 Theory of Religious Transformation

Some theorists perceive secularization as an endpoint (Taylor, 2009). Bruce (2002) proposes a 'God is dead' thesis, arguing that the significance of organized religion (mainly Christian) to British people and the notion that there is a transcendent reality that impacts the material (secular) realm of life is 'dead'. His compatriot, Brown (2009), traced the 'death of Christian Britain'. Taylor (2007), however, argues that secularization should not be perceived as an endpoint.

Some scholars attempted to explain the reasons for the emptying of churches. Berger (1967) argued that church attendance declined because there was a "crisis of credibility" (p. 127) in terms of the plausibility structures of Christianity. Likewise, Luckmann (1990) argued that 'truth' claims developed from 'great transcendent experience' (e. g., angelic messages predicting Jesus' birth) and the notion that Christian beliefs and practices would lead to salvation were challenged. However, in Berger's (1999, 2001, 2007) more contemporary work he argues that the 'crisis of credibility' argument did not lead to the demise of the concept of religion. Indeed, Luckmann (2003) argues that religion, which he defines broadly as having to do with a sacred dimension/transcendent reality will never disappear because human beings will always be compelled to search out meanings for their lives.

Taylor (2007) argues that just about every person has at one time or another been affiliated with a religion somewhere in their heritage whether they currently believe and practice it or not and therefore a religious backdrop is part of individual identity. Indeed, Europeans and Americans (Casanova, 2009) and Canadians (Bibby

2004, 2006, 2011; Clark, 2000; Clark & Schellenberg, 2008) continue to identify as Christians on large-scale surveys even though few attend church. Davie (1990) arrived at the theory of 'believing without belonging' for the European context and more recently (2007) the theory of 'vicarious religion', where individuals access religious institutional support when they are in crisis. Whilst Hervieu-Leger (2001, 2003) proposed a 'belonging without believing' theory for the European context, little is known about how significant or relevant organized religion is to Canadians. Fadden and Townsend (2009) argue the Canadian government does not collect data on what Canadians believe or how intensely they regard organized religion, or how religious identity changes over a lifetime and from generation to generation, or how immigrant religious diversity is impacting the social sphere, or how institutions adapt to religious diversity (p. 5).

Berger (1967) argues that religion will always be significant because it is part of the history of civilization evident in politics, literature, art, music, and architecture and therefore it is a cultural fact, even though a growing number of people are taking a non-religious approach to belief. Taylor (2007) adds that in the differentiation process the religious backdrop to the history of civilization has become marginalized and has become largely unnoticed. Yet, Jackson (2007) proposes that the significance of religion to everyday life should not be undervalued. The bombings of the Twin Towers in New York in September 2001 and elsewhere, he argues, proves that governments should take the significance of religious belief more seriously. Taylor (2007) argues that more studies should investigate the role of religion as Western countries become religiously diverse and more people live a life of diaspora. Berger and Luckmann argue that the society one

is born into will influence how one shapes his/her view of a transcendent reality and a conceptualization of the morals of what is right and wrong. In this regard, Western societies are complex as there are competing realities and competing conceptualizations of right and wrong (Taylor, 2007).

Hill et al. (2000) argue that qualitative research should seek out explanations for why individuals are personally secularizing, separating out their personal beliefs from the doctrine of their religious heritage, and not attending Church. Yamane (1997) promotes 'neosecularization theory', arguing that data must be collected that provides insight into the orientation people have to religious authority structures. Ammerman (2007) proposes that more studies should investigate how everyday people think about religion and how the concept of religion manifests outside of religious institutions. Greeve Davaney (2009) argues that more conversations about the tensions between notions of the 'secular' and the 'religious' are needed. In her view the pertinent issue today is to explore the public roles different perspectives of religion and political ideology should play. She wonders if the views of the secular and the religious are outdated or if they require rethinking in order for them to be relevant for contemporary society.

In this regard, religion is a 'fact' that cannot be ignored no matter how secularized an institution becomes (Jackson, 2007; Berger, 1999; 2001; Taylor, 2007; Casanova, 2009). The contemporary issue is to understand how to deal with religious diversity in contemporary society (ibid).

2.4.2 Theory of Spirituality Revolution

An understudied theoretical pathway in the secular debates is an examination of the concept of spirituality. The introduction of the discourse of spirituality ‘posits new problems and defines different projects’ (see Giroux’s statement above, p. 35). The word spirituality is becoming popular in social discourse, and indeed Heelas and Woodhead (2005) and Tacey (2004) describe a ‘spirituality revolution’, Bibby (2006) describes a renaissance, and Popp-Baier (2010) describes the use of the word as a ‘mega-trend’. The lack of consensus for the meaning of spirituality and how it is differentiated from the concept of religion is creating what Pargament et al. (1995) characterize as “confusing and unsettling” debates about the transformation of belief apparent since the World Wars (p. 955). The following section outlines the various ways that the word spirituality is used in contemporary discourse.

Roof (1999 a, b), Tacey (2004), Heelas (1993, 1996), Heelas and Woodhead (2005), Taylor (2007), and DeSouza (2008) conceptualize the notion of spirituality as a paradigm shift from a collective identity of religion to a subjective life movement that emerged after World War Two and more predominately at the start of the 1960’s. Roof describes the American scene in terms of a counter culture generation that organized large-scale protests, challenging the use of military, particularly the American involvement in the Vietnam War, approaches to environmental issues, and laws that referenced religion as a reason for abortion laws, morals for sexuality and sexual orientation, and women’s rights. He argues that these protests were a sign that Americans opposed government intervention in

their personal beliefs, morals, and practices and were transforming their beliefs and practices into an individual and personal form. Heelas (1993, 1996) found a similar tumultuous time in England and Tacey (2004) noted the same in Australia. However, Bibby (2006) claims that Canadian Baby Boomers were “quieter,” “low key,” and “unobtrusive” about transformation (p. x). In this regard, the way religious transformation occurred was different in different international contexts. The ‘low key’ approach to Canadian transformation, Bibby (2006, 2011) argues, makes the Canadian context difficult to observe and measure.

The 1960 era was a time when psychological theories about individualism and human consciousness and human potential began to flourish. Maslow (1968) proposed the theory of ‘self-actualization’. He described an American population that sought to explore their consciousness and their individual ability for transcendent experience, which he defined as ‘peak experience’. In his view, Americans were attempting to live up to their highest potential. Other popular psychiatrists joined the consciousness movement, such as Jung (1957) who posed the theory of the shadow self, the unconscious self. He argued that to reach one’s potentiality and full identity one needed to delve into the layers of identity including one’s dreams, remembrances, and unconscious thought. Psychologist Victor Frankl’s (1959) post war theory, emerging out of his experience in concentration camps, was that human survival is greater when the individual perceives there to be greater meaning and significance in life, and in his case in suffering. Educationist John Dewey (1934, 1938, 1959) proposed that education should be more about child-centred education with greater value placed on the experience of the child. He re-conceptualized the notion of ‘God’ to be about

growing into one's ideal self and proposed that education should be about nurturing children into their ideal self, not nurturing them into a particular religious paradigm. It is now being argued that it is possible that some people are more spiritually intelligent or gifted than others, meaning that they live more consciously, sensitively, and more meaningfully than others (Piechowski, 2003; Sinetar, 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

In the early stages, transformation was often described as a 'New Age Movement' (Roof, 1999 a,b; Heelas, 1993, 1996; Lyon, 1993; Luckmann, 2003). Lyon (1993) described the New Age movement as "a religious expression of post-modernity," a 're-enchantment' of society, and a retrieval of 'knowledge' from pre-modern times (p. 121). Luckmann (2003) describes the 'New Age Movement' as having retrieved 'old traditions' that were not canonized in traditional religions. The observable manifestation of what scholars described as 'New Age' included a variety of Eastern and Western traditions, such as Aboriginal ceremony, nature rituals, meditation, drumming ceremonies, Pagan festivals, astrology, 12 step programme for addictions, Wiccan practices, meditation, tarot cards, mediumship, and New Age literature (Roof, 1999 a, b; Heelas, 1993,1996; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Tacey, 2004; Schneiders, 2003; DeSouza, 2008; Taylor, 2007). It is argued that privatization and differentiation as well as exposure to alternative belief systems as a result of immigration from non-Christian countries and urbanization created the conditions for new ways of conceptualizing the transcendent/sacred dimension of life (Taylor, 2007). Indeed, Roof (1999b) and Stark and Iannaccone (1994) argue that these forces created a religious and non-religious marketplace to develop and religious institutions (and religious leaders) were forced to compete for their

market share in a competitive social sphere. Immigration and exposure to alternative belief systems, urbanization and proximity to alternatives, and privatization in this regard created an increase in interest in one's spiritual pathway, not a decline, as the rationalization argument proposed.

Taylor (2007) argues that several scholars (mainly from the previous section who limit their examination of transformation to 'religious transformation') were trapped in what he called their social imaginary of what belief in a transcendent reality is and that church attendance is an indicator of belief in God and religious commitment. In this regard, the 'New Age' label, as limited to the activities mentioned above, was a myopic interpretation of the overall subjective life movement. He describes the subjective life turn as:

There is a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else's life. If I am not, I miss the point of my life; I miss what being human is for me (1994: 30).

It is about becoming one's own authority:

that each one of us has his/her way of realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one's own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority (2007: 475).

Personal secularization in this sense is an extension of the de-politicization of identity that occurred as a result of the privatization of the state religion and institutional differentiation. Individuals took up their freedom of religion and conscience and began to shape an individual identity.

Roof (1999b) conceptualizes the word spirituality in terms of 'reflexive

spirituality'. It is a process of personal development and a personal search for an authentic spiritual identity. He finds that underneath the outward manifestation of the activities noted above was "a deep hunger for self-transformation that is both genuine and personally satisfying" (p. 9). It became common, he argues, for individuals to describe themselves as 'spiritual not religious'. In this regard, the discourse was changing. The 'sacred' aspect of life was referred to as the 'spiritual' aspect of life. Their quest may involve a variety of independent practices, such as reading religious and/or secular texts, attending lectures, workshops, retreats, and/or searching out a 'spiritual mentor' or counselor. He argues that transformation does not necessarily mean that individuals thoroughly secularize in the sense that they abandon a religious approach altogether. They may keep certain aspects of their religious heritage, explore alternatives to their religious heritage, and search out their own capacity for transcendent experience. It also became common for individuals, argues both Roof (1999a,b) and MacQuarrie (1967), to search out and/or form personal conceptualizations of 'God' and use expressions like 'something greater or bigger', a 'higher power', or 'the universe'.

Heelas and Woodhead (2005) perceive the concepts of spirituality and religion as contrasting terms, and according to Taylor (2007) unnecessarily polarize the approaches. They investigated the theory of a 'spirituality revolution'. They tested the theory that the numbers of people involved in subjective spirituality surpassed the numbers involved in traditional organized religions. In preparation for the test they established a priori definitions for spirituality and religion. Spirituality was defined as:

living one's life in full awareness of one's states of being; in enriching one's experiences; in finding ways of handling negative emotions; in becoming sensitive enough to find out where and how the quality of one's life – alone or in relation – may be improved. The goal is not to defer to higher authority, but to have the courage to become one's own authority. Not to follow established paths, but to forge one's own inner-directed, as subjective, life. Not to become what others want one to be, but to 'become who I truly am' (p. 4).

By comparison, they defined a 'religious' approach as:

living 'life-as' a member of a community or tradition – whether it takes the form of a kinship system, a feudal system, a nation-state, a class system or a particular religion. What matters is obeying, heeding, pursuing ways of life which stand over and above the individual self and bestow meaning upon life. These higher authorities serve to direct one's life and accord real value to it when one performs one's duties or fulfills one's obligations (p. 3).

Their methodology was to locate people in a small homogenous village in England who matched their social imaginaries for the definitions of religion and spirituality and how people integrated these concepts into their lives. They counted the numbers of people who attended church in the village and although their definition for spirituality above was about being one's own authority they ended up counting the number of people that accessed what they perceived to be a spirituality activity conducted by a non-religious but spiritual mentor (e.g., yoga, meditation, therapy, naturopath, martial arts), which is inconsistent with their definition of subjective spirituality being about one's own authority. Their study is an example of the methodological challenges for examining the transformation of belief. Studies can be heavily influenced by the researcher's social imaginary for the subject, definitions, and sampling. Taylor (2007) argues that a way to resolve these issues is to enter a particular setting, a school for example, and ask the social

actors (e.g., policy-makers, administrators, teachers) in the setting to define the word rather than enter the field with a priori definitions.

DeSouza (2008) offers another conceptualization of spirituality. She sees the word as an umbrella term for a paradigm shift. It refers to a different type of consciousness, where individuals integrate Eastern and Western philosophies in an attempt to create a balanced way of life and distance themselves from a culture based on fragmentation, consumerism, and materialism. Whilst Bruce (2002) argued that fragmentation brought on by immigration and urbanization and Weber (2002, 1964) argued that capitalism and the Protestant work ethic were forces for individual secularization, DeSouza finds that the word spirituality is used to represent a counter force to fragmentation and capitalism.

Besecke (2007) picks up on Roof's notion of reflexive spirituality, but rather than treat it as a term that describes personal secularization to some degree from religious tradition, she employs the concept of reflexive spirituality to mean a negotiation of different interpretations of the Bible, including a personal interpretation of the Bible in relation to other religions. Woodhead (1993) and Hampson (1990) likewise propose the notion of feminist spirituality, a modernization of traditional interpretations of the Bible to include the rights and role of women.

To complicate understandings of the word spirituality further, countries with a colonial backdrop add the concept of indigenous spirituality into the mix. The concept of Aboriginal/indigenous spirituality is an important one for the Canadian context and will be addressed more fully in Chapter Three.

Zinnbauer et al. (1997), Hill et al. (2000), and Pargament et. al. (1995) attempted to find out how everyday people conceptualize religion and spirituality. The best they could do was to say that the words religion and spirituality mean different things to different people. Little is known as far as whether or not the word spirituality resonates with Canadians, what they think it means, whether or not Canadians distinguish between the concept of religion and the concept of spirituality, or how relevant the concepts are to their everyday lives. It is known that by 2006, 16 per cent of Canadians (age 15-44) reported that they attended a religious service once a week (Lindsay, 2008, Clark, 2000; Clark & Schellenberg, 2008). Results from the National Household Survey (2011) administered by the government every ten years where Canadians were asked to select one religion that they affiliate with whether they practice or not show that two-thirds of Canadians identify as Christians. Bibby (2004, 2011), who is well known in Canada for tracing the significance of religious beliefs in Canada, finds that Canadians are fascinated by the concept of a transcendent dimension of life, such as notions of God, afterlife, spirits, dreams, strange coincidences, and states of consciousness but few Canadians go to church. However, he finds, unlike Davie (above), Canadians do not turn to the church in times of crisis, demonstrating the importance of not generalizing from one global context to another. Based on their social imaginary and observation, not data driven studies, James (2006) argues that Canadians cobble together various religions, Fenwick and English (2004) perceive Canadians as having adopted a “mash of spiritual traditions” (p. 2), and Bibby (2004) argues that Canadians take an “a la carte” approach to religion (p. 13). These interpretations assume that Canadians consciously and in an informed

way search out religions that resonate with them.

Bibby (2011) finds that a growing number of Canadians mark 'no religion' as their answer on the National Household Survey. In order to understand what Canadians mean by 'no religion' and also observing the trend toward spirituality, Bibby offered four constructs for self-identification to an Alberta sample: religious and spiritual (result: 43 per cent), spiritual not religious (43 per cent), religious not spiritual (12 per cent), and not religious and not spiritual (2 per cent). He puts forward that more qualitative studies are required in order to gain a nuanced understanding of what Canadians mean when they use the word spirituality and/or describe themselves in these ways.

2.4.3 The Raucous Debate

Taylor (2007) argues there is a raucous debate in the literature about which approach to belief and practice is more genuine, organized religion or individual spirituality. He finds that the debate about acceptable spirituality is based on personal belief and conjecture rather than data driven research. On one side of the debate, he finds, are individuals whose "sense of religious authority is offended by the [individual spiritual quest]" and those on the other side who perceive 'religion' as "their main rival" (p. 508-509). Roof (1999b) finds that reflexive spirituality is sometimes viewed as "shallow, indeed flaky", or "self-absorbed" (p. 9). Tacey (2004) finds the same in Australia describing a common view that it is "flakey, vague and waffly . . . escapist, dreamy or otherworldly" (64). Indeed, Bruce (2002) wonders how individual seekers discern between the "mad ramblings of the deranged" and theological 'experts' that defined religion (p. 87). Luckmann (1990)

perceives spirituality as a collection of “psychological, therapeutic, magical, marginally scientific as well as older esoteric materials” that are repackaged for individual consumption and are “often far-fetched” and “unorthodox” (1990: p. 136). In his opinion, a subjective approach uses “some bricks and straw to make a ‘bricolage’” (1990:137). Canadian social scientist, Bibby (2011), argues that religious leaders tend to think that the individual quest is not real or genuine (p. 135) and in his opinion religious leaders have the onus to tell spiritual seekers “if they are travelling up the wrong mountains,” adding that seekers “need to hear from some extremely persuasive and credible guides” (p. 135), with the implication being that religious leaders are the authority. Luhmann (2013) ignores the rising interest in subjective spirituality because he is searching for the next significant religion, a system of belief that potentially could replace Christianity. Spirituality is too individual and subjective, he argues, to become significant enough to be socially relevant in the way that Christianity was.

At the same time, those involved in the subjective spirituality movement project similar negative attitudes towards the concept of organized religion. Schneiders (2003), a prominent theologian and nun in the United States, notes that the word religion is commonly associated with a limited form of dogmatism and a system of morality that is more about guilt than boundaries for behaviour. Hay with Nye (2006) claims that many of his university students hold the attitude that religion is “associated with fanaticism, bigotry, cruelty and persecution” and in “many people’s minds religion is firmly caught up in the cold brutalities of history” (p. 19). Taylor (2007) argues, however, that perpetuating this polarization (religion and spirituality) is not in the best interest of the field and that it is best for

scholars, and individuals in the social world, to accept the fact that people have the right to religious/spiritual freedom.

Taylor (2007) argues that the contemporary issue for governments and public institutions in democratic countries is to learn how to adapt to the absence of consensus and “unlimited pluralism” (p. 489). Taylor defines pluralism as the range of belief from religious belief, ‘spiritual but not religious’, and atheist. Davison Hunter (2009) argues that the cultural tension in America is the boundary for what is acceptable pluralism. Religion, historically, he argues, was conceptualized by a dominant culture. However, he proposes that there is no longer a dominant culture in his home country of America. The institutional challenge is to develop policy and practice for the modern pluralistic world. The problem, he argues, is that cultural elites are charged with developing the definitions, functional logic, and the narratives for public life, yet the concept of pluralism precludes consensus it would seem. The boundary setting exercise for pluralism would require new conceptualizations of the dynamics of pluralism, new inclusion and exclusion criteria, and a new boundary between what is considered sacred and what is considered secular. He argues this should make space for new voices to join the conversation.

Van der Veer (2009) introduces the concept of spirituality into the debates. He argues that too much attention is paid to the secularization process and not enough is offered to secularism as a historical project. He wonders if the use of the concept of spirituality might resolve some of the tensions that exist regarding the boundary issues. He proposes that the word spirituality, which he notes is

especially difficult to define, might be the word to replace 'religion'. In his view, spirituality refers generally to the opposite of the material world and is distinct from religion and the secular. He argues that a notion of 'the spiritual' is universal and therefore in the changing discourse argument the use of the word spirituality as an alternative to religion serves the purpose of transcending some of the problems associated with the tensions about the diversity of meanings. The concept of spirituality should not be situated at the fringe of the conversations, but instead it should be at the centre. Its vague meaning and its universal application, he argues, allows for a more peaceful discussion about different worldviews to occur. Spirituality is not about proselytizing or converting, but instead about finding one's own pathway. In his view, spirituality depoliticizes the notion that the government shapes how citizens view a sacred, transcendent realm.

Hadden (1987) argues that general proposals for what secularization means are no more than "a hodgepodge of loosely employed ideas rather than a systematic theory" (p. 598). Stark and Iannaccone (1994) conclude that the term secularization should be discontinued in theoretical discourse since it only serves ideological functions and does not give a true account of the changes in belief evident in society. Green (1996) argues that the social forces that became catalysts for the idea that society was secularizing were different in different countries and even different between cities within a country therefore the idea of secularization is a vague notion. Whilst Luhmann (2013) argues that the concept of secularization is rarely used in the scientific community any more because it brings too many notions together under a single term, he also argues that it cannot be abandoned altogether until a better term to describe social changes with regard

to religion is developed. There is growing consensus that the concepts secular, secularization, and secularism need rethinking. This study de-constructed secularization theory and created a template of constructs (see Appendix). It removes assumptions and predictions by taking an inquiry approach in an investigation of an educational institution. It is argued today that the secularization process occurred differently in different contexts. This template becomes useful for bringing out these differences and providing a sense of 'why' and 'how' institutions are different.

2.5 Implications for Education

In examining the notion of secular education, these secular theorists argue that analysis should be sensitive of the historical baseline for the secularization process, the religion(s) that was given hegemonic status in education, the voices that influenced the decision-making process, and the way the function of the secular system was conceptualized by decision-makers as well as how they conceptualized the function of religion in a student's education. Sweet (1997), Brown (2000), Benson (2000), and Bramadat (2008) find that most Canadian policy-makers and administrators operate with an old notion of secularization theory, that the concept of religion is irrelevant to educational concerns and ignore the theory of religious transformation and the theory of a spirituality revolution. Bramadat argues that more qualitative studies should confront old interpretations of secularization and provide a nuanced understanding of new thinking about

secularization theory in relation to the Canadian context (to be developed in Chapter Three).

When the debate returns to the heart of the issue, how to address the part of the human condition that seeks out answers to the mysteries of life, notions of something greater than the material which some people might describe as God or something larger, sense of meaning and purpose, and what death means, then the debate becomes even more complex and controversial for educationists. The United Nations' fundamental rights of the child includes "the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, *spiritual*, moral and social development" (United Nations, 1989, Article 27 (1) *my italics*). Apple (2003) cautions, however, that a government's decision to legislate its version of what 'spiritual development' will entail risks arousing suspicion and a range of cultural and political conflicts. Legislating 'spiritual education' is a deeply contested area in education. McLaughlin (1996, 2003) argues educationists must decide whether the study of beliefs in transcendence, morals, and identity should be religiously tethered or untethered.

Countries where explanations for 'the sacred' are linked to organized religion will often provide space for 'religious education' (RE) or 'spiritual education'. Religious or spiritual education is not a Canadian concept, as we shall see in Chapter Three. Conceptualizations for the form and function of RE models are the subject of contentious debate (Apple, 2003). Jackson (2007) describes the various European models for Religious Education (RE). It is beyond the scope of this review to provide a detailed view into how organized religion and spirituality is

conceptualized in each country. The varieties in form and function of the models demonstrate that different countries secularized (or not) to varying degrees. In relying on Jackson's account, it is evident that some countries, such as Germany situates the church in a supervisory role for RE, Slovakia teaches the religion of the state, and Poland offers RE as an optional subject taught by insiders of schools according to the tenet of different denominations with an emphasis on Roman Catholic. France does not have any space that is specifically designated for RE, but curricular teachers address the religious backdrop to curriculum subjects. In Sweden RE is taught in terms of personal development and there is no involvement from religious institutions. England and Wales offer RE and aim at impartiality with a model that educates children about religion and also creates the space in RE for students to learn from religion as a way of developing personal understandings. Many Canadian schools secularized to a degree that there is no designated space for students to explore the concepts of religion or spirituality (Sweet, 1997; Brown, 2000; Benson, 2000; Seljak, 2009; McDonough & Boyd, 2009). In this regard, this is a study of the absence of space.

In conceptualizing how Canadian schools might incorporate a space, it is important to note Jackson's (2007) experiences. He finds that in international debates the concept of religion is often treated with suspicion. He observed that the European consultation conducted by the Council of Europe in 2002 on Citizenship Education excluded the topic of religion because of the various forms of secularism in different European countries and because religion was perceived as a source of conflict. At the forum on Religious Education and Intercultural Education in Paris 2003, Jackson observed that the experts of Religious Education

were initially treated with suspicion. The experts had to be convinced that the RE experts' intention was to create space for pluralism to flourish. Jackson reports that the Council of Europe is engaging in discussions about the study of religious diversity in schools and the notion of democratic citizenship in an effort to protect human rights and find solutions to discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance (p. 35). It is argued that RE could be a solution to these problems. Indeed, Grimmitt's (2010, editor) compilation titled *Religious Education and Social and Community Cohesion: An exploration of challenges and opportunities* provides varied interpretations of the aims of RE and the complexity of the goal of cohesion.

England has the longest tradition for adjusting policy discourse away from the exclusive use of the discourse of religion/religious to include 'spiritual development' in education policy, dating back to its 1944 Education Act (this will be developed further in Chapter Four), which suggests that to some degree secularization was in process. More recently, Australian policy-makers employed the word 'spiritual' in education policy and employed a set of 'secular values education' approach (Cooling, 2009; Australia, Department of Education, Science and Training, 2014). But, it also includes an extensive pastoral care programme, which gives religious leaders the authority to counsel children (Australia, Department of Education and Training, 2016). New Zealand policy-makers employ 'spiritual wellbeing' as an integral part of the physical education programme, using an indigenous Maori approach (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2009). Comparatives are challenging because of the different ways the sacred, religion, and non-religious spirituality or values are addressed. In this regard, the template is useful. In Canada, there is policy discourse that provides vague directives for

how religion and religious belief and practice are to be treated in schools, but not spirituality as a concept that exists outside of the concept of institutionalized religion. If Canadian decision-makers seek to adjust policy and practice mechanisms, and re-conceptualize its model, then there must be solid educational grounds (Gates, 2007). Yet, much of the international literature is about the contested practice of government controlled religious/spiritual education. The Canadian government takes a 'hands-off' approach, which leads to different debates for the Canadian context, as we shall see in Chapter Three.

Data driven literature from the fields of mental health and social work provides a possible educational ground that might stimulate Canadian educationists to think about the space for religion/spirituality in a more unconventional way. It extends studies from the 1960's, mentioned earlier in terms of human potential, consciousness, transformation, self-actualization, and transcending suffering by finding meaning and purpose. This literature is making huge gains in understanding the role of spirituality in supporting vulnerable youth. This is certainly not an exhaustive search. In conducting a review of Canadian perspectives on spirituality, it became apparent that professional practitioners in mental health, social work, and nursing were engaged in the study of the role of spirituality in professional practice, but few studies emerged for teacher professional practice.

Nevertheless, practitioners in these fields are finding that a study of consciousness, identity, meaning and purpose, and a connection to something greater than the physical manifestation of suffering aids adolescents who are

struggling with depression and overall well-being (Pérez, Little, and Henrich, 2009; Hassed, 2000; Raftopoulos & Bates, 2011; Delaney, Barrere, & Helming, 2011; Zapf, 2008, 2011). It is also argued that the exploration of spirituality helps to build resiliency and contributes to a reduction in substance abuse, voluntary sexual activity, and engagement in high-risk activities (Cotton, Larkin, Hoopes, Cromer, & Rosenthal, 2005). Garrett (1996) finds the exploration of individual spirituality aids adolescents in the recovery from anorexia nervosa.

Nursing literature finds that certain traumatic events in life, such as illness or death, can become catalysts for individuals to question meaning and purpose, beliefs about God, and the possibilities of an afterlife (Bruce, Sheilds, & Molzahn, 2011; Henery, 2003 a, b), demonstrating the continued significance of religion and spirituality. Hassed (2000) argues that the danger in misunderstanding an adolescent's search for an authentic spirituality is that it might be misinterpreted and pathologized by teachers and mental health practitioners who are inexperienced or who have not developed a practice that is sensitive to the variety of ways that a student's spirituality may present itself. Wintersgill (2008), Nye (2009), and Schlarb's (2007) studies show that children think they must hide their ideas and experiences of a spiritual aspect so that classmates, parents, and teachers do not mock them. They often take on tougher exteriors in order to mask that they are struggling with integrating their ideas and experiences into their identity and everyday life.

A theme in professional practice literature is the development of a 'spiritually sensitive practice'. Larson (2011) argues that practitioners must become aware of

tacit personal beliefs and attitudes. Yet, it is argued that learning to relate to religious/spiritual pluralism is left out of training modules (Hodge, Baughman, & Cummings (2006); Baldacchino (2011); Bruce et al., 2011). Baldacchino (2011) argues that practitioners must develop tools to recognize “signs of spiritual distress,” “methods of spiritual coping” and ways to “deliver spiritual care” (p. 50). Scott (2005, 2009, 2010) argues that adolescents enter into a period of their lives where they question the many dimensions of spirituality, such as their transcendent experience, sexual orientation, meaning and purpose and career choice, and their relationships. In social work, clients are often in the midst of crisis (Birnbaum & Birnbaum, 2008; Canda, 2008; Larson, 2011). In this regard, Birnbaum and Birnbaum (2008) argue that practitioners must build a skillset that will facilitate transformation from crisis to a higher state of consciousness so that the student can see a greater meaning and purpose to the events in their life. Bray (2009, mental health) argues that a new skillset must be developed in practitioners in order that they have the capacity to recognize how a multicultural and spiritually diverse society views spiritual health and wellness. Canda (2008, social work) argues that practitioners should engage in genuine dialogue together about diversity and personal beliefs and attitudes. Westerman (2009) finds that immigrant students from unsecularized cultures struggle with a ‘leave your faith at the door’ secular model and with curriculum that is in opposition to their beliefs about a transcendent reality. He urges practitioners to broaden their understanding of the different ways religion/spirituality might manifest in a practice.

Negotiating the function of secular education and the role of religion and spirituality in secular education is complex and controversial. Taylor (2009) argues that old definitions of the secular must be abandoned and social scientists should instead focus on how to develop a society that creates the conditions for an equitable co-existence of a diversity of conceptualizations of religion and spirituality. In this new secular regime, secularism requires neutrality, which he characterizes as liberty, equality, and fraternity. In order to arrive at a contemporary conceptualization of 'the secular' and an ideology of 'secularism', Taylor argues that individuals representing the range of beliefs, or in other words the full range of diversity with regard to belief about the immanent and transcendent, must be part of the negotiation process. In this regard, the negotiation process must not begin with concrete definitions or from some sort of 'higher authority' as to what secular, secularism, religion, and spirituality mean. He argues that there is no generalizable principle for what the secular or secularism is, or for religion or spirituality for that matter. He argues that the goal of the state should be to create a sense of belonging and inclusion amongst citizens, and this extends to believers and non-believers. He argues that secularist paradigms have been overly focused on their response to religion and what is permissible with regard to religious belief and practice in the public sphere. In terms of the historical evolution, he maintains that democratic nations must engage in what may be a painful redefinition process, where their historical identities will change and new ways of balancing equality and liberty are negotiated and put into policy and practice.

2.6 Synthesizing Secularization Theory

From a careful reading of secularization theory, nearly 80 constructs are significant in exploring the nature of a 'secularized education' system. However, it is likely that these 80 constructs do not exhaust all of the various ways to examine the secularization process of a school system.

The 80 constructs are listed in a data collection template in Appendix I. The first series of constructs deal with how a particular education institution conceptualizes the sacred and how this conceptualization is institutionalized (or not) into an education system. The second series of constructs deal with 'Pre-secularization Conditions' (e.g., the historical baseline, state church/no state church, national policy or provincial policy, voices included/excluded, and so on). The third series of constructs have to do with the 'Secularization Era' (e.g., catalysts for change, policies, charters, and school acts, meaning of neutrality, voices included/excluded). The fourth series of constructs deal with 'Post-secularization Education' (e.g., catalysts for change, evidence of desecularization, treatment of religious heritage). The purpose of the template is to spell out secularization theory more concretely so that it is useful and practical in examining a school system. It provides a sound basis for others to build upon.

2.7 Conclusion

A brief summary of secularization theory is that it can be taken in two ways. First, an 'old' version of secularization theory is that it refers to a belief that as societies modernize and rationalize religious authority will diminish in

significance at the state, institutional, and individual level. This version also predicted that the concept of religion would disappear from human consciousness, This prediction had mainly been put to rest (Berger, 1999, 2001; Taylor, 2007). Second, secularization theory is used to explain the secularization process, a separation of religious authority from state, institution, and individual governance. This is a complicated process with many constructs (see template).

Exploring the meaning and function of post-secularization education is a complex undertaking. It requires finding out what secular means in a particular educational context, the extent the secularization process de-Christianized and/or retained/removed dimensions of life related to a transcendent reality and other mysteries, the extent institutions established a rationalized curriculum, and the extent desecularization forces might have changed the trajectory of secularization. It also involves finding out about what people inside the institution believe and how they believe. Whilst much of the literature on the secular, secularization, and secularism is limited to the concept of religion, it is argued today that contemporary notions of spirituality should now become a significant part of the debate with regard to how secular education deals with the concept of diversity, the function of religion and the function of spirituality, and the way the space for religion and spirituality should be imagined.

Chapter Three applies secularization theory as the lens to examine Canadian/Albertan public education.

3.0 CHAPTER THREE

Canadian/Albertan Education Context

This chapter applies secularization theory to an examination of Canada/Alberta's secularization process of public schools. Part One develops the pre-secularization colonial historical educational backdrop (1500's-1960). Part Two develops an account of the process of secularization of public education (1960's-1980's). Part Three develops the post-secularization model of education in the province of Alberta. It opens up the contemporary Canadian debates about the role of secular education in a pluralistic world.

3.1 Literature Review Strategy

The key search terms were: 'religion', 'spirituality', 'religious diversity', 'secular', 'schools', 'secular education', 'teachers', 'Canada', 'Alberta', and 'public education'. The literature was limited to the time period of the 1980's to the present. Few Canadian studies that explore spirituality include the historical, cultural, political, and religious backdrop to their Canadian settings. Sweet (1997), it is argued, constructed the most complete account, ending at the time of the secularization

era. This account used her study as a foundational study and brought it up to date as far as the Alberta context is concerned. It relies mostly on policy statutes, since the concepts of religion and spirituality were rarely studied at the time. Literature and Hansard Reports that addressed the various changes to the Alberta School Act were incorporated in the building of the backdrop. The literature included policy documents: the Constitution Act of 1867, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988), and the Alberta School Act. It included books, edited books, refereed journal articles, Hansard Reports, newspaper articles, websites for Alberta Education, Statistics Canada, and the website of the school jurisdiction involved in this study. It conducted a review of the Library and Archives Canada for Canadian graduate studies that had 'religion' and/or 'spirituality' in the title.

3.2 Pre-Secularization Colonial Era (1500's-1960)

Barnett (2008), who works in the law and government division of the Canadian government, argues that Canada is often used as an example for how to deal with religious diversity because of its fairly long history of doing so. Its government and education structures were constructed on the basis of a diverse population of colonial settlers. This section will demonstrate that in a colonial model of education her version of the effectiveness of the Canadian approach may not be entirely true. It employs Luhmann's (2013) systems theory (see Chapter Two) as a lens through which to understand how the functionally differentiated education system was established during colonial times. It addresses the early

demographics, the problem the education system was expected to resolve, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the functional purpose and identity of the public school system, and finally it critically examines the colonial public education model and the extent to which it accommodated religious/spiritual diversity.

3.2.1 Demographics

According to Luhmann (1977; 1997; 2013) and Dobbelaere (1981), an examination of the secularization process must necessarily begin with a historical baseline. It must construct the historical, political, social, cultural, and religious background of the public school system under investigation (see Chapter Two). In other words it is necessary to have an appreciation for the environment in which the public school existed and an understanding of the functional mandate it was expected to carry out.

Historically, Tomkins (1977) notes, Canadian schools functioned as agents of “political socialization” (p. 6). Most Canadian literature with respect to the colonial era provides a historical account of three groups of people that occupied Canada during the era: Aboriginal, French, and English. It often ignores the diverse nature of early settlers in that there were immigrants from China, Japan, and Europe who came to work on the railways, in the lumber industry, and in fisheries and who brought their religious/spiritual beliefs with them (Wayland, 1997). There was also a growing Jewish population, as well as non-believers. Early Canadian demographics were complicated. O’Toole (2006) maintains that it is only in realizing the hegemonic status offered Protestants and Catholics and the

ramification of imposing a Christian worldview on non-Christians that the Canadian public school system can be understood.

Whilst many scholars begin their accounts with the French and English population, and the Protestant and Catholic segment of the colonial population, this one begins with the Aboriginal story because they occupied the land long before the French and English arrived. The word Aboriginal for the Canadian context is defined in the Canadian Constitution Act (1982) as including three groups of people: 1) Indian (or otherwise known as First Nations who are neither Inuit nor Metis), 2) Inuit (Northern), and 3) Metis (mixture of First Nations and French/English) (Canadian Constitution Act, 1867-1982, Section 25 (2)). The use of these three broad labels, however, does not do justice to the diversity of beliefs, practices, and traditions between tribes of Aboriginals (Beaman, 2002; Battiste, 1995). In general though (and there is a danger in generalizing), Aboriginal spirituality is based on the belief in a Creator, each of us has an immortal spirit, there is a spirit dimension (good and evil) that can influence day-to-day life and must be thanked and/or appeased, and all aspects of the material world are sacred and have a spirit (eg. wind, rain, rocks, trees, for example, have a spirit). There are numerous sacred ceremonies (eg. sweatlodge and Sundance) that honour the sacred spiritual dimension. It puts a priority on the sacredness of all life experience and the relationship to the land (Fonda, 2011).

The Aboriginal community had a complex education system prior to colonization. The function of education was to pass along from Elders to children skills that would ensure their survival, skills such as hunting, gathering, tanning,

cooking, beading, medicine, meteorology, physics, storytelling, environmentalism, and mysticism (Neegan, 2005; Kirkness, 1999). Indeed, it was the responsibility of community members to educate the young (ibid). There was no formal school building and standardized curriculum (Beaman, 2002).

French explorers and pioneers arrived in 1535 and settled mainly in what is now the province of Quebec. English explorers arrived soon after and forces usurped French colonies in a Battle on the Plains of Abraham in 1763. Persistent conflicts between the English and French became a problem for decision-makers and are still evident today.

3.2.2 Education Model

Taylor (2007) argues that most policy-makers draft policy that supports their own worldview as though this view is axiomatic to the larger population. Taylor uses the term social imaginary to describe the conceptual backdrop of policy-makers. It is typical, he argues, for policy-makers to re-construct what is familiar to them. In this case, the policy-makers who constructed the Canadian colonial model of education re-constructed their own imaginary of what a school system should look like and how religion should function within the school system.

When the British constructed the Constitution Act of 1867 (formerly known as the British North America Act), it relied heavily on the observations of Lord Durham who traveled to the colony from England to gain insight into the conditions of the society and how best to construct a school system. In his Report, Durham wrote:

I expected to find a conflict between the government and the people: instead, I found two warring nations within a single State; I found a struggle, not of principles, but of races. And I realized that it would be pointless to try to improve the laws or institutions without succeeding in extinguishing the mortal hatred which now divides the inhabitants of Lower Canada into two hostile groups: French and English (Durham Report, 1939).

His solution to the problem was to strengthen the power of provincial governments rather than the national government. His Report states:

It is not by weakening but in strengthening the influence of the people on their government that it will be possible, in my view, to bring about concord where discord has so long reigned, and to introduce a hitherto unknown regularity and vigor into the administration of the provinces (Durham Report, 1939).

This resulted in education policy-making devolved to provincial leadership. In other words, there is no Canadian system of education, but there are provincial systems, which is why this study focuses on just one province (Alberta) and how religion/spirituality was conceptualized in policy and practice in that province. The only caveat in the Constitution Act 1867 that could be considered a national framework is: Sub-sections 1 and 2 of Section 93. It grants constitutional privilege to Catholic and Protestant French and English colonists and denies the value of other religions/spiritualities. Aboriginal education was situated under federal jurisdiction, not provincial.

Section 93 of the Constitution Act 1867 provides the following legislation for education:

93. In and for each Province the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Education, subject and according to the following Provisions:

- (1) Nothing in any such Law shall prejudicially affect any Right or Privilege with respect to Denominational Schools which any Class of Persons have by Law in the Province at the Union:
- (2) All the Powers, Privileges and Duties at the Union by Law conferred and imposed in Upper Canada on the Separate Schools and School Trustees of the Queen's Roman Catholic Subjects shall be and the same are hereby extended to the Dissentient Schools of the Queen's Protestant and Roman Catholic Subjects in Quebec
(Canadian Constitution Act 1867, Department of Justice, Canada: 1982).

This statute basically establishes the constitutional right for the religious majority and the religious minority (limited to Protestant or Catholic) to have a fully funded education system. This statute at the time was constructed for Upper Canada (now Ontario where the majority was English and Protestant) and Lower Canada (now Quebec where the majority was French and Catholic). The three territories (to the North and mainly inhabited by Inuits) operate under a different educational framework and therefore will be excluded from this presentation.

All provinces (there are now 10 provinces) were permitted to structure education into a dual model, one for the religious majority and one for the religious minority, with religion defined according to colonial policy-makers' social imaginary as either Catholic or Protestant denominational. This decision on the part of policy-makers indicates that they viewed religious identity as important and that children should be divided in schools along religious lines. Khan (1997) and Brown (2000) argue that British policy-makers provided more freedom to Catholics in early Canada than they did to Catholics in England. It is argued that

policy-makers were motivated by the economic benefits that would result from retaining English and French settlers. It was important to appease the French population, according to Khan, because policy-makers knew that settling the massive amount of land, especially with its harsh climate and landscape, was more important than alienating the French located in Quebec. For this reason, colonial policy-makers did not argue for the Church of England as head of state but instead infused Christianity through the dual (Protestant/Catholic) model.

The colonial model is complicated by the presence of the Aboriginal community and other individuals outside of the French and English dominant group (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Jewish) whose worldviews were ignored (Wayland, 1997). Lord Durham's influential report demonstrates the social imaginary that was the backdrop for the Canadian colonial model of education. In his report, he states:

The language, the laws and the character of the North American continent are English, and every other race than the English race is in a state of inferiority. It is in order to release them from this inferiority that I wish to give the Canadians our English character (Durham Report, 1939).

The institutionalization of Christianity in the school system functioned as a mechanism to preserve the religious, cultural, and linguistic identity of the French and English settlers (Khan, 1997, 1998). However, Marshall (1994 a,b) argues that few pioneering Canadians went to church and thus it is difficult to know for sure how strongly they felt about their religious identity. The government, it is argued, used school curriculum and religious instruction as assimilation mechanisms to foster a Christian character amongst the pioneers (McDonald, 1977; Heyking, 2006). Sweet (1997) argues that colonial policy-makers thought

that a belief in God, particularly Christian, was axiomatic and that schools were unquestionably tied to a church.

When Alberta joined the Dominion in 1905, it adopted the dual model. At present there is what Sweet (1997) describes as a “patchwork treatment” of the dual model across the country (p. 30). In this regard, the Canadian approach to education is very complicated to describe. It can be expected that the majority of educationists in Alberta attended Protestant schools and a minority would have attended a Catholic school.

Blair’s (1986) province-by-province study found that schools systematized religion for the Protestant school system in a variety of formal and informal practices. Formal practices included mandatory or elective Religious Instruction, recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, hymns, scripture reading, Christian historical backdrop in curriculum, and a Christian school calendar. Informal practices were public displays of religious symbols, Christian school ethos, and the presumption that students were Christian. It is these status quo practices that became the subject of the decision-making process during the secularization era, as we shall see.

3.2.3 Impact of the Colonial Model

The contemporary debates about the colonial model of education mainly deal with the exclusion of the Aboriginal community and in this respect Aboriginal spirituality in the educational framework. A debate about imposing a European model of education and Christianity on a diverse set of early Canadians is beginning

to emerge from a scholarly group describing themselves as de-colonists (see Smith, 2001; Wane, 2011; Ritskes, 2011: to be taken up more fully later). De-colonists tend to employ the word 'spirituality' as their operative term. They argue that the essence of spirituality, which they perceive as authentic identity, was colonized into 'a religion'. In this respect, identity for Canadians was colonized into a Christian identity, either Protestant or Catholic.

Literature that explores Aboriginal spirituality focuses on the idea that because Aboriginal spirituality did not fit within the social imaginary of colonial policy-makers, they ignored it (Beaman, 2002, 2003, 2006). In other words, it did not fit within the policy-makers social imaginary for a definition of a religion. The most significant issue that emerges in the debates is the impact of the colonial practice of forcibly removing Aboriginal children from their communities and placing them in residential schools, mainly staffed by Christian missionaries. There they were indoctrinated into a Protestant or Catholic worldview and 'white' British or French culture. The unfair treatment of Aboriginals became a national embarrassment as evidenced by Prime Minister Harper during his apology speech of June 11, 2008. He spoke specifically about residential schools and apologized that they were used to "remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture" under the assumption that "aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal" (CBC News, 2008).

Literature employing the term spirituality also tends to focus on new ways of conceptualizing a 'spiritual life' outside of a Christian paradigm. Beaman (2002)

argued, for example, that there is a perception that a 'spiritual life' is a segmented part of life, such as 'going to Church on Sunday', 'saying the Lord's prayer', or 'singing a hymn', rather than as an integral part of everyday life as it is in the Aboriginal communities (Beaman, 2002). De-colonists (Smith, 2001; Wane, 2011; Ritskes, 2011) argue that the concept of the sacred is not a segmented part of life, as proposed by Durkheim (1915); it is infused in all dimensions of everyday life. They maintain that marginalized individuals should question the politics of identity established during colonization and not accept the politics as status quo. Canadians Kawano (2011) and Antze (2011) argue that non-Christian, non-white, non-English, and non-French children were taught that indigenous knowledge was inferior and as a child growing up in the Canadian education system Antze could not relate to a curriculum that imposed a British worldview. Sium (2011) writes of the effect of changing his name to blend into a White society and Muhangi (2011) writes of the impact of the loss of her language. Beaman (2006) argues that scholars should "make strange" current policy that retains elements of colonial assumptions (p. 3). Ritskes (2011) similarly argues that students should be taught to challenge policy, practices, and curriculum that distort or marginalize a spiritual identity.

Whilst the de-colonist voice tends to represent the perspectives of the Aboriginal community and other marginalized Canadians, there are few studies that investigate how the colonization of identity impacted the dominant society, Canadians with a French or English cultural identity and or Catholic or Protestant heritage. Marshall (1994a,b) argues that as early as the 19th century, Churches were struggling to build congregations. If early Canadians went to church at all

they most often chose a church of convenience whether it was the one they identified with before emigrating to Canada or not. Between the 1830's-1850's the Canadian government stopped giving churches special status in society and the churches were required to fund their institution through its volunteer congregation. Churches, Marshall argues, became involved in social and political reform in order to be relevant in pioneering society. Less was made of the Church's function to be an expert on the supernatural and more was attributed to strategies to get early Canadians to church. However, many pioneers were more concerned with increasing their standard of living than building religious communities. Indeed, Marshall argues that it is challenging for historians to discover the religious beliefs and the intensity of beliefs of early Canadians. By World War I, Protestant churches were struggling to build strength, trying to be all things to all people, but in reality church attendance was on the decline. Fair (2003) and Campbell (2010) argue that the 1920's was a turning point decade for Protestant churches and often used to mark the beginnings of the secularization of Canadian society. Fair cites Member of Parliament, John. S. Moir's address, "Canada's history and constitution require that the state be neither indifferent to nor involved in the church and vice versa" (p. 230). Religion, as a concept, did not disappear, but it became over time marginalized in Canada as a government and institutional concern (Marshall, 1994a,b; Sweet, 1997; Brown, 2000; Seljak, 2009; Fenwick & English, 2004; Wane, 2011).

3.3 Secularization of Schools (1960's-1980's)

A consistent thread across provinces, according to the literature, is that the secularization process of schools began in earnest in the 1960's and carried on through the 1980's. In brief, the secularization of public schools, or in other words the differentiation process, entailed de-Christianizing schools. The literature mainly focuses on two national policies that were catalysts for the secularization process: the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the 1988 Multiculturalism Act. The Multiculturalism Act will be presented first because it was a work in progress from the 1970's through to the 1980's, with the latest revision in 1988. More importantly, Canada's increasing multiculturalism was the catalyst for the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982.

3.3.1 Catalyst: Multiculturalism Act

It was argued in Chapter Two that pluralism was an impetus for the privatization of Christianity and the differentiation process. As societies became more complex and religiously/spiritually diverse, it became problematic to provide hegemonic privilege to Christians in policy and practice. In this regard, when the Canadian government expanded its immigration policy in 1963 to include individuals from non-white, non-Christian countries the dynamics of the Canadian public sphere changed (Wayland, 1997). No longer could it be assumed that education could function as an assimilation mechanism into a 'white', British or French, and Christian worldview (ibid). A formal multicultural policy was constructed in 1971 and re-drafted in 1988.

Two sections of the Act's Preamble provide a view into the way multiculturalism is conceptualized for the Canadian context. This section of the Preamble demonstrates the retention of the 'dominant culture' (French and English) in Canada.

WHEREAS the Constitution of Canada and the *Official Languages Act* provide that English and French are the official languages of Canada and neither abrogates nor derogates from any rights or privileges acquired or enjoyed with respect to any other language (Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988, Preamble).

The framework for the Multiculturalism Act 1988 preserves a bi-cultural and bi-lingual 'Dominant Society' Canadian identity of French and English. It does not elevate the status of Aboriginals. They continued to be marginalized in national policy. This section of the Preamble provides an overview of the Act:

WHEREAS the *Canadian Human Rights Act* provides that every individual should have an equal opportunity with other individuals to make the life that the individual is able and wishes to have, consistent with the duties and obligations of that individual as a member of society, and, in order to secure that opportunity, establishes the Canadian Human Rights Commission to redress any proscribed discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin or colour (Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988, Preamble).

Policy advisors to the Canadian House of Commons and Senate, Dewing and Leman (2006), argue that the intention of the Act is:

to assist in the preservation of culture and language, to reduce discrimination, to enhance cultural awareness and understanding, and to promote culturally sensitive institutional change at the federal level (p. 6).

The multicultural model in Canada is the mosaic. Indeed, Bibby (1990) characterizes the Canadian response to pluralism as 'mosaic madness'. Each culture represents a tile on the art piece that is Canadian identity. Essentially, a mosaic model preserves the 'singular community' notion, whether it is a moral community, linguistic, cultural, religious, and so on.

Since education is a provincial responsibility, the interpretation of multicultural education varies from one province to the next (Kirova, 2008). According to Barnett (2008), public schools are to promote multiculturalism by celebrating various religious expressions whilst not prioritizing any one religion. Dewing and Leman (2006), however, argue that in practice multiculturalism tends to be conceptualized in terms of dress, food, music, and festivities. The deeper significance of cultural diversity, such as religious/spiritual diversity, is not typically given much attention, as we shall see (Sweet, 1997; Brown, 2000; Seljak, 2009 a,b; Gaye & Kunz, 2009; Fadden & Townsend, 2009).

3.3.2 Catalyst: Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The way the Charter of Rights and Freedoms 1982 was constructed set the course for the transformation of schools from Protestant institutions where a Christian worldview was infused in curriculum and school ethos to 'secular' ones that operated from the contested notion of 'neutrality'; (see Thierren, 2009, Chapter Two, pp. 54-55). Public schools were required to re-conceptualize their functional mandate and identity (Luhmann, 1977). The Charter creates a litigious boundary for educators in the treatment of religion. It required public schools to

re-imagine the role of religion in schools and to adjust policy and practice mechanisms to be inclusive of multiple religions. Unlike in other settings, such as the United Kingdom, as mentioned in Chapter Two, policy-makers did not adjust policy discourse to the more contemporary term 'spiritual'. It retained the discourse of religion and conscience. Four sections of the Charter pertain to public education and are influential in the way religion is conceptualized for policy and practice.

3.3.3 Legal Framework for Religion

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides a legal framework for how the concept of religion is to be treated in schools (Khan, 1997,1998; Brown, 2000; Sweet, 1997). In this section, the Charter is de-constructed to show the elements of it that pertain to how schools are to treat religion. Canada does not make a clear distinction between the state and religious institutional authority, nor does it explicitly define 'religion' or outline the parameters of 'religious freedom'.

3.3.4 Belief in God

According to the Preamble of the Charter policy-makers situate both a belief in God as equally valid to the rational rule of law. The Preamble reads:

Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982, Preamble).

The Canadian national anthem also makes reference to God. In this regard, it would seem that public schools, and students and educationists, have the constitutional right to include references to God in curriculum and school practices.

There is no consensus in the literature with respect to the meaning and significance of the Preamble. Brown (2000) argues the courts are reluctant to explore the constitutional meaning of the 'supremacy of God' and the implications it has in making legal or educational decisions. He maintains that the courts and academics treat the Preamble as "an embarrassment to be ignored" (p. 561). Barnett (2008), however, interprets the inclusion of the God reference as purely symbolic. The contentious issue for schools is how to deal with multiple versions of God, how to address the significance of God in students' lives (Sweet, 1997; Brown, 2000), and how to deal with a belief in a transcendent reality as a whole.

3.3.5 Definition of Religion

Canadian policy-makers included freedom of conscience and religion as a constitutional right. These follow the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Section 2 of the Charter guarantees:

- a) freedom of conscience and religion;
- b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
- c) freedom of peaceful assembly;
- d) freedom of association

(Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982, Section 2)

The literature draws attention to the absence of a definition for the word religion (see Blair, 1986; Khan, 1997, 1998; Sweet, 1997; Beaman, 2002, 2006; Brown, 2000; Benson, 2000). In this regard, the Canadian government does not define religion or demonstrate any particular attitude to religion. Few Canadian scholars take up the constitutional meaning of the word conscience. In this regard, most scholars focus on the legal parameter and boundary issues for what is meant by 'religious freedom' especially as it pertains to public schools (ibid). Khan (1997, 1998) and Brown (2000) argue that without a definition for religion, the concept of 'religious freedom' is vague. In other words, there are no guidelines within the Charter as to the extent to which individuals operating within public schools could enact their right to freedom of conscience and religion. Brown (2000) argues that the interpretation of the notion of 'religious freedom' fell to the provincial and supreme courts to interpret and judges were not adequately trained to understand the nuance of 'religious freedom'. Beaman (2002, 2003, 2006) likewise argues that court judges resorted to their status quo understandings of religion, which were mainly Protestant or Catholic, and negotiated the concept of freedom of religion in relation to what was familiar to them.

The Supreme Court of Canada provides the following definition for freedom of religion:

The essence of the concept of freedom of religion is the right to entertain such religious beliefs as a person chooses, the right to declare religious beliefs openly and without fear of hindrance or reprisal, and the right to manifest religious belief by worship and practice or by teaching and dissemination . . . [provided that] such manifestations do not inure his or her neighbour or their parallel rights to hold and manifest beliefs and opinion, of their own (cite Khan, 1998, p. 142).

Both Khan (1997) and Brown (2000) note that Supreme Court Judge Dickson argues that the lack of a definition was intentional so that conceptualizations of religion would remain dynamic and flexible, ever evolving in order to remain relevant to the social fabric of Canadians. Judge Dickson stated:

[T]he *Charter* is intended to set a standard upon which present as well as future legislation is to be tested. Therefore, the meaning of the concept of freedom of conscience and religion is not to be determined solely by the degree to which that right was enjoyed by Canadians prior to the proclamation of the *Charter* (cite Brown, 2000, 566).

Judge Dickson explained that the purpose of Section 2a of the Charter (freedom of conscience and religion) is to:

ensure that society does not interfere with profoundly personal beliefs that govern one's perception of oneself, humankind, nature, and, in some cases, a higher or different order of being (cite Brown, 2000, 569).

The emphasis is on ensuring that the State, or in this case the public education system, does not interfere with the right to individual belief or constrain students by a prescribed religious framework. However, as Taylor (2007) and Beyer (2003) argue it is not what one believes that causes problems to the state, it is what one practices and puts out into the public sphere.

3.3.6 Testing the Limits

The mechanism for testing the meanings of religion, conscience, and religious freedom was through Section 24(1) of the Charter. Whilst Section 2 provides the right to a vague notion of religious freedom, Section 24(1) creates an invisible

boundary for how far an individual can go. Section 24(1) is a mechanism that entitles individuals to petition a higher court in the event that he/she perceives that his/her religious freedom has been infringed upon or denied. In this regard, the secularization process in part was a result of the negotiation of infringement issues that were settled by the court of law (as per Thierren's (2009) definition of differentiation, see Chapter Two), not as a coordinated political process to deliberately separate the Church/religion from schools (as per Wilson, 1985; Dobbelaere, 1981; Chaves, 1994, see Chapter Two). Section 24(1) reads:

Anyone whose rights or freedoms, as guaranteed by this Charter, have been infringed or denied may apply to a court of competent jurisdiction to obtain such remedy as the court considers appropriate and just in the circumstances (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, 1982, Section 24(1)).

Section 24(1) ultimately became a secularization instrument for public schools. It limits the capacity for a person to impose religious beliefs or other philosophies on others. Casanova (2009) and Barnett (2008) argue that differentiation will occur differently in countries without a state Church or religion. In this regard, since Canada does not have a state Church/religion, but instead infused a Christian worldview into curriculum and school ethos, the secularization of schools occurred incrementally as status quo practices were deemed problematic (as per Chaves (1994) conceptualization of differentiation) and put to the test in the courts in a case-by-case basis. The voices of the secularizers and the voices of those that wanted to retain Christian beliefs or practices battled out the trajectory of differentiation (as per Chaves (1994), Dobbelaere (1981), Freathy & Parker, 2013).

Maryl's (2011) study of Australia's secularization process shows that administrators and teachers became agents of secularization. This was evident in the Canadian context as well. Section 24(1) put Canadian teachers and administrators at risk of being called before a human rights tribunal if school practices impeded the freedoms of students and/or parents. Educators and court judges, in this regard, set the boundary for how the concept of freedom of belief was to be conceptualized based on case-by-case petitions with little involvement from the government.

It became evident that certain Christian practices became the object of Section 24(1) petitions. A small number of Canadian scholars (Khan, 1997, 1998; Brown, 2000; Sweet, 1997) examined court cases pertaining to public education, as we shall see. It can be assumed that many complaints about public education were resolved within the school and only irresolvable issues were put before the court. As can be expected, the differentiation process occurred differently in different provinces (Dobbelaere, 1981). Different provincial decision-makers interpreted the Charter and religious/conscience freedom in different ways. For example, the province of Ontario's court dealt with a petition against mandatory confessional Religious Instruction (RI) and ruled:

The school can sponsor the *study* of religion, but not the *practice* of religion, and the function of the school is to educate about *all* religion, not to *convert* to one religion. The school's approach should be *academic*, not *devotional* (cite Khan, 1998, p. 146, his italics).

It added:

as long as the purpose of the teaching is to inform the pupils, as an object of study, of the religious perspective as *a* way of looking at issues and values, it cannot be regarded as an indoctrinal purpose (cite Khan, 1998, p. 146, his italics).

It is apparent that schools could no longer use religions courses as mechanisms for assimilation, or place Christian values and beliefs as superior to other religious beliefs and values. The courts did not remove religions courses. The courts ruled that the design of the courses must not prioritize any religions or be used for the purpose of indoctrination.

The logic or ideology behind court rulings depicts the attitude of the judge toward what he/she thought of confessional Religious Instruction. It “imposes a coercive burden on religious minorities which is not mitigated by the preservation of an automatic exemption” (cite Supreme Court ruling, Brown, 2000, p. 590). The Court’s concern was “peer pressure,” which in its view “compel[s] members of religious minorities to conform with majority religious practices” (cite Supreme Court, Khan, 1998, p. 144). Khan (1998) notes a petition from the Alberta school jurisdiction involved in this study regarding *The Lord’s Prayer*. Whilst school administrators argued that the prayer was beneficial to all students, an Alberta court ruled the practice was “insensitive and inconsistent with the multicultural nature of Canadian society” (Khan, 1998, pp. 144-145).

Debates in courts served as mechanisms to deconstruct status quo thinking about what it means to be a moral community and new ways of considering the function of religion in schools. In other words, it was not for educationists to decide what religious values, beliefs, and practices were in the best interest of students. The intention of policy was to protect individual identity of students, particularly

minority students. Public schools were expected to be inclusive learning environments and curriculum and school practices “should be designed to be acceptable to all reasonable persons and, consequently, leave no justification for requiring discriminatory exemptions (cite court ruling, Brown, 2000, p. 589). Ultimately, “the family is the crucible for the transmission of religious beliefs, with parents acting as the primary educators of their children in their faith” (cite court ruling, Brown, 2000, p. 579). The courts essentially privatized religious instruction by situating it in the realm of parental rights but it did not ban religions courses that treat religion in a neutral fashion.

The province of British Columbia, however, went a step further and the courts interpreted the right to ‘religious freedom’ also included the right to be ‘free from religion’ in schools (Brown, 2000; Khan, 1998, p. 148). It eliminated religions courses altogether. Sweet’s (1997) data from her cross Canada study found that most school administrators eliminated religions courses during the 1960’s-1980’s secularization era. In addition, she found that provincial curriculum designers had removed the religious backdrop to historical events, art, music, and literature from textbooks and curriculum. Whilst Supreme Court rulings did not stipulate that schools were to eliminate the topic of religion in schools, Brown (2000) argues that Section 24(1) “compelled the absence of religion from public schools” (p. 584) because it put educators in a precarious position. In this regard, the concept of religion had become controversial for secular schools and teachers avoided the concept in order to avoid possible litigation. Since policy was structured to keep ‘religious freedom’ open to interpretation, Brown argued teachers avoided the topic altogether. Institutionalized religion lost its significance in public education.

The Alberta School Act, Section 50(1), however, indicates that Alberta schools did not remove religious instruction (RI) and exercises from policy. The statute states that a board *may*:

- (a) prescribe religious instruction to be offered to its students;
- (b) prescribe religious exercises for its students;
- (c) prescribe patriotic instruction to be offered to its students;
- (d) prescribe patriotic exercises for its students;
- (e) permit persons other than teachers to provide religious instruction to its students.

(my italics, Alberta School Act, 1988 cS-3.1 s33; 1990 c36 s16)

This statute continues to exist in the Alberta School Act. The Act leaves it up to individual school jurisdictions as to whether or not they want to prescribe RI. Blair (1986), however, located an Alberta survey conducted in 1979 that compared public school jurisdiction administrators' (known as superintendents) responses to the relevance of religion in public schools with the responses of superintendents of the Catholic separate divisions. The public school superintendents indicated that in practice only 30 per cent of public schools at that time offered religions courses, whilst all Catholic schools offered religions courses. Furthermore, public school superintendents marked religion as the least of their concerns, providing further evidence to support secularization theory, that religious authority had diminished in significance in Alberta as far back as 1979. Superintendents had secularized in the sense that they did not perceive religion to be a significant element of public education. The Catholic superintendents marked religion as their primary concern.

These survey results indicate that Alberta public schools were secularizing of their own accord, at least three years before Section 24 became an issue. There is a significant discrepancy between what is incorporated at the policy level (Section 50(1) and the Supreme Court rulings) and what was happening in practice in schools. It is evident that at the school level, religion was considered a problem.

3.3.7 Preservation of Catholic Schooling

Section 29 of the Charter retains the constitutional right for the Catholic Separate school system to continue as a fully funded public organization. Section 29 of the Charter states:

Nothing in this Charter abrogates or derogates from any right or privileges guaranteed by or under the Constitution of Canada in respect of denominational schools (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982, Section 29).

In this way, the Catholic voice was attended and the Protestant voice was not. Since the public system was responsible for the majority of students in a province, who were becoming increasingly diverse due to immigration laws, the Protestant sector was compelled to secularize in order to comply with the Multiculturalism Act and the Charter (Miller, 1986; Brown, 2000; Khan, 1997; Sweet, 1997; Zinga, 2008). The secularization process, in part, occurred as many public school superintendents re-constructed a functional identity that was in opposition to the Catholic sector (Sweet, 1997).

In European countries, where there was a national Church and where education systems differentiated their roles in society from the Church (Casanova, 2009), the

process of secularization and the notion of differentiation took on a different meaning in Canada, where there is no state church. 'Differentiation' in Canada meant the re-negotiation for the boundaries of the dual education model. Public schools differentiated a functional mandate and identity that distinguished itself from the Catholic functional mandate and identity (Sweet, 1997). In this way, parents could choose between a Catholic education for their children, or a secular one where religious courses were removed as well as the religious backdrop to curriculum studies (Sweet, 1997; Brown, 2000; Miller, 1986; Hiemstra & Brink, 2006).

The loss of the rights of Protestant parents to have their children educated in a Christian-based setting became a thorny issue. Brown (2000) notes from his investigation into court rulings on Section 24 that the Supreme Court in 1996 in an 8-1 decision ruled that provinces are not under any legal obligation to fund independent religious schools, despite full funding for Catholic schools. Similarly, Khan (1998) found that the Supreme Court ruled that parents are free to enroll their children in private religious schools but the "cost of doing so is a natural cost of the parents' religion, and the disadvantage they suffer does not flow from the refusal of the province to fund publicly private religious schools" (p. 152). Courts decided that "it was a *basic* compact of confederation that rights and privileges already acquired by law at the time of confederation with respect to denominational schools would be preserved" (Khan, 1998, p. 149-150, his italics).

Aboriginal voices, it appears, were not considered during the secularization process and the drafting of the Constitution Act, 1982. It is only recently that the Aboriginal voice is receiving political attention, as we shall see.

3.3.8 Outcomes of Secularization

Canadian social scientists argue that the high degree of secularization in Canada overall marginalized the concept of religion as a policy-making issue. This, they argue, has created some contradictory tensions. Whilst the intention was to create a neutral space for religious freedom, Brown (2000) argues that most education leaders think that schools are to be “religion free” (p. 520). Bramadat (2008) concludes most leaders operate from “an unnuanced version of the secularization hypothesis” (p. 122). Sweet (1997) concluded from her cross Canada study:

There is no teacher training in religion outside the Catholic system, no interest or commitment on the part of educational authorities to examine religious issues – even to entertain the idea of a debate. And there’s even less interest on the part of politicians. Quite the contrary. Still, there is a debate going on, however scattered and unfocussed it may be. And while there may be some agreement from a variety of people that religion should be offered to children, there’s certainly no consensus on how best to do it (p. 228).

McDonough and Boyd (2009) find that teachers in Ontario are so fearful of Section 24(1) that they avoid discussions about themes related to the philosophy of life in order to avoid a possible human rights complaint. They perceive that “What goes on in Canadian high schools not only does not support philosophical inquiry but, rather, actively stifles it” (p. 56). Sweet’s (1997) concern is that Canadian public school students are losing their religious literacy and receiving a superficial if not inaccurate account of ‘knowledge’.

In Seljak's (2009a) opinion, the high degree of secularization resulted in a gap in student knowledge. Canadian young people, he argues, are poorly prepared to interact with people of different religious beliefs, and they do not have resources to understand and respond to world events involving religion, for example the terrorist attacks of 2001. Furthermore in his view (2009b), the intention of the Charter was to protect minority children but what has happened instead is that religious students are made to feel as though their beliefs are wrong. Barnett (2008, law and government division) argues that overall the Canadian form of secularism is to provide neutral accommodation of religious beliefs and practice, such as religious headcoverings, religious symbols like the kirpan, religious holidays, and religious worship, as long as the action does not interfere with the day-to-day operation of the schools or the safety of students. Benson (2000), however, argues that the word 'secular' has over time moved beyond neutrality and has taken on the meaning of being "anti-religious" (p. 520). Canadian O'Toole (2006), however, concludes that the processes of secularization are "multi-faceted" and occur in "textured" ways, making them difficult to measure and evaluate (p. 2). Van Die (2002) argues that religion in Canada functions "like an informal or 'shadow' establishment" (p. 5).

3.4 Post-secularization Era in Alberta (1990's-present)

This section presents the controversial efforts on the part of Alberta Education to change its secular model and re-negotiate the role of religion in public education.

In Chapter Two, Berger (1999) argued that secularization is a self-limiting process and that if an education system secularizes to the extent that the concept of religion is entirely removed from the educational model, ultimately counter-secularization forces will emerge to disrupt the flow of secularization. These forces are evident in the province of Alberta. A post-secularization model re-inserted the concept of religion back into secular education in controversial ways. Whilst Canadian social scientists argued above that Canadian decision-makers avoid conversations about the concept of religion, this was not true amongst Alberta policy-makers. A small group of scholars, mainly from other provinces, present the Alberta provincial model for the incorporation of religion as exemplary, whilst others, as we shall see, criticize the changes as neo-conservative. But first, a contextual backdrop to the province of Alberta is provided as an orientation device.

3.4.1 General Alberta Context

Alberta joined the Dominion of Canada (colonial title) in 1905. It is in the western part of Canada, between the provinces of British Columbia and Saskatchewan. The Government of Alberta Facts on Alberta (2015) show that Alberta covers a region of over 661,000 square kilometres. Its current recorded population is 3,779,400 as of July 1, 2011. Alberta is mostly rural, with the two largest cities being Calgary and Edmonton (the capital city). Edmonton had a population of approximately 1,176,300 as of 2010, and Calgary had a population of approximately 1,242,600 as of 2010. The main source of revenue for Alberta is oil and gas.

The Alberta School Act (Province of Alberta School Act, 2015) provides an outline for each of the five types of educational models that exist in Alberta: Public, Separate, Charter, Private, and Francophone. Parents also have the option to home-school their children. There are also minority schools, such as Aboriginal schools on reservations and Hutterite schools on colonies. Of interest in this study are the Public Schools. The Alberta School Act sets out that there is a dual public education model (Province of Alberta School Act, 2015, Section 1, RSA 2000, Chapter S-3, Part 11: Transitional Preamble). The province is divided into school jurisdictions based on population size. In this regard, there are fully funded public school jurisdictions and separate school jurisdictions. Separate schools are Catholic and public schools are secular. This model has a long and contested history, which was developed earlier. Presently, there are 42 public school jurisdictions, 18 Catholic School Districts, 13 charter school divisions, 4 Francophone divisions, and 133 private schools (Alberta Education, 2012). The Alberta School Act provides definitions and mandates for each of the types of education options except 'public schools'.

The secular and Catholic sectors have a parallel governance structure as outlined in the Alberta School Act. At the head of Alberta Education¹ is the Minister of Education, an elected official whose role is to supervise the Alberta School Act and make amendments where necessary. The body responsible for curriculum, evaluation, and teacher certification and other duties such as pension

¹ The term Alberta Education, capitalized, refers to the provincial ministry of education located in Edmonton. Without a capital (Alberta education) refers to education in Alberta.

plans and healthcare packages is known as Alberta Education. The head office of Alberta Education is located in the capital city of Edmonton.

The province of Alberta's decision to re-introduce religion into schools is sometimes held up as exemplary. Holmes (1998), for example, argues that the Alberta government re-invented a space for religion in schools. Hiemstra and Brink (2006) argue that Alberta

has opened so many new opportunities for faiths and other philosophies to play various roles in its school systems that the overall system no longer fits any existing classification of faith and schooling (p. 1158).

The following sections outline the controversial debates that exist about the Alberta government's initiatives and process of change after the secularization of schools. It identifies four mechanisms to re-insert the concept of religion into public schools across the province and protect religious freedoms: alternative religious programmes, locally developed curriculum, curriculum for secularized schools, and 2009 exemption policy.

3.4.2 Alternative Religious Programmes

Full public funding for the Catholic sector and partial or no funding for other faiths is a thorny issue in Canada. In 1988, after the institutionalization of the Charter of Rights, guaranteeing the freedom of religion and conscience, and the Multiculturalism Act, the Alberta government introduced the concept of 'alternative religious programmes' in legislation in the Alberta School Act. Section 21 (a) of the Alberta School Act states:

an alternative programme emphasiz[es] a particular language, culture, *religion* or subject-matter, or (b) use[s] a particular teaching philosophy (Province of Alberta School Act, 2015, Section 21(a), my italics).

What this means is religious groups have the right to establish segregated schools or programmes in a regular public school under the funding umbrella of public or separate school funding. This means that religious families could receive full public funding for their children's religious schools/programmes in the same fashion as Catholic families. However, public school jurisdictions are under no legal obligation to agree to offer the programmes.

At the heart of the philosophical debate are the knots that form because of the different interpretations about how religious freedom should be incorporated into schools and how public schools should respond to a growing pluralistic student population. Ultimately, the debate is about the tradition of dividing students based on religion (see colonial model above) and the function of public schools with regard to the example they set for dealing with diversity. The Alberta Hansard reports indicate that the philosophy behind the implementation of alternative schools underwent heated debate in the provincial legislature. Honourable Chumir, for example, contested the practice of segregating religious children from pluralistic classrooms:

Tolerance and understanding is most enhanced when people of different races and religions get to know each other and become friends. Now, as our society becomes increasingly multiracial and multireligious, it becomes increasingly important that our children go to school together and get to know each other in order to maximize understanding. Unfortunately, this government has adopted policies of funding and encouraging private and alternative schooling which

segregate children on the basis of religion and race and which will serve to divide our children rather than bring them together in the future (Chumir, 1988).

Honourable Betkowski employed the right to religious freedom argument in her reply to Hon. Chumir, stating that alternative religious programmes provide choice to religious families and choice is the fundamental principle of democracy (Betkowski, 1988). Hiemstra and Brink (2006), from the province of Ontario, favourably describe Alberta's initiative arguing that it disrupts the prevalent religious privilege offered to Catholic families by allowing "Aboriginal, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, as well as other faiths and philosophies to offer forms of faith-based schooling" (p. 1179). Donlevy and MacCrimmon (2009) support Alberta's model for bringing back Protestant education in Alberta alternative schools, perceiving 'alternative programmes' as re-imagining the space for religion in schools. Davies (1999) argues that in the Ontario context groups should assert pressure on their school jurisdictions to include funding for religious schools.

Taylor (2001) attacks Alberta's practice, arguing that the function of a public school is to educate children of diverse backgrounds together, not provide mechanisms that in her opinion foster intolerance and lead to "fragmentation and ghettoization" (p. 24). Miller (1986) points out that a common argument among opponents of segregated schooling is that a child's education "may result in misunderstanding and intolerance if pupils are hived off into separate schools and associate only with their religious brethren" (p. 286). Since the inclusion of alternative programmes is not government mandated, but optional instead, the

analytical task is to determine which philosophical argument a particular Alberta school jurisdiction followed.

According to 2009/2010 data, 26 per cent of Alberta students were enrolled in religious schooling, and this included students enrolled in the Catholic sector (Alberta Education Information Service Branch, 2010). This meant that 74 per cent of children were enrolled in the secular public system, where a different knot forms. There is a dearth of literature emerging from the Canadian context that attempts to untie the knot regarding how to address the religious/spiritual needs of the 74 per cent of mainstream religiously/spiritually diverse students in public schools.

3.4.3 Locally Developed Curriculum

Whilst the Alberta School Act retained Religious Instruction in policy, in practice the division of curriculum in the Department of Education, known as Alberta Education, had not developed curriculum for Religious Instruction, except for use within Catholic Separate schools. In 2003, the Minister of Education instituted *Policy 1.2.2 – Locally Developed Religious Studies Courses*. The policy states:

Alberta Learning [now Alberta Education] recognizes the right of all school authorities to reflect their particular views and belief systems in locally developed religious studies courses, provided that such courses develop respect and promote understanding of individual and minority group differences; develop an understanding and appreciation of the beliefs, customs and practices, literature and traditions of other major world religions; develop critical thinking; develop desirable personal characteristics; and conform to other provincial policies

(Locally Developed Religious Studies Courses, Policy 1.2.2, Alberta Learning, 2003).

It further explains:

Religious instruction may be offered at the discretion of the school board under section 50 of the School Act. Religious studies courses may contain up to 80% content based on a particular faith or belief value system and shall include 20% content in each course (Religious Studies 15, 25, 35) that addresses a comparative study of other major world religions, such as Judaism, Buddhism, Islam or Christianity.

The objectives of the courses in Religious Studies:

Are to provide an opportunity to experience a number of cultural, historical and contemporary issues from a religious point of view, and through the study of religion as a separate discipline to develop a philosophy based upon values conducive to ethical and moral behaviour and reflected in an understanding of human worth.

This mechanism is a sign of change as it re-invigorates the debates about Religious Studies amongst educationists should they choose to develop curriculum for Religious Studies. The government took a non-directive approach and decentralized decisions to school jurisdiction policy-makers (Trustees) and senior administrators.

3.4.4 Curriculum for Secularized Schools

In 2003, the provincial curriculum department constructed curriculum for three secondary school religions courses: Religious Ethics (year eleven), Religious Meanings (year eleven), and World Religions (year twelve), after decades where secular schools operated without provincial curriculum for religions courses. An outline of the courses is included in the Appendix. Whilst Alberta Education constructed curriculum, it continued with a non-directive approach, treating the

courses as optional for schools to include or exclude in programming, and optional for students.

3.4.5 2009 Exemption Policy

The most recent policy development is the 2009 Exemption Policy. Section 50 (2) of the Alberta School Act already provided an exemption policy for parents to withdraw their children from lessons or exercises on religion and sexuality. However, in 2009 the Alberta government went a step further and included the exemption in the Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship, and Multiculturalism Amendment Act. Section 11 (1) of the Bill reads:

A board as defined in the *School Act* shall provide notice to a parent or guardian of a student where courses of study, educational programs or instructional materials, or instruction or exercises prescribed under that Act include subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion, human sexuality, or sexual orientation (Alberta Human Rights Commission, Section 11(1), 2009).

Subsection (3) explains that the amendment:

...does not apply to incidental or indirect references to religion, religious themes, human sexuality, or sexual orientation in a course of study, educational program, instruction or exercises, or in the use of instructional materials (Alberta Human Rights Commission, Section 11(3), 2009).

The exemption policy is most commonly referred to as Bill 44. This means that parents may lodge a human rights petition against a teacher/school if they perceive that they were improperly notified about a lesson on religion, sexuality, and/or sexual orientation. Alberta educationists could find themselves before a human rights tribunal should they step over the boundary of what they can and

cannot address about these three subjects.

The government, however, did not explicitly define religion and take a stance on what religion is or how schools were to conceptualize the notion of religion. The policy text is vague in its portrayal of what lessons constitute primarily and explicitly teaching about religion and incidental or indirect references to religion or religious themes, which creates another knot in the way post-secularization education dealt with religion and spirituality. Alberta Legislature Hansard Reports, whilst Bill 44 was undergoing heated debate, reveal that several elected government officials (MLA's, Members of the Legislative Assembly) perceived the ideology the Alberta government had toward religion and religious families was problematic. Hansard Reports show how Members of the Legislature perceived the threads of the knot. Honourable Mason was concerned about religious children being denied a balanced education that included both religious and secular/rational scientific knowledge:

The Premier stated that the teaching of evolution will become optional in Alberta public schools if parents object on religious grounds. Eighty-three years after the Scopes monkey trial in Tennessee teaching evolution in public schools will again be prohibited for some children. Why will the Premier allow some children to be denied a balanced, scientific, and objective education (Mason, 2009, April 29)?

Whilst Thierren (see Chapter Two) argued that differentiation was about blocking the religious voice from influencing policy and practice and thus creating a so called neutral learning space, Honourable Chase was opposed to the Alberta government being influenced by a small number of religious parents who somehow had the power to influence education policy:

Enshrining parental rights in human rights legislation as Bill 44 proposes is either a deliberate attempt to undermine Alberta's public education system or a thoughtless, unintended consequence of social conservatism. Not only does this legislation guarantee a get out of class free card, but there's an expectation that the teachers stop, drop, and roll over the lesson to provide an immediate alternative learning experience for the objector. To the Premier: why has the majority of the Conservative caucus decreed that a minority tail wag its dogma at the expense of Alberta's public education system? Does a religious right make an Alberta education wrong (Chase, 2009, April 30)?

He articulated the problem that existed regarding the boundary for conceptualizations of religion by adding, "The minister knows that those things are subject to interpretation. It is the interpretation of what is religion that is at stake here" (Chase, 2009, May 4). In this way, Chase brings the debate back to multiple meanings of *religion*. This study extends his argument to include the concept of personal spirituality and the impact multiple spiritualities have on public education.

Honourable Blackett, the Minister who proposed the amendment, seems to corroborate Sweet's (1997) study that found that the religious backdrop of curriculum was removed. He seemed not to understand the ramifications of Bill 44 on teachers of English, Social Studies, the Arts, Science, for example, where there is a religious backdrop to curriculum. He stated:

I don't know where English fits into that. I don't know where social studies fits into most of that. I don't know what school you went to, but the one I went to never had to deal with that subject matter. We're not talking about religious beliefs. We are not talking about religious content. In our school system in our curriculum as it stands today, there is very little in the way of a religious nature with respect to the

subject matter (Blackett, 2009, May 4).

Honourable Blakeman (2009) argued that a tremendous burden is placed on the teacher in that they might avoid opportunities to teach students how to adapt to an increasingly diverse and complex world. Honourable Mason argued Bill 44 undermined the function of public education, which in his view “is to stimulate dialogue, inspire, and educate our children so that they might become engaged participants in a healthy and vibrant society” (Mason, 2009). Jakobsen and Pellegrini (2009) would ask why the Alberta government situated sexuality and sexual orientation along side the notion of religion.

Despite opposition to Bill 44, the provincial government allocated the school year 2009–2010 for school boards in the province to construct implementation strategies, and little is known about how school boards and teachers interpreted the amendment and how they were going to adapt their practices in compliance to the new legislation. This date coincided with data collection for this study. In the context of Bill 44, it seems Alberta Education retained a status quo understanding left over from the secularization era that Sweet (1997) pointed out earlier. Curriculum specialists appeared to have neglected to consider the religious backdrop to History, English literature, Science, and Art. This study picks up on this stage of the evolution of Alberta education and examined how religion/spirituality manifested in the nooks and crannies of school experience and the knots that have formed over time.

Not all provinces respond to increasing pluralism the same way. The province of Quebec, for example, has engaged in conflicted debates about how to address

religion/spirituality and takes the opposite approach to Alberta. Quebec students must take a mandated Religion and Culture course, no exemption (Milot & Trembley, 2009). The role of the course is to teach students to understand their own beliefs, religious or otherwise, in relation to the three main religions/spiritualities of Canada, Catholic, Protestant, and Aboriginal, and again in terms of other world religions. The goal of the course is to increase sensitivity and respect for alternative belief systems to the students' own. Milot and Trembley note that though parents complained that their children would become confused by exposure to religions outside of Catholicism, the government argued that it is a citizenship responsibility to appreciate the notion of religious/spiritual diversity in a global world.

Conceptualizations of how to treat religion differ from province to province. Below is Table One. It provides a summary of the evolution of policy-making in Alberta in conceptualizing religion. The plus (+) sign indicates conceptualizations that were included and the minus (-) indicates conceptualizations that were excluded.

Table One: Evolution of Conceptualizations of Religion

Colonial Era: 1867-1960

Theme: Religious Assimilation

- + Protestant
- + Catholic
- + Religious Instruction
- + Religious Exercises
- + Recitation of The Lord's Prayer
- + Christian Hymns
- + Christian Symbols
- + Christian School Ethos
- + Assumption Students were Christian
- Aboriginal Spirituality (Residential Schools for Indoctrination)
- Religions/Spiritualities of eg., Chinese, Japanese, Jews . . .

Secularization Era: 1960- 1980's

Theme: Religious Freedom and Inclusion

- + Catholic
- Protestant
- Religions courses
- Religious exercises
- Christian backdrop to curriculum
- The Lord's Prayer
- Christian Hymns
- Christian Symbols
- Christian School Ethos

- Assumption Students were Christian
- Aboriginal Spirituality (Residential Schools for Indoctrination)
- Religions/Spiritualities of eg., Chinese, Japanese, Jews . . .

Post-Secularization in Alberta: 1980's to Present

Theme: Unknown

- + Catholic
- + Alternative Faith-based Programmes
- + Optional Locally Developed or Provincially Developed World Religions courses
- + Optional Collective Worship
- + Increased Parental Rights over 'religious themes' addressed in schools
- Aboriginal Spirituality
- Concept of Spirituality

3.5 Canadian Post-Secularization Studies

Taylor (2007) argued earlier (Chapter Two) that the secularization of politics, institutions, and individuals is often perceived as an end point for considerations of the role of religious/spiritual belief and practices in society and in public institutions in particular. Instead, he promotes the idea that it marks a new theoretical beginning. The problem, according to Canadian sociologists, is that these new theoretical beginnings are slow to emerge in Canada.

A series of focus group studies across Canada engaged policy-makers and senior administrators of large public institutions in conversations about specifically religious diversity in the context of Canada's multicultural identity. The notion of conscience was not the subject of the study. Researchers found that the

marginalization of religion and avoidance on the part of decision-makers to deal with issues related to religion created knots of tension. Researchers found that most decision-makers were more comfortable with using culture as an umbrella term and situating religion under the culture umbrella (Kunz, 2009; Gaye & Kunz, 2009; Fadden & Townsend, 2009). Gaye and Kunz (2009) find a reluctance amongst managers to adopt a “distinct policy lens” to examine religious diversity and they seemed “ill at ease” in discussions regarding the themes of ‘managing diversity’ and ‘accommodating religious practices’ (p. 44). The Research Staff (2009) division of public policy research and Thomas (2009) found that it was evident in focus groups that managers lacked religious literacy and this appeared to hamper their ability to identify contributing factors that might disrupt social cohesion, specifically radicalism, youth, and religion (p.79).

The obstacle for conversations, according to Seljak (2009a), is that Canadian decision-makers tend to exclude the topic of religious diversity and religious change from strategy meetings because they think opening the topic up will lead to “divisive, controversial, and potentially dangerous” debates (p. 28). Unlike in Europe, where conversations occur about how to adapt to pluralism (see Jackson, Chapter Two), Seljak argues that Canadian policy-makers and administrators seem confused about how religious beliefs and expression manifest in contemporary society. He concluded that Canadian institutions should engage in formal conversations about how to address “religious intolerance and discrimination” (p. 32). It is possible that a secular model that situates the concept of religions and spiritualities as controversial requires more explanation than one that includes them (Berger, 1999). In this regard, Kunz (2009) argues that contemporary

understandings of the development and design of public policy for issues related to religious/spiritual belief is “unexplored terrain” in Canada (p.6), and achieved most often by “muddling through” on an ad hoc case-by-case basis rather than a systematic approach (p. 10).

Few Canadian studies include the concept of spirituality in secular debates. In Chapter Two (Literature Review Strategy) it was mentioned that the Library and Archives Canada website for graduate studies using the keyword ‘spirituality’ finds 247 theses. 13 of the 247 (Masters and Doctoral theses) have to do with spirituality and Canadian public education. They tend to employ a heuristic approach to their studies, meaning they engage in a self-study where the researcher explores a personal dimension of spirituality reflexively and uses the literature and possibly a small sample of educators as reflexive tools. Scott (1998) explored his personal spirituality in relation to poetry and art and his experience in the education system. The Masters Theses tend to be limited to a literature review with prescriptive recommendations for education. Bowering (1995) and Golf (1999) provided literature reviews for how spirituality could be prescribed in a course or programme (Bowering) or as a lens for Science curriculum (Golf) in their Masters theses. Rosta (2006) provided a literature review of decolonization as an educational issue in her Masters thesis, mainly focusing on the indigenous perspective. Lawson (1996) examined children’s spirituality and curriculum for the province of British Columbia for a Masters degree, contributing a prescriptive account of what should happen in curriculum.

Data driven studies were rare. Dalia's (2005) doctoral study explored school leadership and spirituality from the point of view of ten school principals, five from the public sector and five from the Catholic sector that self-defined as spiritual. She found that they argued that whilst spiritual beliefs, values, quest for meaning and purpose, and deepest questions drove their practice as leaders, the school setting, even the Catholic sector, was not the place where they felt comfortable in talking about issues related to spirituality. Davis (2001) collected data for her Masters thesis from six female colleagues that met regularly over coffee and wine to talk about their spirituality and the way it shaped their practice in secular schools. The findings seemed to have more to do with the respondents' sexuality as female teachers than offering a view into how spirituality could be conceptualized in a teaching practice. McKinnon (2009, no relation) invited teachers from the same school jurisdiction as the one to be examined in this study through an email invitation. Five teachers in the jurisdiction responded. His research design was to pose the question about what spirituality means and whether or not their Alberta school jurisdiction supported teacher spirituality. Data were collected from a single two-hour interview. The interview was fairly wide open rather than directed by McKinnon and it appears that the teachers took the interview as an opportunity to criticize the lack of administrative support, the neo-conservative backdrop of Alberta Education, the lack of creativity in curriculum, belligerent parents, student boredom, and the way administration inhibited their practice. Teachers offered few examples to clarify their criticisms.

The common finding amongst these theses is that Canadian education does not include the concept of spirituality as a relevant theme in policy or in curriculum.

The theses were constructed in such a way as to prove that the topic of spirituality existed and was relevant to education, and that few conversations were being had about spirituality and education across the provinces. None of these studies developed the theoretical background to the use of the words spiritual or spirituality, nor did they build the backdrop to the social changes in society where it is evident that individuals make a distinction between spirituality and religion. They also did not build the historical, cultural, and policy context in which they operated, or explain why religion/spirituality was a contentious subject in Canada. They did not define 'secular' education and did not account for the litigious nature of Canadian classrooms. The goal of Canadian theses was not to advance theory but to give a voice to educators. But, the context of these voices was not developed. In this regard, the literature review presented here provides a contextual backdrop for Canadian samples and shows how secularization theory can be used to explain why religion was marginalized.

Sample sizes were small, between 4-10 respondents and data were limited to 1-2 hour interviews. The sample was limited to one level of the hierarchy, with most presenting the teacher viewpoint (as mentioned) or the school principal viewpoint (Doetzel, 2004; Dalia, 2005). Studies did not explore the complicated and contentious issue of how to deal with the concept of spirituality/religion from the policy-making, administrative, and teacher viewpoint. Whilst these pioneers have begun to shape the field for Canadian literature, there is much more that can be accomplished.

The archive search for the term 'religion' yielded 547 theses. Narrowing this search to the key term 'secular' yielded 112 theses, with only two related to education. One was about religion in Quebec (Morrison, 2008) and the other was about religion in secular education. Indeed, it is evident that the topic of religion and secular education is not a popular research topic in Canada.

In an ERIC database search, sixteen sources emerged when using the search terms 'spirituality', 'public education', 'Alberta'. The literature predominantly presents the way it is conceptualized in the Aboriginal community. Ten of the sixteen were about Aboriginal spirituality, 2 were about academic success, 1 was about Science education, and 1 was about transformative ministry. Broadening the search to 'spirituality', 'Canada', 'public education' yielded 9 journal articles. Substituting 'public education' with 'schools' yielded 20 articles, ten of which were about Aboriginal spirituality, with nothing related to secondary schools. Substituting 'schools' for 'teachers' yielded 17 articles, 11 were about Aboriginal, 2: Higher Education and public policy, 1: Early Childhood, 1: Workplace, 1: Catholic schools, and 1: Canadians of 'colour' and public policy. There is a conspicuous absence of literature about spirituality as it pertains to individuals outside of the Aboriginal community. Even so, the literature for the Aboriginal community is limited.

An ERIC database search using the keywords 'spirituality', 'education' (not public education), and 'Canada' revealed that a variety of disciplines such as social work (Canda, 2008; Hodge, 2009; Larson, 2011), nursing (Henery, 2003 a,b; la Cour and Hvidt, 2010; Baldacchino's, 2011; O'Shea, Wallace, Quinn Griffin &

Fitzpatrick, 2011), and Higher Education and Adult Education (Creighton, 1999; Tisdell, 2000; Fenwick, 2003; English, 2001; Groen and Jacob, 2006; Bohac Clarke, 2001) are exploring how the contemporary phenomenon of spirituality is conceptualized for use within these different professional practices. There is a conspicuous absence of literature that pertains to Canadian public education, and more specifically the professional practice of teaching in a secondary school. Much of the literature, as mentioned earlier, deals with Aboriginal spirituality, not spirituality in the broader sense.

An ERIC database search using the terms 'religion', 'secular education', 'Canada' yielded one article, a study on Catholic schools and Christian education in Alberta. Entering the search terms 'religion' 'public education' and 'Canada' yielded 20 articles, all exploring various Canadian themes, such as RE in Poland and Quebec, denominational rights, evolution and science, constitution and religion, German Catholics in Saskatchewan, immigrant parent knowledge, the nature of public education, and the place for values and faith. This study moves the literature forward by developing the history of policy-making for religion and by including the concept of spirituality in the evolutionary process. The literature review makes an original contribution to knowledge for the Canadian/Albertan context.

3.6 Conclusion

It is evident that the Canadian education system is complicated and in this respect it is nearly impossible to provide a detailed and accurate view into how

each province and each public school jurisdiction deals with the concept of religion and potentially would deal with the concept of spirituality. However, it can be said that the post-secularization model for public schools in Canada positions religion as a controversial subject. Canadian scholars argue that policy-makers and administrators tend to mistake the meaning of secular as the removal of the concept of religion from schools, keeping them 'religion free' environments for learning, and this has created several knots in the post-secularization Alberta model. Policy mechanisms have limited the way teachers may include themes related to religion in their lessons, making the boundary issue a poignant one for the Canadian context. Little attention it seems is offered to whether or not individuals in the schools think religion is a sensitive issue, how beliefs have changed over time, how religious diversity impacts public schools, or how the notion of spirituality might be conceptualized for the public education setting. It seems that in Canada there is little growth and innovation as far as how religion and spirituality could be conceptualized to suit its multicultural and diverse student population.

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

This chapter makes clear the steps that were taken to create, conduct, and evaluate this qualitative study about how Canadian educationists conceptualized the concepts of religion and spirituality in a post-secularization model of public education. It begins with a presentation of the research questions and a discussion on the appropriateness of a qualitative design methodology. This is followed by a presentation of the research design, data collection methods, choice of research setting, sampling techniques, and ethics procedures. A guide to the semi-structured interview design includes the framework of the interview, an account of the data collection instruments, and a rationale for the framework. This will be followed by a description of the pilot study, and a step-by-step guide to the procedures taken to gain access and conduct the interviews. The data processing and analysis will be described, followed by measures taken to achieve validity for the results of this project.

4.1 Research Questions

A small number of Canadian scholars are emerging to challenge what they perceive to be a high degree of secularization in many provincial models of post-secularization public education, and the absence of educational debate about whether the high degree of secularization is effective in dealing with a contemporary generation of young people. If the goal of secularization was to create a 'neutral' learning environment so that the freedom of religion and conscience could flourish, was this goal achieved? Whilst some scholars focus on the decline in the significance of 'religion' in secular education and the litigious boundary for how educationists were to deal with the concept of religion in schools (Sweet, 1997; Brown, 2000; Benson, 2000; Hiemstra & Brink, 2006; Seljak, 2009), others focus on the lack of space in a rationalized secular education model for 'spirituality' (Bohac Clarke, 2001; English, 2001; Fenwick, 2003; Abdi, 2011; Wane, 2011; Hart, 2011; Cole, 2011). This study engages in the debates about secular education in this post-secularization era through the lens of religion and the lens of spirituality. Therefore, the overarching research question was:

How do teachers, administrators, and policy-makers conceptualize spirituality and religion in secular public education?

The three operational research questions were designed to search out conceptualizations of religion and spirituality that underpin policy and practice for Alberta's secular model.

4.1.1 Research Question One (RQ1)

Research Question 1: How do teachers, administrators, and policy-makers initially conceptualize spirituality and religion?

This question served three purposes. First, it is argued that in this contemporary generation there is no universal definition for religion or spirituality, and conceptualizations vary from individual to individual (Taylor, 2007; Luhmann, 2013; Roof, 1999a,b; Zinnbauere et. al, 1997). Therefore, this question served as a baseline for understanding how the sample involved in this study conceptualized the two operative terms, religion and spirituality. Second, it is a particularly necessary question in Canadian studies where the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) provides the right to freedom of 'religion and conscience', but purposefully leaves religion open to interpretation (Khan, 1997, 1998; Brown, 2000; Sweet, 1997), and does not include the concept of spirituality, a concept that has been growing in popularity since the 1960's (Roof, 1999a,b; Heelas, 1993, 1996; Tacey, 2004; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Taylor, 2007; Bibby, 2011; Luhmann, 2013). Third, new conceptualizations of secularization theory argue that it is important to find out what individuals mean when they use the words religion and/or spirituality and how significant these words are to them in their everyday life (Ammerman, 2007; Berger, 1999, 2001, 2007; Taylor, 2007, 2009; Bibby, 2011). This question acted as a starting point, or baseline, in the interviews to understand definitions, attitudes, and significance.

4.1.2 Research Question Two (RQ2)

Research Question 2: Which conceptualizations of religion and spirituality do teachers, administrators, and policy-makers think should be included or excluded from educational mandates or teacher lesson objectives and activities and why?

This question also served three purposes. First, whilst RQ 1 might find that educationists had personal conceptualizations of religion and spirituality, RQ 2

required educationists to refine their definitions for use in post-secularization education. It began with the 'Starting Point' established in Chapter Three which Table One below outlines. The provisions in the Alberta School Act that were already included are marked with a plus (+) sign and the conceptualizations that were excluded are marked with a minus (-) sign.

Starting Point: The Alberta School Act

Post-Secularization in Alberta: 1980's to Present

Inclusion/ Exclusion of Conceptualizations

- + Catholic Separate Schools
- + Alternative Faith-based Programmes
- + Optional Locally Developed or Provincially Developed World Religions courses
- + Optional religious exercises
- + Increased Parental Rights over 'religious themes' addressed in schools
- Conceptualizations of 'spirituality' and 'spiritual'

RQ 2 served the practical function of locating the boundary for Alberta educationists so that they do not find themselves required to sit before a human rights tribunal for overstepping the boundary established through the increase in parental rights. Second, it followed Luhmann's (1977, 1997, 2013) systems theory argument that boundaries are negotiated by decision-makers who decide which conceptualizations of religion and spirituality should be included or excluded from the system in order to support an agreed upon social function and functional identity. The Alberta School Act includes conceptualizations of religion in terms of Catholic schools, alternative faith-based programmes, optional/mandated locally and provincially developed curriculum for religions

courses depending on the jurisdiction preference, optional/mandatory religious exercises (by jurisdiction), and strong parental rights over their children's religious/spiritual beliefs. No conceptualization is evident of non-religious approaches that this study characterizes as spirituality.

RQ 2 opened up the horizon for multiple conceptualizations of religion and spirituality in secular education beyond religions courses and religious exercises (Gadamer, 1989; Luhmann, 2013). RQ 2 engaged contemporary Alberta policy-makers in a negotiation process where they articulated which conceptualizations should be included or excluded in the learning experience of this new generation of students in post-secularization schools. Third, Dobbelaere (1981) and Chaves' (1994) version of secularization theory is that inclusion and exclusion boundaries are influenced by the voices that have the power to influence the decision-making process. This question, therefore, served the purpose of locating these voices and illuminating which conceptualizations of religion and spirituality were included and which were considered controversial or irrelevant and excluded and why.

4.1.3 Research Question Three (RQ3)

Research Question 3: How do teachers, administrators, and policy-makers think policy and practice could address religion and spirituality within secular schools?

RQ 3 opened up the debates about the controversial and complicated task of constructing policy and practice for religion and spirituality for a complex and diverse society. RQ 3 opened up the debates about the future direction of policy and practice in Canada as far as conceptualizing spirituality and religion were

concerned.

4.2 Research Design

4.2.1 Justification for Qualitative Methodology

This study met Creswell's (2003) three criteria for a qualitative approach: match between problem and approach, personal experiences, and audience (pp. 21-22). First, previous Canadian studies, as mentioned, argue that educational issues related to religion and spirituality had become marginalized from education debates. However, conceptualizations of what religion and spirituality mean and interpretations of the relevancy of these concepts to post-secularization education are changing. In this regard, an interview study is appropriate for seeking out how educationists conceptualized religion and spirituality for post-secularization education.

Second, from personal and professional experience, I had anecdotal evidence that showed students were uncertain if they were allowed to wonder about some of the most provocative questions about the human experience, such as whether there is a God(s), afterlife, fate, meaning, and purpose (see Prologue) and that teachers were interested in exploring how to address religion/spirituality in their litigious post-secularization education setting for a contemporary generation of students. An interview study created the space for educationists to extend Canada's secularization story by providing their accounts of how they thought religion and spirituality should be conceptualized for post-secularization education.

Third, this study was intended for an audience of policy-makers, administrators, and teachers. It provides real world data from Alberta educationists who shared their insights, experiences, and cautionary tales in terms of negotiating how policy and practices and how the space for religion and spirituality should be shaped.

4.2.2 Justification for Heuristic Approach

I employed a heuristic approach to this study (Moustakas, 2001; Patton, 1990). Some scholars who explore the meaning of spirituality in education take a grounded theory approach, arguing that they are entering the field ‘theory free’ (e.g., Wintersgill, 2008; Nye, 2007). This approach is problematic. Wintersgill and Nye’s studies were instrumental (and Canadian studies: see Chapter Three) in the decision to use a heuristic approach.

In Wintersgill’s doctoral study of how teen-agers in England conceptualized spirit, spiritual, and spirituality, she claimed to operate ‘theory free’, but she was an Ofsted inspector and evaluator of Religious Education programmes and it would make sense that she would have a considerable knowledge of the theory behind the concepts of religion and spirituality. Had she used a heuristic approach she could have been more transparent about her identity and how this might have influenced her research design, sampling, and analysis techniques.

Nye’s doctoral study explored how primary school English children conceptualized the spiritual side of life. Whilst she put forward that she was a Christian, she argued that she bracketed her beliefs, yet her Christian orientation

appeared to influence her data analysis, describing some students' conceptualizations as "unusual" and "radically different" (p. 111), "unorthodox" and "inaccurate" (p. 118), and non-religious students' experiences with a spiritual dimension and beliefs in reincarnation as evidence they were "struggling" (p. 118) in this area and that if they knew more about a Christian framework it would resolve their struggle. It seemed that she was unaware of how her Christian lens influenced her analysis.

Data analysis is not a perfect process. These two doctoral samples partly informed this study in the sense that it is understood here that most people have some meta-narrative about how religion/spirituality exists in their lives, whether consciously or unconsciously, that influences how they see the world (Cooling, 2002; Taylor, 2007). The goal in a heuristic study is to be transparent about one's worldview. In this regard, I constructed a prologue and entered the field as transparent as I could in my personal interest in how different cultures perceive the religious/spiritual dimension of life and integrate this perception into everyday life.

A heuristic approach acknowledges that the researcher and in this case an insider enters the field with prior knowledge, experience, and passion about the topic under investigation (Moustakas, 2001; Patton, 1990). Cooling (2002) wonders why anyone would study the topic of religion/spirituality if they were not personally committed to the topic. My future goal is to continue on studying how different cultures conceptualize and operationalize religion and spirituality in their everyday lives and in policy and practice. Thus, the research process partly

became what Moustakas describes as “self-search, self dialogue, and self-discovery” (p. 263). Patton (1990) argues that it is important to ask, “What is *my* experience of this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely?” (his italics, p. 71). He argues that the essence of a heuristic study is the intensity of the researcher’s personal attachment and insights for the topic.

Wane (2011) argues that traditional research approaches that favour objective research, where the researcher brackets out passion, prior knowledge, and prior experience are not the best approach for dealing with the concept of religion/spirituality. Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, she argues that researchers should be transparent and recognize that their approach to analysis is shaped partly by their own subjective reality. In this regard, she supports the researcher in using one’s religious/spiritual worldview as a “methodological tool” (p. 69). Readers of the report then apply their own subjectivity and join the debate. The important issue is to be transparent.

It is also important to recognize that this study investigates a subject matter that is relatively absent in published policy and practice documents in Alberta, and thus this study is about bringing the research matter of spirituality, in particular, into existence. I was an advocate for learning more about the topic of religion/spirituality before I left Alberta (Denzin, 1989, p. 142), and will likely be an advocate when this study is complete and I move onto exploring another cultural group. To argue that this study employs a heuristic approach is to say that I am transparent, as much as consciously possible, and that I am passionate about

the subject matter and have been working on this topic for many years. However, a heuristic approach does not mean that I lead the research to a particular conclusion. It means, according to Moustakas and Patton, that it rigorously investigates the topic, keeping the validity of the processes in the forefront, opening up the widest of horizons for what religion/spirituality might mean, challenging assumptions (mine included), putting forward alternative perspectives to respondents, searching out common themes and outlier voices, and putting the pieces of the post-secularization story with respect to conceptualizations of religion and spirituality together that accurately reflect the culture involved in the study.

In the end, an important part of the process is to reflect on how the study impacted by views on the subject, so that when I do move onto another cultural context I have a deeper understanding of self as a researcher and a more developed lens for how to examine such a complex and sensitive topic.

4.3 Setting and Participants

Chapter Three created the historical, cultural, political, and religious backdrop for the province of Alberta's education system. An examination of the Alberta School Act is useful to only a certain extent. The provincial government takes a hands-off approach where the concepts of religion and spirituality are concerned and therefore policy simply provides options for school jurisdictions. They have the option of including the concept of religion in a variety of ways (3 provincially constructed religions secondary level courses, locally developed religions courses,

religious exercises, alternative programmes), although they must all abide by the national Charter of Rights and Freedoms 1982 and the Multiculturalism Act 1988, and Alberta's Bill 44 exemption policy. Therefore, different school jurisdictions in Alberta will have implemented these options, or not. In this regard, different school jurisdictions will have secularized and privatized religion/spirituality to different degrees and as a result will have different attitudes toward their functional responsibility to include or exclude religion/spirituality.

One of the 42 secular public school jurisdictions (given the pseudonym Secular School Jurisdiction (SSJ)) in Alberta was purposively selected because it met the criteria of being located in an urban centre and it was responsible for a multicultural and pluralistic student population, making it a complex system rather than a homogenous one. It also was the school jurisdiction where I had taught English, Social Studies, English as a Second Language, and Special Education (mostly English) for eighteen years and where students asked if they were allowed to wonder about their ultimate concerns (see Prologue).

There are advantages and disadvantages to insider investigations. Advantages to insider research include: my long-term history with SSJ was a catalyst and a backdrop for an intimate understanding of how the system of SSJ operated, I had experience with policy initiatives, goals, and objectives of SSJ as well as an understanding of the community SSJ served, and the stresses and strains involved in carrying out educational demands (Robson, 2002). Being an insider also made it easier to gain access to SSJ and find potential participants. There are also problems with insider research, such as the uncomfortable nature of interviewing colleagues

and participants in a position of authority, dealing with issues of confidentiality, and maintaining neutrality (ibid). A heuristic approach can be a way of using insider a priori knowledge to an advantage, since the researcher's goal is to co-create knowledge with participants. Thus insider knowledge and experiences can be used as tools to explore, confront, doubt, confirm, and wonder about how the phenomenon of religion/spirituality may be considered for SSJ (Moustakas, 2001).

A hierarchical sample of Alberta educationists was employed. Overall, there were five levels (or views) of the hierarchy that informed the findings: Minister of Education, provincial curriculum designers, SSJ Trustees (SSJ publicly elected policy-makers), SSJ senior administrators, school principals, and teachers. A more detailed explanation is provided below, beginning with the provincial level, followed by jurisdiction level, and ending with school level. The expectation was that a multi-level view of Alberta education would illuminate how management and professional practitioners constructed practices for the contexts in which they operated (Clark et al., 2002), how they dealt with the complexity of the educational organization where they worked, especially in terms of its diversity, and reveal underlying ideologies of the various levels of the hierarchy and determine if there was coherency in the organization (Westerman, 2009). It is to provide a sense of the "unity and wholeness" to the organization of education in Alberta (Stake, 1988, p. 258) and to understand the "relationships, behaviors, attitudes, motivations, and stressors in organizational settings" (Berg, 2001, p. 233). As a foundational study the goal was to lay the groundwork for how religion and spirituality were conceptualized from multiple points of view.

4.3.1 Minister of Education

Policy-makers represent the complex and dynamic process of policy construction, particularly since policy text is a carefully crafted compromise resulting from the ideology of political parties, pressure groups, individual policy-maker bias on the subject of religion/spirituality, and personal ambition (Walford, 2000). Ropers-Huilman (1999) claims, “when we are allowed, and allow ourselves, to witness more closely the lives of those we are researching in a way that encompasses engagement with more than just our specific area of study, we are more likely to be surprised by what we find” (p. 27). In this regard, I sought out educationists in Alberta who had a different role than mine in order to gain deeper insight into the complexity of the issues.

The Ministry of Education, known as Alberta Education, is located in Edmonton, the provincial capital. It is responsible for curriculum, provincial testing (Alberta administers provincial tests to grade three, six, nine and twelve students), and teacher certification. An examination at the provincial level provided a view of the future direction of Alberta Education as far as the function of public education for a contemporary diverse society and more specifically how they perceived the inclusion or exclusion of religion/spirituality in terms of functional objectives. It also provided a view of which Alberta voices were attended to and which ones were not (Dobbelaere, 1981; Beaman, 2006; Luhmann, 1978, 1997, 2013).

Alberta’s Minister of Education (Honourable Dave Hancock) represented the provincial policy construction view. The Minister of Education is a publicly elected official and is appointed the portfolio of education by the Premier of Alberta. The

chief responsibility of the Minister of Education is to oversee the Alberta School Act (Province of Alberta School Act, 2015). Honourable Hancock was the Minister of Education when Bill 44 was passed in the Alberta Legislature, increasing parental rights (see Chapter Three, pp. 121-124). He did not initiate the Bill. The Alberta Minister of Culture and Community Spirit for Alberta, Honourable Lindsay Blackett, put forward the motion to amend Bill 44 of the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act. Hon. Blackett agreed to be interviewed and his interview was scheduled for the third round of data collection, but he had to cancel at the last minute. The Education Minister had just completed a focus group study on new directions for education in Alberta, which made this project timely in the sense that the interviews inquired into the rationale for Bill 44, and the extent to which the topics of post-secularization education, religious/spiritual diversity, and the concepts of religion and spirituality were considered in planning Alberta Education's future.

I had contacted two Alberta curriculum specialists, but could not secure interviews. When I arrived for the Minister of Education's interview, he had invited the two provincial curriculum specialists that I had contacted earlier. The sampling goal was achieved in this respect.

4.3.2 Trustees

Each of the 42 public school jurisdictions in Alberta is governed by a 'school board', which is comprised of publicly elected officials called Trustees. A school board of Trustees is responsible for goal setting, policy-making, finances of the jurisdiction, implementation of provincial mandates, representation of constituents

of parents, and communication of school jurisdiction news to the city (Alberta School Boards Association, 2013). Three long serving school board Trustees, including the Chief Trustee, was included in the sample. Since the governance of Alberta education is mainly devolved to individual school jurisdictions, the Trustee voices were expected to provide a view into how SSJ conceptualized religion and spirituality for post-secularization education.

4.3.3 Senior Administrators

The senior administration of a school jurisdiction includes a Chief Superintendent (Chief Executive Officer), a Deputy Superintendent, Superintendents (each with a specific portfolio), and Directors (with a specific portfolio). A purposive sample of six senior administrators included: one Superintendent who held the portfolio to deal with the topic of diversity, one Director who worked with the Superintendent of diversity, one Director who was responsible for 'learning innovation', two Directors who were responsible for the overall supervision of the schools involved in the study, and the leader of the Crisis Intervention team (since SSJ does not offer pastoral care). These senior administrators were considered to hold portfolios that related to the concept of religion/spirituality.

4.3.4 Principals

Four secondary schools within SSJ were purposively selected, based on their different social/economic conditions, degree of diversity, and educational focus. The decision to limit this study to secondary schools, as opposed to elementary or junior high, came, primarily, because my professional experience was

predominantly that of secondary, and, therefore, the secondary school perspective was more personally and professionally relevant in a long term sense.

One school represented high academic performance on provincial exams, had a religiously/spiritually diverse student population, and was located in a high economic neighbourhood. One school represented medium performance and had a less religiously/spiritually diverse student population because of the community it served (white middle class). One school represented low academic performance on provincial exams and was located in a fairly newly established neighbourhood that attracted new immigrants and was therefore multicultural and religiously/spiritually diverse. One school represented low academic performance, was located in a low income neighbourhood, and was designated a 'high needs school' and several programmes were implemented to deal with the social, cultural, economic and intellectual needs for the community of students. The school where I taught for ten years was excluded in order to avoid problems with familiarity and assumed understandings of the dynamics of the organization (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

The four school principals of the selected high schools were included in the sample.

4.3.5 Teachers

A self-selected sample of 31 teachers represented 10 per cent of the overall teaching staff in each school. The group of 31 teachers yielded: 7 English teachers, 6 Guidance/Special-needs support, 4 Fine Arts, with one also being the rugby

coach, 4 Social Studies, 3 English as a Second Language, 3 Modern Languages, 2 Career and Life Management, 1 Science, and 1 Media Studies.

4.4 Background to the Interview Structure

The design was limited to face-to-face, one-to-one, semi-structured interviews and a priori policy and document analysis. In developing the interview structure, I took into account that the topic of religion/spirituality is a sensitive, personal, and private issue for some people (Gillham, 2000). Canadian scholars argue that policy-makers and administrators are reluctant to engage in conversations because they want to avoid divisive debates (see Chapter Three). The goal here was to avoid the possibility of divisive debates by interviewing policy-makers and administrators individually. The debates could be created in data analysis and in writing up the findings. Previous qualitative studies that probed into how individuals perceived and experienced religion/spirituality (Hardy, 1979; Hay & Nye, 2006; Wintersgill, 2008) found that individuals tend to keep their thoughts about religion/spirituality private because they think that they may be ridiculed if they expose them. In this regard, a private interview created the space for educationists to share personal stories and insights without being influenced by the presence of others (Holstein & Gubrium, 1999).

I had certain expectations about how educationists might approach the interview and therefore I set out to build an interview structure that took into account these expectations. I expected that the meanings educationists attributed to the concept of religion/spirituality for education purposes would likely be an

outcome of participants' unique perspectives on ultimate concerns and the way in which they shaped their way of "being-in-the world" (McKenzie, 1985, p.52). I anticipated that educationists would mostly rely on their lived experience as they made sense of the notion of religion/spirituality for their practice (Denzin, 1989, p. 142).

My initial concern was that respondents might use the one hour interview to psychologically process their life-history with regard to the topic of religion/spirituality since the literature presents the argument that individuals may have different attitudes toward religion or spirituality, some positive and some negative. The structure of the interview, therefore, had to assert some control to avoid the potentiality of respondents digressing into subjects that were irrelevant to the research questions and goals (Patton, 1990). At the same time, I was compelled to design a study that was not about researching my own version of religion and spirituality (see Heelas & Woodhead, 2005 in Chapter Two). It is argued that often times researchers search out versions of reality that are familiar and that match their personal social imaginary (Taylor, 2007) or reality tunnel (Bohac-Clarke, 2001), not what religion/spirituality means for the people involved in the study (Popp-Baier, 2010). Denzin (1989) warns that the researcher must be cognizant of prior conceptions or else become trapped by them (p. 127).

The interview protocol began with a wide open question about how educationists defined the words spirituality and religion, and whether or not they thought there was a difference between the concepts (the full protocol can be found in the Appendix). Whilst it was expected that some respondents might be

forthcoming in the interview, for others their belief systems might reside tacitly in the respondents' consciousness or only be "partially articulated schemes of thought" (Carr, 1995, p. 41). In addition, Canadian social scientists (see Chapter Three) find that Canadian policy-makers and senior administrators tend to perceive the topic of religion/spirituality as irrelevant to their management endeavours. To accommodate this possibility, I created an interview structure that was expected to draw out the understandings of respondents and not assume that they would necessarily "break out talking" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1999, p. 115).

The solution was to construct an interview structure that exposed policy-makers, administrators, and teachers to an alternative education model, one that mandates teachers create opportunities for students to explore the concepts of religion and spirituality. This decision worked hand-in-hand with why I chose to study at the University of Oxford in England. I took a professional fellowship leave from my school jurisdiction in Alberta and moved abroad to explore the concept of religion/spirituality in England where there was a longstanding history for including the notion of 'spiritual development' in formal educational policy. This makes additional sense with respect to the significance of England in terms of Alberta's historical roots. I was intrigued by what I perceived as a low degree of secularization in England compared to Alberta. 'Spiritual development' was a dimension of the national framework for education, Religious Education was mandatory throughout schooling, daily 'collective worship' historically was given a position in England's model, and there was an 'in the main Christian clause' in the 1988 Education (Reform) Act. From a theoretical perspective, England's secular model, and low degree of secularization compared to other countries, can be

explained by the existence of an established church, the Church of England. There continues to be a space granted to 'spiritual development' in policy. This space has resulted in the generation of a significant body of literature, policy statutes, curriculum documents, and conferences. England's educational context has an experienced scholarly group that has been working at conceptualizing religion and spirituality for state education for decades.

Since I was operating from a foundation of scarcity in terms of literature and methodological frameworks, I decided to use England's national policy for 'spiritual development' to operate as a heuristic device to open Alberta teachers up to their own context where 'spiritual development' was not an educational goal. In this way, I brought my doctoral experience to my cultural community of educators. This decision has serious implications. On the one hand, it would be nearly impossible for an outsider to gain a nuanced appreciation of the history of Religious Education in England in a short amount of time. On the other hand, England has written policy and curriculum documents that could serve as useful tools for engaging Alberta educationists in conversations about religion and spirituality. Using English documents also provided an opportunity for educationists to reflect on Alberta's historical connection to Britain.

Early on, I conducted a literature search on the evolution of thinking in England on conceptualizations of 'spiritual development', 'Religious Education', and 'spirituality' for English state-school education. The search was limited to the time period from 1870, when England first established government-maintained schools as an alternative to a church-school model, through to current times. The search

included an examination of England's 1944 Education Act, the 1988 Education (Reform) Act, and the 1992 Education (Schools) Act. In addition, the 2004 document entitled *Promoting and Evaluating Pupil's Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development* produced by the National Curriculum Council and the Ofsted Inspection Agency was examined. The search included books, edited books, *British Journal of Religious Education* and the *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*.

England's model is sometimes criticized for being too traditional, Christian-centric, and too narrow in terms of how teachers were to deal with increasing diversity (Benson & Roehlkepartain, 2008; Green, 2008; Cox, 1983; Jackson & O'Grady, 2007; Cairns, 1989; Copley, 2000; Brown, 2002; Gates, 2007). The use of the word 'spiritual' caused heated debates and conjecture about the government's intention, possibly to restore Christianity in England and indoctrinate students (Francis, 1990; Cox, 1989; Freathy & Parker, 2013). Evidenced in the literature, there were numerous British scholars exploring policy statutes (Copley, Cox, Gates, Francis, Hull, and Chadwick) and conflicted debates that occurred in terms of conceptualizations of spirituality within a Religious Education model (Wright, Jackson, Watson, and Grimmit) and in terms of a relativistic and postmodern approach (Erricker, Hay, Nye, and Priestley).

Aware that England's model opens up conflicted debates amongst England's scholarly community, I made the decision to use England's 1988 Education (Reform) Act as a heuristic device and I took the risk that whilst I might not have a nuanced appreciation of England's context I was involved and engaged in

England's scholarly Religious Education community for four years. Whilst debates in England tend to pertain to the presence of 'Religious Education' or 'Spiritual Education' as educational concepts (Freathy & Parker, 2013), the debates in Canada tend to be about the absence of space for religion and spirituality (Sweet, 1997; Seljak, 2009a; Brown, 2000; Wane, 2011). I had grown to have an appreciation for English debates and was satisfied that I had a deeper appreciation of the conflicted issues related to policy and curriculum development for religion and spirituality than had I remained in Canada and muddled along with other Canadian scholars who operated without a foundation.

The intention was not to dissect or critique England's model. Its use was purely as a conversation starter. The 1988 Education (Reform) Act stipulates students must take mandatory Religious Education (with opt out) and collective worship (with opt out) all through their schooling, and the Act includes a controversial 'in the main Christian' clause (Education (Reform) Act, 1988, (c. 40), Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1(2)). In my reading on the history of religion in England, I noted another point of comparison between England and Alberta. In 1992, The Education (Schools) Act (1992, c. 38, Part 1, Section 2) institutionalized national inspection of Religious Education by an Ofsted Inspection Agency. In this regard, teachers were subjected to high levels of supervision and inspection. McCulloch (2001) suggests that the policy undermines teacher professionalism and limits teacher autonomy. In Alberta, teachers are not supervised, inspected, or evaluated. Instead, they draft a Teacher Professional Goal Plan every year, form their own professional learning community, and pursue their own professional

development (McKinnon & Goddard, 2001). By comparison, Alberta teachers have more autonomy than teachers in England.

I was curious how teachers in England who operate with what I perceived as a low degree of secularization and high degree of supervision conceptualized religion and spirituality for secular education compared to teachers in Alberta who had what I perceived to be a high degree of secularization and low degree of supervision. This study initially was going to be a comparison. I was hoping to build on secularization theory, using these two contrasting settings. But, I was advised at the transfer process to eliminate the comparative aspect and only explore Alberta educationists' perspectives on England's model in comparison to Alberta's model. The reason offered to me was that it would be impossible for me to understand the English character and model in three years.

Having immersed myself in England's academic Religious Education culture, I began to develop what I would consider a 'Canadian lens'. I argued that the retention of space for 'spiritual development' in England made religion/spirituality something 'real', a legitimate policy and practice issue that scholars research and develop, and possibly innovate. Fancourt (2015), for example, traced policy changes in terms of two models for RE, 'learning about religion' and 'learning from religion'. He cites the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's ['QCA'] (2004) definitions for these two approaches. 'Learning about' religion is defined as:

Enquiry into, and investigation of, the nature of religion, its beliefs, teachings and ways of life, sources, practices and forms of expression. It includes the skills of interpretation, analysis and explanation. Pupils learn to communicate their knowledge and understanding using specialist vocabulary. It also includes identifying and developing an

understanding of ultimate questions and ethical issues. [It] covers pupils' knowledge and understanding of individual religions and how they relate to each other as well as the study of the nature and characteristics of religion (p. 123).

'Learning from religion' is defined as:

Concerned with developing pupils' reflection on and response to their own and others' experiences in the light of their learning about religion. It develops pupils' skills of application, interpretation and evaluation of what they learn about religion. Pupils learn to develop and communicate their own ideas, particularly in relation to questions of identity and belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, and values and commitments (p.124).

The National Curriculum Council reconceptualised 'spiritual development' as something that all teachers could integrate into their lessons. Whilst there are heated debates about what spiritual development means and whether or not it is the government's role to provide directives for something as personal as one's spiritual development (Benson & Roehlkepartain, 2008; Green, 2008; Cox, 1983; Jackson & O'Grady, 2007, Cairns, 1989; Copley, 2000; Brown, 2002; Gates, 2007), the written documents are useful in a context where there is relatively nothing written to go by.

The National Curriculum Council developed a list of eight conceptualizations of spiritual development. Whilst it is arguable whether or not these conceptualizations are 'true', useful, acceptable, or generalizable, they are useful in starting the conversations on conceptualizing religion and spirituality for post-secularization education, and identifying which conceptualizations should be included or excluded in an education setting with a high degree of secularization. These dimensions are portrayed in Table Two below:

Table Two : Eight Conceptualizations of Spiritual Development

England's National Curriculum Council Characterization of *Spiritual Development*, supported by Ofsted Inspection Agency (drafted in 1993 by NCC, reiterated by Ofsted in March 2004)

The exploration of a student's inner world . . .

Beliefs – the development of personal beliefs including religious beliefs; an appreciation that people have individual and shared beliefs on which they base their lives; a developing understanding of how beliefs contribute to personal identity;

A sense of awe, wonder and mystery – being inspired by the natural world, mystery or human achievement;

Experiencing feelings of transcendence – feelings which may give rise to belief in the existence of a divine being or the belief that one's inner resources provide the ability to rise above everyday experiences;

Search for meaning and purpose – asking 'why me?' at times of hardship and suffering; reflecting on the origins and purpose of life; responding to challenging experiences of life such as beauty, suffering and death;

Self-knowledge – an awareness of oneself in terms of thoughts, feelings, emotions, responsibilities and experiences; a growing understanding and acceptance of individual identity; an ability to build up relationships with others;

Relationships – recognising and valuing the worth of each individual; developing a sense of community; the ability to build up relationships with others;

Creativity – expressing innermost thoughts and feelings through, for example, art, music, literature and crafts; exercising the imagination, inspiration, intuition and insight; and

Feelings and emotions – the sense of being moved by beauty or kindness; hurt by injustice or aggression; a growing awareness of when it is important to control emotions and feelings, and how to learn to use such feelings as a source of growth.'

HMI (2004) Promoting and evaluating pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. May be accessed online at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum> Dated March 16, 2004. pp. 9-10.

Each of the conceptualizations offers a religious, 'spiritual not religious', and a humanist approach. These eight conceptualizations became constructs in the secularization theory template. The goal was to use the English inclusion of mandatory 'Religious Education', 'collective worship', and 'in the main Christian' as three conceptualizations for how religion could be addressed in post-

secularization education. The eight conceptualizations listed above were also used to broaden the horizon in interviews beyond the conceptualizations included in the Alberta School Act. My intention was to move systematically through traditional conceptualizations (mandatory RE and collective worship) to arguably unconventional conceptualizations as portrayed in the National Curriculum document above.

I created four interview tools that would take respondents systematically through a variety of ways to think about how to approach religion/spirituality. Two interview tools (A and B) presented England's model and two tools presented Alberta's model, as we shall see. The tools were not necessarily used in the same order as the flow of the interview conversation dictated the order. The interview had six main parts to it. The interview tools are located in the Appendices (VI-IX). The interview protocol is also located in the Appendices (X).

4.4.1 Part One: Personal Conceptualization

In the first part of the interviews educationists were asked what they thought the words spirituality and religion meant. In context, most of these Alberta educationists would likely have been educated in a 'religion free' secular system and spirituality was not a formal education concept. Therefore, the first part of interview was to bring forward how educationists conceptualized religion and spirituality before they were introduced to Tools A-D. The self-selected teachers were also asked why they volunteered for a study on spirituality and religion. The first part of the interview provided a baseline for the respondents' initial

conceptualizations of religion and spirituality. The analysis phase was expected to locate conceptualizations in the secularization debates, adding to secularization theory particularly in terms of the significance of these concepts to contemporary educationists. From there, educationists explored the four interview tools.

4.4.2 Part Two: Religions Approach

Educationists examined Tool A, where they were exposed to a different secular model, one that did not secularize to the same degree as Alberta, where ‘spiritual development’ continued to be an explicit part of England’s national education goals (Education (Reform) Act, 1988, (*c.* 40). Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1 (2)). The interview format asked them to offer their opinion about religion conceptualized as: 1) mandatory Religious Education, 2) mandatory daily collective worship, and 3) the ‘in the main Christian’ clause, as per the Education (Reform) Act, 1988. By comparison, the Alberta School Act (Section 50 (1)) states that schools have the option to mandate ‘Religious Instruction’ and ‘Religious Exercises’ and also have the option to offer three religions courses at the secondary level.

4.4.3 Part Three: England’s Horizon of Concepts

Tool B required educationists to read through England’s National Curriculum Council’s document that outlines eight conceptualizations of ‘spiritual

development', as provided above. This tool was also approved at the transfer exam. Educationists engaged in a negotiation and boundary setting process.

The intention was to explore the tensions that exist about reaching consensus of how religion/spirituality was conceptualized, the impact of policy/curriculum discourse, the voices that influenced decisions about which dimensions should be included/excluded, and the differences between policy-makers and administrators' inclusion/exclusion decisions and principals and teachers' decisions. They were not presented as an exhaustive set of conceptualizations, but as a device to open conversations in an educational context where spirituality had not been conceptualized in formal policy or curriculum. Educationists had space to add different conceptualizations and share experiences.

4.4.4 Part Four: SSJ's Horizon of Concepts

Secular School Jurisdiction had a comparative written document for its educational goals: 1) broad goal to finish high school, 2) academic success, 3) citizenship, 4) personal development, and 5) character education. Educationists were asked to reflect on SSJ's goals, where the discourse of 'spiritual development' was noticeably absent. Tool C was also a boundary setting device. Educationists were asked to comment on these goals, whether or not these goals could act as umbrella terms for the inclusion of religious/spiritual themes, and whether or not it was desirous to include or exclude religious/spiritual themes as dimensions of these educational goals.

4.4.5 Part Five: Parental Rights

Tool D required respondents to think about Alberta's conceptualization that parents should have rights over their children's religious/spiritual beliefs (Bill 44: see Chapter Three).

4.4.6 Part Six: Concluding Thoughts

Part Six of the interview provided a conclusion to the interview process. Educationists reflected on Alberta's post-secularization model and had an opportunity to re-imagine (or not, depending on how the semi structured interview unfolded) Alberta's post-secularization model. Considerations included whether or not teacher training should be offered, whether or not policy and curriculum discourse should include the words religion/religious and/or spiritual/spirituality, and what they thought the future of education in Alberta will be in relation to the concepts of religion/spirituality, as well as other issues educationists thought were important that the interview format did not cover.

The interview structure was designed to explore, probe, and confront issues in a systematic and comprehensive way (Patton, 1990). The tools were used to provoke respondents into thinking outside of their social imaginary for religion/spirituality by "indicating – even suggesting – narrative positions, resources, orientations and precedents" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1999, p. 115). Participants were encouraged to convey situated experiential realities in relation to the dimensions presented in the interview tools, as the tools presented alternative perspectives to what they may have expected (ibid, p. 109). My role was to mediate, to add to, and to question what was being said, and to bring out the emotions and the lived experience of educators (ibid, p. 112). Interviews

provided an opportunity for a dialogical, collaborative interaction to occur which probed beneath the surface of responses (Klein & Meyers, 1999) and the use of a model from an alternative setting was expected to offer a non-threatening mechanism to challenge and/or support the assumptions of Alberta educationists and myself.

In summary, educationists reflected on Alberta schooling in terms of its starting point, indicated on the right hand side of the list below. The list on the left, England's conceptualizations, were used to open up the conversations in a context where conceptualizations for religion and spirituality were limited. These constructs were included in the secularization theory template.

England's Conceptualizations

Mandatory Religious Education
Mandatory Daily Collective Worship
In the Main Christian
Beliefs (including religious and identity)
A Sense of Awe, Wonder, and Mystery
Experiencing Feelings of Transcendence
Search for Meaning and Purpose
Self Knowledge
Relationships
Creativity (including intuition and inspiration)
Feelings and Emotions

SSJ Conceptualizations

2 Optional Religions Courses
Optional Prayer at Lunch
Complete High School
Academic Success
Citizenship
Personal Development
Character Education
Parental Rights

4.5 Pilot Study

The interview format was informally piloted amongst educators at Secular School Jurisdiction and amongst 3 teachers in England. The SSJ cohort included a hierarchical sample of: 1 Director of Leadership, 1 Human Resources Officer (senior administration), 2 Learning Leaders, and 2 classroom teachers. My doctoral department confirmed that I could conduct an informal pilot study because the interview instruments I was using had already been tested in another public school setting (England) and in SSJ's setting. The purpose of the pilot was to gauge the time allotment, order of the questions, and to practice engagement with the respondent.

Four points of guidance became clear from these consults: 1) initiate interviews by recognizing participants' areas of expertise; 2) present the goal of the project, and inquire into their personal understanding of both *religion* and *spirituality*; 3) ask participants to respond to Bill 44 and the Education (Reform) Act and the eight conceptualizations; and 4) keep all conversations participatory, with the goal to explore a complex phenomena that was under construction.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

The research design was approved through the University of Oxford CUREC procedures (see Appendix (III) for letter of approval). A similar procedure was required by the Secular School Jurisdiction department of ethics and was approved. All participants signed informed consent letters (see Appendix V).

Three ethical issues arose as I began to gather my sample. A Director (responsible for conceptualizing issues related to diversity) refused the invitation to be interviewed, but when I arrived at her superior's office (also responsible for diversity issues), she was present. Her superior enthusiastically explained that she had invited her colleague to join the conversation. I decided that, ethically, it was better to carry on with the interview than raise any suspicion with the senior of the two.

A second issue was that I had planned to use contextual variables between schools (economic, academic, diversity) in analysis. However, the schools were so markedly different since they served different neighbourhoods that it would be difficult to keep the schools anonymous. In hindsight, I would like to take up the issue of contextual differences in a future project and build an ethical framework that would be agreeable to participants and the institutions.

The third issue was that the first principal who volunteered suggested that he approach teachers he believed would be interested in the project. But this approach would jeopardize anonymity of teachers, perhaps make the teachers feel coerced, and create a sample that would reflect his imaginary of religion/spirituality. We resolved this problem by positioning his role as distributing the email invitation to staff, along with our agreed upon letter of invitation attachment (see Appendix). In his email he indicated that this was a SSJ approved study. Teachers responded to me directly.

All participants were given pseudonyms except the Minister of Education because he was a public figure. He was informed of this before he signed consent.

4.7 Procedure

I laminated a copy of the University of Oxford CUREC letter and the SSJ ethics approval letter to show to all participants. I also laminated the four interview tools (A-D) to be used in all interviews.

I telephoned the Minister of Education's office in February 2010 and was told that he would participate in an interview once he had finished collecting data from the focus group study that he had organized for investigating the 'future of education in Alberta'. Hon. Hancock's office organized the interview for September 2010. I visited the office of the school board Trustees in February 2010 and arranged interviews with the three longstanding Trustees through the administrative assistant. Likewise, I visited the offices of the 6 senior administrators who had portfolios related to religious/spiritual diversity and arranged interviews. I personally visited four secondary schools in one day, speaking to two principals personally and leaving two principals who were away from the office with a message. During the Transfer procedure, it was recommended that the study include three secondary schools, but all four principals agreed to participate, therefore the sample was increased to four.

Teachers were solicited through each of the school principals via e-mail. The first principal to volunteer asked that I draft an invitation letter (as mentioned), explaining the rationale, a brief outline of the expectations of the interview, and the commitment for the teacher. I had already drafted a letter for the Oxford University ethical procedure, known as the CUREC, but he thought that there should be more detail in the letter. We agreed on the final draft of the letter (as

noted above). I emailed the letter to him for final approval, and the next morning he sent an email to his staff with the subject heading “Oxford Research Project”, a brief note to say that he and SSJ had approved the project, and the invitation-letter attachment. The three other principals followed the same procedure, and the invitation was only slightly adjusted for each school in terms of school name. Volunteers were required to contact me directly by telephone or through email, not the principal, to protect anonymity.

Following the recommendation of Rubin and Rubin (1995), the interview began by showing each participant the laminated SSJ and Oxford consent forms. Participants were briefly shown the laminated interview tools so that they were informed of the territory of the interview before they signed the informed-consent document. The goal was to create a comfort level and transparency for participants so that there were no surprises. They were informed that a pseudonym would be applied to them and that their school jurisdiction would be anonymous (Secular School Jurisdiction). Transparency was considered essential, especially with a controversial topic of religion/spirituality. Participants were informed that they would not be required to check over or edit their transcript.

4.7.1 Data Collection Period

There were three periods of data collection:

February 1, 2010 – March 12, 2010: four principals, thirty-one teachers, one senior administrator, one trustee, one crisis manager

May 28, 2010 – June 19, 2010: one superintendent, one director, two Trustees

September 20 – October 1, 2010: two directors, one provincial curriculum coordinator, one Aboriginal infusion specialist, one Minister of Education

On average, I conducted two interviews per day. Data collection, analysis, and writing were considered to be entwined activities. I used gaps in between interviews to generate further questions to be used in interviews. In week one, for example, the interviews generally maintained the flow of the four interview tools. I completed interviews with all four principals, four teachers, and one senior administrator. Time between interviews was used to review the conversations and identify some common and distinct issues raised amongst individuals. A fieldwork journal identified themes, questions, uncertainties, or issues that emerged out of interviews week by week.

There was a two-and-a-half-month gap between the first data-collection phase and the second one. I returned to Oxford and consulted with my supervisor.

4.7.2 Data Management

All digital recordings were saved in an online site and in I-tunes on my computer. All interviews were transcribed in entirety. Transcripts were saved on my hard drive, on an external hard drive, in dropbox, and in my email. Four copies of transcripts were saved for different purposes (Patton, 1990), one in hard copy to use for highlighting and notes, one on my computer hard drive so that I could

splice transcripts into analytical units, and one saved in my e-mail virtual space and in dropbox.

4.7.3 Organization of Sample

Step One: Following each interview, a vignette of the participant was written to capture the essence of the participant (see Appendix).

Step Two: The sample was clustered into two groups policy-makers and senior administrators (Group One) and principals and teachers (Group Two):

Group One cohort included:

Provincial Level: Minister of Education, provincial curriculum designer,
Aboriginal Infusion specialist

Jurisdiction Level: SSJ Trustees and SSJ senior administrators

Group Two cohort included:

SSJ principals and SSJ teachers

Teachers were further clustered into disciplinary subjects: English, Guidance/Social Services, Social Studies, ESL, Arts, Languages, CALM, Science, and Media Studies.

4.7.4 Steps to Data Analysis

Step One: Each transcript was read through, sections highlighted, and notes made in the margins.

Step Two: A Matrix for each 'role' cluster was constructed for: 1) reasons for volunteering, 2) meanings of spirituality and religion, and 3) Tool A (mandatory religious education, collective worship, in the main Christian). This section of the data was analyzed first before proceeding to the next section of data (8 conceptualizations of spirituality, SSJ educational goals, parental rights, concluding statements). The analytic episodes of the four interview tools became the main coding instruments.

Respondents' quotations were inserted under appropriate analytic episode headings. Matrices provided a useful way of visualizing the data set at a glance, gain insight into developing patterns, count responses in the categories to get a feel for which categories were emphasized more than others, and identify the lone voice, the outlier. This was a qualitative study and the objective was not to find out how the majority of participants responded. It was to gain a nuanced understanding of the range of conceptualizations, the range of boundary setting decision-making, and the range of ways educationists thought post-secularization schools should deal with the topic of religion/spirituality for Alberta's SSJ setting.

Step Three: Transcripts were spliced together to create a story for each of the a priori analytic episodes. A 'story' developed from each of the 'role' groups, Ministry of Education, Trustees, Senior Administration, Principals, and Teachers by curriculum discipline (English, Social Studies, Guidance and so on). For example, for the 'collective worship' section of the transcript, each Social Studies teacher's (for example) response was isolated, copied, and pasted in with other Social Studies teachers' 'collective worship' section. This produced, depending on

the category and the number of participants in the particular category (7 English teachers versus 3 ESL teachers) a 50-100 page story. I continued to treat the transcript (or the participant's story) holistically and identified further references for 'collective worship' that might appear later in the transcript and pasted them in, marking them accordingly with reference to where they appeared in the transcript.

Using a highlighter and margin notes, the multiple stories were compared and contrasted. I used each of the items on Tools A-D as analytic episodes (Huberman and Miles (1994: see Appendix for complete list of analysis episodes). A priori themes and units of analysis of the interview tools became the lens to identify recurring patterns and common themes that cut across the data (Merriam, 2002). These episodes were used for analytic induction and constant comparison (Kratwohl, 1998). The hierarchical sample and the multiple stories generated from the different roles participants played were used as points of comparison and to create the Canadian debate (Thompson, 1978 as cited in Denzin, 1989). The goal was to see if the topic of religion/spirituality might be hiding in the "nooks and crannies" of participant consciousness and in their professional practice (James, 2006, p. 130).

The full-length document was copied and saved under a new name and then whittled down to the essence of the theme as presented by multiple perspectives. There were shared views amongst the group, opposing ones, as well as a distinct voice that at times offered a perspective that was perhaps more thoughtful, deep, and considered 'wise', or 'troubling'. Since the interview tools were treated in the

interview as a 'starting point' for discussion, not an exhaustive set of conceptualizations for religion/spirituality, analysis sought to find voices that broadened the 'horizon' as set out in the tools. Some participants had, it seemed, given the topic much consideration in their own teaching whilst others joined the study because they wanted to help out the project and had given the topic little consideration prior to the interview (their lack of prior consideration for the topic was considered important). In writing up the 'story', the goal was to present the span of views, insights, cautionary tales, points to ponder, taking into consideration the role participants played in the overall case. Wane (2011) argues that the "lone voice becomes the collective voice" (p. 74). In other words, it was the 'horizon' of views, not just the prevalent ones, that was considered significant.

Step Four: Transcripts were examined to determine the extent to which the historical, cultural, political and educational context in which the educationists operated, as well as life-history might influence their ideas and opinions about spirituality and religion. This sample was not just "regular" people; these were Alberta educators who held a specific professional role in an Alberta *secular* school system. How had the colonial model influenced them? How had the secularization process of the 1960's and 1980's impacted their organizational/school setting? Was there evidence of change in the organization?

Step Five: Splicing the transcripts together and treating each 'role' cluster as a presentation of the complex story of negotiating the terrain of religion/spirituality and the potential implications for policy and practice became the analytical

approach for the remaining themes: dimensions of religion and spirituality, SSJ goals, parental rights, and concluding statements.

Step Six: Before the next phase of data collection (May 28-June 19), since all teacher and principal interviews were completed, and preliminary findings were drafted, teacher concerns were presented in the form of questions to the next set of respondents: senior administration and SSJ Trustees. By the third and final phase of data collection—interviews with senior administrators, provincial curriculum specialists, and the Minister of Education—I had grown fairly comfortable with my understandings of knots related to religion/spirituality as put forward by teachers and principals. This phase provided an opportunity to address these knots, particularly with the Minister of Education who was the last interview.

Step Seven: Once all of the ‘role’ groups were interviewed and analyzed, a narrative emerged that was representative of the province and more particularly the organization of SSJ that presented a more holistic account of stresses and strains, the ‘do’s’ and the ‘don’ts’, knots of tension, and the possibilities and potentials (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). It was expected that there would be a gap between the top down and bottom up approaches to the concept of religion/spirituality (Westerman, 2009; Clark et al., 2002). Westerman argues that top-down policy often collides with organic bottom-up beliefs and values of the practitioner. The goal was to probe beneath the surface level of compliance to policy and status quo understandings (Crotty, 1998) and arrive at a deeper

understanding of how individuals established practices that may or may not be coherent with their beliefs or with policy directives (Carr, 1995).

The outcome was a rich, thick description (Denzin, 1989) and interpretive account of the findings, with references to literature to support emerging themes. The thesis became a representation of the collective consciousness (Schratz, 1993) of Alberta educationists. The goal, on one level, was to achieve a cognitive understanding of the participants that is a rational, orderly, logical conceptual framework for religion/spirituality that was detached from emotional feeling (Denzin, 1989, p. 121). On another level, the importance of feelings on an interactional interpretive level explored a more nuanced sense of religion/spirituality and the extent to which Alberta educationists thought religion and spirituality should or should not be a part of the educational framework (ibid).

Step Eight: An Epilogue was written to further the heuristic approach, engaging in reflexivity on what I had learned about the subject and about myself as a researcher of this subject. Usher (1996) promotes the idea that:

One's pre-understandings, far from being closed prejudices or biases . . . actually make one more open-minded because, in the process of interpretation and understanding, they are put at risk, tested and modified through the encounter with what one is trying to understand (p. 21).

Crotty (1998) notes that some scholars (and readers) may “simply take their sense of the world and ‘blithely’ view them as the truth and pass this off” (p. 59). It is in the Epilogue that I open up and challenge my conceptualizations, and the theoretical tools I constructed.

4.8 Validity

Validity refers to the trustworthiness of the research (Robson, 2002). Six procedures, as recommended by Robson, were used to increase the credibility of this study.

First, with the intention of being transparent, a prologue and epilogue presents my personal orientation, definitions, values, and interests in the subject of religion and spirituality for post-secularization education. Second, as a teacher at SSJ I avoided relying exclusively on teacher conceptualizations of religion and spirituality and how they shaped boundaries for classroom practices and included policy-makers and administrators in order to draw out a fuller account of the tensions that existed in developing policy and practice for the controversial and sensitive research topic.

Third, I did not arrive at the research site with my own definitions of religion and spirituality, but instead began with an open-ended question about what educationists meant when they used these words. This was followed with having Alberta educationists reflect on England's approach, and the discourse found in policy and curriculum documents there compared to policy and discourse in Alberta/SSJ documents, to open up the boundary issue rather than choosing approaches and discourses found in the literature and risking bias by choosing what resonated with me on a personal level.

Fourth, in sampling I acknowledged that I selected Trustees (who had the longest history in SSJ) and senior administrators (whom I thought had portfolios

related to religion/spirituality) and in this regard my choices influenced the voices that shaped the research. The teachers, however, were self-selected. The strengths and weaknesses of this were addressed above.

Fifth, I realised early on that I had to balance my strong personal position on religion and spirituality with the demands for rigour in the research. I worked with a group of five educational researchers on a weekly basis, asking them to comment on my data and interpretations. They identified points where I weighted one respondents' view too heavily or too lightly, where I favoured teachers over policy-makers and administrators, or let my personal passion for the subject interfere with my analysis and writing up.

Sixth, an argument often encountered in qualitative studies is whether or not respondents should be provided with an opportunity to edit their transcript or provide input on the findings. Scott (1996) recognizes the polarization of views regarding whether participants should have veto power over what is included in the research text at every given point in a study. Some researchers argue that participants should have the right to control how data are interpreted, whilst other researchers have found that if participants are given this right, there is the danger that participants may desire to protect their "public face" more than maintain authenticity in the research process (ibid, 80). Robson (2002) argues that the researcher should be clear with respondents as to the degree of involvement in the research. In this study, all participants were informed that they would remain anonymous, except for Minister Hancock, and that they would not be required to approve their transcripts, or approve findings. In effect, Scott said that there are

trade-offs between the rights of the participants to control the study and the validity of the results. Whilst the participants were not involved at all in the interpretive phase, during the interview when a response seemed troublesome I checked with the participant to find out if I interpreted them correctly or not.

Once I completed the writing up, I returned to the Minister of Education, two of the three Trustees (the other retired), and two of the four principals (one was on a health leave and the other had moved to Edmonton) of my own accord, rather than as part of the methodology, and we went through the findings together in an informal way and they agreed that they could see themselves in the findings and the discussion.

4.9 Conclusion

This methodology chapter set out to provide the protocol for this qualitative study, which investigated how the topic of religion/spirituality was conceptualized amongst a hierarchical sample of policy-makers, administrators, and teachers who worked in a post-secularization public school system in Alberta. It provides the strategy for sampling, access, ethics, data management, data analysis, and validity.

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE

Conceptualizations of Religion and Spirituality

This chapter presents the findings for Research Question One:

How do teachers, administrators, and policy-makers initially conceptualize spirituality and religion?

Debates about the secular, the impact of secularization, and the multiple forms of secularism tend to be contested because of the lack of consensus regarding definitions for religion and spirituality. The goal of this question was to establish a baseline for understandings of the concepts of spirituality and religion before educationists were introduced to Tools A-D.

Once respondents were exposed to the format and parameter of the interview, the formal part of the interview began with the question: What does the word spirituality mean to you? Is there a difference between spirituality and religion? Has the provincial ministry or Secular School Jurisdiction (SSJ) engaged in discussion about the notion of spirituality and religion for education purposes?

The findings have been divided into two parts. The first part represents the findings from the cohort comprised of the provincial Ministry of Education, SSJ

Trustees, and SSJ senior administrators. The second part represents the findings from the cohort of school principals and teachers.

5.1 Ministry, Trustees, Administrators: Conceptualizations

The Alberta Ministry of Education's view into the concepts of religion and spirituality was represented by the Minister of Education, Honourable Hancock, Keith, a First Nations/Metis/Inuit (FNMI) infusion specialist, and Cora, a provincial curriculum specialist. They were interviewed together. The second level of this group included three of Secular School Jurisdiction's (SSJ) Trustees (Connors, the head of the Board of Trustees, Jones, and Smith). They were elected officials and were responsible for policy-making, budgeting, and communication with the stakeholder community. The third level of the hierarchy was comprised of senior administrators who held different portfolios that related to religion/spirituality or the schools in this sample. Christine and Joseph were directors of the schools involved in this study. Beth and June, interviewed together, were Superintendent and Director (respectively) and shared a portfolio that included the topic of diversity. Marilyn was the Director of Learning Innovations. The Ministry, Trustees, and senior administrators were clustered into one cohort because their roles were administrative and they did not have daily contact with students in the way the second cohort comprised of principals and teachers did.

It was explained in Chapter Three that Canadian demographics were divided into three groups: Dominant Society (white, English/French, of Christian heritage), Aboriginal (First Nations, Metis, Inuit), and Immigrant. All but Keith, the FNMI

consultant, represented the Dominant Society. In this regard, the voices of the Ministry, Trustees, and senior administrators were from the 'Dominant Society' sector, except for Keith, the FMNI specialist. This was considered a limitation in this study, but a reality in the sense that most Alberta educationists on the whole were comprised of members of the 'Dominant Society'. Ladson-Billings (2005) and Ryan, Pollack, and Antonelli (2009) speak to the limitations and knots that form when there is not enough diversity amongst decision-makers.

In making sense of this cohort's conceptualizations of religion and spirituality, the interviews revealed that all members of this cohort differentiated between religion and spirituality, SSJ policy-makers had not conceptualized spirituality in relation to post-secularization education except for the Aboriginal community, and SSJ Trustees had conceptualized the 'role of religion' in a public consultation in 2003. The presentation of the findings will begin with definitions. This will be followed with the finding that spirituality had not been conceptualized at the provincial level or jurisdiction level for mainstream students but spirituality had been conceptualized for the Aboriginal community. The final section will present in detail how the role of religion was conceptualized in SSJ in the 2003 consultation.

5.1.1 Definitions

In baseline definitions for religion and spirituality, all members of this cohort distinguished between religion and spirituality, despite the Alberta School Act that only provides directives for how the concept of religion could be taken up in

schools. All members (except one: Trustee Jones) of this cohort spoke of religion in terms of ‘a package’, Church, and ‘rules and regulations’, whilst spirituality was conceptualized as a larger concept that involved personal and subjective beliefs and approaches to life. The definitions were not deconstructed. They were simply ‘let to be’, since conceptualizations were personal and unique to the individual. However, they were situated within the literature presented in Chapters Two and Three in order to add a nuanced appreciation for the significance of the conceptualizations.

The Minister of Education said, “my religion is a context of part of who I am, but it’s not all of who I am” (41). Spirituality, he added, is “who I am as an individual” (41) and “how mentally resilient I am” (41). He explained:

we tried to package the essence of life into our religions, right, and we’ve had our churches essentially narrow our views to, you know, the fundamental creeds (43).²

Similarly, Trustee Connors defined religion as “rules and regulations, the format of their spirituality” (2). She revealed that at a personal level she did not consider herself a religious person. In her imaginary for the concept of religion, she explained:

In North America we tend to think of religion as kind of a Sunday-morning thing and maybe one other service during the week and not as the lens through which you view your daily life (14).

² The number refers to the line number in the transcript

Beaman (2003) argues that one of the problems with policy-makers who shape how religion is to be treated in institutions is that they often perceive being religious as a segmented activity, such as going to church or saying the *Lord's Prayer*. The result is the concept of religion becomes an activity in schools, such as a course or a prayer activity, she argues, and just as Connors articulated, the concept of religion was not treated as a lens through which people view their whole lives.

Kunz (2009) argues that it is common amongst 'secularized' Canadian policy-makers to not have a full appreciation for the significance of religion in people's lives. Trustee Jones (an Evangelical pastor in his private life) provided a contrasting view to the Minister and Connors, explaining that his religion was very significant to his everyday life. He defined his religion as an "all encompassing reality, a truth reality" (40) that revolved around his relationship with God. He argued that most Albertans had personally secularized, in this way validating the prediction for this cohort at least that institutionalized religious authority at the individual level was diminishing. He considered himself to be in the minority, explaining that only "twelve percent attend church on a weekly basis in this city" (50). In this regard, he argued that the majority of Albertans had 'secularized' to varying degrees and did not submit to the authority of institutionalized religion..

Trustee Jones (Evangelical orientation) had an awareness of the transformation of belief, the subjective life turn, and the emergence of the word spirituality to represent an individual approach to belief in keeping with Roof, (1999a,b), Tacey (2004), Heelas & Woodhead (2005), Taylor (2007), and Bibby (2011). He

characterized the word spirituality as a “very robust” term (40), meaning “different things to different people” (34). Indeed, all members of this cohort easily articulated a definition for spirituality without prompts. Trustee Smith’s definition was “our understanding of our own worldview” (113) and “what we want in life” (113). Connors thought it meant, “as human beings, we seek to find meaning in the world. Why am I here? What is my place in all of this” (2)? Similarly, Christine’s definition was “how you operate within the world is being your spiritual self” (2). Beth and June thought the word spirituality must necessarily include a belief in ‘something bigger’, a larger universal force, but Marilyn did not think spirituality had to have a ‘God’ or supernatural dimension to it. Spirituality, she argued, could be an awareness of “a sense of history” and “psychological connectedness” (59). In keeping with the Minister’s conceptualization of resiliency, Beth and June both argued that the function of spirituality was to “provide people with some sort of internal strength, perspective, point of focus” (Beth: 8) and to be a catalyst for a “process of internal growth” (June: 6). In this way, this cohort validates the argument of contemporary theorists that whilst religious authority and the significance of institutionalized religion declined, there is growth in an individual and subjective form of spirituality that is not linked to institutionalized religion.

A subsidiary finding was that this cohort included the beneficial outcomes of understanding one’s spirituality in their conceptualizations, which were in keeping with the studies of Maslow (1964), Frankl (1959), Hardy (1979), Roof (1999 a,b), Tacey (2004), Heelas and Woodhead (2005), Taylor (2007), and professional practitioner research in the area of nursing, social work, and mental health

(developed in Chapter Two). In connection with this finding was that no member of the policy-maker and senior administrator cohort revealed that they were actively engaged in a deliberative, reflexive, lifelong pursuit to understand the notion of spirituality in their personal life (see Roof, 1999a,b; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Taylor, 2004).

In summary, the Ministry, SSJ Trustees, and SSJ senior administrators differentiated between religion and spirituality, they had similar conceptualizations of religion as an organized and systematized set of beliefs and spirituality was perceived as personal and subjective. In addition, they linked the concept of spirituality to individual identity, connectedness to something bigger, meaning and purpose, and wellness.

5.1.2 Spirituality Un-conceptualized in Mainstream Education

When asked if this cohort engaged in conversations about issues related to religion and spirituality, they replied that it had not, except for Aboriginal students, where it has a specialized meaning.

I was aware that the Minister of Education had just finished a province-wide focus group study on *Inspiring Education*. A baseline understanding for my study came from Sweet's (1997) study on the secularization era where she found that conversations about religion and education stopped. This line of questioning was intended to introduce the concept of spirituality. The Minister responded, confirming that little had changed since Sweet's study, "we don't necessarily think

about spirituality in the course and construct of our standard curriculum because we don't do religion except in special courses" (9). In this regard, other than the three optional religions courses that were constructed in 2003 and increased parental rights (to be discussed later), the government had not addressed contemporary issues related to the concept of religion or spirituality. Trustee Connors said, "We don't talk about religion because we're the public system" (16). Smith described the post-secularization SSJ model as "Leave your faith at the door" (103) and students were expected to learn about the concept of religion through "osmosis" (103) because "we won't ever talk about it" (103). Since there was an absence of conversations about the concept of religion in schools, it was not surprising that there was an absence of conversations about the contemporary notion of spirituality and how the way people believe might have changed over the years. Senior Administrator Christine said that the word spirituality was "not language we would, in Alberta or in my whole teaching career, associate with the classroom" (4). She added that spirituality was not a topic of study or "the lens through which we see our work" (4). Trustee Jones opened his interview with:

So, spirituality, no conversation using that language, using that terminology. No explicit or maybe even implicit for all I know conversation around that from my perspective (6).

The data support Sweet (1997), Brown (2000), English (2001), and Wane's (2011) studies where they found that the topic of religion had become marginalized from public education debate. The data here support the view that whilst there was recognition that a growing number of Albertans shaped their beliefs into a subjective spirituality, Alberta Education had yet to adapt to this change.

5.1.3 Aboriginal Spirituality Conceptualized

It was not surprising that policy-makers and administrators initially associated the word spirituality with the Aboriginal community. Aboriginal education was an increasingly political issue in Canada. It was evident at the start of the Minister of Education's interview that he initially associated the word spirituality with the Aboriginal community because he brought with him Keith, the First Nations, Metis, Inuit (FNMI) infusion specialist, to the meeting. De-colonists argue that it is time for Canadian policy-makers to expand their social imaginary for what the concepts of religion and spirituality are and include the Aboriginal worldview (Beaman, 2002; Smith, 2001; Wane, 2011; Ritskes, 2011).

A finding is that the Minister and Keith explained that Alberta curriculum had been infused with the Aboriginal perspective, where it had been excluded before. This finding is significant because it provides evidence of rupturing a longstanding colonial model (see Chapter Three) and also because it shows that the boundary of post-secularization education was changing. This was personally significant to me since I had infused the teaching of Social Studies and English literature with the Aboriginal perspective long before the government constructed a directive for it (see Prologue). Cora (provincial curriculum specialist) mentioned that Alberta Education was studying how to offer better education to Aboriginal students since they understood they were "doing a lousy job" (62) and therefore they had to make some curriculum changes for them (62), which resulted in the inclusion of Aboriginal spirituality into their learning. In this regard, the Aboriginal situation became a catalyst for change. In the context of the three Canadian demographic

groups, the Aboriginal community's spirituality was being attended and the goal of the remainder of the interview was to find out whether the full spectrum of the diversity of beliefs about religion and spirituality was attended.

There were, however, it is argued here, some problems with the way the Minister and other members of this cohort described the thinking behind the inclusion of Aboriginal spirituality. Policy-makers and administrators used a 'we/they' polarity, 'we' being 'Dominant Society' and 'they' being the Aboriginal community. De-colonists argue that policy-makers must stop 'othering' Aboriginal people as though they are fundamentally different than everyone else (Smith, 2001; Wane, 2011). When the Minister of Education was first asked what he thought the word spirituality meant, he replied:

Well, when *we* talk about spirituality—in my sense; please correct me—you think about it in the context of the First Nations, the Inuit area because spirituality is, *you* don't think of their area as religion particularly; it's a spirituality (9, my italics).

Aboriginal spirituality, by comparison to religion, according to the Minister, is "still that broad context of who we are in this world and where our spirits come from" (43). In this way, the Minister provides one explanation for why Aboriginal spirituality is permitted in post-secularization education. It is not defined as a religion. According to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), religion is not to be established in public schools. Defined as a spirituality, Aboriginal spirituality is permitted. Trustee Connors confirmed this interpretation by saying,, Aboriginal spirituality is "their way of being; it's not a religion" (2). However, the data reveal two other more important reasons.

A second reason is that Aboriginal spirituality was considered to be integral to Aboriginal identity, whilst religion/spirituality was considered as a segmented part of life for all others. Marilyn (Learning Innovations) explained:

It's a critical part of their personal identity, and so it is celebrated. It's a part of their everyday—some would argue every moment—existence (37) . . . You can't separate the two (39).

Keith (FNMI specialist) provided the Aboriginal Studies 10 curriculum specialized definition for Aboriginal spirituality:

a set of beliefs related to a higher power, such as the Creator, and incorporates high ideals, values, morals, and ethics. For traditional First Nations Inuit people, spirituality is *a part of daily life and personal identity*. It involves honoring and respecting all things that exist and taking responsibility for maintaining harmonious relationships with that (35, my italics). (See also Aboriginal Studies 10-20-30, 2014).

It is evident that the decision-makers of Alberta Education had constructed a narrative whereby Aboriginal spirituality was integral to the Aboriginal everyday life and therefore must be included in their education, but it was a segmented part of life for the Dominant Society (the 'we') and the immigrant community as well.

A research goal in this study was to understand how Alberta Education conceptualized religion and spirituality for all students, students who came from diverse backgrounds. It was understood that Alberta Education provided space for Catholic students in separate schools and now Aboriginal students. I questioned the assumption that religion/spirituality was not important to the rest of the students. I put to the Minister of Education:

But then we're looking at Aboriginal children as having a spirituality and as if maybe my own kids, who are not Aboriginal, don't. I'm kind of wondering— (40).

Hon. Hancock replied, "It's more a question of how you define spirituality" (41). He implied that certain conceptualizations of spirituality might be acceptable in the Alberta context, whilst others were not, which confirmed the importance of RQ 2. Trustee Smith was posed a similar question:

we make the judgment that we can't separate it for Aboriginal students, but we make the judgment that we can separate it for other people, when it might be a fundamental part of their way of being too (28).

She answered, "For many people they come with it. I guess it's, in my mind it's actually kind of overt at the Aboriginal school, right" (29)? Trustee Jones (above) would likely argue that his spirituality was overt for him too. I would also argue that my spirituality is overt to me as well, since it is significant enough for me to leave my home and study it abroad.

In summary, Aboriginal spirituality was integrated into Alberta education, and perceived as integral to Aboriginal identity and way of life. It was also a way of restoring the importance of Aboriginal knowledge where it had been excluded in the past. For the remainder of public school students, religion and spirituality were conceptualized as a segmented part of self, a dimension of life that could be nurtured in the private sphere in a religious institution.

5.2 Conceptualizations of Role of Religion

A finding was that Secular School Jurisdiction conducted a consultation on the ‘role of religion in public education’ in 2003. Sweet’s (1997) cross-Canada study about the ‘role of religion’ in schools provided a baseline for this study. She found that policy-makers were uninterested in debating the role of religion in public schools after the secularization era. Townsend and Fadden (2009), Kunz (2009), and Seljak (2009a) argue that most contemporary policy-makers are just as unwilling to engage in debates about religion. Despite Trustees describing the SSJ secular model earlier as a ‘leave your faith at the door’ model, the data show that SSJ Trustees organized a consultation on the role of religion in 2003. Much of the background data for the consultation was gathered from *The Backgrounder Report* and the *Minutes* of the meetings given to me by Trustees Connors and Smith after their interviews. As an insider researcher, I remember filling in an online survey back in 2003 in order to make a contribution to the consultation.

Luhmann’s systems theory was applied as an analytical lens to make sense of the consultation proceedings (see Chapter Two). He argues that the following elements of a change in a system should be analyzed according to: the catalyst, definition of religion, the voices that are included or excluded, and conceptualizations of the function of post-secularization education (see template in Appendix).

5.2.1 Catalyst for Re-thinking 'Role of Religion'

The interviews revealed that the catalyst for the consultation was Trustee Jones' request that Trustees implement 'alternative religious programmes' (see Chapter Three) into SSJ. Inclusion and exclusion of funding for religious schooling is a thorny issue in Canada. Whilst a finding was that Jones and Smith explained that they had hoped the Board of Trustees would have quietly integrated these programmes into SSJ, since the Alberta School Act permits them, Trustee Connors (Chairperson of the Board of Trustees) decided to engage in a full review of the 'role of religion' for SSJ rather than vote on the inclusion/exclusion of faith-based segregated programming as a singular issue.

5.2.2 Definition of Religion

It was evident that Trustees conceptualized 'the role of religion' as segmented activities related to religion, not the significance of religion in people's lives or the significance of religious studies in students' educational knowledge and experience. This was not surprising since their role in the institution was to follow the rules and regulations of the Alberta School Act. The Act only provided directives for Religious Instruction, religious exercises, alternative religious programmes, and 'opt out' rights (see Chapter Three). Below is a table that outlines the parameters for religion and the outcomes of the consultation (data retrieved from *The Backgrounder Report*).

Table Three: SSJ 'Role of Religion' Consultation: 2003

Role of Religion: Options	Results	Notes
Mandatory Religions Courses	Implemented 2 Religions courses at secondary school level: Optional at school level and student level	Used the provincial curriculum Did not locally develop curriculum
Mandatory Prayer	Continue with voluntary prayer outside of instructional time based on student demand. Requires teacher supervisor	
Alternative Faith-based Programmes	4/3 vote opposed, except for alternative Aboriginal school	507 of 2985 voted in favour in survey
Celebrations/Holidays	Retain Christian calendar Celebrations of all religions, including Christmas concerts, promoted	
Other	Diversity Council Teachers may no longer reveal religious orientation	

A finding was that whilst it is argued that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) deliberately did not provide a definition for religion and conscience, according to Khan (1997), so that institutional leaders remain open to how Canadian culture changes over time, it was evident here that Trustees had a traditional notion of religion and had not considered the transformation of belief and the concept of spirituality even though they easily articulated meanings for spirituality at the outset of their interviews.

The result of the consultation was that SSJ Trustees approved two of the three government constructed optional religions courses, signifying the beginnings of

change (Berger, 1999). In this regard, a space for students to explore world religions was created after decades where these courses had been removed. However, schools were not required to implement the courses. Connors revealed that few schools offered the courses. Students were permitted to engage in prayer exercises outside of class time and a Christian calendar was retained. The controversial practice of offering faith-based alternative segregated religious programmes was opposed in a narrow 4/3 vote. Findings do not support Holmes (1998) and Hiemstra and Brink's (2006) appraisal of Alberta education where they idealized the alternative programmes approach as exemplary in Canada for opening new possibilities for the inclusion of religion in schools. In practice SSJ did not offer alternative programmes.

A finding was that Trustees Jones and Smith voted in favour of the programmes. Connors voted against them, arguing that requests only came from Christian families that wanted to segregate their children from increasing diversity. Trustees voted in favour of an alternative school for Aboriginal students. In this regard, the Alberta post-secularization story started by including religions courses and Aboriginal schools, but maintained a de-Christianized post-secularization school model.

5.2.3 Voices Included and Excluded

A finding is that Trustees had not included voices that represented the full spectrum of diversity. This conflicts with Taylor (2009) and Davison Hunter's

(2009) argument that secular institutions must widen their understandings of the significance of religion to a full range of viewpoints, not limit discussion to the viewpoint of religious people. Dobbelaere (1981), Chaves (1994), and Luhmann (2013) argue that a systematic examination of an organization requires a careful consideration of the voices that have the power to influence policy-makers and which voices are excluded. Data collected from The *Backgrounder Report* shows that the consultation methods included: an online survey (with a sample size of 2985), focus groups, workshops, discussion groups, hearing panels, and regular meetings. In the focus group components, only religious parents, professors of religious studies, and religious leaders from the Aboriginal, Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities were included. The 'spirituality voice' was conspicuously absent and so was the atheist voice. In addition, teachers' voices were not included in the focus group and workshop components.

Whilst Barnett (2008) argues that Canada is often used as a model for diversity and multiculturalism, in practice Connors remembered the immigrant religious voices as saying:

You're not actually respecting our religious values by not talking about them, right? You think that you're being respectful by not talking about anybody, but, in fact, you're being very disrespectful to who I am because I can't be fully me when I'm in your buildings because you're pretending that there aren't any Christians and Buddhists and Sikhs and Baha'is and all these things (34).

She added, "They weren't chastising us, but they were challenging us to make sure that we haven't denuded all of our language of important elements of human faith" (34). In this way she revealed more about SSJ's post-secularization model in that she provided evidence that the model had removed all traces of religion in schools,

and thus removed the opportunity for students to learn of the significance of religion in politics, history, literature, science, and the arts. In this post-secularization model, I wonder how long it would take before the school system as it is would produce a population where religion no longer exists in its consciousness, thereby fulfilling the predictions of what is now considered an 'old' version of secularization theory, but not for the reason of modernization and rationalization. Mainstream students at SSJ did not have exposure, except in the newly included optional religions courses, to the concept of religion and its significance in the social world (to be developed further in Chapters Six and Seven).

The immigrant population, in the consultation, attempted to draw attention to the significance of religion to everyday life, arguing that it is not a segmented part of life. Smith re-enforced Connors' interpretation of faith-based leaders during the consultation:

in a nutshell the response was they weren't really asking for faith-based schools, but they were saying you need to recognize faith all over the place (1).

In this regard, the immigrant population expanded the social imaginary of Trustees, attempting to show that religion was not an activity but a way of life that manifests in various ways outside of religions courses. Trustee Smith confirmed Connors' interpretation of the immigrant message that it was important to "Recognize spirituality as part of who we are as human beings" (1).

Seven years following the consultation, the data show that SSJ had not changed any further, nor had it expanded much beyond what Sweet's study found fifteen to

twenty years before. The interview process put a light on some of the contradictory tensions that had developed in post-secularization education. One of these knots was that Canada is a multicultural country, yet SSJ Trustees had not addressed the contemporary issue of religious diversity. Smith said:

I'm not sure that we've ever really truly wrestled with that, but we've said, you know, as students come to us, they do come with faith, and how do we deal with that in the classroom, right (1)?

She added, "[SSJ] had not really grappled with the change that has occurred, because it is not visible in some places in our city yet" (121). Whilst Smith perceived the SSJ student population as "pretty homogenous," and "white bread" (121), Connors noted the increase in English as a Second Language students. The interview became a catalyst to consider, "the cultural, spiritual, religious assumptions that these kids have are coming to us and challenging our assumptions and our structures" (Connors: 102). Trustees established a Diversity Council as an outcome of the consultation. Beth and June, the Chairs of the Council, stated in their interviews that the Council sought outside voices, not internal ones.

Defining the boundary for post-secularization education and the extent religion and spirituality were included was a political hot potato. All Trustees mentioned that a Board of Trustees in the province of Ontario was voted out when they put funding for faith-based schools on the political agenda. Religion in schools was a controversial issue in Canada and the decision to avoid religion might have much to do with protecting their jobs. This speaks to the larger issue of having elected officials as policy-makers for education.

5.2.4 Function of Secular Education

The data show that following the consultation the Trustees established five educational goals they thought were cohesive with what they believed to be the function of post-secularization education: complete high school, academic success, character education, personal development, and citizenship. When asked if they had debated the inclusion of spirituality as a goal, they replied that they had not. In retrospect, Trustees thought character education was most closely linked to religion/spirituality because they associated it with moral development. Jones argued that character was “one of the classic aims of education” and it was a very deliberate objective on the part of Trustees to make explicit that public schools had “values that we think are common Canadian values” (34). The decision to include ‘character education’ in Alberta, they explained, was politically risky since it was linked to ‘moral development’ and Alberta parents expected to have control over their children’s moral development. They argued that the neutral space in education in terms of its approach to the concept of religion (no prioritizing one religion over another, no indoctrination, no proselytizing) evolved into the expectation that public schools were to be ‘value free’. They decided to challenge this assumption, claiming post-secularization schools did not “exist in a values vacuum” (Smith, 73).

By examining *The Backgrounder Report* of the consultation, after the interviews, I noticed that the word ‘spiritual’ was indeed employed and the report seemingly makes a distinction between spiritual and religious (and culture for that matter) stating:

a valid objective in the education of children is understanding and appreciation of the *spiritual*, cultural, and *religious* history of humanity (p. 6, my italics).

Further, the Report (Item One) states that teachers are encouraged “to involve students in open, objective discussion of *religious*, moral, ethical, and *spiritual* topics whenever they arise” (p. 6, my italics). This is evidence that the distinction between ‘the religious’ and ‘the spiritual’ was in the consciousness of policy-makers at SSJ. However, the Trustees had not picked up on the change in discourse in their document. It was evident that no discussions occurred at SSJ to conceptualize the distinction between spiritual and religious, moral, or ethical. Cora, the provincial curriculum specialist, also noted that provincial curriculum designers included the word ‘spiritual’ when they were in the process of re-drafting CALM curriculum (Career and Life Management, a mandatory course for Year Eleven students). Designers did not go any further in conceptualizing the word spiritual.

5.3 Summary

It was evident that there were signs the post-secularization model was changing. The inclusion of world religions courses and an Aboriginal school and programme of studies were signs of change. Trustees had engaged in re-thinking its post-secularization model by incorporating the values of citizenship, character, and personal development, which they considered to be secular values. The mainstream post-secularization model as a whole continued to be ‘leave your faith at the door’, with the assumption that religious/spiritual beliefs and identities

were segmented dimensions of life that could be taken up in the private sphere. A culture of silence on the relevancy of religion/spirituality to a secular educational mandate prevailed. Whilst policy-makers recognized that religious diversity was becoming an issue in Alberta, they did not perceive it as significant enough at the time to warrant attention.

5.4 Teachers: Conceptualizations of Religion and Spirituality

This cohort consisted of a purposive sample of four principals and a self-selected sample of 31 teachers and one Crisis Manager belonging to the four schools administered by the principals who accepted the invitation to participate in this study. The volunteer teachers represented ten per cent of the teacher population of their school. It was noted that the majority of the 31 teachers represented the Dominant Society component of the Canadian population, in that all but three were 'white' and had a 'Christian heritage'. Of the three teachers, one was Metis, one Chinese, and one Lebanese. Vignettes of the teachers and principals are in the Appendix (XII).

Teachers and principals were asked the same questions as policy-makers and senior administrators: what they thought the words religion and spirituality meant and whether or not they perceived a difference between spirituality and religion. The teachers, being a volunteer sample, were asked the additional question about why they volunteered to unearth how they perceived the significance of religion/spirituality to post-secularization education. The principals did not offer

significantly new data for how they conceptualized religion and spirituality that differed from the previous cohort. Therefore, their data was moved to the side. The teachers, on the other hand, conceptualized religion and spirituality as emerging out of their life-history. Policy-makers, senior administrators, and principals did not.

Bibby (2011) argues that it is nearly impossible to cluster Canadians because their conceptualizations of spirituality in particular are so various. Other Canadian masters/doctoral candidates had small samples of 4-10 educationists (e.g., Dalia, 2005; Davis, 2001; McKinnon, 2009 in Chapter Three). They did not analyze the conceptualizations in terms of secularization theory and mainly put the voices forward in vignettes. In this larger sample of 31 Alberta teachers, it was evident that a Canadian post-secularization story began to emerge. It became evident that teachers were changing. When these life-histories were analyzed through the lens of secularization theory in keeping with the reality that these teachers operated in an Alberta post-secularization education system, a meta-narrative emerged that highlighted some pressure points in Alberta's post-secularization model. Cooling (2002) argues the stories are significant because the beliefs that are shaped by our life-history form our commitment to religion/spirituality which ultimately influences teacher practice. Therefore, the analytic strategy was to cluster teachers into shared life-history themes.

Five themes underpinned the accounts and these themes served to provide a means to cluster teacher accounts and illuminate contemporary issues concerning policy and practice for religion and spirituality for the Alberta education context.

A golden thread that ran through most stories was a deep hurt for not feeling as though they could be open and public about their personal journey of spiritual development and emerging spiritual identity in a post-secularization model of education.

5.4.1 Religious Teachers

Seven of the 31 teachers had not ‘secularized’ and described themselves as religious and active members in their religious organization. They were not forthcoming about their religious beliefs and life-histories, which compared to the rest of the teacher sample was considered significant. Debates about whether or not teachers who are religious should bracket out their personal religious orientation in the classroom are particularly relevant in countries (and in the province of Quebec) where Religious Education is a teaching subject (Jackson, 1982; Cooling, 2002; Gravel, 2015). What is evident amongst this sample is that the ‘religious teachers’ bracketed their religious orientations in the classroom, whilst teachers who were non-religious were more forthcoming about their non-religious forms of spirituality (as we shall see more clearly in Chapters Six and Seven).

Marie (French³) joined this study to put forward her voice about the hurt she felt at having to hide her Christian identity whilst at school, as though it were a segmented part of her life. She enjoyed the multicultural nature of teaching in

³ The teaching subject will be put in brackets

public school and supported students in sharing their religious identities but argued that at SSJ she and other Christians had to hide their identities, whilst other religions seemed more free to express theirs'. Kevin (Art) would only share his religious identity after the formal interview was concluded and the recorder was turned off. Marie argued that too many people misconstrue Christianity to mean "legalistic religions," where there are rules about drinking or dancing (22). For her religion was about the healing stories in the Bible. Alex (Social Studies) perceived the word 'spirituality' as a "catch-all term" that "does not offend as much as religion" and that had appropriated dimensions of religion (73). George said that many people "get their back against the wall about religion" (42). In this regard, there was an undertone of hurt at how they felt misunderstood about their religious beliefs and practices.

Marie, George, and Alex personally thought that religion and spirituality were similar but not synonymous concepts. Alex thought spirituality was a re-imagining of religion with prayer re-conceptualized as meditation, for example. George thought spirituality was a type of religion, just implemented into life differently than religion. However, the other four religious teachers made more of a distinction between religion and spirituality. Kevin (Art) characterized religion as an identity one is born into and spirituality was a lifelong exploration of the spirit, which he thought was the student's 'real self'. Mark (Teacher's Aid and Pastor in his private life) characterized spirituality, "like breath; it's the wind that moves, it gives some sort of movement or energy" (4). Dennis perceived spirituality as a process of setting priorities about what is important in life. Tania (Wellness and

Lebanese) associated spirituality with behaviour and how one presented oneself to others (clean nails and clothes and respectful behaviour).

5.4.2 Educated in Catholic Sector

A second cluster of teachers conceptualized spirituality in contrast to their Catholic schooling experience. It was expected that a segment of the sample would have been educated in the Catholic separate school system since Alberta had a dual public system, Catholic and secular. Berger's (1967) study shows that a growing number of people challenged the plausibility structures of organized religion. In this sample, a cluster challenged specifically the Catholic faith, which is not a surprising finding. In keeping with Roof's (1999a,b) American study, it was found here that teachers perceived the Catholic doctrine to be too confining. It did not open itself up to the subjective life turn and the legalistic side of Catholicism, as Roof found, was perceived as too rigid in handling some contemporary moral debates.

Eric (Art and Rugby coach) described Catholic schooling as too rigid, packaging the "baffling mysteries of life" into neat boxes when what he needed was the freedom to balance inner consciousness and his existence in what he perceived to be an inexplicable connection to something larger than himself (26). He cited an example of a guest speaker who presented the abortion moral issue as "immoral and evil" instead of a complicated moral and spiritual issue (154). Geoff (Science) similarly argued that Catholic education was not about students finding their personal connection to something bigger; it was about following the rules and

regulations of Catholicism. For Eric and Geoff, the lack of critical inquiry in Catholicism left them unsatisfied with the tradition and thus both distanced themselves from Catholic traditions and explored their spirituality independently. Both Eric and Geoff enjoyed the religions courses in Catholic school, but their perception was that the ethos and culture were constraining. Geoff's version of spirituality was: "a process of moving—well, the usual contradictions with spirituality—the process of moving forward while you're staying right where you are" (10). It is about living consciously "in the now" (12). Eric described himself as Agnostic and defined spirituality as a process of asking questions and seeking answers in his own experience.

Donna (Career and Life Management: CALM) said that her Catholic education left "little tentacles that reach into every nether region of life whether practicing or not" (4). She was particularly opposed to having the Catholic Church as a moral authority, explaining that she did not "require a mandate from a higher authority, a Pope or a church leader or ayatollah" to monitor her moral choices (54). For this reason, she thought, "in public education there is no place for the religious aspect of spirituality" (4). Her bitterness toward her Catholic upbringing resulted in her bringing her own children up in a secular household where religion played no role. However, in the interview, upon talking about religion and spirituality and unpicking the concepts into dimensions of life, she wondered if she let the pendulum in her household swing too far in the direction of a rationalized approach to life and if perhaps she had short-changed her children by not introducing other ways of thinking about religion/spirituality.

In Julia's view the Catholic school system supported the values of exclusion and intolerance because they were offered an elevated status in Canada's education model. She thought schools should be spaces of inclusion of all children. The concept of spirituality resonated with her because she perceived it as about inclusion, respect, and human decency (12). It was not surprising to find a certain level of hostility amongst public school teachers toward the Catholic sector, as this hostility was part of the Canadian colonial and secularization story (McDonough & Boyd, 2009).

5.4.3 Influenced by Parents

Parental rights were strong in Alberta. This cluster conceptualized religion and spirituality in terms of breaking away from their parents' traditions. It is possible that since this study occurred at the time that Bill 44 had just been introduced, giving parents more rights over their children's exposure to religious/spiritual concepts, that the timing of the interview rekindled some childhood memories of parents.

Stuart (English and post Mormon) seemed the most open and bitter about breaking away from his upbringing. In his response to the email invitation he described himself as an 'antitheist' and that he wanted to join the study to have a voice in the data about how religion/spirituality should be conceptualized for post-secularization education. In his definition, an 'antitheist' was opposed to any religious/spiritual tradition that was systematized around a belief in a supernatural 'God' figure and revelation. He differentiated between being an 'antitheist' and an 'atheist'. He thought there was a force larger than self, but it was

not a traditional 'God' figure as described by the Mormon tradition. In this regard, he was reconceptualising the notion of 'God', which is in keeping with the literature on the transformation of belief (see Chapter Two: MacQuarrie, 1968; Roof, 1999a,b; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Taylor, 2007; Bibby, 2006, 2011). He was opposed to religions that were systematized around revealed 'truth' because when he was fourteen years old and read a magazine article about a group of Mormons who claimed they were guided by a vision to kill a certain group of innocent people, he confronted his parents, left the Church, and objected to the "package" of religion. His definition for spirituality was:

a lifelong thing and then, eventually, you die, and the answer is given to you. And if you quit searching, then you've defeated the whole intent of understanding spirituality. It is a constant search for self (218).

In this regard, Stuart provides an example of a teacher who made a significant shift in his religious beliefs over a lifetime.

Joyce (ESL) explained that she had been emotionally and psychologically abused as a child by Catholic parents who used their religious beliefs as threats. The interview opened up a wellspring of emotion. As an adult, she said that she shaped her notion of spirituality about understanding the supernatural dimension, especially the afterlife, being a good person, and being open-minded about how people, including her own children, developed a personal spirituality. Molly's (English) father was a minister and when he died she felt free to explore her spirituality which she described as asking questions about life such as: What makes us want to look for more? How do we know there is something out there? Whilst a child, she felt as though she were a heretic to question if God existed.

However, Adam (English) had the opposite problem. He came from what he described as a secular home and the absence of a space at home and at school to explore dimensions of religion/spirituality “left him somewhat pining for some sort of spiritual tradition that he could grab on to” (10). In this regard, he represented the impact of the post-secularization education model most strongly. He was reading both organized religious and secular texts to find out more about the nature of God, afterlife, and meaning and purpose. In this regard, he did not have a definitive answer for the meanings of religion and spirituality.

This cluster, and the preceding one, present examples for how some teachers had come to secularize, which contributes to Canadian literature where there is a gap in this matter (Fadden & Townsend, 2009; Bibby, 2011). It also supports the prediction inherent in secularization theory to a degree. It is evident that institutionalized religious authority had diminished and that individuals were developing a personal subjective spirituality. The life-histories provide examples for why religion was treated in a cautionary way in Canada’s highly secularized public education system. Religion was a prickly subject for some Canadians and it opened up some old wounds.

5.4.4 Impact of Critical Event

Nursing literature (see Chapter Two) finds that religion/spirituality may not always be top of mind for everyone all of the time. Sometimes when a critical event occurs, religion/spirituality becomes important. Policy-makers and senior administrators argued earlier that spirituality was a tool for strength and

resiliency, but had not thought to explore whether or not SSJ should conceptualize spirituality for post-secularization education. Whilst Davie (2007) argues that Europeans tend to seek guidance from churches when in crisis, the data support Bibby's (2006, 2011) understanding of Canadians in that they tend not to seek out the church. Some of these teachers sought out guidance from their religious heritage, but found that it did not help.

Katie's (Music) mother struggled with cancer, which caused Katie to return to her religious heritage for answers but the religious tools (scripture, hymns, morals, Church) did not resolve her questions about life and death and the meaning of suffering or help her find a connection with something bigger, supporting James (1902), Frankl (1959), Berger (1967) and Roof's (1999a,b) studies that argued that some people find that the doctrine and morals of a religion do not resolve the psychological issues that a new generation encounters. Katie was searching outside of her religious heritage to resolve her questions.

One of the themes emerging out of Maslow's (1968) study and also Social Work and Mental Health literature is the theme of transformation and the role spirituality (inquiring into beliefs about something larger, finding meaning and purpose, locating a set of beliefs and values to live by (see Chapter Two) play in transformation. April (English) developed post partum depression after the birth of her first child. She perceived spirituality in terms of the Buddhist philosophy of living in the moment and accepting that suffering is a part of life. Her Christian heritage she argued made her feel guilty for "not being the perfect mother" (8). Similarly, Deborah (Spanish) entered a period of depression and found that an

exploration of the body, mind, spirit connection, as conceptualized in Buddhism, alleviated her symptoms. Jake (World Religions) was nearing retirement, which stimulated him to think about his personal spirituality, especially how he would bring new meaning and purpose to the next phase of his life. He conceptualized religion as the major religions he taught in his courses and spirituality to be about his personal meaning and purpose. Janis (Social Studies) also defined spirituality in terms of meaning and purpose and also a sense of connectedness. She was particularly concerned with struggling and vulnerable students who seemed not to feel a sense of connectedness or meaningfulness in their schooling or in their lives. She wondered if they would benefit from exploring their spirituality.

The goal of this study was not to pin down the concept of spirituality but to open it up. All educationists, at all levels of the hierarchy, were in keeping with the literature in the sense that the word spirituality meant different things to different people and took on different meanings at different stages of life. However, this cluster opened up the debates about the absence of space for students to process their personal orientation, and whether this was the role of post-secularization education.

5.4.5 Impact of Colonialism

A small cluster adds to de-colonization literature that develops the theme of spirituality as the process of the recovery of identity lost through colonization. Robert (Special Needs) was a descendent of Chinese railway workers during the colonial era, who were required to convert to Christianity to stay in the country

(see historical backdrop, Chapter Three). Since Christianity never felt right to him, he began to study Taoism. He described the philosophy as feeling so “natural” (84). Steve (French and Metis) was exploring his Aboriginal heritage, particularly Aboriginal approaches to wellness. Sarah (ESL) spoke of her German post-World War Two immigrant father’s attempts to integrate into Canadian society. He became “a very tough guy, real macho,” which led to a “very tumultuous household in terms of faith” (130). When he passed away, she went back to the Church for a short time, took World Religions courses at the university, attended an Aboriginal sweatlodge, read material on the Dalai Llama, and took a six month leave to travel to Germany to explore her heritage.

The data show the significance of lost identity through colonization. They support the work of de-colonists who argue that individuals should question how spirituality became colonized into a religion (Smith, 2001; Beaman, 2002; Wane, 2011; Ritskes, 2011).

5.4.6 Summary

Most of these teachers were categorized as ‘Dominant Society’ according to Canadian demographics. Whilst the Canadian government only collects data on religious affiliation, whether a person practices or not (National Household Survey, 2011) and Seljak (2009) claims that most Canadians are Christian because two-thirds of Canadians identify as Christian on the National Household Survey, the data show that this sample of Alberta teachers was changing and transforming their conceptualizations of religion and spirituality. Fadden and Townsend (2009)

and Bibby (2011) argue that the Canadian government does not collect data on the changes in the ways people believe and thus there is a lack of Canadian data for how these changes impact post-secularization institutions. In building a foundation for the Canadian and Alberta context, the findings show that teachers were changing and the traditional notion of a 'Dominant Society' in Canada, put forward by Seljak above, was changing. The findings of this study fill a gap in Canadian literature. Whilst policy-makers and administrators mainly bracketed out their personal beliefs and life-histories when they defined spirituality and religion, teachers did not. They revealed the ways their beliefs were changing and why. Whilst a minority was committed to a religion, for others religion was a prickly subject and opened some old wounds. To a degree the findings validate secularization theory and provide the 'why' for institutionalized religious authority diminishing in significance amongst this Alberta cohort.

5.5 Conceptualizations of Secular Model

The question about why teachers volunteered for a study on religion and spirituality opened up the terrain of how contemporary Alberta educationists perceived the post-secularization model in Alberta. Their reasons for volunteering were entered into a matrix. This data helps to lay the foundation for post-secularization schooling for Alberta, moving beyond Sweet (1997) and Brown's (2000) studies of the secularization era. The data show that teachers thought the degree of secularization was too high and that there was a culture of silence and caution that permeated post-secularization education institutions.

More than half the teachers and the principals argued that the degree of secularization in Alberta was too high, because in closing the door to Christianity as having a monopoly over the sacred part of life, Alberta Education closed the door for students to explore their spirituality. The data show that 13 teachers were on a personal spiritual quest, 18 teachers thought spirituality should have a role in public education, 8 teachers argued that the absence of the concept of spirituality at SSJ created a void in the organization, and 8 teachers argued that the time had come for SSJ to deal with the impact of religious/spiritual diversity amongst students. Eric (rugby coach and Fine Arts) summed up: “I wouldn’t be surprised that you’re getting a good response. It’s not because teachers have time to spare, that’s for sure, but we are interested in this type of topic” (2). In this regard, teachers were interested in having a conversation about the impact of religious/spiritual diversity and how to integrate spirituality into the system.

5.5.1 Culture of Silence and Caution

The teacher data support the view from policy-makers and senior administrators that no discussions occurred in Alberta or at SSJ about conceptualizing religion and spirituality. Yet, the concepts of religion and spirituality were important and relevant in the personal and professional lives of the teachers. In this regard, institutional secularization did not result in an endpoint, according to ‘old’ versions of secularization theory, from a teacher point of view (see Chapter Two). Some teachers were passionate about their religion

and/or spirituality. The absence of conversations at the organizational level created a knot for teachers who thought religion and spirituality should be there.

As an organization, claimed Alex (Social Studies), “we don’t talk about it” (148). The secularized model went beyond ‘leave your faith at the door’, according to George (Media Studies). Over the years, he argued the concept of “religion was viewed as useless” and became “ignored,” as though it did not even exist (14). Veronica (ESL) wondered, “is it okay to even talk about religion, and I’m curious, so I always want to talk about it” (20). In keeping with Brown’s (2000) argument that Section 24(1) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms created a litigious yet invisible boundary for teachers and compelled the absence of religion in schools, Katie (Theory of Knowledge) argued, “whenever we have a discussion about topics that are sensitive, it’s always, ‘be careful. Bring this up at your own peril. Watch how far you go” (22). In this regard, whilst teachers presented themselves as passionate about the concepts of religion and spirituality in their private lives, in their public lives teachers argued they learned they were to be cautious. Katie claimed, “Teachers know that there could be repercussions” (22). Veronica (ESL) explained that there was an assumed understanding that teachers were “not supposed to talk on sensitive issues” (114). There was an expectation, explained Eric (Rugby/Art), that they were “to leave notions of spirituality out of the discussion where possible” and he found this to be “a little bit curious” (6). A predominant perception existed amongst teachers, Eric added, that there were a “myriad of potential complications” that might arise if spirituality/religion were addressed and therefore many teachers “won’t even walk into that conversation” (142).

Teachers and principals volunteered for this study to challenge the culture of silence, caution, and the void they perceived in public education as far as the concepts of religion and spirituality were concerned. They argued that the pendulum had swung too far. Katie thought SSJ should stop “shying away from” topics related to religion/spirituality. Jake (World Religions) argued the effect of the post-secularization model was that SSJ had become a “spiritualless or spiritless” organization. He added that SSJ:

treads gently around the sentiments and feelings of things that might have to do with religious beliefs or spirituality, and then by staying away from those ideas, from staying away from those potentially controversial issues, we don't really have anything to hang our hats on. You know, we don't have a guiding principle . . . Maybe there is this huge undercurrent of spirituality that...you know, it's like being, you know, Voldemort [reference to a character in the Harry Potter novel series]; we just can't say the name.

The current post-secularization model, according to both Adam (English: 162) and Jessica (English: 44, 46), created a public space where the concept of religion/spirituality was the “elephant in the room.” The post-secularization model, they argued, needed to adapt to the fact that massive numbers of people believed in or were fascinated by the concepts that resided under the umbrella terms of religion/spirituality, which is the argument put forward by Berger (1999, 2001). He argues that when educational institutions secularize and rationalize to the degree where space for ‘thought about a transcendent reality’ are removed completely, voices will emerge to challenge the post-secularization model.

It was evident that in Alberta Education, however, the provincial government restored the rights of conservative religious families to have segregated faith-based programmes (although SSJ did not offer them). In addition, segregated

schools for Aboriginal students (and infusion of an Aboriginal worldview in mainstream curriculum) were integrated into Alberta and SSJ's post-secularization model. The data show that at SSJ only Aboriginal students' spiritual needs were conceptualized for post-secularization education. Teachers and principals argued that mainstream students' religious/spiritual needs were not conceptualized. In this regard, teachers became voices in this study to counter the post-secularization model, although their voices did not reach the level of organization decision-makers as they were not included in focus group discussions on the 'Role of Religion' discussed earlier. Eric explained that a project like this DPhil study "reminds a lot of us that, you know, that this hasn't been addressed" (6). He supported the voices of Canadian scholars who also argue that the degree of secularization was too high (Sweet, 1997; Brown, 2000; Benson, 2000; Abdi, 2011; Wane, 2011; Hart, 2011) and that mainstream public education, where the majority of students were educated, should find a more balanced educational approach somewhere between highly secularized education and faith-based education (to be developed further in Chapter Eight).

The findings indicated that religion and spirituality was conceptualized as a controversial subject in Alberta education, an 'elephant in the room', a subject that educationists had learned to cautiously tiptoe around. The effect was that religion/spirituality did not exist in any tangible way.

5.5.2 Spirituality/Religion and Secular Values

Practitioners were asked to provide their feedback on SSJ's counter secularization measures: the secular value goals (Tool C) and the new religions courses.

Teachers perceived the re-introduction of world religions courses and SSJ's values goals as positive steps in addressing the topic of religion/spirituality and student identity. However, they did not see these introductions as going far enough in dealing with the various issues related to how religious/spiritual belief and attitudes that manifested outside of courses and exercises. These teachers were not teachers of religion and their main concern was how to address religion/spirituality in their subject areas. The restoration of religions courses was a sign of change, they argued, but in contemporary Canadian society where few people were religious and where religion was a prickly subject, more change was necessary. They argued the concept of spirituality was different than religion and therefore must be treated differently.

Jake, the only teacher of world religions in this sample, thought SSJ was "doing a better job of it than before," in that the goals of citizenship, personal development and character education indicated higher order reflective thinking (126). Natalie (Assistant Principal/Phys Ed teacher) characterized the SSJ value goals as "a step closer" (16), but considered there to be "a block" (162) in the sense that SSJ only created space for students to explore their spirituality in "the box of religion" and had not yet "acknowledged that spirituality really exists" (162). Jake (World

Religions) argued that spirituality was different than religion, stating, “Spirituality transcends that” (130), referring to the new educational goals at SSJ. For Eric (Rugby/Art), “spirituality is something more than just whether you’re a good person and whether you’re meeting your own potential as a human being” (176). He earlier argued that spirituality was about asking questions about the nature of reality. Lou-Anne (Guidance) perceived SSJ’s goals as a secular “whitewash” of spirituality, which she viewed as unrelated to religion (182, 228). Natalie was concerned that the secular goals did not create the conditions to consider education as “something bigger than just teaching people to get their high school diploma” (16). Danielle (CALM) interpreted the choice of discourse in the secular goals as “carefully worded and guarded” (226).

Having interviewed policy-makers and senior administrators about the goals, the discourse, and whether or not religion/spirituality were considered in the planning stages, the data show that they perceived religion/spirituality as a segmented part of life for mainstream students that could be resolved in the private sphere and spirituality was not a lens through which to view education. A finding in this study was that the discourse of religious/spiritual appeared in planning documents but was not further conceptualized. Adam (English) argued that Canadian educationists in general had yet to acknowledge that fewer Canadians subscribed to organized religion anymore and as a consequence SSJ had not developed new tools and ways of thinking to “navigate” the contemporary subject of spirituality as a concept different than religion (174). In this regard, whilst secular goals were considered useful, they did not fully realize the changes

evident in society. Eric (Rugby/Art) likewise argued that incorporating a contemporary model of spirituality was “uncharted territory” (40). They support Abdi’s (2011) view that there were few roadmaps for Canadian researchers to follow in constructing a pioneering study of Canada’s post-secularization education system. This study offers the first articulations of Alberta educators and their attempts to navigate through the complex territory of conceptualizing religion and spirituality in post-secularization education.

5.5.3 Summary

As a starting point to conversations in Alberta, it was evident that whilst some teachers retained a religious identity and belonged to a religious community, the majority of this sample was quietly transforming away from their religious heritage and venturing onto a subjective life path as conceptualized by Roof (1999a,b), Tacey (2004), Heelas and Woodhead (2005), DeSouza (2008), Taylor (2007), and Van der Veer (2009). There was no spirituality revolution (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005; Tacey, 2004) and teachers were not engaging in ‘New Age’ spirituality (Heelas, 1993; Luckmann, 1990; Bruce, 2002). Teachers were not creating a personal spirituality, as other Canadians describe, by taking an ‘a la carte approach’ to religion (Bibby, 2006), ‘mashing together spiritual traditions’ (Fenwick & English, 2004), or ‘cobbling together religions’ (James, 2006). Educationists were more in keeping with Roof’s (1999a,b) conceptualization of reflexive spirituality and Taylor’s (2007) conceptualization of the ‘subjective life turn’ (see Chapter Two). Further, some of the teachers did not want to associate

their personal spirituality with the word religion. In this regard, religion was perceived as a paradigm of tenets and rituals shared by a community and spirituality was about autonomy, critical inquiry, and reflexivity. However, the data show that religious teachers felt hurt that they could not be open about their religious identity. Despite personal orientations, all teachers had learned that they were to be cautious and not bring religious/spiritual themes into their lessons. They thought that the pendulum had swung too far in terms of the degree of secularization and they sought to voice their concerns in this study.

5.6 Hierarchical Coherence and Conclusion

The data demonstrate that Alberta educationists, at all levels of the hierarchy, differentiated between the concepts of religion and spirituality. There was a clear boundary between how educationists conceptualized religion (as organized religions) and spirituality (as a subjective and unique perspective on life experience). Policy-makers and senior administrators had an understanding of the concept of a personal spirituality, but unlike practitioners they did not mention that they were passionate (except for Trustee Jones) or engaged in a conscious pursuit of their spirituality.

Alberta Education and SSJ had changed the post-secularization model to the extent that they re-inserted traditional world religions courses and lunch time prayer activities in SSJ's post-secularization model and retained a de-Christianized format of education. Trustees had yet to consider the impact of the transformation of belief at SSJ or think about religious/spiritual belief as a concept bigger than

activities. Teachers argued that spirituality was larger than religion and was an integral part of everyday life. They thought policy-makers and senior administrators only conceptualized spirituality in the 'box' or 'package' of organized religion. Several practitioners opened up about their deep wounds associated with religion and argued that spirituality was about autonomy, critical inquiry, and reflexivity. Whilst policy-makers and senior administrators had filled the void for Aboriginal students, it was not filled for the 'Dominant Society' or the 'Immigrant Communities'.

In Chapter Six, educationists refined their conceptualizations of religion and spirituality for post-secularization education purposes by making decisions about which dimensions of religion and spirituality should be included or excluded from the bounded system of Alberta public post-secularization education.

6.0 CHAPTER SIX

Traditional to Contemporary Conceptualizations: The Boundaries

This chapter presents the findings for research question two:

Which conceptualizations of religion/spirituality do teachers, administrators, and policy-makers think should be included or excluded from educational mandates or teacher lesson objectives and activities and why?

Research Question 2 required respondents to think about the horizon of conceptualizations of religion and spirituality. Interview Tools A, B, and D (see Appendix for descriptions) were used as heuristic devices to take Alberta educationists systematically through traditional conceptualizations of religion (mandatory religions courses, collective worship, in the main Christian, and parental rights) and non-traditional conceptualizations (England's eight conceptualizations of 'spiritual development'). The research goal was to find out which conceptualizations of religion and spirituality should be included or excluded from Alberta's post-secularization model. It was confirmed in Chapter Five that these educationists did not have formal written policy and curriculum, yet the concepts of religion and spirituality were developed in the consciousness of

educationists. The interview design was expected to draw out conceptualizations that resided in the consciousness of educationists.

6.1 Policy-makers, Trustees, Senior Administrators:

Traditional Conceptualizations

An unexpected finding was that the government body responsible for provincial curriculum and evaluation had recently re-drafted Alberta curriculum to include the concept of ‘multiple perspectives’. This new curriculum change anchored the interview questions and the movement through Interview Tools A, B, and D. Was religion and spirituality conceptualized as a dimension of ‘multiple perspectives’?

6.1.1 New Alberta Curriculum

Once the concept of ‘multiple perspectives’ was introduced in the interview conversations, I proposed to the Minister that teachers did not necessarily know the acceptable boundary for multiple perspectives as far as the extent they could include themes related to religion and spirituality (see Chapter Five). The Minister’s interview was conducted last, which offered an opportunity to bring the voices of teachers and principals to the attention of the Minister. The Minister responded:

The language, though, actually drives me crazy. I mean, it’s a perfectly valid question, but the idea that we’re allowed or not allowed to do anything in a learning environment is ridiculous, to be frank (26).

The Minister argued that there was no boundary for how teachers conceptualized religion/spirituality in their practices as long as they did not proselytize or position one religious/spiritual view above another.

Cora, the provincial curriculum specialist, provided insight into the ‘multiple perspectives’ initiative since she participated in the decision-making for it. The goal, according to Cora, was for Alberta students to gain a global view of issues. Multiple perspectives, Cora explained, were the “cornerstone” of Social Studies curriculum (62). When asked if the religious and spiritual perspectives were included in the theme of multiple perspectives Cora responded that it was not. This finding supports and extends Sweet (1997), Brown (2000), Seljak (2006) and Abdi’s (2011) studies, demonstrating that religion/spirituality continued to be a marginalized topic in Canadian education and in Alberta the religious/spiritual perspective was excluded as a legitimate form of knowledge or orientation to the world. It also supports Kunz (2009), Gaye and Kunz (2009), and Fadden and Townsend’s (2009) studies’ claim that Canadian policy-makers and senior administrators tended to be reluctant to adopt a distinct policy lens for the concepts of religion/spirituality.

At the institutional management level, only Senior Administrator Marilyn (Learning Innovations) spoke of ‘multiple perspectives’ as it was part of her portfolio to ensure that teachers were integrating this theme into their lessons. She explained that teachers, especially Social Studies teachers, were required to present competing perspectives and values that might bring societies together or tear them apart so that students would develop a deep understanding of global

perspectives and build tolerance for alternative values to their own. Like the Minister, she was adamant that teachers were required to include multiple perspectives, including religious/spiritual perspectives, however this interpretation was not explicitly articulated in curriculum materials for teachers. This finding extends Jackson (2007) and Grimmitt's (2010) studies on the European context where social cohesion was an important educational issue. They support the idea that Religious Education could function as a mechanism to build understanding, tolerance, and social cohesion. In Alberta, social cohesion was conceptualized in terms of 'multiple perspectives' and religion and spirituality were excluded from the framework. In this regard, it appeared that the exclusion of religion/spirituality in the 'multiple perspectives' model meant that religious values and perspectives and issues of religious intolerance were not up for debate in the social cohesion Alberta model.

6.1.2 Parental Rights

The issue of the intention behind Alberta's latest Bill 44 rights (Chapter Three and Tool D) was an a priori theme and was used to understand how parental rights were conceptualized in Alberta schooling. In 2009/2010, the provincial government increased parental rights, offering parents the constitutional right to remove their children from lessons on religion, sexuality, and sexual orientation. Teachers who explored these topics without parental consent might be required to defend themselves in a human rights tribunal should a parent launch a petition. Included in this finding is that the increase in parental rights coincided with the

provincial government's latest curriculum theme of 'multiple perspectives'. Whilst the government expanded the boundary to include 'multiple perspectives', it at the same time increased the litigious boundary for teachers, possibly making them even more cautionary about what they might include or exclude in their lessons. This study provides an intimate view into the intention of the latest Bill in relation to conceptualizations of religion and spirituality, as the Minister was involved in passing the Bill in the Alberta Legislature. The government delegated the responsibility of conceptualizing Bill 44 and creating mechanisms to ensure compliance to the Bill to individual school jurisdictions. Data collection for this study occurred in the time period set out by the government.

The data show that Minister Hancock minimized the power of Bill 44 to affect school practices and act as a boundary for teachers. He described the debate about Bill 44 as having "got off the rails badly" (19). The intention, as he perceived it, was to promote the concept of a religiously/spiritually sensitive practice. Teachers were not to engage in explicit teaching about religion (he did not mention spirituality) except in the World Religions and Aboriginal Studies courses (32), where there were curriculum guidelines and parents signed a permission note prior to students taking the courses. The Minister argued that parents had the right to know how religion was presented to their children:

If you're teaching about my religion or you're teaching my child about other religions, I want to know because I want to know what you're teaching them. I want to be able to exempt my student if *we disagree* (24, my italics).

A sensitive practice, he argued, was to be aware of the family background of all of the children in the classroom and "adapt their teaching to who they're teaching"

(24). Hancock cited an example from his son's teaching experience in a rural school where the parents were from a fairly homogenous group of conservative Christians. His son could not talk about the book and film series of *Harry Potter* because the community where he worked was opposed to the themes (witchcraft, for example) in the literature. In this regard, the Minister's view was that teachers should know their students' religious views and not interfere with them. He expected that in a religiously/spiritually diverse context such as SSJ these issues would be rare. In this regard, teachers could take up themes related to religion/spirituality as they arose implicitly.

In the interview, I tested the Minister's understanding of the boundary for teacher practice and parental rights by sharing my experience of being accused of witchcraft for using the Chinese/Vietnamese horoscope as a vocabulary-building tool during Chinese/Vietnamese New Year (see Prologue). His response was that the administrator mismanaged the complaint, stating:

If there's anything scary about parental rights, I suppose it's that people would assume that because you've used the term *parental rights*, it means that you have to actually jump through hoops every time a parent calls, and the reality is, what you want to do is include them in the process and help them understand what's going on, not do what they say . . . There has to be judgment; there has to be a process to involve that judgment. And that's, in the process of a school system, a teacher has to use judgment with respect to what's right in their community (90).

Teachers in Canada had a great deal of autonomy over their teaching practices and therefore it would seem the Minister was saying that teachers could bring the concepts of religion and spirituality into their practices, but they were to use professional judgment in doing so. In this regard, the Minister supported teacher

professionalism and did not perceive Bill 44 as a significant boundary-setting device.

At the institutional level, Connors (advocate for personal spirituality) and Jones (advocate for funding of faith-based schooling) provided conflicting views (also noted in Chapter Five) on the intention of Bill 44. Connors described public education as the “everybody system” (8), meaning that it was responsible for the education of the majority of students and included the spectrum of beliefs. Her interpretation of Bill 44 was not that it was designed to increase teacher sensitivity but that it was to protect the rights of conservative religious families to have authority over their children’s religious/spiritual views. Her attitude was that these families:

want to control what their children are taught, and they might not want that conversation where you legitimize other perspectives by simply allowing them to be expressed (42).

Her use of the word legitimize was telling. Her view resonated with my Chinese/Vietnamese New Year anecdote. She perceived the government’s intention as “the desire to sort of pull us back to a different time when we weren’t quite so diverse” (44). She presented the conflict for educationists in secular education systems in that they may become caught between a parent who conceptualized religion as a family issue and their own conceptualization that public education should serve to foster individuality and autonomy in students:

Students may come from a home where people are saying, ‘This is the way it is. Here’s our book that we use. Here’s what it says. Here’s what you will believe.’ And then they’re dropped into this public education system that, as we move to more personalized learning, say, ‘Okay,

you're an autonomous human being. Your job is to figure out who you are, what your place is, what are your questions? And we'll support that, make sure you have the skills, the basic tools to do that, but to find your own way. And in that way you may need to ask yourself, *What is God? Is there a God? Do I believe in God?* And that may be directly challenging positions that are taken in the home, right (94)?

Jones supported Bill 44 and provided a contrasting view to Trustee Connors:

'I don't want my public education to tear [my religious beliefs] down. I've been teaching and instructing and training and modeling my child for the last, about fifteen years. Now you're going to come along and say: Actually, you need to critically look at everything you believe, because if you don't, you won't be able to fully appreciate these things over here,' and that's the stakeholder challenge (143).

In this regard, Trustee Jones advocated for post-secularization education remaining the way it was so that religious children were not caught in a school system that might in some way challenge beliefs. I asked Trustee Jones how many parents he thought shared his views. He said that he did not know since no one had ever asked the question before. I asked this question because religious parents have several options in Alberta: Catholic schools, alternative programme in a nearby public school jurisdiction, private school, or home school. I wondered how many parents did not want their children to think about and articulate their beliefs and wonders and learn about alternative views to their own. The data extend Milot and Trembley (2009) and Morrison's (2008) study on the province of Quebec's treatment of diversity by providing a contrasting Alberta example. In Quebec, provincial leaders argue that it is a global citizenship responsibility (no exemption) to understand one's own religious/spiritual viewpoints in relation to alternative views.

It was expected that the interview would capture data for how SSJ senior administrators conceptualized 'religious theme' and how they constructed mechanisms to ensure understanding of and compliance to the Bill. I had imagined that the introduction of the Bill would have become a catalyst for debate at the management level. In England, the introduction of the policy changes for 'spiritual development' in the 1944, 1988, and 1992 Education Acts (see Chapter Four) sparked debate and also deliberative measures on the part of the National Curriculum Council and Ofsted to conceptualize 'spiritual development'. One of the results was the production of the eight conceptualizations of 'spiritual development' used in this study.

The data, for this study, however, show that Trustees and the senior administrators selected for this study (portfolios related to conceptualizing diversity and learning innovations) had not engaged in any conceptualizing negotiations. Indeed, most senior administrators were confused as to whether or not the government had passed the Bill in the Legislature. Yet, the senior administrator interviews were conducted at the tail end of the school year (June) and the government's directive was that schools were to be compliant by the start of the new school year in September. Christine thought the government "didn't actually pass it" (104). June was under the impression that the Bill was not passed because there was much opposition to it because it was too extreme (107) as "it could inhibit work and dialogue and so on quite a bit" (107). Marilyn knew the Bill had passed but she did not think that it was an institutional responsibility to conceptualize the meaning of 'religious theme' and/or differentiate it from a 'spiritual theme'. She said that SSJ was "waiting for a case to surface so we could

understand the parameters of it” (163). This meant that SSJ was waiting for a teacher to cross the interpretive boundary of Bill 44 and be called before a human rights tribunal. June concluded that it was unlikely teachers would introduce religious themes because “religion is something that the family and the community need to support” (69). In other words, due to privatization of religion this cohort argued that including the concept of religion was not a function of public education. This viewpoint supports the privatization argument in secularization theory (see Chapter Two). By privatizing religion and placing it as a ‘role of home’, not a ‘role of school’, public schools became ‘religion free’. The privatization rationale created a knot for teachers who argued in Chapter Five that religion and spirituality should be addressed in schools.

Whilst the expectation was that interview questions about Bill 44 would clarify the notion of what was meant by religious theme it did not accomplish this goal because the purposive sample had not engaged in a deliberative attempt to conceptualize the notion of ‘religious theme’.

6.1.3 Religions Courses

Findings from Chapter Five show that SSJ introduced two of the three optional provincial curriculums for World Religions courses. The method for opening up the discussions on traditional boundaries was to use England’s national goal of ‘spiritual development’ and mandatory Religious Education, mandatory daily collective worship, and the ‘in the main Christian’ clause as educational concepts in the context of Alberta’s optional religions classes, optional religious exercises, and

de-Christianization of schools (see Appendix: Tool A). The implications for employing this device in this study were addressed in Chapter Four.

The role of policy-makers, according to Luhmann (1977, 1977), is to understand the needs of the population the system is to serve. This cohort on the whole perceived the value in Alberta students having an understanding of different religions but did not think that an Alberta population would respond well to mandated courses. This conflicted with the Alberta School Act (Section 50(1)) that stipulated schools were entitled to mandate Religious Instruction. In Canada's interpretive model, it would seem that institutional leaders could re-interpret 'religious instruction' to meet the needs of a diverse population. However, the Minister of Education was opposed to the idea of mandatory courses in general, arguing that they created resistance. Choice, he argued, was a fundamental Alberta value.

SSJ's Trustees and senior administrators perceived the inclusion of their two World Religions courses as a radical and defiant move on the part of Trustees to disrupt the boundary of Alberta's 'leave your faith at the door' post-secularization model. The data show that the re-insertion of the courses was to disrupt the status quo resistance to diversity as an Alberta cultural fact. Christine, for example, made the generalized claim that Albertans tended to be "conservative" in their religious beliefs (4). Similarly, Beth described some Albertans as "terribly conservative when it comes to receptivity of those who are not the same as the dominant culture" (Beth, 78). Connors mentioned earlier that this group did not want

alternative worldviews to be 'legitimized'. Whether or not this perception of Albertans was representative of the majority or minority is unverifiable.

Nevertheless, the data do not support Berger's (1999, 2001) argument that a rationalized voice blocks efforts to counter a secular model. Indeed, the data show that it was a conservatively religious voice that influenced policy-makers to retain a 'leave your faith at the door' model. The data do not support Benson (2000) and Brown's (2000) argument that Canadian educational policy-makers kept schools 'religion free' because they were 'anti-religious'. The data show that Alberta education policy-makers wanted to avoid the potential problems that a conservatively religious segment of the Dominant Society might raise if Alberta adapted to the transformation of belief that an immigrant and a changing Dominant Society brought to public education. The data support Bruce (2002) and Taylor's (2007) view that immigration and the exposure to alternative religious/spiritual viewpoints can lead to individuals separating from their religious heritage. In this case, the re-introduction of optional religions courses with students having written permission from parents was a way of bringing religion back into schools whilst not disrupting parents who wanted to preserve their children's religious beliefs and values.

Exposure to England's post-secularization model where Religious Education (with opt-out) was treated as an important educational concept in comparison to Alberta's post-secularization model opened up discussions about the role of religions courses in a diverse society. Director Joseph argued that the inclusion of World Religions courses was a positive step toward fostering in students "a

broader global understanding of other global issues and a better sense of global awareness” (4). June argued:

a well-educated person today should understand what we mean when we say someone’s a practicing Buddhist or whatever, what are the major tenets of Buddhism, Judaism, but that’s it. It’s not to get into values of whether this is right or wrong. And I think that, you know, the growth and the change and the history of religions and how they’ve influenced the world (71).

The tension that existed, according to Joseph, was that for many Canadians the word religion “brings with it considerable baggage in itself” (30). This baggage was evident in the teacher life-history cases portrayed in Chapter Five. Therefore, mandating courses was perceived as problematic. The data support Jackson’s (2007) findings (see Chapter Two) that at European meetings about citizenship, delegates representing Religious Education were often treated with suspicion.

The data show that policy-makers and senior administrators agreed with the concept of students learning about a variety of religions, but an additional stumbling block for promoting the religions courses as an educational issue was its perception that it would be impossible for teachers to remain neutral in the teaching of World Religions curriculum and this would defeat the purpose of offering the course. Administrators were concerned that teachers might take the liberty of having “an agenda” (Joseph: 26), promote a particular perspective (Beth: 177), or cross the line and consciously or unconsciously proselytize, or break the code of impartiality by revealing their own religious identity/beliefs (Joseph: 26). Beth’s statement summarized:

Teachers are in a position of authority, and the opportunity to influence students about their personal religious beliefs should be treated in the same way as questions about political and moral beliefs, views on sexuality and orientation are treated. Members are encouraged to involve students in objective discussions of religion, moral, and spiritual topics whenever such topics become relevant in the curriculum without stating their own personal religious beliefs (149).

The data support Gravel's (2015) study of Quebec teachers to a degree. She argues that impartiality, defined in her study as the teacher not presenting his/her viewpoint, is an ideal but in fact is impossible. She finds that teacher viewpoints are visible through classroom displays, choices of readings, and topics of class discussion. The knot that existed was whether to remove religions courses because of the potential influence of teacher beliefs, or include them and educate teachers about the implications of being a religions teacher. In Alberta, the religions teachers were not trained in their subject matter. The complication Gravel found was that her sample of teachers argued that students wanted to know the teacher's position on various religious/spiritual themes.

In Director Joseph's case he wondered about a teacher's role in challenging student beliefs and the student's ability to articulate a particular stance (46). He drew on the example of France's policy on wearing a hijab or burka:

Do we have a debate in the classroom or not? And are we willing to let that debate...? And, you know, if we don't allow the debate, you know, does that mean that we're just shutting up the voice of those students (50)?

Joseph's concern, however, was that teachers might in some way impose their views on students instead of liberate the student to think for him or herself.

Whilst the Minister of Education thought teachers were professionals and would use professional judgment in dealing with religious/spiritual themes, senior administrators thought teachers lacked the ability to use professional judgment when establishing a boundary for their personal viewpoints.

6.1.4 Religious Exercises

The Alberta School Act stipulates that schools have the right to offer mandatory religious exercises (with opt-out). At SSJ, students have the right to form prayer/worship groups at lunch-time as long as they have a teacher supervisor. This cohort was exposed to England's model where mandatory 'collective worship' (with opt-out) was an educational concept for all students. The Minister cited the School Act and argued that schools had choice. SSJ policy-makers and administrators, however, was coherent in stating that it would not bring in mandatory religious exercises to SSJ.

6.1.5 Christian Heritage

At the provincial level and jurisdiction level, policy-makers and administrators agreed that it had no plans to re-Christianize Alberta education in any degree.

6.2 Non-traditional Conceptualizations

In this section, this cohort examined England's National Curriculum Council's conceptualization of 'spiritual development' (see Appendix: Tool B). Educationists

made decisions about which of the eight conceptualizations could be included and which should be excluded in Alberta's post-secularization model. A short version of the document is: 1) beliefs that shape identity, 2) sense of awe, wonder, and mystery, 3) experiencing feelings of transcendence, 4) search for meaning and purpose, 5) self-knowledge, 6) relationships, 7) creativity, and 8) feelings and emotions. The use of England's curriculum document proved worthwhile because it provided a concrete and explicit set of conceptualizations that could reside under the umbrellas of religion and spirituality or the SSJ goals of character education, personal development, or citizenship. In Alberta's context where there was no written document and educationists operated from vague and interpretive understandings of religion/spirituality, the written text was valuable in being a mechanism to locate the boundary for conceptualizations of religion and spirituality.

6.2.1 Written Documents

Overall, policy-makers and administrators regarded the written document and the mandate for 'spiritual development' as a government directive. Since the secularization era, the government took a 'hands-off' approach to defining religion or spirituality for Canadians (see Chapter Three: Charter of Rights and Freedoms). As governance officers, this sample did not want to venture into the territory of pinning down religion and spirituality and constructing a similar document.

The Minister's immediate reaction to the document was that it contained "trigger words" that carried "baggage for people" in Alberta (66). Trustee Smith argued the document would "cross the line" (153) between the role of school and

the role of home. Conversely, Trustee Connors perceived the document as “remarkable” (70) and “fabulous” (88). Similarly, Joseph described the document as presenting an “inclusive” approach to religion and spirituality, one that could contribute to the notion of “personalized learning,” an SSJ initiative (20). However, Beth, June, and Marilyn disagreed that all eight conceptualizations belonged under the concept of ‘spiritual development’. Beth did not think meaning and purpose was a dimension of ‘spiritual development’ (188). Marilyn argued that SSJ addressed many of the conceptualizations but did not situate them under the umbrella of ‘spiritual development’, religion, or spirituality (to be unpacked further).

6.2.2 Inclusion/Exclusion

It was hoped that policy-makers and administrators would create an argument for each of the conceptualizations, but instead they honed in on ‘experiencing transcendence’, beliefs in a transcendent reality, and beliefs in God as problematic concepts on the document. Minister Hancock objected to teachers presenting multiple perspectives on “an afterlife” (66), which conflicted with his earlier argument that the theme of ‘multiple perspectives’ included everything and that there were no boundaries for teachers. Trustee Jones (Evangelical Pastor) argued this dimension would push “the boundaries beyond the acceptable, to a certain segment of public education supported in our society” (66). He thought directives would be a “violation” of parental rights (10); parents would ask, “So, when did public education take on the role of introducing people to the divine (74)?” He did not perceive the written document as permission for students to bring their

conceptualizations of God to their learning. Director Christine was opposed to teachers “going down any path around whether God exists or not” (84), or if ghosts exist (in reference to a question regarding *Hamlet*), or engage in discussions about “the big questions” (84). Beth stated, “I don’t think that we would get into transcending and all of that kind of stuff” (162).

In these first articulations of Alberta policy-makers it became apparent that they were reluctant to open the boundary of post-secularization education to include a belief in a transcendent reality. Put differently, they were reluctant to change the rationalized curriculum that was presented to mainstream Alberta students. In secularization theory, as it relates to explanations for the secularization process, the construct of how schools deal with the notion of a transcendent reality is an important one (see template). The findings demonstrate that the boundary for post-secularization education, where a belief in a transcended reality was excluded as a perspective (multiple perspectives), conflicts with the fundamental right of religious freedom. In this regard, Alberta students it can be argued were not enabled to exercise their right to religious freedom and belief in God. Most organized religions are systematized around a conceptualization of a transcendent reality (Luckmann, 1990; Berger, 1967; Smart, 1989; Luhmann, 2013). The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) stipulates that a belief in ‘God’ is a fundamental human right. Further, it conflicts with James (1902), Otto (1923, 1958), Frankl (1959), Maslow (1968), Hardy (1979), Persinger et. al., (2010), Hay (2006), and Hamer (2004) who argue that ‘experiencing transcendence’ is a fairly common everyday experience and part of the human condition. Indeed, Persinger and Hamer argue that it is possible that human beings are hard-wired for

transcendent thought and experience. In this regard, the perception that a transcendent reality or experience was taboo conflicted with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and with the theory that thinking about a transcendent reality is part of the human condition.

Trustee Connors offered a contrasting view, however, perceiving ‘experiencing transcendence’ in terms of being “lifted above your ordinary” (118) and being “lifted to a higher plane” (118) and a “higher purpose” (118). Her view was more in keeping with the findings of the researchers noted above. Indeed, Hardy, Maslow, and Frankl’s studies show that integrating the meaning of transcendent experience into life has health benefits and may increase longevity. Trustee Connors argued that engaging students in thinking about their higher purpose rather than just thinking of education in terms of getting a good mark on an exam would be beneficial. However, Christine explained, “In Alberta, policy would say that that would not be in the mandate of education” (10) and “as a culture that that’s one of the things that family had wanted to have domain over as opposed to the school” (8). Furthermore, she argued:

In terms of talking with a child about whether or not what they’re feeling is about the existence of a divine being or their personal resiliency, I’m not sure that’s an area that we would feel confident and competent to help students distinguish that or to try and help them define and identify that feeling of transcendence and what it meant to them (62).

Trustee Jones thought teachers would “step over a line and start advocating on a particular issue where they should not be advocating” (10). Trustee Smith asked, “How far can a teacher go as opposed to is it something that should be done at

home” (91)? Director Christine argued that students who wanted to learn more about or discuss transcendent experience should seek “pastoral support outside in the community” (12), not in schools. However, Canadian data show that only 16 per cent of Canadians attend a religious institution of any kind any more (Lindsay, 2008; Clark, 2000). In this regard, it is uncertain how or where Director Christine thought everyday students were to find a resolution to their religious/spiritual questions in the private sphere. This cohort did not support the rationalization argument as an explanation for keeping a ‘transcendent reality’ out of post-secularization schools (see Chapter Two, particularly Berger, 1999, 2001). The motivation behind a ‘transcendent reality free’ programme of studies was to avoid controversy that a conservatively religious community might arouse.

To test the Minister’s objection about multiple perspectives on ‘the afterlife’, I asked him to offer insight into how the plays *Macbeth* (theme of witchcraft) and *Hamlet* (theme of ghosts) should be treated. Upon reflection he did not think that these topics trespassed a boundary. This prompted him to think about the religious/spiritual backdrop to Social Studies curriculum, arguing:

if you’re talking about what’s happening in the Middle East, you can’t do that without some discussion about the fact that there’s a Jewish state and there are Islamic states and that has an impact (19).

I tested for whether or not teachers could pose the question: “Is there a God?” (109) The boundary he drew was in terms of a teacher-generated question or a student-generated question:

And it might be a boundary if the teacher framed the classroom question around “Is there a God?” but if a student raised the question about it in the context of something you were talking about, wouldn’t it be a wonderful discussion (110)?

In this regard teachers should be responsive, not directive.

When Director Joseph perceived ‘experiencing transcendence’ as “a challenge” (20), I told him about my professional dilemma about students wondering if they were allowed to wonder (see Prologue). He could not comprehend why students would not be allowed to question, “Is God real?” Yet, it was evident that this cohort did not think it appropriate for discussions about God to occur. Joseph wondered how SSJ had reached “the point where kids would wonder, ‘Can I even wonder that at school or not?’ Well, of course you can” (54). However, in Chapter Five teachers argued that they were to be cautious about dealing with issues related to religion/spirituality and most teachers, outside of this sample, would rather not.

Trustee Jones (Evangelical Pastor) was the most opposed to students engaging in critical inquiry about their beliefs, or teachers introducing dimensions of belief (e.g., the concept of God) to students. I shared my ‘wonders story’ with him as well. The opportunity for conversation and exposure to alternative perspectives shifted his thinking:

So, these kids said, ‘Can I ask these questions?’ Why would they do that? Why would they say, ‘Can I ask these questions?’ What happened to lead people in high school to say, ‘Can I ask these questions?’ What is it about public education the way we structured it, delivered it, our habits as a system, whatever that would lead students to say, ‘Can I actually ask this question’ (94)?

He thought that perhaps students were asking if they were allowed to ask “deep questions” because they thought a post-secularization Alberta education was:

about getting a job; education is about skill sets; education is about vocation, money for the future and graduating and all the rest of that. That’s what education is about (102).

He wondered if adolescents who turned to drugs, alcohol, and cutting and burning themselves were struggling with their spirituality. He shifted his perspective, describing Alberta Education as a “truncated experience” (86).

6.3 Summary

This qualitative study is significant because it unearthed how policy-makers had conceptualized religion and spirituality in Alberta schooling. The Alberta Ministry of Education and the Division of Curriculum added the theme of ‘multiple perspectives’ to curriculum objectives, which would seem that this was evidence that it was adapting its post-secularization model to address growing diversity, but a religious/spiritual perspective was not included in the overall concept. There was a general lack of understanding that the concepts of religion and spirituality existed outside of religions courses and Aboriginal studies. Exposure to England’s horizon of concepts for ‘spiritual development’ proved to be a useful device to unearth the boundary for which conceptualizations of religion/spirituality could be included or should be excluded and which voices had the power to influence policy-makers. Conceptualizations of a transcendent reality and a transcendent experience were identified as too sensitive and controversial for an Alberta population. Ironically, it was not mentioned that rationalists complained if teachers ventured into this territory. Indeed, the majority of educationists to some

degree believed in some sort of 'transcendent reality'. Conservative Christians were identified as the reason for keeping religion out of schools. There was a boundary between the role of post-secularization education and the role of home (parental rights). In this regard, the secularization process in Alberta was not a process where state and church/religion were separated (as presented in Chapter Two, particularly referenced in terms of a European interpretation of the secularization process). The separation was between school and home. Keeping religious/spiritual themes out of schools was a way not to interfere with the religious/spiritual identities of children that were nurtured at home. The potential of teacher impartiality was a significant reason for keeping religion and spirituality out of the 'multiple perspectives' curriculum framework and out of schools altogether, except in the three world religions and Aboriginal studies courses.

6.4 Principals and Teachers: Traditional Conceptualizations

Practitioners were taken through the same interview process as policy-makers and administrators, providing their insights on the boundary for religions courses and exercises and making decisions about the boundary for the horizon of conceptualizations related to religion and spirituality. Teachers did not bring up the 'multiple perspectives' theme and indeed I only learned about it in the last round of interviews, which suggested that either little had been done to offer teachers professional development for 'multiple perspectives' or teachers did not associate religion/spirituality with the 'multiple perspectives' theme.

6.4.1 Religions Courses

Teachers and principals saw the value in World Religions courses and perceived Alberta's re-insertion of religions courses as a sign of progress, despite many of them personally distancing from their religious heritage (see Chapter Five). Geoff (Science) argued the courses suggested that SSJ was "going small steps in the right direction" (68). Kevin (Art) similarly noted, "It sounds like we're starting off where [England] started off already" (222). Indeed after being exposed to England's mandatory approach to Religious Education half of the teachers were supportive of the idea of mandating at least one course at the secondary level. They were not advocating that Religious Education as a concept should be integrated into Alberta's post-secularization model, but that at least one religions course would be beneficial.

The main reason offered for mandating a course was that practitioners thought being educated about religions might resolve some isolated incidents of intolerance, racism, and misperceptions about religions amongst students. The diversity of religions and attitudes toward religions that students brought to school with them was beginning to surface at school, and this was causing some problems. Natalie (Phys Ed) recounted an event where Jewish students on her soccer team were chased off the field, Sarah (ESL) spoke of a student who wrote in his journal that his role in life was to kill Christians, and a student asked Caitlyn if God only answered the prayers of Christians. Donna (CALM) was angry that Lebanese students tore up the small Canadian flags they were given to celebrate the Olympics and threw them on the floor. Marie (French) wanted to be a voice for

what she perceived to be the marginalized Christian voice in public education. Alex (Social Studies) was deliberately supporting Muslim male students and addressing issues of radicalism in a Friday afternoon Islamic prayer group. Sheila (English) was disturbed with students from Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, who would not stand for two minutes of silence at the Remembrance Day assembly (112). Sheila (English, same school as Alex) argued, “Sometimes the encouragement to be strong in their faith comes at the expense of others” (100). Both Sheila and Julia (English teachers at the same school as Alex) noted that some students would not read a book about Afghanistan if they were from Lebanon. Sheila claimed that their school suffered from “rampant intolerance” (104).

It was argued that religions courses had the potential to be spaces for students to learn how to “smooth out social unrest” (Veronica: 26), “learn to resolve differences” (Stuart: English, 274), clear up “misperceptions” and “negative stereotypes” (Jake: World Religions, 68), expose students to alternative perspectives to what they learn at home (Stuart: English/post-Mormon), and model critical thinking and conflict resolution (Steve: French). Caitlyn perceived World Religions as a “safe, moderated space” to “ask the big questions” and foster “sensitivity to the common thread” of religions (188). Kevin thought students could “figure out where they are in the universe” (146) and Sheila (English) thought courses could engender in students the notion that they belonged to a “global village and inclusive society” (Sheila: English, 98). Whilst George (Media Studies) argued that it would be “ridiculous to think [mandatory World Religions] would eradicate misunderstanding,” it could curb the distribution of “false

information” about religions (58). April (English) found that some students claimed to be of a certain religious faith but had a limited understanding of beliefs and practices of that faith. George (Media Studies) thought courses would enable students to personalize and identify with a religion or culture that perhaps seemed like ‘other’.

The data support Jackson (2007) and Grimmitt’s (2010) argument that religions courses can be mechanisms to address social cohesion issues. However, some teachers raised the issue that course designs might provoke more problems. Julia (English) argued that it was impossible to provide a neutral approach since decisions needed to be made about “dominant beliefs, texts, and which beliefs and texts come first” (50). Likewise, Adam (English) was concerned with which “epistemological authority is considered valuable, especially in terms of a postmodern society” (78). Marie argued that the absence of teacher training for the courses was also problematic.

The other half of the sample argued that religions courses should not be conceptualized as spaces for students to develop a personal spirituality, since they did not view institutionalized religion as an authority on the sacred dimension of life. As noted in Chapter Five, the concept of religion had baggage for some teachers. Danielle argued that as soon as the label ‘World Religions’ was put on top of the idea of a belief in a higher force or essence it limited it (112). This is in keeping with de-colonists who argue that schools should not ‘colonize’ the broad notion of spirituality into a religions paradigm (see Chapter Three: Smith, 2001;

Wane, 2011; Ritskes, 2011; Abdi, 2011). It is also in keeping with scholars who argue that the space for children to think about religious/spiritual issues should not be linked to 'Religious Education' or religions courses (see Dewey, 1959; Maslow, 1968; Hay, 2006; Tacey, 2004; Erricker, 2007; Van der Veer, 2009).

The interview became a catalyst for a small cluster of teachers to re-imagine the function of a traditional model beyond the boundary of World Religions courses. Heather (Social Studies) described an imaginary course where reflexive spirituality and philosophy would be the framework and religions would be 'a' way that students might organize their spiritual beliefs and practices. She would use a "journey of discovery" approach from grade 10 through to grade 12 (150). Her emphasis would be on "becoming a better human being" (152). Alex (Social Studies) would bring in the religious backdrop of Social Studies curriculum. Julia (English) would use novels, short stories, plays, poetry and film as a way for students to explore their own religious/spiritual beliefs as they negotiated their own beliefs and experiences in relation to the characters in literature and the themes put forward by the author. Michael (Principal) thought one 'religions module', rather than a course, could be integrated in Social Studies curriculum at the elementary, junior high, and senior high level.

All in all, there was a lack of consensus over the way religion, and the function of religions courses, should be conceptualized for post-secularization education. The interview stimulated some teachers to re-conceptualize traditional religions courses into different models. Teachers, however, were clear in saying that

conceptualizing religion in schools was not the same as conceptualizing spirituality.

6.4.2 Religious Exercises

Teachers explained that religious students had the right to form a club and pray during lunchtime, as long as they had a teacher supervisor. Marie and Danielle (same school) spoke of a Christian and Muslim lunchtime club at their school and Alex (different school) facilitated the Muslim prayer group on Friday at his school. However, Danielle found that principals of schools were not always neutral in terms of decision-making about which religions were acceptable. At a former school a small group of students put in a request to the principal for a Wiccan club, but the request was denied. In her current school her principal Matthew approved the club.

The use of the concept ‘collective worship’ on Tool A as opposed to Alberta’s policy discourse of ‘religious exercises’ opened up teachers to the two notions, collective and worship. For teachers, particularly those that went to Catholic school or who had overly litigious parents, the concept of ‘collective worship’ conjured bitter memories of prayer services that were attended prior to respondents’ shift toward a personal spirituality. Geoff (Catholic schooling), for example, described collective worship as an “odd term” (72) and remembered it as “go to church, get on your knees” (74). Donna (Catholic schooling) responded, “define worship” (32). In her view, “worship is celebrating some deity, some god, some power greater than themselves” (34) and does not belong in a secularized public school. Similarly, Joyce (strict Catholic upbringing) argued that collective

worship “belongs in your religion, your church, your mosque,” not in a public school (106). Stuart (antitheist/post-Mormon) more adamantly described collective worship as “utterly repugnant” (90). Eric (Catholic school) and Molly (father was a Minister) reacted to the word collective. Molly grew up attending church and that generated in her an attitude, “Whenever I see anything that’s like religious people under the same roof, it scares the hell out of me” (42). Eric remembered the experience from his Catholic schooling as “fascinating” (184). However, he thought a relationship with ‘God’ (he was Agnostic) was a “personal one” (184). In his view the “danger of coming together” was “giving over experiential control to someone else” (184). He thought it “natural for human beings to want to collect because they’re lonely in this world,” but spirituality is the pursuit of “mysteries” and personal answers and to collect in a group somehow lost the “authenticity” of a spiritual experience (184).

In the interview practitioners asked how English schools conceptualized ‘collective worship’ for state school. I cited Copley (2000) who described collective worship as an assembly, a space for teachers and students to celebrate accomplishments and deliver inspirational messages. Exposure to this idea opened the imagination of teachers to think of how they could create a meeting space to deliberately build connectedness, think about what it means to be a good person, and ponder the kind of human being one wants to be. Donna imagined a designated time for guided discussion, such as an assembly, homeroom, or mentorship programme. Similarly, Adam imagined a time to teach students how to converse about different beliefs, especially in terms of the social cohesion issues. Caitlyn described her “focus” activity, where students lay on the floor in the dark

with music playing in the background (210). She guided them through a meditation where they set aside their problems. She argued that it was important for her high academic students to “have a bit of time to just sit and not think about anything in particular” (210). Similarly, Veronica started each lesson with a meditation. She was about to start teaching a course called Mind and Body at a new school. She planned to bring meditation to the class as one way of “accessing the spiritual” though she did not use the term in the course’s title (166). In her view, meditation was a tool to assist students in manifesting a sense of calm when they were stressed. Eric and George also saw the benefits of teaching students to meditate, both imagining that students could engage in yoga in physical education class, learning how to breathe, clear the mind, and relax. Principal Malcolm mentioned that he meditated every morning before he started work.

A cluster of teachers (Jessica, Danielle, Eric, Molly, and Veronica) were concerned that if a management committee decided to include a space for students to come together in some sort of spiritual way that the space and exercise would have to be pinned down to a particular function and particular form. Molly’s concern was that for an authentic engagement in reflection one needed to “be really vulnerable in that space” (44). She argued that there needed to be “trust” otherwise it turned into “a mockery or fake or contrived. You have to be safe” (44).

The data show potential for re-imagining a traditional conceptualization for religious exercises, by removing the organized religion aspect and keeping the function, quiet reflection or a time to come together for a shared purpose.

6.4.3 Christian Heritage

I also expected that teachers would reject the English statute for the ‘in the main Christian’ clause, but I was surprised to find that a large cluster of teachers thought the English statute demonstrated transparency. Adam (English), for example, noted that the Alberta school calendar revolved around Christian holidays and traditions and the dominant society group (the majority of Canadians) had a Christian heritage. He argued that if Alberta policy-makers were to seriously take up an investigation of a role for religion/spirituality in public education that they would necessarily have to acknowledge the Christian backdrop to many of the practices that had become status quo and this would “open a can of worms” (148). Alberta would have “to start making accommodations where we haven’t before,” he said, like the Christian calendar for example (148).

Most teachers had disengaged from Christian teachings and practices, but they put forward the idea that Christianity was still an element of their historical and social roots and that it was still a part of the heritage of Canada. They all addressed the issue of the elimination of explicit discourse. They believed there to be a boundary that stipulated that they were not to use the word Christmas or host Christmas events. Eric (Art/Rugby) argued that in his school, prior to Malcolm becoming principal, he organized for a student to dress as Santa Claus for the Christmas/Winter dance. His principal denied permission, arguing that the action would reveal a religious viewpoint and this was against school policy. Eric ordered a green costume instead, called the character ‘Father Winter’, and he was to say ‘Hey, Hey, Hey’, instead of ‘Ho, Ho, Ho’. Eric’s example provides a subversive

response to the litigious efforts on the part of some administrators to remove all traces of the concept of religion from schools.

The knot that existed for teachers was that schools operated with Christian and agrarian calendars. Teachers thought that the removal of traces of religion closed the gap for them to teach about the social significance of Christmas (Janis: English) and to “wash down what we have” (Natalie: Physical Education, 72) with the religious backdrop being “swept under the rug” (Sheila: English, 170). Marie (French and Christian), for example, pinned a picture of a crèche behind her desk, breaking the impartial rule. She wondered if someone would tell her to take it down. In checking SSJ’s website, I found that teachers were permitted to use the discourse of Christmas and were allowed to host Christmas concerts as long as they celebrated other traditions as well. Overall, teachers were concerned with the lack of transparency in their organization. Adam (English) argued, “We attempt to appear neutral but nothing that we actually do will demonstrate that” (160). “We’re still going to have a Christmas concert,” he said, “but we’ll call it something different” (160).

It could be argued that the strong association with Christmas signified a strong association with a Christian heritage, however none of the educationists mentioned a strong association with other Christian holy days, such as Lent and Easter. In this regard, the teachers had secularized to various degrees with many co-mingling the celebration of Christmas with a personal spirituality.

6.4.4 Summary

Exposure to an alternative international setting where there were policy and curriculum documents became a catalyst for teachers to reflect on the absence of these mechanisms in their context. Whilst half the teachers saw the value in conceptualizing a mandatory religions course for Alberta schooling, there was a lack of consensus as to what this course should entail. The teachers were adamant that conceptualizations of religion and spirituality should not be mixed. They were two different concepts. Exposure to an alternative setting also became a catalyst for educationists to think of how to re-conceptualize traditional concepts such as ‘collective worship’. Surprisingly, practitioners thought the de-Christianization of schools had gone too far and they wanted the pendulum to swing back into a more balanced position.

6.5 Teachers and Principals: Non-Traditional Approaches

Exposure to England’s written curriculum document (eight dimensions: Tool B) generated a positive response in practitioners. Katie (Theory of Knowledge) thought that it was “exciting that [England] actually wrote it down” (154). It offered teachers “some permission” to address these dimensions in practice (Katie: 154). George (Media Studies) wondered if a written document such as England’s would “get rid of fears” of Alberta teachers (220). Sarah (ESL) described the eight dimensions as “wonderful” (72), Caitlyn (Drama) “fantastic” (266), Eric (Social Studies) “a great presentation” (232), and Stuart (English) “vital” (200). Tania (Wellness) and Eric (Art) interpreted the document as opening the door to either a

religious or non-religious approach to spirituality. They stimulated questions, April (English) said, about the “human experience” (160) in what Lou-Anne (Guidance) described as a “generic” and non-offensive way (104). Jake (World Religions) made a copy of Tool B at the end of the interview so that he could refer to it from time to time.

In similar fashion to policy-makers and administrators, the written document served to illuminate the boundary for policy and practice. In coherence with policy-makers and administrators, teachers and principals identified ‘transcendence’ and also ‘awe, wonder and mystery’ as problematic. Caitlyn (Art) described them as “hot taboo” words (308) and Donna (CALM) described them as “high-powered words” that generate “huge emotional responses” (182). The reason was, according to Geoff (Science), “for a lot of parents, spirituality is devil worship” (214). “Some parents,” he added, “might think the dimensions are Buddhist or in some way ‘other’ and therefore will not want a part in them” (216), confirming the perspective that policy-makers and senior administrators had of the Alberta population. Many teachers and principals wanted to share how they were integrating the eight conceptualizations into their practices (or not) and thus the data and findings were moved over to Chapter Seven.

6.6 Parental Rights

This section presents findings related to how practitioners viewed the intention of Bill 44 and also the extent they thought Bill 44 would influence their practice.

Whilst the Minister of Education argued the Bill was intended to increase teacher religious/spiritual sensitivity, teachers perceived the Bill as reducing student autonomy and personal authority and protecting parents who wanted to “insulate” their children from a diverse culture (Eric: 126). Similarly, Jessica (English) argued it was “a misguided attempt to try to retain some control over the ideas that kids already have” (138). In this regard, Jessica argued that a contemporary generation of students had grown up with diversity.

In keeping with Trustees and Senior Administrators, teachers interpreted Bill 44 as a reflection of the historical backdrop of the province of Alberta, in comparison to other provinces (since each province controls its education policy). Danielle (CALM) and Dennis (Special Ed) commented on a ‘Bible Belt’ Evangelical history of Alberta. When Adam moved to Alberta from the province of Manitoba, he found that Alberta seemed more ‘Christian’ than other provinces. Similarly, Caitlyn (Drama), Janis (Social Studies), and Tania (Wellness) observed that Albertans tended to be ultraconservative. Geoff (Science) argued the Bill was to mollify an ultraright conservative Christian viewpoint (112), which he claimed had a lot of political power in Alberta. Steve (French) promoted the idea that public education should celebrate multiple perspectives, arguing that it was not “right for a parent who has a certain religious background to profit from the public education system, paid for by the taxpayers and their neighbors, to opt out on a curriculum” (142). In his opinion, if parents wanted their children protected from increasing diversity of worldviews, including the rationalized worldview, then “don’t go to public education system” (142). He noted that there were options for

religious parents in Alberta, such as Catholic schools, Independent faith schools, and home schooling.

The intention of the Bill seemed to baffle teachers. George (Media Studies) and Lou-Anne (Guidance) commented that they were surprised that the Alberta government would draft a Bill about opting out of 'religion' when it seemed to be commonly understood that Alberta teachers were not supposed to address 'religion' in their teaching. Caitlyn argued that the Alberta government was not addressing the changes with regard to increasing numbers of religions amongst students and also in addressing the concept of religion. She argued the government was "stepping away from those big questions," and "shutting doors" (240). In addition, George explained that if the government had paired the right to opt out with an equal opportunity to "pursue spiritual understanding between nations, cultures, religions" then the Bill would be "a step forward" (78). In this regard, teachers argued that change was occurring in Alberta education, but that they perceived resistance on the part of Alberta Education to adapt to the changes.

The school principals argued that the privatization argument, specifically that student understandings of religion/spirituality was a parental concern not an educational one, was having an adverse affect on students. Matthew and Malcolm argued that a contemporary parenting style of this generation of young people was interfering in some ways with healthy adolescent development. They both used a trendy term 'helicopter parenting' to describe parents who hovered about their adolescent children and made all decisions. Parents, they noted, were having trouble "letting go" of their children and this was impacting schools. Matthew

explained that educators “walked the razor’s edge” (128), believing their role was to foster a sense of independence, autonomy, and resiliency in young people whilst some parents might not necessarily want to give up control of their children. Adam argued that teachers functioned for some students as a “corrective for bad parenting” (290), arguing that some students arrived to school with intolerant attitudes cultivated at home.

In McKinnon’s (2009) doctoral study of SSJ, his sample of five teachers avoided the topic of spirituality/religion in order to avoid ‘belligerent parents’. In the experience of this larger sample of teachers parental complaints, according to Alex (Social Studies), were “exceedingly rare” (134). In an interpretational model of ‘religious/spiritual freedom’, a parental complaint was a sign the teacher had gone too far. Katie (Music) who had “never had a parent complain” argued, “I don’t think it’s as relevant as the powers that be think it is” (16). Similarly, Kevin (Art) claimed that the fear existed more within government than with teachers in the classroom. He had not “been shackled and bound, told that I can’t do this,” he explained (200). Some teachers thought the Bill was constraining and would “lead to teachers being unwilling to expose students to ideas outside a very narrow framework” (Jessica: 128). However, Kevin perceived the Bill in the spirit of the Minister’s intention, as a “yield sign,” not a “stop sign” (356). In the Minister’s view, teachers should operate like Caitlyn (Drama) who said that she would “take the temperature of the room” before she engaged in any sensitive topics (244). Alex (Social Studies) thought the tension around Bill 44 had subsided, but he predicted that the issue “will probably resurface when some poor teacher has some conversation in class that they just thought was an innocuous conversation

about something and then somebody gets angry enough that they decide to execute that right" (188).

The data confirm that religion and spirituality were conceptualized as controversial in Alberta, so controversial that parents had strong rights over their children's religious/spiritual beliefs.

6.7 Hierarchical Comparison and Conclusion

There was a lack of coherence between the opinions and attitudes of policy-makers and administrators and teachers and principals as far as the extent they were prepared to go in addressing the boundary for what it means to offer post-secularization education to a contemporary generation of students in Alberta. Policy-makers and administrators had not thought to include religion/spirituality as a dimension of 'multiple perspectives' and retained a belief that to address religion/spirituality outside of religions courses would overstep the boundary of home responsibility and school. They perceived the concepts of religion/spirituality as too controversial and taboo for a post-secularization model. Teachers and principals, who dealt with a contemporary group of students and parents, and who were re-imagining their personal spirituality, perceived the concepts of religion/spirituality as fairly normal concepts, a dimension, as Berger (1999) and Luckmann (2003) describe, that is part of the human condition.

Policy-makers and administrators exposed a contradictory knot that had developed in the post-secularization era. In an effort either to support

conservative Christians or at least not arouse complaints from them, Alberta Education had not dealt with increasing diversity. Principals and teachers argued that diversity was impacting schools and teacher practice, sometimes in negative ways. Some teachers and principals argued that one mandatory religions course or regular meeting times to talk about SSJ as a community might resolve some of the tensions but that religions courses should not be confused with offering a space for student spirituality.

Policy-makers and teachers were opposed to pinning the concepts of religious/spiritual themes down into a written document, preferring to keep the boundary open for interpretation instead of opening up a potential backlash from Albertans. However, teachers perceived the written document as permission. Exposure to England's document as a heuristic served to unearth some underlying beliefs that policy-makers and administrators had that they had not revealed in the 'baseline' conceptualizations of Chapter Five. It was evident that policy-makers and administrators perceived the notion of a transcendent reality as problematic enough for the Alberta context to argue that teachers should not address student views on 'God', afterlife, and other supernatural concepts. Teachers agreed that some Albertans would be opposed to teachers including notions about a transcendent reality in their lessons. Policy-makers and administrators were most concerned that teachers would have an agenda and impose their views on students, but the data from teachers (except for one) showed that they recognized a boundary and that they were to be cautious and sensitive (see Chapter Five). The data show that teachers did not receive parental complaints about their approaches. In an interpretive model, a parental complaint was the sign that the

teacher went too far. It became evident that in post-secularization education there was a contradiction in the sense that Alberta Education viewed itself as open and accommodating, but the interview protocol created an opportunity for reflexivity and in this process the barriers were revealed. Post-secularization education was not a place for religious/spiritual freedom, unless teachers and principals created the space in a bottom-up way.

Chapter Seven shows how some teachers and principals conceptualized religion and spirituality in their practices, or not, in the absence of directives or curriculum guidelines. It divides the principals and teachers into a cluster of school principals and curriculum discipline clusters to provide further findings for how teachers who operated in a high secularization and low supervision education system conceptualized religion and spirituality in their school/classroom.

7.0 CHAPTER SEVEN

Conceptualizing Religion/Spirituality in Practice

This chapter moves beyond educationists' responses to the interview tools, which were provided to open up the subject of conceptualizing religion and spirituality in Alberta schooling. It provides a more nuanced understanding for how teachers and principals conceptualized religion and spirituality for mainstream students in their everyday practice. The goal was to extend Sweet (1997) and Brown's (2000) studies that found that Canadian schools eliminated the topic of religion in schools after the secularization era. This chapter demonstrates how teachers from different curriculum disciplines, who were offered a great deal of autonomy in Alberta and who were expected to get to know their students and use professional judgment, were bringing their conceptualizations of religion and/or spirituality into the classroom without directives or curriculum documents. In this regard, the data show that teachers became mechanisms for expanding the boundary of post-secularization education in a bottom-up way. This study does not provide a critical view of teacher practice

in terms of 'best practice' or learning and teaching theory. It stays true to the goal of this study, which was to extend the Alberta post-secularization story and build a foundation for the complex task of conceptualizing religion and spirituality in everyday practices.

7.1 Teacher Practice

The sample is divided into cohorts of curriculum disciplines.

7.1.1 English Teachers

Not all teachers showed how they conceptualized their version of religion/spirituality into their lessons. Jessica, for example, said that religion/spirituality as an educational concept was 'the elephant in the room' (see Chapter Five), and thus she did not address it in her lessons. The following English teachers, however, (and all teachers selected in this chapter) provided concrete examples for how they interpreted the concepts religion and spirituality in their curriculum discipline and in their interaction with students.

English teachers spoke most often about how an exploration of spirituality was beneficial to vulnerable struggling students. Molly, for example, enjoyed teaching 'non-academic' students, describing them as "damaged" (86), "battered and bruised" (8), and "flawed" (8) like her. April was troubled by how little kindness it took for 'the battered and bruised' students to become loyal. Adam was concerned for struggling students who did not have outside support to help them with their spiritual questions, since he grew up in a secular home life where no conversations occurred about religion/spirituality. For Adam, his high school experience in

English class, engaging in literature, became his “life raft” (188). This was why he became an English teacher, a profession he said that brought him “great solecisms” (28). Adam hoped that he could throw some ‘life rafts’ to students who struggled with their spiritual questions. Social Work and Mental Health literature argue that some adolescents are at a stage in life where they are thinking about spiritual concepts, but there is little in the secular world that helps them process their thinking, emotions, and experiences (see Chapter Two).

Adam, having grown up in the absence of any religious structure, used secular literature to open up questions of a spiritual kind. His personal questions were: “What’s on the other side of this life? What is death?” and “How do I negotiate a connection to the transcendent” (28)? He described himself as having a “preoccupation with spiritual issues” (28). He presented his approach as creating the space where students could comfortably engage in conversations about their beliefs and questions. He mentioned that one student requested to leave the room when these types of discussions occurred because it conflicted with her religion to listen to how others answered these questions. In this case, she went to the library. Her approach conflicted with his personal view that an “unexamined life isn’t really worth living” (50), but his professionalism dictated that he must not prevent her from opting out. Like Cooling (2002), Berger (1999, 2001), and Taylor (2007) argued, Adam put forward, “We thirst for some metanarrative . . . we want a sense of purpose that’s greater than ourselves” (50). Indeed, Frankl (1959) argued that ‘man’s search for meaning’ is a survival tool in times of suffering. Adam used a ‘Meaning of Life’ assignment every year to get students thinking about the meaning of life in relation to literature and personal experience. He was fascinated by

students' uncertainty about how to even begin answering the question: what is the meaning of life? It seemed that he was "the first person to ever ask them that question" (44).

Adam was Stuart's (anti-theist, post-Mormon) English department leader (and Jessica's above). They were both concerned about vulnerable students, but for different reasons. Adam was attempting to fill a gap for students who had no resource in their private world, but Stuart presented himself as filling a gap for students who came from conservative religious families (like he did) and who did not question their beliefs. Whilst this study does not evaluate teacher practices, it nevertheless was unnerving in the interview to hear Stuart's bitterness and perception that his role was to challenge students' thinking. His view was "believing in God without thinking, then that's dangerous" (216). When asked about the concept of 'experiencing transcendence', he argued that if students claimed to see ghosts, "feel like they are touching God" (156), or "hear little voices" (156) they should be referred to a psychologist. One of the reasons why policy-makers and administrators were reluctant to go down the pathway of opening the door to teachers taking up religion/spirituality was to block teachers from enforcing their views on students. Nevertheless, it was evident that it happened anyway, although for the most part teachers spoke of their cautionary approaches.

Both Adam and Stuart were passionate about bringing spirituality into lessons, meaning that they wanted students to explore their views on the 'big' questions of life, but they took different approaches. It seems that Adam, as the department head, could initiate a special interest group in his department to talk about how to

address religion/spirituality, literature, student beliefs and identity, and vulnerable students since three teachers from his department volunteered. It is possible that they could begin some action research projects in their department. At present, in the absence of directives or organizational conversations in SSJ's 'leave your faith at the door' post-secularization model, teachers were letting their personal orientation and passion for the subject of religion/spirituality guide their practices.

Molly had grown up in a similar household to Stuart, but she and Adam were more in alignment in their approaches. She described the students in her school as 90 per cent 'very religious'. Indeed, earlier (Chapter Six) teachers from this school described a 'rampant intolerance' amongst students. Molly argued that she was not going to subscribe to the 'leave your faith at the door' post-secularization model when a massive number of students in her classes were religious. She presented herself as creating space for students to view literature through their religious/spiritual lens and to treat their beliefs as a normalized part of their identity. Whilst two other English teachers (see Chapter Six) from her school said that students were resistant to reading books from cultures that they were at war with, Molly found that students from Afghanistan and Lebanon "loved talking" about the notion of "superstition," "ghosts," "the third eye," and "judgment day" (198), when studying texts like *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Whilst her approach conflicted with policy-makers and administrators' reluctance for teachers to engage students in discussions about a transcendent reality, it aligns with James (1902), Berger (1967), Maslow (1968), Luckmann (1990, 2003), and Hardy's (1979) argument that beliefs and experiences about a transcendent reality are

normal parts of the human experience for many people and not so mysterious or peculiar. Molly presented herself as having taken the politics out of their beliefs and instead treated beliefs as a part of what we shared as human beings.

The data provide evidence for how some teachers were confronting a ‘leave your faith at the door model’, which Ammerman (2007), Berger (2001, 2007), and Taylor (2007, 2009) argue are needed today. Whilst this study is limited in the sense that it did not offer an observational component, or interviews with students or parents, it was evident that the Alberta post-secularization model was changing in a bottom-up fashion.

7.1.2 The Arts

The Arts teachers honed in on the dimensions of creativity, intuition, inspiration, awe and wonder, and self-knowledge as outlined on England’s horizon of concepts.

Kevin (Art) initially asked if this study was about his personal or professional version of spirituality. Personally, he was committed to a religion. Professionally, he argued that he bracketed out his personal religious beliefs but did not bracket out his passion for the topic of ‘spiritual belief’. Indeed, he used the discourse of spirit, spiritual, and spirituality in his lessons and conversations with students, which contrasted with policy-makers and administrators’ (Chapter Five) view that SSJ did not use the discourse of spirituality, nor did it perceive spirituality to be the lens through which they saw the function of post-secularization public education. Kevin saw each student as “a spiritual being as well as a physical being or a mental

being” (44). The spirit dimension, he argued, was their ‘core identity’ that made them “unique” (62). Wintersgill’s (2008) study of teen-agers found that they defined spirit as their unique self. Her sample defined the concept of spirituality as the unique and individual process of coming to know their unique identity, which supports Kevin in his approach to spirituality, if indeed the role of teachers is to help students with their individual identity. Policy-makers and administrators’ was in favour of parents taking up this role.

As an Art teacher, where creativity and identity seem to go hand-in-hand (and were conceptualizations on England’s document and included as constructs in the secularization theory template that all teachers should be concerned about), Kevin argued that his teaching goal was for students to think about how to transform inspiration into art. He provided two examples. In the first example, a religious student was fascinated by how Christianity moved into China along the Silk Road. In response, Kevin encouraged this student to explore this fascination in Art. A non-religious student was inexplicably drawn to a colour palette and symbols inherent in Aboriginal art, although not of Aboriginal ancestry. As the student seemed confused about his or her passion for Aboriginal art, Kevin responded, “It comes from your spirit,” conveying to the student that it came from the student’s core identity (48). Otto (1923, 1958) argued that individuals sometimes needed to be provoked into thinking about the mysterious parts of life. Whilst Kevin used questioning techniques, and students’ inspirations, he also set the tone in his classroom with Buddha sculptures, Aboriginal art, incense, and background music (in alignment with Smart’s (1989) material construct of organized religion, see Chapter Two and the secularization theory template). In keeping Kevin’s context in

mind, he was being asked about his views on spirituality. It can be assumed that he employed all sorts of techniques not just ones related to his version of 'spirituality' to get students to think creatively. One such technique was an integrative workbook where students traced their unique creative inspiration and intuition. He used questions to stimulate a sense of awe and wonder about being alive, such as, "What excites you about snow falling or the leaves falling off the tree or the roughness of tree bark" (202)? He depicted himself as a catalyst for students to think reflexively about their identity, including their religious/spiritual identity.

Caitlyn (Drama) and Katie (Music/Theory of Knowledge) were both actively engaged in thinking about their spirituality in their private lives. As artists, they focused on awe and wonder on England's eight dimensions (and template). Caitlyn said, "It's magic," she said, "that a painting can make somebody feel something or that a play or a monologue or a scene or a moment or an image can make you feel something" (16). She thought religious people (both of her parents in-law were United Church pastors) felt this sense of awe and wonder in Church. Whilst she was not religious, she thought her job to be about creating this sense of awe and wonder in the secular world of her classroom, through art and drama. Katie (Music) described how the power of music made her "knees buckle" (106). In this regard, they brought what they perceived to be a 'religious dimension' (awe and wonder) to the secular classroom.

In support of English teachers, and also Bray (2009) and Scott's (2005, 2009, 2010) studies, Caitlyn was concerned about vulnerable students. She thought that

post-secularization schools should take vulnerable students' issues more seriously, arguing:

Artists, in particular, go through a period in their lives where they feel very alienated and alone because they think they're weird, because they're very sensitive to the world, or because they think that the way they do things isn't valid (28).

In this regard, she argued that different students gravitated to different curriculum areas, and teachers needed to increase sensitivity for recognizing the vulnerable students. Both Bray and Scott argue that more must be learned about adolescent spirituality and how it manifests in the everyday life of post-secularization schools. In this regard, the issues of post-secularization education extend beyond how to adapt to an increasingly diverse religious community, but also how to adapt to increasing secularization in student home life and the absence of tools, or in Adam's words 'life rafts', for vulnerable and struggling students.

7.1.3 Career and Life Management (CALM)

The title of this course appears to support Weber (2002, 1964) prediction that secularized Protestant schools would become career-driven organizations that operate from a Protestant work ethic (see Chapter Three). Robert (Special Needs) joked that in the Catholic system there was "catechism" and in the public system there was "CALM" (Career and Life Management, a mandatory course for sixteen year-olds) (136). Cora, the provincial curriculum specialist, mentioned that the word spiritual was included in the initial conceptualization of the latest CALM

curriculum, but the concept was never developed (Chapter Five). She wondered if teachers were developing the notion of spirituality in the CALM curriculum without provincial directives. The data show that some CALM teachers had gone ahead and conceptualized the ‘spiritual’ and some had not.

Danielle provides an example for teachers who went ahead. She was passionate about her spiritual progress in her personal life and also how she was “threading spirituality” through CALM (4). She shared a childhood story of joining a Baptist congregation without telling her parents because they did not go to church or have any interest in spiritual matters (similar to Adam). She described herself as singing vigorously:

Love lifted me, love lifted me, you know, bringing in the sheaths. I was holy rolling like you wouldn’t believe until somebody blew the whistle and said, ‘You know, your kid, what the heck is going on with her?’ And, you know, I think it was because of my own individual desire to make sense and connections with people and with my place in the world (120).

She enjoyed the sense of community and the feeling in this church experience. Whilst she described herself as Buddhist in her current stage of evolution, she said that her classroom often brought in the ‘revivalist church atmosphere’ she enjoyed as a child. Her course dealt with issues related to career, finance, money management, sexuality, and sexual identity. Whilst Donna, the other CALM teacher in this sample, did not include any themes related to ‘religion/spirituality’, Danielle presented her version of threading spirituality as “plant[ing] seeds” for students to think about “self-love,” “the internal” and to “listen to inner voice” (4). She went beyond the ‘capitalist’ version of curriculum and encouraged students to develop a

“body, mind, soul connection in all decisions” (4), rather than being enticed into drugs, alcohol, crime, or sexual activities that were not in alignment with the soul or their intuition. She argued that her role was not to be an “authority” (8) on the concept of spirituality. In her view, she was not teaching ‘spirituality’. She described herself as awakening students to the concepts that reside under the umbrella of spirituality and together she and students were a “mutual learning discovery team” (8).

7.1.4 Guidance

A traditional approach to religious/spiritual guidance is to employ pastoral care facilitators. However, in Alberta post-secularization schools this role did not exist, which was one of the reasons why policy-makers and administrators argued that students should seek counsel outside of schools in the private sphere. Guidance Counselors assisted students with course selection, university applications, and personal problems.

A golden thread that ran through many of the interviews with teachers and principals was the concern for students who had little access in the secular private sphere to learn how to deal with the ‘big’ questions of life. Lou-Anne spoke of the “vulnerable” students, especially those that revealed suicidal thoughts (126) that she encountered in her role as a guidance counselor. Whilst her training did not include a module on how to deal with religious/spiritual problems, such as the contemplation of suicide, Lou-Anne took a Masters level course where she was required to draft a long account of her beliefs, values, attitudes and how these

influenced her practice. The second part of the task was to whittle the paper to two pages, which then illuminated her core beliefs. The third part of the task was to have classmates challenge her assumptions. She found this process to be instrumental in learning how to address students and their religious/spiritual concerns.

Lou-Anne explained that in her first point of contact with a student she did not assume they were religious. Her professional judgment led her to ask questions such as if they “have any faith and if it’s something that can be supportive to them” (4). In context, there were likely many occasions where professional judgment led her not to ask potentially intrusive questions. She explained that she avoided the word church because she did not want students to think, “that if they don’t go to church, then they have no faith or they have no spirituality” (6). Instead, she would ask, “Do you have a faith? or ‘Do you have a spirituality? Do you have some sort of core beliefs and thoughts about big questions in life that kind of help to guide you” (6)? In some encounters she felt comfortable in asking, “What are your thoughts about death? What happens to people when they die” (8)? In her experience, “the answers to some questions can actually give them strength” (8). Mental Health and Social Work literature (see Chapter Two) also finds that vulnerable adolescents benefit from exploring their spirituality. Lou-Anne argued that teachers who created space or introduced struggling students to religious/spiritual concepts did so “covertly” (260).

This study, as mentioned, did not critically examine how teachers addressed religion/spirituality. The goal was to extend the secularization story. The data

from this study can be used to extend Benham-Reddick's (2009) study of pastoral care in the Canadian military. She argues that the pastoral care division of the Canadian military is staffed according to results from the National Household Survey, administered every ten years, which shows that two-thirds of Canadians identify as Christian (see Chapter Two). Therefore, the majority of pastoral care providers in the military were Christian pastors. She found that soldiers who sought counsel, who were often vulnerable and suffering from post-traumatic stress, could not relate to the Christian-based approach in which the pastor was trained. The pastors struggled with how to offer care to an increasingly non-religious Canadian population. Lou-Anne provides an example for how she re-imagined pastoral care for an increasingly non-religious student population in a post-secularization school system.

Stella was the crisis management coordinator for SSJ. Her role was to help students process large scale traumas such as if a school member (student or teacher) committed suicide, or died in some other sudden fashion (eg. car crash), hostage taking (she was dealing with one at the time of the interview), flood, or any other traumatic incident. She did not deal with students one-to-one. Both Lou-Anne and Stella were cautious about bringing religion in as a tool for students. Stella perceived her role as assessing the situation and being responsive, bringing in religious/spiritual leaders if necessary. In her experience, when people were suddenly in crisis they looked toward what they could "count on, what's certain, and what isn't" (10). Her role was to search out what gave the individual strength:

if they have a strong foundation, such as character education or the Circle of Courage (Aboriginal concept), then it's natural that we will help them fall back on the beliefs that underlie that because they've used it and typically have used it very, very successfully to attend to many issues (10).

She argued that it should not be assumed that religion/spirituality was the solution for all people in a diverse population. Spirituality was one piece of the puzzle, she added (12). The needs of the students and staff drove the agenda (18). Stella argued, "religion has baggage. For some people it is the thing that gives them strength. So, who are we to judge (52)?" Like Lou-Anne, Stella perceived her role as finding out what anchored the person in crisis. If spiritual/religious belief was what anchored the individual, then the crisis counselor would explore that with students (20). She did not consider herself a 'pastoral care provider'. She was hesitant about accessing religious leaders because she was not sure if their message would be suitable for a given situation, which supports Benham-Reddick's (2009) study about pastoral care in the military.

By comparison, Tania, the Wellness Centre Counselor at a different school, in the absence of directives and training, avoided religious/spiritual beliefs (when students presented with suicidal thoughts) for fear that students might report that she was attempting to proselytize. She was religious in her private life, which might explain why she avoided the topic of religion/spirituality in her practice. She continued to perceive religion/spirituality as taboo for the post-secularization setting. However, she put the theme of spirituality on her Teacher Professional Growth Plan (see Chapter Three, p. 157 for explanation) so that she could learn more about how to respond to spiritual issues.

7.1.5 Modern Languages

In SSJ's post-secularization model, language teachers were confused as to whether they could take up the religious/spiritual backdrop of language. Marie (French) thought she was not to address the religious backdrop for French language and culture. Her data provide evidence for the difference between Alberta curriculum and Milot and Trembley's (2009) study of Quebec curriculum where students were mandated to understand the religious/spiritual backdrop of French, English, and Aboriginal language and culture. Deborah (Spanish), however, in the absence of directives chose to open space in lessons for students of different faiths to share their traditions in comparison to Spanish traditions, demonstrating that different interpretations of post-secularization education led to different teaching methods.

7.1.6 Science

In secularization theory, rationalization and modernization were conceptualized as reasons for why modern individuals stopped believing in a transcendent reality, although this was considered more a European interpretation of secularization (see Chapter Two, especially Casanova, 2009). The data from Geoff and Michael (a science teacher and principal and former science teacher) provide examples for how they adapted their practices to students' subjective religious/spiritual beliefs, particularly their beliefs in God.

Geoff was the Science teacher in the school where 90 per cent of students were described as being 'very religious'. He deliberately hung a multifaith calendar in his classroom to demonstrate to students that he supported their religious/spiritual traditions. He found that curriculum on "Big Bang or evolution raises the hackles on probably about eighty percent of the students here" (30). In this regard, he created space for students to exercise their religious freedom. Both Science teachers found that some students would argue, "God created everything." Geoff attended Catholic school whilst young and had studied world religions. He argued that SSJ's 'leave your faith at the door' post-secularization model was unrealistic in his school (see also Molly in the English cluster above from the same school). Rather than remain with the rationalized curriculum and textbook, he deliberately created space for students to share their views on how their religion explained God's role in some of the scientific principles of the curriculum (32). He perceived his role as one where he taught the rationalized curriculum, but using professional judgment he created space for students to learn how to mediate curriculum through a religious lens.

Similarly, Michael argued, "As a teacher you're sort of allowing that free flow of information in your classroom without overstepping anyone's bounds" (126). Geoff's classroom discussions often motivated students to come in at lunch to talk about the mysteries of science; usually they "talk about God" (36). I asked if it were a formal club, thinking that students were permitted to have religious prayer groups. He replied, "I don't even know if I'll be allowed. As I mentioned earlier, here we seem to be afraid of any sort of talk like that" (42). In this regard, he supported Lou-Anne's (Guidance above) interpretation of Alberta's post-

secularization model in that he had to operate 'covertly' when he opened space in his lessons for students to exercise their right to religious freedom and belief in God.

7.1.7 English as a Second Language (ESL)

ESL teachers perceived their role as supporting the integration of ESL immigrant students (the third group in Canada's demographic) into Western English speaking and post-secularization schools. This supports Westerman's (2009) study of the transition of immigrant students from non-secularized countries into Western secularized culture and academic life. He argues that educationists must develop sensitivity toward the significance of belief and orientation to knowledge that immigrant students bring to their learning. ESL teachers said that they were probably freer than other teachers to engage in conversations with students about religious/spiritual worldviews and experience. They described immigrant students as open about their beliefs as a normalized dimension of their identity.

Veronica argued that immigrant students brought a variety of spiritual/religious beliefs to the classroom. She provided an example of a girl who was confused about the presentation of schizophrenia in Psychology class because in her culture schizophrenia was conceptualized as a spiritual entity taking over a body. In this regard, Veronica supported Hassed's (2000) concern that a rationalized secular approach to psychology conflicts with the way some immigrants perceive psychology. His concern was that students may be pathologized if they talked about their beliefs that conflicted with a secular model.

In developing a spiritually sensitive practice, Veronica argued that teachers needed “to be open to it,” and “not discount” or “mock” student beliefs or experiences (192).

Sarah provided an example for her role in confronting students’ beliefs that were not in accordance with the Canadian value of peaceful co-existence:

I had a very shocking experience with a student who was a very strong Muslim. He was from Pakistan. In his journal he wrote that because of his belief system, he would have to kill people who were Christian. I talked to him after school one day because my deep concern is with young men who come from war-torn countries who have these feelings of hatred for different groups. It makes me think of my father [who was a post-World War Two German immigrant]. I’m trying to get students to realize that in Canada, we are trying to encourage the acceptance of people from different cultures and that we can’t solve problems through killing. One of the things that my father never experienced was the opportunity to discuss different belief systems. Canada was very racist in the 1950’s. But I think through our school system, we are trying to build moral character and tolerance and respect so that people have a chance to express their beliefs and work through them and just see that one of the deepest philosophical beliefs, hopefully, of the Canadian system is that we promote tolerance (130).

Sarah’s anecdote provided evidence for how religious beliefs manifested in everyday life and the teacher’s role in dealing with new issues that religion/spirituality brought to the public sphere of education.

Kunz (2009), Seljak (2009), and Fadden and Townsend (2009) argue that the Canadian government does not offer enough support to institutional leaders in learning how to deal with the way religion manifests in student lives and

behaviours. It is evident that the student population at SSJ was changing and teachers were dealing with issues related to religion/spirituality in their practices.

7.1.8 Social Studies

Whilst the Minister of Education, Cora the provincial curriculum specialist, and Marilyn the Learning Innovations Director all previously argued that ‘multiple perspectives’ were the cornerstone of Social Studies, these Social Studies teachers presented themselves as the most inhibited in addressing any dimensions of religion/spirituality. Marilyn provided evidence that she was working on curriculum documents to implement multiple perspectives (and character, personal development, and citizenship), but the teachers in this sample seemed uninformed. Indeed, Social Studies was the one curriculum area where there was no evidence of expanding the boundary of the post-secularization model.

Janis did not include conversations about religious/spiritual themes because they were “not curriculum-based” (8). However, she put forward that the new curriculum infused Aboriginal spirituality which she interpreted as emphasizing “white man’s burdens” in terms of “British imperialism,” “missionary work,” and “social Darwinism” (12). When asked about the rest of the curriculum, she stated the grade eleven course “starts with the Enlightenment and goes into the French Revolution,” covering “absolute monarchy to a democratic system” and the “divine right of kings” (6). I did not challenge her in the interview, but it seemed that Janis did not realize, for example, that the Enlightenment era was about the emergence of a rational/scientific worldview that challenged faith-based worldviews. This seemed like an opportunity to take a ‘de-colonist’ perspective (Smith, 2001; Wane,

2011; Ritskes, 2011) and offer students the space to exercise their right to religious/spiritual freedom, challenge the curriculum, and have conversations about science and faith. The French Revolution led to the secularization of French society, and discussions could explore the meaning of secularization and the function of a secular society. Divine right was explicitly about a belief in God, and conversations it would seem could be generated about multiple perspectives. Like other teachers, she noted that the dimension about 'belief in God' and 'experiencing transcendence' was problematic.

When Katie (Theory of Knowledge) was asked if the religious/spiritual perspective was a dimension in the 'theory of knowledge', she replied that it was not. She taught in the school where it was earlier claimed that about 90 per cent of students were religious and believed in God. Even though students tried to argue that their beliefs were their form of knowledge, she interpreted the lack of directives to mean that she was required to fail them if they argued this in their essays. Katie thought England's written document of the horizon of concepts offered permission to legitimize a religious/spiritual perspective. Without curriculum directives she imagined that she was not allowed to legitimize the religious/spiritual perspective.

Alex explained that the religious/spiritual backdrop to history was removed from texts and no questions on exams or provincial testing inquired into students' understandings of the religious/spiritual influence in shaping events or political philosophy. In his experience, most teachers did not touch on the religious/spiritual themes in their lessons. Indeed, he mentioned that he did not

teach the religious backdrop to the unit on the Crusades. He argued, “You can certainly teach, ‘This is what this particular religious tradition conceives of ‘God’” (110). Would he ask students about their notions of God? “No,” he said, he was “not tenured” (114). However, when he examined Tool B he summarized his interpretation of the state of a post-secularization public education model in Alberta:

We’d be fooling ourselves by saying, ‘Oh, you know, we don’t really do that here.’ We do do it; we just pretend we don’t do it, and we don’t really speak directly to it. We kind of just find a way around it (212).

In this regard, he confirmed that Alberta’s post-secularization model was quietly and unobtrusively changing. Heather, who did not provide concrete examples about integrating religion/spirituality, argued that teachers who took up the concepts of spirituality did so “under the radar” (213), confirming both Lou-Anne and Geoff’s interpretation of how teachers were quietly changing Alberta’s post-secularization model.

Once Janis unpacked England’s eight dimensions in the interview, she gravitated toward the notion of awe and wonder, thinking that she could increase students’ sense of being moved by events in history and to feel connected with and perhaps feel a sense of awe about the resilience of people of past generations. She was not comfortable with introducing concepts that might be construed as “mystical” but perceived potential in encouraging students to connect with the meaning and purpose of eras, especially how different generations rose above “hard times” (132). She imagined drawing student attention to ‘feelings and emotions’ aroused in such units as “genocide,” “the Depression Era,” government philosophical

beliefs, and “President Obama” and “Martin Luther’s” inspirational speeches (128). She noted the speeches had “a real charismatic sense that really rallies people” (132). This finding speaks to the impact of having a written document that opens up the dimensions of religion/spirituality.

7.2 School Principals

Principals provided a view into the everyday experience of school leaders as they addressed the contemporary generation of students.

Principals re-imagined the English document’s wording of ‘beliefs’ into ‘subjectivity’. Matthew described a “post-modern society” where people were “questioning the authority of religious figures, our churches, our military institution” (96). In this regard, he argued the authority of the curriculum and the authority of educators were not taken for granted (96). His case supports Taylor’s (2007) argument for a ‘subjective life turn’ and Roof’s (1999a,b) study of American culture where beginning in the 1960’s Americans began to reject authority and adopt an individual stance to life. Matthew described the role of education as in a state of transition, where teachers “walk a razor’s edge” with regard to how to find a healthy balance between the acceptable boundary of curriculum and the acceptable boundary of student subjectivity (108). He perceived this transition as an exciting change because it opened the door to a healthy debate, one where students would become involved in knowledge creation instead of passive recipients where curriculum and teachers were held up as authorities. In this regard, he extended the boundary for the voices that should be involved in the

process of change. In Matthew's estimation the "next four or five years in education is going to be some of the most exciting work that, at least in [his] career, is going to occur" (102).

Principals agreed with the dimension of 'self-knowledge'. Gerald explained that adolescents were in the process of learning who they were "within this academic community that we call school," "who they're becoming in their own family and in their community" and "who they are called to be after they are done school" (23). Schooling, argued Matthew, was more than a place that got students ready for work; it was an "opportunity for a child to grow and develop into a bigger culture, into a bigger world than the parent can provide" (92). It was important, said Malcolm, for schools to find ways to help students become more "self-reflective," "philosophical," "resilient" and "assertive in a polite and respectful manner" (6). De-colonist literature supports the principals' position on the function of post-secularization education in that a contemporary generation of young people should be taught how to be empowered learners.

Whilst the English document used the term 'relationships', principals and many teachers used the word 'connectedness'. Gerald described adolescents as having a spiritual "hunger" to be "included" and "validated" (23). Oftentimes principals were required to deal with troubled students. Michael dealt with some students who, from his perspective, came from a background where there was "a tremendous lack of family values or social values" (134). Some students were joining "gangs," he said, in order to find a sense of "belonging that they don't find in their home life" (134). In this regard, principals challenged the position of policy-

makers and administrators that continued with the privatization argument, making a distinction between the role of school and the role of home.

Like policy-makers and administrators, principals identified 'experiencing transcendence' as a boundary. Two principals thought the boundary should be challenged and two thought teachers should stay away from the notion of a transcendent reality. Matthew explained that beliefs about the concept of transcendence were "part of who they are" and often students were "very comfortable" and "very forthcoming in terms of how they understand it" (210). He thought that addressing a student's belief in a transcendent reality would be "something that a great teacher would address, probably individually with that person" (208), not in front of the whole class. Gerald responded that if students felt comfortable in a classroom to put forward their questions about a transcendent dimension then this was a sign that a teacher had created a trusting environment for students. Conversely, Michael thought that teachers had learned to be cautious about the topic of transcendence and would probably direct students to resources outside of the school in order to help students answer their own questions. Malcolm also thought that teachers should be cautious because they did not know what "skeletons" a student might have regarding their beliefs or experiences (94). He was more cautious because:

all it takes is for some kid to go home and to spin something completely different, and then you've got an irate parent knocking on your door the next day, going, 'What the heck are you doing teaching my kids about ghosts or whatever (84)?

Malcolm preferred to interpret 'experiencing transcendence' in terms of resiliency, arguing that adolescent lives were stressful. In addition to "gender pressures, societal, cultural, peer pressures," he noted that parents were pressuring their children to "excel" (6). Post-secularization schools, in his view, should include secular, non-religious, ways to deal with stress.

All in all, principals were supportive of teachers. Principals thought that different teachers would create different boundaries depending on who they were as a person and depending on the subject that they taught. Matthew thought that teachers were taking up many of the constructs in England's model in a student centred way because "that's the type of people they are" (124).

7.3 Conclusion

It was evident that the 'leave your faith at the door', rationalized, and capitalistic post-secularization model was changing from the bottom-up as individual teachers began to introduce religious/spiritual concepts to students or create space for students to exercise their right to religious/spiritual freedom. In the absence of directives and curriculum, teachers, mainly motivated by their own passion for the exploration of the concept of spirituality, began to confront the post-secularization model. Mayrl (2011) found that in Australia teachers and headteachers had a significant impact on the trajectory of secularization and it appeared that in this Alberta study teachers and administrators were responsible to a large degree for reshaping the boundary of post-secularization education. Whilst Mayrl's subjects

removed religions courses because they became problematic in the sense of timetabling, the data show that policy-makers and administrators re-introduced religions courses. But, individual teachers, who knew they were to be cautious, went further by creating space for students to talk about their beliefs about God and the supernatural, their meaning and purpose, sense of awe and wonder, thoughts about their spirit/soul, where their inspiration and intuition came from, and their mental health in spiritual terms.

Mayrl found that teachers who had a high degree of autonomy have more influence on the secularization process than teachers with low autonomy. In this study, teachers had high autonomy, and whilst they operated under the radar or covertly, it was evident that quietly the Alberta post-secularization model was changing. The one curriculum discipline where the least amount of change occurred was in Social Studies, where teachers carried on teaching lessons without addressing the religious backdrop to curriculum, such as the Crusades or the Enlightenment Era and failing students who argued that religion was a form of knowledge. Whilst this study did not evaluate teacher practices, it was evident that teachers seemed to be muddling through the controversial terrain on their own, with what seemed like the best of intentions. The lack of data driven informed 'best practice' methodology seemed to be typical in most professional practices, according to the literature (see Chapter Two).

8.0 CHAPTER EIGHT

Future Direction

This chapter presents findings for research question three:

How do teachers, administrators, and policy-makers think policy and practice could address religion/spirituality within secular public schools?

It is argued that the secularization of public institutions was intended to create a neutral public space where the freedom of religion/spirituality could flourish (see Chapter Two: Casanova, 2009; Taylor, 2007, 2009; Barnett, 2008; Thierren, 2009; Beaman, 2003). However, 'neutrality' is a contested concept, and different countries will have different versions of a 'neutral public space'. In the preceding chapters it was found that in conceptualizing religion and spirituality the Alberta government constructed policy mechanisms to protect the religious rights of conservative religions and the Aboriginal community, but had not ventured into the territory of conceptualizing how the freedom of religion/spirituality for mainstream students, who were diverse and represented the broad spectrum of belief, could flourish.

This chapter examines the future direction for Alberta post-secularization education. It pulls the threads of the debates about the form and function of post-secularization education together for the Alberta context, contributing an Alberta example to the international debates about secular education for a new generation of students. It includes a hierarchical view into debates about mandates for religion and spirituality, changes to policy discourse, teacher training, and the function of post-secularization education in a global world.

8.1 Policy-makers and Administrators

It has been established that the Alberta Ministry of Education, by comparison to other international contexts, conceptualized its role as providing options for parents and schools to include or exclude the concepts of religion and spirituality at their discretion, based on the population a school jurisdiction served. The objective in the line of questioning that made up this section of the findings was to inquire into whether or not Alberta policy-makers and administrators would go further and take a more deliberative approach to conceptualizing religion and spirituality for a contemporary generation of young people that were enrolled in mainstream education, who were not in Aboriginal programmes or faith-based programmes.

8.1.1 Conceptualizing Religions

Certain courses in Alberta Education were mandatory, such as the CALM course (Career and Life Management). In the context of CALM being a mandatory course,

the Minister was asked if he would take a more 'hands-on' approach to the concept of religion and elevate it to a public policy issue, perhaps mandating at least one of the religions courses at the secondary level. The Minister replied that he was in general opposed to "prescriptive education" (90). He was not going to mandate a religions course.

Whilst the Minister was exposed to England's national mandate for 'spiritual development' and 'Religious Education', it was not surprising that the Minister would not want to follow down the same pathway. Historically, the Canadian government does not conceptualize the meanings of religion for Canadians, and is not involved in the religious/spiritual lives of Canadians (see Chapter Three). Barnett (2008) argues that countries, like Canada, experienced in policy-making for a diverse population will often take a flexible 'hands-off' approach to conceptualizing religion for the public sphere and countries with less experience tend to be more directive in how religion is to be conceptualized in the public sphere. Barnett argues that in a flexible approach, individuals are free to express their religion/spirituality as long as they do not interfere with the day-to-day functioning of the public institution or cause harm to others. However, the data show that institutional leaders, principals, and teachers interpreted the 'hands-off' approach to mean that they were to offer a 'leave your faith at the door' post-secularization model (see Chapter Five).

The Minister was asked where he would situate himself in the debate in England that proposes Religious Education could be a mechanism to promote social cohesion and create the conditions for mutual understandings between religious

groups (Jackson, 2007; Grimmitt, 2010; Pring, 2010). The Minister replied that extreme public displays of religious intolerance demonstrated in places like New York and London with bombings were at present not evident in Alberta. Thus, the argument that religions courses could resolve tensions was not considered appropriate for the Alberta context. In response to this question, he stated:

Do you really want to get into saying, “In order to live together, we have to understand each other’s spiritualities?” Maybe we do as we progress further down the road. I don’t know if we can get more diverse, but as our world becomes tighter, I suppose, as more people come in and there’s less room to move, you may actually have the same kind of issues that other parts of the world have (54).

His impression was that Canada is “the best example of a pluralistic society there is in the world” (54). He perceived Alberta as having regions that have remained fairly homogenous in terms of their faith, but urban areas (where SSJ is located) were “very pluralistic, cosmopolitan” (54). He noted that the Alberta population was changing, commenting on the “waves of immigrations from various places around the world” (54). He offered a conflicted view of Canada’s social sphere, arguing that it was at once harmonious and susceptible to racism:

one thing we (as in Canada) can share with the world is that ability to live together in peace and harmony better than any other place. Not perfectly. We have systemic racism; we have issues . . . So, that’s a whole different piece that we have to come to grips with this so we can go forward (104).

In Chapter Five, SSJ Trustees found in their 2003 consultation that a religious new immigrant population challenged SSJ’s ‘leave your faith at the door’ model, but SSJ had not done anything to address this population’s concern. The current Alberta model conceptualized the space for religion in terms of the three optional religions

courses in schools. The data show that the Minister was not going to turn these religions courses into something more than an option for students.

Kunz (2009) argues that the Canadian government and provincial leaders tend to turn a blind eye to the impact of religious diversity in the public sphere. Whilst recognition that religious intolerance was surfacing as a public issue, the Minister did not believe that religions courses could serve as the mechanism to resolve tensions. He proposed that dealing with religious diversity was possibly a future problem for Alberta. At present, his understanding was that for most Alberta students, religious diversity was not an issue as they had grown up in an environment of multiculturalism and diversity. In the context that Canadian public schools were to be inclusive learning environments, the Minister was not going to make religious diversity a public policy issue. The outcome of the interview conversation was that the Minister preferred to continue with the Canadian tradition of a 'hands off' approach, which left the concepts of religion and spirituality open for interpretation by students, parents, teachers, principals, senior administrators, and trustees.

With institutional leaders, I opened up the debate regarding the 'role of post-secularization education' in introducing students to the concepts of global citizenship (Sweet, 1997; Brown, 2000; Seljak, 2009a,b), the politics of religion (Smith, 2001; Beaman, 2006; Taylor, 1989, 2007; Ritskes, 2011), the skillset of understanding how one's own religious/spiritual views were situated in the larger sphere of multiple religions and spiritualities (Milot & Trembley, 2009; Grimmitt, 2010; Pring, 2010; Jackson, 2007), and adaptability to different religious/spiritual

cultures (Westerman, 2009; Wane, 2011; Larson, 2011). In other words, the SSJ 2003 consultation investigated the 'role of religion' in schools. This line of questioning took a different approach by asking about the 'role of post-secularization education' in addressing issues related to religion.

I used the end of the interview protocol to put forward what I perceived to be my marginalized voice, as a non-religious parent, in keeping with the heuristic approach, challenging decision-makers to think about the complex task of re-imagining the function of post-secularization education, and also challenging my views (Moustakas, 2001; Patton, 1990):

As a mum, I want my kids to be exposed to diversity. I want them to be global citizens. I want them to understand the commonalities and the differences between different belief systems, whether they're religious or spiritual or atheist so that they can be comfortable anywhere they go in the world, so they can understand when they go to a country, they should check out what the religious beliefs are, because religion and law sometimes entwined right? So that they have this awareness. And by not putting it in here, we're kind of thinking everybody's going to stay in Alberta. But what about when they go traveling, or they're working in a business office with a bunch of different people from around the world (128)?

Ladson-Billings (2005) and Ryan, Pollack, and Antonelli (2009) would draw attention again to the sample that made up decision-makers, the 'Dominant Society'. They would question whether decisions reflect the issues emerging from a growing multicultural and religiously/spiritually diverse population or whether they keep a longstanding status quo. Davison Hunter (2009) would argue that decision-makers should stop assuming that there is a 'Dominant Culture' anymore. In Chapter Five, Trustees initially conceptualized religion as going to church, and

as a segmented part of life, and seemed to have a view that Albertans were for the most part conservatively religious. This question was intended to open up this conceptualization by proposing that there were likely parents at SSJ who wanted their children to explore diversity and by situating religious beliefs as taboo it was denying these parents the rights to have their children explore multiple perspectives on religious/spiritual belief (also an argument put forward by Sweet (1997)).

Trustee Smith responded that preparing students for life outside of Alberta was not perceived as an educational mandate. She found the idea “really fascinating” and “something we have to grapple with” (129). The question stimulated Connors to think that public education should function as a mechanism to prepare students for “the world they are going to have to succeed in” (56). She explained that she had hoped that the 2003 consultation would lead them “farther on the road of honoring religion and teaching about religion, but we didn’t get to where I would’ve liked to go (56). Jones responded:

We send a signal to the wider society that we really value diversity, which we say we do at SSJ, value diversity, and the kids are going to be exposed to something that they would never be exposed to, because they’re part of a larger public education system. In my mind it’s all a piece. It all fits together philosophically, pragmatically, it fits, but we don’t do it (140).

In this regard, the data show that in future the role of post-secularization education may be re-imagined to include the skillset of awareness of multiple religions and the significance of religion in different cultures and sensitivity toward religious cultures.

8.1.2. Conceptualizing Spirituality

The data show that all levels of the hierarchy thought the concepts of religion and spirituality were two different concepts. This line of questioning inquired into whether or not this cohort would consider a space for the concept of spirituality for mainstream students. At present, only Aboriginal students had a space for spirituality at SSJ and at the provincial level conservative families had a space as well.

In the Minister's view, spirituality for mainstream students should be conceptualized in terms of psychological wellbeing. He perceived spirituality as a concept that could be infused in all areas of the curriculum. A designated space with curriculum and evaluation procedures was not necessary. He conceptualized spirituality as a dimension of health curriculum:

So, in the context of the broader piece of our curriculum and learning system, I think you have to build that concept of spiritual wellness into the curriculum, into the health curriculum, because it's really about how you're healthy as an individual human being, and, for different people, that may include more or less of their religious beliefs if they have them (41).

Whilst the Minister had not mentioned other disciplines, it was apparent that some teachers had already gone ahead and considered religion/spirituality as dimensions of their curriculum disciplines, although they included dimensions of spirituality (beliefs in God and afterlife) that the Minister initially considered taboo for Alberta Education (see Chapter Six).

It was evident that whilst curriculum documents did not include explanations for how spirituality was to be conceptualized in different disciplines, Marilyn

(Learning Innovations) argued, “there’s no intent in public education to diminish anyone’s spirituality as they bring it and as it is understood and shared” (41). She concluded that a discussion about spirituality:

speaks to where we’re going to as a learning community around working with the whole child and the whole program of studies, building teams of teachers to work with children and understanding children, having that self-knowledge and personal knowledge of children through their work (189) . . . And if you’re going to deal with spirituality, you’d better understand the whole student (197).

Her role in the organization was to create documents that would develop the concepts of character, personal development, and citizenship, but she had not included a child’s religion/spirituality as a dimension of these concepts (see Chapter Five). Her response speaks to the much larger debates of ‘whole child learning’ (Dewey, 1938, 1959; Erricker, 2007; DeSouza, 2008; Cole, 2011; Hart, 2011), a debate that was not fully developed in this study, but one that shows promise if Alberta Education and SSJ were planning on re-imagining post-secularization education further to include the concepts of religion and spirituality as part of ‘whole child learning’.

Taylor (2009) argues that re-engaging in debates about what post-secularization education should entail will likely lead to painful discussions that unpack assumptions that underlie the way policy and practices were constructed. Trustee Connors put forward early in her interview, “We haven’t equipped ourselves to address religious and spiritual identity” (28). “This was unfortunate,” she said (28), and through her interview she argued that SSJ must start to “challenge assumptions” (52). One assumption discovered in this study was that the religious/spiritual side of life was conceptualized as a segmented part of a

person's everyday reality, not an integral part, conflicting with the studies of James (1902), Otto (1923, 1958), Maslow (1968), Hardy (1979), Berger (1967, 1999, 2001), Persinger (1987), Hamer (2008), and Taylor (2007) and also conflicting with the data from many of the teachers and principals in this study that argued their religion/spirituality was a significant and relevant part of their personal and professional life (see Chapter Five). The data show that a deliberative space for spirituality might occur in the future. Some teachers had moved ahead and were creating space already. It was evident that Trustees and administrators acknowledged that religious/spiritual belief and identity existed. The interview gave them an opportunity to work out how they might position and/or reframe the inclusion of religion/spirituality in a post-secularization model. They could imagine the concepts as part of 'whole child learning', not as a concept positioned under 'spiritual education'.

8.1.3 Conceptualizing Curriculum Discourse

Defining religion and spirituality and communicating definitions to the larger stakeholder community were cited as obstacles for integrating the concept of spirituality into Alberta Education's model of post-secularization education. The controversy that policy and curriculum changes create was illuminated in Chapter Four, when English policy-makers included the concept of 'spiritual development' in national policy.

The data show that the Minister of Education did not want to engage in debates about definitionals, pinning concepts into agreed upon meanings. He stated:

I wouldn't go out and fight it and say, "This is about religion and this is about..." but it's inherent in what we talk about (68).

Seljak (2009a) argues that most Canadian policy-makers do not want to engage in meetings about the topic of religion because they believe they will erupt into heated debates. The Minister of Education in this study, however, was opening up the larger issue of government involvement in defining religion and spirituality for Albertans. To start defining terms now would conflict with a long Canadian tradition of a hands-off approach (see Chapter Three).

Furthermore, the Minister did not think spiritual or religious concepts needed to be "identified or named" (68). The Minister argued, "everybody has an essence of who they are; their religion is part of it, their belief system is part of it" (12), which is in keeping with the literature presented in Chapter Two, particularly James (1902), Otto (1923, 1958), Maslow (1968), Berger (1967, 1999, 2001), Luckmann (1999), and Taylor (2007). Cora, a provincial curriculum designer, added: "Anytime you're looking at big questions, it's based on spirituality" (99). The issue for teachers was that they believed that the absence of the words spiritual or spirituality in the Alberta School Act and curriculum documents meant that they were not to explore the big questions or engage students in thinking about their religious/spiritual identity (see Chapters Five, Six, Seven).

At the institutional level, Marilyn (Learning Innovations) argued:

the word itself cannot carry the weight that you've ascribed to it. It might be what you unpackage in the word (87) . . . until we actually can clarify terminology, we can't act in ways that are coherent to our

community. And so, this is an issue of coherence rather than an issue of definition (169).

Whilst the Minister of Education was opposed to defining religion and spirituality, Marilyn highlighted the tension that exists in ensuring that if SSJ were to use the word spirituality, then the community should understand what was meant by the word and that the intention was a match for the community.

The data show that communicating intention and meanings to the wider stakeholder community opened up a host of problems. Whilst Marilyn (Director of Learning Innovations) argued that SSJ did not use the discourse of spirituality, it included some of the dimensions of spirituality she found as she unpicked the concept in her interview. The difficulty was in communication:

I would be curious to know, we've done some significant work around all of these aspects that are defined as being part of spirituality. We haven't called it *spirituality* so I would be interested in how this is understood, how it's taken up by a society, and how, then, it is promoted or disseminated into the community as part of good citizenship (59).

Indeed, she posed the question as to whether or not the word spirituality should be used at all. Whilst it is evident that other international contexts (such as England, Australia, and New Zealand: see Chapter Two) use the word 'spiritual' in educational discourse, there was reluctance amongst Alberta's Ministry and institutional leaders in using the word.

The dilemma, argued Connors, continued to be the emotions that people had about the concept of religion, as some people viewed religion as "great oppression" and others saw it as "the freeing agent in their lives" (16). Her main concern was

that if document changes included 'spirituality', it might open the door for religious people (teacher, parent, or student) to exert their worldview, arguing, "We can't have proselytizing in the classroom" (24). She concluded, "we haven't hit the balance" (26). She concluded that a step forward might be to include a "non-threatening descriptor" in the SSJ educational goals, asking, "What kind of human being do we want to see there?" (122). Connors thought there would need to be "full-on conversations with our parents in our city" (94). In her view, the conservative Christian sector of the population were most likely to block attempts on the part of SSJ to change the post-secularization model. In communicating to parents, Connors thought that SSJ was not saying, "Ditch that whole God thing you're learning at home; go your own way," (94) but the teacher is saying:

'I have enough respect for your abilities to think, to say, Okay, there's your question. What do you need to answer that question? I will support you in finding what you need to get to a sense of the answer. I won't give you the answer, but I'll have that conversation with you.' (94).

It is possible that she had this view because of Trustee Jones (Evangelical pastor), who voiced his concerns about protecting religious children from the increasing religious/spiritual pluralism in Alberta. He was not opposed to religious children's exposure to rationalized curriculum. Exposure to alternative religious beliefs appeared to be of more concern than rationalized beliefs. It is likely that Connors and Trustees debated this issue in the 'Role of Religion' consultation. The consensus at all levels of the hierarchy, beyond Connor's interpretation of the Alberta population, was that religion/spirituality would be a threatening concept for many Albertans. They believed that to introduce religion/spirituality in a

deliberative way would be perceived as an attempt on the part of the government to intrude into their private beliefs.

8.1.4 Conceptualizing Teacher Training

In Canada, there is teacher training in religions for the Catholic sector, but not for public school teachers (Sweet, 1997). Indeed, teachers of World Religion courses at SSJ did not receive any formal training. The issue here was the sort of teacher training for mainstream teachers, where there was no designated space for the concept of spirituality and where mainstream teachers argued that religious/spiritual issues manifested in their daily practices with this generation of students (developed in Chapter Six and Seven). Other professional practitioners, operating in other post-secularization sectors such as nurses, social workers, and mental health providers, find that their training did not involve any modules that dealt with the way religion/spirituality manifested in their practices (Hodge, Baughman, & Cummings, 2006; Badacchino, 2011; Bruce et al., 2011). The Minister was asked if he thought that university teacher training programmes (which is a provincial responsibility) should include a module on educational issues related to religion/spirituality.

The data show that the Minister was opposed to teacher training programmes where teachers would learn about multiple religious/spiritual perspectives. In his view:

Teaching is about seizing the opportunity, about guiding the discussion, about helping the students ask the right questions and using their questions (108).

In his view, he did not think it in the best interest of teaching and learning for teachers to have a deep and nuanced understanding of religions, and consider themselves an authority on the subject, arguing:

When it comes to religion, I'm not sure I want teachers necessarily to have a background in all world religions, because I'm sure that my view of their view of my religion would be different than their view of my religion. It's not important. What's important is that kids can talk about if there's a holiday, what does this holiday mean for them? What is this about? How does it fit in to our community, right? . . . And for a whole classroom of people, you'd have a wonderful discussion if you just got into the discussion (108).

The dilemma that professional practitioner literature asks is: how does the practitioner know the appropriate questions to ask clients, patients, and students and what is the appropriate way to respond to religious/spiritual issues as they arise (see Chapter Two).

In order to check again how the Minister thought teachers should address student beliefs in God, afterlife, and other issues of a transcendent reality (since he was wary at the beginning of his interview and because some teachers were going ahead anyway, see Chapter Seven), he was asked again. He replied:

I mean, if you really wanted to get into that whole issue, you could come down to the question of, you know, is there a God or isn't there a God? Who started the place? And that would be a wonderful discussion, but it wouldn't really matter if I knew what everybody's religious view on that was, I don't think. So, in my view, what we need are teachers to be the ones who inspire the discussion, not the ones who know everything about it (108).

In this regard, his view supports what teachers were already doing in their classrooms (See Chapter Seven). The issue is that the teacher must not take the role of an authority on conceptualizations of a transcendent reality or position any particular belief system as an authority. In this regard, the Minister validates

secularization theory in terms of its prediction that religious authority will diminish over time and that policy-makers and administrators play a role in maintaining the separation of institution and religious authority. In post-secularization education, when institutional religious paradigms for a transcendent reality are not positioned as authorities, teachers are expected to take a curiosity-based approach, asking questions and not supplying answers. However, many teachers argued they thought they were supposed to avoid the religious/spiritual aspects of curriculum and student identity altogether (see Chapter Five in particular). In this regard, Marilyn's (Learning Innovations) response to the teacher training issues had more to do with permission than training, arguing, "maybe what you're identifying or questioning is the permission that needs to be given around having these conversations more explicitly and in more of an open way—" (121). The data show that teachers thought they had to operate covertly or under the radar in addressing religious/spiritual themes (see Chapter Seven).

Cora (Provincial Curriculum Specialist), however, argued that teacher training in contemporary issues about religion/spirituality was necessary. She found that leaders from a refugee background asked Alberta Education to include "cultural competence" as a dimension of teacher training (106). She thought this would lead to major discussions over the next five years in which the understanding of religion/spirituality in general should be addressed, but not in a way that teachers were trained in the nuances of religion (106). Her response could be explained by the fact that few Canadians have been educated about world religions over the last fifty years. The Minister and Cora open the door to re-conceptualizing how to train

teachers to be sensitive to religious/spiritual diversity and how religious/spiritual beliefs manifest in student behaviour and interpretation of curriculum without requiring teachers to have knowledge about religion.

8.1.5 Predictions for Change

At the conclusion of interviews with Trustees it seemed that unless there was a catalyst for change, like there was for Aboriginal education, Trustees would not engage in further debates about the function of post-secularization education (Berger, 1999; Luhmann, 2013). It was not going to investigate the significance of religion/spirituality in people's lives (Berger, 2001; Bruce, 2002; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005), the ways beliefs have changed amongst Albertans (Taylor, 2007; Bibby, 2011; Fadden & Townsend, 2009), or the boundary between the secular, the religious, and the spiritual (Greeve Davaney, 2009). They also had no plans to engage in the uncomfortable process of unpacking their assumptions (Beaman, 2006; Taylor, 1989, 2007, 2009; Davison Hunter, 2009; Van der Veer, 2009; Ladson-Billing, 2005).

I asked Trustee Jones about the possibility of conducting a new consultation (from the one in 2003) to include a range of voices, rather than conceptualize the topic of religion and spirituality as only of interest to religious people. A spectrum of voices could offer their views on the function of post-secularization education, the role of religion in post-secularization education and also the role of post-secularization education to deal with the concepts of religion and spirituality. He replied,

You're likely right on that, and it may be good to do it all over again, to say, 'Okay, so should we update religion in SSJ schools and our study of it, our view of it? Can we work it out?' We likely should because this has been awhile now. The world is changing dramatically. SSJ is such a far more diverse place today than it was when we first started talking about this seven eight years ago (181).

In this regard, there was evidence to indicate that policy-makers and administrators saw the benefits of addressing religion/spirituality as educational concepts, but the 'how' to do this in a culture where religion was a prickly issue and where spirituality was a vague and indefinable term continued to be problematic and not one that could be resolved in a one to two hour interview. However, Trustee Smith concluded her interview with, "it's not the next thing on our list" (159) and "We're not hearing screaming and yelling, saying, 'You've got to have this in our school system'" (161).

In this regard, there will likely not be a top-down educational movement that will radically change Alberta Education, unless a catalyst for change surfaces. This is in keeping with Barnett's (2008) theory that countries that are experienced in dealing with diversity tend to be informal in dealing with religion/spirituality, rather than creating definitions, and prescribing spaces in education, curriculum, and evaluation. In the meantime, teachers were changing the Alberta post-secularization model in a quiet and unobtrusive way, without directives or curriculum mandates (see Chapter Seven).

8.1.6 Summary

This study was intended to be an Alberta example for how religion and spirituality were conceptualized in policy and practice. It resulted in capturing the first articulations of a contemporary generation of policy-makers and

administrators. In this regard, it provides a baseline for future studies on Alberta's post-secularization story. In summing up the governance position, there was a lack of coherency amongst policy-makers and administrators with regard to the direction Alberta Education should take. The Ministry was opposed to changing the Alberta School Act, or taking the controversial step of being more 'hands-on' and explicit in directives about how religions and spiritualities should be conceptualized for post-secularization education. The Ministry had a general attitude that teachers could explore religious/spiritual beliefs and practices as they arose implicitly. At the SSJ level, administrators were concerned about opening the door to proselytizing. Whilst the interview brought contemporary issues to the attention of this cohort, it appeared at the time of the interviews there was no urgent catalyst or problem in their view that would be an impetus to engage in further debate about post-secularization education.

8.2 Teachers and Principals

This section brings the voices of teachers and principals forward and presents their views on policy directives, policy and curriculum discourse, the function of post-secularization education, teacher training, and what they perceived was the way forward.

8.2.1 Conceptualizing Post-secularization Education

Teachers argued that the Alberta post-secularization model constrained students. They perceived Alberta Education as overly focused on preparing students for work and that changes needed to be made. They situated the void in

Alberta Education in terms of spirituality in particular as a social justice issue. In the absence of mechanisms in schools for non-religious children, teachers were filling the void and their role in post-secularization education was changing.

Weber (2002, 1964) argued that most secularized Protestant systems re-conceptualized the functional mandate of education to be about producing students with a Protestant work ethic and career skills to serve the economy. Alberta teachers supported Weber's theory. Heather (Social Studies) argued that the SSJ post-secularization model "compartmentalizes students into something that's not normal" (6). Since Alberta, in her opinion, was the "oil and gas mecca of North America" the education system perceived its "duty to produce people for their labor force" (114), and "spirituality is at the bottom of the totem pole" (118). Similarly, Jake (World Religions) perceived Alberta education as about "employability or industry" (8). He wondered if "the government is afraid that if we stray into something that's more spiritual that it will deflect from the job of work or industrial progress or even capitalism, something along those lines" (8). The result, he proposed, was that it did not acknowledge that students "bring their own beliefs or their own spirituality or religion to the table" and the lessons can become "very shallow" (12). In addition, as Caitlyn (Drama) argued, "If there isn't an answer to the question, if I can't put that on an exam and then give it a mark, then we can't spend time on it" (274), meaning that questions about the human condition became ignored. Steve (French) understood that "many young teachers are feeling the pressure to achieve on [provincial] exams, so they ignore

everything but preparing for the exam, and we know that that doesn't develop a good citizen or healthy citizen" (18).

Teachers and principals perceived the silence in Alberta education and the cautionary warnings, especially in a multicultural, diverse, and complex country like Canada, as a form of injustice. Kevin (Art) argued, "if we are to accept ourselves as a multicultural society we must accept that student spirituality is a part of a conceptualization of multiculturalism" (312). Katie (Theory of Knowledge and Music) thought that accepting the concept of a personal spirituality, as different from organized religion, was "the next great hurdle" (172). Katie argued, "women's rights, rights for people of color, and then rights for those of different gender identifications" (172). She remarked, "but we haven't gotten to religion, because it's so touchy" (172). She explained:

But all of these subjects throughout history have been very touchy. It's taken time and a great deal of fighting to get them to a place where it's okay to talk about them to a public eye. It's not okay to be homophobic, right? It's taken time to get to that point, and I feel like maybe spirituality is next, but it just hasn't quite gotten to the public awareness yet that other issues have gotten to (172).

It will be "inevitable," (52) said Heather (Social Studies) that in this post-secularization era SSJ will eventually have to address the notion of personal spirituality, as a different concept than religion. In her view she did not "think [the Alberta government] can avoid it any longer" (52). Heather did not think it was going to be in the immediate future, claiming that it would "take a few more generations of people who are more open-minded and less conservative in their

viewpoints” (52). Kevin (Art) argued that after such a long absence, policy-makers, administrators, and teachers needed to “be gradually, kindly, gently moved into this way of thinking” (368).

Matthew (Principal) thought it was an exciting time to be an educator because in general people were “re-inventing, re-understanding, and re-imagining their religious beliefs” (6). In this regard, he supported the literature on the transformation of belief (see Chapter Two: Roof, 1999a,b; Tacey, 2004; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Taylor, 2007; Bibby, 2011). Matthew argued that in the social world people were speaking more openly about religion/spirituality. He referenced the work of Richard Dawkins and how the atheist movement was a catalyst for furthering the debates on the significance of religion and spirituality in the social world. In this regard, secularization of public institutions did not present an endpoint (Taylor, 2007). The way the concepts of religion and spirituality and the significance they had in everyday life were presenting themselves in new ways. Gerald (Principal), for example, was curious about “where the personal boundary ends and/or where it overlaps the work that I’m doing on a day-to-day basis” (1). In this regard, he challenged the policy-maker and administrator view that religion/spirituality was a segmented part of life, as here Gerald sought to find the boundary for personal and professional spirituality.

Several teachers reiterated their concern that Alberta students growing up in a secular world and secularized education system that removed the space for students to explore the concepts of religion and spirituality were prevented from accessing tools they might need for their spiritual wellness. Eric (Art/Rugby)

argued, “Our society is becoming less and less religious, but they still have these questions” (102). He was personally wrestling with the notion of spirituality, saying, “I feel like a spiritual being, not that I know what that means” (18). In the absence of religion, he said, “There are some people who aren’t able to grapple with these questions by themselves, and so they maybe feel out on a limb” (102). For students from secular homes, Janis (Social Studies) asked, “Where is their entry point to spiritual understandings” (50)? She wondered if they turned to drugs and alcohol instead. In Jake’s (World Religions) experience when students are struggling in school and they are “in a school system that rewards scholastic ability and [they’re] not doing very well or [they] feel like [they’re] a round peg in a square hole, then these things (eight dimensions: Tool B) absolutely have to be discussed because otherwise, this experience becomes fairly empty and meaningless for [them]” (92).

Principals and teachers highlighted a contentious knot in the conceptualization of the function of post-secularization education. The assumption that a contemporary generation of young people could access religious/spiritual mentorship in the private sector, not education, was outdated. Few Albertans attended a religious institution anymore. The assumption that young people could resolve their religious/spiritual issues from their parents was perceived as outdated for the same reason and also because it came to light that some parents did more harm than good. The status quo assumption that post-secularization public schools that did not need to include mechanisms to assist students in religious/spiritual understandings was also considered outdated. Principals and

teachers argued that this new generation of youth, living in a secular world, needed schools to step in and offer some tools for students from secular homes to explore their spiritual questions. The data show that teachers were trying to fill the gap left behind from the secularization era. Caitlyn (Drama) argued that there were several teachers at SSJ who could rise to the challenge of being “spiritual guides” (230). Adam (English), for example, hoped to “throw out a few life boats” (190) to students who were struggling with spiritual issues and to be “a spiritual mentor to some degree” (28). Molly (English) started each day with a meditation, “I just want to be a bit of a blessing to some little lives” (98) and April (English) tried to be the kind of teacher she would want for her own daughter. In this respect, Jake perceived that adolescents “need a little guidance or a little direction which was something that [he tried] to provide” (92) and Lou-Anne (Guidance) hoped to be a “resource” (2). All in all, Adam explained, “as teachers we’re always trying to smuggle in our love” (214).

The literature (see Chapter Two) shows that scholars engage in a ‘raucous debate’ about the legitimacy of non-religious approaches to spiritual care. This study provides an example for how teachers provided ‘spiritual care’ in a culture where there were few resources in the private sphere for non-religious students and where a ‘religious approach’ to spiritual care was perceived as helpful to some students but inappropriate for others (see Chapter Seven). In this regard, the data show that there should be a wider conceptualization for what ‘spiritual care’ means and who is considered an expert in ‘spiritual care’. The data show that teachers, in the absence of resources for non-religious students, perceived that they were taking on the role of spiritual mentor.

8.2.2 Conceptualizing Policy Directives

The goal was to find out if teachers and principals wanted policy and curriculum directives to guide how religion and spirituality should/could be conceptualized for mainstream education.

Despite teachers and principals supporting other Canadian scholars (see: Abdi, 2011; Wane, 2011; Hart, 2011; Cole, 2011) in their perception that the absence of space in Canadian mainstream education was problematic, principals and teachers in this study extend the Canadian debates by supporting policy-makers and administrators in that they did not want the provincial government or SSJ to become more directive about religion/spirituality. They did not want the government to define spirituality and draft a framework or mandate for how spirituality should be addressed in a classroom. In this regard, all Alberta educationists were opposed to policy directives and curriculum mandates.

Whilst Eric (Art/Rugby) argued that the advantage to structuring the concept in policy and practice made the concept exist and it became a tangible and relevant part of Alberta education, he preferred to address spirituality informally. April (English) said, “I like [spirituality], but I don’t know that I necessarily want it to be mandated as that is now part of your job too” (312). Steve was only interested in policy for spirituality if it “makes our jobs easier, not harder” (106). Principal Malcolm spoke more from a cultural social stance, arguing, “This is a province,” he argued, “that abhors anything mandatory, even putting snow tires on cars in the winter; mandatory will have people running the other way” (190). Resistance to

government interference in the private life of Canadians was a thread that ran through all interviews.

Teachers and principals had two main concerns about policy-making for spirituality. One concern was that if policy-makers formulated a policy it would somehow diminish the overall concept. The other concern was that if spirituality were included in policy directives and curriculum then it would necessarily have to be evaluated. Lou-Anne said “as soon as you create it in policy, it looks different” (260). “It becomes ‘rote’ like saying ‘the Lord’s Prayer’ or singing ‘O Canada’ (the national anthem),” explained Caitlyn (Drama, 218). It “kills the spirit” (172), claimed Mark (Teacher’s Aid). Donna (CALM) added that an understanding of self or exploration of self could be encouraged but not mandated (118). Jake (World Religions), who made a photocopy of England’s eight dimensions (see Chapter Six), stated, “this is the real curriculum for me,” but argued that spirituality, as a dimension of student learning, was different from others (86). It would be “a hard issue to sell,” he argued, in that addressing the vague notion of spirituality was messy and not easily quantifiable (86). Jessica (English) and Marie (French) argued that spirituality was a private and personal aspect of a person and should not be subjected to assessment.

8.2.3 Conceptualizing Policy and Curriculum Discourse

Adding the discourse of spirituality to Alberta curriculum documents was perceived as useful for the teacher, but potentially problematic for stakeholders, particularly parents. The reasons put forward offered a view into the controversial

task of conceptualizing religion and spirituality, where there was no consensus as to the meanings. Examples included Eric (Rugby/Art) who argued “the word spiritual is a loaded word for most people because they think church or temple or congregating” (171). April (English) thought the word spirituality was “too messy” (298). Natalie (Acting Assistant Principal) thought policy-makers were not prepared to change and enter the “bigger box” of spirituality (36). Sheila (English) saw the benefit of leaving the word spirituality out of curriculum documents:

both provincially and federally at times tries so hard to be inclusive, innocuous, diverse, and not lean towards any one religion or faith that by leaving it out, it seems to allow it to be all things to all people. If we want it to be there, but if we don't, it's okay too (166).

However, Jake (World Religions) argued that in the absence of discourse in the curriculum, teachers bore the responsibility if they trespassed the interpretive boundary:

We try to address [the eight dimensions] in school, knowing full well that if we run afoul of anybody, we're going to get our knuckles rapped for doing so. So, it's a kind of a 'Yes, [policymakers] want you to do it, but we can't really put it in writing well, because we're worried about a backlash from this group or that group or human rights group' (30).

Whilst England's directive approach is sometimes criticized for pinning down the concepts of religion and spirituality into mandates and curriculum documents (Benson & Roehlkepartain, 2008; Erricker, 2007), teachers in this study perceived the benefits and drawbacks of having written documents (also taken up in Chapter Six).

In context, this Alberta sample experienced a high degree of teacher autonomy and therefore its responses to the issue of government mandates would likely generate resistance. Some teachers were integrating religion/spirituality into their lessons without directives (see Chapter Seven). The principals noted that the concept of spirituality was manifesting in the organizational structure of SSJ, but in an organic way, not a top-down government directive. Matthew, for example, mentioned that the Chief Superintendent of SSJ infused her opening address to principals with lessons that she had learned from having attended a lecture by the Dalai Llama. He argued that this would not have happened ten years ago. From his vantage point, he perceived spirituality to be “cautiously on the table” at SSJ (6). Conversations, he said, occurred about “twenty-first century” schooling, in the sense that schools should attend to more than academic needs (6). He thought the concept of spirituality had become “shrouded” and “disguised” in “different terminology” (16). Michael said that spirituality was “implicitly” (252) included in SSJ goals, which Director of Learning Innovations earlier mentioned. Malcolm described SSJ’s approach as “a small ‘S’ spirituality rather than a big ‘S’” (150). “Big ‘S’”, he explained, “would be like a directional, purposeful, it’s there, big, overarching and small ‘S’ is it’s one of several things” (152). In this regard, whilst trustees and senior administrators provided evidence to say that they had not thought about spirituality prior to the interview, school principals, who were personally and professionally interested in spirituality, could see evidence of change, even if the trustees and senior administrators could not.

In this regard, the word spirituality was being used in SSJ, just not in a directive way, not as some sort of social or educational movement, but cautiously and quietly.

8.2.4 Conceptualizing Teacher Training

These experienced teachers did not mention that they needed formal training. Instead, the sample in this study wanted to feel supported by their organization as they struggled with adapting to the transformation of belief and religious/spiritual diversity. Eric (Rugby/Art), for example, explained that the absence of conversations about spirituality at SSJ and the constant warnings to “be careful” made his “skin crawl” because it always made him feel as if he were doing something wrong (76). Heather (Social Studies) said that sometimes in her lesson she might broach a topic related to spirituality and realize, “That’s going to open up a can of worms” (34). Principal Gerald said, “Controversial topics and topics of sensitivity are going to be brought up all the time” (49). He added, “We’re not going to avoid that; that’s life. So what do we do with that” (49)?

Principals and teachers wanted opportunities to engage in professional conversations that normalized the discourse of religion and spirituality, rather than treat the concepts as taboo. In this regard, Marilyn (Director of Learning Innovation) confirmed teacher and principals’ viewpoints by saying that perhaps SSJ should conduct open conversations about religion/spirituality for post-secularization education (see above). Teachers wanted to unpack the concept of

religion/spirituality and to articulate the issues they were experiencing in their practices. They were not asking for directive training. Eric (Art/Rugby) argued that a start to conceptualizing religion/spirituality for public education would be:

having these discussions (referring to the interview conversation) and having them openly and having the support that we can have these conversations and that we have each other's back so to speak when sensitive, perhaps overly sensitive, parents or defensive parents come back and are questioning why we're asking these questions (246).

Malcolm (Principal) similarly argued that there should be opportunities "to talk about it," and to "see that it's really wonderful, it's exciting, it's enriching" (188).

8.2.5 Conceptualizing Future Direction

Alex (Social Studies) was in favour of a "deliberative" approach (126), rather than the haphazard approach that seemed to be in place. Natalie (Assistant Principal) argued that Alberta Education should not continue with the culture of silence that permeated the organization, stating, "We have to get the message out there, whatever that looks like, so [a model of spirituality] respects all cultures" (127). Malcolm argued, "If we're trying to really make inroads," the presentation of the concept of spirituality should be "really nonthreatening" (188). Earlier in his interview, he argued that the key was to educate the parents about what spirituality meant. Trustees and senior administrators also thought that helping parents understand what spirituality was and why it was a dimension of public education would be necessary. Malcolm speculated that the Alberta Ministry would need to see evidence that parents were accepting of the inclusion of spirituality as a dimension of programming, so that they would know that they

were “not going to be fighting a public relations campaign here, and then they can craft something” (18). In his view, “It’s all in the packaging” (14).

In this regard, teachers did not want some sort of sweeping educational movement in Alberta, but an acknowledgment on the part of policy-makers and administrators that spirituality existed as a different concept than religion and that Albertans were changing and not as many were religious as they were in the past. They argued that the secular sphere did not offer resources for non-religious students to learn about spirituality and thus teachers were filling the gap. Teachers and principals wanted organizational conversations, not policy and curriculum, about how to address religion and spirituality as it manifested in their practices.

8.3 Hierarchical Coherence and Conclusion

At the provincial ministry level, the current Minister of Education did not have plans to become directive or more deliberative in addressing the notion of religion/spirituality, or engage in conversations about how to adapt to religious/spiritual diversity. He preferred to retain a Canadian tradition of a ‘hands off’ approach and for teachers to address the concepts using their professional judgment. Whilst teachers did not want the government to become directive by constructing statutes or writing curriculum, they would like the government to demonstrate that the topic of religion/spirituality existed and is a relevant educational issue.

Trustees were more amenable to re-evaluating SSJ's post-secularization model than the Ministry and senior administrators. Since decision-making is devolved to school jurisdiction Trustees, they have the authority to re-interpret its post-secularization model. Data show that they would not include the discourse of spiritual/spirituality in their school board materials, like other international settings had done (see Chapter Two). They contemplated extending educational goals to include 'the kind of people the school jurisdiction wants students to be' and 'whole child learning', so that students recognized that education was more than graduating and getting a job. However, since there was no catalyst at the time, apart from the interview for this study, it was unlikely that the group of elected Trustees involved in this study would significantly change the post-secularization model to include religion/spirituality as a relevant concept for education. Teachers, however, wanted more. They wanted to see the organization normalize the concept of religion/spirituality so that they did not feel that they were doing something wrong when they explored the concepts in the classroom. They wanted deliberative professional development opportunities, but not formal directives, to explore the concepts and the issues that were emerging in their practices. In Canada, teachers had been able to act fairly autonomously in their practices and in re-addressing the notions of religion/spirituality they did not want to lose their autonomy.

It appeared that in a post-secularization society teachers were filling the gap that secular parents and the decline in church attendance left behind. This suggests that in re-considering the concepts of religion/spirituality for education purposes that policy-makers and administrators expand their social imaginary for

the concept of religious/spiritual ‘experts’ beyond religious leaders and religious scholars, and include teachers in the conversations and recognize their experience and expertise as well.

Whilst the interview experience engaged in many of the controversial issues related to conceptualizing religion and spirituality for post-secularization education, the findings cannot conclusively provide a model for the future of post-secularization education in Alberta. It can be argued that bottom-up teacher efforts to confront the ‘leave your faith at the door’ and the capitalist model was occurring. The Alberta post-secularization model was changing, albeit teacher-by-teacher in a quiet and unobtrusive way and in a way that had yet to catch the attention, or imagination, of policy-makers and administrators.

9.0 CHAPTER NINE

Discussion: The knots in post-secularization education

This study proved to be groundbreaking for the province of Alberta. It dealt with a subject that was an ‘elephant in the room’, something educationists cautiously tiptoed around. It dealt with a subject that Alberta educationists avoided lest it ‘opened a can of worms’. The interview process became an opportunity to reflect on whether or not a ‘leave your faith at the door’ and ‘religion-free’ post-secularization model was working for the educationists and students that operated in this model. The result was that educationists identified several knots and shared the impact of these knots and how they attempted to unravel them. In this regard, this study becomes a foundational study for other Canadian researchers since it constructed not only the historical backdrop for why Alberta post-secularization schools operate with a ‘religion free’ model, it used secularization theory as a theoretical lens to provide explanations for how and why these knots formed. Placed within the larger international context, the Alberta situation acts as a heuristic, opening up the larger conversation about the function of public education today.

This chapter will begin with a summary of five main findings, which demonstrate the knots that have formed in Alberta education since the secularization of schools. It will then explore these findings more fully in terms of the wider literature and international perspectives.

9.1 Summary of Findings

This discussion chapter will focus on five key findings. They demonstrate the pressure points that have developed over time in Alberta education and position findings as points that other international settings are likely grappling with.

First, Alberta school populations are more complex than ever before. Whilst some students (and teachers) retained a Christian worldview, there was evidence that there was an increase in students who came from ‘secularized’ homes, where religious/spiritual teachings were not a part of parenting. In addition, there was an increase in religious diversity that immigrants from non-Christian countries brought to the classroom. Evidenced in this sample, a growing number of educationists had to varying degrees ‘secularized’, and had become fascinated by exploring their individual spirituality. Adapting to religious/spiritual pluralism in public education has become an international concern.

Second, the data show that at the provincial level governance officers restored traditional and familiar conceptualizations of religion and had yet to embark on a pathway to conceptualize the unfamiliar terrain of space for mainstream students who were multicultural and diverse.

Third, conceptualizing the space for Aboriginal spirituality in Alberta education became a catalyst for change.

Fourth, a high degree of secularization of schools had unintended consequences that potentially disadvantaged Alberta students.

Fifth, whilst secularization theory focused heavily on secularization as a political process, there is evidence to suggest that in post-secularization education changes will occur in a bottom-up way first, which then might lead to changes at the governance level.

9.2 Implications: Grappling with the knots

9.2.1 Changing Dynamics and Changing Beliefs

The data show that the ‘leave your faith at the door’ and rationalized curriculum in Alberta’s post-secularization model had become increasingly unrealistic, the ‘elephant in the room’. Using constructs from secularization theory, it was possible to draw out the changing dynamics of Alberta schools. Some Canadian scholars, Seljak (2009a,b) for example, continue to portray Canada as a Christian country since two-thirds of Canadians identify as Christian on the National Household Survey (although spirituality is not an option, see Chapter Three). Alberta policy-makers and senior administrators also proposed that many Albertans are Christians and think of the concept of spirituality as ‘going to church’. However, the voice of principals and teachers showed that Alberta education should not rely on this assumption any more. Real world data show that

Alberta classrooms are becoming increasingly religiously/spiritually complex settings. Teachers and principals noted that a growing number of students brought a religious/spiritual identity to their learning and this also manifested in their behaviour, which conflicted with the 'leave your faith at the door' model.

Religious/spiritual pluralism is not a new issue in Alberta or in other Western international settings. This contemporary reality has been the subject of heated debates in the sphere of public education. The lack of debate in Alberta, and in Canada in general, is significant.

9.2.2 Traditional and Familiar Conceptualizations

Some Canadian scholars describe Alberta's reconceptualization of a space for religion in schools as innovative (Hiemstra & Brink, 2006). This study found that the Alberta government restored the familiar and traditional space of alternative-faith based programmes and optional religions courses, lost during the secularization era.

In effect, religion was treated as a segmented course of study or religious exercise (outside instructional time), not a lens through which to view curriculum and life. Those who shared a particular religious worldview could segregate into a homogenous learning community, leaving mainstream curriculum and classrooms 'religion free'. In this regard, parents who want their children to experience a learning environment that is culturally and religiously/spiritually diverse must

operate without access to knowledge about the religious backdrop of curriculum and without consideration of their religious/spiritual identity.

Much of the literature developed in Chapters Two and Three rely on European explanations for the secularization process, mainly because many theorists emerge out of the European context. Their main concern, as developed in Chapter Two, was in understanding the differentiation process between the established church/religion and the state school. In this regard, evident in Jackson's (2004, 2007) portrayal of European approaches to religious/spiritual education, there appears to be a status quo practice of including religious/spiritual education and religious/spiritual themes in curriculum. This is not the case in Alberta. Indeed, religion and spirituality are considered controversial.

The knot that formed related to the function of post-secularization education. Teachers thought Alberta education was geared toward preparing students for work, mainly in the oil and gas industry. Higher order questions about the human experience, beliefs in God, afterlife, the concept of the spirit, and other conceptualizations of a transcendent reality were treated as controversial in mainstream education, but not in the alternative religious programmes. This finding is part of 'old' Canadian debates of the secularization of schools that found that most Canadian schools were 'religion/spirituality free' (Blair, 1986; Sweet, 1997, Brown, 2000; Benson, 2000; Seljak, 2009a). Therefore, it is not new except in the sense that perceptions of post-secularization education in Alberta had changed very little over the decades.

This study, however, contributes the ‘why’ for the Alberta context. Dobbelaere (1981), Chaves (1994), and Luhmann (2013) argue that the trajectory of secularization will be heavily influenced by the voices in the community that have the power to influence policy-makers (see Template). A golden thread that ran through the data was that the Alberta conservative Christian community had the power to influence policy-makers. In this regard, it was not the rational voice (Berger, 1999) or an ‘anti-religion’ voice (Brown, 2000; Benson, 2000) that kept curriculum religiously/spiritually free. It was a conservative voice that either wanted to have segregated programmes or religion free programming so that their children would not be caught in a classroom where they would be exposed to alternative beliefs to their family’s or engage in critical thinking about beliefs, and possibly end up doubting their family’s religious beliefs. Canadian school systems have a longstanding function to preserve family culture and religious beliefs, not challenge them, dating back to colonial times.

This study also contributes to how ‘religions’ courses were conceptualized in post-secularization education. Compared to other international settings and the Canadian province of Quebec, the Alberta government did not resolve the knot of ‘how’ to include religious studies by re-introducing courses in a mandated, directive way. The courses were ‘quiet’ options for students. By ‘quiet’ option it is meant to demonstrate that the courses did not serve a political or social mandate and the government continued with a ‘hands-off’ approach to conceptualizing religion for Albertans. Bringing ‘religion’ back into schools made the concept of religion exist as an academic subject where it did not in the past. However, there was a belief amongst educationists that it would be impossible to overcome the

issue of bias in curriculum design. Too many assumptions and bias are inherent in decision making over course design, such as which religion is presented first and last, the amount of time spent on each one, texts included or excluded, and the general accuracy of a portrayal of 'a religion'. In other words, neutrality is impossible to achieve. Jackson (2004), Copley (2000), Wright (2000), Erricker (2007), and Fancourt (2015) engage in lengthy debate of these issues in England, where there is a longstanding history for the evolution of the form and function of religious studies. Mojzes (1996) provides a useful example of the "birth pains" in Russia as religious studies were returned to schools there after a long absence (no page reference in online article). Little debate ensues in Alberta.

The Alberta solution to the knot is to support the inclusion of optional religions courses and curriculum design. However, further supports such as teacher training was not a part of the implementation process and no specialist was appointed to facilitate the teaching of courses (like there was for the Aboriginal Studies programmes). Whilst half the teachers thought a mandatory religions course would be beneficial to students, the Ministry of Education's position was that courses would function as options.

9.2.3 Inclusion of Aboriginal Worldviews

The decision to include the indigenous voice became a catalyst for change. Untying the knot of the impact of residential schools, administered by Christian missionaries, during colonization has become an urgent issue in Canada. A full inquiry was recently conducted and stories of humiliation, 'cultural genocide', and

sexual abuse are being brought to the surface. Currently, billions of dollars are being spent on restitution. Infusing Alberta curriculum with Aboriginal worldviews, which incorporates their spirituality, is part of this restitution. Indeed, it is a social justice issue.

Whilst this issue may not seem relevant to a European community, it is of relevancy to other post-colonial countries that are currently grappling with how to integrate indigenous worldviews into public education structures, particularly Australia and New Zealand.

9.2.4 The Alberta Disadvantage

The finding of an Alberta disadvantage speaks to the ‘so, what?’ question. Alberta students were perceived as disadvantaged by the high degree of secularization in three ways. First, incidents of intolerance, racism, and resistance were surfacing in Alberta schools, making cracks in the illusion that Alberta was a leader in dealing with diversity. Principals and teachers argued that knowing how to situate one’s subjective beliefs in relation to diversity in the social world was an important skillset for the new generation of students. This was a skillset not explicitly conceptualized in Alberta curriculum. The removal of religion in curriculum closed the space for teachers to integrate the skillset of mediating diversity and religious/spiritual sensitivity. In addition, teachers did not receive professional development in order to understand how to deal effectively with the social cohesion problems they experienced in schools. Social cohesion and the contemporary skillset of mediating diversity is an ongoing subject of debate in

Europe (Jackson, 2007; Grimmitt, 2010). However, in Alberta the data show that the effort to preserve the identity of a small population of conservative Christians outweighed the benefits of further investigation in how to deal with diversity issues.

‘Old’ Canadian debates argued that Canadian students had limited religious knowledge and weak religious literacy after the secularization era (Sweet; 1997; Brown; 2000; Seljak, 2006). This study adds to the Canadian post-secularization story in that it found that Alberta curriculum continued to be ‘religion free’ and the latest curriculum development of ‘multiple perspectives’ excluded religion as ‘a perspective’ in history, politics, science, the arts, and culture. This knot is one that England has been grappling with for decades (see Chapter Four), in terms of curriculum changes and despite the suspicion that is aroused from competing voices. In France, where strict laws prevent religious symbols in the public sphere, teachers are expected to address the religious/spiritual backdrop to curriculum in history, literature, science, and the arts (see Jackson, 2007, chapter Two). But, in Alberta this is not the case.

Sweet (1997) argued that the high degree of secularization puts Canadian public school students at a disadvantage when they enter higher education and find that students from Catholic schools and private schools have the academic tools to articulate a nuanced understanding of the significance of religions in the social world or when they attend higher education in international settings where the study of religions is considered a normal part of being an educated person. This study showed that institutional decision-makers had not thought about the role of

post-secularization education as being about educating students of the significance of religion in the global world or about preparing students for entering into this global world as they potentially moved out of Alberta. In this regard, countries with a low degree of secularization and where religion still plays a role in the educational experience potentially have an advantage over Canadian students who have low degrees of religious knowledge and critical thinking skills about religion.

Another 'old' Canadian debate is that Canadian students are theoretically granted the fundamental right to religious freedom in the public school classroom, but in practice Brown (2000) argues that the high degree of secularization in schools inadvertently created the conditions for students to be denied the right to religious/spiritual freedom. He attributes the practical response to Section 24(1) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (see Chapter Three) and Bill 44 for teachers in Alberta. It created the conditions for teachers to avoid touching on anything 'religious' in the classroom lest they find themselves before a human rights tribunal. The data in this study show that educationists recognized that they were to be sensitive and impartial in their practices, which might demonstrate that the goal of Section 24(1) and Bill 44 was achieved. However, some teachers avoided the subject of religion/spirituality, which inadvertently positions religion/spirituality as insignificant. Taylor (1989) argues that high secularization, and avoidance, leads to religious/spiritual children having a demeaning image of self and Seljak (2006) argues that religious/spiritual children are taught that their religious/spiritual beliefs are wrong. It would be worthwhile to examine more fully models in countries that did not secularize to the degree Canada did and find

out how they manage to deal with religious freedom in the classroom from a top-down and a bottom-up perspective.

Ritskes (2011) created a new orientation to this 'old' debate in that he argues that contemporary Canadian students today were born into a society that values authenticity, independent thinking, and autonomy, yet post-secularization education imposes a rationalized view of the world as an authority in curriculum. Therefore, Canadian students should be taught how to challenge curriculum that strips them of their religious/spiritual freedom or distorts their beliefs or self-image. Challenging the assumptions of 'authority', whether religious or rational, in appropriate and constructive ways should be a contemporary skillset. Ritskes argues that the removal of the religious backdrop in curriculum shut down the space for Canadian students to learn how to exercise these freedoms. In this regard, to thoroughly examine education models where a space exists for students to negotiate knowledge through a religious/spiritual lens would shed light on how this skillset could be implemented into curriculum. Principals and teachers made this point in this study, but policy-makers and senior administrators did not. This created a bottleneck in terms of top-down and bottom-up conceptualizations of the function of post-secularization education.

The new issue that this study puts forward is that struggling and vulnerable non-religious students were being disadvantaged by the high degree of secularization. They had limited exposure to religious/spiritual tools that could benefit their mental and emotional wellbeing and resiliency. This study posed a new knot for post-secularization societies. Teachers were filling in the gap left

behind by the decline in church attendance and the declining significance of organized religion in everyday life. Some scholars in interpreting the secularization of society focus on the role and relevancy of the church in secular society (Marshall, 1994a,b; Davie, 1990, 2007; Bibby, 2006; Luhmann, 2013), but the data in this study support the idea that in the absence of 'church' in students' lives, the classroom was conceptualized as a replacement for 'church'. It was a place where young people could come together and develop tools to understand the 'sacred' dimension of life. However, the 'neutral' post-secularization classroom space was conceptualized as not offering curriculum (or doctrine in the church sense). Teachers did not hold themselves up as an authority on any particular version of spirituality (as a religious leader in the church sense). Teachers perceived their role as to primarily let the concept of spirituality exist, know the appropriate questions to get non-religious students to think about their spirituality, and understand the resources where students could learn more about the concept of spirituality (readings, art, and music for example).

It is evident that an examination of how other international settings deal with the concept of 'spiritual education', 'spiritual development', and 'spiritual wellbeing' would be fruitful. The concrete examples put forward by teachers in how they were untying the knot of how to address the spiritual aspect contributes to this body of knowledge.

9.2.5 Bottom-Up Changes

Mayrl (2011) argues that 'old' secularization debates focused too much on secularization as a political process and not enough attention was offered to the significant role principals and teachers had in the process. It must be kept in mind that the 31 teacher voices involved in this study are not religious studies teachers (except one). They are multi-disciplinary teachers who perceive religion/spirituality as integral to their teaching subjects and a significant dimension to adolescent development.

This study finds that in this post-secularization era, Alberta teachers were navigating through the messy terrain and 'new reality' that religion and spirituality were growing in significance by 'covertly' and 'under the radar' creating space for students to exercise their fundamental right to religious freedom and to gain exposure to religious/spiritual tools. There was a wide sensibility amongst teachers that they could find themselves in trouble if they overstepped 'the line'. The way teachers stepped around the boundary issue was not to teach 'about religion' or 'about spirituality'. Instead, they argued that they created the conditions for religion/spirituality to exist as part of student identity and orientation to the world. They 'let faith in the door'. They found a balance between rational curriculum and subjective belief. Their approach did not resolve the religious literacy issue, but it had possibilities for teaching students the skillset of mediating diversity and challenging curriculum.

It could be argued, however, that one will not find the concept of spirituality as part of Alberta's post-secularization model unless one knows what to look for. In

Alberta, educationists' approaches to addressing the spiritual aspect are relatively informal, possibly invisible. Could this approach in any way fall under the umbrella term of 'spiritual education'? Marples (2006) would argue that it would not, but Hand (2003) would likely argue that it does.

Hand (2003) considers this question, philosophically, in three ways. Being from England, where 'spiritual development' is an aspect of national policy, it is important to pin down what 'spiritual education' means. 'Spiritual education' is not a concept that appears in Canadian debate. Nevertheless, were Alberta teachers entering the territory of 'spiritual education'? First, Hand dispenses with the notion that 'spiritual education' is about teaching 'spiritual truths' or 'spiritual principles' found in different organized religious paradigms. Certainly this definition would not apply in Alberta. Teachers treated the concept of spirituality as religiously untethered (McLaughlin, 2003) and used a child-centred approach (Erricker, 2007; Hay, 2006, Desouza, 2008). Teachers consciously and deliberately avoided linking the students' spirituality with the concept of religion. Arguments such as Grimmitt's (1982, 1986) that a student's personal spirituality can be developed through religions courses, Fancourt's (2015) presentation of 'learning from' religion in English curriculum, and Wright's (1998, 1999, 2000) critical inquiry approach would not be supported in Alberta Education.

Hand also dispenses with the notion that 'spiritual education' refers to education in spiritual activities, such as prayer or meditation. This interpretation, however, has some merit in Alberta. Teachers were concerned with vulnerable

students and tools that students might need to increase resiliency and wellness. Teachers considered themselves to be spiritual mentors in some respect, introducing students to activities that might increase wellness.

Hand's third interpretation of 'spiritual education' is "education of the human spirit" (p. 397), which he characterizes as bringing the spirit, heart, and passion into the educational experience. In this regard, 'spiritual education' is an approach to education. Marples (2006) opposes this definition because the concept of 'educating the spirit' presumes that there are answers to one's personal 'search for self', including questions about whether God exists. The term, 'spiritual education', he argues, is misleading. Hand would likely argue that this definition has merit in describing Alberta's approach. Perhaps theoretically what happens in Alberta could be characterized as 'spiritual education'. However, it is not a term that Albertans used in describing themselves. It is not a term that government would likely use in policy and curriculum. It would be argued that the term 'spiritual education' would arouse suspicion and resistance. Furthermore, the term implies that there must be curriculum and evaluation procedures, and all educationists were opposed to creating curriculum and evaluating students on their spiritual understandings.

Nevertheless, teachers included the spiritual aspect, as well as body and mind aspects, as a normalized concept. Data show that teachers were attempting to awaken students to the spiritual aspect of life, that there was something larger going on in life than just doing well on a test or getting a job. There is a deeper meaning in life and a sense of awe and wonder in being alive. In this regard, the

spiritual aspect flowed through the Chief Superintendent's address to principals and an assignment about meaning and purpose. It flowed through questions that encouraged students to think about their spirit, how science and subjective beliefs are interrelated, or what students thought happened in the afterlife. It flowed through the creative process of art, music, or being aware of how snow fell on a branch. I would not press the concept of 'spiritual education' on what Alberta educationists were doing in the classroom. Marples makes a valid point when he argues that it is too open to misinterpretation.

In this regard, a fruitful study would be to examine how mainstream teachers in international settings deal with religious/spiritual themes. Does high, medium, or low secularization make a difference in how mainstream teachers untie the knot of how to deal with the topic of religion/spirituality? How do they describe their approach?

Alberta policy-makers did not want to follow the same pathway as other international settings in creating a space for 'spiritual education', 'spiritual development', or 'spiritual wellness'. They were not going to use the discourse of spirituality, draft curriculum, or consider evaluation mechanisms. In Canada, the religious/spiritual life of Canadians is considered private and personal, not an area where the government should intervene.

9.2.6 Professional Development

The high degree of secularization in Alberta closed the space for educationists to engage in teacher training and professional development. This created a knot for teachers in learning how to mediate their interests in the concept of religion/spirituality, student interests and wonders, the diversity of beliefs in their classrooms, and the 'elephant in the room' as far as the religious backdrop to curriculum. Policy-makers and administrators were leery about incorporating the discourse of spirituality into policy and curriculum, because they thought teachers might interpret the change as permission to step over the line and start proselytizing or imposing their views on students. It would be worthwhile to explore how international countries with religious/spiritual education/wellness provide teacher education and professional development in order to untie this knot. However, an essential part of the study would be to unpack assumptions, and voices that shape the form of professional development.

This study did not borrow 'best practice' literature for religious/spiritual education in different international settings. Researchers of non-religious approaches to adolescent spirituality in nursing, mental health, and social work find the body of knowledge for adolescents is underdeveloped overall (Westerman, 2009; Scott, 2005, 2009, 2010; Hassed, 2000; Bray, 2009).

9.3 Conclusion

This study opened up a conversation on a topic where a culture of silence predominated. However, it did not finish the conversation. In this regard, this

study provides a living document and an original contribution to knowledge for the Canadian/Albertan context and potential for other educational settings. The pendulum was moving away from a place of high degree of secularization, but had yet to reach a state of balance. It looked at the 'elephant in the room' and developed methodological tools to bring the 'elephant' into existence for all to see. The results are relevant to a wide community of researchers and practitioners and open new pathways to conceptualizing religion and spirituality in post-secularization education.

10.0 CHAPTER TEN

Conclusion: Untying post-colonial knots

This thesis so far has shown how secularization theory can be used as a lens to examine the process of separating out institutionalized religion from the daily governance of a school. Secularization theory has a long and contested history because its theoretical assumptions are critiqued, or because other processes have occurred, such as the desecularization of the former Communist states, for example Russia. This study employed secularization theory because the problems that faced teachers, which I addressed in the introduction, seemed to be bound up in understandings and misunderstandings of the appropriate boundaries in education between indoctrination and proselytizing and taking up religious/spiritual themes in a holistic way. The development of secularization theory in this paper largely draws on European interpretations of the secularization process. This chapter turns to how post-colonial countries with a similar historical backdrop to Canada, namely Australia and New Zealand, handled the concepts of religion and spirituality. This account does not claim to provide an ‘expert’ and exhaustive understanding of Australia and New Zealand’s education

system. This chapter will focus on how these countries grappled with three key knots: religious/spiritual pluralism from the start, indigenous spirituality, and how to deal holistically with mainstream students. This thesis will end by adding to secularization theory in light of the post-colonial experience.

10.1 Religious/Spiritual Pluralism: Knot One

In using the constructs of the secularization theory template (see Appendix), it is necessary to establish the baseline treatment for how Canada, Australia, and New Zealand conceptualized ‘religion’ and its role in public education. Australia, New Zealand, and Canada share similar historical baselines. They had a British colonial history and went down a pathway to independence, had a religiously/spiritually pluralistic population from the start and did not establish a national church/religion. In addition, they grappled with how to reconceptualize a space for indigenous spiritualities.

In Alberta, like most provinces in Canada, decision-makers constructed a dual model, where children were separated into religious groupings (Protestant denominational and Catholic, see Chapter Three). The function of education was to assimilate a religiously/spirituality pluralistic population into a British and Christian identity (see Chapter Three). In contrast, both Australia (1872) and New Zealand’s (1877) Education Acts dealt with a pluralistic population by defining education as ‘free, compulsory and secular’ (Meadmore, 2001; Adhar, 2006). Meadmore argues that the function of Australia’s colonial model was to reduce the

crime rate. Free education was treated as an intervention, and scripture readings were used to inculcate morals and values. Students were divided into denominational groupings once a week and educated in their specific religion. In New Zealand, pluralism was dealt with by incorporating religious instruction outside of instructional time at the end of the day (Adhar, 2006). The rest of the day was secular and 'religion free'.

The knot that formed from the secularization process is more significant to Australia and Alberta, than New Zealand (since religious instruction was already parcelled out of mainstream schooling). In Alberta, the data show that contemporary educationists were unsure how they were to deal with the concept of religion/spirituality, with many thinking that they were not allowed to incorporate religious/spiritual themes into their lessons. In comparing Australia and Alberta's secularization process it becomes evident that the devolution of decision-making to states/provinces is a defining feature in how the secularization process transpired in Australia (Mayrl, 2011; Meadmore, 2001; Byrne, 2013) and in Canada (see Chapter Three). Teachers in some Australian states are equally uncertain as to how they are to handle the concept of religion.

In New Zealand, there is a national system of education (Adhar, 2006). However, in Australia and Canada decision-making was devolved to states/provinces/territories. In this regard, there is no unifying policy for how religion is to be conceptualized, as there was in New Zealand. Mayrl (2011) provides a useful account of Australia's state of New South Wales (NSW) to show

the significance of devolution of decision-making in adding to secularization theory. His account illuminates the knot that formed in Alberta education.

Prior to the secularization process, the NSW government mandated that schools deliver religious instruction in two ways. Classroom teachers taught GRT (General Religious Teaching: Scripture readings) in primary social studies classes. Secondary school students were divided according to their religious affiliation into weekly SRI (Special Religious Instruction) classes taught by clergy (Maryl, 2001; Byrne, 2013). However, Maryl (2011) argues that the system became unwieldy for practical reasons, but also due to the controversy stirred up by parents exercising their right to opt out, teachers exercising their conscientious objection to teaching scriptures, and clergy who did not necessarily favour the approach. To avoid controversy, the Australian government devolved decision-making to local authorities (Trustees), proposing that they could develop a system suitable for their jurisdiction. Maryl notes that the government backed away and stopped promoting GRT and GRT disappeared in discussions and educational documents. Teacher training for GRT was no longer offered and the production of Scripture readers, the main curriculum source, diminished. Whilst GRT was still established in the Education Act, teachers were left with no support or guidance let alone instructions on the issue of religion.

In effect, the Australian 'solution' to this knot of controversy was similar to Alberta's solution: 'Let's pretend there is no issue'. Whilst the Alberta School Act (Section 50(1), see Chapter Three) seemingly opens the possibility for educationists to interpret and modify the meaning of 'religious instruction' in a

responsive way to the community Trustees serve, this has not happened in practice. The Alberta government's laissez-faire approach, the lack of tangible written documents to support the inclusion of religion/spirituality in lessons, and the lack of teacher training and professional development led educationists to believe that they were not allowed to integrate themes related to religion/spirituality into their lessons. The result was the concept of 'religion' and the general concept of a religious/spiritual aspect to life disappeared from mainstream education. In this regard, this study illuminates the wider debate about the extent a government should become involved and supportive in negotiating the space for religion/spirituality if these concepts are to survive in post-secularization education. Findings in this study, however, show that teachers attempted to untangle the knot in a bottom-up fashion. One of the strengths of this study is the hierarchical sampling, and the view this creates from the top-down and the bottom-up. There is a dearth of studies that explore the challenges of top down administrators and bottom-up practitioners as they attempt to unravel the knots that were left behind from the secularization process.

At times, controversy has also arisen in England over the inclusion of Religious Education (RE). The controversy arose between a Christian segment motivated to retain Christian hegemony in RE, those favouring more inclusive approaches (including Humanists), and secularists who sought to remove RE from schools altogether (Copley, 2007; Freathy & Parker, 2013). Yet, the government continues to make religion/spirituality exist as an educational concept and supports the inclusion of religion/spirituality through national policy mandates, curriculum, and inspection. The government can justify its approach because England has a

national church. Whilst England's approach draws some criticism (see Chapter Four), stakeholders there could turn to this study for an example of the pressure point that forms when the space for students to explore the concept of religion/spirituality disappears from a lack of government support.

10.2 Addressing Indigenous Spirituality: Knot Two

Whilst teaching about religion is strained out of post-secularization education and parcelled into objective religions courses/programmes or special religious instruction in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, indigenous spirituality is given an established space in Canada and New Zealand. New Zealand adopted Maori spirituality into mainstream education as a model for 'spiritual wellness' (Smith, 2009; Fraser, 2007; Ahdar, 2006). In Alberta, this study found that an Aboriginal worldview, which is inextricably entwined with their version of spirituality, is now integrated into mainstream curriculum. As well, there are three optional Aboriginal studies courses at the secondary school level. A cursory search finds that, compared to New Zealand and Canada, literature that refers to Aborigines and Australian secular education is difficult to find.

This second issue deserves more attention. It is without doubt that indigenous spirituality should have its rightful place in post-colonial, post-secularization schools. First, the indigenous story that has been silenced for so long needs to be shared. Both Canadian and Australian Prime Ministers in 2008 publicly and formally apologized for the mistreatment of Aboriginals in residential schools

(Smith, 2009). However, the Canadian government immediately followed up with a thorough inquiry, whilst Australia did not (ibid). The Canadian inquiry exposed stories of humiliation, deliberate cultural annihilation, and physical and sexual abuse that occurred in Christian led residential schools. The sharing of stories, it is hoped, will sensitize the larger community to indigenous culture and beliefs and in an ideal world reduce prejudice and 'othering'. With a voice, the indigenous community has a greater chance of moving toward wellness and empowerment as a social justice issue.

Lessons can be learned in regards to the Maoris, according to Smith's study for the United Nations on the impact of colonization. The Maoris successfully negotiated their language as an official language of New Zealand. They defended their right to their culture and spirituality. They resisted and challenged residential schools and successfully negotiated their own terms for Maori day schools (Smith, 2009). There is massive potential for research in how to untie the knot that colonialism and secularization formed for the indigenous communities in post-colonial countries. De-colonist/anti-colonist scholars have begun this pathway (see Chapter Three).

A study of the impact of colonialism on the indigenous community has further implications for secularization theory. As mentioned earlier, many of the interpretations of secularization theory were drawn from the European community. They mainly attempt to provide accounts for why 'religious authority' is diminishing at the national, institutional, and individual level (see Chapter Two). For post-colonial countries, like Canada, one of the reasons why 'religious

authority' is diminishing in the social world, and excluded from public schools, can be attributed to a rebellion against the colonial missionary practices of proselytizing and indoctrination. It can be argued that the indigenous situation cultivated a sense of mistrust of institutionalized religions, especially religious leaders/missionaries. Public schools in Canada, for instance, closed the door to holding up 'religion' as an authority on the sacred dimension of life and letting religious clergy into mainstream education. Section 24(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms prohibits proselytizing and indoctrination in schools. The data from this study show a heightened sensitivity amongst educationists for the boundary of secular education and religious indoctrination. This study opened up deep wounds amongst educationists, beyond the indigenous situation. In this regard, Alberta schools closed the door to religion being held up as an authority and religious leaders having access to students in order to safeguard children from unwanted influences. Religion is a controversial subject in some post-colonial countries. It is evident that in Alberta, New Zealand, and Australia the solution is to parcel out teaching about religion into segregated courses, leaving mainstream education 'secular', and safe.

10.3 Conceptualizing a Holistic Approach for All Students: Knot Three

This study showed that Alberta Education had not deliberately gone down the pathway to consider the religious/spiritual lens that mainstream students bring to their learning and how it impacts their sense of self, behaviour, and achievement. New Zealand provides an example for how it adapted an indigenous Maori

approach to spirituality to a generalized interpretation of 'spiritual wellness' in post-secularization curriculum (Fraser, 2007).

The New Zealand Ministry of Education defines spiritual well-being as 'the values and beliefs that determine the way people live, the search for meaning and purpose in life, and personal identity and self-awareness (For some individuals and communities spiritual well-being is linked to a particular religion; for others it is not.)' (cite Fraser, 2007, p. 31). This definition is similar to England's National Curriculum Council's definition for 'spiritual development' that was used as a heuristic in this study. Fraser's study of teachers who negotiated through the nexus of state education, spirituality, and culture, where 'spiritual wellbeing' exists as a national educational objective, is a useful example for how teachers in New Zealand handled the spiritual aspect holistically for mainstream students. She provides samples of teacher narratives. Teachers show how they responded to incidents where students (Maori mostly) drew a family picture that includes a deceased brother that the child still views as part of the family or students who openly and without hesitation talked about the knowledge they received in talking to the 'spirits'. In Fraser's study, unlike in this Alberta study, none of the teachers spoke of repercussions if they had conversations with students about a transcendent reality. In this regard, written policy acts as permission, as teachers in this study proposed.

In Alberta Education wellness, as a theme, was added and indeed a 'Wellness Coordinator' was part of the teacher sample. However, a 'spiritual dimension' was not included in the wellness model. Nevertheless, some teachers in a bottom-up

way without directives handled student transcendent experience in a similar way to the teachers in Fraser's sample. However, on the whole responding to students' beliefs about a transcendent reality was considered taboo.

In this comparison, it is evident that in both Alberta and Australia, a top-down holistic approach was to construct a set of 'secular' values deemed appropriate for all students. In Australia, the National Framework for Values in Australian Schools promotes nine values: care and compassion, doing your best, fair go, freedom, honesty and trustworthiness, integrity, respect, responsibility and understanding, tolerance and inclusion (Australia, Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005). SSJ promotes three values: character, citizenship, and personal development. The institutionalization of a common set of values proved controversial in both settings. Scholars in Australia complained that the government was attempting to indoctrinate students with values (Cranston, Kimber, Mulford, Reid, & Keating, 2010). At the same time, the Australian government is accused of engineering schools to be mechanisms to serve the Australian economy (ibid). Policy-makers in Alberta claimed the institutionalization of values also drew criticism. Teachers, however, claimed that 'values' do not go far enough in dealing with the spiritual dimension of life. The secular model, they argued, was too 'body' and 'mind' oriented. The function of education, they agreed was about preparing students for work.

Today, the Australian government does not enforce students to follow a particular religion, as it did in the SRI model of colonial times (Chavura, 2011). But, it funds a variety of religious ventures at the federal, state, and local levels

(ibid). One of these ventures is Australia's school chaplaincy programme (Australia, Department of Education, Science and Training, 2007b). This programme proved equally divisive to the framework for values. Byrne (2013) argues that the chaplaincy programme is evidence of Australia's 'failed' attempt at being secular. She points out that 98 per cent of the chaplains are Christians, mainly Evangelical Protestants. In Alberta, this programme would not be allowed into post-secularization education.

It is difficult to get a handle on what actually happens in the Australian classroom/school from a policy and literature search, without conducting a full study. The notion of 'secular' education is a slippery one. On the one hand, scholars in Australia argue schools are rationalized organizations designed to prepare students for the world of work (Cranston, Kimber, Mulford, Reid, & Keating, 2010). On the other hand, there is the chaplaincy programme, which suggests that Australian schools provide an ambiguous conceptualization of 'secular' education. It is these slippery issues that make international comparatives useful, particularly when educationists become involved in them, which was the case in this study. Whilst Canada, Australia, and New Zealand share a common history, it is evident that they indeed secularized in different ways and achieved different results. They share common knots and resolved them in different ways. This opens numerous pathways for further research.

To end this study of Alberta education, it is evident that educationists in Alberta recognized that there is a spiritual aspect to the human experience, but because of the history of controversy for how to create a space for students to explore this

aspect Alberta Education ignored it. Other international settings debate the meanings of 'spiritual education' (see Chapter Nine, particularly Hand, 2003; Marples, 2006), 'spiritual development' (see Chapter Three and Four, particularly Copley, 2000; Wright, 2000; Jackson, 2004), and 'spiritual wellness' (Fraser, 2007). A useful exercise for Alberta policy-makers, administrators, and teachers, where there is a culture of silence, would be to explore different international models. There is potential to include a spectrum of voices in the conversations and create a model for addressing the spiritual aspect of human experience that would support the needs of Alberta students and parents.

10.4 Nuancing of Secularization Theory

Few studies use secularization theory, any more, to explain the changes in society with regard to the role of religion in society (Luhmann, 2013; Stark and Ionnaconne, 1994). The lack of consensus for the object of the secularization process and the assumptions scholars projected onto the changes in society made the use of secularization theory unwieldy (Taylor, 2007). Few studies apply secularization theory to a particular setting to test its merit. The application of secularization theory to the Alberta public school setting proved useful in unpacking how the secularization process occurred in Alberta and why. It also served to illuminate the knots for the educationists and students within Alberta schools.

The introductory chapter set out two ways that secularization theory is often conceptualized. First, secularization theory refers to a belief that as societies progress, especially through modernization and rationalization, religious authority will diminish in significance at the state, institutional, and individual levels and eventually the concept of religion will become insignificant in the social world. Casanova (2009) argues that this interpretation is a particularly European one. Many Alberta educationists had secularized, but not for the reason of rationalization. Most educationists had a belief in a transcendent reality. Second, secularization theory explains the process of secularization, removing institutionalized religious authority from national, institutional, and individual governance. This section will briefly unpack these theoretical positions, using the data that emerged from this study.

In the first definition, religious authority has diminished in significance in individual everyday lifestyle (Bruce, 2002; Taylor, 2007; Bibby, 2011). Most of this skewed sample of 'dominant society' educationists (white, English, post-Christian) did not perceive institutionalized religion as having a monopoly over how to conceptualize the spiritual dimension of life and the majority no longer subscribed to the dogma and ritual of their Christian roots. Religions courses were removed from Alberta programming decades ago and only recently three optional religions courses at the secondary level were added, offering institutionalized religions 'a' space, but not a significant one. The religious backdrop to curriculum subjects was deleted decades ago, removing the possibility for Alberta students to learn the significance of religion in history, politics, literature, science, and the arts. On the national level, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms keeps a vague

relationship between a belief in God and the rule of law, but at the institutional and individual level it is evident that the authority institutionalized religion once had in Alberta has diminished over time.

The second conceptualization of secularization theory proposes a theoretical lens to examine the secularization process. This study synthesized the constructs for secularization theory and found that they offer a useful method to unpack how and why the trajectory of the secularization process in any particular educational setting took the pathway that it did. It is frequently argued that the historical, political, cultural, social, and religious backdrop of a country will influence the way secularization occurs. European explanations for secularization theory often focus on the role of the state church/religion in the process of separating out the role of the church and the role of state schools. But, in drawing out a comparison of the post-colonial province/countries of Alberta, Australia, and New Zealand where there was no state church, we can see a different explanation for the secularization process.

First, the absence of a national church/religion in a country influences the degree of secularization (Barnett, 2008; Casanova, 2009). Barnett argues that countries that have a national/church value religion more in an education system and give it a place of significance. In these three post-colonial countries, instructing children in religion was parceled out into separate homogenous programmes, either in after school instruction or separate school programmes,

Second, in countries that dealt with religious/spiritual pluralism from the start, religion is often treated as problematic and controversial because of the diversity

of beliefs (Brown, 2000; Sweet, 1997; Khan, 1997, 1998; Barnett, 2008). Controversy is often dealt with by devolving decision-making to local school board authorities, as was the case in New South Wales and Alberta. With the devolution of authority, the government often removes supports for the inclusion of religion as an educational concept, and we see educationists uncertain as to how to deal with religion in the classroom and many will avoid the subject of religion altogether. In effect, the subject ceases to exist.

Third, in post-colonial countries Christian missionaries were a significant part of their historical backdrop, especially for indigenous communities. There was a collective consciousness of mistrust for conservatively religious people amongst educationists. To shield children from the potential for indoctrination and proselytizing, the door was firmly shut, in Alberta at least, to any space where religious individuals could engage in indoctrination and proselytizing. In Australia, however, religious pastoral caregivers were allowed in schools. This was not the case in Alberta.

The absence of a state church, the devolution of authority, the lack of government supports in terms of curriculum directives for mainstream teachers, teacher training, and general conversations about religion/spirituality in schools, and mistrust for the possibilities of indoctrination and proselytizing are post-colonial explanations for secularization theory. New Zealand, however, has created a holistic approach for mainstream students in the form of 'spiritual wellness'. It was the first of these three colonies to restore rights to indigenous Maoris, it was the first to include indigenous spirituality in public schools, and it

was the first to bring in 'spiritual wellness'. Whilst Religious/Spiritual Education tends to be a favoured approach in European countries, we see post-colonial countries introducing wellness, beginning with repairing the damage to indigenous communities. Alberta recently restored Aboriginal worldviews in curriculum, and a wellness model is in place but it excludes 'spiritual wellness'. Teachers explored the concept of spirituality as a way of increasing their personal wellness. They were concerned for the wellness of vulnerable students. In addition, it was also evident that a 'search for one's roots' is a theme in post-colonial countries, where great numbers of people live a life of diaspora. Teachers in Alberta were bringing spiritual concepts into their practices in a bottom-up way, without curriculum or directives. Possibly, in time the Alberta government will start to introduce supports for teachers.

This chapter brings out the differences between how secularization theory is interpreted in Europe and England and in post-colonial countries. It emphasizes the point that different historical, cultural, social, political, and religious backdrops will lead to different patterns of secularization. In this regard, secularization theory has merit. The problem over time has been that theorists generalized findings from one context to another. Here we see that even though Alberta, Australia, and New Zealand share similar historical backdrops, the end result of the secularization process was different for each. Secularization theory provides mechanisms for a deep understanding of the 'hows' and 'whys' religion and spirituality are treated in a certain way in a certain context. For this reason, secularization theory continues to be useful.

10.5 Future Research

Findings show that there is a gap between a top down avoidance strategy in dealing with the controversy that the concepts of religion and spirituality create and bottom up efforts on the part of teachers in dealing with the contemporary issue of religious/spiritual diversity, with principals caught in the middle. The use of England's approach, as a heuristic, proved beneficial in illuminating the tensions that exist in Alberta. In moving forward, New Zealand and Australia's approach could also be used as a heuristic for Alberta educationists since they share a similar history and some of the stresses and strains emerging from this history. Ideally, bringing policy-makers, trustees, administrators, and teachers together would prove fruitful in learning from each other about how they handled some of the contentious issues that have arisen over time.

Since educators in Alberta had begun to create a responsive approach in handling the contentious issue of religion/spirituality, whilst conscious of the boundary of Section 24(1) in the constitution and Bill 44, the timing is right for action research. Educationists could begin the process of documenting, sharing, inquiring, researching the literature, and analysing their own practices with the view of publishing. There is potential for sharing action research with other professional practitioners responsible for children, such as nurses, social workers, and mental health providers.

It almost goes without saying that more research must be conducted on the Aboriginal pathway to wellness and justice.

10.6 New Beginnings

It would be impossible to exhaust all that can be told about the data collected in this study or the possibilities for future studies. This study demonstrates that the secularization era of the 1960's-1980's did not mark an endpoint. Indeed, this study suggests there is a new beginning to post-secularization debates. It brought the voices of policy-makers, administrators, and teachers together and gained a nuanced appreciation for the complex issues related to policy and practice for this controversial subject. It demonstrated that the secularization story is far from over and a new post-secularization chapter is emerging.

Epilogue

The purpose of this Epilogue is to continue with the goal of transparency and reflexivity about what I have learned about studying this messy and complicated field of interest.

First, I relinquished my position at Secular School Jurisdiction, partly because I had not finished my doctorate and full time teaching would present significant obstacles for completion and partly because there was no apparent avenue at SSJ to continue on with my study of spirituality/religion. My goal is to negotiate with public and charter schools the possibility of providing professional development and coordinating action research.

Chapters Two and Three provide a solid reference point for further studies. The next theme of inquiry will be to locate data-driven research informed studies on conceptualizing religion and spirituality in 'best practice' for struggling and vulnerable youth since this theme permeated the data.

Teachers were describing themselves as conceptualizing spirituality in terms of 'Buddhist' principles. Therefore, in future I will expand the literature to include conceptualizations from Buddhist countries. The main obstacle will be locating English-speaking literature. Immersing myself in the English Religious Education academic culture was invaluable in illuminating the differences between cultures. Therefore, if I were to take up a study of Buddhist teaching principles I would expect

to immerse myself in a Buddhist culture. It would be interesting to find out if what Alberta educationists think happens in Buddhist teaching occurs in everyday schools.

The most important skillset in this whole process was to develop a research lens that could detect the infusion of 'spirituality' into practice. Infusion was subtle and unless the researcher was sensitive to the varieties of ways 'spirituality' manifested in practice, much would go unnoticed.

Whilst this doctoral study was the most challenging project of my professional career, it opened me up to new ways of thinking about religion and spirituality and forced me to check my own assumptions and biases so that I was not traveling down the road of searching for the familiar.

The personal and professional goal is to stay with this area of inquiry and continue to build a solid body of work.

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APPENDIX I

Template:

Constructs to Apply Secularization Theory

Country:

Province/State:

School Jurisdiction:

Construct	Data
Conceptualizations of the Sacred/Spiritual Aspect of Life	
How is the sacred/spiritual aspect conceptualized?	
Is the sacred/spiritual aspect treated as a segmented or integrated part of life?	
How does the institution deal with the sacred/spiritual aspect?	
How is a transcendent reality conceptualized (e.g., God(s), spirits, heaven/hell, afterlife)?	
How is transcendent experience conceptualized (e.g., connection to God(s), something bigger, awe & wonder, peak experience, intuition, dreams, meditation)	
Do curriculum and school practices include/exclude notions of transcendent reality or are they rationalized?	
Is a sacred/spiritual/transcendent reality systematized into a religion(s) for the community of learners?	
If yes, what function does the religion(s) have?	

If yes, what role does the religion(s) have?	
If yes, how is religion dealt with in the school?	
If yes, does the school include/exclude the following dimensions: practical and ritual, experiential and emotional, narrative and mythic, doctrinal and philosophical, ethical and legal, social and community, material	
Pre-secularization Conditions	
What is the historical baseline?	
Does the country have a state church/religion?	
Is a religion given hegemonic status in education?	
Does the country have a colonial history?	
Does the system have national policy or was decision-making devolved to school jurisdictions?	
What dimensions of organized religion are included/excluded in schools: (e.g., religious instruction/education, exercises/ritual, experiential, narratives, doctrinal, ethical/legal, material/symbols, assumption students are religious)?	
Are religious studies courses taught by teachers or clergy?	
Are teachers allowed to convey their beliefs or are they to remain impartial?	
How were morals and values conceptualized?	
Whose voices are included/excluded in how religion is systematized in schools?	
How were the excluded voices treated?	
What is the function of religion in school?	

What is the functional identity of school?	
Are any religious schools publicly funded?	
Describe teacher training/PD	
To what degree is the government involved in decision-making and providing supports?	
Other	
Secularization Era	
What were the catalysts for change?	
What policies, charters, School Acts relate to secularization?	
Who are the decision-makers?	
What systematizations of Christianity were retained/removed? (e.g., religious instruction/education, exercises/ritual, experiential, narratives, doctrinal, ethical/legal, material/symbols, assumption students are religious)?	
To what degree is the religious heritage retained/removed?	
To what degree was the process a top-down political movement?	
To what degree was the process a bottom-up process?	
What role does religious authority have?	
How is neutrality achieved?	
Do religious leaders have a role in schools?	
Whose voices are included/excluded in the process of change?	
Was religious instruction/education changed? (e.g., learn about, learn from, critical inquiry, child-centred, wellness)?	
Was the religious backdrop to curriculum	

retained or removed (e.g., History, Literature, Science, the Arts)	
Was curriculum rationalized?	
How were morals and values conceptualized?	
How are religious/spiritual identity and lens conceptualized?	
Are any religious schools funded?	
Were changes made to accommodate indigenous children?	
Were changes made to accommodate immigrant children?	
Was a conceptualization of the sacred religiously tethered or untethered?	
What was the function of 'secular' education?	
What was the functional identity of the secular institution?	
How were parental rights conceptualized?	
Are teachers allowed to convey their beliefs or are they to remain impartial?	
Was there teacher training/PD?	
To what degree is the government involved in decision-making and providing supports?	
Was secularization low, medium, or high?	
Other	
Post-Secularization Education	
Identify catalysts for change	
Is there evidence of desecularization (e.g., reinsertion of curriculum and practices removed during secularization?)	

To what degree is the religious heritage retained/removed?	
How is neutrality achieved?	
How are indigenous children accommodated?	
How are non-Christian immigrant children accommodated?	
How are non-religious mainstream students accommodated?	
Identify changes in how religion is conceptualized? Eg change in form and function of religions courses	
How are morals and values conceptualized?	
How are religious/spiritual identity and lens conceptualized?	
What supports are there for students to access help in dealing with religious/spiritual issues?	
Identify policy or statute changes including changes in language	
Whose voices are included/excluded?	
How are the students' individual subjective beliefs and experiences handled?	
Are any religious schools funded?	
Is spiritual/spirituality discourse used? If so, how was it conceptualized?	
Are contemporary constructs used for notions of the 'spiritual' (E.g., relationships/connectedness, experiencing transcendence/Connected to something 'bigger'/God, spirits, beliefs about transcendent dimension, meaning and purpose, awe and wonder, self knowledge/identity, creativity/intuition/inspiration, feelings	

Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality in Secular Schools

and emotions, meditation, group reflection on spiritual issues)?	
Are teachers allowed to convey their beliefs or are they to remain impartial?	
Identify function of post-secularization education?	
To what degree is the government involved in decision-making and providing supports?	
Is there teacher training/PD	
Other	

APPENDIX II: Alberta Course Guides for Three Religions Courses

RELIGIOUS ETHICS 20 (Year Eleven)

CONTENT

1. Concept of ethics
2. Meaning of religious ethics
3. Ways in which the adolescent attains self-realization
4. How the adolescent works out his or her identity in society
5. How certain specific contemporary issues affect the adolescent

RELIGIOUS MEANINGS 20 (Year Eleven)

CONTENT

1. Humankind has basic needs
2. The need to search for meaning in life
3. Ways in which humankind searches for meaning in life
4. Faith adds a dimension to humankind's quest for meaning
5. Deity is an ultimate concern in whom many have faith
6. Because faith is a growth process, crisis will be encountered
7. Humankind tends to depend upon others in their growth in faith
8. Faith must manifest itself through action

WORLD RELIGIONS 30 (Year Twelve)

CONTENT

1. Meaning of religion
2. Development of religion
3. Faith is the core element of religion
4. Major religions of the world
5. Basic beliefs and practices of the major religions of the world

APPENDIX III: CUREC Research Ethics Approval Letter

SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
INTER-DIVISIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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Co-ordinator of the IDREC
Social Sciences Divisional Office



Ref: SSD/2/3/IDREC

11 January 2016

Mrs Margot McKinnon
Linacre College

Dear Mrs Margot McKinnon,

Application for research ethics approval

Ref No.: SSD/CUREC1/10 – 273

Title: The Conceptualization of Spirituality in Public Education: A Comparative study of policy and practice in Alberta and England

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Social Sciences and Humanities Inter-divisional Research Ethics Committee (IDREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided to the IDREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly approval has been granted.

Should there be any subsequent changes to the project, which raise ethical issues not covered in the original application, you should submit details to the IDREC for consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Chris Ballinger'.

Dr Chris Ballinger

cc: Prof. J. Furlong, Department of Education
Lisa Currie, Department of Education
HBP/CAJB

APPENDIX IV: Invitation Letter to Participants

You are invited to an international research project

Margot McKinnon, a [SSJ] teacher and doctoral candidate at the University of Oxford, is conducting a comparative **research project on the emerging field of spirituality in public education**. You are invited to participate. England's policy-makers position 'spiritual development' as the number one educational goal in its broad goal of spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of students. My goal is to understand how policy-makers, administrators, and teachers conceptualize spirituality for public education in both contexts, England and Alberta.

Background: The inclusion of spirituality as an educational goal is becoming a trend in policy for public schools. England and Australia implemented 'spiritual development' while New Zealand integrated 'spiritual wellbeing' into the physical education programme. **But what does 'spiritual' mean? How is 'spiritual' distinct from moral, cultural, personal, character or citizenship development? Is there a 'spiritual' dimension to learning? How do educators in England and Alberta conceptualize spirituality in policy and practice?**

Involvement: The goal is to understand how teachers from **several curriculum disciplines** conceptualize spirituality in policy and practice. Therefore, I am seeking between **5-10 teachers** in total from Pearson who represent a variety of disciplines: English, ESL, Social, Science, Math, Physical Education, CALM, Art, Music, Drama, Second Languages, Technical, Guidance, etc. Your commitment is only a **one hour conversational interview**. No need to prepare ahead of time. All data is confidential and anonymized. Involvement is voluntary.

Why Western Canada? With globalization and increased immigration schools are complex organizations and teachers are at times required to **mediate diverse belief systems**. Current research on adolescents suggests that they would benefit from a spiritual approach to teaching and learning. Often policy-makers consult with religious leaders when they embark on policy development for spirituality. **This project is unique** because it consults with principals and teachers about how they regard spirituality and if and how they mediate spiritual diversity or attend to student spiritual concerns. Western is an ideal research site because of its diverse student population and its complex educational context.

Benefits to Participation: Global policy-makers are struggling with how to design policy and implementation strategies to include spirituality in a post-secular age. **Your voice** will contribute to clarity on the subject of spirituality in education. On a personal level, if you have been pondering how to study abroad, Margot will share her experiences with you.

Conclusion: I hope you will consider volunteering for this project as **I have selected your school because of its unique and complex context. Your voice is extremely important.**

I am looking forward to your participation.

All the best!

Margot McKinnon

[Contact information]

APPENDIX V: Letter of Consent

Dear :

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my doctoral research project: ***The Conceptualization of Spirituality in Public Education: A comparative study of policy and practice in Alberta and England.*** The purpose of the study is to explore the various ways the phenomenon of spirituality may be conceptualized in policy and practice for government maintained educational settings from three basic perspectives: policymaker, administrator, and teacher.

This research project has received ethical clearance from both the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee and the Calgary Board of Education Department of Accountability. This letter of consent declares that as a participant in this study, you:

- 1) have read the participant information sheet
- 2) have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and have received satisfactory answers to questions, and any additional details requested
- 3) understand that you may withdraw from the study without penalty at any time by advising Margot McKinnon of this decision
- 4) understand that a pseudonym will be used to identify you. Data will be secured on a digital recorder and computer file, and data will remain secured after the completion of the doctoral project in the event it may be used for future projects. You will not be asked to review your transcript or contribution to findings.
- 5) understand that Margot McKinnon, her supervisor (Professor John Furlong), and research colleagues will have access to data for the purpose of increasing trustworthiness of data analysis
- 6) understand that data analysis will be used for publication
- 7) understand that should a concern arise, you may contact me at margot.mckinnon@[REDACTED] or Professor John Furlong through email:john.furlong@[REDACTED] or telephone numbers listed above.

I have read and understand the above conditions of this research project and agree to participate in the study.

[Signatures of Participant and Researcher and Dates]

APPENDIX VI: Interview Tool A

England's Religious Education and Collective Worship Model

(A1)

England's Education (Reform) Act 1988

Broad Goal: Section 2(a) to: promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society

(*c. 40*). Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 1 (2).

(A2)

England's Education (Schools Act) 1992

Curriculum was nationally centralized and OFSTED inspects and assesses school performance, including Religious Education, collective worship, and school ethos that promotes spiritual development

(A3)

England's model for Spiritual Development:

- Mandatory Comparative Religious Education, with opt-out clause for parents
- Mandatory Daily Collective Worship, with opt-out clause for parents
- Both must be in the main Christian

APPENDIX VII: Interview Tool B

England's Non Religious Paradigm

England's National Curriculum Council Characterization of Spiritual Development, supported by Ofsted Inspection Agency (drafted in 1993 by NCC, reiterated by Ofsted in March 2004)

The exploration of a student's inner world . . .

'Beliefs – the development of personal beliefs including religious beliefs; an appreciation that people have individual and shared beliefs on which they base their lives; a developing understanding of how beliefs contribute to personal identity;

A sense of awe, wonder and mystery – being inspired by the natural world, mystery or human achievement;

Experiencing feelings of transcendence – feelings which may give rise to belief in the existence of a divine being or the belief that one's inner resources provide the ability to rise above everyday experiences;

Search for meaning and purpose – asking 'why me?' at times of hardship and suffering; reflecting on the origins and purpose of life; responding to challenging experiences of life such as beauty, suffering and death;

Self-knowledge – an awareness of oneself in terms of thoughts, feelings, emotions, responsibilities and experiences; a growing understanding and acceptance of individual identity; an ability to build up relationships with others;

Relationships – recognising and valuing the worth of each individual; developing a sense of community; the ability to build up relationships with others;

Creativity – expressing innermost thoughts and feelings through, for example, art, music, literature and crafts; exercising the imagination, inspiration, intuition and insight; and

Feelings and emotions – the sense of being moved by beauty or kindness; hurt by injustice or aggression; a growing awareness of when to it is important to control emotions and feelings, and how to learn to use such feelings as a source of growth.'

From Ofsted (2004) Promoting and evaluating pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. May be accessed online at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum> Dated March 16, 2004. pp. 9-10.

APPENDIX VIII – Interview Tool C

Alberta School Division: Broad Educational Goals

Goal 1: Broad Goal

Each student, in keeping with his or her individual abilities and gifts, will complete high school with a foundation of learning to function effectively in life, work and continued learning.

Goal 2: Academic Success

Each student will possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for academic success and be effectively prepared for life, work and further learning.

Goal 3: Citizenship

Each student will be a responsible citizen by being an informed and involved member in his or her local, national and global communities.

Goal 4: Personal Development

Each student will acquire the skills, attitudes and knowledge to achieve personal highest potential

Goal 5: Character

Each student will possess the character to do what is right, act morally with wisdom and balance individual concerns with the rights and needs of others.

APPENDIX IX: Interview Tool D

Alberta Policy on Religious Studies

Alberta June 4, 2009 Human Rights amendment to Bill 44, Section 9, 11.1:

(a) parents or guardians have the right to exempt their children from courses of study, programs, or materials that include subject matter dealing primarily and explicitly with religion, human sexuality or sexual orientation

Subsection (2), 3 clarifies that “this section does not apply to incidental or indirect references to religion, religious themes, human sexuality or sexual orientation in a course of study, educational program, instruction or exercises or in the use of instructional materials.”

APPENDIX X: Interview Protocol

Semi-Structured Interview: A hierarchical sample

One: Alberta policy-makers

Part One: Conceptualization of Spirituality/Religion: Baseline

How would you define the word 'spirituality'?

Is there a difference between spirituality and religion?

Have you engaged in any dialogue about religion/spirituality for Alberta education?

How important do you think religion and spirituality are to Alberta education and to student learning?

Part Two: Conceptualization Within a 'Religious' Paradigm

Tool (A) From an Alberta perspective, how do you respond to England's policy for:

Mandatory Comparative Religious Education (with parental opt-out clause)

Mandatory Collective Worship (with parental opt-out clause)

'in the main Christian'

Part Three: England's Eight Conceptualizations of Spiritual Development

Tool (B)

What do you think of England's eight conceptualizations? Which ones would you include or exclude?

Part Four: Alberta's Approach to Religion/Spirituality

Interview Tool (D): Bill 44

How does the amendment to Bill 44 reflect the Alberta social/cultural context?

What problem did you want to solve by amending Bill 44 Section 9, 11.1 in the Alberta Human Rights Act? Did you borrow this policy from elsewhere?

Alberta public schools are complex organizations. With globalization students are exposed to a pluralistic, multicultural and multifaith perspective. What is the law regarding the extent to which teachers may explore the diversity of religious/spiritual themes and individual student experiences in a secondary public school classroom setting? In the Hansard Reports, I understand the amendment is to apply primarily to Religious Studies classes, Physical Education, or CALM classes.

Many people make a distinction between religion and spirituality? Does this policy make a distinction? Would you consider introducing the idea of spirituality in education policy?

Are students legally allowed to integrate their religious or spiritual beliefs into their school learning and experience? Are there any occasions where this is appropriate/inappropriate?

Are teachers legally allowed to share their religious or spiritual beliefs with students? Are there any occasions where this is appropriate/inappropriate? What if students ask teachers about their views?

Under Bill 44, how are teachers expected to handle emerging discussion and inquiry from students who are forging spiritual identities that are not in keeping with their parents' vision of religion?

Would Alberta consider introducing a spiritual care programme so that students may get counsel regarding spiritual issues?

What is the legal entitlement for parents in Bill 44? How are parents going to be informed of their legal rights under this new policy?

What directives are being issued to school jurisdictions with regard to the legal aspects of this policy change?

Part Five: Conclusion

Do you have any final comment with regard to how England and Alberta approach religion/spirituality in education policy and practice?

Do you think teachers should get teacher training in this area?

Would you consider including the discourse of spirituality/spiritual in policy text and curriculum documents?

Two: Provincial Curriculum Specialists

Part One: Conceptualization of Spirituality/Religion

Repeat from Above plus: Have you discussed how the concept of religion/spirituality might be included in curriculum?

Part Two: Conceptualization Within a 'Religious' Paradigm

Tool (A): Repeat

Part Three: Eight Conceptualizations of Spiritual Development

Tool (B)

What do you think of England's eight conceptualizations? Which ones would you include or exclude?

Do you think some curriculum subject areas are more likely than others to address the religious/spiritual aspects to learning? How might this look for Alberta curriculum?

Is it appropriate for students to explore their inner world in public education setting?

Are there dangers?

Part Four: SSJ's Values Model

Tool (C)

What do you think the difference is between spiritual development and character, citizenship/personal development? Do you think there is a spiritual aspect to student learning? Should this be addressed in curriculum?

Part Five: Alberta's Bill 44

Tool (D): The Amendments to Bill 44 *Interview Tool C* appear only to refer to the teaching of 'religion'.

As a curriculum developer, how do you suggest teachers respond to the diversity of religious and spiritual beliefs/lenses students bring to their learning particularly in a pluralistic, multicultural and multifaith public education setting?

Can you think of any dangers to addressing religious and spiritual beliefs in the curriculum?

Do you think there is a need for educators to receive professional development in the religious/spiritual aspect to student learning? Why or why not? If so, what do you think teachers need to understand?

Do you think that Alberta might integrate a non-religious approach to spirituality in education at some point in the future? Why or why not?

Part Six: Conclusion

Do you have any final comments with regard to how England and Alberta approach religion and spirituality in education policy and practice?

Do you think curriculum discourse should include the religious/spiritual aspect to learning?

Do you think teachers need professional development/teacher training in this area?

Three: Trustees and Senior Administrators

Part One: Conceptualization of Spirituality/Religion

Repeat

Part Two: Conceptualization within a 'Religious' Paradigm

Tool (A) Repeat

Part Three: England's Eight Conceptualizations of Spiritual Development

Tool B and C

What do you think of England's eight conceptualizations? Which ones would you include or exclude?

Are these dimensions conceptualized within your school board's Broad Educational Goals (Interview tool D): Goal One, Academic Success, Citizenship, Personal Development, and Character Development?

What do you think the difference is between spiritual development and character or personal development?

Do you think there is a religious/spiritual aspect to student learning not conceptualized in your school board's broad goals?

Would you consider adding spiritual goals to SSJ's model of secular education?

Do you think some students may be spiritually gifted?

Is it appropriate for teachers to assist students in the exploration of their inner world? Are there any dangers?

Does your school division have any systems in place to deal with a spiritual dimension?

Is there a counselor in SSJ who is knowledgeable in dealing with students' spiritual or transcendent experiences/questions/issues?

Part Four: Alberta's Approach to Religion/Spirituality

Tool (D) Recent amendments to Bill 44 regarding Religious Studies reflects the Alberta position on how 'religion' should be treated in public education

How have you conceptualized the amendments to Bill 44 for educators in your jurisdiction?

Are there some curriculum subjects that Bill 44 might affect more than others?

What implementation measures has your division taken to ensure understanding amongst educationists and compliance?

How does your jurisdiction deal with the religious/spiritual diversity of students particularly in the pluralistic, multicultural and multifaith classroom?

Is there any relationship between the amendments to Bill 44 and the emerging phenomenon of spirituality?

Do you think educators may incorporate spirituality into their practice and remain in compliance with Bill 44?

Part Five: Conclusion

Do you have any final comments with regard to how England and Alberta approach religion and spirituality in education policy and practice?

Do you think policy, curriculum, and daily school activities should include discourse that includes the religious/spiritual aspect to learning?

Do you think teachers need professional development/teacher training in this area?

What do you think the future direction is for SSJ in this area?

Four: Principals

Part One: Conceptualizations of Spirituality

Repeat plus: Why did you volunteer for this study?

Part Two: Conceptualization within a 'Religious' Paradigm

Tool A

Repeat

Part Three: England's Eight Conceptualizations Of Spiritual Development

Tool B and C

Repeat, plus

How does the concept of religion manifest in your teaching and in dealings with students?

Does your school have any systems in place to deal with students struggling with a religious/spiritual issue?

Is there a counselor in place who is knowledgeable in dealing with students' spiritual or transcendental experiences?

Part Four: Alberta's Approach to Spirituality/Religion

Tool D

Recent amendments to Bill 44 regarding Religious Studies reflects the Alberta position on how 'religion' should be treated in public education.

How have you conceptualized the amendments to Bill 44 for educators in your school?

Are there some curriculum subjects that Bill 44 might affect more than others?

What implementation measures have you put in place for your teachers?

How does your school deal with the religious/spiritual diversity of students?

Is there any relationship between the amendments to Bill 44 and the emerging phenomenon of spirituality?

Part Five: Conclusion

Do you have any final comments with regard to how England and Alberta approach spirituality in education policy and practice?

Do you think policy, curriculum, and informal school practices should include religious/spiritual aspects?

Do you think your teachers need professional development in this area? Have you ever organized PD in this area?

Five: Teachers

Part One: Conceptualization of Spirituality/Religion

Repeat Principals' questions

Part Two: Conceptualizations within a 'Religious' Paradigm

Tool A

Is England's policy model of 'spiritual development' appropriate for the Alberta

Do you think some students need religious studies or a religious dimension as part of student learning?

Does your curriculum subject or your teaching practice benefit in any way by including a religious aspect to it?

Should curriculum re-insert the religious backdrop?

How does the concept of religion manifest in your teaching and in dealings with students?

Part Three: England's Eight Conceptualizations of Spiritual Development

Tool B and C

What do you think of England's eight conceptualizations? Which ones would you include or exclude?

Are these elements conceptualized within your school board's Broad Goals: Academic Success, Citizenship, Personal Development, and Character Development?

In the Broad Goal, do you think some students might be spiritually gifted?

What do you think the difference is between spiritual development and character or personal development?

Do you think there is a spiritual dimension to student learning not conceptualized in the Broad Goals? If so, explain and do you think this dimension needs to be supported?

Is it appropriate for teachers to assist students in the exploration of an inner world?

Does your school division have any systems in place to deal with the spiritual aspect?

Part Four: Bill 44

Tool D

Recent amendments to Bill 44 regarding religious themes reflects the Alberta position on how 'religion' should be treated in public education

How have you conceptualized the amendments to Bill 44 in your practice?

Will Bill 44 impact your practice?

How have senior administrators facilitated conceptualization and implementation structures for you?

Are there some curriculum subjects that Bill 44 might affect more than others? If so, how has this been taken into consideration for implementation practices?

In your practice do you have a system in place to recognize or support religious/spiritual diversity of students especially in a pluralistic, multicultural and multifaith public education system?

Part Five: Conclusion

Do you have any final comments with regard to how England and Alberta approach spirituality in education policy and practice?

Would you like professional development?

Do you think policy, curriculum, and informal school practices should include the religious and spiritual aspects?

Six: Crisis Counselor

Part One: Conceptualizations of Spirituality/Religion

Repeat

Skip Tool A

Part Two: England's Eight Conceptualizations of Spiritual Development

Tool B

What do you think of England's eight conceptualizations? Which ones would you include or exclude?

Do spiritual/religious issues come up when you are dealing with students in crisis?

Are there dangers for addressing religious/spiritual issues in your work as a crisis management facilitator?

Would you consider the work you do to be 'pastoral care'?

Do you feel knowledgeable in dealing with students' spiritual or transcendental experiences?

9) Are there any areas for which you would like to receive professional development training?

Part Three: Alberta's Approach to Spirituality/Religion

Tool D

Recent amendments to Bill 44 regarding Religious Studies reflects the Alberta position on how 'religion' should be treated in public education.

Will the amendments to Bill 44 have any affect on the work you do?

Have you received any instruction on how to implement Bill 44?

Part Four: Conclusion

Do you have any final comments with regard to how England and Alberta approach spirituality/religion in education policy and practice?

APPENDIX XI: Analytic Episodes

Part One: Baseline Forms of Secularism

1. Reasons for Volunteering
- 2) Definition for Religion
- 3) Attitude toward Religion
- 4) Definition for Spirituality
- 5) Attitude toward Spirituality

Part Two: Religions Model (Tool B)

- 6) Opinion of Mandatory Religions Courses (inclusion/exclusion)
- 7) Opinion of Mandatory Collective Worship/Religious Exercises (inclusion/exclusion)
- 8) Opinion of 'in the main Christian'/Christian heritage (inclusion/exclusion)

Part Three: Dimensions of Religion/Spirituality (Tool B)

- 9) Beliefs: religious and personal beliefs (inclusion/exclusion)
- 10) Sense of awe, wonder, and mystery (inclusion/exclusion)
- 11) Experiencing feelings of transcendence (inclusion/exclusion)
- 12) Search for meaning and purpose (inclusion/exclusion)
- 13) Self-knowledge (inclusion/exclusion)
- 14) Relationships (inclusion/exclusion)
- 15) Creativity: imagination, inspiration, intuition, insight (inclusion/exclusion)
- 16) Feelings and emotions (inclusion/exclusion)

Part Four: SSJ Goals (Tool C)

- 17) Broad Goal: complete high school

18) Academic Success

19) Citizenship

20) Personal Development

21) Character

Part Five: Tool D

22) Parental Rights and impact on boundary-setting

Part Six:

Concluding Remarks

APPENDIX XII: Vignettes of Teachers and Principals: Sample of Clustering

Cluster One: Committed to a Religion (e.g., religious teacher)

1) Kevin: Art Teacher

I did not go back to university until I was 40 years old. I took two degrees because I have wanted to be a teacher my whole life. I'm very comfortable knowing who I am, where I come from, why I'm here, and where I'm going. Kevin has a solid religious tradition that he follows and views his role as a teacher is to create the environment for students to fully understand all aspects of their authentic identity. He views a difference between spirituality in his personal life and spirituality as it relates to his practice as an Art teacher.

2) Mark: Behaviour Support Worker for Students with Mental Illness

Mark is a pastor in his personal life but works at WOBE as a Support Worker for students with anxiety or depression. There may be some students with Asperger's or Autism or other learning disabilities. They have to have a mental health tag to be in the programme. Mark was not specifically trained for his position but WOBE took into consideration his prior experience as a Chaplain in a psychiatric hospital.

3) Dennis: Students With Special Needs

Dennis has positive feelings about religion as bringing people together in celebration. Every Christmas Eve he and his wife host a Christmas party and invite all the people in who are alone, through divorce usually. They have lots of food and drinks prepared and leave everyone to socialize while they slip out to church and return to join in celebration.

4) Marie: French

I'm a Christian. I think generally in our society there is an acceptance of many religions and many religious practices, and Christianity is not allowed. So I am a very, very careful teacher when I'm at school and often feel that comments are made about Christianity that hurt me and I have to keep my Christian beliefs separate from who I am.

5) George: Media Studies

George feels strongly that spirituality is a part of our lives and debated back and forth about whether he would participate in this study. He decided that it would probably be good to have a voice in spirituality. He later revealed that he is a Mormon.

6) Alex: Social Studies

My undergraduate degree is in religious studies, specifically in Islamic history. The role of religion in school systems was always an interest to me. As an academic subject, religious studies always came easily to me so I ended up following that stream. I'm not tenured yet, so I have to keep my nose clean for the next few months.

7) Tania: Wellness Co-ordinator

I grew up in Lebanon and everything we did in school, whether math, science, language, even our course in behaviour, that is how we carried ourselves, respect, trust and good relations with people, was part of our education and culture. Spirituality is an important part of that because it is very difficult to separate spirituality from what makes us people the people we are. Tania did not discuss her religion per se but emphasized that her cultural upbringing was completely entwined with her spirituality. Tania is the Wellness Centre Co-ordinator. I don't have any specific training for the job. My training came more as a teacher because I am an immigrant from Lebanon. Lots of immigrant students were able to come to me and they felt I could understand them; they felt they could connect with me and talk to me about their worries and challenges. So as a teacher, kids would come at lunch, kids would come early in the morning or after school. We needed privacy and certain kids don't want their classmates to know.

Cluster Two: Negative Experience with religion and therefore moved away from family traditions

Cluster 2a: Opposition to Catholic System

1) Donna: CALM Curriculum Leader

I grew up Catholic in a Catholic School system in Saskatchewan. The whole religious instruction was a part of my life, of my growing up, and being raised Catholic sort of has little tentacles that reach into every nether region of your life whether you are practicing or not. I married an Anglican and together we made the conscious decision not to involve our children in a church. My adult son thinks he believes in God and my eighteen year old daughter claims not to believe in anything. I wonder if I did my children a disservice by not exposing them to a religious education?

2) Eric: Arts/Phys Ed/Rugby Coach

I identify myself as agnostic. But it's funny. My family is Anglican but I decided to go to Catholic school so that I could play on the football team. I didn't have to show a baptismal certificate or anything, so I was there as a false Catholic. To be a student there I had to take Religious Studies. The classes were actually a really good study of World Religions and I thought that was wonderful. But then I remember we had a guest speaker one time, a lady from Texas, who at one point had a string of abortion clinics and had since seen the light and was then touring and telling people how immoral and evil abortion was. I was in grade eleven. At the end of her talk I asked, 'So what if somebody, against her will, becomes pregnant at a young age?' And she answered, 'Well, if she's old enough to conceive, then it's wrong to have an abortion.' Afterward I asked my Religious Studies teacher whether we would have somebody in to talk about the other end of it, and my classmates all laughed. They thought I was making a joke or that I was being a jerk to my teacher and I wasn't. And so, institutionalized religious classes and institutionalized religious morality really makes my skin crawl because it doesn't consider other

viewpoints. It doesn't trust the learner with other viewpoints and allow them to make informed decisions for themselves.

3) Joyce: ESL

I'm not religious. I was raised Catholic but I do not follow Catholicism, and I certainly have strong feelings about organized religion, so to speak, or some aspects of it, having experienced it. But I've also learned a lot about other ways of seeing spirituality and belief systems and things like that as I have matured. I actually had a conversation with one of my twin boys last night because he was afraid. He said, 'I was lying in bed thinking about dying, and I was wondering, do I go to heaven, or is there just nothing?' And so, I went and lay down beside him and talked to him about that he will figure that out as he grows up, and I told him what I believe – that our souls go on. He got to sleep and he felt better. I said, 'You really can't answer the question right now, but you will spend time as you get older and you will find some answers that fit with you as an individual. It's very personal and what entirely feels right for you is what you should go with.' Later Joyce revealed: Growing up, we were physically abused – not sexually, physically – and I've believed that I didn't have that chance or opportunity to tell anyone. I don't know that I would have any way, but we were beaten pretty badly at times and so now I think . . . I want students . . . sorry (tearing up) I want them to know that they are worthwhile human beings and don't deserve to be treated that way. So, absolutely, I welcome the openness because it might be the only opportunity they have. And they need to feel safe.

4) Geoff: Science Teacher

My experience is with the Catholic Church. Your spiritual development would not mean getting closer to God. It wouldn't mean being aware of anything. It was simply to being one with the rules, with the catechism. Now I meditate usually twice a day, in the morning before I go to school and before bed. My goal is to live more consciously, to live in the now.

5) Julia: English IB

I think I'm a very spiritual person, but I'm not a religious person. So, speaking dogma is completely different than speaking spirituality, and I think there's a big disconnect between the Catholic Church and its followers. I mean, I think that people bandy that word around as if it's got more meaning or has a real substance or meaning, or is it just a dogma? I see spirituality as connectedness, which is understanding and decency. So, I think there is a real lack of that, so we talk it, we don't walk it, and the Catholic Church, very fundamentally, doesn't walk it. And nor do I think the Catholic schools talk it. Anyone who depends on a god to strike people down for bad behaviour is dangerous. And when you don't process when you're talking through the Bible is extra dangerous in my mind because then you become a mindless follower of propaganda, and that to me is the scariest thing of all when people don't process what they're actually saying and behaving right because someone else told them to do this. It's mindless.

Cluster 2b

Breaking Free of Family Religious Tradition: Not Catholic

Still Negative

1) Molly: English Teacher (Death of Father: 'Freed her to question God')

Molly contacted me because her colleague Sheila recommended her for this study due to her openness of bring 'spirituality' to her practice. I was raised in a very intellectual home. My parents were always talking; they were also very spiritual and religious. And while my father was a minister, at the same time there was the intellectual discussion about 'what if this', 'what if that', so I always heard this kind of stuff and books and everything. And then my father passed away and that was a huge change in my life. Like, when he passed away, it was as if a part of me stopped and a new part of me began, and then I was given a new kind of appreciation for the darkness that happens in everyone's life, and then I see that with the kids and just I guess recognizing it, I don't know. I think there is a separation between religion and spirituality. I'm very supportive of other religious views for sure, but oftentimes, because of the way I was raised, I've seen that narrowing that takes place when man or woman touches something spiritual. It's warped, it's screwed up, and so I'm more interested in the surrounding picture around religion. Like what makes us want to look for something more? How do we know there's something out there? It is okay if I question if God exists if I've been raised as a Christian, or does that make me a heretic or whatever? Are those questions okay and how does that lead me to being a richer person? I don't know.

2) Katie: Music Teacher (Death of Mother: Organized religion did not work)

When I lost my Mom, I came to the conclusion that I had two choices. I could either be angry with the doctors or angry with God. I'm not really a God person, and frankly, I don't want to be that angry all the time. I prayed to God, but my prayers were not answered so that's probably why my personal faith has gone the way that it has. Organized religion did not work for me. I had no results and no proof. I made a very conscious choice in my life that I will believe that what we have here isn't all there is. But religion to me has a connotation of organization, that there is a leader, that there is a Bible or Koran. Religion has rules, guiding principles. I'm not interested in formalizing a structure. I'm not interested in being told that if I follow this faith, then that means these things. Mine is very personal. I'm spiritual. My sister and her husband went hard core atheists. I am somewhere over here in the spiritual. I believe in more than what I can see, more than what I can touch, more than what I can quantify. What it is though, I have no idea.

3) Lou-Anne: Guidance Counselor: Death of Father: He couldn't just disappear entirely

My father was Anglican and my mother is Scottish and for some reason she really turned away from the church. There was something about the Church of England that just turned her off one day, and it was something regarding tolerance or acceptance. I never attended church with my Mom but I did with my dad early on and ironically just over the street there. Currently, I am not a church attender and I married a Catholic and I was married in a Catholic church by both a Catholic priest and an Anglican minister. From my background, I grew not necessarily agreeing with what churches do and their hierarchy

and at the same time recognizing that my father had at least a strong faith and then having to also fit in with my Catholic husband. He has strong beliefs but he does not attend church. Our children go to Catholic school. If you asked me when I was twenty I would have said I was agnostic. My minister said that being agnostic is like being a fence-sitter for the rest of your life. I needed to take a stand. I'm on a journey. I have more questions than I have answers. Recently my father passed away so questions of faith really come to the surface. When people die, is that it? Are they gone? Do they have a soul? Is there a spark that's left over?

4) Stuart: English Teacher (Mormon: Prophets Failed)

I'm here to be the voice that counters the anachronism that is traditional religion. My fear that the traditional religions will have too powerful a voice in that way that spirituality goes in education – particularly, the Abrahamic religions. I recall in my youth doing The Lord's Prayer every morning at school, and the Muslim kid always sat in the hall. And I never knew what the hell that was about; never understood it even a little bit. And then the kid would come in later. Because I was raised a Mormon until I was fourteen, so I've got firsthand experience in ludicrous, and I understand the force and the power that it has and I understand that breaking away from it takes cognitive will. Of course, when you're raised in a faith, they're selective about what they tell you about the history of your faith. And I read an article about the Mountain Meadows massacre, wherein some fifty-odd Mormons shot people in the back of their head to kill them because they were imposing upon their promised land, and someone divine had said they needed to do this. The question has to be: Well, if my faith has got it figured out right from square one, Joseph Smith or whatever, how could these people possibly make this mistake in the name of God? And the answer is, it's very simple—you couldn't. This is a prophet-based faith, and the prophets have failed repeatedly. I just told my parents that I wasn't doing this anymore. Well, my Mom was, you know, she was smoking cigarettes in the bathroom, and my Dad only went along with it because he was so passive, he didn't want to upset his wife. And they were going through a divorce at the time. And, you know, in the Mormon faith, that's excommunication. Bye-bye. I was the first one in the family to go, and then everybody went except my Mom.

And, unfortunately, I think most people are possessed of average intelligence, and they can't cognitively break away from it. They're incapable of doing it. It's just a whole lot easier and a whole lot more comfortable to continue swimming along with the current the way that it's always been. And that's problematic. Evidently, so the greatest threat to modern civilization right now is religion. You know, the proof's in the pudding. You read about it every day in the paper. And for that reason, you know, it's not just the Islamic faith, and it's not just Muslims. It's all religion.

5) Veronica: ESL

Veronica was a substitute teacher in 2009/10. Geoff forwarded my email to her believing that she would like to be a part of the study. Veronica and I met at her flat for lunch on a Sunday afternoon. My own personal journey is I have a hard time with religion because I've experienced some really negative things. So, I'm always questioning, you know, what

is the role of religion? Why does it seem to meet so many needs? And I have met religious people who I still really respect and value, and so it's working for them.

Cluster Three: Not a Negative Experience With Religion

Religious Tradition Unsatisfying

1) Caitlyn: Drama Teacher

I attend a tremendous amount of art, and I often find really great art is a spiritual experience. I've done church, like I went to a United Church because I thought the reverend was fantastic but I am just not interested in organized religion I discovered. I've always known that. While at university, like most people, I did my reading and learned about different religions. I had a nice growing-up phase when it comes to spirituality, sort of teenage resistance and rebellion of it all. And my husband's parents are actually United Church ministers and so he had a very different experience of religion growing up. Very liberal and loose. Even so, he looks for spirituality too and that is part of our lives together.

2) April: English (Birth of Child)

I just finished my Masters Degree in Citizenship Education. I have a two year old daughter and I find that Buddhism is speaking to me right now. Whereas, with Christianity, which is what I grew up with, didn't. For some reason I wasn't learning those same lessons from that, so that's kind of where I am personally right now. I had to struggle with postpartum depression and Buddhism and the being in the present and not trying to get away from suffering, but just knowing that things are and that it can be something different at another time really helped me heal from that. So, I think I'm learning a lot of that in motherhood. It's not trying to force and change things and make things perfect; it's just accepting what is.

3) Heather: Social Studies (Death of Husband)

It's hard to be a good human being and I think it's much easier to kind of look at self-preservation, but spirituality is the root of humanity, to be human. I never would have thought that I would ever – like in my younger days—have believed that I would lean towards things like reincarnation. And maybe that's how it was presented to me when I was younger, as something tainted. I've come to realize that we're all on a journey, on our soul's journey. I guess it is up to me. My husband passed away last January and he was starting to understand some of this as he was dying. But in all his fifty-three years and the six years that we had together, this kind of stuff was not on his radar. In fact, my mom said to him at one point very late in his life, she said, 'You know, Rick, you've been reading all the wrong books.' Because he was an avid reader, English teacher, and he said, 'You might be right.' I know that I'm born on this Earth and I will die on this Earth, but that is just a blip.

4) Sarah: ESL (Death of Father)

I was a self-professed pagan for many years, but when my father passed away, I kind of had a personal crisis about eight years ago. Before that I spoke to people about their faiths and beliefs and really felt that my sense of spirituality came from a connection to the earth. But when my father passed away I needed more support. I grew up in a very tumultuous household in terms of faith. My father was a self-proclaimed atheist and my mother is a United Church person. I had a deep concern about my father because he had been estranged. I don't know if that's too personal or not, but I always wondered if he was as at peace. He was in a very troubled state when he passed. I live in a small town so I went to the local United Church and I felt really connected to the minister there. I ended up taking a basic Christianity course and becoming baptized and I've done three sermons. I found that organized religion wasn't totally meeting my needs and I have a curiosity. For example, I went to a Native Indian Sweatlodge this summer because I am very fascinated by aboriginal beliefs. I am part of the Environment Club at school. I felt that traditional First Nations beliefs are very much in harmony with nature and that's what I find quite fascinating. But I also read. I am reading stuff by the Dalai Lama right now. When WOE started offering World Religions, a colleague from school and I took a course through the university and we loved it. I just returned from Germany after taking a semester off to explore my German roots. I haven't even unpacked all of my boxes yet or set up my classroom.

Cluster Four

Questers: Not a negative experience, seemed to be born with natural longing to search

1) Danielle: CALM Curriculum Leader

I was as Anglican as they came, but I tried everything. There was a time my Mom was told by somebody in the village where we lived in Nova Scotia, 'Do you know that your daughter is going to Monday catechism, Tuesday Anglican Bible study, Thursday southern Baptist revival meetings?' And she sat me down and said, 'Danielle, I think it's wonderful, but you must choose one church. In my nine-year-old head, I thought, 'Why?' And I was the only kid in that family that had questions, and I just tried all the churches in the village because I was thirsty. The only happenstance that made me pursue this line of religious inquiry was based on convenience of the Anglican church nearby me, a friend who was Catholic, who used to, in order to play with me on Mondays, I had to go to her catechism class, a grade-five teacher who said, 'How would you like to come and play games at the Baptist church?' Her brother was the southern Baptist minister, so it was kind of a little manipulative, you know? All these little grade-five girls, 'Ooohh, we're going to play games.' Love lifted me, love lifted me, you know, bringing in the sheaths. I was holy rolling like you wouldn't believe until somebody blew the whistle and said, 'You know, your kid, what the heck is going on with her?' I think it was because of my own individual desire to make sense and connections with people and my place in the world.

2) Adam: English Curriculum Leader

I think being born in a totally secular household in Winnipeg left me somewhat pining for some spiritual tradition that I could sort of grab on to. From my experience, and I think echoed it the experiences of others, our contemporary society offers sort of a shopping mall of spiritual traditions. You can just hook in where you want. They're somewhat decontextualized from the original source and so it's become something of a consumer experience for me. I'm interested in the word and concept of spirituality as it works for our culture. I mean, it's sort of popping up everywhere, from O Magazine—you know—Oprah and I guess I find myself somewhat allergic to my own spirituality but at the same time fascinated by it. So, I'm always somewhat. . . there's always that trepidation and skepticism, like, I like this, I need it to some degree, but in another way am I undermining it? Am I not valuing it? Is there something I'm totally missing? So, I'm always so cynical about that word, and I fear that spirituality is just religion neutered for for some sort of consumer experience.

3) Natalie: Acting Assistant Principal

Natalie was in her first week in her role as Acting Assistant Principal. I was down in Guatemala doing some volunteer work and this high school kid said, 'My Mom says you're religious.' I'm going, 'Religious? No wrong word,' So, we sat out in the water for probably a good hour just talking about that, and were both like, 'Wow, wouldn't it be neat to look at some different religions?' Because she's at an age where she's learning to look at that. Her parents, like my parents, didn't force a lot of religious study on us and I just took some courses from the Catholic part of the university. But I wonder at what age do we look at spirituality?

4) Deborah: Spanish

I'm not very religious, but I understand a lot. I studied world religions. But I'm still growing and learning about the mind and body, and I have just started touching on that really. I've gone through some crises, and I'm just figuring out all the power I have in my brain, and I'm understanding the power you have in the way you think.

3b) Searching for Cultural Identity

5) Steve: French

I am Metis and I am very interested in the native Canadian approach to wellness.

6) Robert is Chinese/Canadian: Teacher of Developmentally Challenged Students

I was brought up Christian because that was the only way we could remain in Canada. Chinese who are in their mid 50's like me are called CBC's, Canadian-born Chinese. I'm working with the Chinese Academy and, I suppose, rediscovering my Chinese heritage is where my spirituality lies, knowing who I am and where I am. I've always been proud of being Chinese.

Cluster Four: An Aspect of Human Development

1) Janis: Social Studies

Spirituality is a very important part of life. What that means, I'm not entirely sure because it means different things to different people. People learn according to their growth experience and so I think it's more meaningful for them when we have kind of a context for them to place it in. For adolescents, it's natural in that time of life where they are kind of searching for meaning and questioning their identity, asking 'Who am I?' and whatnot. When they are lacking a connection, and it doesn't necessarily need to be a religious connection, but they seem to – some students anyway—seem to kind of be searching for connection. Spirituality might be the piece that's sort of missing that allows them to find direction a little bit quicker for themselves in learning.

2) Jake: Social Studies

Spirituality is, although not front and center, is a topic of interest for me, especially within a public school board setting. And as it happens I teach options in psychology, religion and philosophy.

3) Jessica: English

We have had a bit of discussion around some of the end statements of our board and how it is possible to quantify subjective ends. I have been looking at the citizenship end and for me the concept of citizenship necessarily entails some form of understanding of what it means to be a good citizen. I think necessarily that has to do with our beliefs around spirit or what we are intrinsically, maybe not intrinsically, but what we are as good people, that goodness I think really is somehow the notion of spirituality or spiritual life.

4) Sheila: English

As an English teacher looking at literature and character development, I tend to want to consider the spiritual aspect of their lives and I talk a lot about mythology and archetypes in our literature analysis. So, I am interested to think about that because we have such a diverse population with their own views on spiritualism. I am engaged in my own Master's research on the Monster Archetype in Hamlet.

Principals

Matthew: I have a philosophy and religious studies background personally, so spirituality has always been a personal interest of mine to investigate. In terms of public education it just seems to be something that is being discussed more openly with the public milieu but also within the media, so spirituality is a timely issue that we as administrators or as teachers in the public system have to address.

Gerald: I am interested in realizing my personal understandings of spirituality and how they become infused or somehow transmitted into the work that I do on a day-to-day basis, which of course is supposed to be about upholding policy and procedures of our institution. Of my thirty years with SSJ, twenty of them have been in this area of the city

where there are multifaith communities. Perhaps that has coloured my experiences and my understanding of what we need to do and get to do when we are working with kids.

Malcolm: I took courses on spirituality in my Masters Degree and I am emphatic to say that the courses had nothing to do with religion and more to do with spirituality. These courses allowed us to be in touch with our inner selves, reflective, introspectionist. They delved in philosophy, they touched on different things, Zen Buddhism, different ideas from Christianity, Judaism. So, not so much religion, but kind of the higher order . . . if there's a higher power in one's self or in one's world that we can draw on."

Mike: Most people see themselves in a spiritual light of some sort but not necessarily linked to a religion.